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The Lahawiyin: Identity and History in a Sudanese Arab Tribe

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Thesis submitted
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Department of History
Durham University

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the Lahawiyin of northern Sudan, and it explores the relationship between identity and history in this Sudanese Arab tribe since the late nineteenth century. The history of the Lahawiyin reveals continuous crossings of borders and boundaries through a period of substantial political and economic change, much of it driven by external forces.

The thesis demonstrates that the Lahawiyin Arab identity has been central to the way that Lahawiyin leaders have sought to develop and maintain their authority, and the ways in which ordinary Lahawiyin have tried to maintain a particular way of life and patterns of social relations. Arab identity has been used instrumentally to make claims or assert rights; but it has also shaped the way in which Lahawiyin have understood their interests. The emphasis on Arab identity has been closely linked to the prolonged campaign by some Lahawiyin for a homeland (*dar*), and in the way that Lahawiyin have negotiated their subordinate status within larger Arab confederations – first the Kababish, then the Shukriyya. It has also shaped Lahawiyin relationships with their own subordinates, particularly slaves. Though the Lahawiyin campaign for a *dar* has not been successful, and their lifestyle of most Lahawiyin has now changed irrevocably away from pastoralism, Arab identity has continued to be important in current contests over the political status of potential leaders, and the group as a whole.

The thesis makes use of a range of archival sources in the UK National Archive, in Sudan Archive at Durham and at the National Records Office in Khartoum. During the fieldwork various academic sources were consulted in Khartoum and Gedarif which form an important aspect of the narratives together with the many stories which were generated from the oral histories told by the Lahawiyin.

Using these materials, the thesis discusses how the Lahawiyin, have utilized their Arabness, and the way they present their history, to negotiate their status with a series of regimes, from the Turco-Egyptian state of the nineteenth century to the current regime of the National Congress Party.

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Abbreviations

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
BNP	Blue Nile Province
CEDEJ	Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Economiques, Juridique et Sociale
CIVSEC	Civil Secretary
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DC	District Commissioner
DSRC	Development Studies & Research Centre
ESPA	The Eastern Peace Agreement
KP	Kassala Province
LGA	Local Government Act, 1971
MFC	Mechanised Farming Co-operation
NIF	National Islamic Front
NRO	National Records Office
PLGA	People Local Government Act, 1971
SAD	Sudan Archive, Durham
SNR	Sudan Notes and Records
ULA	Unregistered Land Act
WNP	White Nile Province

Glossary

Acacia Seyal/ Melifera	Savahana tres
Al – ahliya	Non-formal
Al -Bayaa	Oath
Al –idara (idara)	Administration
Al Shura	Consultation
Al-Rabitaa	Association
Amir	Prince, a title given during the Mahadi’s ruling period
Ashraf	Noble
Atmors	land possesses characteristics derived partly from sand and partly from clay
Belad	land
Bet	Daughter
Bey	An Egyptian title
Butana	Plain
Condominium	British- Egyptian Administration
Dar	Home land
Dinder and Rahad’	Seasonal Rivers
Dura	Sorghum
Emirs	A rank in the Mahadiya
Fasher Fort	Grazing line
Feddan	Land measurement, 1 feddan =1 acre
Ghabat El-Fiel	Forest of the Elephant
Habil	Land measurement. 1 habil = 60 meters
Hayat	Corporation
Higleeg	local name of Acacia Melifera trees
Jerif/ Jurif (Juruf)	Riverside land after flood/plural
Karab	Hard clay soil of alkaline and calcareous
Karu	Land lying remote from river banks, slightly lower and are irrigated by river flood
Khalifa	Predecessor of the Mahadi
Khalwas	Religious schools
Kharagi	Dues-paying /The prize of victory
Kharif	Rainy season
Khashm beit	Sub-section
Khut	line
Lahawi	A man belonging to the Lahawiyin tribe is identified as a Lahawi which reconfirms a tribal identity/ adjective of Lahawiyin
Mahdiyya	Mahadi’s ruling period
Majalis	Councils
Majlis Shuraa	Consultation Council
Majlis	Council
Mak	Governor
Mamur	Sub- inspector
Markaz	Headquarters
Masar	Nomads route

Meahalya	Municipality
Meshaikha	A number of sections
Mudir	Provincial inspector
Mudiria	Province
Muhafiz/een	A clerical post /plural
Muqaddam	General [a rank in the Mahadiyia]
Mutamedin	Commissioners
Nas	Group of people
Nazir	Paramount tribal leader
Nizam	System
Nizarete	Tribal headship
Sharaeyya	A proportional tax in kind
Sharig	East
Sheikh	paramount chief
Suq	Market
Turkiyia	Turkish rule period in Sudan
Umda/s	Chief of a section
Umudiyya/s	chiefdom
Urf	Customary rule
Wad	Son
Wakil	Caretaker
Wali	Governor
Wathiga	A charter bearing the ruler seal to grant land title

Declaration

I declare that no portion of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other institution.

Statement of Copyright

The copy right of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation form it should be published without prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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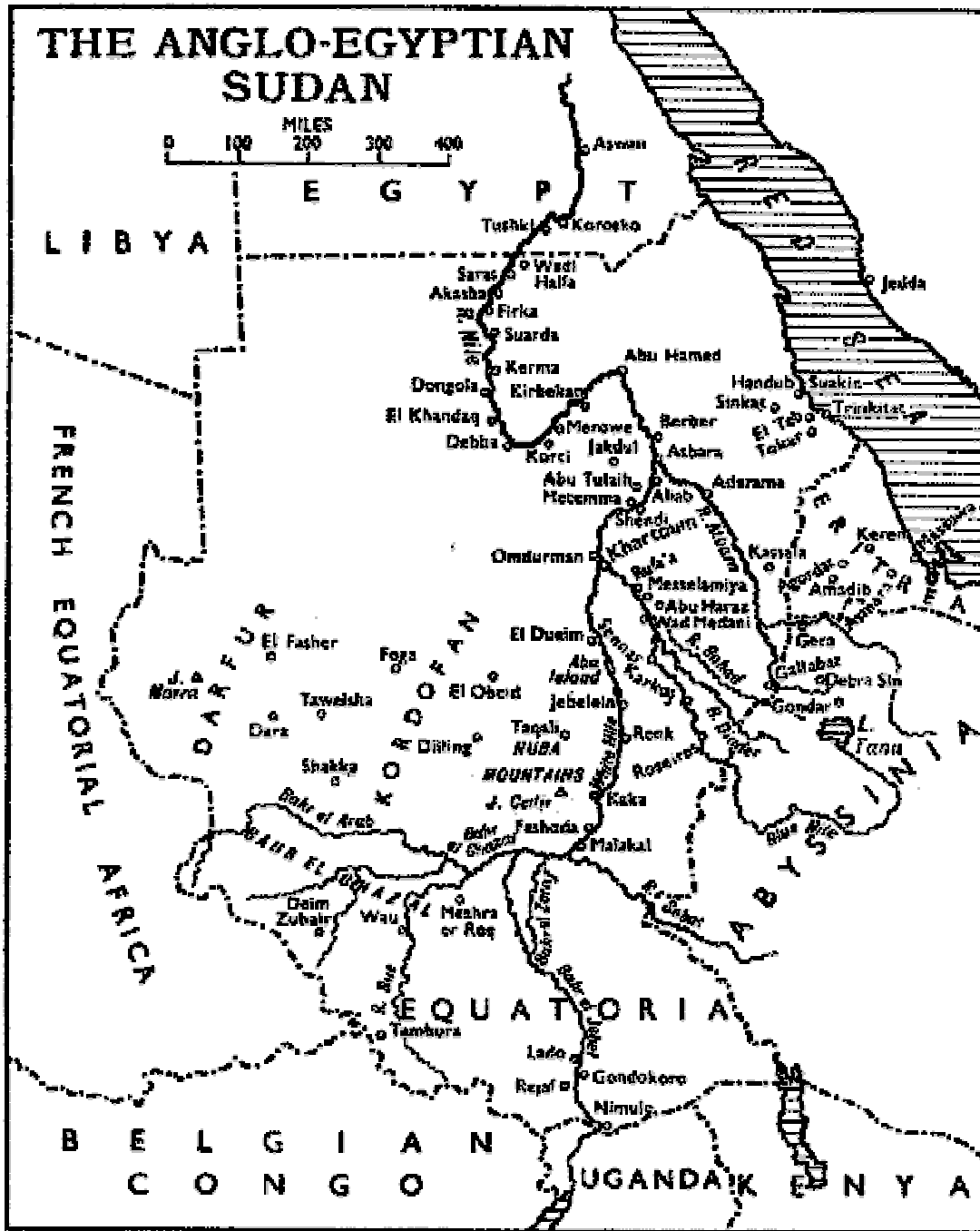
To my beloved family: my father, Ahmed, my mother Hayat, my sisters, Asma, Arwa, Rufayda and Selma and my brothers, Tarig, Mohamed and Khalid, who have all continued to respond unconditionally to my financial needs; I will always be indebted to you. I am also grateful to the following: Khadiga Osman, Ibrahim Mustafa Khalid and Manal Shargawi, Rasha Abdel Rahman, Khalid al Sawi, Abrehet Goytom and Samira Amin for their support and generousities.

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Dedication

For my Parents and the Lahawiyin

Map of Sudan



Source: SAD/PF 26/3/5 1904

Introduction

Arguments in the context of literature on Arab Genealogy, identity and land in Sudan

History is not concerned with the past as past. It is concerned, in the first instance, with the actual structure of the society in which we live; the manners and customs which we share with people around us.¹

Collingwood's words, recently cited by Mark Leopold, in his study of the lived significance of the past in northern Uganda, are equally suited to the position of the Lahawiyin, an Arab group in northern Sudan. The Lahawiyin are not numerous. In 1931, the Lahawiyin in Butana – by that time the principal area of their occupation – were estimated to be around 14,000 persons;² in 1996, the Ration Cards Section in Showak Rural Council – as the principal area of settlement was then called – estimated the Lahawiyin to be approximately 45,265 persons.³ But the idea of a distinct Lahawiyin identity has been developed and maintained over a long period, and has persisted even though the livelihood of nomad pastoralism ideally associated with it has almost vanished. The presentation of the past has been central to this persistent, yet changing idea of Lahawiyin identity. This thesis argues that the history of this identity – and the stories of the past which have been told around it – offers a new insight on the nature of Arab identity and the complex relationship between authority, land and group identity.

Why study the Lahawiyin?

The bulk of the Lahawiyin tribe are currently found in Gedarif State, in the eastern part of northern Sudan, in the vicinity of al -Showak Rural Council (RC). Some inhabit areas of the neighbouring al-Fashaga province, and the rest are scattered on

¹ Robin G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History, with lectures 1926-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.66, quoted in Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History and Representation on an African Frontier* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), pp.3-7.

² P.B.E. Acland, 'The Butana during the present government', handing-over notes 1939, SAD.777/14/1-23.

³ T. Khalid, I. Dalmau and C. Miller, 'The Lahawiyin in Showak Rural Council: Imposed Boundaries and the Quest for Political Recognition,' pp.314-316, in Catherine Miller, Isabelle Dalmau and Francois Ireton (eds.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political legitimacy in Eastern Sudan: Kassala and Gedaref States* (Cairo: CEDEJ, 2005).

either side of the Atbara River and around the smaller Setit River. The area of al-Showak is roughly the valley of the River Atbara from Safawa to Khashm el Girba Dam. It has a low to medium rainfall of 200-300 mm per year, mainly concentrated between June and September.⁴ This area changes topographically from the flat plains in the north to more undulating parts in the south. The plains between the Blue Nile, River Nile and Atbara river and Ethiopian boundaries are known as the Butana; this has been described as ‘one ecological, economic and cultural unit’.⁵ The Atbara River flows from south to north, intersecting the Setit River. Both rivers run through valleys, forming a particular kind of clay known as *karab*. Furthermore, the vegetation in the area has three forms: the Butana plain, a semi-desert grass land; the Showak area is largely characterised by *Acacia Melifera*, with a belt of *Acacia Seyal* in the south alternating with grass. Another environmental feature is the seasonally flooded *Jerif* - the rich silted soil, formed after a flood descends - found on the river banks, the deposition of which changes seasonally depending on the rains.

The Lahawiyin have moved over time, as this thesis will show; but also there have been changes in the administrative nomenclature of the land across which they have moved. The current area of Lahawiyin residence was known as Butana District from 1898 to 1940s; in 1942 the Gedarif Rural Council was created; more recently, the area has become part of Gedarif State. Gedarif State is located in the east of the Sudan between latitudes 12° 40' and 15°40' N and longitudes 33°30' and 36°30' East and which covers an area of about 71,000 square kilometres with 17 persons per km. Gedarif borders Ethiopia and Eritrea in the east, Gezira State in the west, Sinnar State in the south and Khartoum. Gedarif, Kassala and Red Sea States constitute the “Eastern Region”.

The history of the Lahawiyin “tribe” is a remarkable story of movement and migration since 1885. It is also a history of resistance to assimilation and absorption by a larger tribal confederation, and of the development and survival of a pattern of tribal leadership within one section, or *umudiyya*, of the Lahawiyin, who are known as the

4 The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.8.

⁵ Mohamed I. Abu Sin, “The Regional Geography of the Butana North of the Railway,” (MA thesis, University of Khartoum, 1970), p.3.

al Faki. They offer an example of a group which has resisted integration, and they have retained their distinctive identity up to now. The history of the Lahawiyin is therefore revealing of the interplay between government administrative policies, resource competition, processes of identity formulation and political alliances, with relevance to the wider context of Sudanese history.

For much of the twentieth century the Lahawiyin were nomads; however, their position has changed somewhat. This thesis argues that the “Arab identity” of the Lahawiyin has been the central tool in their search for a *dar* (homeland). The Lahawiyin offer an important case study of the ways in which an ‘Arab’ identity has been constructed or maintained, which differs from, or is more complex than, many of the general studies of Arabization and identity politics in Sudan. Their use of this identity is bound up with their historical lack of administrative autonomy or their own homeland, and conversely with their slave-owning status. It is thus driven by long-running internal factors as much as or more than by a postcolonial, government-led ‘Arab supremacist’ agenda highlighted in existing literature. However this also demonstrates the ways in which land and Native Administration policies have contributed to identity politics.

Before going on to a historical discussion of the Lahawiyin Arab genealogy, migration, boundaries, land and identity, it is necessary to make clear that the use of term ‘tribe’ throughout the thesis is limited to the convention mainly established by the Lahawiyin themselves to be identified as a ‘tribe’ and so used by other groups who were involved in any kind of relations with the Lahawiyin. A tribe has been defined as ‘a group of people bound by common language, territory and custom.’⁶ Yet significantly, the Lahawiyin have not had their own territory, and their self-identification as a tribe related to their perception of others. From the Lahawiyin narratives it is apparent that they manipulated the concept in an attempt to depict their Arab identity and Lahawiyin distinctiveness in ‘creating a political culture’.⁷

⁶ Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner (eds.), ‘Introduction,’ in *Perspectives on Africa: a reader in culture, history and representation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.6.

⁷ Leopold, *Inside West Nile*, p.163.

Academic literature usually avoids using the word 'tribe' because, as Richards and Herskovits argued, the concept of 'tribe' had divided the world into a 'west' and 'others' who lived in tribes.⁸ But because the word is commonly used in both historical and contemporary sources on Sudan, the term 'tribal groups', rather than 'ethnic groups', is used here in the interest of historical continuity. Most of the unpublished reports and the secondary sources as well as the primary archival materials in the National Record Office (NRO) Khartoum and Sudan Archives, Durham use 'tribal groups'. In these sources the population of colonial Sudan, especially those inhabiting the respective *dars*, were conceived as discrete bounded and self-contained stable entities.⁹ Unlike the use of the term 'tribe', the vocabulary regarding livelihoods gradually changed from 'nomadic' to 'pastoralist', as the political set-up moved from Condominium to post-independence.

This thesis draws very heavily on this range of sources. Although the Lahawiyin were numerically a small group, and so did not attract the level of official attention given to some larger tribes, they did offer some significant administrative challenges, which have generated a substantial written record. This is very largely a record produced by outsiders; it reveals relatively little of debate amongst the Lahawiyin themselves. The research for this thesis has therefore also involved the collection of oral history, relating to the whole period of the study itself. Spear has argued that oral history played a role in passing on the "history, literature and general knowledge" of the African people over time, but he and other scholars have also noted the interpretive challenges which it offers; which now include 'feedback' from published sources.¹⁰ The way that Lahawiyin have talked about their past – the distant past of immigration from Arabia, or the recent past of disputes with the larger Shukriyya tribe - is very much a part of their negotiation over identity. But it is possible to use this oral history to extend and develop the information in the archives, and particularly to offer an insight from the perspective of Lahawiyin themselves.

⁸ Audrey Richards, *Land, Labour, and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: an economic study of the Bemba tribe* (Oxford: OUP, 1939) and Melville J. Herskovits, *Dahomey: an African Kingdom* (1967 [1938]), quoted in Grinker and Steiner (eds.), 'Introduction,' in *Perspectives on Africa*, p.6.

⁹ Gaim Kibreab, *State intervention and the environment in Sudan, 1889-1989: the demise of communal resource management*, in *Studies in African Economic and Social Development*, Vol. 18 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, c2002), p.13.

¹⁰ Thomas T. Spear, *Kenya's Past: an introduction to historical method in Africa* (London: Longman, 1981), p.xii; Justin Willis, 'Feedback as a "problem" in oral history: an example from Bonde,' *History in Africa* 20 (1993), p.353.

Arab identities and histories in Sudan

The history of 'Arab' identities in Sudan has been greatly debated, both among scholars and among ordinary people in Sudan. Much of the scholarly work, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, gave great attention to genealogy (always reckoned patrilineally) and presented the history of Arab identity in Sudan as the accumulated history of multiple descent groups – which are usually called tribes. This approach characterized the work of scholars including Harold MacMichael (who was also an administrator); Yusuf Fadl Hassan; Richard Hill; and Rex Sean O'Fahey (whose work focussed on Darfur).¹¹ These scholars drew on a range of evidence, including travellers' books such as those of W.G. Brown 1806; Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Tunisi in 1803 and H. Barth 1855.¹² The writings of al-Tunisi, for example, revealed that in western Sudan in the early nineteenth century some of the population were considered Arabs and some were not; and some of those who were not considered Arabs nonetheless spoke Arabic.¹³

But these scholars also drew on the testimony and writings of religious leaders and sheikhs, including al Tahir b. Abd Allah, a local historian whose manuscripts were collected by Richard Hill in 1966. Al-Tahir provided detailed descriptions of Arab tribes in Sudan, and he established a genealogical order which embraced all the Arab tribes in northern Sudan. He made a distinction between 'Juhayna' and 'non-Juhayna' tribes according to this genealogy. The Lahawiyin, for example, he categorized as Juhayna, on the basis of an alleged genealogy going back to 'Rekab' b. 'Sultan' b. 'Shutair' b. 'Zebian' of Juhayn. This genealogical order could define continuing

¹¹ Sir Harold MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs in the Sudan: and some account of the people who preceded them and of the tribes inhabiting Dárfur, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922); Peter Malcolm Holt, *The study of modern Arab history : an inaugural lecture delivered on 2 June 1965* (London: University of London (SOAS), 1965); Yusuf Fadl Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan: from the seventh to the early sixteenth century* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1973); Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820-1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Jay Spaulding, 'The Chronology of Sudanese Arabic Genealogical Tradition,' *History in Africa* 27 (2000), p.329; J.O. Hunwick and R.S. O'Fahey (eds.), *Arabic Literature of Africa, Volume 1: Writings of Eastern Sudanic Africa to c.1900* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

¹² William G. Browne, *Travels in Africa, Egypt and Syria from the year 1792 to 1799* (London: printed for T. Cadell Junior, W. Davies, T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1799; reprinted by Nabu Press, 2005); Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Tunisi, *Tashhidh al-adhhan bi-sirat bilad al-'arab wa-al-Sudan / haqqaqahu Kh.M. 'Asakir, M.M. Mus'ad ; raja 'ahu M.M. Ziyadah* (al-Qahirah : al-Mu'assasah al misriyah al-'ammah li-al-ta'lif alkh, 1965); Heinrich Barth, *Travels and discoveries in North and Central Africa: including accounts of Timbúktu, Sókoto, and the basins of the Niger and Bénéwé* (London: Ward, Lock, 1890).

¹³ al-Tunisi, *Tashhidh al-adhhan bi-sirat bilad al-'arab wa-al-Sudan*, pp.68-69.

relationships, as well as antecedents: it meant that the Lahawiyin were blood relations of the Nurab, the ruling family of another northern Sudanese Arab tribe, the Kababish, who originally descended from Rekabiyya.¹⁴

MacMichael's work was the most ambitious venture in using this kind of genealogical material to try and write history, and has continued to inform some subsequent scholarship, though it has been much criticised.¹⁵ Making use of a range of evidence collected by himself, and his fellow administrators, MacMichael presented his study in the archaeological and anthropological setting of Sudan and using this to locate Sudanese history in what one (critical) commentator has described as a "classical Islamic Literature of migration and descent".¹⁶ By focussing on genealogy and the idea of each Arab tribe as a descent group, MacMichael implicitly – and often explicitly – presented the history of Arabs in the Sudan as one of immigration – indeed, sometimes, of 'invasion' - and the steady replacement of one population by another.

A later generation of scholarship, while maintaining the interest in genealogy and the movement of Arab tribes, modified the implicit notion of population replacement by emphasising the process of 'Arabization', by which is meant acculturation through migration and contact.¹⁷ This viewpoint assumed that Arab identity had a basis in migration, but was also cultural. This is how Yusuf Fadl Hassan puts it "the slow Arab penetration which commenced in the early decades of Islam in the form of frontier clashes reached a climax in the 8th-9th/14th -15th c., when the Arab tribes overran most of the country. By the tenth/ sixteenth C., a culturally Arabicized stock emerged as a result of at least two centuries of close contact between the Arabs and the inhabitants of the Sudan. Regardless of a few exceptions, the term Arab was

¹⁴ al Tahir b. Abd Allah, 'Kitab marif turu' usul al- arab wa'l- hasab wa'l-nasab', manuscript lithograph collected by R .Hill June 1966, Box 97/5/76-83, Durham archives [AR] pp.1- 8.

¹⁵ Representative studies of recent times include the large compendium of' Awn al-Sharif Qasim, *Maiust'ata l-qaba'il w a'l-ansab fi 'l-Sudan* (Khartoum, 1996); Ahmad' Abdal- Rahim Nasr, *Hadha Jamiiniasab al-Ja'aliyyin* (Khartoum, 1981) and al-Fiki al-Fahl al- Tahir, *Tn'rikhtv a-tusla l-'Arabb i'l-Sudan* (Khartoum, 1979). Title to the contrary, no serious critique of Mac Michael's scholarship may be found in Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, "Breaking the Pen of Harold MacMichael: The Ja'aliyyin Identity Reconsidered," quoted in Spaulding, 'Chronology,' p.327.

¹⁶ Spaulding, 'Chronology,' p.329.

¹⁷ Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, pp.135-76.

progressively being emptied of nearly all its ethnic significance.”¹⁸ From this point of view, Arab is a cultural identity. Whoever speaks Arabic and partakes in “Arab” cultural practices is an Arab - regardless of ethnic origin.

Migration was, however, at the root of this process, and Yusuf Fadl identified three different types of Arab migration to Sudan. The principal one was attributed to the influx of the Arabs southward into Sudan, up the line of the Nile, to take refuge from the intensified warfare of the Mamluk period in Egypt, in the 15th-16th centuries CE. This was what Yusuf Fadl called ‘the Arab breakthrough’, for it coincided with – and helped to precipitate - the collapse of the Christian Nubian kingdoms.¹⁹ Yusuf Fadl also identified an earlier migration which had led to the settlement of some Arabs in the Beja lands in eastern Sudan. A later cohort of migrants found ways to go further south and moved to Butana and the Gezira, and also went further west, crossing the Nile to Kordofan and Darfur. On arrival in Kordofan and Darfur they met other groups of Arabs who had taken a different route along the dried watercourses which cross the desert and have long provided trade routes – the “wadi al-Malik and wadi al-Magdam” - to Kordofan and Darfur.²⁰

Yusuf Fadl argued that the second Arab migration was largely composed of nomadic Arab tribes. Their interaction of the Arabs with the existing local inhabitants (Nubians and Beja) took the form of a gradual transformation of the local inhabitants, and happened through the adoption of Arab customs and intermarriage between them. The process was uneven; though the Nubians and Beja had responded to the influx of Arabs by adopting Islam and intermarrying with the Arabs they kept their languages intact. Most of the migrants were probably, like all nomads, poorly Islamized, but they were largely responsible for Islamization of northern Sudan. This was achieved primarily by intermarriage with the local population. In other words the process of Arabization was accompanied by a process of Islamization.²¹ The progress of Arabization and Islamization could be dated to this time in the early sixteenth

¹⁸ Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, p.176.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.90-134.

²⁰ Yusuf Fadl Hassan, ‘Main aspects of the Arab Migration to the Sudan,’ *Arabica* T.14, Fasc.1 (February 1967), pp.30-31.

²¹ Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, p.177.

century.²² Peter Holt's work similarly offered a combination of migration/genealogy and 'Arabization' to explain the development of northern Sudan's Arab population.²³

More recent scholarship has reacted against this fascination with genealogy. Jay Spaulding argued that MacMichael's assumption that there had been an Arab 'invasion' coloured all of his interpretation, and that MacMichael had made a basic epistemological error regarding the nature of the evidence which he was using. Most of the manuscripts were religious works central to the Islamic discourse at that time which was the Sufi one.²⁴ These manuscripts included valuable genealogical information which substantially related to the time of its creation and to the history of ancestors. In Spaulding's words, "It is therefore not surprising that MacMichael decided to abandon history for Orientalism".²⁵ Spaulding's critique echoed in some ways the earlier work of Ian Cunnison, whose writings on the Baggara of Darfur and Kordofan claimed that there were many ways of constructing genealogies. Cunnison compared the examples of the Humr, who claimed their genealogy to be ten or eleven generations from the Prophet, and the Juhayna of the Nile Valley who claimed as many as twenty-eight or more generations from the Prophet. In the end Cunnison suggested that all genealogies need to be dismissed as fake ideology. Epistemological arguments aside, criticism of the focus on genealogy has been more generally associated with a scholarship that has problematized Arab identity in Sudan as part of an exploration of the causes of the prolonged internal conflicts which have affected Sudan since independence. A recent example is Mahmood Mamdani's book on Darfur, which posed the question "who is an Arab", and in answering this question has presented the ongoing debates. Mamdani has asked the question 'who is an Arab' at a point in time when the word Arab is controversial and highly contested and inflammatory.

Within this context Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim posed an interesting challenge to Mamdani by stating that genealogists' claims should not be treated as wholly true but we should ask why they make such claims in the first place. This issue was central to the debate in anthropology for a while in the early 1920s although it was addressed differently by

²² Hassan, 'Main aspects of the Arab migration,' p.31.

²³ Holt, 'The study of modern Arab history,' p. 6.

²⁴ Spaulding, 'Chronology,' p.328.

²⁵ Ibid., p.329.

scholars: “Are the recollections of the past – whether concerning myth (Branislaw Malinowski)²⁶ or lineage claims (Evans-Pritchard)²⁷ or other origin based claims (Paul Bohannan)²⁸ – confused memories or are they claims on the present?”²⁹ Talal Asad made a different stand by stating that “The Kababish didn’t have genealogies going all the way back to Arabia. Could it be a case of who asks the question and how? The Kababish never said ‘we are Arabs and therefore from Arabia’. Who makes these claims and in what context? The Kababish actually never claimed to come from anywhere else.”³⁰ However Ibrahim added to this by saying that “a people’s self – concept”³¹ should be taken into account for it elucidates aspects of “their understanding, organisation and mobilization”. However according to Mamdani this “still leaves us with the task of understanding the context in which this “self- concept” originates and of which it makes sense”.³² From what Mamadani puts forth, it can be assumed that this self concept is a device for measuring the dynamics of a society; however as regards the origin of this device, it is necessary to engage in a debate as to how this concept came into existence. It is no doubt true that Mamdani in order to create this idea of ‘self- concept’ was influenced to a great extent by the works of other scholars³³ like Fadl; who argues that “Arab identity is neither ethnic nor racial but cultural”. He termed this process as “arabization”. It can be stated that this view of Fadl is contrary to that held by Sharif Harir who argues that “Arabism” is “cultural acquisition”. This phenomenon is prevalent amongst many groups in Sudan that are not racially Arabic.³⁴

²⁶ Branislaw Malinowski, *Myth in primitive society*, quoted in Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, politics and the war on terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009), p.106.

²⁷ Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*, quoted in Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.106.

²⁸ Paul Bohannan, *Justice and judgement among the Tiv*, quoted in Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.106.

²⁹ Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, pp.105-106.

³⁰ Talal Asad, personal communication to Mamdani, June 2006, in Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.106.

³¹ **Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim**, ‘Breaking the pen of Harold MacMichael: the Ja’aliyyin identity revisited,’ *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21:2 (1988), pp. 217-231.

³² Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.105.

³³ Fadl Hassan, Talal Asad, Sharif Harir, Jay Spaulding.

³⁴ Fadl Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, quoted in Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p. 106; Sharif Harir, “Recycling the Past in the Sudan ; an Overview of Political Decay” in *Short-Cut to Daecay: the case of Sudan*, (ed.) Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt, 10-68(Uppsala:Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1994), pp.21,18-19, quoted in Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.106-107.

Mamdani's work in itself built on a prolonged scholarly and popular debate on the nature of Arab identity. This can be exemplified through the work of Gerasimos Makris, whose work is concerned with how people have come to identify themselves as Arabs, rather than with migration and genealogy. In this analysis, Islam and Arabness in the Nile Valley were shaped by the prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions resulting in a process of a gradual adoption of Arabic as 'lingua franca and as religious script'.³⁵ Such adoption has brought together much of the population of northern Sudan under a common religion with a common sense of 'history and historical destiny' as **Makris** put it. This encourages them to adopt genealogies (*nasab*) which link them to the Prophet and to the Islamic Arabian lands. Within this context those who identified themselves as Arab also claimed a right over land. Makris asserted that claims to an Arab genealogy have more to do with political and economic circumstances, including clientage and slavery, than with migration. These above points explain the 'Arab self-identity' as the corollary of the attitudes built towards non-Arabs as explained by Makris,

These finer points concerning the gradual but firm assumption of an Arab self-identity by those on the northern side of the nineteenth century frontier become clearer when one considers the second part of the oppositions - non-Islamic pedigree, non-Arab descent and black colour- that concerned those on the southern side.³⁶

Within a wider changing context of ecological and cultural framework in North Africa the Arab claimed an 'imagined community'. This gave them permanence and a defined domain associated with 'freedom, humanity, Islamic tradition and heroic history' and asserted through a claim to patrilineal descent. All this existed in contrast with an untouched hostile image: the realm of the pagan African slaves (who were called '*abd, riqi* or *khadam*').³⁷ For the Sudanese Arab, the term 'slave, did not define 'a status' but the 'absence of a status' where a lack of attachments of kinship or genealogy was central to the slaves' society. Identity served to mark the boundary between the free – the Arabs - and the enslaveable population. As the slave economy of Sudan developed, slaves included servants, agricultural workers, concubines,

³⁵ G.P. Makris, *Changing masters: spirit possession and identity construction among slave descendents and other subordinates in the Sudan* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), p.27.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

boatmen, porters, mercenaries and guards in the service of the Muslim slave traders.³⁸

In the words of McHugh:

Those said to lack the requisite (Arab) genealogy have been deemed barbarians, liable to subjugation and enslavement... The people without Islam and recognized Arab descent.. are the 'people without history,' .. Slaves were defined by their marginality, their 'outsider' status: they had no genealogy at all. With no religion, descent and history the slaves were 'mere commodities and cyphers (even those born in servitude _ muwalladin) ... classified in the legal sense with livestock,'³⁹

As this shows, history and genealogy were crucial to political and social status. Amir Idris has similarly argued that

The adoption of an Arab identity required the construction of certain perception and representations about others and Muslims in the North claimed for themselves patrilineal descent from distinguished Arab ancestors. This continued acceptance of the claim to be 'Arab' was of crucial importance. It demarcated and rationalised the people of the Sudan.⁴⁰

Most of the Arab and particularly the Muslim slave traders and merchants had developed a self-ascribed Arab identity which affirmed the legitimacy of their dominance over even those slaves who became Muslim. Being Muslim was of no help where claims to Arab descent were at the heart of status.

In this analysis, the linkage between Arab identity and social status remained crucial even after Sudan became an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in 1898, and political control lay largely in British hands. The Condominium administration sought to suppress slavery, but – as was common in colonial Africa – they took a gradual approach, first making the slave trade illegal. The changes were most rapid and evident much more in the urban areas in the north of the country for the first time after many years of ongoing raiding, trading and exchanging of slaves leaving behind an uneven social structure. The slave trade did diminish, but continued on a small scale until the 1940s. Meanwhile, the ownership of 'domestic' slaves was left untouched for fear of losing the loyalty of their masters and bringing about a downturn in the

³⁸ Makris, *Changing Masters*, p .28.

³⁹ Neil McHugh, *Holy men of the Blue Nile: religious leadership and the genesis of an Arab Islamic society in the Nilotic Sudan, 1500-1850* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p.10, p.12.

⁴⁰ Amir H. Idris, *Sudan's civil war: slavery, race, and formational identities* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), p. 36.

economy.⁴¹ As Warburg cited by Makris, the British had tried to suppress slavery yet they had institutionalised domestic slavery with an Islamic ideology among the dominant Arabs of the north.⁴² The Condominium also entrenched a distinction in its policies and language between the freeborn Arabs and slaves. Slaves were identified by a series of names such as 'volunteer slaves,' 'servants,' 'unpaid workers' or – significantly - 'Sudanese'. This drew on former practice. During the period of Turco-Egyptian rule in the nineteenth century, the term Sudani (black) was associated with slaves (though it was used as *nisaba* in nineteenth century Egypt).⁴³ By the end of the nineteenth century the term was also used to connote the soldiers – often run-away slave soldiers from Turco-Egyptian or Mahdist forces - who made up the bulk of the Black corps of the Anglo-Egyptian army. In an ironic twist – revealing how malleable ethnic labels and constructions can be - this term 'Sudanese' was taken up by educated northern Arabs from the 1930s, and they developed a vision of the 'Sudanese' nation as pre-eminently Arab which was to shape post-independence policies in ways which provoked conflict. In this analysis, in which – as N'Mah Yilla puts it – being Arab is best understood as an 'identity rather than an ethnic or genetic heritage', Arabization has been a process which has been pushed by, and has marked, political and economic inequality, and claims to Arab genealogy are, ultimately, all about power and wealth: Sudanese Arabs are actually Arabic-speaking Muslims from a variety of ethnic heritages who have adopted Sudan's riverain valley language and culture as their own. Thus, it is also a collective self-definition that develops to highlight the contrasts between different groups and categories.⁴⁴

While they have been concerned to identify the 'root causes' of Sudan's conflicts, these analyses of Arab identity have also drawn on a wider literature on identity in Africa. This topic has seen a large amount of scholarly work in recent years, much of which has argued that identity is constantly shaped and reshaped by socio-economic and political processes. It is also subject to construction and deconstruction of members within a group and outside the group as many scholars have argued.⁴⁵ As a

⁴¹ Makris, *Changing Masters*, pp. 32-41.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁴⁴ N'Mah Yilla, 'History, Ethnicity and Religion and the Sudanese North-South Conflict,' *Reconstruction* 8.4 (2008), p.3.

⁴⁵ Louis Brenner (ed.), *Muslim identity and social change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1993), pp-59-78; Francesca Declich, "Gendered narratives," history and

process of “naming oneself, naming others and being named by others”,⁴⁶ identity is constantly in flux, forming and reforming as a function of different social, political and economic situations. It is constructed and deconstructed by both those within a group and those outside of it. In this way, identity reflects the collective self-perception of social, political and economic reality and not necessarily the true reality.⁴⁷ Miller added another aspect to the discussion of identity by pointing out that identity and cultural affiliation are understood in a ‘diversity of voices’.⁴⁸

A widespread feature of this scholarship has been a focus on colonial policy, and the ways in which colonial states exacerbated – or invented – ethnic differences. The set of practices which are roughly characterized as ‘indirect rule’ have often been identified as especially important in this process, for they encouraged colonial officials to see their subjects as members of discrete tribes, and they encouraged colonial subjects to present their claims for – or against – authority in terms of tribe.⁴⁹

Madan Sarup has asserted that ‘identities are not free-floating; they are limited by borders and boundaries’.⁵⁰ However, as Southall and others continued the debate on tribalism, they argued that boundaries between tribes were often drawn quite arbitrarily by anthropologists or administrators. Occasionally this was done according to resemblances and dissimilarities between languages, and at different times variation in territory, religion, or dress code were all perceived pertinent by the Europeans. In most cases boundaries were constructed more out of convenience than for local tribes

identity: two centuries along the Juba river among the Zigula and Shanbara,’ *History in Africa* 22 (1995); see also Aidan W. Southall, ‘The illusion of Tribe’, in Grinker and Steiner (eds.), ‘Introduction,’ *Perspectives on Africa*; Justin Willis, *Mombasa, the Swahili, and the Making of the Mijienda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993), pp. 12, 201; **Thomas Spear and Richard Waller (eds.), *Being Maasai: ethnicity & identity in East Africa*** (London: James Curry, 1993); Paul E. Lovejoy (ed.), *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (London: Sage, c1981); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Slavery on the frontiers of Islam* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, c2004).

⁴⁶ **Brenner, *Muslim identity***, p.59.

⁴⁷ **Ibid.**, p.59, p.2.

⁴⁸ Catherine Miller, ‘Language, Identities and Ideologies: a new era for Sudan,’ published in the Seventh International Sudan Studies Conference (Bergen: Norway, 2006), p.8.

⁴⁹ John Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Leroy Vail (ed.), *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa* (Oxford: Currey; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

⁵⁰ Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (eds.), *Migrants of Identity: perception of home in a world of movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp.55-56. See also Madan Sarup, ‘Home and Identity’, in George Robertson (ed.), *Travellers’ Tales: narratives of home and displacement* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.93-104.

in Africa where many tribes found themselves divided into two halves. The example of the Azande who live between Sudan and Zaire is a good illustration of this.⁵¹

The case of the Lahawiyin supports many of the wider theories regarding ethnicity and identity formation. Government policies, including the imposition of boundaries and tribally-defined administration, contributed to the process whereby they defined themselves as Lahawiyin and as Arabs. The Mahdiya, for example, played a significant role in constructing certain identities among northern nomadic tribes. This was maintained by differentiating between Darfurian and Kordofanian tribes, as well as between them and the riverain tribes who were perceived, to a large extent, by the Mahdiya leaders, to be a clique identified with the Turkish government.⁵² The Condominium administration then made a distinction between the 'Arab and Black tribes' adopting variant policies. This in turn strengthened the notion which already existed within the Arab tribes themselves. Interestingly enough even the Lahawiyin made a similar, rather stronger distinction between the Ahmada⁵³ and Kababish.

But the thesis will also show in detail how internal competition and politics fed into these processes; ethnic identity was not simply imposed on the Lahawiyin from outside, but developed because leading individuals and families saw the advantage of claiming to speak for a united 'tribe'. And the processes of identity formation can also be located in changing livelihoods and relations with neighbouring and territory-owning tribes over a long period of time.

⁵¹ Richard and Herskovits, 'Introduction', in Vail (ed.), *Creation of tribalism*, p.7.

⁵² Muhammad Said Al-Qaddal, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith* [Modern History of Sudan] 1820-1955 (Omdurman: Abdel Karim Merghani Centre, 2002), pp. 189-190, 252-253; Muhammad Said Al-Qaddal, *al-Mahdiyyah wa-al-Habashah: dirasah fi al-siyasah al-dakhiliyah wa-al-kharijiyah li-dawlat al-Mahdiyyah, 1881-1898* (Khartoum: Jami'at al-Khartoum, Dar al-Ta'lif wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1973); see also Peter M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan: from the Funj sultanate to the present day* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, c1961); Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *al-Ard fi al-Mahdiyyah* [Land in The Mahdiyya] (Khartoum: Jami'at al-Khartoum Shu'bat Abhath al-Sudan, 1970).

⁵³ The Ahmada were originally "Bedouin" as Barbara Casciarri presented them. They came to Sudan as a result of the migration of many nomadic groups from Arabia and Egypt. They first crossed to Kordofan and later on settled in the White Nile area, west of the river establishing the first 'Dar al-Ahmad' which was recognized by other nomadic tribes and the authority early 17th century. Over time and while making claim over the land they faced several intertribal conflict with the Hassaniya, Messalamiya, Dar Muharib, Seleim Gima'a. They failed to remain united and the tribe disintegrated and some left for Butana joining the Shukriya Confederation. For more details, see Barbara Casciarri, 'Tribal Recognition of the Ahmada', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*; MacMichael, 1922; Reid 1930; NRO Dakhliya 112/3/16; NRO CIVSEC 66/1/1.

One of the strategies which the Lahawiyin now claim to have pursued in order to maintain their identity was to avoid marrying non-Lahawiyin, including ruling families of other hosting tribes like the Shukriya. But there were some cases, the most remembered of which was the intermarriage with the Shilluk in the nineteenth century. Interestingly this marriage was often referred to as the marriage of “the Lahawiyin of the White Nile Province”⁵⁴ which indicates perceptions that within the Lahawiyin there were different degrees of Arab-ness. The Arab identity was a focus for competition between *umudiyyas* as much as it was a source of a unifying tribal identity.

The story of Lahawiyin identity must be understood in this context of intense popular and scholarly debate over the nature of identity, and in particular Arab identity, in Sudan. But there was also a practical and economic context for claims to particular identities, in which rights and access to land and territory were most significant.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistic Department, December 2007, Gedarif.

Land tenure System in Sudan (1405 - 1984)

If wider debates over Arab identity form one crucial part of the context for the story of the Lahawiyin, changes in the nature of land tenure form the other. And these two issues overlap, for the question of how identity relates to access to land has been subject to particularly fierce debate, and significant change.

There has been no single 'system' of land tenure in Sudan. Instead, there has been a chronic tension between multiple different systems, which have overlapped, coexisted and sometimes conflicted. As al Mahdi has pointed out, 'traditional' land tenure was diverse, undocumented and unclear.⁵⁵ A series of different government systems have been introduced over time, which have not entirely displaced these customary forms but have in some ways reshaped them, as well as sometimes conflicting with them.

The literature on land tenure in Sudan, covering both colonial and postcolonial times, suggests that state attempts to introduce new land laws, policies and, therefore, rights always focused initially on riverain areas of central and northern Sudan. In particular, the systematic recognition of individual claims to land, whether as leasehold or freehold, was concentrated in those areas.⁵⁶ Elsewhere in Sudan, many rural communities remained outside this system of individualising land tenure for a long time: even after 1970, when changes in the law formally asserted government ownership of all land to which there was no other title. Instead, under various forms of customary land tenure, individuals had use-rights to land – a kind of usufruct.⁵⁷ But these customary rights were not unchanging or unaffected by the state; a long pattern of state intervention, stretching back well before Turko-Egyptian colonialism created the Sudanese state, linked governmental authority, collective identity and land tenure. It also

⁵⁵ Saeed Muhammad Ahmad al Mahdi, *Introduction to the Land Law of the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1979), p.221.

⁵⁶ A. R. C. Bolton, 'Land Tenure in Agricultural Land in the Sudan', in J. D. Tothill (ed.), *Agriculture in the Sudan, being a Handbook of Agriculture as Practiced in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) pp. 187–97; Sir Harold MacMichael, *The Sudan* (London: Benn, 1954); I. G. Simpson, 'Land Tenure', in Gillian M. Graig (ed.), *The Agriculture of the Sudan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp.101–116; al Mahdi, *Introduction to Land Law*; Carey N. Gordon, 'Recent Developments in the Land Law of the Sudan: a Legislative Analysis', *Journal of African Law* 30:2 (1986), pp.143–74; L. Kapteijns and J. Spaulding, 'The conceptualization of land tenure in the pre-colonial Sudan: evidence and interpretation,' in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Land, literacy and the state in Sudanic Africa* (Trenton NJ: The Red Sea Press, 2005), pp.21–41.

⁵⁷ Mark Duffield, 'Absolute distress: structural causes of hunger in Sudan', *Middle East Report* 20 (1990), pp.4–11.

progressively undermined the position of pastoralists – a process which accelerated rapidly in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Land tenure from the Funj period (c. 1400- 1820)-to the Mahdist period (1885-98)

The Funj sultanate covered a significant area of what is now central riverain Sudan; the exact extent and nature of its authority varied, but it existed in some form or another from around 1400 CE up the time of the Turko-Egyptian conquest in 1820/21. The Funj sultans used the system known as *Wathiga*: a charter through which they granted land rights to privileged local tribal rulers and holy men.⁵⁸ These charters, which gave authority over both nomadic pastoralist and sedentary cultivators, were mostly granted in the predominantly rain-fed lands to individuals who showed loyalty and support to the sultanate; they expressed land rights in terms of a collective tribal identity, and gave power to the individuals recognised as intermediaries between tribe and sultan.⁵⁹ Thus the ‘power centre’ in each tribe was endowed by the monarch, who used allocation of land to win political alliances. Shazali and Ahmed argue that the Funj period thus assisted the nomadic tribes to achieve a relative political stability, although the Funj monarchs did play different ‘power centres’ within a ‘tribe’ against each other to serve their purpose.⁶⁰ These grants may be seen as the basis of the idea of the *dar*: a territory in which access to land was associated with membership of a particular ethnic group, and was associated also with acceptance of the authority of the recognized head of that group. This was an idea which was to have profound and enduring importance in Sudan.

After the defeat of the Funj sultanate in 1820/21, the new Turko-Egyptian administration established a system of administration that assumed direct control over the urban sedentary population. Shazali and Ahmed suggest that, with the former ‘power centres’ of the Funj left to administer tribes which came to be defined as

⁵⁸ Salah Shazali and Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, *Pastoral land tenure and agricultural expansion: Sudan and the Horn of Africa* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1999), p.4.

⁵⁹ R.S. O’Fahey and Jay Spaulding, *Kingdom of the Sudan* (London: Methuen, 1974), and Jay Spaulding, ‘Farmers, Herders and the State in Rainland Sennar,’ *Journal of African History* 20:3 (1979), pp.329-48.

⁶⁰ Shazali and Ahmed, *Pastoral land tenure*, p.4.

consisting largely of nomads only, this system began ‘a process of political marginalization of pastoralists’.⁶¹ Through northern Sudan, the sovereignty of the tribes was maintained subject to payment of tributes by the *dar* holders to the Funj Sultans and later to their successors, the Turko-Egyptian rulers.

Importantly, the Turko- Egyptian government recognised all the land rights, including *dar* rights, acquired from the Funj Sultans and regents, including their vassals. It has therefore been argued that the Turko-Egyptian regime (the *Turkiya*) did not affect fundamental changes in the structure of land ownership. Though all land was *kharaji* - the prize of victory – and as such was vested in the government, the only difference from the land policy pursued by the Funj Sultans was said to be that private ownership of irrigated land and rain-fed land under continuous cultivation was recognised.⁶² But there was uncertainty, even over this. Colonel Stewart, reporting on the Sudan in 1883, wrote: ‘in the Sudan as elsewhere in the East it is admitted that the Government is the owner of the land, and that the peasant in order to cultivate it must pay a certain tithe calculated at one tenth the produce’.⁶³ This suggests official uncertainty over freehold even in riverain areas: land that was cultivated intermittently was regarded formally as the property of the Government and the cultivators were seen as tenants.

Uncertainties aside, however, it seems that under the *Turkiyya*, the economy in the the lands surrounding and in between the Blue and White Niles – where the state was at its strongest – began a movement from one based on communal land-sharing and ownership to one that was more capitalist, based on individual ownership of land. Additionally, the Turco-Egyptian government promoted individual land claims by instating law statutes that favoured private land ownership.⁶⁴ This made it possible for individuals to privately own land that they could not have laid claim to under the pre-colonial system. In effect, as Spaulding concludes ‘the Turks, through their land-tax policy, encouraged institutions that facilitated the transfer of rights over the land out of the traditional system of tenure [where patterns of kinship dictated how land was

⁶¹ Shazali and Ahmed, *Pastoral land tenure*, p.4.

⁶² Mohammed Hashim Awad, ‘The evolution of landownership in the Sudan,’ *Middle East Journal* 25:2 (1971), p.216.

⁶³ Report by his Majesty’s Agent and Consul General on the Sudan, Annual report: Agricultural lands Department 1903, p. 167.

⁶⁴ Jay Spaulding, ‘Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15:1 (1982), p.7.

distributed] and into the bourgeoisie marketplace'.⁶⁵ Spaulding further declares that under the Turko-Egyptians, 'rights to the fruits of the land gave way to rights to the land itself'.⁶⁶ These land policies affected the way that individual Sudanese viewed the concepts of landownership and communal responsibility. An example of this can be seen with the *saqiya* lands - those irrigated by a water wheel. *Saqiya* land was at one time public property but by end of the nineteenth century many of the *Saqiya* holdings were classified as *maqsuma*⁶⁷ or divided into discrete plots of land with individual owners.⁶⁸

The accumulation of large plots of land by individual people became easier not only because the Turkiyya brought a legal system which – rather unevenly – recognized individual tenure in these riverain areas, but also because its occasionally arbitrary and extractive approach to taxation created new opportunities for some individuals. In this riverain heartland, land that had been recognized as individual property was vulnerable to seizure and sale when individuals failed to pay their tax; and others could buy the land, not at its market value but at the price of the debt owed to the state.⁶⁹

The Mahdist state of 1885 to 1898 - the Mahdiyya - made little formal attempt to change the land tenure system; but other policies of the time had a significant impact on land settlement. The Khalifa Abdullahi, who ruled for almost the whole of the period, transferred vast territories to his loyal groups and followers, and disloyal groups were dispossessed of land rights.⁷⁰ Large areas were left empty, being depopulated for security reasons, or because the population had left following the Khalifa to Omdurman. According to Kibreab, the Mahdiya caused a 'profound' change in the system of land ownership in terms of individuals and groups while leaving the '*dar* right intact'.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Spaulding, 'Slavery,' p.7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.4.

⁶⁷ Magasuma means divided

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.4; Spaulding, 'Farmers, herdsmen and the state,' p.329-348.

⁷⁰ Awad, 'Evolution of Land Ownership,' pp.212-28.

⁷¹ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, pp.21-30.

The Condominium (1899- 1956)

Following the Anglo-Egyptian campaign of ‘reconquest’ in 1896-98, the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium agreement of January 1899 restored Egyptian rule in Sudan, but with joint authority exercised by Britain and Egypt. The agreement designated territory south of the twenty-second parallel as Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.⁷² In the Condominium’s early years the Governor-General – the official in charge of the Condominium, nominally appointed by both powers but in practice always chosen by Britain – had a great deal of freedom in governing Sudan; this was only very slightly reduced after 1910 with the creation of an executive council whose approval was required for all legislation and for budgetary matters after 1910. This council was presided over by the Governor General and included the Inspector General, the Civil, Legal, and Financial Secretaries and two to four other British officials appointed by the Governor- General.⁷³ The Executive Council retained legislative authority until 1948.

The Condominium saw an entirely new level of systematisation. Penal and criminal procedural codes were introduced; commissions established land tenure rules and adjusted claims in dispute; taxes on riverain land were calculated on a basis which took account of the type of irrigation, the number of date palms, and the size of herds. Government sought to undo what was seen as the disruption of the Mahdiya, and to restore an earlier tribal map of the country to reduce inter-tribal conflicts; on the other hand, land settlement and deeds registration legislation was introduced to solve disputes over land which was claimed by individuals, and despite its general conservatism, the Condominium’s concern to generate revenue to meet the costs of government led it, over time, into several innovations in land tenure in order to promote projects of large-scale economic development. There was never any intention that Sudan should be a settler colony; from the outset, it was expected that Sudanese producers would be the basis of prosperity and government revenue. In 1912, Lord Edward Cecil wrote: ‘The Sudan is not and never will be, a country suitable for permanent European habitation, and it is therefore the interest of the

⁷² Helen Chapin Metz (ed.), *Sudan: A country study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991), accessed on 21 November 2010, <http://countrystudies.us/sudan/15.htm>.

⁷³ Martin W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); See also Daly, *Imperial Sudan: the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, 1934-1956* (Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Government to encourage as far as possible native land owners of a respectable and suitable type'.⁷⁴ The Condominium formally separated civil law and *sharia*; but it also created guidelines for the operation of *sharia* courts as an autonomous judicial division under a chief *qadi*.

All this systematization was nonetheless associated with a continued reliance on customary law. The Condominium had limited resources, and its senior officials were British men, familiar with the imperial practice of relying on – and partially creating – subordinate forms of authority and justice which were not part of the formal structures of 'modern' government.⁷⁵ Indirect rule of various kinds was widely used; in Sudan, this was formally adopted in the 1920s under the rubric of Native Administration or *Idara Ahliyya*. But while the rhetorical emphasis on this approach was strongest and most consistent in the 1920s, the core of this system had been laid in the memorandum of Kitchener – the first Governor-General – who, immediately after the 'reconquest', advised his subordinates to cooperate with indigenous leaders who had no direct commitment to the Mahdist state. The British officers from the very beginning sought to recognize and work with tribal leaders, and to give them a wide range of authority including the settlement of tribal conflict, maintenance of justice and collection of taxes.

In terms of land tenure, the Condominium government initially largely aimed to reinstate the pre-Mahdist system; but it legally enshrined and made systematic the distinction between rain land and riverain land. Some parts of the latter – especially in areas around Khartoum – came under the system of registration. Rain land, however, was excluded from individual ownership. The Government claimed some rights to control and regulate land recognized as *dar*, and its policies encouraged the perception that there were 'homeland' *dars* for different tribes, which conferred communal rights of control over areas usually used by them. Al Mahdi maintains that 'because of the long enjoyment and use of large tracts of land, tribes became the reputed owners of their homelands (*dar*) with the effect that in some situations they were able to exclude

⁷⁴ Annual report: Agricultural lands Department 1903, p.165.

⁷⁵ Metz (ed.), *Sudan*; Debrah Lavin (ed. and introduction), *The Condominium remembered: proceedings of the Durham Sudan Historical Records Conference 1982 Volume 1: the making of the Sudanese State* (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, University of Durham, 1991).

aliens' and suggested a developing set of ideas about the nature of dar rights under which 'No other tribe can cultivate, graze or water themselves or their animals in a dar belonging to another tribe, except by permission of such tribe through tribal chiefs or the local authorities'.⁷⁶ Dar rights also involved the right to admit or refuse strangers to water and graze in the dar and the right to impose conditions on such entry; the right to build permanent buildings in the dar; the right to cultivate; the right to sink wells, or dig new ones. Closely connected to this issue were the questions of the nature and enforceability of routes (*Masar*) and camping sites on the migration cycle of the year, bearing in mind that the route is not simply a road or pass-through area, but is also grazing land. Dar rights were held to include the welcoming of friendly groups, hospitality being one of the outstanding features of nomadic life. 'The customary rules between nomads are based on the reciprocity of such guest-rights in bad years: in fact, in times of need befriended groups have visiting right in the other dars - which means use rights as to water and range'.⁷⁷

These developing ideas of the dar gave individual rights, as well as collective ones; every member of the tribe was regarded as having the right to cultivate a plot for each member which is protected as an individual or family holding. This however was not generally understood as a permanent right, but depended on actual possession being continuous. It was economically most valuable because this potential use right could be actualised to claim unused land at anytime, anywhere within the dar.⁷⁸

During the Condominium, it was routine practice for nomadic tribes to hold annual meetings in which, among other things, they settled disputes concerning watering, grazing, animal theft, and blood money; settlements which themselves revolved around the idea of the dar. Access requests from neighbouring tribes were also considered during such conferences, which devised grazing strategies, modified or amended terms of old agreements and defined the conditions under which temporary access could be granted, and other issues.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Awad, 'Evolution of Land Ownership,' pp.212-28.

⁷⁷ Mechthild Runger, *Land law and land use control in Western Sudan: the case of Southern Darfur* (London: Ithaca Press, 1987) p.10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.36-40.

⁷⁹ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.45.

Alongside this developing idea of *dar* rights, the Condominium developed the formal system of land ownership. It issued the first Land Title Ordinance in 1899; this allowed for the recognition of freehold in riverain areas, where a plot of land had been in continuous use for five years. It provided for the settlement of disputed titles to land and for the appointment of a commission consisting of three Egyptian Army officers and two notables.⁸⁰ ‘The Ordinance however, excluded from land settlement and registration the rainlands of central, eastern and western Sudan as well as all lands in Southern Sudan’.⁸¹ Land commissions were appointed and toured many parts of Northern, Khartoum and Blue Nile provinces to settle titles to, and rights over, land.⁸² Generally, the Condominium administration seemed to be more concerned with settlement of agricultural land as a basis of the economic future of Sudan while allocating specific grazing areas for nomads.

The recognition of title to riverain land was an important element in the Condominium strategy of recovering from the Mahdiyya and ensuring social and political stability by encouraging agriculture. Therefore cultivators were reassured that their rights over land would be secured and that no land would be recognized without a valid title’.⁸³ Therefore settlement of agricultural land was the prime concern of the Condominium and was seen as the basis of the economic future of Sudan. This was confirmed in May 1903 by the appointment of an inspector of agriculture and land. In 1903 the Condominium Government clearly defined as Government land property which included all *karu* [Land lying remote from river banks, slightly lower and are irrigated by river flood] and *atmors* [land possesses characteristics derived partly from sand and partly from clay]⁸⁴ The Government claimed these lands because they were considered all waste and could be hardly treated.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.46.

⁸¹ Shazali and Ahmed, *Pastoral land tenure*, p.5.

⁸² al Mahdi, *Introduction to Land Law*, pp.86-87.

⁸³ Mustafa Babikir, ‘Land tenure in Kordufan: Conflict between the “communalism” of Colonial Administrations and the “individualism” of the Hamar,’ in Endre Stiansen and Michael Kevane (eds.), *Kordufan Invaded: Peripheral Incorporation and Social Transformation in Islamic Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p.200.

⁸⁴ Annual report: Agricultural lands Department 1903, p.165.

⁸⁵ Said Muhammad Ahmad Al-Mahdi, *A Guide to land settlement and registration* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1971), pp.86-96.

The above two pieces of legislation, and further ones over the next few years - the Deeds Registration Ordinance of 1907, amended by the Deeds Registration Ordinance of 1908 and 1920 - were reinforced in 1925 by the comparative and consolidating Land Settlement and Registration Ordinance.⁸⁶ This absolutely fixed the legal dichotomy in land tenure that characterizes the agrarian structure of the present day Northern Sudan. This dual tenure has privileged certain groups. Under these laws, the cultivated rain lands of northern and central Sudan were considered “unsettled” areas and were classified as Government-owned and divided into two classes: Government land subject to no right, and Government land subject to various kind of *usufruct*, or use rights, which were vested in communities such as tribe, section, village (or, in the case of the Nuba Hills of Western Sudan, in individuals). This classification has remained intact up to the present time.⁸⁷

Mechanized farming experiments, and post-independence land policies

The big step of land development during the Condominium was the Gezira scheme. Originally conceived before the First World War, this scheme aimed to create a vast new area of irrigated land, damming the Nile to make possible the creation of a network of irrigation canals in the triangle of land between the White and Blue Niles which is known as the Gezira. Large areas of land were taken up for the scheme in 1921⁸⁸ with an addition of a total of 134,414 feddan by 1927.⁸⁹ This was, in effect, a transfer of land out of one category and into another; most of the land involved had been used for rain-based cultivation or for grazing, and so had been part of the category of collective rights. Under the scheme, it was taken by the government and leased to individuals.

More generally, along the river, more and more land was being seized for pump irrigation, and let on annual basis: the increasing availability of petrol-driven water pumps made this an attractive new area for investment. Private cultivators were

⁸⁶ Al Mahdi, *A Guide to land settlement*, pp.86-96.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-96; Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p. 46.

⁸⁸ Sudan Report on finances, administration and condition in 1921, 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1928 presented by the Secretary of the State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of his Majesty, No. 2 (1926), p. 43; see also SAD 627/16/11.

⁸⁹ Sudan Report on finances, administration and condition in 1928 presented by the Secretary of the State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of his Majesty, No. 2 (1929), p. 90.

encouraged to lease land particularly in Khartoum and Berber provinces to pursue pump irrigation; a development which inevitably created some tensions with previous systems of tenure.⁹⁰

It was not until the 1940s that the Condominium government attempted any involvement in rain-fed agriculture in Sudan. By 1944 the government had surveyed and demarcated 350,000 feddans of rain land at Gadambaliya near Gedarif for the mechanised production of *dura* (sorghum) for the Sudan Defence Force units stationed in North Africa. The Government attempted fully mechanised production in order to avoid dependence on wage labour and potential disturbance of the supply of labour to the Gezira scheme. By the end of the 1946/47 season, in which 21,000 feddans were cultivated, the available varieties of *dura* proved impossible to harvest effectively by mechanical means and the necessity for employing manual labour in the harvest was recognised. In the following year it was decided to introduce tenancy system on 3,000 feddans divided into plots of 28 feddans.⁹¹ These initial efforts at rain-fed mechanised agriculture were beset with difficulties.⁹² In addition, tenancies were allocated on the basis of family and relatives by the nazirs and sheikhs. In 1953 the Ministry of Agriculture appointed a Working Party to review the situation at Gadambaliya. Among the many suggestions to improve the situation for the tenants and to minimise difficulties mentioned earlier, the working party proposed leasing larger plots to private investors and cooperatives.⁹³

This recommendation was implemented and many investors profited from mechanised farming; and so just as Sudan was coming to independence, at the beginning of 1956, the government's earlier focus on irrigated riverain agriculture as the basis for development was now joined by a developing commitment to mechanized farming on rain fed land, which was to have particularly marked impact in the areas east of Khartoum. The crop areas in Kassala province under mechanised farming rose from

⁹⁰ Sudan Report in 1928 (1929), p.86.

⁹¹ J. O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor and Development in Sudan,' (PhD thesis, University of Connecticut, 1980), pp.89-92.

⁹² The machinery imported was not suitable for local conditions, spare parts were expensive, there was inadequate food and water supplies for workers and there was a lack of roads and marketing facilities, all of which influenced the cost of production.

⁹³ All information in this page was extracted from O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor,' pp. 89-92; Al Mahdi, *A Guide to land settlement*, pp.86-96.

5,000 feddans in 1954/55 to 1.2 million feddans in 1959/60. This area was distributed to investors and co-operatives in blocks of 1,000 feddans. The consequence of such expansion was that the extension rapidly exceeded the planned surveyed areas. Legislation was developed to regulate such expansion. The Land Ordinance 1925 was effectively the base of regulating leasehold and production relations; the Rain-fed Land Ordinance in 1959 required the Government to license all mechanised crop production. Leasehold moved from annual to a compulsory minimum of 25 years.⁹⁴ By 1961, licensed mechanised crop production schemes had been extended to Dali and Mazmum areas in Blue Nile Province, and by the 1960s there were similar schemes in Kordufan and Upper Nile province and the White Nile area as well. By 1968 the Government had licensed 1.8 million feddans to private individuals in Sudan.⁹⁵

As a consequence of this, while during the Condominium period the Government catered to a large extent for tribes and particularly nomadic pastoralists in term of *dars*, and grazing rights, the post-independence governments of Sudan dealt with pastoralist groups less carefully. Pasture and grazing lands were transformed into mechanised schemes for privileged traders and business men more than nomads and livestock herders.⁹⁶ 'Development' was primarily sought through agricultural expansion. Expansion either replicated the model of the Gezira Scheme (Managil Extension, New Halfa and Rahad), or promoted large-scale rain-fed farming in a search for enhanced national food security.⁹⁷

This expansion had devastated most of the clay plains of eastern and central Sudan's rain-fed areas since and turned them into rain-fed mechanized farming land, particularly after 1968. These were grazing lands for the Lahawiyin, Dabayna, Gawasma, Ahmada and Shukriyya. They covered an estimated area of over twenty five million acres, most of which was not actually allocated by the Government but rather captured by big influential traders and politicians. Invariably this expansion was at the expense of pasture land and the environment. The Lahawiyin and other

⁹⁴ O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor,' pp.89-92; Al Mahdi, *A Guide to land settlement*, pp.86-96.

⁹⁵ O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor,' pp.89-92.

⁹⁶ Manzul A. M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedaref Area: A Symbiotic Encounter,' in Miller, Dalmau and Ireton, *Land, ethnicity and political Legitimacy*, pp.172-198.

⁹⁷ Shazali et al., 'Share The Land Or Part The Nation: The Pastoral Land Tenure System in Sudan', UNDP Sudan Study 3 (SCPP, 2006), p.19.

tribes stated that their fortunes during the Condominium time were far better than their lot under national governments. New legislation in 1970 accelerated this process.

The Unregistered Land Act 1970

The Unregistered Land Act (ULA) 1970 was based on the view that any common property was regarded as nobody's property, where entry is unlimited and use unregulated. The Government of Jaafar Nimeiri, committed to rapid economic development and motivated by a profound suspicion of the 'reactionary' nature of traditional authority, was determined to re-allocate land and other resources in the country to activities where it was believed that returns would be higher. By this Act the Government claimed ownership of all unregistered land in the country, and so the Government effectively vested in itself the power to limit nomads' movement and their livelihoods. A further dramatic step was the dissolution of old tribal allocative power by the enactment of the Local Government Act, 1971 (LGA).⁹⁸ This meant, in essence, that continuance of land control by the old system was no longer enforceable in court. It opened the door to those investors who came to exploit uncertain situations of land tenure by establishing large, unauthorised tractor schemes. These merchants rejected any interference by traditional authorities and moreover claimed Government support; in fact usually they obtained some form of official authorisation. Then the situation allowed relatively easy access to land. Even legal access to, and allocation of, land by the Mechanised Farming Corporation, the public venture created in 1968, turned out to be 'soil-mining', that is, destructive and exploitative farming which degraded the land because the soil conservation conditions in the lease were not complied with by the tenants.⁹⁹

By the early 1980s, as Sudan lurched from one economic crisis to another in the final years of Nimeriri's rule – and as Nimeiri himself looked to Islam as a new basis for his authority - the consequences of these changes had become dangerously apparent. There was further legislation on land under the Civil Transaction Act, 1984, which abolished a number of land laws such as 1928 Ordinance. The Act stipulates that 'registered usufruct rights are equal to registered ownership'. The Act also authorizes

⁹⁸ Awad, 'Evolution of Land Ownership,' p.35.

⁹⁹ O'Brian, 'Agricultural Labor,' pp.89-92.

some parts of *shari'a* law by legally emphasising the role of the state as a landowner and a land manager. By repealing the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, the new 1984 Act provided comprehensive guidelines and details to assist in its implementation. I would argue that the coinciding of the introduction of this Act with the drought of 1984 reveals that the Government had realised that the displacement of much of the population that took place as a result of the drought from their original rain-fed lands might cause some disruption in usufruct rights and therefore it was obligatory for the Government to regulate and keep order. The 1984 Act appeared to issue a number of rights regarding land and property and these rights included “land held in undivided shares, family ownership, and possession of unclaimed property, ownership of usufruct rights over land and property, grants of usufruct rights, easement rights, and acquisition of ownership by accession, possession and succession”.¹⁰⁰ The essence of this Act were issues related to acts instigated more or less by the government such as: ‘transfer and inheritance of rights; compensation requirements for land appropriated by the state; granting of land leases to cooperative bodies; conditions for obtaining usufruct rights; possibility of registering easement rights (rights of way)’. The Act also fell short of being able to define wasteland as it tried to draw various Islamic laws from different countries that proved to be unsuitable to the Sudanese context.¹⁰¹ Throughout this developing process of pastoral marginalization, the Lahawiya were in a particularly vulnerable position, for they never had a recognized dar. The consequences of not having their own territory led the Lahawiya to multiple movements, creating a succession of tribal conflicts as they joined different confederations, under each of which they were kept on the margins of power. The chapters below set out these conflicts chronologically, and analyse the persistence and development of Lahawiya identity as they do so.

The history of changing land policies and systems outlined above has been largely analysed in terms of its negative effects, particularly upon pastoralists. But while the Lahawiya have certainly experienced a shrinking space in which to access land for their traditional livelihoods, their story shows the more complex effects of land policy. Among the tribe there were both winners and losers, as some individuals or

¹⁰⁰ Babiker, Mustafa, ‘Historical Overview of Land Policy in Sudan,’ in *Environment and Conflict in Africa*, p.249. See <https://www1.maxwell.syr.edu>.

¹⁰¹ Babiker, ‘Historical Overview of Land Policy in Sudan,’ p.249; see also Shazali et al, ‘Share the Land,’ p.29.

sections began to pursue alternative livelihoods, including sedentary cultivation and labour migration. The resulting differentiation and competition then fed into internal politics and external alliances, demonstrating once again the interconnections between land and livelihoods, tribal identity and administration, and wider politics.

Chapter One entitled ‘An emerging identity: political relations and migrations, 1881-1910, presents some of the different accounts of the origin and migration of the Lahawiyin from Arabia to Northern Sudan. It then examines the internal structures of the tribe, and its various movements. It also covers the Lahawiyin involvement with the regime of the Mahdi and his successor, the Khalifa, under which the Lahawiyin were entitled to certain rights as a result of their early alliance with the Mahdi. The main argument in the chapter is that the power exercised by al-Tom of the Kababish led the Lahawiyin to emphasise a distinctive, ‘Arab’ identity.

Chapter Two deals with ‘The Lahawiyin under the Condominium 1910-1928: external boundaries and internal divisions’. The chapter focuses on a period in which the Lahawiyin struggled to resist the new boundaries imposed by the Condominium government, and shows how this was linked to a process of administrative unification of the tribal structure. This chapter argues that the British administrative policies towards the Lahawiyin centred upon controlling movement boundaries, grazing and land.

Chapter Three is called ‘Slavery and Lahawiyin Identity and Economy.’ This chapter explains the process of Arab identity formation in relation to slavery and the slave trade in the case of the Lahawiyin, who were simultaneously Lahawiyin, Ansar and/or Khatmiyya and ‘slave masters’. The chapter argues that the self-constructed identity of the Lahawiyin also rested on their notions of wealth and status, which came to define membership of the tribe. Wealth and status were in turn based during the colonial period on ownership of camels and slaves.

Chapter Four discusses ‘The desire for a *dar*: changing livelihoods and relations to the land in the later Condominium period’. This chapter explores the impact of continuing Condominium Government efforts to create and enforce such boundaries, and of the development of new agricultural land-use. The main argument of this

chapter is that there were contradictory processes of increasing tribal unity around the demand for a *dar*, and increasing variation between different livelihoods within the tribe

Chapter Five, ‘The shift to sedentarisation, 1956-1986’, explores the social and economic changes of the period up to the 1980s, and uses them to set the context for the events of 1983-84, when drought brought these changes into dramatic focus, revealing the vulnerability of the Lahawiyin and pushing new developments in identity politics. The chapter argues that much of the agricultural mechanisation that took place did not always impact negatively on the Lahawiyin. Indeed it increased individual land rights among the well-off Lahawiyin, which would later support their political representation and claim for a *nazirate*.

Chapter Six is entitled ‘New Claims for a *Nazirate*: the Politics of Native Administration in the 1990’s’. This chapter discusses three main events in the development of the Lahawiyin quest for nazirate in the 1990s. These were the 1994 Decree, the Lahawiyin Conference of 1996 and the election of the Showak Rural Council in 1996. It argues changes in Native Administration offered opportunities to the men who competed for leadership of the Lahawiyin, and to their followers, to try and improve their political and economic positions.

Chapter Seven deals with ‘Lahawiyin Contemporary Politics’, looking at the contemporary politics of the Lahawiyin drawing on a specific period of time when Lahawiyin identity was re-shaped as a result of the expansion of mechanisation, 1980s drought and the abolition and reinstatement of Native Administration. It will discuss how they co-opted the local politics in their favour by collecting the tribe from all over Sudan and established new tribal and political institutions which perpetuated a process thriving on the contemporary politics of the region. This chapter argues that with the margin of political authority granted through the new institutions which had emerged, there was an underlying dynamic which would cause the tribal political power to attach more forcefully to the traditional Lahawiyin Arab identity in order to negotiate the nazirate and that identity would increasingly be confined to a new face of political identity which emerged within the tribe’s new political institutions.

Chapter One

An emerging identity: political relations and migrations,

1881-1910

As the Introduction showed, the history of ‘Arab’ identities in Sudan is much debated, with increasing divergence between scholarly views and the internal versions of their history presented by particular tribes. The Lahawiyin claim a more recent arrival in Sudan than many other groups, which they use both to explain their client status in relation to other tribes, and to claim a more pure Arab identity than these politically-dominant tribes.¹ They also claim to be a part of the ‘Juhayna’ Arabs – descendants of ‘Abdullah al-Juhani, like the Rufa’a, Kababish, and other Arab tribes of western Sudan.² McHugh has suggested that the division between those claiming Juhayna descent and those claiming Ja’ali (Abbasi) descent in Sudan tends to correspond to the division between nomadic peoples of the ‘hinterland’ and ‘sedentary riverain peoples’. This, he argues, ‘had much less to do with literal migration than with political and economic associations, possibly including clientage and slavery’.³ As this suggests, the genealogical identity developed by the Lahawiyin is bound up with a complex set of factors: nomadism and pastoralism, political and territorial clientage, slave-owning, and changing access to land.

Much discussion of Arab identity in Sudan has highlighted the twentieth century as the period in which it became most intensely politicised, through colonial policies favouring Arab tribes, the writing down of oral histories, and postcolonial programmes of Arabisation. But as historians have also noted, it was the long nineteenth century that saw the widespread development of Arab genealogies.⁴ This chapter shows that Lahawiyin identity emerged from the political context of the nineteenth century, so that even in the twenty-first century it

¹ With exception of the Rashayda who arrived in Sudan by 1860s. William C. Young, *The Rashaayda Bedouin: Arab pastoralists Of eastern Sudan* (Texas: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996), pp.105; Eman Bushra, ‘Local level political dynamics in Kassala State: the Rashayda’, in Catherine Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.277-308.

² MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs*, pp.237-244. See al-Tayyib Muhammad Tayyib, *al-Indayah / taqdim ‘Awn al-Sharif (Khartoum: Dar ‘Azzah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi’, 2004)*; see also al Tahir b. Abd Allah, ‘*Kitab marif turu’ usul al- arab wa’l- hasab wa’l-nasab*’ (Manuscript lithograph collected by R .Hill June 1966, Durham archives Box 97/5/76-83). In this manuscript, the Lahawiyin genealogy goes back to ‘Rekab’ b. ‘Sultan’ b. ‘Shutair’ b. ‘Zebian’ of Juhayn, which would make the Lahawiyin blood relations with the ruling family of the Kababish, the Nurab who originally descended from Rekabiyya.

³ McHugh, *Holy men of the Blue Nile*, pp.9-10.

⁴ Spaulding, ‘Chronology,’ pp. 325-337.

continues to emphasise a contrast with their hosts a century earlier, the 'Kababish'.⁵ The chapter also traces an emerging tribal unity through the migrations and disputes through which the Lahawiyyin reached their present location in the Butana. By forming their own political relations with three successive regimes, they resisted absorption or intermarriage into host tribes and sought out the best situation in which to practise their livelihoods.

This chapter presents some of the different accounts of the origin and migration of the Lahawiyyin from Arabia to Northern Sudan. It then examines the internal structures of the tribe, and its various movements. In crossing borders, the Lahawiyyin further developed an Arab identity that was maintained through social and customary constructed norms, and which differentiated them in their own view from other ethnic groups. They had no recognized tribal homeland – no *dar* – and any land rights were exclusively held by the hosting tribe. The primary hosting tribe in the nineteenth century were the Kababish of Kordofan, whose position was strengthened by their close relationship to the Turco-Egyptian government.⁶ The chapter also covers the Lahawiyyin involvement with the regime of the Mahdi and his successor, the Khalifa, under which the Lahawiyyin were entitled to certain rights as a result of their early alliance with the Mahdi.⁷ This strengthened their position in relation to the Kababish authority; indeed it is argued that Lahawiyyin support for the Mahdi was partly motivated by their ambition to improve their own political position. Their continuing search for stronger rights to territory, together with their resentment at the harsh system of tribute and taxes under Ali al-Tom, *nazir*⁸ of the Kababish, would lead to the splitting and migration of the Lahawiyyin from 'dar Kababish' to 'dar Shukriyya' in the Butana, where they became the guests of the Shukriyya *nazir*, whose family had gained in wealth and status through their association with the Turco-Egyptian regime, had succeeded in

⁵ Talal Asad, *The Kababish Arabs: power, authority and consent in a Nomadic tribe* (London: Hurst, 1970); Talal Asad, 'Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe,' in Ian G. Cunnison and Wendy James (eds.), *Essays in Sudan Ethnography, presented to Sir Edward Evans-Prichard* (London: Hurst, c1972), p.128. See also Justin Willis, 'Hukm: The Creolization of Authority in Condominium Sudan', *Journal of African History* 46 (2005), pp.29-50.

⁶ Asad, 'Political Inequality,' p.128.

⁷ A.B. Theobald, 'The Khalifa Abdallah', Sudan Notes and Records, Volume 31:2 (1950), pp. 254-273. See Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan*; Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *al-Ard fi al-Mahdiyyah [Land in The Mahdiyya]* (Khartoum: Jami'at al-Khartum Shu'bat Abhath al-Sudan, 1970); Muhammad Said Al-Qaddal, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith [Modern History of Sudan] 1820-1955* (Omdurman: Abdel Karim Merghani Centre, 2002); M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: the Anglo-Egyptian-Sudan, 1898-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Abdalla Ali Ibrahim, 'The Mahdiyya and the Kababish: towards legitimacy and resistance' (unpublished manuscript, University of Khartoum, 1976).

⁸ In 1886 during the Turco-Egyptian rule and Musa Bash Hamdi created new administrative divisions, *aqsam*, out of some districts and appointed local nazirs as their administrators. Gabriel Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate: administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899-1916*, (London: Cass, 1971), p.144.

maintaining much of their privilege under the Mahdiyya, and who continued to prosper under the Condominium.⁹ That the Lahawiyin move occurred largely in the early Condominium period probably reflects the effects of the Anglo-Egyptian victory over the Mahdists, and the boost this gave to the position of the al-Tom family, now favoured by the British authorities, which was able to make new and unwelcome demands of their Lahawiyin guests.

The main argument in the chapter is that the power exercised by al-Tom of the Kababish led the Lahawiyin to emphasise a distinctive, 'Arab' identity. The distancing of the Lahawiyin from the power centre in *dar* Kababish by the Kababish ruling family, the 'Nurab' was an important factor that perpetuated the preservation of the so called Arab identity and which led to the development of a search for a *dar*.¹⁰ The Lahawiyin hoped to gain more control of their own affairs in Butana under the Shukriyya. Although British policies would perpetuate the privileging of *dar* rights, of claims to Arab identity, and hierarchical divisions among Arab tribes, this chapter will nevertheless show that these processes had their roots firmly in the nineteenth century. Finally, the chapter will discuss the role of the key leaders of the Lahawiyin, who emerged during the Mahdiyya.

⁹ Muhammad Said Al-Qaddal, *al-Mahdiyyah wa-al-Habashah: dirasah fi al-siyasah al-dakhiliyah wa-al-kharijiyah li-dawlat al-Mahdiyyah, 1881-1898* (Khartoum: Jami'at al-Khartoum, Dar al-Ta'lif wa-al-Tarjamah wa-al-Nashr, 1973), p.24-25.

¹⁰ Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim has defined the 'Nurab' as a section of Rekabiyya tribe lived east of al- Afadd on the Nile. A sub section resented living on the Nile and headed to Kordofan and mixed with other tribes where as the Kababish was one of them. Their intermarriage with the Kababish had helped them take over the tribe headship. They competed and defeated the former traditional ruling family, 'awlad Ugba'. Nurab consisted of a number of groups of a blood relations: of awlad Fadlalah wad Salim (al-Tom, Balul, Karadem, Salih), awlad Gurish, awlad Fahal, awlad Awad al-Seid, awlad al-Keir, dar Kabeer, dar um al-Bakhiet, dar Saeid and abu Shaiyya. The Nurab was – according to Abdullah Ali Ibrhaim - part of the 'al-Baij', a confederation that includes al- Rebeigat, al-Hawarab, and al-Kebishat. The 'al-Baij' was the symbol that this confederation put on their camels .The Nurab created an administrative unit governed by customary laws and thus became to some small tribes or sub sections of tribes a resort for those who might had blood feud or tribute debts to others. Abdallahi Ali Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1977), pp.32-38. See also Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*, p.121; al Tahir b. Abd Allah, 'Kitab marif turu' usul al- arab wa'l- hasab wa'l- nasab,' pp.6-8; Awad abdel Hadi, *The Political History of Kordofan during the Mahdiyya 1881-1899* (Khartoum, 1973).

1. Stories of Lahawiyin Migration ‘from Arabia’

The Lahawiyin base their claim to a more ‘pure’ Arab identity on having arrived in Sudan from Arabia more recently than other Arab tribes in Sudan, and having ‘resisted intermarriage’ with other tribes.¹¹ They also present their migration to Sudan as a search for pasture, implicitly emphasising that their pastoralist livelihood has been key to their sense of history and identity.

Many Lahawiyin have presented themselves as part of the Juhayna, and this is generally accepted in the accounts of MacMichael and Fadl Hassan¹². The latter cites Burton, who reported that the Juhayna were a large tribe from the Hejaz Mountains who could be found from the plains north of Yanbu (which were granted to them by the Prophet in 624 A.D.) into the Semitic peninsula.¹³ MacMichael goes on to suggest that the Juhayna were among the tribes which ‘flocked’¹⁴ into Egypt in about 630 A.D, and notes that Makrizi mentioned them “among the six largest and most powerful tribes of Upper Egypt established at Manfalut and Elsiuf at that time”.¹⁵ Furthermore, he writes that “some of them took part, with the Fezara and others, in the expedition of 647 A.D settling in great numbers between Sayene (Aswan) and Abyssinia”.¹⁶ Again it was the Juhayna and the Rabia who in 869 A.D. contributed largely to the composition of the Arab groups that ‘invaded Beja country and settled there and intermarried with the people’.¹⁷ The scale of these movements is probably much exaggerated by Fadl Hassan and MacMichael, but they do suggest that any Juhayna migration into Sudan took place very early, between the seventh and ninth centuries, whereas Dirar suggests that the Juhayna came to Sudan as late as the 13th century.¹⁸ But they all [MacMichael, Fadl Hassan and Dirar] suggest that the Lahawiyin migrated much later, in the late nineteenth century. These accounts may have influenced the Lahawiyin’s own construction of history.

¹¹ Interviews with late sheikh Ahmed al-Zein, June 1997, al-Mugataa wad al-Zein, interview with Ali Sueleiman, Gedarif, December 2007, al-Zein Ahmed al-Zein, and others. Collection of poems and songs, see Tamador A. Khalid, ‘Changing dynamics of gender relations of the Lahawiyin,’ in Miller (ed.) *Land, ethnicity and political legitimacy*, p.464.

¹² Mac Michael, *A history of the Arabs in the Sudan*, p.237.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139. See also Yusuf Fadl, *The Arabs and The Sudan*, pp. 154-177.

¹⁴ MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs*, pp.138-139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.138-139.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.138-139.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.154-176.

¹⁸ Dirar Salih Dirar, *The Migration of the Arab tribes to Nile Valley Egypt and Sudan* [AR] (Al-Reyad, al-Tawba Bookshop, 2001), pp. 446-447.

According to MacMichael (and Fadl Hassan) until the nineteenth century the Juhayna (including the Lahawiyn) formed no part of the Kababish and they were never more than temporary members. Since MacMichael's account was very much based on the information he gathered as an administrator, this suggests that the Lahawiyn had emphasised to the Condominium Government their lack of connection to the Kababish. In the beginning – according to MacMichael - they were said to have settled in Western Sudan and moved as pastoralists between the White Nile and Kordofan and later on they moved to Eastern Sudan.¹⁹

The Lahawiyn have relied on oral history to explain much of their origin, their genealogy and the routes they had taken to reach Sudan, as much of their history is undocumented. However, Awad al-Karim Babikir, a local historian, claims that they were descended from the Juhayna and that they linked their ancestors to the 'Ashraf' – that is, people who claimed nobility on the basis of their alleged descent from the Prophet - of Al Sayed Rafei wad Al Sayed Amir.²⁰ He was the great grandfather of the Shukriya and – according to this account - came to teach the Quran, crossing the Red Sea at the Bab el-Mandab strait, but then returned back to his home land in Arabia'.²¹ This is interesting in that it provides an alternative genealogical linkage, tying the Lahawiyn genealogically to the Shukriya. A Shukri interviewee similarly stated that a Lahawiyn great-grandmother was the daughter of Abdalla Al Juhani, and excluded any possibility of any blood relation between the Lahawiyn and the Kababish: 'We have no relation with Kababish - Kababish are viewed as non-Arab'.²² Thus the Shukriya promote a similar notion to the Lahawiyn about who could be a pure Arab and who could not. As we shall see, Lahawiyn identity has been partly constructed by comparison with their former rulers, the Kababish, who are seen as less pure 'Arabs', and with whom the Lahawiyn claim not to have intermarried.

The complexity – and the contradictory nature – of Lahawiyn stories of their genealogy is further suggested by another account, told by some Lahawiyn, which suggests that the

¹⁹ MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs*, p.180.

²⁰ The term 'Ashraf' was widely used as reference to all descendents of the Prophet, of 'Ali b. Abi Talib', and those of his brother 'Ja'far al-Tayyar'. Though most descendents relied on oral history and local tradition they hardly obtain any evidence with exception to Sharif Zayed b. Abi Numayyb. Ajlan, sharif of Sawakin. Hassan, *The Arabs And The Sudan*, p.171.

²¹ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, Historian, Showak Rural Council, December 2007.

²² Interview with Babikir al-Daw Shola (Shukri), President Pastoralist Union, Gedarif, December 2007.

Lahawiyin are not Juhayna but are from the Rufaa group. They say that it is only because their great-grandmother was a daughter of Abdalla al-Juhani that some historians and some Lahawiyin think they are Juhayna.²³ Although MacMichael suggests that the Rufaa and Juhayna were closely connected in some way, this is hard to reconcile with his account, and these variations in the Lahawiyin history suggest that, in the absence of written histories, Lahawiyin have developed multiple accounts of their migrations and genealogy, reflecting the shifting demands of alliance and affiliation.²⁴

A further account provided by Lahawiyin was that they were part of different Juhayna groups, who came from Egypt, Libya and Morocco through the Sahara to north Kordofan and had lived with the Kababish and then moved to White Nile Province and to the East after the Mahdiyya. According to a Lahawi Sheikh, “our grandmothers used to say *belad Fas al Mawraha Nas*” where ‘Fas’ literally refers to Fez in Morocco as the furthest land beyond which no one lived.²⁵ Whether this is any more ‘true’ in an absolute sense, it may convey some sense of the more gradual and extensive migrations that might have occurred in reality across the northern part of Africa. In this regard Fadl Hassan had also mentioned that the Arabs had entered Sudan from different routes, not only Egypt. Some Arabs had entered from the Red Sea from the early time of Islam as well.²⁶ While Fadl Hassan stated that the Juhayna were found in Darfur and Bornu he was not specific in explaining whether these groups of Juhayna arrived from north Africa or through the Red Sea and had followed their nomadic instinct to search for grazing and pasture in places further from their first identified settlement in Kordofan.

Great numbers of them [Juhayna] still live to the east of the Nile, and some of these have immigrated within the last few years. Others are to be found in Bornu and Darfur.²⁷

One further account was presented by the Shukriyya Sheikh Omara Abu Sin to the Collinson Pasha, then governor of Kassala, in 1901. He declared that the Lahawiyin had migrated to Sudan from Arabia during the Mahdiyya and were living in many places in the Sudan, including Kassala and Kordofan, “having no ‘belad’ [land/country] of their own and that he

²³ Interview with a Group of Lahawiyin sheikhs, market in Showak, December 2007.

²⁴ Sir Harold MacMichael, *The tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p.187.

²⁵ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

²⁶ Yusuf Fadl Hassan, ‘Main aspects of the Arab Migration to the Sudan’, *Arabica* T.14, Fasc.1 (February 1967), p. 31.

²⁷ MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs*, p.181.

was trying to collect them”.²⁸ However this same account was later contested by the Governor of Kordofan in 1910:

I distinctively remember hearing him [Abu Sin] telling Collinson Pasha that story early in 1901. Neither Collinson Pasha nor I had any idea at the time, as I know now, that this was a [t]issue of falsehoods from beginning to end; so Omara was encouraged in every way to collect this tribe which though very rich in camels was without any habitation.²⁹

Clearly Abu Sin’s account was unfounded, since the Lahawiyin were documented to be part of Juhayna under the Kababish since the 1880s, although he might have meant to refer to their arrival in Butana in 1901. This also shows that the Shukriyya could construct history in order to justify ‘collecting’ the scattered Lahawiyin together under their rule. They may have contributed to the idea that the Kababish were less pure and that the Lahawiyin had more genealogical relation to the Shukriyya, as part of attracting the ‘camel-rich’ tribe to move to Butana, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Overall, then, little can be said for certain about the processes of migration and Arab influence on Sudan, but what is clear is that the Lahawiyin were involved in the same process of genealogical construction as other tribes claiming ‘Arab’ status. This was probably also part of a process of unification of disparate groups into the Lahawiyin ‘tribe’. Most importantly, Lahawiyin versions of history reflect their relations with the two competing host tribes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Lahawiyin identity is contrasted with the less ‘pure’ Kababish, whereas the Shukriyya are said to be distantly related to the Lahawiyin.

²⁸ Letter, Governor of Kordofan to the Assistant Director of Intelligence Khartoum. (31 May 1910) NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29. See also Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*.

²⁹ Letter, Governor of Kordofan to the Assistant Director of Intelligence Khartoum. (31 May 1910) NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

2. The Lahawiyyin in the Nineteenth Century

During the Turko-Egyptian rule (1821-1881) the social structure of the Lahawiyyin tribe was based on the following sections, each named as 'the people' of a particular leader; these would later become sections under headmen, or *umudiyya*: Nas Wad al-Faki, Nas Wad Isa, Nas Magait, Nas Sowar, Nas Wad Hassan, Gawamis, Awlad Hardan, Awlad Gubarab, Wad Mohammed al-Zein.³⁰ Each section centred on the leading family from which it took its name. These families claim distant common ancestry, so the Lahawiyyin saw (and still see) their internal structure in terms of related lineages. Each section had its own hierarchy and structure, and they did not by any means exist in complete harmony and unity. Some old conflicts and blood feuds were inherited by them and were maintained for a long time, sustained by historical retelling. Some sections were interested in developing their own interests, rather than seeing their interests as defined by their membership of the Lahawiyyin as a whole, and these ambitions contributed to the internal division of the tribe.

It is interesting to note that the term *nas* among the Lahawiyyin implied that the eponymous leader of the section possessed a distinctive level of wealth and power. The term *awlad*, according to many Lahawiyyin, by contrast implied much less wealth: the Awlad Hardan ('the sons of Hardan') had few camels compared to the Nas Wad el Faki, 'the people of the son of El Faki', or the Nas Isa whose leaders held power and authority. Willis, writing of the Kababish, uses the term '*nas*' to mean those without authority of any sort – 'the "subject", in the full sense which Mahmood Mamdani used the word'.³¹ I would argue that on the contrary, in this context, '*nas*' socially implies recognition and prestige and Nas Wad al Faki were a family of authority and power within the Lahawiyyin. The role of Nas wad El Faki in shaping the internal structure of the Lahawiyyin was significant in determining later political alliances (to strive for dar and nizarete) with traditional political parties during the Condominium administration and in the recent government of Sudan.

³⁰ T. Khalid, I. Dalamu and C. Miller, 'Lahawiyyin in Showak Rural Council: Imposed Boundaries and the Quest for Political Recognition,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.313-314. See also 'Lahawiyyin tribe' in the Tribal Anthropological Survey, NRO Dakhliya [1] 112/5/27.

³¹ Willis, '*Hukm*,' pp.29-50. See also Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, c1996).

3. Turco-Egyptian rule and the Kababish: the Lahawiyin as client tribe

The Turco-Egyptian administration in 1821 established a new system of administration that assumed direct control over the urban sedentary population along the line of the river Nile in northern Sudan. This meant an administrative separation between these groups and the nomads and farmers in rain-land Sudan, amongst whom administration continued to be indirect and where people maintained their access to a collective claim, which relied on the payment of tribute to the Turco-Egyptian state, through tribal leaders who were recognized as *dar* holders. The Turco-Egyptian government recognised all the titles acquired from the Funj Sultans and regents, including their vassals.³² Most importantly for the pastoralists, *dar* rights, including those emanating from the charters granted by the Funj Sultans, were recognised by the *Turkiya*. This benefitted both the Kababish and the Shukriya; on the other hand, it meant that the Lahawiyin, who had held no *dar* under the Funj sultanate – quite possibly because they had no very long history in Sudan as a distinct group – had no collective right of their own, and so had to rely on client relationships with these larger tribes.

By the time of the Turkiyya, four sections of the Lahawiyin were hosted within the tribal boundaries of ‘Dar Kababish’ under al-Tom Wad Salim.³³ The Lahawiyin were considered as a client tribe, and as such had the right to graze and water in the *dar* of the hosting tribe with an annual payment of a goat by each member of the client tribe known as the yard goat for watering all their animals. Again the client tribe was eligible to cultivate in the hosting *dar* for a *shiraya* paid to the sheikh of the hosting tribe. The *shiraya* was a tax in kind valued as three *amdad* [510 Grams] for each *raika* (the *raika* is thirty mid i.e. four and half *kaila*).³⁴ A client tribe was not allowed to dig a deep well, or put signs on trees or mountains or hit the drum within the hosting *dar*. Like other small tribes, the Lahawiyin faced a difficult choice, imposed on them by the governmental recognition of larger tribes; they had to pay tax through the larger tribe or face punishment, and to make claims to land outside this system would be a risky option

³² O’Fahy and Spaulding, *Kingdom of the Sudan*, and Spaulding, ‘Herders and the State,’ pp. 329-48. Also see Spaulding, ‘Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class,’ pp.1-20.

³³ ‘Lahawiiin tribe’ in the Tribal Anthropological Survey, NRO Dakhliya [1] 112/5/27.

³⁴ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kunjarat*, p. 14.

The Kababish of northern Kordofan had a long history in Kordofan and they were considered by the Turkish administration to be an important tribe; Fadl Wad Salim, who was recognized as the leader of the Kababish by the Turco-Egyptians, in 1833-1875, was a reliable supporter of the government. In 1850, Mansfield Parkyns account, based on an extended period of residence with the tribe in 1846-47, differentiated between the Kababish and their client tribes: his list includes a number of names which are usually used of independent tribes living elsewhere, which suggests that the Kababish may at this stage have been acting as hosts to a number of sections which had separated off from these larger tribes and sought grazing, protection or other opportunities with the Kababish.³⁵ The key differences between the Kababish and the client tribes lay in the government recognition of the Kababish claim to a *dar*; under Turco-Egyptian rule the newly-imported term *nazir* was applied to the recognized leader of the Kababish. In terms of local symbolic items of power, the *nazir* also had a *nahas*, a copper tribal drum.³⁶ Kababish sheikhs, subordinate to the *nazir*, were given responsibilities to claim and collect taxes and *ushur* according to the tribal customary laws. Client tribes, without their own *nahas* or *dar*, were directly subject to any appointed sheikh of a Kababish section. There seems little doubt that the Kababish as a whole and the Nurab in particular, absorbed many of these clients over time into Kababish identity – the advantages of becoming Kababish, rather than continued existence as clients, were considerable.

The Kababish ability to attract clients and ultimately to absorb some of them, was a result of their relationship with government. Al-Gadal has argued that both the Kababish and the Shukriya had built strong economic relations with the Turco-Egyptian government during their rule in Sudan; aware of the importance of camel transport to the government, they always supplied the required number of livestock, whenever these were demanded by the government³⁷. Such relations had strengthened the position of the Kababish and the Shukriya among other tribes, particularly in relation to client tribes such as the Lahawiyin which explains the privileged relation both tribes, the Kababish and the Shukriya, would also obtain and maintain throughout the Condominium.

³⁵ MacMichael, 'Notes on the history of Kordofan before the Egyptian conquest,' SAD.281/3/1-30.

³⁶ Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*, and Asad, 'Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe.'

³⁷ Al-Qaddal, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith* [Modern History of Sudan], pp.99-291. See Daly, *Empire on the Nile*.

4. History of an ‘Arab’ Identity

In their subsequent accounts of this period of clientship in Kordofan, Lahawiyin claim to have maintained a distinct identity while living in Kababish territory. One oral history told was that they had to flee when a Kababish sheikh wanted to marry a Lahawi woman. The family and the *umudiyya* as a whole refused to allow this, although the suitor was a sheikh, and so they decided to leave by night - with their camels, of course. The late Sheikh Ahmed al-Zein, telling this story in the 1990s, explained that it would have been impossible to approve such a marriage, because “we have an opinion about their [Kababish] Arab-ness”.³⁸ Whether or not this was actually the cause of the migration, the story is very revealing of the way in which the Lahawiyin have expressed their resentment of Kababish rule by questioning their degree of ‘Arabness’. Thus political grievances were channelled into the formation of a Lahawiyin identity which emphasised ‘pure’ Arabness.

This assertion that Lahawiyin are more Arab than the Kababish is constantly encountered. In the early twenty-first century, one Lahawiyin explained how the position of women was a means of comparability of values as to whether they were genuine Arabs or otherwise.

We are different from them (Kababish) in that our woman is always in the shade: that means, she does not go out – that means the uncle can’t joke with his niece, part of the discipline. The Kababish community is an open community; they flirt with women and their women dance openly. We say that the woman who is flirted with is (*gazyyia*) loose.³⁹

Such a statement made a clear distinction between the Arab tribes. Throughout the years spent with the Kababish and before, the Lahawiyin could – by their own account - trace their genealogical purity. This is contrasted repeatedly with the position of the Kababish: according to an account reported by Abdallahi Ali Ibrahim, the Kababish great grand sheikh, Rabeh Baouda al Ugabbi, married a woman who, it was claimed was Shukriyia or a slave from Dar Hamid⁴⁰. This was the reason why the Lahawiyin often publicly questioned the ‘Arabness’ of the Kababish. The Lahawiyin in general had identified a way of social exclusion, consistently refusing to allow women to marry outside the tribe. It was

³⁸ Interview with the late sheikh Ahmed Adam al-Zein, Mugataa wad al-Zein, June 1997.

³⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁴⁰ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kunjarat*, p.39.

unacceptable to marry a Lahawi woman to a stranger 'Women who will be taken away and travel, we don't support'.⁴¹

The Lahawiyin, even as clients of the Kababish, claim to have maintained some sort of social structure by customary laws. This was, presumably, not easy and entailed intrigue and survival strategies in order to keep the tribe intact and insulated, as the Lahawiyin claim. This however was reflected in property ownership (camels) and marriage which was exclusively an internal matter for the Lahawiyin *umudiyyas*. Although some oral history shows that the Kababish tried hard to infiltrate the Lahawiyin by marrying their women, Lahawiyin insist that this did not happen on a significant scale, and attributed the occasional exceptional case of intermarriage with the Kababish as a consequence of the disruption during the Mahdiyya.⁴²

Our Kababish grandmother is probably the only offspring of the chaos that took place during the Mahdiyya or the possibility that our great grandfather worked with Kababish and he may be the only individual who married with them. Not many Lahawiyin did that.⁴³

Even this Kababish great-grandmother was not seen collectively by all Lahawiyin as their great grandmother; for other Lahawiyin, this is a peculiarity of the wad Hardan section. This shows how each *omudia* worked independently regardless of the fact that all belonged to one tribe.

Simultaneously the 'ruling group', the Nurab, controlled political and economic power among the Kababish.⁴⁴ However, Ali Abdullah Ibrahim argues that the Lahawiyin, as a client tribe, insisted on preserving certain customs and rights of the tribe, and by doing so their 'nobles also exercised some sort of power and authority'⁴⁵ at a different level which was not apparent to others. Although the Lahawiyin were always seen as the vulnerable clients who only provided labour and paid tributes, they handled their affairs subtly and carefully.⁴⁶ The Lahawiyin knew any confrontation with the Nurab would cause them great loss of property, men, women and camels that could be avoided if the tribe co-operated and searched for

⁴¹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁴² Interview with Siddig Yousef, Trader, Showak, December 2007.

⁴³ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁴⁴ Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*, and Asad, 'A note on the history of the Kababish tribe,' *Sudan Notes and Records* xlvii (1966) and Asad, 'Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe,' pp.126-148.

⁴⁵ Interview with Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, Assistant Professor of History, University of Missouri-Columbia, Durham, September 2008.

⁴⁶ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

alternative pasture. The Arab identity carried by the Lahawiyin was a protective element in the way that the Lahawiyin had dealt with the Kababish, and their women were central to their movement.

5. The Mahdiyya, 1881-1898

Not all the Lahawiyn sections were living in Kababish territory in the nineteenth century. One section, Bulolab, was already in the Butana, and four others were in the White Nile Province. Local historian El Obeid has been told that before the Mahdiyya, the Lahawiyn were at Gadir, in the southern Nuba mountains, and Marabeei wad al Ebieh (a village to the west of the Nile) and also on Aba Island on the White Nile.⁴⁷ In one written account, they constituted the first supporters of the Mahdi, who established his initial headquarters on Aba Island.⁴⁸ Interestingly enough the oral history of the Lahawiyn also claims that the tribe had lived in Aba Island, with the Shilluk tribe.⁴⁹ Later in 1921, a British Inspector in Butana who was presumably informed by the Lahawiyn themselves also reported the story of their presence on Aba Island before the Mahdiyya:

During the Turkish Government the only Lahowin who were in Butana were the subsection BELULAB who were under AWLAD EL-KERIM AHMED BEY ABU Sin.....The other sub-sections, Nas WAD ISA, NAS SOWAR, AWLAD HARDAN, NAS WAD HASSAN Lived about ABBA ISLAND under Sheikh WAD EL LEBEIH.⁵⁰

In the 1860s a European explorer had recorded that

The infamous Mohamed Khayr, sheikh of Hilat Kaka, had founded his first settlement here in around 1857 for the purpose of large-scale slave raiding. However, compelled by the Shilluk, he had to give up this location, and nowadays no trace of this settlement is found.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, Historian, Showak, December 2007. Gadir, near Tegali, owed its importance of being the second big victory against the Turco - Egyptian army and it was also the place where the Mahdi compiled what was known as the 'Imam al-Mahdi's Ratitb', a collection of Quran's verses and Hadith. See Al-Qaddal, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith* [Modern History of Sudan], pp.180-185.

⁴⁸ Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*; Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan*; Hadi, *Tarikh Kordofan al-Siyasi* [Political History of Kordofan].

⁴⁹ Interview with a group of Lahawi sheikhs, Showak, December 2007.

⁵⁰ P. Ball, Inspector Butana, 'The Lahowin Tribes' (1921), pp.1-14, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102.

⁵¹ Theodor von Heuglin, *Die Tinne'sche Expedition im westlichen Nil-Quellgebiet 1863 und 1864* [Journey in the area of the White Nile: Eng. Trans] (Gotha: J. Perthes, 1865), p.81; Ferdinand Werne, *Expedition zur Entdeckung der Quellen des Weissen Nil* [Expedition to discover the sources of the White Nile] 1840 - 1841 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1848). A detailed map with this book shows very clearly some distance south of Dueim, at appr. 13o 10' North: 'Die Inseln und die Stromufer von hierab von SCHILLUK bewohnt,' which is to say, 'from here [i.e. further upstream] the islands and river banks are inhabited by Shilluk.' This is well north of Jazira Abba!

Some Lahawiyin claim that one of their great grandfathers was named 'Khair Allah', but there is no further evidence of the Lahawiyin's involvement in slavery during that period of time or that 'Mohamed Khayr' was connected to 'Khayr Alla'.

According to the Lahawiyin oral history, the Mahdi turned to them for military support in order to evacuate the Shilluk from Aba Island and give their land to his own followers. The story told by the Lahawiyin has an interesting twist, however:

Our great grandfather, wad Barajub, a Mahdi leader, was called by the Mahdi to talk to the Mak ['king' or 'chief'] of the Shilluk who lived on the Island, urging him to leave the Island. The Island was not named Aba then. The Shiluk Mak received the Lahawi representative of wad Barajub and told him to tell wad Barajub that the Mak 'Aba' [Aba means 'refuse' in Arabic] and since then the Island was called Aba. Wad Barajub decided to fight the Mak and when he got there he gave him the choice; either to fight or to marry his two daughters to wad Barajub and his brother and that was the case. This why the Lahawiyin of wad el Lebiyeh (White Nile province) are different, their great grandmother was a Shilluk.

This story was told by a Lahawi sheikh in Showak and was retold by another interviewee in Gedarif.⁵² There was also a suggestion that these Lahawi leaders, wad Barajub and his brother, might not have married the two daughters of the Shilluk Mak as presented above but might have enslaved them instead. Such a marriage with a non-Arab would appear to go against all the Lahawiyin principles of refusing intermarriage with the Kababish because they were less pure Arabs. If taken literally, this intermarriage with Shilluk women might have happened because wad Barajub wanted to please the Mahdi.

Whether or not the Lahawiyin were actually present on Abba Island in the 1880s, they did become supporters of the Mahdist rising and the Mahdist state established under the Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa, from 1885. It is debatable whether they were strong believers in the Mahdi's religious message; the Lahawiyin have been generally reputed to be a nomadic tribe with little interest in religious teaching, as Fadl Hassan notes:⁵³

⁵² Interview with Sheikh Yousif Hassab al-Gawi, Showak. December 2007; interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Statistics Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁵³ Interviews with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al-Zein, 1996, al-Mugataa wad al-Zein, Ali Suleiman, Gedarif, December 2007, Babikir Awad al karim, Showak, December 2007, and Abdalla Amir, Gedarif, December 2007. Some informants had indicated that the Lahawiyin because of their continuous movement and nomadic life could easily affiliate themselves with any religious Fiki. For instance, the Lahawiyin umudiyyas followed both Kahtmyyia and Samania; they used to visit al-Sherif Hindi who was leading another different Tariqua, which means they were mixing up all sort of religious principles.

The nomads were neither well versed in Islamic dogma nor literate; but to disseminate the simple the teachings and practices of Islam do not require a high measure of literacy. To declare the Shihada or act of faith is all that is required.⁵⁴

Their support for the Mahdi might rather be the earliest indication that some of the leaders of Lahawiyin sections were seeking to gain their own territory, particularly as the leaders of the Kababish and Shukriyya, as close allies of the Turco-Egyptian government, did not have good relations with the Mahdist movement. While the Lahawiyin were roaming between Kordofan and White Nile province, they had lost any grazing rights they had previously had in Kababish territory. The Lahawiyin's close affiliation to the Mahdi contributed to building mutual trust between the two parties. Thus the Lahawiyin who were rich in camels were entrusted to carry confidential messages to various parts of Sudan calling upon tribal leaders and *sheikhs* to join the revolution, as part of a camel post system. The time shared in Aba Island between the Mahdi and the Lahawiyin may have created a bond which caused them to support his religious teaching, if only in pursuit of political ends.

The Mahdi's unexpected death in 1885, shortly after he had achieved his final victory with the capture of Khartoum, may have deprived the Lahawiyin of some of the fruits of this early alliance. If he had had lived longer the Lahawiyin would probably have had more say in terms of *dar* and land. The Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi transferred vast territories to those he as his loyal groups and followers – his fellow Ta'isha and other cattle-keeping Arabs from the far west of Sudan, while groups he suspected were dispossessed of land rights.⁵⁵ Large areas were left empty, being depopulated for security reasons, or because the population had left following the Khalifa to Omdurman. According to Kibreab, the Mahdiyya caused a 'profound' change in the system of the land ownership in term of individuals' and groups' positions while leaving the '*dar* right intact';⁵⁶ For the Lahawiyin, this period was one of movement, but it did not result in the creation of a new *dar* for them.

During the Mahdiyya, important political changes took place among the Lahawiyin sections. The privileged position of the sections referred to as *nas* did not change much. Some Lahawiyin moved to live near the Khalifa's capital in Omdurman, while others remained in the White Nile and Butana areas. Two sections (Wad Isa and the Wad Sowar) moved from

⁵⁴ Hassan, *The Arabs and the Sudan*, p.177.

⁵⁵ Awad, 'The evolution of land ownership in Sudan,' pp.212-28.

⁵⁶ Kibreab, *State Intervention and the Environment in Sudan*, pp. 21-30.

the White Nile to Omdurman, while the remaining sections (Wad Hardan and the Wad Hassan) left for Gazira and lived opposite Abba Island. Both these sections were known to own few camels making them appear poor compared to the rest of the Lahawiyin, who were considered highly rich. "They used to have no camels".⁵⁷ The Mahdiyya offered titles to the some Lahawiyin section leaders, who were recognized under the Mahdist system of *emirs*. The appointed Lahawiyin figures were Mohammed al-Zein (al-Faki) and Mohammed al-Easir (Isa). These two *emirs* were subordinate to Ahmed wad Barajob who remained responsible for the Lahawiyin even after his retirement. They provided a good deal of transport for the Khalifa's armies but were not involved in fighting.⁵⁸ However the structure of the Lahawiyin tribe had been profoundly changed and competition between al-Zein's family and the Isa would continue through the twentieth century.

The Khalifa used *emirs* and *amils*' as tax collectors and they were given the responsibility of dealing with any significant problems which arose among tribes or internally within the tribes, particularly when it came to authority and headship of the *umudiyya*. However minor internal affairs were left to the tribal leaders, *sheikhs* and *umdas* who retained 'certain local and tribal power.'⁵⁹ It is possible that this system had created the opportunity for some tribal leaders to establish an administrative and legislative structure, perhaps assisted by a council of elders or *majlis* that might have to interfere to exercise power and settle internal tribal disputes where necessary.⁶⁰ All these changes represented a decline in the authority of the Kababish and their leader, al-Tom wad Fadlalla. .

There were still several sub sections (al-Faki, Magit and Gawamis) of the Lahawiyin in Kordofan, and migration to Butana was a piecemeal process, suggesting a distinct lack of tribal cohesion at this time, with different sections moving at different times. All, however, seized the opportunity to manipulate political legitimacy and space. Their aim was to some extent achieved and maintained. Their closeness to the Mahdi was manifested in protection and entitlements, and the tribe as a whole did not suffer ill treatment during the Khalifa's rule. Some *umudiyyas* of the Lahawiyin proved to be loyal Ansar or followers of the Mahdiyya; and during the Reconquest campaign of 1896-98 some Lahawiyin were among the many

⁵⁷ All information in this paragraph is drawn from Anthropological and Historical Records, 'Tribal Arabs, the Lahawin,' NRO Dakhliya [1] 112/5/27.

⁵⁸ Anthropological and Historical Records, 'Tribal Arabs, the Lahawin,' NRO Dakhliya [1] 112/5/27.

⁵⁹ Hadi, *Tarikh Kordofan al-Siyasi [The Political History of Kordofan]*, p.103.

⁶⁰ Mohamed Ibrahim al-Nur, 'The role of the Native Court', in Lavin (ed.), *The making of the Sudanese State*, Volume 1, p.78.

Ansar who suffered at the hands of Kitchener's army.⁶¹ According to some interviewees, the section with the strongest affiliation to the Ansar was Wad Hardan. They claim to have provided the largest number of soldiers for the Mahdi's army:⁶²

Our grandfather was the Mahdi's Swordsman Mohamed El Shaeir. When the Mahdi came, Wad Hardan were the ones whom he befriended. The majority of the Mahdi army were from Hardan - even those who used to own livestock died for him. The rest of the Lahawiyin with livestock tried not to engage with the Mahdiyya and were distant from the fighting areas... This may explain why Wad Ez- Zein and Magait were always rich.⁶³

This statement may also reveal that a motive for other Lahawiyin sections to affiliate themselves to the Mahdiyya was for fear of losing their camels to the Mahdi if they did not join him. In the wake of their close attachment to the Ansar, the leaders of Wad Hardan tried to retain independent authority and resist the hegemony of the wad al-Zein *umudia*, mapping out a separate political path for their section.

By the end of the Mahdiyya in 1898 a partial settlement had taken place by the Lahawiyin in the Butana except for Wad Mohammed al-Zein, who settled in White Nile province, and Awlad Ghraloga who relocated to Blue Nile province. A few also settled in the Mahdist capital of Omdurman, across the river from Khartoum, in the area known as Hay al-Arab, 'the village of the Arabs'.

It is evident that the Mahdiyya was not as harsh on the Lahawiyin as on many other tribes. On the contrary there was mutual benefit and exchange of services on both sides. That the Lahawiyin camels were not touched helped them to have an interesting role later on in terms of herd tax during the Condominium. Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim has interpreted the support of tribes like the Lahawiyin for the Mahdiyya in terms of their client status: "the client tribes tended to support Mahdi as a revolt to their masters".⁶⁴ However, I would suggest that this argument ignores the time factor which indicated that most of the client tribes showed their discontent with the Kababish effectively during the Condominium period. Some Lahawiyin after all initially returned to the Kababish territory after the Mahdiyya.

⁶¹ Interview with Babikir al-Daw Shola, President Pastoralist Union, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶² Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶³ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶⁴ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.78; NRO CIVSEC 1/38/101; see also Hadi, *Tarikh Kordofan al-Siyasi [The Political History of Kordofan]*.

6. The Mahdiyya and the Kababish

Whether the Lahawiyin were increasingly at odds with the Kababish because they were loyal supporters of the Mahdi; or whether they were supporters of the Mahdi because they were at odds with the Mahdi, it is clear that the leaders of the Kababish were generally hostile to the Mahdi and to his successor. The Kababish disliked the Mahdiyya because it threatened their strategic location on the trade route between Egypt and Kordofan. By 1887 the Khalifa Abdullah was convinced that Sheikh Fadlallah was allied with Egypt, which may well have been the case, given how the Kababish had benefitted from that relationship.⁶⁵ Another reason for Kababish disaffection was that the ruling Nurab had largely lost their control of the lucrative trade transporting gum arabic from al-Obeid to Dongola because of the war between the Mahdiyya and the Turkiyya.

Furthermore the Mahdiyya began to threaten the Nurab by sending them and other tribes north to Kordofan, an official directive urging them that 'no two people have to fight over the way of cultivation and no one can claim the inheritance of land from his fathers or grandfathers to get from it a tribute or tax or value anyone living on it for that reason'.⁶⁶ This posed a direct threat and challenge to an important economic aspect of the power of the Nurab and contradicted what they had taken for granted - their ownership of the *dar* and their absolute right to dispossess any other client tribes by arms. This was known as *barad al dar* that is, the doctrine that the *dar* would be the right for the invader.⁶⁷ From an economic context this directive had deprived the Nurab of the revenue from tributes on water and cultivation, which had come to them as the ultimate owners of the *dar*. Such a directive had a political implication for the Nurab as the Mahdi had requested Ali al Tom wad Salim to return all that had been confiscated forcibly from Dafallah wad Mohamed Juhayni.⁶⁸

Another political implication was that the Mahdiyya had also threatened the political hegemony of the Kababish in the eyes of the client tribes such as Kawahla, Beni Garar, Shanabla and Juhiyina. This led to the disbanding of two sections that split from the Kababish. The two were al-Atawiyia, who joined the Kawahla and al-Aawida and later

⁶⁵ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.74; see Al-Qaddal, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith* [Modern History of Sudan].

⁶⁶ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.76.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.76.

⁶⁸ A well-off sheikh of Juhayna who lived in the vicinity of Kababish had some of his property confiscated by Kababish leaders. For more information see Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*.

moved to Butana. Furthermore the Mahdiyya made the Kababish look small in the eyes of the neighbouring tribes such as Dar Hamid and Hamr who were traditional rivals of the Kababish.

Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim suggested that 'by establishing its own institution, the Mahdiyya had replaced the Bado [Bedouin] aristocracy with its new institutions'⁶⁹ which in fact justified the split of the Lahawiyin and others as client tribes. Many client tribes decided to disentangle themselves from the rule of the Nurab and moved away to Omdurman or to other parts of the Sudan. This helped many client tribes to act independently and to take control of their affairs, leaving the Kababish unable to control their client tribes politically at a time when most of the neighbouring tribes were their enemies.

This move of the client tribes was to a large extent encouraged by the fact that most client tribes were also afraid of the Mahdiyya and thus resorted to allying themselves with large tribes who had already sided with the Mahdi. In doing so they had to disregard their Kababish identity to avoid becoming the 'Ghanima' (literally, 'the booty' of the Mahdi.⁷⁰ For instance, the al Barar section joined the Jaaliyin, al Atawiyia and al Awaiyida joined the Kawahla and Sarajab joined the Kenana while some sub sections of Awlad Ugba moved to Dongola.⁷¹

The *Khalifa* made use of the existing tribal conflict in the Kordofan in his confrontation with the Kababish. He used the client tribes and the neighbouring tribes from Beni Garar, Dar Hamid and Kawahla, and in doing so he opened the door for the suppressed sections within the Kababish, client and neighbouring tribes to enjoy some space and autonomy, overturning the existing unbalanced relationships of power.

Another aspect was that the *Khalifa* had included in his directive his wish to send religious teachers to introduce Islamic teaching and to renovate mosques and staff them with Imams. This was not welcomed by the Kababish as they tended to invite religious sheikhs according

⁶⁹ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, pp.76-77. See also Hadi, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith [The Political History of Kordofan]*.

⁷⁰ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.77. 'Ganima' is a free hold of property, lands and money of a victory. It was a pre-Islamic tradition and was encouraged by the Turco-Egyptian government and was augmented by the Mahdi. For more details on 'Ganima' see 'Proclamation of the Mahdi,' collected by Richard Hill (1966), SAD 97/5/96-131.

⁷¹ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.77.

to their own criteria, approval and supervision. This was a real threat to the Nurab as the imams were meant to advise that all confiscated animals to be returned to their owners – which would seriously affect their wealth. It was also felt by the Kababish to be a threat to the tribe's customs and traditions. The Mahdi had also advised that women and girls should be segregated from the men and should cover their bodies and hair and anyone who refused should be lashed.⁷² However this was contrary to practice among the Kababish, where men were allowed to visit women and talk to them freely.

But the Mahdiyya did not result in a complete break between Kababish and Lahawiyin. A large section of the Nas al-Faki remained in the Butana for two years after the Battle of Omdurman and then went back to Kordofan, not returning to Butana for ten years. The cause of their return to Kordofan was – according to a note made in 1939 - a blood feud.⁷³ The details of this are unclear: many years later, the only blood feud which the leading Lahawiyi *sheikh* could recall was caused by cattle belonging to members of the Hadendawa tribe grazing on a sorghum field cultivated by some Lahawiyin from al-Faki *umudiyya*.⁷⁴ This, incidentally, suggests that when the Lahawiyin first arrived in Butana the land was occupied by the Hadendawa and was not as empty as they later claimed. The last of the Lahawiyin would not finally leave Kordofan until 1909-10, when they were angered by the policies of the new Nazir, Ali al-Tom. Ali al-Tom's reputation for aggression towards other neighbouring tribes perhaps had a positive influence on the Lahawiyin, causing them to face tribal discontent against the Kababish with caution and leading them to abandon Dar Kababish for a new home land.⁷⁵

⁷² 'Manshur al-Hidud min Sayedna al-Imam al-Mahdi' (proclamation of the Mahdi), compiled by Richard Hill, 'Hand-list of Arabic manuscripts and lithographs', (1966), SAD 97/5/129-130.

⁷³ P.B. Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District,' (1939), SAD.777/14/7.

⁷⁴ Interview with Sheikh al-Zein Ahmed al-Zein, by phone, May 2009.

⁷⁵ "Ali al-Tom led the Kababish against the Berti in northern Darfur, defeating them and seizing their herds on the pretext that they were 'enemies of the government'. From there they turned to raiding Dar Zaghawa (a territory straddling the Chad/Darfur border). At the same time the Bani Halba of southern Darfur were looting herds from other neighbouring tribes without any concern for whether their owners were pro or anti government". Andrew McGregor, 'Subverting the Sultan: British Arms Shipments to the Arabs of Darfur 1915-1916,' accessed on 25 November 2010, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/subvertingthesultan.aspx>.

7. The Final Migration to the Butana

In 1898 the British army defeated the Mahdiyya; one consequence of the bloody battle at Omdurman was a structural tribal demographic change, particularly in Gedarif area, the home of tribes such as the Dabayna and Hamaran which were decimated. This left behind an unpopulated area which had lately become the concern of the Condominium Administration which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The movement of most Lahawiyyin sections from Kordofan to the Butana after the first decade of Condominium rule resulted from the taxation and administrative policies of the new government and its appointed leaders, and from the interaction of key personalities: Ali al-Tom, *nazir* of the Kababish; Omara Abu Sin, *nazir* of the Shukriyya, and Mohamed al-Zein, a leading Lahawiyyin sheikh. Also significant in the migration was another Lahawiyyin sheikh, Hamed Abdel Kader. But it was during this period that Mohamed al-Zein or 'Mohamed walad Ezzein' of the al-Faki section really consolidated his leadership and helped to unify the Lahawiyyin in their final migration to the east of the Sudan, though it was challenging for any client tribe to stand in the face of the power and authority of Ali al-Tom. The al-Faki section would continue to play a leading role, as was shown later on by his son Sheikh Adam al-Zein and his role during the Condominium regarding the structuring of the tribe.

Sheikh Mohamed al-Zein, known in the Condominium records as 'walad Ezzein',⁷⁶ was born in Kordofan in the middle of the nineteenth century. He belonged to al-Faki section, and had succeeded sheikh wad Barajub, the swordsman entrusted by the Mahdi with the leadership of the Lahawiyyin, who was one of the appointed *amirs* during the Mahdiyya.⁷⁷ Being appointed as *amir* had enabled Mohamed al-Zein to act as a representative of the Lahawiyyin and talk on their behalf to the *nazir* of the Kababish. He identified himself as a new leader of the Lahawiyyin by trying to keep them united and also by maintaining the privileged position of the al-Faki section.

Following the Battle of Omdurman and defeat of the Mahdiyya, some sections of the Lahawiyyin already began to move to Butana, but others were still in Kordofan. The role of

⁷⁶The Condominium records identified Sheikh Mohamed al-Zein as 'walad Ezzein.' P. Ball, Inspector Butana, 'The Lahowin Tribes' (1921), pp.1-2. NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.2.

the Shukriyya *nazir* in encouraging this migration was already significant, according to a later report by a British official:

On the reconquest of the Sudan, the late sheikh Omara Abu Sin, nazir of the Shukriyya on the Atbara in Kassala Province, induced certain of them to join him on the Atbara and as long as he lived intrigued to get more of them to follow.⁷⁸

In 1898 the British Administration appointed Ali al-Tom, the son of Fadullah as the *nazir* of the Kababish. At the time of his appointment Ali al-Tom was described by Asad as having been “a young man of very modest wealth”.⁷⁹ Asad described him further by stating that in 1899 he was reported by some British officials to be ‘resident in a small village of scattered grass huts about 40 miles west of Omdurman’, and had been sent as Head Sheikh of the Kababish to bring some Kababish raiders to justice, being warned ‘that any slackness on his part might cause his dismissal’.⁸⁰

Ali el Tom must have been successful in dealing with these offenders, because far from being dismissed; he quickly became the favourite of the new British officers of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium government.⁸¹ He was much less popular with the Lahawiyin, however. This unpopularity stemmed from the fact that he began to overuse the authority he had been granted, though he was supposed to be, as Willis put it, the “epitome of the ‘uneducated but loyal and influential nomad sheikhs’ who were to be the basis of authority”.⁸² As Willis has put it:

The handful of European administrators with intimate knowledge of Dar Kababish all knew that its people paid an additional tax, of grain from cultivators and livestock from pastoralists and which was used by Ali el Tom to build up his own wealth.⁸³

The Lahawiyin complained about their share of the tax, as it was considered high, and about the irregularity in terms of time of payment. Their large number of camels was the reason

⁷⁸ Anthropological and Historical Records, ‘Tribal Arabs, the Lahawin’, NRO Dakhliya [1] 112/5/27.

⁷⁹ Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*, p.161. See also Willis, ‘*Hukm*.’

⁸⁰ Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*, p.161.

⁸¹ R. Davies, ‘Official Papers: Policy in Dar Kababish, a memorandum written by R. Davies when Inspector of the Kababish, 9 June 1915, with explanatory note written by him in 1966,’ SAD.627/1/1-21; Daly, *Empire on the Nile*; Gabriel Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate*. See also A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, ‘The Sudan Political Service: A Profile in the Sociology of Imperialism,’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15:1 (1982), pp.21-48.

⁸² Willis, ‘*Hukm*,’ p.37.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.32.

behind the high payments. As a client tribe the Lahawiyyin suffered most because of their wealth in camels compared to other clients such as the Awaida and Bisharab who had fewer camels. I would argue then that the willingness of the Condominium authorities to turn a blind eye to the additional tax extorted by Ali al-Tom was a legitimisation of that power over client tribes which gave him the absolute right to determine the amount of arrears per section and when it was due; in effect the Lahawiyyin and Awaida had to pay a disproportionate share of the overall tribute which Ali el Tom collected, partly for the Government and partly to enrich himself. This contributed to the decision by both tribes to decamp from the Kababish *dar*.

The Lahawiyyin seemed not to have been regular in paying tribute and tax to Ali al-Tom until around 1909, which seems to have been a turning point in the relationship between al-Tom and Mohamed El Zein. MacMichael mentioned that:

They were for several generations attached to the Kababish and lived in northern Kordofan and were known as Guhayena section; but they quarrelled with the “nazir” of the Kababish in 1901 and moved eastwards over the Nile.⁸⁴

Even earlier the fleeing of some sections of the Lahawiyyin had not affected nor disturbed Ali Al-Tom’s status regarding the collection of tributes and taxes from client tribes. This shows that the biggest exodus of Lahawiyyin to Butana had taken place during this year and afterwards. The departure of the Lahawiyyin for Kassala Province was also accompanied by Awaida and Bisharab and this reduced even further the tributes and taxes received by the Kababish.

The Lahawiyyin claimed that they had been satisfied with their treatment by al-Tom’s predecessors, suggesting that it was personal dislike of al-Tom’s rule that had prompted the migration. Mistrust developed between the two sheikhs, Ali al-Tom and Mohamed al-Zein over time. As Mohamed al-Zein wrote directly to al-Tom:

After greetings, I beg to inform you that your grandfather Fadl al-Tom walad Salim has not done any harm to the Lahaween, and the Lahaween are not content in the land because of you and of what you do to the Lahaween. We are not pleased of what you do. If you would like to do us a favour then send the camels to us and at

⁸⁴ MacMichael, *A history of the Arabs*, p.244.

the same time think of the good connection your father has done. We thought that you will be of good. Salams to all in your own quarters.⁸⁵

MacMichael, Inspector of Bara at the time, presented this case to the Governor of Kassala informing him about the correspondence of Ali al-Tom and Mohamed al-Zein. It seemed that the relation between MacMichael and Ali al-Tom was good enough not to be disturbed by Mohamed al-Zein's letter. This might be attributed to the fact that MacMichael had left the matter to be handled by the Governor of Kassala rather than to be dealt with in Bara jurisdiction. The confidence built between Ali al-Tom and MacMichael was not going to be dismantled by a client tribe that was regarded as unimportant by the British authority then. MacMichael wrote

Enclosed here a letter from Mohamed al-Zein, sheikh, of the Lahawiyin, I believe, in Kassala. Will you please note that he, Mohamed says, that the Lahawiyin were satisfied with the treatment they got from Tom's ancestors, so much for the plea that they were only a temporary adjunct of the Kababish in recent days. Secondly Ali al-Tom with reason brought by experience fears that the remainder Guhiyyina still in Kordofan with the Kababish (and they have been one of the biggest sections of the tribe for at least 60 years, if not more) may follow the example of their relatives and with impunity change their Mudiria. He wishes a wire to Governor Dueim in order to forestall them should they attempt it. I pass the matter to you as I have no idea whether it is desired that these persons should remain here to be left to their own desires.⁸⁶

The 1909 migration to Butana was started in part by another Lahawiyin sheikh, Hamad Abdel Kader and his brother Idris, who had already fled there once before in late 1898, but then returned to Kordofan.⁸⁷ In 1909 they moved again to Butana with their and other *umudiyyas'* herds, Hamad abdel Kader and his brother thought that fleeing dar Kababish would have minimized the *ushur* and taxes due and the fact that the Awaida had preceded them in a similar act to Butana had encouraged them to a large extent to follow their example.

Perhaps it is true Hamad Abdel Kader was some far years ago with the Giheina in Kassala, but previously had been with the Kababish i.e. this is the second time he has "decamped" from Kordofan.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Translation of copy of the note sent from Sheikh Mohamed wad al-Zein, *sheikh* of the Lahawiyin to Sheikh Ali al-Tom, by MacMichael, Inspector Bara, 19 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁸⁶ Letter from H.A. MacMichael, Inspector Bara, to Assistant Director General, 22 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁸⁷ There is no evidence to why they returned to Kordofan, however this might be explained by either of the following reasons: the shortage of pasture following the Khalifa Abdallahi's plan to resettle tribes from Western Sudan which might have resulted in less grazing. See Al-Qaddal, *al-Mahdiyyah wa-al-Habashah*, and Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *Tarikh al-Khartum* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1979).

⁸⁸ Letter from Mac Michael to Inspector General, Kassala, 16 July 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

At the height of the tension between al-Tom and wad al-Zein, al-Tom received a statement from Mohamed wad al-Zein at Kassala in which the latter requested that al-Tom should “let off the men and women who sent their camels to Kassala with Hamad Adel Kadir and Idris al Kadar (by way of flight)”.⁸⁹ Mohamed al-Zein went further by asking al-Tom not to prevent the Lahawiyin whose animals were already in Kassala from following their animals so that they could be with them. The *nazir* of the Kababish was apparently concerned that the rest of the tribe might leave; he was concerned both for his ability to collect tribute and for his reputation, both of which would suffer if his subjects were allowed to flee. Ali al-Tom’s fear was that all those who ran away with their camels would not come back and he was sure that al-Zein would “secretly communicate with the rest of the tribe living with me (which he has ready done) to cross the river and follow those who went ahead”. This disturbed Ali al-Tom greatly and he wrote to the Governor of White Nile Province advising him to ascertain crossing points along the White Nile River whereby the Lahawiyin could be traced and forbidden from crossing. In his correspondence Ali al-Tom requested the Governor to bring back those who had fled to Kassala with their camels and also those animals sent earlier with Hamid Adel Kadir and Idris al-Kadar, “so that their owners should not follow them and so that the tribe should be in peace”.⁹⁰

Ali al-Tom claimed that the migration of the Lahawiyin had bewildered him to a large extent and had undermined his image as the principal figure of local authority in northern Kordofan. For a long time he continued to petition the Condominium government urging them to return the Lahawiyin to his authority.

Re the Lahawiyin about whom I have already petitioned with Hamed Abdel Kader Idris al Faki and their people, I beg to state that they have been living with the Kababish for a period of seven fat body [sic] they are of Kababish tribe; but owing to their intrigues and unitary [sic] nazirs of Shukriyia, they eventually deny that they belong to and make false statements to your Excellency. You are however, quite aware of the real situation of the Kababish and its celebrity in the old days of the former government, also misshapes and ruin that the befallen it through the cruelty of the Khalifa. The Kababish have only recovered their name as a tribe through just government; but if ever now and then a section of this itself on the plea that its people are not Kababish, they evidently be the complete ruin of the whole tribe disappear.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Letter from Sheikh Ali al-Tom to Inspector Bara district, 19 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Letter from Sheikh Ali al-Tom, nazir of Kababish, to Inspector General, March 1910, ‘Lahawiyin, Halwiyyen, Shukriyia disputes,’ NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

In response to this letter the Inspector General replied “They all united by intrigues.”⁹² In this regard the Governor was referring to both the Shukriyya and the Kababish, and the personalities of the two *nazirs*, Ali al-Tom and Abu Sin. Ali al-Tom had great confidence that the Condominium Government would bring back the Lahawiyin who had left for Butana (Kassala Province) as he believed that Kordofan was their homeland and that they should be living within his locality with the rest of the Kababish. Al-Tom’s key concern was that he should be able to collect arrears of tributes and also to avoid any future trouble that other groups might cause to the Kababish. However, at the same time Ali al-Tom also accused the Shukriyya *nazir* and felt that the Lahawiyin had left his district because they were encouraged and supported by the Shukriyya which implied that the Lahawiyin would not have the courage to think of leaving Kordofan had they not been united with the Shukriyya.

The Lahawiyin migration should also be understood in terms of competition between the Shukriyya and the Kababish for clients to contribute to taxation, and for control of the camel trade. Al-Tom might not have cared as much to have the Lahawiyin under his “*hukm*”⁹³ if he had not been aware of their wealth. The commercial aspects of his *hukm* relying on client tribes led to the expansion of the camel trade with Egypt. The fact that the Lahawiyin decided to leave *dar* Kababish for *dar* Shukriyya added another dimension in terms of the subtle competition between the two tribal leaders that arose from them being treated differently by the Condominium. The only competitor to the Kababish in terms of the camel trade with Egypt turned out to be the Shukriyya. Having said this, the departure of the Lahawiyin was interpreted by the Kababish as a commercial and economic blow to their economy. Not only had they lost tribute and tax but also the contribution the camel trade would have made to the tribe’s prosperity and welfare.

I would argue that in addition to the above reasons, which were obvious to many Sudanese historians, the Lahawiyin had always felt above the Kababish in terms of being pure Arabas which was a legitimation to their departure. They left to seek refuge among other Arab tribes so as to satisfy an internal search for a homeland that would be more or less acceptable and accommodative to them as Arabs. The drive behind their Arab identity was strong enough for them to move away for the hidden reason which the *nazir* of Kababish and the Shukriyya alike both confirmed was a blood feud. There was no evidence to present regarding the cause of

⁹²Letter from Inspector General to District Commissioner, Bara, March 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁹³Willis, ‘*Hukm*’, pp.29-50.

the blood feud – which might be seen as an assertion of distinct identity - but reference was made to this alleged feud in a letter sent by the nazir of Shukriyya in 1909 to the Governor General where he mentioned that:

the Lahawiyin who arrived in 'Halfayat al Muluk'⁹⁴ with their camels had lived in the east in 1904: 'They then joined the Kababish, until... an incident... cropped up between them and the Kababish; the result was a blood feud and the loss of everything they held and they were forced to come to the east without knowing the Government's orders not to move without permission..⁹⁵

The letter of the *nazir* of Shukriyya suggested that the Lahawiyin were moving reluctantly, and may have been intended to win the sympathy of the Governor General to the Lahawiyin. The feud could have been a reason for a section of a tribe to leave, but would probably not in itself be a strong enough reason to cause the entire tribe to follow. The willingness of the Shukriyya nazir to provide a refuge was crucial, for the only 'Juhayna' tribe to leave Kordofan was the Lahawiyin; the rest had accepted the rule of Ali al-Tom. Some wanted to be independent of the Kababish, but on the whole they were happy to remain part of the Kababish because of the grazing rights it provided them with.⁹⁶

In 1910 the *nazir* of Shukriyya wrote to Sudan's Inspector General informing him that the Lahawiyin had arrived in Halfayya with their camels.⁹⁷ This shows that the *nazir* of Shukriyya was well-informed about the Lahawiyin movement, and anxious to communicate the matter to the higher level of authority. According to the provincial boundary map, Halfayya was not part of his territorial jurisdiction nor was it within the boundary of Shukriyya. It was located within Khartoum province. This might explain why al-Tom planned to travel to Khartoum to discuss the Lahawiyin migration with the British officials.⁹⁸ For al-Tom it became no longer a matter of a client tribe but a matter that involved tribal leaders:

I beg to report that Lahawiyin who crossed the W.N.P this year are surely found in the Gezira vis Awlad al-Faki, under sheikh Abdalla wad Ahmed living at Maatook of Kawa Merkaz, and awlad Mohamed al-Zein under sheikh Gaber Khairallah living at Shabasha, all of them under White Nile Province. They didn't proceed to Kassala. I received today the attached letter from the Lahawiyin awlad Mohamed al Zein in which they report of abandoning their native land (al dar wal watan)

⁹⁴ 'Halfyat al-Muluk' is located in Khartoum north, and a section of the Lahawiyin arrived there in 1909.

⁹⁵ A telegraph sent by the nazir of Shukriyya to the Governor General (in Arabic), 3 March 1909, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁹⁶ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, p.77.

⁹⁷ Letter from Nazir of Shukriyya to Inspector General, 3 March 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁹⁸ Letter from Governor Kordofan to the Assistant Director of Intelligence, 'Awaida Lahawiyin in Kassala,' 23 June 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

without any cause of harm to themselves, they changed their mind and expressed their repentance. Orders have already been issued regarding this.⁹⁹

His letter showed that some sections of the Lahawiyin did not go directly to Butana but had to stay in White Nile province. However this might not have been so for long because awlad Mohamed al-Zein later ended up in Butana. If grazing was available and good it would be the reason why their movement was interrupted before a final settlement was agreed upon in addition to the fact that traditional and customary rule prevailed; the hosting local sheikhs had to approve and welcome their presence before giving a final settlement. Ali al-Tom felt that by sending that information it might be easier for the Government to send them back as they were close to Kordofan. The surprising thing was that the correspondence continued between the Kababish sheikh and the Shukriyya sheikh more than between the former and the Lahawiyin. It was as if the Lahawiyin were not as concerned about the consequences of their migration as the Shukriyya *nazir* was about their attachment to his tribe.

On several occasions Ali al-Tom complained to the Government regarding the return of the Lahawiyin to join the rest of the tribe, hoping to recover from them the amounts which he had paid to the Government on their behalf which were tribute arrears for forty people from Lahawiyin; from Hamed wad Abdel Kader and his brothers and Idris al Kadad. These amounts were “£78 for 1909 and £78 for 1910, a total of 156.”¹⁰⁰

At the same time Ali al Tom was claiming tribute arrears from the Awaida Bisharab, in Kassala – another client group over whom he was trying to maintain his authority, with Government help.

As regard the sum claimed by Ali El Tom from the Awaida Bisharab in Kassala, who have been told to return and from whom I told Ali El Tom he could collect his tribute from 1909 and 1910 on their arrival, the amount of tribute owned has, I believe, not been exaggerated as happened in the case of the Lahawiyin but correctly stated as £19.200.¹⁰¹

Ali Al-Tom did not give up – even if he could not get the Lahawiyin and the Awaida Bisharab back to his *dar*, he insisted on being paid his arrears. On the grounds of the above

⁹⁹ Letter from Ali al-Tom, nazir of Kababish, to Inspector of Bara, 31 December 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Ali Tom, nazir of Kababish, 19 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰¹ Letter from H.A. Mac Michael, Inspector Bara, 22 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

complaint made by Ali al-Tom to the Governor of Kassala, the Lahawi *sheikh*, Al Abdel Kader was a prisoner in Khartoum accused of unpaid tributes arrears

Subject: Sheikh Abdel Kader El Lahawi: Kindly arrange to release sheikh Abdel Kader El Lahawi now in the Khartoum Mudiria Prison, and instructed him to report himself to this office. Tributes arrears due from El Kader and brothers and Idris £ 78 for 1910] people (Lahawiyin)¹⁰²

Ali al-Tom continued corresponding with the British Government to return the Lahawiyin which seemed to have caused him great embarrassment in front of his tribe and neighbouring tribes.

Several times I complaint to you requesting that the Government may kindly arrange to them returned here to join the whole tribe so I may be able to recover from them the amount which I paid on the behalf , but up to day no result having been arrived at.

Being still compliant with the Government order in all events Ali Al-Tom begged that the Government may put an end to this question so that he should not be troubled again. I would argue that Ali al-Tom's tribal image mattered much more than his duty to paying the British administration and whether that unpaid amount would be retrieved or not from the concerned tribes. He had only used this argument of 'paying back' to the Government in order to urge the Government to send the Lahawiyin back.

I had complained several times in regard to the above sub sections who failed to pay me back. I consider this is my duty for the government and the government has to fulfil its part.¹⁰³

In response to the above complaint the Assistant Director of Intelligence took no action regarding the Lahawiyin tribute arrears. On the other hand he suggested the punishment of Awaida Bisharab. It is hardly surprising that the Assistant Director referred to the Awaida and not the Lahawiyin because if the latter had been subject to any punishment which in their case implied financial payment, the nazir of the Shukriya would not have been happy about being deprived of any arrears that were to be paid by the Lahawiyin¹⁰⁴. He asked "Do you

¹⁰² Letter from Assistant Intelligence to Governor of Khartoum Province, Khartoum, 14 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰³ Letter from Ali al-Tom to Inspector Bara, 'Rifat Effendi,' May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Savile, Governor Kordofan to the Assistant Director of Intelligence, Khartoum, May, 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29

wish me to take any steps to punish the Awaida?"¹⁰⁵ A month later in July 1910 the Governor of White Nile Province passed an order to stop the Lahawiyin from crossing the east bank of the White Nile to the Gezira yet it was not an effective order because most of the Lahawiyin by then had already crossed.

By the end of 1909/10 the split by the Lahawiyin from Ali al-Tom of the Kababish and their movement to Butana had several implications. First, the Condominium consented to the Lahawiyin movement without objection. As the Governor Kordofan wrote

every year a section of the Kababish emigrate to the Atbara. Every year they are ordered to return. They do not return and after two or three years they are taken on to the Kassala lists. Every year recently we have been told that no others will be allowed to go & that those who have most recently gone will be sent back. I have never yet come across a case in which any were actually sent back.¹⁰⁶

In 1910 the Lahawiyin petitioned the Governor Kassala to allow them to remain in the Province until the rains as there was no grazing for their animals on the road back to Kordofan. They were permitted to stay. Reading from the earlier correspondences of sheikh Mohamed al Zein it seems evident that the Governor had no intention of making the Lahawiyin and their animals return to Kordofan.

Secondly, Ali al-Tom's wealth was definitely affected by the departure of the Lahawiyin and Awaida Bisharab. Tax and tribute that used to be collected by his tribesmen would be decreased and would be transferred to the Shukriyya. This was pointed by the Governor Kordofan in the letter cited above, in which he asserted that some Lahawiyin had already settled in Butana and had paid less tribute compared to those sections who remained in Kordofan, but noted also that the Government was not willing to assign police patrol to prevent the Lahawiyin from further movement.¹⁰⁷ There was an understanding that most of the officials during the Condominium who were dealing with the Lahawiyin had not shown commitment to putting pressure to stop them from migration. There was a great deal of correspondence and letters yet there was little to implement:

¹⁰⁵ Letter by Assistant Director to Governor of Kassala Intelligence, Khartoum, 23 June 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰⁶ Letter From Governor of Kordofan to Assistant Director of Intelligence, Khartoum, 31 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the following “most likely the whole of the Giheina, one of the largest & wealthiest sections of the Kababish, of which the Lahawiin is a sub-section, will follow suit.”¹⁰⁸

Critically most correspondence exchanged portrayed a concern from the side of the Government on the issue of the loss to the Kababish of the wealth of the Lahawiyin. But Abu Sin had been chosen by the Condominium Government as an important new ally in eastern Sudan and this will be documented in the following chapter. This might explain why the Condominium Administration did not stop the Lahawiyin from moving to Butana despite Government orders; the Shukriyya were growing in power and the camel trade was high among the Government’s exports to Egypt. Sheikh Abu Sin might have convinced the British Government with good pasture in Butana for the Lahawiyin and their camels and this was strong reason for the Condominium approving Lahawiyin movement.

The Condominium tried to dismantle the institutions that Mahdiyya had established and the administration tried to restructure nomadic tribes to and remap their *dar(s)* and to set grazing agreements in action. Thus by doing so, people leaving Kordofan were relocated in Butana. Indeed the departure of the Lahawiyin had created a vacuum for Ali al-Tom particularly at a time when another tribe who had been subordinate to them, the Kawahla had also moved away.¹⁰⁹ The relationship between the Nurab and the Kawahla had been tense for a long time, dating back to before the Mahdiyya. This could be attributed to the close affiliation of the Kawahla with the Mahdiyya, which was the opposite of the Kababish’s bad relationship with the Mahdiyya. Because of this connection with the Mahdiyya, the British Administration later treated the Kawahla with caution. Willis has also argued that the Kawahla had “in those turbulent years [of the Mahdiyya] established separate identity and authority”¹¹⁰ The fact that the Kawahla had tried to split from the Kababish and claimed their nazirate made the Condominium aware of the consequences of the new territorial boundary that the Kawahala might have aspired to and which might have some consequences to other client tribes.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Governor of Kordofan to the Assistant Director of Intelligence, Khartoum, 31 May 1910, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁰⁹ Kawahla were re-attached to Ali al Tom in 1935. For more details see Willis, ‘*Hukm*’; Ibrahim, *Fursan Kunjarat*, and ‘Migration of Lahawiyin,’ CIVSEC 66/3/29, CIVSEC 66/11/99.

¹¹⁰ Willis has also stated that “the Kawahla as a group remained independent, to Ali el Tom’s annoyance”; see Willis, ‘*Hukm: The Creolization of Authority*’, pp.39-40.

Simultaneously the Government had a job ahead of it to deal carefully with Lahawiyin arrivals in Butana where other tribes such as Hadendawa, Bani Amer and Fellata were already there and tribes from Western Sudan had arrived at the same time.

In conclusion, during their stay in Kordofan, the Lahawiyin suffered the control of the 'Nurab' over the tribe and the heavy tax and tribute Ali al-Tom imposed on them, while the lower tax and tribute in Butana had encouraged the Lahawiyin to migrate. The Lahawiyin had left Kordofan because of the factors discussed earlier but the most pressing factor was that they did not accept the rule of a tribe whose 'Arab-ness' they doubted. The Lahawiyin also felt that remaining in dar Kababish might jeopardise the tribe's integrity and their Arab identity would be dismantled in an authoritative environment run by Ali al-Tom. In light of all these issues Mohamed wad al-Zein, having been an *amir* during the Mahdiyya, overcame his fear and led the Lahawiyin to a new destiny in their history in Butana, a phase that witnessed internal restructuring of the tribe and more power struggles between its sheikhs. Grazing and administrative boundaries were instituted and limited political authority and recognition was achieved by the Lahawiyin.

Chapter Two

The Lahawiyin under the Condominium 1910-1928: external boundaries and internal divisions

To the Lahawiyin, boundaries never resemble the true nomadic life: we are free Arabs. To be an Arab is to be a nomad.¹

As the previous chapter showed, in the course of their struggles against the Kababish ruling family the Lahawiyin had already begun to assert a distinctive Arab-ness. Under the Condominium, British administrative policy and changing land use would push the Lahawiyin into a rather contradictory position. For much of the period they resisted or resented the imposition of boundaries limiting their movement, in line with a vision of unfettered movement as the basis of true 'Arab-ness'. Yet as pressures increased on available grazing, and as political and administrative authority became more closely tied to territory, the Lahawiyin would ultimately come to demand a defined territory of their own. And this quest for a *dar* led them to strengthen the tribal unity between the various sections, and to further emphasise their Arab-ness. Questioning Arab-ness would become a way for the leaders of a small *dar*-less tribe to assert themselves in relation to larger, more powerful tribes.

This chapter focuses on a period in which the Lahawiyin struggled to resist the new boundaries imposed by the Condominium government, and shows how this was linked to a process of administrative unification of the tribal structure, imposed by an administration which sought – sometimes obsessively, and often unsuccessfully – to use tribal identity and authority as the basis of government, and to create clear geographical limits to tribal land use which would coincide with administrative boundaries. For the Lahawiyin, the term *nazir* – first introduced by the Turco-Egyptians, and reintroduced by the Condominium to denote a 'paramount' sheikh – acquired new importance; so too did *umda*, a title introduced in nineteenth-century Egypt for a village headman, which spread steadily in Sudan, along with a new sense of the territorial nature of administrative control.² By the 1920s, Lahawiyin sections which had been conceived as kinship groups had also become *umdiyyas* – the

¹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General of Statistics Department, Gedarif, November 2007.

² Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate*, p.144.

administrative units under individual *umdas*. Throughout the period from 1898 to 1918 the creation of provinces and districts was partly related to grazing boundaries.³ These districts were quite important to the Lahawiyin in terms of authority and administration and constituted different layers of confinement. These districts were Butana, Gedarif, Khashm al-Girba and Abu Deleig which were all administered from Kassala province. In this context, Lahawiyin unification paradoxically came about through internal divisions and rivalry and individual ambition, but it was perhaps enabled by the wider context of a shrinking space for the Lahawiyin. As access to grazing and to administrative influence increasingly became defined by 'tribe' so perhaps the Lahawiyin 'created' a tribe to belong to, in Iliffe's famous phrase.⁴

1. 1910-18

1.1. *Becoming confined to the Butana, c. 1910-18*

As the previous chapter showed, the Condominium government to some extent reproduced a tribal structure inherited from the Turco-Egyptian government in the nineteenth century, as it sought to undermine former Mahdist supporters. The Kababish and the Shukriyya had been privileged by the Turco-Egyptian authorities and were now similarly favoured by the Condominium, which was "keen to re-instate" the leading families of the Turkiyya.⁵ The power of these families was greatly expanded under the Condominium, as other sections and tribes were placed under their administration. Small tribes were overseen by eminent tribes such as the Rizeigat, the Kababish, the Shukriyya and the Beja. This would lead to growing rivalry between groups, as ethnicity became the defining factor in administration. At the same time, the rather romantic vision of Arab tribes held by leading British members of the government led to increasing emphasis on claims to Arab genealogies, and attempts to record their history in writing.⁶

³ Kassala, Dongola, Berber, Fashoda, Kordofan and Khartoum provinces were created in 1898. In 1934, Kassala was enlarged to include Red Sea Province after the creation of the Beja 'Confederation' for the purpose of strengthening the tribal system. See Mudaththir Abd al-Rahim Tayyib, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan: a study in constitutional and political development, 1898-1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 49. See M.W. Daly, *Imperial Sudan; The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1934-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), also Peter Woodward, *Sudan, 1898-1989: the unstable state* (Boulder: Rienner, 1990).

⁴ Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*, pp.318-341.

⁵ Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), p.12.

⁶ Asad, *The Kababish Arabs*; Asad, 'Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe.'

Rulers of groups such as the Kababish and Shukriyya, as part of their self-recognized Arab identity and their power to rule, accommodated non-tribal members, creating a power relation through expanded relations by marriage, or incorporation into a fictive genealogy, with other smaller client tribes. This was to safeguard their hegemony over others and to increase their economic, social and political authority. As the previous chapter showed, however, despite disregarding territorial boundaries, the leaders of the Lahawiyin, and those who identified themselves as Lahawiyin, rejected these strategies of incorporation. Though they were a client tribe they nevertheless claim to have maintained rigid *social* boundaries, preserving their identity by refusing intermarriage even with their host tribes. Elsewhere in Sudan movement across ethnic boundaries might be easy, as Johnson has argued of Dinka 'becoming' Nuer⁷; but the Lahawiyin insisted on maintaining their identity, and their claim to greater tribal 'purity' shows the way in which they created their identity in opposition to these larger, powerful tribes.

The Lahawiyin population increased in Butana between 1910 and 1914 compared to the Shukriyya or other tribes.⁸ The increase in their numbers would mean an increase in their contribution towards the tribute and *ushur*, making them more valuable to their hosts. The population continued to increase, making the Lahawiyin the second largest group in Butana, with an estimated 14,000, compared to 20,000 Shukriyya in 1931.⁹ In terms of camel wealth, the herd tax records list an increase from nearly 30,000 camels in 1917 to 46,000 just three years later; it is not clear if this reflected a real increase, or simply more effective taxation listing. In 1931 the Lahawiyin were said to own 50,000 camels out of a total of 90,000 in the Butana.¹⁰ The Lahawiyin's wealth had increased considerably since the beginning of the Mahdiyya, partly because they had not suffered as heavily as other tribes under Mahdist rule¹¹. Also, since their first move to Butana, they had not faced drought or any environmental degradation that would have hampered the growth of their livestock. Their

⁷ Douglas H. Johnson, 'Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer-Dinka Relations in the Sobat and Zaraf Valleys, 1860-1976,' *The Journal of African History* 23:2 (1982), pp.183-203.

⁸ Sudan Government Intelligence Department, Khartoum, 20 March 1916, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁹ P.B. Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District' (1931), SAD 777/14/7. ['The population of the Butana is purely conjectural. Attempts have been made to arrive at a figure by multiplying the numbers of the names on the herd tax lists by seven and by asking sheikhs for information as to the number of houses in their sheikh-ship.']

¹⁰ Ball, Inspector Butana, 'The Lahowin Tribes' (1921), pp.1-14, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102; Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District,' (1939), SAD.777/14/7; NRO Dakhliia 112/5/27

¹¹ Ball, Inspector Butana, 'The Lahowin Tribes' (1921), pp.1-14, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102; Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District,' (1939), SAD.777/14/7; NRO Dakhliia 112/5/27

wealth in livestock gave them a degree of power to negotiate clientage. As a result of the increasing population and herds, in 1916 the Civil Secretary wrote to the Kassala Governor to inform him that the Government had decided that the 'Lahawin [sic] should remain with the Shukria,'¹² and by 1920 the government itself admitted its inability to control this movement or redress the *fait accompli*, despite its close friendship with Ali el-Tom:

No other action would appear necessary at present. The Governor of Kassala is correct in saying the Lahawiin crossed from Kordofan about 1908. They had been a section of Kababish, under the name Guhyna, and showed the same spirit of insubordination at that time as now. They left Kordofan en masse without permission and against orders, but protracted efforts to send them back proved fruitless and were finally discontinued by the Inspector-General's instructions.¹³

Some Lahawiyin appear to have remained in White Nile Province, as this report from 1916 suggests:

From enquiries made among the Sennar Arabs I find that the Kawahla reported as having ascended from Kordofan with their camels, and who were constantly said to be coming into Sennar province en route from the Eastern Sudan, have never left White Nile Province. They are said to be now partly at Gefrat and partly south of Jebal Doham. I am told that they consist partly of Kawahla and partly of Lahawiyin, but none of my informants have actually met them, as they have never come within the boundaries of the province.¹⁴

The Condominium government did not acknowledge the separation that its own policies were creating amongst the Lahawiyin, who were divided by administrative and provincial borders between White Nile, Blue Nile, and Kassala provinces. This division, interestingly, had not brought about any competition along the tribal leadership lines, but it had created tension with government authorities and hosted tribes. These tensions revolved around grazing and tax, for a major aspect of Condominium administration was the attempt to control and regulate nomadic movements. Some British officials admitted the difficulties in imposing territorial limits: 'It was a mistake to fix a rigid boundary because of the acknowledged nature of nomads'.¹⁵ However, in general, British administrative policy did seek to impose such boundaries.

¹² Civil Secretary to Governor of Kassala, N.D. April 1916, CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹³ Civil Secretary to Private Secretary, 13 March 1920. See also Civil Secretary to Governor, Kassala Province, 12 April 1916, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102.

¹⁴ Angus Cameron Lewa, Governor of Sennar Province, 'Migration of the Kawahla,' 16 July 1916, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁵ District Commissioner, Khashm al-Girba, 25 October 1925, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102.

In 1904 the Condominium administration, concerned to limit potential conflicts, assigned a boundary commission to demarcate areas and routes for nomads. This demarcation resulted in the Butana grazing agreement which divided the Butana into general and specific grazing areas. The general grazing area was left open to all southern nomadic tribes¹⁶ that were outsiders to the Butana, while the special grazing area was kept mainly for the Shukriyya and a few client tribes including the Lahawiyin from the Butana.¹⁷ The shared grazing area had no permanent water resources, only some seasonal water reservoirs (*hafirs*) and wells, which compelled roaming tribes to leave the Butana after the rainy season. The Commission's task was extended to set the boundaries dividing Butana from the west with the Blue Nile Province and from the north with Berber Province. By doing so the Condominium administration would increase control over nomads by controlling water points and migratory routes by issuing local orders to regulate the times and direction of the nomads' movement.¹⁸ The 1904 boundary was of great consequence for the Lahawiyin, because it placed them under one Shukriyya *khut*, the Atbara *khut* which lies within the boundary of Gedarif district and later Khasm al Girba. The Lahawiyin were always the weaker party in land matters, reliant on grazing agreements and vulnerable to punishment when they broke them. The Butana area was expanded in 1916 and its boundaries were subsequently modified several times. However, owing to movement of the Butana nomads across the Atbara, these remained 'somewhat vague'¹⁹ until the 1930s. Though also inhabited or used by a great number of other tribes, the Butana was considered Shukriyya tribal land (*dar*); the Lahawiyin were there as subordinate guests.²⁰

The Lahawiyin did not however remain within the imposed boundaries on their grazing, as for example in 1916 when a report suggested problems with the boundary, and a sense of official frustration with the uncertainties over the relationship between identity and place – and in particular with the challenges posed by Lahawiyin identity:

¹⁶ These tribes were Fadanyya, Batahin, Messelmiyya, Rufa'aa, al-Sharg, Kenana and Rekabiyya. See C. Delmet, 'The Native Administration System in Eastern Sudan', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.153.

¹⁷ Delmet, 'The Native Administration,' p.153.

¹⁸ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.110.

¹⁹ Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District' (1939), SAD 777/14/ 1 - 23; cf. also Anthropological and Historical Records, 'Tribal Arabs, the Lahawin,' NRO Dakhliya 112/6/35; Kibreab, *State Intervention*, pp.110-119. Extract from the Report of the Butana Commission, 1904 (Appendix 'A', Monthly Intelligence Report, No 115, February 1904 in Appendix 'B' Sudan Intelligence Report 323, WO33/997). The southern tribes who migrated to southern Butana during rains were from the provinces of Berber, Sennar, Khartoum, Gezira and Blue Nile.

²⁰ Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District,' (1939), SAD 777/14, 18/1 – 23.

I received information four days ago that the 'so-called' Lahawiyin had appeared close to Jebel Moya and sent them orders to return within their own boundary which is in that latitude quite known.²¹

A dispute of uncertain origin occurred at this time between the Lahawiyin and the Halawiyin, which resulted in a decision to impose a temporary prohibiting of the Halawiyin from the eastern boundary of Butana²² where the Lahawiyin used to graze and which in turn confined the Lahawiyin to the boundaries of Kassala Province.²³ The two tribes established peace in 1917 and the Halawiyin were then allowed to return to graze on the eastern boundary.²⁴ Even within the Butana, internal movement continued between the different parts of the Butana and Atbara River.

The Government's desire to limit tribal movement in order to avoid any tension or conflict between nomads could only be realized by redefining and revising provincial boundaries of Sennar, White Nile and Upper Nile, which the Lahawiyin and other tribes used and abused.²⁵ New measures were set to regulate tribal movement and demarcated areas were identified. The new 1916 boundary was south of Kalakis which is approximately 15.2° north by 33.6° east.²⁶ This area had been used considerably by the Lahawiyin and others to bring slaves from Abyssinia into central Sudan, as we shall see later in the chapter.

1.2. Land policy in the early Condominium

As was discussed in the introduction, the Condominium land policy recognized individual claims to land in some areas, but more widely sought to re-instate collective *dar* rights, and to use this to favour large confederations. The Condominium administration perceived that *dar* right was the core of the overall strategy that it pursued in terms of resettling the nomads and the other tribes that were displaced as a result of the Mahdiyya state. During the first two

²¹ From Civil Secretary to Assistant Civil Secretary, N.D. September 1916 (in response to a correspondence dated May 1916), NRO CIVSEC 66/3/39.

²² The mentioned area was between Umrueshid, Bera and El Deid.

²³ 'Report on Lahawiyin – Halawiyin disputes,' 14th August 1916, pp. 153-154, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

²⁴ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.116. See Governor of Kassala Province to Inspector Butana, 11 April 1921, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/101.

²⁵ Assistant Civil Secretary to Governor of Sennar, 3 August 1916, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

²⁶ Governor of Sennar to Civil Secretary, 24th August 1916, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

decades of Condominium rule, tribal boundaries in northern Sudan were assumed to coincide with geographically-defined customary *dar* rights.²⁷

'Guest' tribes in the *dar* might be allowed to cultivate in limited areas; such use was not restricted by time but gave no ownership; long-term 'guests' could develop a usufruct right, as Runger explained:

however this is not a permanent right, but depends on actual possession being continuous. It is economically most valuable because this potential use right can become actualised at any time and place.²⁸

As was discussed in detail in the introduction regarding land tenure in Sudan, the Condominium administration was principally concerned with settlement of agricultural land as a basis of the economic future of Sudan. The 1903 legislation which did not recognize nomads' rights to *karu* or *atmors* had a significant effect on the Lahawiyin, many of whom now now lived between the Atbara and Setit rivers. Further legislation in 1905 ruled first, that

all waste, forest, and unoccupied land shall be deemed to be the property of Government until the contrary is proved;²⁹

By this Ordinance more land was named agricultural land and became the property of the government, as explained by Shazali:

The class of government land subject to customary land usufruct rights mainly comprised the abundant rainland where usufruct rights of nomadic pastoralists and sedentary cultivators were recognized; it also included the whole of southern Sudan.³⁰

But this formal ownership was combined with a policy which engaged the 'traditional authorities' in issues related to land and especially customary land which it recognized.

For the Lahawiyin, this meant that their claims to land were mediated through others. They had been assigned areas to cultivate and areas to graze within the Shukriyya *dar*; however

²⁷ Awad, 'The evolution of land ownership in Sudan', pp.212-28; Spaulding, 'Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class,' pp.1-20. See also Saeed .M. al-Mahdi, 'Some general principles of acquisition of ownership and of rights over land by customary prescription in the Sudan', *Journal of African Law* 20:2 (1976), pp. 79–99.

²⁸ Runger, *Land Law and Land Use Control in Western Sudan*, p.40.

²⁹ Al-Mahdi, *Guide to land settlement*, pp.86-96.

³⁰ Shazali and Ahmed, 'Pastoral land tenure and agricultural expansion,' p.5.

these areas were not recognised outside the customary rights of the Shukriyya. Yet the Lahawiyin took it for granted that it was their land as long as they used and took care of it. In interview, some Lahawiyi sheikhs argued that

As long these areas were not inhabited and grazed by others, we were the ones to claim them. Not only that, but we are the ones who used to protect them [Shukriyya] from Abyssinians and the *shifra*.³¹

But although nomadic tribes were granted rights to land and watering, these rights had to be approved by district commissioners and tribal leaders. For the Lahawiyin, every right was negotiated either by the DC or *nazir* of the Shukriyya. Even the digging of a well or *hafir* had to be approved by the DC.³²

1.3 Administrative restructuring, c. 1910-1927

During this time the Condominium began to lay the basis for an administrative structure. The British DCs were supported by Assistant District Commissioners (ADCs), who until the last years of the Condominium were always British, *mamurs* (a rank roughly similar to that of ADC, but held by an Egyptian, and in later years by Sudanese), accountants, *sirrafs* (cashiers), *katibs idaras* (clerks), translators and police. This developing administrative hierarchy supervised- but also relied on - the recognised (and sometimes newly created) 'tribal' leaders. In Butana, the Lahawiyin relied on the long-recognized possessors of the *dar*, the Shukriyya, and their rulers, the Abu Sin family. The Shukriyya hosted the Lahawiyin with the intention of adding to their judicial, administrative and financial authority. They provided the Lahawiyin with land, water and political representation to the Condominium government but this did not satisfy the Lahawiyin. In a letter to the Civil Secretary as early as 1910/11, the Governor of Kassala – Baily - revealed his apprehension as to whether the Lahawiyin would accept the leadership of the Shukriyya *nazir*, Awad al-Karim Abu Sin. Responding to the suggestion that that other tribes, such as the Ja'alín, Kawahla and Batahin, should be considered to be under the auspices of the *nazir*, Baily thought that this idea was slightly premature. His prime concern was that the *nazir* should exercise better authority over the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin.³³ In pursuit of this goal, the *nazir* and the Deputy Governor of

³¹ Interview with Lahawi sheikhs in al Shuwak Rural Council, November 2008.

³² Lea, Butana notebook No. 1, SAD 645/3/1-90.

³³ Baily, Governor of Kassala Province to Civil Secretary, 27 January 1927, NRO CIVSEC 1/28/78.

Kassala Province went on a tour to mobilize the Lahawiyin's support for the Shukriyya nazirate.³⁴

On the whole, Condominium officials were reluctant to address Lahawiyin grievances, though they were aware of them:

They would like to be independent of the Shukria and yet be allowed to graze in dar Shukria at their own sweet will. their *umdas* are nearly all self-made men and intriguers, who care little for anything except their own advancement. Their people enjoy having a grouse; and the *umdas* are apt to stir the mud up in order to fish in the troubled waters; [but] it must not be imagined that the Lahawin complaints are always groundless.³⁵

The Lahawiyin suffered a lot from the restriction of grazing areas which resulted in an increased loss of animals from disease. Theft of livestock was also a major problem for the Lahawiyin, as they were usually the victims rather than perpetrators: it was mentioned by P. Ball that during his three years of service in Butana District, he never had a case of theft raised against a Lahawi.³⁶ For Lahawiyin, such problems could be readily blamed on their Shukriyya hosts; although the hardship was not openly voiced it was probably the basis for the Lahawiyin discontent – expressed again through plans for migration - at that time.³⁷

The migration of the Lahawiyin had led to a disturbance in the social structure of the tribe itself. Some sections – now formally *umudiyas*, each with its own *umda* - became close to the Shukriyya and others kept their distance. This resulted in the division of the tribe with some wanting to go back to Kordofan. Awlad Hardan wished to go back to Kordofan and had petitioned the Government to let them leave while others preferred to remain in the Butana.

The Governor of Kassala noted in 1916 that

The reasons alleged for Lahawin dissatisfaction with Kassala Province were as follows: Restriction of grazing areas, resulting increase of loss of animals from disease, Loss of animals by theft, over oppression by the Shukria. The third reason was not openly voiced but it is probably the foundation of Lahawin discontent at that line. Enquiries showed that in the original quote a feeling of discontent with their lot was prevalent throughout the tribe. The desire to move to Kordofan and the White Nile Province was not shared by the whole tribe.³⁸

³⁴ T.Khalid et al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.318.

³⁵ Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District,' (1939) SAD 777/14/21.

³⁶ Ball, Inspector Butana, 'The Lahawin Tribes' (1921), pp. 1-14, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/102.

³⁷ 'Note on Lahawiyin petition for transfer from B.N.P to Kordofan,' 1925, NRO Kassala 1/78/350.

³⁸ 'Note on Lahawiyin: petition for transfer from B.N.P to Kordofan,' 1925, NRO Kassala 1/78/350.

The British administrators therefore refused to allow any return migration by the Lahawiyin, which left authority over the Lahawiyin in the hands of the Shukriyya³⁹. The Lahawiyin were still divided into their sections, but Sheikh al Igba Abdalla continued to have some wider influence.

Condominium policy towards the Lahawiyin must be seen in the context of 'native administration' more widely. In 1917, the Sudan Government's Legal Secretary, Bonham-Carter, proposed a committee to study and report on what steps should be taken to involve the 'native Sudanese closely in the work of the Government Departments'.⁴⁰ In 1920, the Condominium administration accepted the recommendation of the Milner Commission which emphasised that the native Sudanese should handle the administration of their country. Up to 1924, the 'dual policy' promoted such Sudanese involvement both in terms of bureaucratic structures and 'customary authority'; but after the events of 1924, which were seen by the British as evidence of the unreliability of educated Sudanese, the emphasis was entirely on customary authority, and 'Native Administration, as it was called, became 'almost a doctrine'.⁴¹ As the Power of Nomadic Sheikhs Ordinance, 1922, stated:

It has from time immemorial been customary for sheikhs of nomadic tribes to exercise powers of punishment upon their tribesmen and to decide disputes among them and whereas it is expedient that the exercise of these powers should be regularised.⁴²

In 1923 the Power of Nomadic Sheikhs Ordinance was applied to Butana district. Gradually, in its application, the 1922 Ordinance also included *umdas* besides which sheikhs of big confederations were given some limited authority. Few of the *umdas* were able to fully practise and use the authority they had been granted.⁴³ Limited power was granted to the Lahawiyin sheikhs, Sheikh al Igba Abdalla and Sheikh Adam al Zein. Native administration created a tribal 'hierarchy': the *nazir* of the Shukriyya, for example, became close to the

³⁹ R.E.H. Baily, 'Outline of Shukria history,' in 'notes on the history of the Shukriyyah, Balahin and Ashraf tribes,' SAD.533/4/44. See also Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmad, *Shaykhs and Followers: Political struggle in the Rufa'a al-Hoi Nazirate in the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1974).

⁴⁰ E. Bonham-Carter, Legal Secretary, 'Note on the Administrative Policy', 10th May 1917, NRO B.N.P 1/17/102.

⁴¹ L.M. Buchanan, 'Memoirs,' SAD 797/8/41.

⁴² Ahmed I. Aboushouk and Anders Bjorkelo, *The Principles of Native Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1956* (Omdurman; Bergen: Abdel Karim Mirghani Cultural Centre; Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2004), p.88.

⁴³ Some mds of the Shukriyya were granted powers under the Ordinance. See Acland, 'A note on the history of the Shukriyyah', November 1931, SAD 777/14/33-53.

British administration to the extent that his advice was often taken whereby the client tribes maintained a lower position in the hierarchy away from any direct privileged authority.

In 1924 the Condominium administration granted some budgetary powers to *nazirs* including Abu Sin of the Shukriyya and Ali al Tom of the Kababish. By 1925 the Village Court Ordinance was in place to extend some authority to cliental tribes, whose sheikhs could deal with minor offences. The jurisdiction of 1925 was limited to some provinces but the 1928 Village Court Ordinance covered all northern Sudan provinces and was effective within districts and villages. This legislation covered the sheikhs of smaller tribes, and under it Sheikh Adam al Zein became the first to preside over the Lahawiyyin Village Court.⁴⁴ His achievement of this position reflected a restructuring consequent upon a rivalry between the leaders of two *umudiyyas*, wad al Faki and Magit, over the headship of the tribe.

This rivalry became entangled with northern Sudan's sectarian politics, and the competition between Sufi orders which, in the early twentieth century, tended to simplify into an overall competition between two major groups. The Khatmiyya and Sammaniya, as two Sufi *tariqas*⁴⁵ had influenced the socio political role of tribal structure in Kassala province. The relation between the two *tariqas* had always been competitive. In the nineteenth century, the Khatmiyyaa was allied to the Turco-Egyptian Government and it later proved a stronger ally to the Condominium while the Sammaniya took a different path, being identified with the Ansar, the supporters of the Mahdi.⁴⁶

During the early times of the Condominium, the Lahawiyyin had been followers of the 'Sammaniya *tariqa*' which explained their proximity and affiliation to the Mahdiyya whilst in Kordofan. Lahawiyyin sub sections which were clients of Tom wad Salim of the Kababish had been considered Sammaniya, but had gone over to the Khatmiyya when they moved to Butana in 1910. Since then most of them followed that *tariqa*, though some of them used to visit Sharif Yusif al-Hindi who was seen as an offshoot from the mainstream of the

⁴⁴ Acland, 'A note on the history of the Shukriyyah', November 1931, SAD 777/14/33-53.

⁴⁵ Amani M. El Obeid, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Kassala and Gedaref States,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.119-123.

⁴⁶ El Obeid, 'Sufi Brotherhoods in Kassala and Gedaref States', p.128. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*; Ali Salih Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in Sudan* (London: C.Hurst, 1992); Muhammad 'Umar Bashir, *Tarikh al-harakah al-wataniyah fi al-Sudan, 1900-1969 / ta'lif naqalahu min al-Inkiliziyah Hinri Riyad, Wilyam Riyad, al-Junayd 'Ali 'Umar ; raja' at Nur al-Din Sati [Revolution and nationalism in the Sudan, AR]* (Beirut: Dar al-Hil, 1987); Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *Buhuth fi tarikh al-Sud an, al-aradi, al-'ulam al-ara', al-khilafah, Barbar, 'Ali al-Mirghani*, (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1992); Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim, *Adawat al-Hukm wa al-Wilayah Fi al-Sudan* (Beirut : Dar al-Jil,1992).

Khatmiya. The Lahawiyin showed no consistency in their attachment to *tariqa*. Some years later, when Sheikh Adam al Zein was reinstated as *umda* of wad al Faki, he fully positioned himself with the Khatmiya. One informant argued that the inclination to the Khatmiya was a political manoeuvre that al Faki and Magit sections had used in the early years of its arrival in Butana to be accepted by Hadendawa whom they had encountered in Atbara River areas, and by a locally respected *faki*, a Muslim healer and diviner.⁴⁷

On the other hand the sub sections that were in the White Nile Province⁴⁸ - Nas wad Hardan, Nas wad Isa and Nas wad Sowar - for the most part followed the Sammaniya though some of them also went over to the Khatmiyya and developed a similar pattern of visiting Sharif Yusif al-Hindi. The other sections, under sheikh al Igba Abdalla, including the Magit and the rest of the tribe was divided between Khatmiya and Sammaniya. The *sheikhs* of the Magit *umudiyya*, for instance, were all Khatmiyya. The division between sections along the two *tariqas*, to a large extent was based on the political affiliations of each sheikh. This might have served the interest of each sheikh but it did not serve the tribal interest. It also served the two traditional parties in term of political support and many followers that were added to them. In Kordofan and White Nile the Lahawiyin had been classified as followers of the Ansar; that some sub sections changed their beliefs with the movement from Kordofan to Butana revealed their new affiliation to the Shukriyya, who followed the Khatmiyya. The Lahawiyin affiliation to Sherif al Hindi could be useful to them in terms of positioning with the rest of the Khatmiyya, as will be seen in the case of al Igba Abdalla and his claim against the Shukriyya. This relationship of al-Hindi to the Lahawiyin could also be explained by a quarrel between the Sharif and the *nazir* of the Shukriyya, which took place in March 1920 when the two were travelling back to Sudan after their involvement in the 'loyalty delegation' of sectarian leaders and 'traditional authorities' which visited King George V. The quarrel was described by an official as an 'extensive affair'.⁴⁹ Soon after this two Lahawi sheikhs went to Khartoum to complain about the *nazir* of the Shukriyya, one intending to visit the leader of the Khatmiyya, Sayed Ali al-Mirhgani and the other to see Sherif Yusef al-Hindi. The two sheikhs were informed that 'they should apply to the authorities if they had any complaint'; and they were also put in detention for few days, to discourage this sort in order to make them learnt not every complaint should they travel for to Khartoum. One official's

⁴⁷ Interview with Dr. Abdullah al-Bashir Musa, Director Ministry of Health, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁴⁸ Those sections in White Nile province were under sheikh wad al-Lebeih.

⁴⁹ ??? to Lyall, 28th March 1920, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

comment on this hinted at the abuses which might underly such complaints, and the way that encouraging complaints could be a tactic in rivalries.

I gather from native sources that the tax returns are not made out with complete fidelity to the facts, and the Shukria make the difference and the figure is sufficiently large to arouse their keen objection to any system that may endanger their profits. As far as the recent events are concerned, I attributed the remarks of the Lahawiin to a desire to annoy Awad El Karim and the Shukria, and to the best of my knowledge sheriff Yusef has maintained a correct attitude over Lahawiin coming here to complaint, merely directing them to the Government.....I have mentioned privetaly to Yusef El Hindi that he should avoid semblance of interference in Shukria affairs, but I think it only fair to him to give some account of what I believe to be the facts to indicate that whatever may have been the case some years ago, he has ..erly[sic] adopted a correct attitude. I further understand that owing to the failure of the Lahawiin to provide the customary "awaid" [payments] they are not likely to receivee Sherif Yusef's assistance.⁵⁰

Yusef al-Hindi tried to use the Lahawiyin for his own sake by corrupting the image of sheikh Awad al-Karim Abu Sin; but this was hard to do when some of the British officials thought high of the latter as a man who 'does not take money from the Arabs.'⁵¹

The Shukriyya remained Khatmiyya⁵² and the Lahawiyin majority also became Khatmiyya. Apparently, becoming Khatmiyya or Sammaniya to the Lahawiyin was not an ideological issue; it was a way to manoeuvre between powerful patrons. In terms of daily life and cultural practice, in births, weddings and death, Sherif al-Hindi was probably the most influential,⁵³ but combining more than one loyalty seemed to be the trend for the Lahawiyin. Hardan was the only *umudiyya* which remained independent of wad al Faki and Magit that adhered strongly to the Ansar sect forming a new line in the tribe leadership.

⁵⁰ ??? to Lyall, 28th March 1920, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁵¹ ??? to Lyall, 28th March 1920, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁵² Tim Niblock, *Class and Power in Sudan: the dynamics of Sudanese politics, 1898-1985* (Albany: Suny Press, 1987), p. 210.

⁵³ Interview with Dr. Abdullahi al-Beshir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, January 2008.

2. Rivalry between al Igba and al- Zein

1918-20 was a turning point for the Lahawiyin regarding internal tribe restructuring. The establishment of a new administrative district in the Butana and the division of the Shukriyya between Butana and Atbara resulted in only one section, Hardan, remaining with Omara Abu Sin in Atbara District, while the rest of the Lahawiyin were connected to Ali Wad al-Had, Butana District.⁵⁴

Al Igba Abdalla was appointed *umda* of the Magit and Gawamis in 1919, when the Lahawiyin were for the first time granted the title *umda*, a total of six Lahawiyin *umd*as being created.⁵⁵ By this time, the Condominium Government had become concerned about the presence of the Lahawiyin in Butana, and how it might complicate tribal relations regarding grazing and rights over land: a *sheikh khut* position was created to manage the Lahawiyin and ensure that they paid tax.

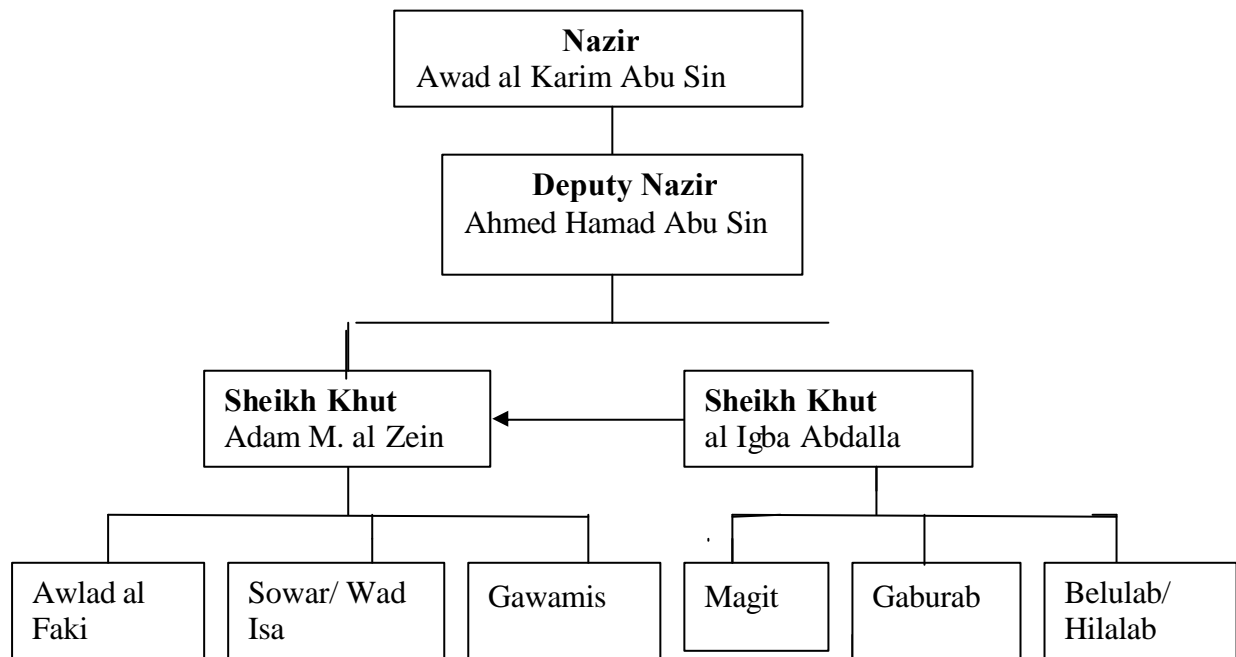
In 1920 the six *umudiyyas* were rearranged, divided up into two *khuts* headed by Adam al Zein and al Igba Abdalla respectively, under the two Shukriyya *nazirs*, Ahmed Hamed Abu Sin and Awad al-Karim Abu Sin. The creation of these *khuts* gave a kind of recognition to the Lahawiyin, but at the same time created a new dividing line, between the two sheikhs: Sheikh Adam al Zein, who was then quite young at eighteen years old compared to Sheikh al Igba Abdalla who was fifty-three years old. The new *sheikh khut*, Adam al Zein had little support from his people but the full support of the Shukriyya *nazir* and the Government whose requirement was, as stated by Baily, ‘government support’; if that was obtained, authority would be granted.

The *sheikhs khut* had to ensure that certain public works were undertaken, including the digging of the wells, and the building and maintenance of roads and rest houses. They also had minor administrative tasks such as reporting death. But they were also, most importantly, supposed to assist in the administration of justice and were responsible for the collection of

⁵⁴ Sheikh Mohamed Awad al-Karim Abu was appointed paramount nazir of the Shukriyya by the Condominium Government. After his death in 1903 he was succeeded by his brother who had two deputies, Ali Al Had Abu Sin for Butana district and Umara Mohamed Abu Sin for Atbara district. For details see ‘Report on the Shukria,’ 24 January 1900, NRO Dakhliya 112/6/35.

taxes. The Magit, Geborab, and Hilalab and Belulab sections were placed under Al Igba Abdalla. The Gawamis, formerly part of al Igba's *umudiyya*, were transferred to Adam al Zein's *khut*. Within his area, al Zein was responsible for the three tribal leaders of Gawamis, Sowar, Wad Isa and Wad al Faki who were known by the military ranking of *magadem* (a title that was given to prominent and active tribesmen who had participated in the battle of Omdurman.).⁵⁶

The following diagram explains the political structure and hierarchy of the tribe under the Shukriyya 'Confederation' which was approved by the Butana district officer in 1925. The reporting mechanism that was established between the two Lahawiyyin *sheikhs* indicated the British mistrust of Sheikh al Igba Abdalla as well as the preparation for the amalgamation of the different sections under one *sheikh*.⁵⁷



⁵⁶ Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District', 1939, SAD 777/14/21/8.

⁵⁷ Acland, District Commissioner, 'Copy of handing over notes on Butana District', 1939, SAD 777/14/21.

The new *sheikh khut*, Adam al Zein, was appointed sheikh of nas wad al Faki in 1918 on the death of his father, Sheikh Mohamed al Zein. Sheikh Adam was then nominated as *sheikh khut* by a few of his people from al Faki section and supported and approved by the Shukriyya *nazir*. In the same year he was given a 3rd class Robe of Honour when he was only twenty-three years old. Like the Kababish *nazir*, Ali e-Tom, Sheikh Adam had in fact ‘adroitly turned the British concerns to his advantage’;⁵⁸ he was described positively by a British official as ‘honest, and energetic and not afraid of enforcing Government orders at the risk of making himself unpopular with his own people’.⁵⁹

Al Igba, by contrast, was said to have ‘endeavoured several times to assume the leadership of all the Lahawiyin though [he] has no family claims to this position and has done so with a view of obtaining a Nazirship over the whole Lahawiyin.’⁶⁰ Al Igba was described by DC Butana in 1921 as “dishonest and untruthful and a born intriguer”.⁶¹ All these personal qualities of al Igba had to do with the fact that he was a man in his fifties who never abided by the laws of the Condominium and was always rebelling against orders.

The rivalry between the two *sheikhs khut* was already emerging in 1921, when some of Adam al Zein’s *sheikhs* reported to the D.C. that the Lahawiyin of Sheikh al Igba had deserted to the Italian border. He sent a force to bring them back to a place called al Shagarab, south of Khashm al-Girba, eight days journey from the Butana and they were then instructed not to leave.⁶² Al Zein may have deliberately tried to discredit al Igba in British eyes.

He is young and inclined to be much like a government protégée, but he has had rather a difficult and responsible task and he promises with courage on his part to visit, unaccompanied by Government officials, the hostile parts of his tribe, and with attention to the wise council of the nazir to be satisfactory.⁶³

Due to historic hostility between Magit and al Faki and between the latter and the Geburab, Adam al Zein was not widely welcomed by those two *umudiyyas*. The Magit were not happy

⁵⁸ Willis, ‘*Hukm*,’ p.40.

⁵⁹ Baily, ‘Note on Butana District,’ 1921, in ‘notes on the history of the Shukriyyah, Balahin and Ashraf tribes,’ SAD.533/4/44-46.

⁶⁰ Ibid., SAD.533/4/44-46.

⁶¹ Ibid., SAD.533/4/44-46.

⁶² NRO Dakhliya (1) 112/5/27.

⁶³ Governor of Berber Province to Director of Intelligence, Sudan Government Khartoum, March 1928, NRO CIVSEC 66/4/30.

to have the al Faki on an equal standing with them. Up to now this feeling of enmity with the people of al Faki has grown throughout the years. An informant from the al Faki put it interestingly as ‘*Al-Yad AlMa Btalaha Khut Magit Telaha*’.⁶⁴ Symbolically this means that ‘the enemy which you cannot face put the Magit in front to protect you’ explaining how the Magit were known as fierce and cruel characters. It also implies that the Magit are people who initiate trouble. The two *sheikhs* had different ways of coping with the Condominium authority and a different approach to holding power. Al Igba seemed to be confrontational and uncompromising while Adam al Zein sought to advance himself – and the status of the Lahawiyin – by cooperation with the Condominium. Each tried to rule the tribe by giving privileges such as land, headship of *umudiyyas* and positions in tribal courts to close and direct blood relations.

The rivalry between al Igba and al Zein was also entangled in the relations between the Lahawiyin and the Shukriyya. When a general meeting was held in the presence of certain government officials to discuss the subordination of the Lahawiyin to the Shukriyya *nazir*, al Igba called upon Sheikh Awad al-Karim Abu Sin, Nazir of Shukriyya and Lahawiyin, to take an oath before the assembly that he would not treat any Shukriyya better than any Lahawi, and would look upon them with an eye of equality.⁶⁵ Abu Sin refused to take the oath. Sheikh Abu Sin paid no attention to the presence of the government officials or to the Lahawiyin’s *sheikhs* and *umdas*. Such a reaction led to a stressful situation for the Lahawiyin that caused them to suspect that their new *nazir* would not treat them fairly. On the other hand, the gap between the two *sheikhs*, Awad al-Karim and al Igba, had widened as Awad al-Karim was offended by al Igba’s request. This particular request of al Igba caused more enmity between the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin which became obvious to everybody. In addition, Sheikh Adam al Zein seemed to be siding with the *nazir*, Awad al-Karim. Al Igba’s supporters regarded Adam al Zein as a plotter, interpreting his stand as a jeopardising the Lahawiyin’s position as a tribe and reinforcing the hold of the Shukriyya on the Lahawiyin.⁶⁶

Some Lahawi sheikhs were reportedly ‘looking upon him, (Adam al Zein) as a *sheikh* and not as a Lahawi’.⁶⁷ This reveals how a ‘Lahawi’ identity was further emerging through political

⁶⁴ Interview with the Late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, Former President of the Pastoralist Union and Khatib Khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

⁶⁵ Baily to Director of Intelligence, ‘Translation of Agents report,’ 1927, NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁶⁶ Ibid., NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁶⁷ Ibid., NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

and administrative relations with the Shukriyya. A real Lahawi, as interpreted by some Lahawiyin, would not compromise the wishes of his people to serve his own interest or become allied with a stranger. Their identity as Lahawiyin seemed to proceed from their political aspiration and this is why some Lahawiyin sheikhs thought that Adam al Zein should be asserting Lahawiyin rights in the face of Shukriyya dominance.

I would say that all the recent troubles in the Lahawiyin are traceable to these first and important differences. The nazir and Wad al Zein try to control the affairs of the whole tribe; the nazir's word is that listened to by the Government officials; and therefore the position of sheikh al Igba, in the eyes of the Government officials is precarious. Al Igba is a not a match for the *nazir* and Wad al Zein combined, especially as these two are supported by Government.⁶⁸

Interestingly enough, Baily took a different stand from the rest of the British officials who dealt with the Lahawiyin. He was once described as having the “greatest fondness for the Shukriyya and the *nazir*”.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Baily to Director of Intelligence, ‘Translation of Agents report,’ 1927, NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁶⁹ Governor of Kassala Province, Notes on Gedarif District, NRO Kassala 3/139/615.

3. Grazing boundaries and inter-tribal relations

Within a few years of the creation of the two *khut* for the Lahawiyin, Sheikh *Khut* al Igba was put on trial and dismissed, resulting in the unification of the tribe under one *Sheikh Khut*. We have seen already that the British administrators were predisposed to favour the young and pliable Adam al Zein over the older and more resistant al Igba Abdalla. But in order to understand the particular reasons for the dismissal of the latter, it is necessary to return to the wider context of government policy towards the Lahawiyin, in terms of their grazing migrations and land rights. In this context another tribe, the Hadendawa, were also significant, as well as the continuing fluctuating relations between the Lahawiyin and their 'hosts', the Shukriyya.

A grazing agreement had been signed in 1913 between the Shukriyya and the Hadendawa. This agreement was one of the customary unwritten agreements signed in a tribal meeting (*majlis*) between the *nazir* of the Shukriyya and the *nazir* of the Hadendawa. It compelled each *umda* or sheikh of the Shukriyya to satisfy the *nazir* of the Hadendawa in terms of grazing protection (confined grazing in Hadendawa land) and if they failed to do so, the *nazir* of Hadendawa had to appeal to the British Government. The Government then had the right to fix fines and the time in which they had to be paid.⁷⁰

Hassan has argued that the land policies and grazing agreements issued during the Condominium benefitted some nomadic tribes more than others.⁷¹ Some agreements caused tension between tribes, such as that tension between the Shukriyya and the Hadendawa over territorial rights to land east of the Atbara River, which was known as "no man's land". This had on the one hand developed into tension over administrative and district boundaries along the Gedarif and Kassala Provinces, while on the other hand, the Lahawiyin feared the loss of 'the no man's land', over which they believed they had rights because they had cleared it when "it was forest inhabited by wildlife".⁷²

⁷⁰ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.189. For more details, see NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁷¹ H. M. Salih, *Hadendawa Traditional Territorial Rights and Inter-Population Relations within the Context of the Native Administration System, 1927-1970* (Khartoum: Institute of African and Asian studies, The Nile Valley Conference, Dept. of Social Anthropology, University Of Khartoum: 1980).

⁷² Interview with the Late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, Former President of the Pastoralist Union and Khatib Khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996

The issue of grazing created a bond between the Lahawiyin and the Shukriyya against the Hadendawa for the first and only time. From 1918 into the 1920s these two tribes repeatedly violated the agreement with the Hadendawa.⁷³ The Lahawiyin, as a non-signatory party in the agreement, took this opportunity to refuse to abide by the agreement and particularly to refuse to pay any tributes or fines to the Hadendawa, claiming that they were guarded by the Shukriyya who in this situation were obliged to pay tribute to the Hadendawa. For the first time the Lahawiyin seemed to value their cliental relationship with the Shukriyya. As a further consequence the tribal assembly called upon the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin to agree not to violate the set boundaries of 1913 unless allowed by the *nazir* of the Hadendawa. However it was difficult to control nomads, especially the Lahawiyin.⁷⁴

By 1923 they had infringed further into the Hadendawa homeland, which caused fighting between the two tribes in which many were injured. The tribal assembly was called to negotiate and reconsolidate between parties on the matter. The Shukriyya on the one hand were representing themselves and the Lahawiyin at the same time, and the Hadendawa on the other hand had to abide by the customary laws of the tribe. The *nazirs* of both the Shukriyya and the Hadendawa wanted to keep this incident within the jurisdiction of the tribal assembly because otherwise their stature as tribal authorities would be compromised if they failed to solve 'minor' troubles over grazing and nomadism. It is worth mentioning here that this tribal assembly also included members of resident tribes like the Bani Amer and the Rashaida, and that membership was bound by any decisions the assembly might have taken. The Lahawiyin also admitted that they needed the Shukriyya's support against attack and theft by the Hadendawa on their herds, as much as the pasture and water point which was located on the Hadendawa's land.⁷⁵

The work of the tribal assembly did not make much difference to the movement of the nomadic tribes searching for pasture. In 1924 for instance, there was a sudden movement of tribes from within the Butana towards the Atbara River. These were specifically Shukriyya, Lahawiyin and the Rashaida. The cause of this movement was a shortage of rain inside the Butana, while there was more rainfall on the east bank of the Atbara which offered the

⁷³ Governor of Kassala to Civil Secretary, 31 May 1920, NRO CIVSEC 1/9/30.

⁷⁴ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.189. For more details, see NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁷⁵ ADC Gedarif to DC Butana, 26 September 1927, NRO Kassala 1/78/348; report of a meeting of DCs of Singa, Abu Deleig, and Kassala, 15 August 1925, NRO CIVSEC 66/11/101; Kibreab, *State Intervention*, pp.42, 46-47; Paul Andrew, *A history of the Beja tribes of the Sudan* (London: Cass, 1971).

chance of better pasture. Many arrived with their families, and large herds were seen as far as Goz Rejab, close to Kassala province boundary.⁷⁶ This alarmed not only officials at the provincial headquarters but also the Hadendawa tribe, who feared that these migrants might settle for a long period. The area between Goz Rejab and the Atbara River was considered Hadendawa grazing, and was under the authority of the *nazir* of the Hadendawa. At the beginning, the *nazir* accepted the migrants' presence given that the three visiting tribes acknowledged the Hadendawa's land rights and would respect their customary laws that extended to the payment of the customary '*awaid*', an amount paid on behalf of one tribe to another. However this did not last long as the visiting tribes began to abuse the customary agreement and conflict erupted with local Hadendawa. The *nazir* of Hadendawa immediately requested the DC to send them back to Butana in order to avoid further conflict and maintain good relations with the Shukriyya *nazir*.⁷⁷

J.A. de C. Hamilton, the DC to whom they took this request, wrote to the Governor of Kassala:

I shall be glad therefore if you would approach the District Commissioner Butana on this matter and ask him to arrange that no Shukria or Lahawiyin establish *buyut* [houses] or cultivate east of the River and that further if they wish to continue to graze on this side that they will arrange to pay the customary grazing dues to nazir Ibrahim Musa. Whilst the fixing of the latter might I suggest be settled at the time of the Shukria gathering next month, I would request that the necessary orders with regard to settlement east of the River be given at once as feeling is running very high at the moment.⁷⁸

It was not only the government rule that governed the nomads; there were also 'customary rules' that nomads accepted which compelled them to return all their herds to Butana from grazing to the east of Atbara River during the rainy season.⁷⁹

In 1925, four Lahawiyin men went to Khartoum to reveal their grievances and complained to the Condominium authorities that the grazing was bad and that there was much sickness among their camels,

⁷⁶ Lea, Butana notebook No. 1, SAD 645/3/1-90.

⁷⁷ Sheikh Musa, *nazir* of Hadendawa to Govenor of Kassala, extract from letters and telegraphs, 1923, NRO Kassala 1/78/348; NRO CIVSEC 66/11/101. Also see Kibreab, *State Intervention*, pp.21-31.

⁷⁸ J. A. de C. Hamilton, DC to Governor of Kassala, 16 February 1924, NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁷⁹ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.189.

. ...they therefore want to go to Kordofan or rather to the Northern end of the White Nile Province where they allege there is sufficient space for them. I pointed out to them that the Lahawiyin left Kordofan in flat disobedience of order and they had been repeatedly told to return and had never done so until efforts to make them return were finally discontinued by the order of the Inspector General.⁸⁰

These four men, who were from wad al Faki, wad Hardan and Gaborab, also complained, that their camels were subject to continuous theft by the Shukriyya. They believed that the *nazir* of the Shukriyya had not done what he should do to catch the thieves. More than that they reported that there was 'bloodshed' among the Lahawiyin and their sheikhs were not forceful in addressing the matter before the Government, 'but glaze over them either from fear of discharge for negligence or from fear of the Shukria'.⁸¹ Mr. Ball, a British official at Khashm al-Girba, dismissed this complaint, claiming that the Lahawiyin *umdas* and *sheikhs* disassociated themselves from it and expressed their regret that it had been made. On the contrary it was agreed by the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin in a meeting following the complaint that the two tribes should assist each other in handling any incidents.⁸²

A significant attempt to address the Lahawiyin complaint against the Shukriyya was also made on the orders of the newly-appointed Governor of Kassala, C. A. Willis, in 1925. The Lahawiyin being rich in camels, as many of the sources confirmed, had formerly been denied the right to sell their camels directly to the Government.⁸³ Willis suggested that 'for camel purchases the government should deal directly with the Lahawiyin'.⁸⁴ The Condominium Government used to purchase Lahawiyin camels through Shukriyya sheikhs and through direct arrangement with the *nazir* of the Shukriyya. This had displeased the Lahawiyin for a long time. The Condominium administration had treated the nomadic tribes in an unequal manner.⁸⁵

The change in government policy over this in 1925 reveals two main points. First, the Condominium government had acknowledged the injustice shown to the Lahawiyin as main contributors to Butana tributes and taxes. Secondly, the government was aware of the tension

⁸⁰ C.A. Willis, Director of Intelligence, to Civil Secretary, 16 May 1925, NRO CIVSEC 66/4/30.

⁸¹ Willis, Director of Intelligence, to Civil Secretary, 16th May 1925, NRO CIVSEC66/4/30.

⁸² P Ball, Khashm al Girba, to Governor of Kassala, 17th February 1920, NRO Kassala 1/78/350.

⁸³ See Acland, Ball, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29-31.

⁸⁴ 'Notes on the Political organisation of the Lahawiyin' (1925), pp.2-3, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

⁸⁵ The Condominium had dealt with the Rashayda differently. Isabelle Dalman argued that the Rashayda are the pioneer in the Easter Sudan of camel (meat) trade with Egypt, which has always been the main source of their monetary wealth. They convoy Lahawiyin and other's camels as well as they taking their own to Egypt.' Isabelle Dalmu, 'Camel Production and Trade', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p. 208.

and sensitivity between the Lahawiyin and the Shukriyya over grazing land and thus to apply the carrot and stick policy they were compromising the upper hand of the Shukriyya in camel purchases. They were also granted some limited autonomy in relation to their economy and tributes at the same time. By 1926 the Government introduced certain measures which were of benefit to the Lahawiyin. It changed the system of tax collection from herd tax to tribute and it had also simplified its method of collection of ushur. In addition to this it opened a camel market in Gashm al Girba which had lessen the monopoly of the Egyptian and Rashaiyda camel traders in the Ed dammar market and many camel owners were able to deal with their camels.⁸⁶

In 1927, however, the Lahawiyin again failed to stick to the 1913 Shukriyya-Hadendawa grazing agreement. Because of the bad grazing that year they crossed the Setit River on 10 June. The Government sent a police patrol to drive them back to the boundary of Atbara River.⁸⁷ The incident revealed to officials that the Lahawiyin could not be handled efficiently by the Shukriyya local authorities. Butana was seen as a model to the Condominium which should set an example of smooth grazing, movement and peaceful coexistence between nomadic tribes; in the face of this new problem the Condominium administration tried to control the Lahawiyin, not through the Shukriyya but rather through the Hadendawa. Setting a boundary between the Shukriyya and the Hadendawa was supposed to limit future movement of the Lahawiyin. Instead of facing authorities from the Shukriyya they would apparently have to handle other authorities with which they might not be familiar. There was therefore continual official pressure upon the Lahawiyin to recognise the Hadendawa and thus the Shukriyya sovereignty in the Butana and east of Atbara River.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ P.B.E. Acland, 'The Butana during the present government', handing-over notes 1939, 777/19/10-12.

⁸⁷ 'Grazing question,' NRO Kassala 1/78/348.

⁸⁸ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.189.

4. Al Igba Trial 1926-27

Despite the creation of the Lahawiyin *khut* and the concessions over the camel trade, the Lahawiyin continued to resent and resist subordination to the Shukriyya and the restrictions placed on their grazing: as one retrospective account put it, these were an affront to their 'free Arab identity'.⁸⁹ This dislike of boundaries, together with the internal tensions resulting from rivalry of the sheikh of *khut*, came to a head in 1927.

During this time, and as result of the Hadendawa agreement, the DC issued an order to confine the Lahawiyin to graze only on the west bank of the Atbara River and not to cross to the east during the rainy season. They were allowed to do so in the dry season, but even that was strictly demarcated, as they could not cross beyond al-Showak crossing point (*meshraa*) in the south east, and subject to other conditions, notably 'Provided they do not trespass on other tribal boundaries'.⁹⁰

This order did not bring the Lahawiyin to one area. They were divided between the west and east banks. For instance two *umdas* and one *sheikh of khut* were on the west, and three *umdas* and one *sheikh of khut* on the east. In February 1927 Sheikh Adam al Zein with some of his people and *muawin* (local men employed as agents of the DC) met in Butana to discuss the movement of the tribe, routes it should take as well as permission to drink from government *hafirs* (the government had constructed its own *hafirs* which were regulated, and the use of which had to be approved). The DC also informed Sheikh Adam al Zein that some of the Gawamis *umdas* and twenty-six *muawins* were in the east and should be kept within the boundaries.⁹¹

Nonetheless, Sheikh al Igba, accompanied by some of his people crossed the boundary and were found to the east of the Atbara River. They did not 'trespass' on any 'tribal boundaries' though they encroached on 'the no-man's-land' south of Khashm al-Girba. Essentially even this area it seems was prohibited because of its proximity to the border, though that was not clearly stated by the Government. However no-one could confirm whether al Igba intended to go beyond crossing grazing boundaries. One *umda*, though, simply supported al Igba's

⁸⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁹⁰ 'Translation of Agent Report,' NRO Dakhliya 112/5/27.

⁹¹ Lea, Butana notebook No. 1, SAD.645/2/69.

action, claiming that “for any Arab when his *sheikh* moves, he moves with him”⁹²; though in fact only one *umda* out of four had moved with al Igba, and two of his sheikhs were even grazing on the west bank of the Atbara River close to Sheikh Adam al Zein.

Early in 1927 two border points, Suruf and Zahana had been identified and demarcated by officials from Gedarif, together with local sheikhs and the *umda* of Zahana, Yousuf Osman. The Lahawiyin and the *umda* of Zahana had a dispute over land that the Lahawiyin had cultivated before they were given permission. The *umda* had claimed this land and there was no other way but to resort to the *nazir* of the Shukriyya because the Lahawiyin refused to pay him the tribute. It was agreed that the Lahawiyin would make a payment of 560 piaster.⁹³

This incident shows that the Lahawiyin found it difficult, if not impossible, to stick to one area and to abide by rules. In July 1927 the DC, Acland, forbade grazing on the east bank of the Atbara River, but some Lahawiyin who were already living there decided to remain in the east during the rainy season because pasture there was plentiful. Sheikh al Igba was among those Lahawiyin and when he heard of the DC’s order he went to Khashm al-Girba to meet the DC and requested permission to be allowed to remain. Acland refused and asked him to cross to the west with his people immediately. Sheikh al Igba had allegedly been told by his people to explain their complete lack of grazing and that ‘if they were faced with crossing over all their animals would perish’.⁹⁴ The DC was not sure whether al Igba and his people intended to depart from the east bank. Meanwhile the Lahawiyin and their herds were scattered all over the place which made the DC’s mission difficult. Therefore the DC decided to send a *muawin* with thirty policemen to ensure their evacuation on time. When the *muawin* arrived, sheikh al Igba and his *umda* were no longer there. They had left to meet with the acting DC. However most of his people were found grazing on the east bank.

Al Igba subsequently claimed that Acland had allowed him to graze in the east.⁹⁵ Whether this was true or not, al Igba was summoned to Khashm al-Girba and put on trial for defying orders. The trial was held by the Assistant DC, Lea, and heard evidence from the *umda*

⁹² *Umda* Yousuf Osman quoted in Lea, Butana notebook No.1, SAD 645/3/1-90.

⁹³ Lea, Butana notebook No.1, SAD 645/2/69.

⁹⁴ Lea, Butana notebook No.2, SAD 645/3/97.

⁹⁵ ‘Translation of Agent Report,’ NRO Dakhliya 112/5/27.

Yousif and also Sheikh Adam al Zein and a *muawin*.⁹⁶ The *umda* stated that el-Igba told his people that he had permission from Acland to graze on the east bank. Sheikh Adam el Zein then spoke and declared that ‘El Igba is the cause of it all... The common people are not to be blamed they have only been stupid’. He also revealed the complexities of internal politics, explaining that el-Igba was also trying to remove one of the Magit *umd*as, Abdullah Adam Ali Taam. A *muawin* was questioned and declared that the Lahawiyin ‘are like their own camels: they can’t obey an order’. The *muawin* reported that all the Lahawiyin expressed their contempt for Adam al Zein and his *umda* Abdalla Ali Abd Taam to the extent that the *umda* couldn’t appear alone in public, particularly without the *muwain*. “They spit at his name and wad el Zein” said the *muawin*.

Al Igba Abdalla explained that he crossed because he had left some of his herds with two groups of his people - ‘nas Ballinga’ and ‘nas Abdalla Khiraallah’ – and because he had to find building material for his house, which came from al- Showak. In the end, al Igba lost his title of *sheikh khut*. The case revealed Lahawiyin leadership was contested between the two *umudiyas*, al Faki and Magit, and how much more successful Adam was at securing British support. None of the British officials who dealt with al Igba’s case believed his story and therefore the penalty was inevitable.

The story of al Igba Abdalla did not end there. Some Lahawiyin sheikhs, mostly from Igba’s people, went to Acland, the DC Butana, after his return from leave. They appealed to him to reinstate Sheikh al Igba. Acland reinstated him; but only briefly, because of pressure from the Shukriyya *nazir*, Abu Sin, for whom Acland had a high regard.⁹⁷ For Acland, as for many British officials, loyalty of tribal leaders was not enough for the Government trust if they show any sign of independence.⁹⁸

When Acland reinstated Sheikh al Igba Abdulla, Sheikh Awad al-Karim Abu Sin told him,

I am drinking your tea, I am eating your food, I will tell you the truth. You were right to sack El Igba, you were wrong to return [sic] him. He is too old to learn, he will try it again. You will have to arrest him. There may be a riot. Innocent

⁹⁶ Lea, ‘Daily record of work done at Butana, 1927-1928; carbon copies of official correspondence,’ Butana notebook No.2,’ SAD 645/3/23-60.

⁹⁷ Acland, ‘Memoirs,’ SAD 707/15/10.

⁹⁸ Warburg, *The Sudan under Wingate*, p.147.

Lahawin may be hurt. He will be banished instead of peacefully retiring to live with his own people. There is no blessing of God for a weak ruler.⁹⁹

Months later, after the dismissal of al Igba Abdalla, in a meeting held between the *sheikhs* of the Lahawiyin and the *sheikhs* of the Shukriyya, it was agreed that before the Lahawiyin could enter *dar* Shukriyya in the Gedarif district, the *umdas* of the Lahawiyin or their representatives had to seek permission from the *sheikhs* of *khut* and the *umdas*. The *sheikhs* and *umdas* of the Shukriyya could allow the Lahawiyin to enter their territory if there was adequate grazing for their own livestock. The Lahawiyin also had to remain strictly within the watering and grazing areas allocated to them by the Shukriyya *sheikhs*.

Some of al Igba's *umdas* received some punishment being seen as opponents of the new orders of the government. For instance *umda* Yousif Osman a sum of £E.100 while another two *umdas* were transferred to Adam al Zein's sheikhship.¹⁰⁰ Al Igba was not granted a right to appeal; such was the power of the Condominium. The case revealed the tensions inherent in the system of native administration: al Igba had tried to act as a representative of his people in defending their interests in grazing; but officials viewed his behaviour as disobedience. The dismissal of sheikhs, *umdas* and even *nazirs* was not uncommon in Sudan.¹⁰¹ But al Igba's replacement did not come from the same family but rather from a different *umudiyya* which was not the norm for the Government who tended to keep it within the same family for the sake of stability and authority.

Sherif Yousif al-Hindi, reported an account of the al Igba case which he heard subsequently, from a man of the Lahawiyin tribe, who was ill and was seeking treatment in Khartoum. The Lahawi man told Sherif al-Hindi:

A party of the Lahawiyin grazed last year at Zahana near Setit. The days were very hard owing to lack of grazing and Sheikh al Igba asked the D.C for permission to graze in Butana and permission to graze at the railway line was granted. When this DC went on leave and another came to replace him, some of *umda* Adam al Zein reported that al Igba had deserted to the Italian border. He sent a force to bring him back to a place called al Sharagab, south of Kashm al Girba, eight days journey time from the Butana and they were then instructed

⁹⁹ Sheikh Abu Sin to Acland, cited in Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.146.

¹⁰⁰ 'Daily record of work done at Butana, 1927-1928; carbon copies of official correspondence,' in Lea, Butana notebook No.2, SAD 645/3/23-60.

¹⁰¹ For example, the *nazir* of the Kawahla was dismissed for misconduct in front of the DC Bara, the *mak* of the Shilluk was dismissed in 1903 because of cruelty to his own people, and the *nazir* of the Misseriyya was dismissed on suspicion of being involved in the Fiki uprising in 1915. For details see Kibreab, *State Intervention*, pp.145-146.

not to leave. It is a district full of insects and harmful birds and the Lahawiyin in consequence are losing their animals.¹⁰²

This shows the sense of injustice with which the Lahawiyin viewed the whole issue of the boundary and el-Igba's trial. Their bitterness only increased with the subsequent appointment of Adam al Zein as the sole *sheikh khut*, without the unanimous approval of the Lahawiyin. Immediately after the dismissal of al Igba, DC Butana requested Sheikh Awad al-Karim Abu Sin to visit the Lahawiyin with him. He argued that 'the wisdom of Abu Sin and their respect was needed at that moment especially as al Zein was disrespected by some of his own people because of the dismissal of al- Igba'¹⁰³ The Lahawiyin *sheikhs* went further in trying to undermine Adam al Zein, justifying their transgression of the grazing boundary by complaining to the DC that Sheikh al Zein had not informed them on the subject and thus he was the one responsible.

The events of 1927 thus led to the Lahawiyin being united administratively under one *Sheikh Khut*, Adam al Zein of the al Faki section. This occurred largely because al Zein convinced the British administrators of his loyalty and cooperation, in contrast with the resistance of al Igba to the (rather ambiguous) grazing boundaries imposed by the government. Al Zein had also forged good relations with the ruling family of the Shukriyya. None of this enhanced his legitimacy *within* the Lahawiyin tribe. But ironically, his appointment as the sole *Sheikh Khut* can be seen as a key moment in the unification of the tribe, and its quest for its own *nazir* and *dar*.

¹⁰² Note, 6 December 1927, NRO Dakhliya (1) 112/5/27.

¹⁰³ Ibid., NRO Dakhliya (1) 112/5/27.

5. Native Administration changes in 1928: *Sheikh Khut* and courts

The reinstating of Sheikh Adam al Zein strengthened the position of the al-Faki *umudiyya* and brought the Lahawiyin under a new leadership with a new title mandated by judicial authority. It was formally announced that the Lahawiyin were to come under the *nazir* of the Shukriyya and for the first time since they moved to Butana they were collected under one *khut*. However, this was not accepted by some Lahawiyin, especially supporters of Sheikh al Igba Abdalla. The Lahawiyin were amalgamated into one administration unit, the *khut*, just before the introduction of new 'Native Courts' as part of the Condominium government's policy of native administration. Native Courts, one for each *khut*, were instituted in 1928 following the Power of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance.

Native Courts consisted of two levels, in a hierarchy. Some were considered major Native Courts and some were treated as minor Native Courts. There were five in the Gedarif and Butana districts. These included one in Gedarif, one in Mugataa, and others in Subag, Rufaa, Matarg, Kashm and al Girba for the Shukriyya.¹⁰⁴ The local, minor court of al-Mugataa was exclusively for Lahawiyin and dealt mostly with cases of land disputes, which included grazing and cultivation (*hildat* rights), herd disputes and familial affairs - marriage and divorce. The court was granted limited authority to deal with these cases but not to overrule the authority and judicial power of the *nazir* of the Shukriyya. The Lahawiyin positively welcomed al-Mugataa court and interpreted its jurisdiction as part of the tribe's self-governing and autonomy from the Shukriyya. The Lahawiyin were then the only client tribe which had been granted a separate court in Butana while the rest of the smaller tribes' affairs were being dealt with in courts dominated by the Shukriyya, or by the Gedarif court. Some Lahawiyin came to see this as the first step towards independence from the Shukriyya, which irritated the leadership of the Shukriyya to a large extent.¹⁰⁵

The reason for this separate treatment is not clearly recorded, but it may have been either because of the Lahawiyin wealth in camels, which made them such important tax-payers, and because of the continuous discontent which Lahawiyin had shown over their subordination to the Shukriyya. The Shukriyya were under three Native Courts. Within their *dar* these courts

¹⁰⁴Interview with Abdalla Sueliman Amir, former deputy Governor of Gezira State and a District Administrator for Lahawiyin (1964), Gedarif, January 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Kassala Province Annual Report for 1949, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

had power to judge on more serious cases and to impose much larger fines than the Lahawiyin under their Native Court. The referral system was indirect for the Lahawiyin court which meant going through the Shukriyya court and then to the DC. This meant that while on the one hand the new court system gave the Lahawiyin a measure of autonomy, it also institutionalised their subordination to the Shukriyya; the more serious cases, and appeals, had to go to Shukriyya courts.

Newly-appointed as *sheikh khut* for all the Lahawiyin Sheikh Adam al Zein, had to deal with cases within the jurisdiction of the Lahawiyin Native Court, and so had to work with the *umdas* to identify recognized sheikhs of lineages who would sit on the court when necessary. About ten *sheikhs* representing lineages, or *khashm beit*, to the east of the Atbara River and between the border and the Merkaz in Gedarif were selected to deal with conflict arising from grazing and cultivation. Interestingly, there were a small number of cases of divorce and runaway brides which were also dealt with by the court as well as minor injuries and theft.¹⁰⁶

In regard to the selection of *sheikhs*, the *umdas* tended to select 'loyal *sheikhs*' from within their families to keep their customary rights close to their blood relatives. This brought about difficulties when it came to the *bildat* and *juruf* customary rights as will be discussed in the chapter on post independence. It was reported that Sheikh Adam al Zein relied more on his family members, and particularly his sons and nephews.¹⁰⁷ This may or may not have been true as there were many unauthenticated stories about Adam al Zein because of the rivalries between the different *umdiyyas*. However time proved one thing, that after his death one son became his successor and the other became *wakil* to his brother.

In 1932, further reform divided the Native Courts into four types; *Sheikhs'* Courts with *sheikhs* as presidents, Members Courts with a *sheikh* sitting with elders in *majlis*, Village Courts with a *sheikh* sitting alone and Special Courts established by warrants.¹⁰⁸ Native Courts were then granted some power to try cases relating to marriage, divorce, inheritance and related matters according to the *shari'a* (rather than the combination of local custom and Condominium law which usually governed native administration courts). This introduced a

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Abdalla Suleiman Amir, former deputy Governor of Gezira State and a District Administrator for Lahawiyin (1964), Gedarif, January 2008.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, anonymous informant, Showak, December 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Lavin, 'Introduction,' in Lavin (ed.), *The Condominium remembered*, p.83.

new element into the hierarchical ranking of courts, as those with an *Alim* (a scholar with training in the *shari'a*) acquired a new status. The relevance of this to the Lahawiyin 'Native Court' was that their court did not have an *alim*; it continued to be presided over by the *sheikh al-Khut*.¹⁰⁹

The implication of the Native Court for the Lahawiyin was that it gave them a degree of independence from the Shukriyya. It also encouraged a sense of a social superiority based on 'Arab-ness', because cases involving ex-slaves of the Lahawiyin were brought to the court, an issue which will be discussed in the next chapter. Disputes between the Lahawiyin and people of western Sudanese origin (known collectively, and derogatively, as Fellatta) over *juruf* land were also brought to the court of the Lahawiyin, and fell under the jurisdiction of *Sheikh Adam al Zein*.¹¹⁰

Sheikh Adam al Zein's appointment as *sheikh khut* created the Lahawiyin as a single administrative unit in its own right. Now Adam al Zein stood between the *nazir* and his people, and while the government's trust in Adam el Zein may have made him unpopular among his own people by creating this new administrative unity it had encouraged a feeling of distinctiveness among the Lahawiyin. This newly-constructed political power by the Condominium Administration created a type of enduring demand among the Lahawiyin who believed that these new structures of administration could provide means to negotiate further powers and rights.

¹⁰⁹ Note, Governor of Kassala, N.D. NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Awad al-Karim Ahmed Adam al Zein, Forest and Agriculture Department, Showak, December 2007.

Chapter Three

Slavery and Lahawiyin Identity and Economy

‘if a non-Arab became a Moslem, and acquired a Moslem name and culture, he became an Arab.’¹

Nyombe’s argument echoes a widespread notion of the ability of Islam to transform status and identity. Islam, during the early days of the Prophet, called for the integration of slaves into the kinship structure of ancient Arabia, encouraging the coexistence of ‘people who have no previous identity’.² This integration, when accompanied by a conversion to Islam by a slave, meant the ‘difference between the servile and the free’ would be removed.³ But as John Ralph Willis noted, in practice slaves in Muslim societies did not always enjoy such straightforward possibilities of social advancement, with their exclusion in itself affirming the genealogy and behaviour which underpinned the identity of their masters: ‘Slaves were seen to lack those attachments of lineage or genealogy which, . . ., an Arab-dominated society held in highest esteem: they were without honour and identity - moved by savage and irrational instincts; swayed by animal propensities;’⁴ Among the Lahawiyin, too, ‘inclusive idealism’, as Heather Sharkey calls it, has historically often been eclipsed by an exclusive sense of enduring racial hierarchy⁵. If it were the case that conversion to Islam was enough to transform someone into an Arab, the estimated 10,000 slaves held by Lahawiyin in the early twentieth century would have become Arabs.⁶ This chapter explains the process of Arab identity formation in relation to slavery and the slave trade in the case of the Lahawiyin, who were simultaneously Lahawiyin, Ansar and/or Khatmiyya and ‘slave masters’⁷. The Lahawiyin identity as an ‘Arab tribe’ developed partly through their experience as ‘clients’ of the more powerful *dar*-owning groups, the Kababish and the Shukriyya, as the previous

¹ B.G.V. Nyombe, ‘The politics of language, culture, religion and race in the Sudan,’ *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter* 6 (1994), p. 10.

² J. R. Willis, ‘Introduction,’ in J. R. Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa, Volume One* (London: Cass, 1985), pp.3-4.

³ O’ Fahey, ‘Preface,’ in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, p.ix.

⁴ Willis, ‘Introduction,’ in Willis, *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, pp.3-4.

⁵ Heather J. Sharkey, ‘**Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race,**’ *African Affairs* 107 (2008), p.26.

⁶ Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, *Slaves into workers: emancipation and labor in Colonial Sudan* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 43; Taj Hargey, ‘The suppression of slavery in the Sudan 1898-1939’ (PhD thesis, Oxford, 1981), p.122.

⁷ The term ‘slave master’ is borrowed from Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*. See also G.P. Makris, *Changing Masters: spirit possession and identity construction among slave descendants and other subordinates in the Sudan* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, c2000).

chapters demonstrated. It would also develop and harden as a result of administrative policies in the colonial period and subsequently. But the self-constructed identity of the Lahawiyin also rested on their notions of wealth and status, which came to define membership of the tribe. Wealth and status were in turn based during the colonial period on ownership of camels and slaves; and geographical circumstances – notably their proximity to the porous borders with the Italian colony of Eritrea and with Ethiopia – gave Lahawiyin particular opportunities to both acquire slaves and to trade in them. Trading in slaves was illegal under the Condominium, but here – as elsewhere in Africa – the cautious policy of the colonial state effectively allowed continued slave ownership well into the 1930s, providing a degree of cover for a continuing clandestine trade.⁸

The Lahawiyin consistently resisted the idea of being looked at as “subjects”, whether under the Kababish or the Shukriya, and promulgated and were nourished by the notion of being the ‘masters’ And with such a notion, resistance to being assimilated with their host tribes was internalised and thus they preserved an “Arab” identity in many ways.⁹ One way to feel like ‘masters’ was to distinguish themselves from slaves.

1. The Camel and Slave Trades and the Eastern Frontier

During the Condominium period, the camel trade became an important activity. This was partly driven by tax: camels were either paid directly as tax, or sold to raise money to pay tax. Dalmau added that such exchange led to a “monetization of pastoral economy.”¹⁰ Some of this trade was cross-border, perhaps linked to the movement of camels either in search of grazing or to evade taxes. In 1920, for example, a Lahawi *sheikh* whose camels were said to be grazing near the ‘Italian’ frontier (that is, the Eritrean border) was reported to have crossed it in order to evade Sheikh Adam al Zein who had been sent to investigate by the British officials in Kassala.¹¹ The Government was concerned that camels were smuggled to the Italian territory. The sheikh explained that some herds were in Italian territory and some were watering in Sudan. Following this incident Adam al Zein was called and had to inform

⁸ Lovejoy, *The Ideology of slavery in Africa*; Lovejoy, *Slavery on the frontiers of Islam*.

⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Statistic Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

¹⁰ Dalmau, ‘Camel Production and Trade,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.208. See ‘General Report: Rashayda, Notes on all tribes of Kassala,’ NRO CIVSEC 66/A.1.8 (190-35).

¹¹ Lea, Butana notebook No.3, SAD 645/4/37.

the DC in charge concerning another two *sheikhs* that “Their camels were found to be there [near the frontier]”; when Sheikh Adam pursued them they removed everything to ‘Italy’: ‘The official declared that all camels were safely arrived in Italy and that the *sheikhs* would disappear’.¹²

In the early years of the Condominium, the trade in camels within Sudan was not entirely straightforward for Lahawiyin, who found that in their dealings with the government – a major buyer of camels – they were forced to deal through the Shukriyya nazir and his sheikhs; as a result, the camel prices received by the Lahawiyin were not satisfactory to them which frustrated them to a large extent.¹³ As the previous chapter showed, the Condominium government eventually agreed in 1925 to deal directly with the Lahawiyin in the purchase of camels, rather than going through the Shukriyya. The purchase of camels increased dramatically during the Abyssinian campaign of the Second World War:

The year ended for me in order to take charge of the buying, branding and grazing of 3,000 baggage camels for the Ethiopian transport Camel Corps to be used in the intervention of Abyssinia to carry supplies, weapons and ammunition as far as the Abyssinian Escarpment. The total number purchased for this exercise from Kordofan, Kassala and Blue Nile Provinces was 18,000... The price was agreed according to the merits of each camel and ranged between £8 and £10. The seller seemed well satisfied.¹⁴

In March 1941 alone, one official reported buying 600 camels from the Lahawiyin.¹⁵ It was obvious that the camel trade was crucial to the Lahawiyin economy and this was why they had to fight for transactions which did not go through the Shukriyya. Not only that but it also showed that the Government had to rely on the Lahawiyin camels to a large extent. However, since camels were so important to the wealth and status of the Lahawiyin, many preferred to find the cash to pay taxes from elsewhere. Some *sheikhs* were ready to pay their tribute in gold rather than compromise a camel. On one occasion Sheikh Adam al Zein had to plead with the DC to leave the *sheikhs*' camels and to let them pay the tribute in gold.¹⁶

¹² Lea, Butana notebook No.3, SAD 645/4/37.

¹³ ‘Notes on the political organisation of the Lahawiyin,’ 1925, pp.2-3, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁴ K.D.D. Henderson, *Set Under Authority: being a portrait of the life of the British District Officer in the Sudan under the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1898-1955* (Castle Cary Press, 1987), p.163.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹⁶ All information in this paragraph is drawn from Lea, SAD 645/3/1-149.

In 1917 it was reported that

It is well known fact that the Lahawin run both rifle and slaves out of Abyssinia, though my efforts to catch anybody red-handed have so far had no success. It is however, I think, advisable to keep them away from the Abyssinian frontier as much as possible. I have at present no arrangement whatever for looking after any of the other Arabs more whose feriks [residences] are on the Atbara from Mogatta to Khor Showak¹⁷

Observations by Condominium officials in the 1920s and 1930s suggest that for Lahawiyin, the slave trade continued to be one way of generating extra revenue.¹⁸ For a long time the eastern region of the Sudan had been an important sources of slaves, drawn from the uncertain borderlands between a succession of states; and many nomadic tribes had been engaged in this trade. These included Shukriyya, Batahin, Hadendawa, Rashaiyyda, Bani Amer and the Lahawiyin.¹⁹ Slaves were an important economic commodity to the Lahawiyin for maintaining a viable nomadic mode of production that relied on camels and seasonal cultivation; therefore a close relation between the two activities, slavery and fulfilment of tribute and *ushur* to the Condominium, developed comfortably.²⁰ On the other hand, to the nomads the value of slaves, compared to camels, was not high; a slave boy or girl had less value than a good camel. Therefore the Lahawiyin's strategy for trading slaves in order to pay their taxes was partially to avoid losing their camel herds; and both camel and slave trades allowed the Lahawiyin to exploit the opportunities provided by the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) and Italian (Eritrean) frontiers.²¹ Not far from this frontier were the areas of Bela-Shangul and Gubba, where Khojeli Hassan and his family members and others had established

¹⁷ 'Administration- Nomads Arabs Atbara Grazing Grounds,' letter signed by Inspector Ground Gedarif dated 6 March 1917, Kassala, Gedarif, in notes on Gedarif District, NRO Kassala 3 139/615.

¹⁸ 'Notes on the Political organisation of the Lahawiyin,' 1925, NRO CIVSEC 66/3/29.

¹⁹ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan 1898-1939,' p.139. Hargey also mentioned that during the Mahdiyya and while the country was considered unstable, some of the above nomadic tribes had been engaged in trafficking in slaves by sending them to Arabia and beyond. See also Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p. 43; Willis report, NRO CIVSEC 66/2/1-78.

²⁰ Isabelle Dalmau, 'Camel Production and Trade', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.208.

²¹ Early in 1899 a tentative agreement on the Frontier was agreed upon between the British Government headed by Harrington and Menelik, the ruler of Abyssinia. This agreement was drawn on a map and had no topographical or ethnographic meaning. It also acknowledged that the District south of Blue Nile, Beni Shangul, was not part of this agreement though it was under the rule of the Egyptians until 1898 when it was taken over by Menelik. Meanwhile the Frontier northwards at the Setit River was recognised as the Italian frontier. The final stage of demarcating the Sudan-Abyssinia frontier was undertaken in the winter of 1902-3. Major General Sir Charles Gwynn, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., 'The Frontiers of Abyssinia: a retrospect,' *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36:143 (April 1937), pp.150-161.

chiefdoms, and begun to pay tribute in slaves, ivory and gold to the Ethiopian government., Many Arabs from Sudan were acquainted with the area.²²

The *umudiyya* Magit were particularly active in a pattern of grazing and trade which spanned the border. They crossed the international borders whenever there was insufficient pasture in Butana and along the permitted grazing zone of the Atbara River. The Magit are said to have organized this on a collective basis, arranging with Ethiopian tribal *sheikhs* that they should be allowed to remain for four to six months with a kind of *awaid* paid to the local Ethiopian leaders for grazing, on the condition that the Magit should not take or steal any unattended animal or cut trees. The Magit gave the Ethiopian sheikhs a guarantee, the '*al Raee paper*' (the shepherd document), which covered a permitted grazing area and was intended to promote good relations between them.²³ In 2007, one interviewee, a *sheikh* from *umudiyya* wad Hardan, implied that the Magit had identified themselves more with the tribes across the border and went so far as to say that that a blood relationship existed, saying that 'Magit is not an Arabic name'.²⁴ Although the Lahawiyin engaged in cross-border grazing, trading and raiding, the border nevertheless contributed to defining their identity as 'Arab' as opposed to the people on the other side, which were not Arab. The section which interacted most across the border, Magit, were therefore also seen to be possibly less purely 'Arab' than the rest of the Lahawiyin. This tells much of how the history of the Lahawiyin has been told by certain families of certain *umudiyyas* as a reflection of a shaped identity at a certain period of time and according to a specific interest.

Crossing the frontier was considered to be a serious matter by the Condominium. Sometimes the police had to arrest *umdas* and *sheikhs* in Kassala to force the Lahawiyin to return the camels from the frontiers. At one point the Governor drove to Gereda (near the border) and then went down the Italian frontier looking for camels. He ordered that all people and animals were not to be left until they were south of Gereda.²⁵

Both border control and slavery posed challenges to the Condominium government. Slave trafficking was said to be easy for the Lahawiyin (Magit and Gawamis), who obtained slaves

²² Wendy James, 'Life lines: exchange marriage among the Gumuz,' in Donald Denham and Wendy James (eds.) *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: essays in history and social anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.122.

²³ Interview with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1996.

²⁴ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director Generala of Statistic Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

²⁵ Lea, Butana notebook No.3, p.37, SAD 645/4/84.

either by raiding or purchase, crossing the border to do so on the pretext that they were looking for grazing.²⁶ Some other Lahawiyin such as Hamid Gadallah and Hamid al Igba were also reported to be slave traders.²⁷ Raiding for slaves increased during the early period of the Condominium (1900-1918), attributed by Hargey to the intention of slave traders to keep the 'social fabric' as it was, and to meet the emerging need for an agricultural labour force while the eastern frontiers question was still under discussion.²⁸ These factors had led to the increase of slaves trade in the eastern frontier. Moreover, the Lahawiyin were thus among the leading raiders, beside the 'Jallaba' traders, 'individual kidnappers' and 'enterprising dealers' in Abyssinia.²⁹ Even in the early 1920s it was estimated that there were about 15,000 persons in Sudan engaged in the slave trade which indicated that the average number of slaves handled each year might have been far beyond this figure.³⁰

These merchants established commercial networks across the border and their slave-trading activities evaded suppression.³¹ This was attributed to several reasons. First the enslaved tribes here belonged to ethnic serf groups in the frontier district of Abyssinia; second, their new Arab masters appeared to a certain degree to be "respected religious notables"³² who instilled in the slaves "a considerable fear of what the white man will do to them"³³ and third, the Abyssinian administration was openly engaged in slave trafficking and derived indirect profit by taxing it. But this was also a result of the wider policy of caution with regard to slave ownership. Colonial governments – in both Sudan and Eritrea – were short of resources, and feared the economic and political disruption which might be provoked by robust measures to end slavery. Thus district commissioners and the governor of Kassala, while laying down their authority, barely attempted to take a firm stand or even to look critically upon slavery; and the widespread presence of slaves made detection and suppression of slave-trading problematic.

²⁶ C. Willis, Chapter 1- 'Control of Routes with Special reference to Slave Traffic,' SAD 212/1/11.

²⁷ A. J. Arkell, 'Official papers', WP/SD/MC NO 41-D-54/8, 09/06/1928, SAD 783/2/39.

²⁸ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p.105; Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p.37; letter, Slatin to Wingate, Cairo, 27 January 1900, SAD 270/1/1.

²⁹ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p.105; Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*.

³⁰ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p.105, citing P.F. Martin, *The Sudan in Evolution*, (London, 1921), p.216.

³¹ Abbas Ahmed Mohamed, *White Nile Arabs* (London, 1980), quoted in Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p.43.

³² National Archive London, F/141/571/8.

³³ National Archive London, F/141/571/8.

The Lahawiyin had taken a central position in the Abyssinian slave-trade compared to other nomadic tribes (Seleim, Rufaa, Zeidat, Nebaha Ahamda); and the Gawamis and Magit were allegedly heavily engaged in raiding and abduction along the border.³⁴ In a case from 1916 reported by Arkell, Arabs from Seleim (Nas Attia and Nas Abdall) went via Gelhak to Belwara brought three boys, two women and six girls. On their return through Rufaa Agab al Mahdi, one of the Arabs changed one boy for a girl who had just been imported from Abyssinia by Ali Abdalla, a Lahawi.³⁵ In 1917, for instance it was reported again that 'Arabs' from Seleim went to Abyssinia to 'Belawar' through 'Gelhak' to get slaves and they came back with one man, two women - one with her son, five girls, and two boys. On their return through Rufaa they exchanged some of them with a Lahawi man called Ali Abdalla.³⁶ The deal was accomplished in local currency and a boy was sold for £E 10, a girl for £E 10, and a man for £E 3. It was obvious that age was a determining factor in buying and selling; a young boy was worth much more than a mature man.³⁷ In addition to the age factor Hargey added that the 'ethno-tribal origins continued to dictate the value of the merchandise.'³⁸ Young female slaves were highly valued in the market.

The slave trade was a well-organised and defined business with distinctive roles being played by different Arab groups. In most cases the Lahawiyin were primarily raiders and buyers while the Ahamda and Seleim were mostly dealers. The Ahamda lived in White Nile bordering Kordofan. The Condominium records confirm the Ahamda's involvement in the abduction of Nuba women, girls and also boys; the Lahawiyin, by contrast, were more involved with the trade in Abyssinian slaves.³⁹ The Lahawiyin and the Ahamda were also engaged in pre-financing which was an important aspect of the slave trade. Pre-financing required cash, and dealers were expected to pay before the trip to Abyssinia took place; although enquiries have shown that the Lahawiyin could cross the Abyssinian border and buy slaves themselves. Another case from the 1920s reveals some of the details of this pre-financing. In January 1927 Hamid Bashir Abu Gifin and Bilal Beshir bought the 12 year old Fargalla (a Berta boy of serf parents), 11 year old Sabah al Khair (a Berta boy of slave

³⁴ A. J. Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, 'Summary of the evidence presented at minor courts during 1928 and 1929, into cases involving smuggling and purchase of slaves', SAD 783/3/14.

³⁵ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 76/1928, SAD 783/3/16; see also Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, SAD 783/3/1-28.

³⁶ Ibid., SAD 783/3/16.

³⁷ Ibid., SAD 783/3/16.

³⁸ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p. 62.

³⁹ Arkell, Official Papers, 'White Nile Province, summary of the evidence presented at minor courts during 1928 and 1929, into cases involving smuggling and purchase of slaves', SAD 783/3/16.

parents) and 12 year old Aruin (a Berta boy of slave parents) and three rifles, including a Remington. Two Ahamda pre-financed Hamid Bashir Abu Gifin and Billal Beshir. They paid them £40 which they presumably made from selling grain from the excellent Agarib's Hareeg crops in the previous year. Hamid Bashir Abu Gifin and Billal Beshir acted as agents and when they returned from their journey they handed over two slaves and the three rifles to the Ahamda men. The third slave was sold to Ibrahim Ismail of Seleim, Nas Ibrahim.⁴⁰ Arkell reported other cases of pre-financing by Ahamda:

Safi was pre-financed by an Ahamda called Sheikh Ali who gave him £24 before his start and to whose son he delivered Madina + rifle + a Remington with Egyptian Army Mark in Oct 1927. The girl and the rifle being together valued at £36 on his return, he was given a further £5 for his trouble. More than 20 boys and girls had been collected. Most of them were sent back to Showa in Abyssinia but she and two others were sent to the house of Mehdi Khojali Hassan at Megali and remained for two years before being sold to Safi.⁴¹

Within these tribes religious *sheikhs* and tribal leaders were the main buyers or middle men. Other local *sheikhs* employed a large number of slaves for domestic work. As well as buying slaves, groups such as the Lahawiyin raided the Berta and Gumus on the upper Blue Nile. The consequence of this was that, somewhat surprisingly, slave owning amongst the Lahawiyin actually increased in the first years of Condominium, despite the nominal commitment of the government to end slave-trading. It was reported that the Lahawiyin had a small number of slaves at the beginning of the century, but within a decade or so their slaves numbered about 10,000 – a remarkable figure, given that the Lahawiyin themselves were a relatively small group.⁴² Such a figure was high compared to other tribes such as the Shukriyya, but this may be because the latter had less need to trade in slaves since it paid its tribute from its client tribes, Bawadra and Lahawiyin. Rufaa Ewida, a nomad's *farik* was the congregation entry point of slaves after arriving in Sudan.⁴³ Throughout their raids on non-Arabs in Abyssinia, the Lahawiyin dealt with Arab slave traders (of both genders): the dividing line between slave traders and raiders on the one hand and slaves or potential slaves on the other was defined by Arab identity, which may have contributed to their developing

⁴⁰ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 62/1928, SAD 783/2/26.

⁴¹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 76/1928, SAD 783/2/40.

⁴² Willis, Report, NRO CIVSEC 60/2/7 and 78. See also Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p. 43.

⁴³ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.76/28, SAD 783/2/34-38.

pride in this Arab-ness. Most of those with whom they dealt were known as Watawit who were descendants of Sudanese Arabs who came to Bela-Shangul as traders and Islamic preachers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; some were brought in 1897 by Ras Makonnen, governor of Hararge in southern Ethiopia, when he led an expedition into Bela-Shangul. The fact that they intermarried with the local Bertha people caused them to be identified as Black Arabs. In time the Watawit became the sole slave traders in the area, with some of them engaged in transporting the slaves to Sudan. More often the Watawit sold slaves to Sudanese merchants who used to come to the market of Bela-Shangul. As they were mixed with Bertha people they had fewer slaves from the area but regularly raided the Mao and Khoma people to the south of Bela-Shangul.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Information from Abdussamad H. Ahmad, 'Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz, Ethiopia: Border Enclaves in History, 1897-1938,' *The Journal of African History* 40:3 (1999), pp.433-336, and Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.72, SAD 783/2/34. For more information see Margery Perham, *The government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969); 'Blue Nile Province', NRO 1/27/202; 'The Dinder Reserve', FB/31/A16; Arkell, District Commissioner, Southern District, Upper Nile Province, 'Subject: Slave Trade Between Abyssinia and the Sudan,' April 1928, NRO 1/12/104. Another market was the Gallabat Market which catered for the supply of slaves from Ethiopia, and had been established as a market in the nineteenth century. It was considered a transit market and its catchments for slaves of this transit market extended southwards to the Beni Shangul area and south and south-east to the Oromo lands. Gallabat was central to Sinnar and Shendi markets and far up to Sawakin on the Red Sea. Quoting Burckhardt, Bjorkelo (1989) gives a detailed description of the market and the flow of commodities in Shendi. He illustrates, with a diagram, the connections that Shendi had with the rest of the country and abroad. See Anders Bjørkelo, *From King to Kashif: Shendi in the Nineteenth Century* (Bergen, 1983), p.24.

2. Slavery, Gender and Lahawiyin Identity

I was surprised to know that many of the more important Sheikhs owned one or more slave girls. They and their parents had often been with the *sheikh's* family for generations. They usually seem well content, but if they wanted their freedom they could go to the District Commissioner and demand it and they were often freed. The difficulty was what they would do thereafter? Prostitution was the obvious line but sometimes it was arranged for them to marry into the police force which worked extremely well.⁴⁵

Slave-raiding and trading led to the formation of internal power centres of traders, dealers and buyers. Each group strove for authority, for the number of slaves they acquired determined wealth and power and men were not bound to one particular leader. Slavery was as prestigious to the Lahawiyin as keeping camels.⁴⁶ Slaves were often shown off, and and exchanged between the different *umudiyyas* and with other tribes. The importance of the slaves was not simply economic; one could argue that while the Lahawiyin were rich in camels, there was no need for slaves, as camels could have substituted for tribute and *ushur*, but the possession of slaves affirmed the Lahawiyin identity as Arab nomads, and asserted both their economic independence and their defiance. For the Lahawiyin, just like the Baggra cattle-keeping Arabs described by Ian Cunnison, the ideal was 'to hold no man his master'.⁴⁷

Nor was this just a matter of owning slaves; the direct contact with Arab traders in Abyssinia, and their own part in slave-trading, led the Lahawiyin to identify themselves as masters and that their feeling of Arab-ness grew further. These groups of raiders and traders identified themselves as masters and perceived themselves as an authority away from the government's reach, even as the government was busy establishing rules to ban slavery, and DCs were increasingly concerned with the number of slaves who had either been forced into slavery or were still under their masters.⁴⁸

However, the Lahawiyin did not abide by the rules; for them raiding and/or trading for slaves was less preferable to having to sell camels to pay tribute and taxes. But a further motive for involvement in the slave trade was a sense of pride in being Arab - to rule but not to be ruled.

⁴⁵ Mrs. Bridget Acland, 'Memoir', SAD 777/15/1-13.

⁴⁶ Interview with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

⁴⁷ Ian Cunnison, *Baggara Arabs; power and the lineage in a Sudanese nomad tribe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p.114.

⁴⁸ Lea, Butana notebook No.3, p.37, SAD 645/4/84.

As already noted, the Lahawiyin were not known to be religiously orthodox. The consistent movement the Lahawiyin had experienced and the lack of their own religious *sheikhs* had led to somewhat unorthodox practices of Islam and deprived them of a systematic kind of religious education. Hence, it may be not surprising that they were not concerned with the Islamization of slaves, nor were they generally likely to view this as a route to incorporating slaves. Usually, they gave the slaves names which, interestingly enough, were solely confined to slaves. This was another dimension of the Arab Lahawiyin identity construction process whereby slaves were distinguished from the Arabs by exclusively reducing their names to days of the week and/or relating them to their masters such as 'Khamis' [Thursday], 'Khair Eseid' [Master's welfare or well being] or 'Khadim Aboha' [the slave of the father]. These were all names which implied belonging to others.

The diary of a DC's wife, Mrs Acland, gives us a window on events of the time in Butana. It portrays a relative tolerance to slavery by the Condominium administration represented by a high official, the Governor General, to the presence of slaves as part of the social lives of nomadic tribes and as an important element in entertaining officials.

It was the slave girls who danced "*Dellukas*" on festive occasions. As the tempo increased their top clothing was slipped off. When the Governor General came to the big Tribal Gathering at Khashm el Girba it was considered unsuitable for the dancing girls to expose so much of themselves and they were issued with little 'B.B's'⁴⁹ - this was not a government instruction and it produced roars of laughter from the assembled natives.⁵⁰

This reveals an interesting and overlapping set of ideas about what should and should not be revealed; the *nazirs* and sheikhs instructed slave women to dance, but feared that their breasts (though not their status) would cause embarrassment; the Sudanese audience laughed that ideas about female modesty should be applied to slave women. Lahawiyin Arab women, on the other hand, would never be allowed to dance and expose themselves in this way, so this also reinforced the interplay of gender and the Arab identity, based on Lahawiyin women being seen as more morally pure than other women.

This reminds us of the profound importance of slavery in allowing a particular, gendered vision of the relationship between moral behaviour and identity. Many activities were

⁴⁹ 'B.B' means brassieres.

⁵⁰ Mrs. Acland, 'Memoir', SAD 777/15/2.

considered absolutely inappropriate for Lahawiyin Arab women. In the large households to which they were attached, women slaves presided over the cultivation and preparation of food, the making of clothing and the looking after and upbringing of children; but they also had multiple duties in the public domain, such as the market place, which women of higher status avoided.

It seems likely that the leaders of the Lahawiyin were well aware of this trade, and may have been actively involved. In 1918 Beshir wad Tayib (Lahawi), Sheikh Tayeb el Hajja (Rufaa), and one 'Nazir Ahmed el Ugba,'⁵¹ (Lahawi) who was accompanied by others, and Ahmed Abu Shotal (Kenani) went to Belawara and Dorolawi after Wad Mahmud attacked Beshir village. They seemed to be less successful in obtaining as many slaves as had hoped. They purchased only two slaves, Gabir, a boy and Shamma, a girl from Koma. The boy was sold for £11 and the girl for £20 by Amin wad al Sheikh Gellab aki Guma.⁵² When this incident was investigated it was reported that the so-called 'nazir el Ugba' was active in buying slaves; presumably this was al Igba Abdalla it confirms the argument presented earlier that Magit was a leading *umudiyya* in slavery.

In his capacity as a DC in White Nile province in the late 1920s and early 1930s, A J Arkell presented a great deal of information on the slaves from Abyssinia, categorising them according to tribe and age.⁵³ The majority of the slaves of the Lahawiyin were women and girls, according to Arkell's accounts of minor court cases in White Nile Province. These cases often concerned girls and women who had recently been freed from their masters. Those female slaves were highly valued by the Lahawiyin for public work as well as for the image of the tribe, a concern which has continued until recently, as will be discussed in the post independence section. Female slaves unveiled their faces and were open to public view. They could conduct affairs in a manner denied to their masters' women.

⁵¹ The only sheikh of the Lahawiyin in 1918 was Sheikh al Igba Abdalla; however J.A. Arkell reported that it was Nazir and Ugba which might have been wrongly spelled or another sheikh of the Lahawiyin section in Blue Nile.

⁵² Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.55, 1928, SAD 783/2/17.

⁵³ Unspecified report, presumably concerning the slave trade from Abyssinia to White Nile Province. Each appendix consists of a summary of the evidence presented at minor courts during 1928 and 1929, into cases involving smuggling and purchase of slaves. Courts files of slaves in White Nile Province were registered by place of origin, tribe, gender and age, See Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, SAD.783/1/1-53 and SAD 783/2/1-103; statistical summary of information contained in appendices above, showing numbers and origins of slaves imported, SAD.783/3/1-28.

Alongside this public role there was a sexual one. Female slaves were treated as concubines to their masters. Hence the master's sexual exploitation was, in Walz's words, 'a right which brought no blame'.⁵⁴ This sense of a right to sexually exploit slaves seems to have extended beyond their own masters:

In the village at Khashm el Girba lived a few slave girls whose behaviour was not always immaculate. One evening I decided to inspect the police guard on the prison and government stores. The guard turned out smartly, but with no sergeant. I found him in the guardroom on the bed with one of these young ladies who had been arrested for affray.⁵⁵

As a result of the above case the district *mamur*, Daud Khalifa Effendi was summoned to build an extra room in which he had to lock up females. The Governor of Kassala visited Butana district while Acland, the DC of Butana was on trek, at this time. Daud Eff. wanted to show some respect and to impress the guests by showing them around the prison and especially the newly-built women's prison. When he carefully opened the room door there was a girl hiding in a corner under the heat. She instantly objected to the Governor about being mistakenly arrested and imprisoned on false grounds and it was reported that she 'begged for mercy'.⁵⁶ When Acland returned he was asked by the Governor for an explanation regarding the imprisoned girl of whom he had no knowledge and had to find out about from Daud Eff. Acland was told that:

There was no woman in the prison and no record of any arrest. Daud Eff.'s explanation was simple - he regarded the building of our special prison as something modern to be proud of and when showing it to a distinguished visitor, he thought it would be more realistic if it had an inmate; so he had paid the girl 10 piasters to sit there for the morning. I was told to write and offer this explanation to Johnson-Hicks and received back a charming letter thanking me for an excellent story on which he could dine out.⁵⁷

While freed slaves thus found themselves subject to the legal whims of the state, cases involving slave girls who still lived under the Lahawiyin authority would not have reached the *merkaz*, as reported retrospectively by a Lahawi *sheikh*: 'we Lahawiyin would handle our problems internally, we were responsible for them, and they are ours'.⁵⁸ Such cases were considered a matter of honour and should not be made public.

⁵⁴ 'O'Fahey, 'Preface,' in Willis (ed.), *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, p.viii.

⁵⁵ Acland, 'Memoirs,' SAD 707/15/6-7.

⁵⁶ Acland, 'Memoirs,' SAD 707/15/7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., SAD 707/15/6-7.

⁵⁸ Interview with El Igba Ahmed Adam al Zein, a driver and jurif owner, Gedarif, December 2007.

While female slaves were treated differently from Lahawiyin women, the slave trade also offered opportunities to some other 'Arab' women to gain status outside their normal gendered roles. The famous woman slave-trader, Asit Amna, had a principal role in providing, safeguarding, selling, purchasing and exchanging slaves, particularly female slaves, with whoever was interested. She was married to Sheikh Khojali Hassan, who had an army of his own which he used to raid another slave-owner, Wad Mahmoud, in 1922.⁵⁹ This army was made up of slaves who were brought up in his own compound - that is slaves born of slave parents. Many ex-slaves of Wad Mahmoud were captured as a result of the raid and came into the possession of Khojali Hassan. Khojali Hassan was also reported to have gold mines in Bani⁶⁰ (Bela) Shangul where in 1923 the government in Addis Ababa consulted him about concessions on the gold mines regarding the behaviour of some Italian businesses⁶¹. For more than two decades after 1905, Asit Amna - the wife of the slave-trader, Sheikh Khojali Hassan - traded in slaves from Bela Shangul to Sudan. According to British records she was a Jaaliyin, from northern Sudan⁶², but Abdussamad Ahmad has given a slightly different account of her origin and movements

She emigrated from Bela-Shangul to the Sudan and settled at Jebel Ora, then at Khor Yabus and finally at Mortosoro, an established slave depot. Khojele, [Khojali] himself, established another slave entrepot in the Sudan through which some 600 slave children passed.⁶³

Asit Amna would conceal all the Berta and Koma slave girls in her household, before they were dispersed through the trade.⁶⁴ This took place not within the house itself, but in an attached building, as a hiding place away from the eyes of intruders: 'The slaves were kept in the "barn" behind the household where she used to keep her horses'.⁶⁵ While the slaves were

⁵⁹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, 'A note on the history of the country of the Berta lying east of Kurmuk within the Abyssinian frontier, with special reference to the recent discovery of a considerable import of Berta slaves into the Sudan', 1928, SAD.783/3/40-53.

⁶⁰ Arabic name for Bela.

⁶¹ A. R. C. Bolton, Official papers, Situation reports on northern sector, Upper Nile area, January-April 1941, SAD 624/3/17.

⁶² Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.58, 1928, SAD 783/2/19.

⁶³ Ahmad, 'Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz,' p.438; Atieb Ahmed Dafallah, 'Sheikh Khojele al-Hassan and Bela-Shangul (1825-1938)' (BA thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1973), p.16-17; Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p.149.

⁶⁴ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.133, 1928, SAD 783/2/90.

⁶⁵ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.157, 1928, SAD 783/2/19.

hidden, Asit Amna settled deals with any potential buyer/s. Some claimed that Arabs, including the Lahawiyin, went to Mortsoro to buy slaves from Asit Amna.⁶⁶

There was direct communications between the Lahawiyin and Asit Amna. Clearly Lahawiyin, whatever their feelings about their own women, felt no restriction on dealing with female traders; on the contrary most deals were done by her as she appeared to be the ultimate authority in her family and the main source for female slaves.⁶⁷ Asit Amna was one of the main providers of Lahawiyin slaves after Kojali Hassan, Mahdi Khojali Hassan, Faki Ishag.⁶⁸

The export of slaves from Bani Shangul and its neighbouring lands seems to have been at its highest from 1923 to 1925, due to the state of instability of Abyssinia and the activities of Wad Mahmud's former slaves,⁶⁹

At this time Wad Mahmud having been removed to Showa (where he still is) his Berta soldiers were quite out of hand, robbing right and left, and stealing slaves in large numbers and selling them. These slaves they obtained from Asosa, Gotta, Dul, and ORA, selling them all in Bani Shangul.⁷⁰

These raiders were led by Ibrahim Abdel Rahman (a Bertawi slave and a *wakil* of Mohamed Abdel Rahman, chief of Bani Shangul). The latter was detained in Addis Ababa by 1923 and many Berta were exiled in Kurmuk district; they were estimated at 5,000 by Bimbashi Ruth [sic].⁷¹ Some sense of the personal insecurity of the time can be gathered from individual stories: in 1923, 13 year old Idris and seven year old Al Ajabo, two sons of Himidi Idris, Magdam of Hageral Abelad, were abducted from their home in Hagar al Abelad in Agadi. This was south east of Jerok between Jebels Belagu and Jebel Midok, in the country of Wad Mahmoud, who had just been defeated by Khojali Hassan and an Abyssinian force. The kidnapper was a Watawiti man who lived in Mahadi wad Kojali's village. They were sold to

⁶⁶ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.157, 1928, SAD 783/2/19,47,90,94; SAD 783/3/16.

⁶⁷ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No 75/28, SAD 783/2/39.

⁶⁸ Concluded from Arkell papers, SAD 783/2/1-103.

⁶⁹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, SAD 783/3/53.

⁷⁰ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, 'Note on the history of the country of the Berta,' 1922-1923, SAD 783/3/50.

⁷¹ Report on Bani Shangul-Asosa 1923, NRO Dakhliya (1) 112/16/101.

Habib Ahmed, a sheikh from Seleim, but after two years he found that they were not sufficiently servile so he sold them to an Ahamdi, Nas Dehaiba.⁷²

By 1926, the border slave trade had declined. One source suggested that the reduction in the number of in Arabs visiting the frontier to buy slaves was financial 'since 1925 there has been a great diminution of Arabs visiting the frontier in order to buy slaves, apparently due to their shortness of ready cash'.⁷³ This was also a period in which the administrative apparatus of the Condominium was developing, in the aftermath of the introduction of the Power of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance and the Village Courts Ordinance to regulate and incorporate the powers and authorities of traditional leaders, increasingly strict monitoring by British patrols along the borders may have been another reason. This, however, had little immediate effect in some border areas, where bordering tribal *sheikhs* were traditionally involved in slavery, and some were far more closely involved with Abyssinian authorities than with those of the Condominium. Nor, however, were they always attentive to Abyssinian officials: Khojali Hassan (1897-1938)⁷⁴ received an order from Showa forbidding the buying and selling of slaves and warning that 'anyone guilty of selling a slave would be fined 10 *wogias* of gold and the purchaser 25 *wogias*'.⁷⁵ Many took no notice of this order, including Khojali's own family members and their clients, the Arab nomads of eastern and central Sudan.

Mahdi Khojali's son lived in Megali.⁷⁶ With his relative Fiki Ishag of Sergoli, he continued to openly sell slaves, and to round up slaves stating that they were demanded by the Abyssinians, and to send them in batches to Khojali Hassan at Showa. From there they were presumably kept by Khojali as 'concubines or servants, not slaves' or distributed to those with whom he wished to curry favour.⁷⁷ Interestingly enough Mahdi Khojali Hassan's concubines were themselves given slaves. For instance Mahdi's concubine Mahdia was given Khamisa who was later transferred to another concubine called Magia.⁷⁸ Children born of slaves and children born of serfs [Mahdia and Magia parents were bound to the land simply to labor; they could not travel freely without the consent of Mahdi Khojali their master; they had no

⁷² Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No.72, 81, 1928, SAD 783/2/34, 41.

⁷³ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, 'Subject: Slave Trade between Abyssinia and the Sudan', 29 April 1928, SAD 783/3/53.

⁷⁴ Ahmad, 'Trading in Slaves in Bela -Shangul and Gumuz,' p.435. For the life of Sheikh Khojele, see Dafallah, 'Sheikh Khojele al-Hassan.'

⁷⁵ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, July 1928, SAD 783/2/32-35.

⁷⁶ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No 89/1928, SAD 783/2/32.

⁷⁷ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, SAD 783/2/32.

⁷⁸ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No 12/1928, SAD 783/1/14.

legal rights but were relatively free to work as they wish in their daily action while Khamisa for example was a property of Mahdi and could sell her anytime he wants] were treated differently. The latter mostly became the selected concubines. Most of the serfs were owned by slave traders in Abyssinia such as Abu Rabha (uncle of Khojali Hassan). ‘Mahdi supplies Fiki Ishag with slaves on payment and he also sends them to his mother Asit Amna at Morbosor, who sells them for him’.⁷⁹ It is apparent that the slaves of the family of Khojali Hassan learnt Arabic from birth. Not only that but according to one record a medical inspector reported that three slaves girls of Kojali were circumcised and had been long time before his examination.⁸⁰

The demand for slaves in Abyssinia was encouraged by coffee plantations which required large number of workers; the provision of slaves met that demand. An owner of a coffee plantation called Beshir, in Mega, used to employ slaves in coffee picking, though he was not equal to Asit Amna and her family in terms of the number of slaves owned and authority exerted.⁸¹ Beshir village on the border was named after him and was recognised as a meeting point where most dealers and buyers met and spent time before accessing slaves. The two traders had worked closely and provided support to each other at times of official raids and when slaves were in short supply.⁸² However the link with Asit Amna was stronger among the Lahawiyin and many of the suppliers who dealt with the Lahawiyin were ex-slaves of her sons Mahdi and Ismaail.

In 1917, Safi Mohamed, Lahawi came to the Abyssinian frontier brought Bahr Elniel Fadlalah ‘ alias fadl Wasi, a Berta girl now aged about 22 from Ismaail son of Bimbashi, Khojali Hassan’s trusted slave at Kirin.⁸³

While trading in Abyssinian slaves, and using Arab identity as a way of distinguishing between those who could and could not be enslaved, the Lahawiyin were unconsciously exercising their power in differentiating between those born of slaves and those born of serfs [they were differentiated as being the child of a serf of one of the slave traders]., with the assistance of the slave traders who set different prices for them. Price also depended on gender. For instance in 1924 a Koma girl a child of a serf of Mahdi Khojali, Mogdam Sebit,

⁷⁹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, July 1928, SAD 783/2/32.

⁸⁰ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No 12/1928, SAD 783/1/15.

⁸¹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 77, 1928, SAD 783/2/38.

⁸² Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 97/1928, SAD 783/2/61.

⁸³ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 75/1928, SAD 783/2/39.

was taken to Mahdi's house and had the cheek marks known as 'shillukh' 'cut on her cheeks and was sold by Mahadi for £10. Together with another two girls she was sold to Hassan Omer, Seleimi, who was pre-financed by Hamid Mareig another Seleimi.⁸⁴

It was common to sell and resell slave girls more than once and a slave girl might have been roaming from one *sheikh* to another or from one village to an Arab *ferik*. After the 1922 raid against Wad Mahmound, where many female slaves were captured by Khojali Hassan, some were resold a few months later by relatives of Asit Amna to Arab nomads.⁸⁵ Others were kept until 1925 when prices rose to £35 for girls of 10-13 years old.⁸⁶

But Condominium authority was slowly extended over this area through the 1920s' Khojali died in the mid-1920s, and when a Condominium patrol set out for Kurmuk and Bani Shangul about 1928/29 it was reported that 'Asit Amna, the widow of Khojali Hassan, has sent a letter of welcome'.⁸⁷ In Asit Amna's letter of support she welcomed the arrival of the patrol in that part of Ethiopia; she had evidently opted to make an ally of the Condominium authorities in an area that lay in the uncertain borderland between the Condominium and Ethiopia, and hoped to have a cordial relationship with British officials so her business would survive.

Condominium officials also received a letter of welcome from her son Mahdi wad Hassan.⁸⁸ The three family members had spread their residence across the trade routes: Asit Amna lived in Mortosoro, Khojali Hassan in Beika and Mahdi wad Hassan in 'Megali' near Wad Mahmound'.⁸⁹ "Mahdi supplies Fiki Ishag with slaves on payment and he also sends them to his mother Asit Amna at Morbosor, who sells them for him".⁹⁰

The Sudanese slave trade made Khojali and Amna rich and provided them with great returns. Despite her letter of welcome, in 1928 the Condominium arrested Asit Amna for slave

⁸⁴ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 85/1928, SAD 783/2/51.

⁸⁵ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 81/1928, SAD 783/2/41.

⁸⁶ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 49/1929, SAD 783/2/42.

⁸⁷ A. R. C. Bolton, Official Papers, 'Situation reports on northern sector, Upper Nile area,' January–April 1941, SAD 624/3/17.

⁸⁸ Bolton, Official Papers, 'Situation reports on northern sector, Upper Nile area,' January–April 1941, SAD 624/3/17.

⁸⁹ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 133/1928, SAD 783/2/90; Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No. 137/1928, SAD 783/2/95. Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, Minor Court No 76/1928, SAD 783/2/40. 'Wad Mahmound' was a town in Abyssinia named after a northerner who left after the Mahdiyya and who hold a title 'mughadam.'

⁹⁰ Arkell, Official Papers, White Nile Province, July 1928, Dakhliya 112/16/101.

trading and she was put in prison in Wadi Halfa until 1935 when she was released and returned to Wad Medani.⁹¹

For, though enforcement was slow and patchy, in the end Condominium policy was driven along by Britain's international commitments to end both the slave trade and – ultimately – slavery itself. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Slavery and the Slave Trade, in London, had made it clear to that 'it shall be deemed to be a panel offence for any subject of signatory power wherever resident to engage in the slave trade.'"⁹² Condominium policy had first been aimed to eliminate the 'capture of human beings, their sale and purchase and their ill-treatment at their masters' will and which involved non-recognition of all personal rights'. On the other hand, there had existed, what was commonly referred to as 'domestic slavery',⁹³ which was more gradually dealt with.⁹⁴ In May 1925, however, the Sudan Government issued a decree which asserted the absolute right to freedom of all Sudanese despite the strong objections of the powerful religious leaders including the Grand Qadi 'that wholesale manumission was a contravention of Islamic law.'⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ahmad, 'Trading in Slaves in Bela-Shangul and Gumuz,' p. 438; Atieb, 'Sheikh Khojali al-Hassan,' p.16-17; Hargey, 'The suppression of slavery in the Sudan,' p.149.

⁹² National Archives London, Slavery 1925, FO 141/640/2.

⁹³ No. 3 Memorandum on Slavery in the Sudan, p. 18, in Sudan No. 1 (1926), 'Papers relating to Slavery in the Sudan (printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationery Office.1926)

⁹⁴ The League, set in motion by the resolution of 1922 and finding little response to its appeal for information, appointed the Temporary Slavery Commission in 1924 to enquire into slavery worldwide. This body was established by Britain, France 'to have no bite and very little bark', and was limited to eight experts on slavery to keep the cost low, as well as private individuals who were appointed by the League, not by their governments, hence theoretically 'independent'. However, six were nationals of the leading colonial powers.

⁹⁵ Robert O. Collins, 'Slavery in the Sudan in history,' *Slavery & Abolition* 20: 3 (1999), pp.80-81; Suzanne Miers, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade as International Issues, 1890-1939,' *Slavery & Abolition* 19:2 (1998), pp.24-25.

3. Slaves and sedentarisation

While slave-trading continued, the campaign against slavery and the slave trade was gaining momentum. As early as 1910-1913 about 200 slaves, men and women had reported their demand to emancipation to the *merkaz* Al Dweim.⁹⁶ The campaign required inquiry into and the listing and registration of the slaves' conditions. Exhaustive inquiries had to be made by the Condominium administration relating to the place of capture, method of capture, dates, route taken and persons concerned, as often the slave was either a child or an old woman incapable of answering coherently. In many cases the accused, their masters, would be sent away to minimize their influence over the slaves.⁹⁷ The Condominium authorities consistently sought to downplay grievances: in 1929, one official reported that there were 'very few cases of ill treatment and dissatisfaction and many of them are almost independent'.⁹⁸ Yet, by the late 1920s, courts set up by the Condominium government were active in hearing ex-slaves' cases, of whom some had been abandoned by their masters. Revealingly, in this district [Butana], most of the slaves belonged to Lahawiyin and were found in the area of what would become the headquarters of the *sheikh khut*, Mugataa Wad al Zein, along the River Atbara.⁹⁹ Remarkably the majority of descendants of those 10,000 slaves of the Lahawiyin chose to remain by the River Atbara, and formed what is now known as Mugataa al-Suq. This was a town of slaves and non-Lahawiyin migrants.¹⁰⁰

Settlement following both the campaign and the steps of their masters perpetuated a self-recognition of a new identity. Land began to become a concern in an area where herd ownership was also classified as that of Arabs. Therefore the only option open to those ex-slaves was to seek smallholdings of land to exercise a form of ownership. Mostly, these smallholdings were the rain-fed land, *bildat*, in the environs of Mugataa Asuq and the *juruf*

⁹⁶ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan,' p.140.

⁹⁷ T.R.H Owen, ADC Geteina and Ed Dueim, White Nile Province, personal correspondence to his mother, 'description of Kosti and British officials serving there; trying of slave cases; visit to Tendelti to investigate corruption in the sale of water,' 1-19 July 1928, SAD 414/2/3-7; Owen, personal correspondence to his mother, 29 January 1929, SAD 414/2/18.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Hargey, 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan'; Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*; Acland, 'Memoirs,' SAD 707/15/1-19; Acland, 'Life in Kassala Province as A.D.C. Butana: description of district and tribes; administration and police; beginnings of devolution; herd tax; education and trade,' SAD.707/15/2-10; Mrs. Acland, 'Memoir,' SAD.777/15/1-13.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director Statistic Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

close to this village.¹⁰¹ The Lahawiyyin's acceptance of the establishment and expansion of Mugataa Asuq did not happen arbitrarily; rather it was intentional as it served many purposes that suited the Lahawiyyin, as later accounts suggest. Ex-slaves had always constituted part of the tribe and were counted within the constituency of the *sheikh khut*. Moreover, the labour of ex-slaves was crucial to the maintenance of the tribe, a reciprocal relationship. Former slaves provided agricultural and herding work that was in high demand with the expansion of small mechanised schemes.¹⁰²

Across central and eastern Sudan, livelihoods were changing at this time. In the White Nile Province, a mixed economy of herding and rain land cultivation developed. In the Gezira Province the introduction of cash crops generated a great demand for labour. Also, with the existence of market towns such as Kosti, Sinnar, Kurmuk, and Jabelin, nomadic tribes had accumulated wealth in livestock which contributed to successful farming and in turn allowed individuals to build up herds. The combination of these activities created a greater demand for labour, particularly family labour.¹⁰³

Most of the ex-slaves were engaged in agricultural and herding activities, petty trading, butchering, mechanics and carpentry, the trade in vegetables and so on. Some may have owned *bildat*, through continuous cultivation over the years which were customarily known as 'free hand' while some bought agricultural schemes from other land owners within the tribe.¹⁰⁴ A number of ex-slaves obtained a right over *juruf* but these were limited in number. During the 1940s most of the slaves were freed. The desire for education encouraged some slaves to leave their masters¹⁰⁵ and compete with them in local politics, creating a somewhat problematic relationship.¹⁰⁶ As we shall learn later on that the Lahawiyyin were not very much into education some former slaves also joined the police and the army, prominent services for the people who in these years of the Condominium were the only ones called 'Sudani'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ The Lahawiyyin Development Conference Report, by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyyin Planned for April 1996), p.4; interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General,, Statistics Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

¹⁰² Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, November 2007.

¹⁰³ Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, Showak, December 2007.

¹⁰⁵ Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers*, p.185.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, Showak, December 2007.

¹⁰⁷ In early days of Condominium the term Sudan implied a slave origin and was used in a derogatory way; Buchanan, Personal Papers, 'the human factor in British colonialism: the case of the Sudan,' SAD 797/8/8.

Prior to the settlement and the development of Mugataa Asuq, the interaction of the slaves with their *sheikhs* and their families was very close and unavoidable; however the new set-up separated the slaves and their masters further.¹⁰⁸ The freedom obtained by the slaves distanced them and allowed some to engage in certain social practices of which some Lahawiyin might have not approved. The development of the Mugataa contributed to widening the gap between the Arabs and non-Arabs, particularly the slaves. The nominal freeing of the slaves by manumission led to a kind of confinement of the slaves by the Lahawiyin; just as the Lahawiyin found themselves confined by grazing boundaries, former Lahawiyin slaves found themselves confined by restriction to a particular area: the Lahawiyin perhaps lost direct control over the slaves; but they had succeeded in confining the slaves in one place. Al-Mugataa Asuq, as a case in history, played a part in a relationship of self recognition and construction of two opposite identities of nomads and slaves. As one informant put it “Al-Mugataa is a place that brings strangers, sons and ancestors of slaved women *Alsarari*. Al-Mugataa Asuq is ‘*Abeed*’ [slaves]; some of the social behaviours suit them- and 90% of them were owned by Magait.”¹⁰⁹

Yet most interesting of all is that – as the next chapter will show – when the Lahawiyin themselves also began to form permanent settlements, the leading al-Faki section would choose to establish its village of Mugataa Wad al Zein right next to the ‘slave’ settlement of Mugataa Asuq.

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with late sheikh Ahmed al Zein, al-Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997; Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, December 2007; Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, Showak, December 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with an anonymous informant, Gedarif, December 2007.

4. Identity and slavery

In 2007, a Lahawi woman proudly stated that: ‘Our grandfather, Wad Al Yagoub, and his camel named Kbasour used to enter Ingesana areas. He was trading in slaves.’¹¹⁰ During the Condominium period the Lahawiyin acquired a degree of wealth, sustained a nomadic economy and asserted their own status by enslaving others. Even though the Lahawiyin *sheikhs* respected the slaves as living beings – for example, they acknowledged the slaves’ desires – they still treated them with less respect than a Lahawi because slaves were used as a means to their own ends. Descendants of ex-slaves still maintained relations with their ex-masters; a feeling of belonging to the tribe was quite prevalent and this maintained an inherent identity of their past experiences as ex-slaves, which in turn confirmed their self perception and recognition of the Lahawiyin as masters. The master/slave relationship still exists long after formal emancipation, as was reflected in many interviews. This was clearly depicted in the private discussions of the Lahawiyin:

Some slaves freed themselves – the market has brought people from all walks of life and they married and mixed with them. Some even married with Lahawiyin. But the fear is that the grandsons will not be able to marry from Lahawiyin. They continue to feel that they belong to the Lahawiyin and they are affiliated to the tribe. Some of them educated themselves and now represent their constituency in the State Assembly.¹¹¹

Nyombe expressed the sense that Sudanese social borders might be negotiable and that Arabism was not genealogically exclusive. The Lahawiyin suggest a very different dynamic to Arab identity. They claim that throughout their history they were cautious of intermarriage even with non-Lahawiyin Arabs, as illustrated by the statement made by an interviewee ‘A Lahawi daughter was married to a Shukri *sheikh*; the Lahawiyin were angry although this marriage would have solved a lot of land problems.’¹¹²

Slaves’ circumstances did improve in the aftermath of manumission even though in some cases they had the experience of their offspring being identified as ‘*awlad al seriyya*’¹¹³ and treated differently. In the view of a Lahawi *sheikh*, recorded in 2007, people from former slave families have a ‘blood relation’ and need to be ‘protected’; interestingly he explained

¹¹⁰ Interview with Haja Bakhita al Igba, Mugataa wad al Zein, December 2007.

¹¹¹ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, Showak, December 2007.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “Seriyya” is a female slave married to her master.

this in terms of a division within the tribe, between Arab and the no-Arab former slaves, whom he called *al-Hakamat*, as well as *seriyya*:

They are members of the Tribe with two different colours - we feel it is a blood relation. The tribe supports and protects them when they need it. In celebration al Hakamat are not Arab – they are the ex slaves up to now they play the drum (Daluka [nugara]), but an Arab will get her hand chopped off if she dares to do that - only among the women alone. In most Lahawiyin areas the drum or the Tar calls in evils like the slaves. Al Hakamat organise parties and bring joy to people. Any Lahawi whose grandmother is Seriyya even if this Lahawi is your cousin you will not give him your daughter.¹¹⁴

As this shows, the role of female slaves was also defined. They made their living and obtained rewards by entertaining and praising their masters and related family members. Competition between female slaves over an intimate relationship with their masters was common. Hargey argued that ‘the *nugara* [dancing drum] . . . became the focal point’ for former slaves.¹¹⁵ Mugataa Asuq became a refuge, a residence and a ‘nugara place’ for the slaves and ex slaves. Haja Bakhita stated that slave women were ‘good at dancing and made the *nugara* hot [appealing].’¹¹⁶

A contemporary illustration reveals the endurance of the ‘ex-slave’ category within the Lahawiyin tribe. One morning in 2007, two ex-slave women came from al Mugatta al-Suq on a visit to Sheikh Ahmed al Zein and his wife Haja Bakita. From a distance they could be seen and when they were close to the vicinity of the house of Sheikh Ahmed and his wife Bakhita, they both suddenly took off their slippers and carried them in their hands and took their traditional Sudanese cloths from their heads and sat down. They greeted the hosts not by shaking hands but by starting to chat casually. When Bakhita was asked why these two women acted strangely she replied “they are *khadam* (slaves) *nas amik* (your uncle) Ahmed.”¹¹⁷ This story reveals two things; the slave self-image and the Lahawiyin expectation of their slaves which has become a norm. These were ex-slaves; however they continued to be identified as slaves. To have head and shoulders uncovered is, for a woman, a sign of low status. Away from the family that had owned their family, these women covered themselves, and wore shoes; but when they saw that family, they uncovered themselves in a way that marked their lower status. This persistent slave identity was tied to the economic and social

¹¹⁴ Interview with a Lahawi *sheikh* in Showak, Gedarif, November 2007.

¹¹⁵ Hargey, ‘The suppression of slavery in the Sudan,’ p.140.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Haja Bakhita al Igba, Mugatta a wad al Zein, December 2007.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

protection that the tribe could offer to those women. However, negotiating another identity, a non-slave identity, is out of the question and unobtainable to elderly slaves. They identify themselves with the Lahawiyin. As long as they live in the boundary of the Wad al Zein, they belong to them.

Chapter Four

The desire for a *dar*: changing livelihoods and relations to the land in the later Condominium period

As the previous chapter showed, the main forms of wealth and sources of status among the Lahawiyin were firstly camels and secondly slaves. Maintaining these resources, particularly camels, required the crossing of administrative, grazing and national boundaries. This chapter will explore the impact of continuing Condominium Government efforts to create and enforce such boundaries, and of the development of new patterns of agricultural land-use. As the Lahawiyin experienced increasing restrictions on their grazing and access to land, they responded in two ways. Firstly, they began to demand their own territorial homeland or *dar* to try to protect the communal grazing rights of the emerging 'tribe' as a whole. Secondly, individuals and groups within the tribe began to take the decision to engage in non-pastoralist economic activities and to purchase cultivable land. For those who had always been poor in camels, the new opportunities for agriculture and labour migration offered the chance to gain different kinds of wealth, and to renegotiate their status within their section or tribe. The later part of the Condominium period therefore saw the contradictory processes of increasing tribal unity around the demand for a *dar*, and increasing variation between different livelihoods within the tribe.

1. 'The Lahawiyin must be ruled': enforcement of grazing and district boundaries

We saw in Chapter two that violations of grazing boundaries led directly to internal restructuring of the Lahawiyin, because Sheikh e-Igba was removed as a result of illegally grazing camels across a boundary. This left Sheikh Adam al Zein of the Wad e-Faki section as the overall administrative head of the Lahawiyin, holding the title of *sheikh khut*. The issue of boundaries placed him and his section in a difficult position, because they were one of the richest sections in camels, and therefore needed access to grazing. Yet al Zein needed to appear loyal to government and obedient to its boundaries in order to avoid the same fate as al-Igba. This may explain why he began to demand the creation of the position of *nazir* for the Lahawiyin, a demand first articulated at the time of the establishment of the Lahawiyin

Native Court in 1928; this was part of a strategy to secure land rights which would allow him (and other Lahawiyin) to maintain their camel herds. According to the archives, both in Sudan and in Durham, the Lahawiyin had demanded their independence from the Shukriya several times.¹ The archive sources suggest that this was expressed in administrative terms – the demand was explicitly for a *nazirate*. But it seems clear from interview evidence that for the Lahawiyin, the claim for a *nazirate* was inseparable from the claim for a *dar*. *Dar* and *nazirate* were used almost interchangeably, to define tribal territory, authority, and political legitimacy. The linkage was one which was not – and is not - necessarily accepted by others. As Babikir al-Daw Shola, a prominent Shukri leader, argued in 2007 ‘a nazirate is not a dar.’² His argument – and, no doubt, the argument of other Shukri since the 1930s - was that the existence of a land *wathiga* (a land document issued by the Funj Sultanate) which recognized the claim of the Shukriya to the Butana as far as the Blue Nile was in itself a guarantee not to grant any *dar* rights to other tribes in the same area. . Yet, revealingly, he himself went on to conflate land claims and administrative titles:

Shukriya are always welcoming others and sharing grazing lands. Every nazirate is based on *dar* – The basis is the *dar* - Emarat [nazirate] Wad Zaied, Wad Bakur Ashukria, these are traditional holders of the land.³

The Government, meanwhile, saw al Zein’s role as that of an agent who would enforce limits on Lahawiyin movement. al Zein’s title as *sheikh khut* may have given him additional status – and power – as an individual, but the recognition on which the title depended was dependent on governmental approval, and this – of course – left al Zein trying to balance the conflicting demands of accumulating wealth for himself and his section, trying to maintain a degree of legitimacy among the Lahawiyin as a whole, and meeting the expectations of the government. In the 1930s this balancing act was made steadily harder, as the government greatly increased the restrictions on the movement of the Lahawiyin, especially crossing the Atbara River.

These restrictions were associated with the elaboration of a hierarchy of people and institutions with titles and positions which were ultimately derived from a relationship with government. The *hamla* – ‘patrol’ - was in general introduced to impose boundaries by

¹ Lea, Butana notebooks, 1927-1928, SAD.645/2-645/4; G.M. Hancock , Governor Kassala, Kassala Province Annual Paper for 1948, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

² Interview with Babikir al-Daw Shola, President Pastoralist Union, Gedarif, December 2007.

³ Ibid.

keeping the nomads in assigned grazing areas as well as to show that the Government authority's had not been affected. In 1923 the government sent a *hamla* of the Eastern Arab Corps to Abu Deleig to warn the Batahin not to mess with the Government after the transfer of part of Abu Deleig to Butana District.⁴ For the Lahawiyin, regular *hamla* imposed the boundary that kept them south of Khor Gergaf and north of Atbara River and ran from Kassala merkaz.⁵ For example, ten camels were hired between July-August 1927 for the *hamla*.⁶ The *muhafiz* - 'retainer' - was a post established after the placement of two police officers on the east bank; his authority bolstered by the police, this man would give written permission to the Lahawiyin who wanted to go north of Khor Gergraf.⁷ Otherwise the Lahawiyin would be liable to questioning and their camels would be confiscated. This post was authorised by the *merkaz* in Kassala⁸ and Lea made a request which suggested the potentially coercive nature of the role: 'Could handcuffs be supplied to sheiks of khuts for use by muhafizia?'⁹ .

The supervisory structure of official support, which both, supported and scrutinized men like Adam el Zein, was however always subject to financial constraints. In 1931 it was proposed to abolish the *mamur* and *katib Idara* ['administrative secretary'] posts at Khashm al Girba and to reduce the number of police. This was intended to result in greater efficiency – that is, lower costs - and was accompanied by an increase in the number of *muhafizin*.¹⁰ On the other hand the *muawin*,¹¹ was an official, appointed by the government, and working for the DC – not part of the 'native administration' was established to keep guard over grazing camels, report to the DC and communicate orders to sheikhs and the Lahawiyin people.¹² The *muawins* were attached by DC to sheikhs according to the size of the herds and locations identified and the number of *muawins* was 37 in total.¹³ The *wakil*, or 'representative' was

⁴ The Batahin had an internal quarrel and were in conflict with the Shukriya because of land being confiscated by the latter and also for camel-thieving. For more details on the transfer of Abu Deleig, see Acland, Official Papers, 'Handing over notes on Butana District,' SAD.777/14/1-32.

⁵ Lea , Butana notebook No.2, SAD.645/3/90 .

⁶ Ibid., SAD.645/3/50.

⁷ *Muhafiz* (pl. *muhafizin*); Acland, Official Papers, 'reorganisation and expansion,' SAD.777/14/6.

⁸ Lea , Butana notebook No.2, SAD.645/3/90 .

⁹ Lea , Butana notebook No.3, SAD.645/4/26.

¹⁰ Acland, Official papers, SAD.777/14/9.

¹¹ Daly says that the term was used of 'Sudanese sub-mamurs', who were being introduced to replace Egyptian mamurs from the mid-1920s. M. Daly, *British Administration and the Northern Sudan, 1917-24: the governor-generalship of Sir Lee Stack in the Sudan* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1980), pp. 45-46. Sub-mamurs in other provinces, though, for instance in Dongla and Merwai, were assigned different tasks such as administration and accountancy.

¹² Lea , Butana notebook No.2, SAD.645/3/87.

¹³ Ibid., SAD.645/3/ 95-97.

appointed to deal with land disputes, rather than herds; the archive record is not clear, but Abu Shouk and Bjorkelo suggested that these were all assigned by the DC.¹⁴

Like the *sheikh khut* himself, the *muhafizin* and *wakil* occupied an uncertain position; nominally part of the 'native administration', yet dependent on the approval and support of the government, which would be lost if they were not able to meet at least some of the demands of government policy. The *hamla* was placed to follow the Lahawiyin wherever they crossed the Atbara, and in particular to report unpermitted crossing from west to east. In 1932 a *muhafiz* was assigned to look after the Lahawiyin away from the east bank and thus facilitated proper crossing of the river when it was low.¹⁵ The Lahawiyin were difficult to control, even in the presence of the *muhafiz*. In areas of cultivation (*bildat*), a '*wakil*' was appointed to watch over cultivated areas as much as he could to minimize disputes between different land users in 1932. Conflicts which could not be solved by the *wakil* would go to Sheikh al Zein.¹⁶

¹⁴ Aboushouk and Bjorkelo, *The Principles of Native Administration*, p.100.

¹⁵ Lea, Butana notebook No.2, SAD.645/3/ 54.

¹⁶ C. D. Denver, Assistant District Commissioner Gedarif, 'General Report of Trek', 30 August -12 September 1945, p.88, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

2. Agricultural schemes and further grazing restrictions

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, a series of developments underlined the increasing challenges faced by Lahawiyin – and others around them – in securing access to the range of grazing land which was necessary to sustain a life reliant on camel herds. In 1924, an agricultural scheme had been established in the Gash delta. Its aim was to encourage cotton cultivation, and to draw Beja tribes, particularly the Hadendawa, into a new kind of seasonal cultivation, and its effect was to gradually transform nomadic livelihoods - mostly those of camel herders – to agriculture.¹⁷ Though the scheme was much smaller than the enormous project at Gezira, it grew steadily: from 9,100 feddans in 1924, to 29,400 feddans in 1927 and 68,600 feddans by 1956; and as it expanded, the ‘tenancies’ which were given to those who wished to farm as part of the scheme were given not only to Hadendawa, but also to some farmers from western Sudan. In 1939, following encouragement from the government, the *nazir* of the Shukriyya gave up valuable grazing land on the *karab*. This was ‘an area of bad-lands topography between the river valley; and the steppe, an open clay savanna stretching eastwards to the Gash River some 50km away.’¹⁸ This was to be included in this Gash scheme. The *nazir* was advised – perhaps pushed - by the Government to do so because of the ‘economic importance’ of the Gash agricultural scheme.

The *nazir*'s decision included land which the Lahawiyin claimed for their own use. Since entry to the land east of the Atbara had been restricted because of the uncertain conditions on the frontier, the Lahawiyin had come to assume that they had acquired grazing rights there. The Beja, by contrast, had not had access to the area, and so in Lahawiyin eyes had no right to infringe on the rights which others had already established there. The issue sparked fresh dispute over the demarcation of boundaries, and whether the area which the Lahawiyin were accustomed to use was, or was not, a part of the *dar* of the Shukriyya:

He [the *nazir*] did not admit the claim that the grazing agreement in which the grazing rights east of the Atbara were based did not mention the Karab and that therefore it was excluded..... it is unfair to term the area east of the Atbara a general grazing area; it has been part of the Dar Shukriyya since the ‘reconquest of the Sudan’.¹⁹

¹⁷ Niblock, *Class and Power in Sudan*, pp.17-18. The scheme was run by a board of the Kassala Cotton Company, the government and the tenants.

¹⁸ Karim Sadr, ‘Interim Report On Late Pre -Historic Settlement Pattern Of The Khashm El Girba Area, East AST Central Sudan,’ *Nyame Akuma* 22 (1983), p.28.

¹⁹ DC Southern Gedarif, 25 September 1941, NRO Kassala 3/ 139/ 615.

The arguments turned on the need for a range of grazing which would provide for bad years, as well as good; there was not enough pasture for the nomads in order to give up access to such land, even if they did not need it every year. The DC Gedarif agreed; as he pointed out, there were dangers in asking the Shukriyya to give up their grazing land, because in bad years it was Shukriyya pastoralists were sorely tempted to try and graze their animals in the agricultural part of Dar Shukriyya, which caused damage and disputes; just as pastoralist the Beja were liable to damage the cotton in the Gash when grazing was short. The DC, however, seems not to have seen this as part of the Shukriyya *dar*, but as an area which needed much closer administration

In this connection you will recall that the area between Kassala and the Atbara and Setit contains a “Higgies”²⁰ [mix] of tribes (to quote from one of my predecessors) of this area. The Hadendawa are responsible for...their strip. The rest is ‘nominally’ administered from Kassala or Khashm al Girba. I have recently discussed in Kassala the urgent need for forming a body representing this ‘higgies’, and I will urge the Hadendawa authorities in that body and the tribe to combine to improve good order in this no-man’s land.²¹

“Higgies” was metaphorically used by the DC in Gedarif to refer to the mix nature of the tribes in this area, and that mix formed a concern to the government in terms of administration and control, The Hadendawa, Shukriyya, Lahawiyin, Bani Amer and others were claimants to the no-man’s land. The proposed ‘body’ meant to oversee all these tribes. But this body disregard the Shukriyya claim to the area to the east of the Atbara River, and overlooked the Lahawiyin claim, that this was a part of their grazing land. Instead, the ‘the no-man’s land’ was rather annexed to demarcated areas and the Lahawiyin’s chances to land right decreased.

At the same time, increasing demand on grazing land, and government attempts to manage conflict arising from these, was leading to other kinds of demarcation which explicitly relied on ethnic categorization. In 1940 a grazing line (now remembered locally as the ‘Fasher Ford’ line, apparently from the name of a British official) was established to set southern boundaries to the Shukriyya and Bawadra movement into this area; and, conversely, to demarcate a grazing area for the Lahawiyin.²² This may, on one level, have been welcome for the Lahawiyin, since it gave them an exclusive area; on the other hand, it was part of

²⁰ This is used in the Scottish sense, i.e. a ‘mix’.

²¹ DC Gedarif, Sinkat, January 1940, p.159, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

²² Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

wider changes which increasingly restricted grazing, and made their lack of a recognized *dar* ever more of an issue.

The Government went further in its confinement of the nomads. In 1940 a boundary commission was assigned to fix boundaries with the Blue Nile province in the west and the Berber province in the north.²³ The same commission also redefined the boundaries of the Butana. As the use of land was becoming more closely restricted and proscribed, the size of the herds of the Lahawiyin and the sedentary tribes was increasing; by the early 1950s it was reported that the Lahawiyin owned more animals than the eastern Shukriyya of the Butana and Atbara *khut*.²⁴

The ever-closer fixing of boundaries showed the fundamental nature of the differences in interests and approach between the Condominium and the nomads. Condominium officials saw the fixing of the boundaries of the provinces as a process of administrative regularisation, simplifying the task of government. British administrators were guided primarily by administrative concerns – ‘It would be good to have the boundary at Adrama’, as Lea wrote. But in doing so they set a northern boundary for the Lahawiyin.²⁵ The southern boundary was set at ‘Hager al-Abiad’ or ‘Mereibiaa’, the point at which the Lahawiyin usually watered their camels in large numbers, and where they had once objected to the presence of the Rashaida.²⁶ But for the Lahawiyin such regularisation inevitably meant the restriction of movement in a way which directly threatened their livelihood; four Lahawiyin men went to Khartoum to complain, but the DC commented ‘in this the Lahawiyin must be ruled’.²⁷

The impact of the flurry of boundary setting around 1940 was in some ways contradictory. The fixing of boundaries was followed by the introduction of penalties, including fines, for those who crossed the boundaries without permission, and in effect the boundaries both

²³ Governor of Kassala Province to District Commissioner Southern District, Sinkat, 29 September 1941, Kassala 3/139/615.

²⁴ ‘General Grazing Question,’ NRO Kassala 1/78/348; M.M. Harrison, ‘Report on a grazing survey of the Sudan, 1956,’ quoted in Khalid et al, ‘The Lahawiyin,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.323.

²⁵ Lea, Butana notebook No.3, SAD.645/4/84.

²⁶ District Commissioner Southern/ District, Agriculture/Eastern Grazing, Ninth Rashaida Meeting, Goz Rajeb 15-20 February 1940, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

²⁷ DC Southern/ District, Agriculture/Eastern Grazing, Ninth Rashaida Meeting, Goz Rajeb 15-20 February 1940, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

restricted access to watering points and grazing and divided the Lahawiyin – with some on one side of the new boundaries and some on the other. For instance the Bulolab *umudiyya* became part of Khashm al Girba district whereas the rest of the *umudiyyas* remained within Gedarif district.²⁸ However they all remained under the *sheikh khut* of the Lahawiyin.²⁹ But the division, and the sense that livelihoods were threatened, actually encouraged a sense of unity among the Lahawiyin and changed the dynamics of the constant negotiations over access to grazing and water in which ideas about identity and the nature of claims to land were constantly rehearsed.

In July 1941 the Rashaida and the Hadendawa presented several complaints regarding boundary violations by the Lahawiyin.³⁰ The *nazir* of the Hadendawa, Ibrahim Musa, and presented a request for the enforcement of certain rights *vis à vis* the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin. But these were not expressed in terms of the recent redefinitions of boundaries; the rights involved, he insisted, had been granted to him in an agreement made between the tribes by an earlier Condominium official, Townsend Bey, decades earlier.³¹ In his request the *nazir* acknowledged implicitly acknowledged equivalence between the rights of the Shukriyya and the Lahawiyin in the area, by accepting that the Lahawiyin had possessed grazing rights in the area prior to the mentioned agreement. The response of officials was to try and impose a separation of the Lahawiyin from the Hadendawa and Bani Amer, which resulted in restricting social and economic relations for a long time.³² It was also supposed to prevent the Bani Amer crossing the frontiers to Sudan.³³

This was enforced by the establishment of a camel police patrol in Zahana south of the Setit River. This was intended to stop the Lahawiyin from crossing the boundary into the grazing area; through this police presence administrators were able both to bolster Adam al Zein's authority and to put pressure on him to exert that authority more thoroughly, as a telegram from 1941 shows:

²⁸ Interview with Abdalla Suleiman Amir, former deputy Governor of Gezira State and a District Administrator for Lahawiyin (1964), Gedarif, January 2008.

²⁹ Khalid et.al, 'The Lahawiyin,' p.319.

³⁰ Kassala 23 July 1941, District Commissioner Gedarif, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

³¹ District Commissioner Gedarif, Kassala 23 July 1941, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

³² Ibid.

³³ D. F. Hawley, Official papers relating to Gedarif, Kassala Province, 1946-1948, SAD.1/3/1-79.

The police have found some Lahawiyin and are now sent to you. Please do what is necessary and inform all your Muhafizeen to send away *all* the Lahawiyin from the restricted grazing area.³⁴

However the 1927 incident, which had led to the removal of sheikh al Igba Abdallah from the tribal leadership had not taught the Lahawiyin much as they continued to ignore government rules and graze in restricted areas.

³⁴ A telegraph from the Inspector to *Sheikh* Adam al Zein on 23 October 1941, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

3. Changes in livelihoods, internal differentiation and inter-tribal competition

The Fasher Ford (also known as the Sindi Ford) line proved difficult to police effectively, but certainly did not work in favour of the Lahawiyin. This was partly because of pressures on grazing which resulted from wider changes - notably the expansion of mechanised agriculture, which had a growing effect on the Butana from the mid-1940s. Therefore nomads from outside the area were not stopped by this line. Kibreab argued,

that 'the strangers [Kawahla and Rufa'a el Sharig] followed no rules and did whatever they liked with the resources.... but they also tended to overstay, encroaching upon the dry season grazing and watering areas in central Butana on which the livelihood of central Butana tribes depended.'³⁵

The establishment of the mechanised schemes had an effect on the local economy and grazing in Butana and led to competition between tribes and internal change in economic practices within the Lahawiyin. Three sections or *umudiyyas* were particularly affected in different ways by the wider economic and administrative changes. The Magit were the most prominent in trading across the colonial borders with Ethiopia and Eritrea, as we saw in the previous chapter. Wad Hardan had always been poor in camels and so became among the first to turn to sedentary agriculture and labour migration. Wad el-Faki, the section of the *sheikh khut*, al Zein, retained their wealth in camels, but also took advantage of their prominent position to invest in purchasing land. In terms of inter-tribal relations and competition, the Fellatta, and the Bawadra also became significant, as well as the dominant *dar*-owning Shukriyya and Hadendawa.³⁶

Up to the 1940s, there had been no official encouragement for the development of rain-fed grain agriculture in Sudan – schemes in the Gezira and Gash had been based on irrigation, and the production of cotton for export. But the demand for food grains created by the Second World War drove a newly interventionist approach, and by 1944 the government had surveyed and demarcated 350,000 feddans of rain land at Gadambaliya near Gedarif for the mechanised production of *dura* (*sorghum*) for the Sudan Defence Force units stationed in North Africa. By the end of 1946 into 1947 about 21,000 feddans of *dura* were cultivated.

³⁵ Kibreab, *State intervention*, p.109.

³⁶ Most of information in this page is extracted from O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor,' pp.89-92. See also Arthur Staniforth, *Imperial Echoes: the Sudan: people, history and agriculture* (Oxford: World View Publications, 2000) and M.M.M. Ahmed, *Development of Agriculture in the Sudan: an Annotated Bibliography with an Introductory Essay* (Khartoum: Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum, c1994).

This proved impossible to harvest effectively by mechanical means and the necessity of employing manual labour for the harvest was recognised; the government consequently experimented with the introduction of tenanted leasehold farming, already established in the irrigation schemes, and in 1948 a tenancy system was established on 3,000 feddans divided into plots of 28 feddans. *Nazirs* and *sheikhs* played an important role in the allocation of tenancies where distribution was based on family relations and loyalty. This came at a time when many Lahawiyin were still seeking to maintain their status as pastoralists and in consequence few were allotted tenancies. The only Lahawiyin who were granted tenancies at that time were the family of Adam al Zein.³⁷ The administrative subordination of the Lahawiyin to the Shukriyya also ensured that they lost out in the process. In 1953 the Ministry of Agriculture assigned a committee to review the situation at Gadambaliya. The committee presented a list of suggestions among which they proposed the leasing of larger plots to private investors and cooperatives.³⁸ The Ministry adopted many of the suggestions and land was leased to a number of investors who sought to benefit from this opportunity, the consequence was a more effective return to the mechanised farming which had been envisaged ten years earlier.

The consequence was a change in land use, and a diminution of grazing areas. The land which was given out as leaseholds was partly taken from former free grazing areas; among the new leaseholders were many non-pastoralists. These included members of some riverain Arab tribes - Ja'aliyin, Shaigiya - and a sprinkling of exotic investors - Copts, Kurds Indian and Yemenis. The Ja'aliyin and Shaigiya were the majority.³⁹ This official encouragement of rain-fed agriculture had further effects. Though nominally 'mechanized', this agriculture remained highly reliant on labour, and this led to a new influx of migrants from elsewhere in Sudan (Fellata, Nuba, and Darfuris) and even Ethiopians seeking new opportunities in waged labour. Not all Lahawiyin lost out in this process, the family of Sheikh Adam al Zein, for example, were allotted some land, though this was small in size compared to those of the Shukriyya leadership.

The presence of non-pastoralist migrants in the area was not new. Certain tribes like the Fellata had been officially encouraged by the Government in 1906 to contribute to the

³⁷ Interview (online) with Babikir Awad al Karim, historian, May 2010.

³⁸ O'Brien, 'Agricultural Labor'; Ahmed, *Development of Agriculture in the Sudan*.

³⁹ M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.193.

population growth in an area that had allegedly been depopulated in the Mahdiyya, and what the government called 'Fellata colonies' drew on a longer tradition of movement and settlement connected with the pilgrimage.⁴⁰ But the development of new agricultural schemes encouraged further migration. This increasing Fellata presence had an effect both on the local politics of identity and on the local economy. As a non-Arab community of growing size and importance, the Fellata may have encouraged a reactive assertion of ideas of rights and status based on Arabness; and as they became increasingly active in the local economy as agricultural labour and so they began to acquire land rights and compete with the Lahawiyin over the *juruf* along the Atbara and Setit Rivers.⁴¹ Yet, challenging though the Fellata were, the growing involvement of the Bawadra to the local economy was more challenging for the Lahawiyin. The Bawadra were among the early investors in Butana who opted to transform their livelihood from purely herding to being agricultural scheme owners. This investment by the Bawadra was attributed to the fact that they had relied on their blood relation with the Shukriyya. Being close to the Shukriyya and always having lived around the area between Butana and Gezira had granted them usufruct rights over land prior to the Lahawiyin, which explained how their presence in Butana exceeded that of the Lahawiyin. However their land boundaries were more to the west of Butana and far from the traditional areas of the Lahawiyin which were bounded by the Atbara River. The Bawadra were considered to be Arab, and an exclusionary language which linked Arabness with rights to land could not be used so effectively against them. This conflict with Bawadra became particularly intense after as increasing numbers of Lahawiyin settled began in the 1950s.

Alongside this encroachment of the mechanized schemes on grazing land, the Lahawiyin began to diversify their involvement in commerce. Lea's description of the Lahawiyin when crossing border with Ethiopia as still 'untamed' and 'independent' at the end of the 1930s is a

⁴⁰ C. Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims; The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p.137; Alamin Abu Manga and Catherine Miller, 'The West African (Fellata) Communities in Gedaref State: Process of Settlement and Local Integration', pp. 375-423, and Rupert Hasterok, 'Sultan Muhammed Bello Mai Wurno, Native Administration and the Fellata of Kassala Province', pp.424-448, in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*. Also see J. S. Birks, *Across the Savannas to Mecca: the overland pilgrimage route from West Africa* (London: C. Hurst, 1978), p.20; 'Tribal -Sudan Moh. Bello Mayurno of the Fellata,' NRO CivSEC 66/8/57; Mark R. Duffield, *Maiurno: capitalism & rural life in Sudan* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981); A.A. al-R. Nasr and M.R. Duffield, *A bibliography of West African settlement and development in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan* (Khartoum: Development Studies and Research Centre, Faculty of Economic & Social Studies, University of Khartoum, 1980).

⁴¹ Fellatta were reported to have settled in these areas since 1925: see Abu Manga and Miller, 'The West African (Fellatta) Communities,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.385.

good one.⁴² The rapid political changes of the 1940s – war, the brief period of British administration in Ethiopia, and then the reestablishment of an independent government that was suspicious of British intentions – did little to tame the area.⁴³ In the late 1940s, the Condominium had resorted to routine use of the Sudan Defence Force to patrol the frontier in the Basunda area of Gedarif: two regular patrols were maintained from January to May every year, at the peak of seasonal movements, and were occupied mainly with the prevention of crossing.⁴⁴ Despite this increased policing, the population on either side of the nominal border continued to live in ways which straddled it. In 1940, it had been reported that the Lahawiyin felt that there were no inhabitants to the east of the Atbara and this was ‘no man’s land’⁴⁵.

By the 1940s, both slavery and the slave trade had declined substantially – partly because of the steadily tightening enforcement of the law, but more generally (in Sudan, as elsewhere on the continent) because economic opportunity and social change had pushed emancipation.⁴⁶ But the border continued to be a resource, for people who sought to avoid colonial demands, improve their livelihoods or benefit from border trade, and the Lahawiyin continued to cross the border not simply in search of grazing but rather to avoid paying tax, to trade in camels, and for other kinds of trade.⁴⁷ Movements by the Magit section of the Lahawiyin, for example, tended to take them east across the international border more than west. The Magit were reported to be good at arms smuggling and many local agreements were signed by their *sheikhs* and *sheikhs* in Ethiopia and Eritrea.⁴⁸ Of course it was not only the Magit but other *umudiyyas*, such as the Gawamis, who were engaged and active. Their proximity to Ethiopia played a role in establishing business relations. The relevance of this to the rest of the Lahawiyin case stems from the fact that the Magit was a leading *umudiyya*, rich in camels who sought to graze without restriction whether in Sudan or Ethiopia. Their wealth in livestock enabled and encouraged the *umudiyya* to develop a special relationship and a small

⁴² Lea, Personal Papers, letters to his parents, 1926-1927, SAD.645/7/1-62; Lea, Butana notebooks No.1-3, SAD.645/2-4.

⁴³ Bahru Zewde, *A history of modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991* (Oxford: James Curry, 2001), pp.178-79; also Denham and James, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*.

⁴⁴ SAD, ‘Report on Finance, administration and condition of the Sudan, SudA PK1561 GRE: 1939-41 (inclusive)’, pp.11-12. As mentioned by Birik, the West African pilgrims transiting through Sudan increased by 1940. They predominantly used the Ethiopian routes and this might also explain why there was a routine patrol at the border. See Birks, *Across the Savannas to Mecca*, p.25.

⁴⁵ DC Gedarif, Sinkat, January 1940, p.159, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

⁴⁶ Sikainga, *Slaves into workers*; Hargey, ‘The suppression of slavery in the Sudan.’

⁴⁷ Kassala Province Annual Paper (1948), pp.1-2, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁴⁸ Informed by a Lahawi sheikh in Mugtaa wad al Zein, 1997.

scale border trade with tribes on the Ethiopian border that were mutually beneficial to them, with traders in Gedarif district and with Ethiopians.

The significance of cross-border trade – almost all of which was ‘smuggling’ in government eyes, since it involved either trade in banned goods, or the avoidance of tax – is suggested by the continued official efforts to suppress it. In 1940 it was reported that there was ‘already a mounted patrol based at Showak engaged in stopping the export of grain and it can be temporarily diverted to other duties if circumstances require’.⁴⁹ Camels, grains (sesame and *sorghum*) were all smuggled by the Lahawiyin out of Sudan across Ethiopian frontiers.⁵⁰ These deals were organised and maintained by tribal leaders along the borders. As the demand for slaves declined, the main items imported came to be gold, arms, coffee beans and honey. The rainy season was the peak smuggling period as it was difficult to follow animals’ footprints.

The smugglers were mostly Lahawiyin and Bani Amer. Camel men were among the many regularly caught by the police, but many others must have got through undetected and hardly any of the principals in this trade, who were believed to be Sudanese merchants, were caught.⁵¹ Neither the Lahawiyin nor the Bani Amer had much cultivable land that would produce grain for export, only *khors* and *bildat* for domestic subsistence. They were particularly interested in camel smuggling rather than grain smuggling which was arranged by merchants (grain was in high demand during the period following the Second World War). But they became involved in grain smuggling as providers of transport to carry the grain for traders. The smuggling of grain and sesame from the Gedarif district into Eritrea via the Ethiopian frontier post of Homera also occurred on a large scale.⁵²

In 1951, it was reported that the local authorities in Ethiopia were ‘under the impression the Atbara River was the frontier’.⁵³ While there were reports of border violations by Hadendawa and Bani Amer, most reported crossings were by Lahawiyin and by Ethiopians.⁵⁴ For both

⁴⁹ DC Southern District, ‘Agriculture: Eastern Grazing, Ninth Rashaida Meeting Goz Rajeb’, 15-20 February 1940, NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

⁵⁰ Kassala Province Annual Report (1948), pp. 1-2, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Kassala Province Annual Report (1948), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁵³ For P.B. Brockbent, Governor General Kassala Province, Kassala Province Annual Report (1950/51), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁵⁴ Kassala Province Annual Report (1950/51), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.; SAD, ‘Report on Finance, administration and condition of the Sudan, SudA PK1561 GRE: 1950/51.

Lahawiyin and the Ethiopians, the border could mean free pasture and free border trade in an uncultivated land where the political concept of boundaries was purely nominal.

It is possible that by the mid-1950s, border patrols had reduced some of the cross-border movement; one report claimed that:

‘Our Lahawiyin tribe kept away from attempts at encroachment on the rich pasture on the other side of the border’.⁵⁵

At the same time however, arms smuggling may if anything have been increasing. The ‘Shifta’ – a term which was used rather loosely of armed bandits generally – were said to be active along the Gedarif–Ethiopia frontier in 1955/56, when it was reported that three Lahawiyin were kidnapped and held for a ransom of E£250, which was paid.⁵⁶

The first Lahawiyin settlement – in the sense of a long-term living place, with cultivation and long-term dwellings - was around 1940 and was by members of the al Faki *umudiyya*. A few al Faki families started to settle at that time in al Mugataa al Suq⁵⁷, a seasonal camp on the eastern bank of the Atbara River. This village was a multi-ethnic centre for both Arabs and non-Arabs and a marketing centre for many tribes in the area, and as noted earlier, the first settlers had been the ex-slaves of the Lahawiyin. . However, Mugataa al-Suq did not flourish due to the growth of Showak as the local and intra- state market holder for the camel trade; in 1946 the DC Butana, Mr. Hawley, described Mugataa, (presumably he meant Mugataa al-Suq) as ‘an unpleasant place’ of about 12,000 people.⁵⁸ His apparent distaste could perhaps be attributed to the fact that the place was known to be a village of former slaves where distilling illicit spirits - *araki* - was a normal, wide-spread activity.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, another Mugataa was developing. This, established by Sheikh Adam al Zein was the first exclusively Lahawiyin village, ‘al-Mugataa Wad al Zein’.⁶⁰ He was followed by other members of the tribe who settled with him, realising the importance of land acquisition. According to Hawley’s comments in 1946, Sheikh al Zein used to camp near Mugataa in winter; it was this seasonal camp which became the basis for a gradual settlement. Initially those who lived

⁵⁵ Kassala Province Annual Report (1954/55), p. 4, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁵⁶ Kassala Province Annual Report (1955/56), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁵⁷ Al Mugatta al Suq was established in 1939 according to National Archives London, Boundary and Frontiers , FO 141/463-574/7-4.nd The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996),p. 3.

⁵⁸ Hawley, Official papers relating to Gedarif, Kassala Province, SAD 1/3/1-79.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ ‘The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.8.

there would still move to the Butana during the dry season period. However this settlement was perceived in retrospect by some members of the tribe as the beginning of the ‘taming’ process of the Lahawiyin and the end of the ‘independent’ nature for which the tribe was known.⁶¹ A second settlement took place in 1953, led by members of the Wad Isa and Magit,⁶² though Al Mugataa wad al Zein continued to grow as the tribe’s main settlement, and the headquarters of its leaders. This change, roughly coincided, with the increased provision of education and other services, and with a new sense among the Lahawiyin themselves that these services were desirable. From then on, the Lahawiyin started to divide into small groups on the eastern and then western banks of the River Atbara. This grouping was based on previous dry-season camps that became villages on the banks of the river.⁶³

Most of the villages north of Showak, with the exception of those of the Gawamis *umudiyya*, developed in the late 1950s and 1960s, which will be expanded on in the next chapter. However, the establishment of villages brought with it a new concept of territorial village boundary and concern over rights in the land which was known as *juruf*. This had alarmed neighbouring tribes such the Shukriyya and the Bawadra, who saw the settlement as a sign of a long term political challenge to their authority. Some Bawadra were themselves trying to pursue significant investment in the expansion of mechanized agriculture, on the basis of their position as one of the leading tribes. But it was not only Lahawiyin settlement which concerned them; all the *meshras*’ (fords/watering points) along the Atbara were used by the many Lahawiyin herds of camels which also indicated a constant presence of livestock which might jeopardise other tribes in the area as a threat to crops.

Meanwhile, Showak town grew in population. Numbers were swelled by the settlement of Arabs from a number of groups, from all over northern Sudan – Hamran, Ta’isha, Ja’aliyyin and others – and also non-Arab Fellata, Nuba and others. But the basis of the town was a number of predominantly Lahawiyin villages. Having moved into the area, some sections of the Lahawiyin began to value settlement as a way of possessing land. This was a profound

⁶¹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶² ‘The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), pp. 3-20.

⁶³ These were Remailer, Duwaih, Shagra, Wad Eirra, Eal Tartar, al Shagalaib, Magit, al Mugataa al Suq, al Mugataa Wad al Zein. All these villages corresponded with others on the eastern bank of the River Atbara. Lahawiyin also established villages on the banks of the River Setit, for example Baslam Fashaga, west of Gedarif, al Donkey, Um-Khanjar, Qaryat Thuria, and Um-Shajarat.

change – a movement from an idea of rights to grazing and water which stretched over a wide area to an idea of the outright ownership of a defined piece of land. From this modest beginning, Showak was to become, over the following decades, the focus of an ever-more settled Lahawiyin community.

4. Administrative changes: councils

The changes in livelihoods and settlement patterns of the Lahawiya would also lead to political rivalries within the tribe. These took place largely within the structures of the Native Administration which had developed since the 1920s, contributing to the pressure for the highest position in those structures, that of a *nazir*. But these structures were themselves changing in the later Condominium period, as the colonial government shifted its rhetoric from indirect rule to 'local government'.

The rhetorical shift was formally introduced in 1937, when the very name of new legislation – 'Local Government' ordinances - suggested a decisive break with the former ideology of traditional authority as the basis of 'native administration'. The immediate significance of this can be overstated, however, and in rural areas in particular there continued to be a heavy reliance both on the tribe as a unit of administration and on 'customary' authorities as the link between government and people. There was, however, a new impetus towards forms of administration which were at least in part territorial, and were not restricted to a single tribe; and there was increasing overlap and confusion in following years, between judicial and administrative functions and between tribal and territorial structures. The Local Government Ordinances of 1937 for Rural Areas⁶⁴ gave recognition to bodies such as the tribal *majlis*, - 'assemblies', especially among nomadic tribes, though it revealed a conflicting jurisdiction between the *majlis* (singular *majlis*) and the native courts. This step was supported by the Local Government (Rural Areas) Ordinance 1937.⁶⁵ The *majlis*, though presented in the language of custom, were not tribal bodies; the *nazir* was considered the head of any *majlis*, but the essence of any *majlis* was that it included representatives from more than one tribe and more than one *nazir*. The tribal *majlis* of the Hadendawa and the Shukriyya in the 1940s had three *nazirs*, including the Bani Amer.

If the changes of 1937 had been less immediately significant than their language might suggest, the end of the 1940s saw a more profound ideological change. The Marshall Report, as it became known (after its author, Arthur Marshall, the Town Clerk of the British city of Coventry) proposed a major revision of local government structures. This was intended to

⁶⁴ J. Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1974), pp.30-31. *Majalis* is plural; *Majlis* is singular.

⁶⁵ Aboushouk and Bjorkelo, *The Principle of Native Administration*, p.247.

make them into much more effective local agents of a central government whose primary aim was development, and which was committed to the provision of multiple kinds of social service which were seen as necessary to development. Marshall recommended the complete end of the long-standing overlap between local administration and courts, and a move to an entirely territorial system of local government.

Before explaining the tribal *majlis* in detail in relation to the Lahawiyin one has to make the distinction between the tribal *majlis* and '*majlis ahli*. The latter, literally the 'popular assembly', was the term used for urban councils, and is not our focus here. In this rural context, the leaders of tribal *majlis* as Woodward put it, "had become involved in the territorial politics. They were utilized not simply for administrative purposes but also for a political reason too,"⁶⁶ The *majlis* was an inter-tribal, consultative body called upon to settle disputes, as opposed to a council which was formally still a tribal body. The *nazir* of the Shukriyya and three *sheikh khut*, including Adam al Zein of the Lahawiyin, were also invited to participate in the meeting. A number of *umdas*, and *sheikhs* with complaints were also welcomed.⁶⁷ The implication for the Lahawiyin was that the tribe was represented on the *majlis* yet Sheikh Adam al Zein would not be able to attend without the authorization of the *nazir* of the Shukriyya; his presence was under the auspices of the Shukriyya.⁶⁸

The *majalis* were summoned to discuss issues related to the tribes' affairs and relations including theft and killing. On occasion they could act as Native Courts and various cases were brought in for further discussion and investigation. In 1941 the relation between the Hadendawa and the Lahawiyin became tense over grazing. Confrontation between the two tribes was frequent, and the Shukriyya were unwilling to intervene or act as guardian to the Lahawiyin. When five Lahawiyin were shot by Hadendawa tribesmen a *Majlis* was immediately convened and tribal leaders were summoned. The *Majlis* members (Hadendawa, Shukriyya and Lahawiyin) and they were satisfied that the Lahawiyin agreed that this case should be dealt with on its own merit when the investigation was complete and need not hold up the discussion of other cases.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Peter Woodward, *Condominium and Sudanese nationalism* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1979), p.168.

⁶⁷ NRO Sudan, Kassala 1/78/348, The Beja – Shukriyya Meeting, Kassala Dec (19-23) 1941; see also NRO CIVSEC 66/11/101 'Grazing Areas'.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ District Commissioner, 1 January 1942, NRO Kassala 3/139/617, p.309.

The aforementioned case and others suggest the duplication of authority between *Majlis* and Native Courts, where powers overlapped but the process involved was quite different. In a *Majlis* the decisions regarding sentences, apart from fines and compensation, had to be approved unanimously by all parties, rather than resulting from the decision of the judge or court president. For example, in December 1941 eight Lahawiyin killed and injured members of the Amrara tribe and were sentenced by the major court to three to five years' imprisonment. They were fined £E150 to pay *dia* (blood money), and also had to pay compensation for injuries. A *Majlis*, by contrast, gave the opportunity to negotiate fines. In 1942 the same *Majlis* reached an agreement over the killing (or disappearance) of two men from Amrara and Lahawiyin in addition to a Lahawi woman.⁷⁰ There were only a few cases where tribal settlement was made possible by first reaching agreement.

In the view of the paramount importance in the maintenance of public security of better tribal relation in the area, especially furthering the disturbances due to the war) I strongly recommend that the sentence of the Lahawiyin (none of whom are actively convicted of homicide) be now reduced and compensation hospital stoppage be actually paid up before release of any of them.⁷¹

The aforementioned facts speak about the functioning of the *Majlis* from 1930s to the early 1940s, however this change with coming into force of the Gedarif Rural Council; which this section shall engage in a discussion.

Gedarif Rural Council came into being in 1945. By 1950 it had been granted the status of an urban council, with two new councils created for the northern Shukriyya area and the southern Dar Bakr area.⁷² In 1951/52 the cost of staff in what had by then become Gedarif Northern Rural Council rose and it was also faced with revenue difficulties which could only be overcome by the full efficient collection of direct tax, a long-standing problem in a predominantly nomad area. During that year the population of the settled part of the council area (Abu Sin Khut and Western Khut) were persuaded to accept the collection of a tax in grain. This was in line with the prevailing system in the southern rural council area. However, as a dual system for tax collection was not introduced in the northern council area, it was not possible for the nomad *khut* to comply with the system.⁷³ The rural councils had relied to a large extent on the tribal *majlis* and had resorted to *sheikhs* and *umdas* in the process of tax

⁷⁰ Women's cases used to be discussed in public in *Majlis* before sending them to major courts.

⁷¹ District Commissioner, 1 January 1942, NRO Kassala 3/139/617, p.309.

⁷² Kassala Province Annual Report for (1953/54), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

⁷³ Kassala Province Annual Report for (1951/52), NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

collection. For instance *umdās* and *sheikhs* failing to pay their herds tax were firstly dealt with at the *majlis* and each *majlis* would try its best to settle such an issue for the sake of complete tax collection to contribute to the council. The Lahawiyin were not represented in the Rural Council; however Sheikh Ahmed, the son of Adam al Zein, was appointed as tax collector for the Lahawiyin *khut*.⁷⁴

This had been a continuous but necessarily slow and gradual process since the middle of the 1920s. The position of *nazir* and combined multiple types of power – judicial, administrative and executive - in one single person.

⁷⁴ District Commissioner, 1 January 1942, NRO Kassala 3/139/617, p. 309.

5. Internal politics and the claim for a *nazir*

During the late Condominium, the Lahawiyin went through another restructuring and the tribe organisational setup was expanded to eight *umudiyyas* which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The *umudiyyas* were Wad al Faki, Wad Isa, Hardan, Gaborab, Magit, Swar, Blulab and Gawamis. Towards the end of the Condominium the Lahawiyin leadership shifted, but remained within the al-Faki *umudiyya*. Wad Hardan *umudiyya* grew in economic terms and new rivalry between leaders came to the fore with al-Faki *umudiyya*, while Magit *umudiyya* had less of its previous intrigues.

In 1946 D.F. Hawley, ADC of the Gedarif district, had considered promoting Sheikh Adam al Zein by formally appointing him as *wakil* (deputy) *nazir* to the *nazir* of the Shukriyya, Sheikh Mohamed Hamad Abu Sin. This position previously been held by Shukriyya sheikhs only.⁷⁵ Hawley was considering this because the Lahawiyin had already bypassed the latter's authority and appealed to the DC :

That there might be a case for appeal from Sheikh Adam's court lying to the D.C. instead of to the *Nazir* of the Shukri⁷⁶

However, Hawley drew back from this idea because he realised that his suggestion would be controversial. When the Lahawiyin arrived they were hosted and accepted by the Shukriyya and they in turn accepted the Shukriyya's hospitality; Hawley himself felt that this was the reason behind the Lahawiyin's prosperity. Hawley described the Lahawiyin as 'strong and the largest and most important of the "foreign" tribes within the Shukriyya nazirate.'⁷⁷ Hawley did not want to annoy Sheikh Mohamed Hamad Abu Sin by making the suggestion for the Lahawiyin to have right of appeal direct to the DC; he hoped that it might be possible instead for Abu Sinn to be made to feel that it was his own idea, rather than directly telling him 'hands off the Lahawiyin'.⁷⁸

Hawley's sympathy towards Sheikh Adam al Zein did not last for long. Within a few months he had changed his mind, and described Sheikh Adam al Zein as follows:

⁷⁵ Hawley, Official papers relating to Gedarif, Kassala Province, 1946-1948, SAD 1/3/54.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Adam El Zein the *Sheikh khut* used to be the finest and best looking and most well-mannered and strong young nomad sheikh that I have ever met.-That was 19 years ago and now he is in decline - teeth gone to [illegible] diabetes and *araki*. Full of his own importance. Loathes the *nazir* of the Shukriya to whom he has been grossly rude in *majlis*. Has turned against Sheikh Yusif Omara who always his friend was even backing him up against the late *Nazir* of Shukriya Awadel Kerim Abdullah.⁷⁹

By 1947 Sheikh Adam al Zein was apparently regarded by officials as an increasingly disruptive element in the politics of the tribes. Apart from this statement of Hawley, there is no other evidence regarding the incident in *majlis*, and it is only possible to speculate on what may have lain behind this. Whatever the reason, the Lahawiyin faced the challenge of losing the old friendship of the Shukriyya for whatever reason, and Sheikh Adam al Zein was not promoted to *wakil nazir*. However, he was a man of long term vision and by having his sons sent to school ahead of other *umudiyya* children; he had paved the road to keeping the leadership of the tribe within his family.

The al-Faki accumulated wealth in terms of land and herds and were the first to have educated members in addition to filling higher position in the native administration. Sheikh Adam presided as the sheikh of the Showak court as well as being *sheikh khut*. This put him close to the *nazir* Omara Abu Sin of Shukriyya and to the British.

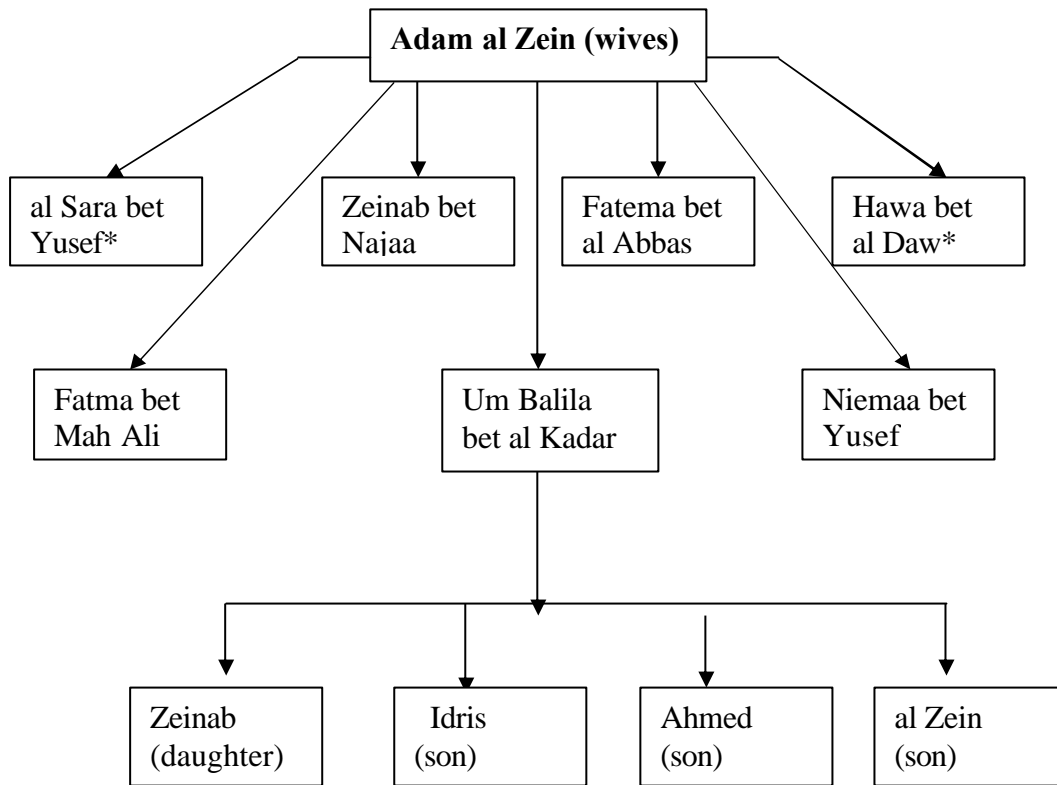
The Governor, Peter, Yusef Omara, Adam El Zein, Hamid Abdel Gadir and myself went by car to Nawsil. We walked all over the mountain and I was made to sketch-map asite for an hafir.⁸⁰

Al-Faki *umudiyya* remained the leading *umudiyya* with growing authority and ambitions. A leading figure in this came to be Sheikh Abdalla Adam al Zein, the oldest son of Adam al Zein. Sheikh Abdalla was not of the same mother as Adam's other sons, al Zein and Ahmed; He represented his father as the latter grew old and ill. Sheikh Abdalla took the formal position of *wakil*, 'deputy', from 1947 until the death of his father in 1963, though he was never given the title *sheikh khut*, and much of the actual power and decision-making remained in the hands of Adam al Zein until his death.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Hawley, Official papers relating to Gedarif, Kassala Province, 'Note of estimated population of Atbara *khut*,' 6 February 1946, SAD.1/3/1-79.

⁸⁰ Lea, Personal Papers, letter to his parents, March 1927, SAD.645/7/51.

⁸¹ Telephone interview with Adam al Zein, June 2010.



The above diagram shows how authority of *umudiyya* wad al Faki descended and remained in one family during this period. Al Sara *bet* Yusef and Hawa *bet* al Daw, both slave wives from Mugatta al Suq, and Fatma *bet* Mahamed Ali, who was from Gabourab *umudiyya*, were all childless. This raised the question as to why only the non-Faki women had no children. All Adam's children were from his marriages to cousins from within the section direct and distant cousins, so that power remained with the al Faki's. Particularly prominent were the sons of his wife Um Balila, who was a direct cousin from his father's side, though he had other children from his other wives. Apart from the four children stated above, Adam al Zein had another thirteen children.⁸²

Not long afterwards, the younger brother al Zein of the newly appointed *wakil* deputy Abdalla was also placed in the administrative hierarchy of the tribe as well as the Native Administration given the sheikh *khut* title. In 1956, Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein was appointed the *katib khut* to the Lahawiyin; working with his brother al Zein but also in close contact with the DC of Butana.⁸³ This was a new post that could be related to the local

⁸² Interview with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former *katib khut* and president Pastoralist Union Showak, Mugatta'a wad al Zein, June 1996.

⁸³ Interview with Al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein in Mugatta wad al Zein, January 2008.

government changes with the establishment of new local government councils. The councils were required to form financial and personnel committees according to local needs and were also allowed to co-opt members from the council for services.⁸⁴ So it was that possible this post was needed at the local level for purely technical reason; though the appointment may also have been political, as a response to the dominance of the council by the Shukriyya.

This post was more threatening to the *nazir* of the Shukriyya than the post of the *sheikh khut*. The power of the *nazir* of the Shukriyya over the Lahawiyin had however been reduced within the tribal territorial boundaries through being deprived of the right to collect tax from the Lahawiyin by the new authority given to the Lahawiyin in 1946.⁸⁵ Sheikh Ahmed was responsible for tax collection so was in direct contact with all the *umdas* and *sheikhs* of his tribe, using his authority in tax collection the way he saw appropriate. Some may argue that the appointment of Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein as *katib khut* was another plot by Sheikh Adam, which no doubt had benefitted the Lahawiyin and his family most.⁸⁶ According to one informant,

Sheikh Adam al Zein had placed his sons with the children of the Shukriyya in the primary school in Kassala and they were privileged, being met by a car at the railway station in Kassala.⁸⁷

The appointment was not entirely welcomed by the Shukriyya *nazir* because Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein showed some kind of a spirit that alarmed the Shukriyya, a spirit full of ambition and unbounded by rules or hierarchy. At government level his appointment seemed to be approved by the DC who had chosen him whereas the majority of *umudiyyas* showed a degree of satisfaction towards Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein who was reported to be 'humble and wise'.⁸⁸ This Ahmed, on the other hand, was felt to be full of intrigues and ambitions.⁸⁹ However the new post was seen as a direct threat to the *nazir* much more than to the *sheikh khut* because it deprived the *nazir* of direct contact with the Lahawiyin for collecting tax and therefore the *nazir's* financial sources were reduced.

⁸⁴ G. M. Salih, 'Local Government after Independence', in Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan*, pp.33-36.

⁸⁵ Extracted from an interview with Abdalla Amir, former deputy Governor of Gezira State and a District Administrator for Lahawiyin (1964), Gedarif, January 2008, and correspondence of District Commissioner Gedarif. NRO Kassala 3/139/617.

⁸⁶ Interview with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein in Mugataa wad al Zein, January 2008.

⁸⁷ Interview with an informant in Gedarif from the Lahawiyin, January 2008.

⁸⁸ Interview with a Lahawi *sheikh*, Showak, December 2007.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Meanwhile, Sheikh al-Bashir of the Hardan *umudiyya* began to seek ways and means of developing his own power and influence, based not on herd accumulation (as this *umudiyya* had always been poor in camels, and was not in a position to accumulate more) but through education and trade. After living for a while in White Nile Province, Sheikh al-Bashir returned to Butana and became *umda* of the Hardan at the end of the 1940s. He went into trade, in to a joint business with a Ja'ali man. The account of his movement to White Nile Province and subsequent return, as told by his son, suggest a complex dynamics of sectarian and tribal politics.

In the late 1930s my grandfather (Sheikh Musa, al Bashir's father) said that he wanted to go back to White Nile Province because it was an Ansar domain and he also believed that the Butana was a Khatmiyya place which lacked religious spirit. He planned to take his young wife with him but he was stopped by the *nazir*, Abu Sin, and the *nazir* forced him to sign a document in which he stated he would not go back to White Nile Province which was an abiding order. This document was initiated by Sheikh Adam al Zein. He did not want the Lahawiyyin to go back. But it was not abiding for a long time to my grandfather. Following the rainy season and while the tribe went to graze in Butana Sheikh Musa had left for White Nile Province and did not come back until he died there. My father joined him later when he was 18 years old. He spent five years in White Nile Province and another five years in Blue Nile Province.⁹⁰

This account clarifies many issues. First, as discussed earlier in chapter one, the historical rivalry between the two sections, which had now become *umudiyyas* was a rivalry based on wealth. Hardan had not retained many camels while al-Faki was recognised to be rich in camels. This had resulted in the pursuit of different livelihoods, allowing the al-Faki to invest in new kinds of activity. For instance, Sheikh Adam al Zein had requested of DC Hawley a site for shops in a new mall, which the ADC had approved for Mugataa.⁹¹ Second, religious affiliations were stronger among the Hardan, which led their *sheikh* to seek out a much stronger Ansar environment in terms of practices. On his return to Blue Nile, Bashir established al-Mansura village on Atbara River, which became the Hardan leading family's residence.

Despite the internal competition between *umudiyyas*, in 1948 the Lahawiyyin leaders revived their demand to have their own *nazirate*. The Lahawiyyin had persistently claimed a *nazirate* and their claim coincided with the growing encroachment of mechanisation and huge settlement of merchants and businessmen as well as a gradual process of settlement of the

⁹⁰ Interview with Dr. Abdallah al Bashir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

⁹¹ Hawley, Official papers relating to Gedarif, Kassala Province, 1946-1948, SAD.1/3/1-79.

tribe. The involvement of the Lahawiyin leaders with the Khatmiyya might explain why the Lahawiyin had to bring it to the attention of the government. This was a time of rapid national political developments, in which the two main sectarian leaders were heavily involved: in 1948, over Egyptian objections; Britain dissolved the advisory executive council and created a partially elected national Legislative Assembly to represent them. At the same time, elected local government bodies were taking over more responsibilities. In these circumstances, the sectarian leaders, all of whom held political ambitions, were active in seeking support and followers.

In 1948, the Governor of Kassala Province, G.M. Hancock reported that

Tribal politics showed no more than normal activity ... the Lahawiyin of Gedarif district resuscitated their twenty year old intrigue against the Shukriyya *nazir* and pressing for the promotion of their sheikh to the status of *nazir* and local autonomy for the tribe.⁹²

For the first time the Government made a distinction between sections of the Lahawiyin as a tribe by referring to them as the 'Lahawiyin of Gedarif district'. Hancock also described the Lahawiyin section in Gedarif as intriguers which presumably meant they had previously been involved in activities that were not appreciated by the Government.

It was also in 1948 that the sedentarization of some *umudiyya* began to take place along the Atbara River and this might also explain the fact that the Lahawiyin felt the need to be recognized as the owners of Atbara river banks. In addition to this, as mechanisation was expanding and western tribes were encroaching, there was a real fear of depletion of resources. I would argue that the reason behind their claim at this point in time was that the Lahawiyin feared further loss of land rights, and saw also that this was the right time to gain land if they had a *nazir* who could negotiate authority away from the Shukriyya. However the Condominium Government did not take the Lahawiyin claim seriously as it was perceived as further intrigue against the Shukriyya *nazir*; which may have been particularly unwelcome at a time of wider political uncertainty.

Nevertheless my argument is that the *nazirate* claim was not the product of a consensus among the different *umudiyyas* across gender, ethnic (slaves) and economic status. This was a

⁹² Kassala Province Annual Report for 1948, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

claim directed by certain *umudiyyas*, or groups within *umudiyyas* who had particular power and authority. A more widespread dissatisfaction could easily have been articulated by those *umudiyyas* or sub sections that were not happy with the Shukriyya, who might have decided to voice their request to the Government and show their dislike for the Shukriyya. But this does not seem to have happened. Although there was no evidence whatsoever to distinguish which *umudiyya* was leading the claim but it is interesting that the government had made a distinction between Lahawiyin of Gedarif and others. Within Gedarif, it seems likely that the call for a *nazir* came especially from al Faki; Hardan or Magit *umudiyyas* for the reasons discussed earlier, the historical intrigues and strive for power.⁹³

In conclusion, while the imposition of boundaries on the Lahawiyin continued, with other large confederations like the Hadendawa setting tribal boundaries, restricting grazing and movement, and while this went hand in hand with increased enforcement of boundaries, this did not restrain the Lahawiyin from aspiring to more administrative reforms and an independent authority. The dominant families among the Lahawiyin used the new structures of government to augment their power within the tribe, and to assert claims for greater autonomy – and land access – for the tribe as a whole. This had revealed the growing ambitions and aspirations of the tribe's leadership from *sheikh khut* to Native Court to representation in the *Majlis* and later on a *katib khut*.

This period had also witnessed a growing economic power of Hardan *umudiyya* that became the bases for a competitive leadership along different religious affiliation. The leadership differences of the Hardan and al-Faki *umudiyyas* had much to do with ways of gaining authority and power. Both were striving for headship of the Lahawiyin. But Sheikh al-Bashir, lacking wealth in herds, turned to entrepreneurship in trade and acquisition of land, and also began to invest in education. On the other hand, while the leaders of al-Faki educated their own children and made some investment in land, their focus remained on the accumulation of camels, and trade in these.

The Local Government Ordinance 1951 was based on these recommendations; over the next few years, the number of local councils grew significantly. This new 1951 Ordinance threw into question the nature of tribal cohesion and power relations between the old and young

⁹³ G.M. Hancock, Governor General in Kassala Province Annual Paper for 1948, NRO Kassala 3/138/610.

sheikhs. In the Butana it particularly affected the relationships within the Shukriyya and also their relation to the Lahawiyin.

This also showed a process of centralization of authority upon local councils and courts, running against the previous intention were to establish decentralised power through the tribal *sheikhs*. However this centralizing put the government in a position to control events more closely at provincial and local levels. It is significant to note that these institutions became dependent on the centre with less and less uniformity and a latent weakness in the executive authority. Such a situation had made the local government bodies, finances, powers and personnel more or less dependent on the central government.⁹⁴ The 1951 Ordinance stressed the executive nature of the activities of the local government but was silent on any type of political activity performed by local government officials, perhaps as a result of its resemblance to the British model.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ G.M.A. Bakheit, 'The Condominium and Indirect Rule,' in Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan*, pp.30-32.

⁹⁵ M. el Basir, 'The Political Role of the Local Government Officer,' in Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan*, p.78.

Chapter Five

The shift to sedentarisation, 1956-1986

The thirty years after Sudan's independence in 1956 saw the continuation and intensification of processes that had begun during the Condominium, in terms of alienation of land for agriculture and resulting changes in livelihoods and internal relations for the Lahawiyin. By the mid-1980s increasing numbers of Lahawiyin were no longer camel-owners, but had become waged labourers, farmers or traders. This led to questions about an 'Arab' identity that had been built upon nomadic camel-herding (and slave-owning). But the self-constructed Arab identity of the Lahawiyin had also been in part their reaction to their inferior political and legal status as a client tribe under other *nazirs*, as well as a strategy by leading families to maintain their privileged position within the tribe. By the 1990s, such strategies would be revived in a new environment of political opportunity, as the next chapter will show. But the 'tribe' that would demand its own nazirate in 1996 looked rather different from the tribe that made the same demand in 1948, or 1928. This chapter explores the social and economic changes of the period from the 1950s up to the 1980s, and uses them to set the context for the events of 1983-84, when drought brought these changes into dramatic focus, revealing the vulnerability of the Lahawiyin and pushing new developments in identity politics.

The changes of this period have been widely discussed in the literature on Sudan, and it has generally been argued that pastoralist livelihoods were increasingly under threat from a combination of factors; largely related to the developmentalist ambitions of the post-colonial state. These ambitions affected the structures of government: the creation of a more interventionist state which sought to dispense with the mediation of tribal structures, initially envisioned by late-colonial British planners, was pursued with increasing vigour by a succession of Sudanese independent regimes up to the 1970s. But it was also apparent in economic terms. The post-independence governments dealt less with issues of *dars* and grazing rights. Pasture and grazing lands were transformed into mechanised schemes that benefited traders and businessmen more than nomads and livestock herders. The crucial development here came in the 1960s. Up to that time, development policy continued to foreground irrigation schemes; in Butana, the New Halfa scheme, linked to a new dam at Khashm el Girba, had a significant impact. But the scope of this was relatively modest

compared with the consequences of the decision in the 1960s to pursue with much greater energy the experiments with rain-land grain agriculture that had begun in the late 1940s. Across Sudan, the area of rain-fed mechanized schemes grew from less than one million feddans in the mid-1960s to more than three million in the mid-1970s and more than six million by 1981-82; by one estimate, as many as 12 million feddans may have been under mechanized cultivation by around 1990.¹ The growth of these schemes was accelerated by the 1970 Unregistered Land Act, which gave the state complete control over unregistered land – which included almost all land used customarily by pastoralists – and in effect threatened the complete dismantling of the *dar* system.

In developmental terms, neither the new structures of government nor the new emphasis on rain-land agriculture were a success. The progressive changes in local government – the abolition of district commissioners in 1960, the elections of 1964 – generated new institutions, but the state lacked the resources to transform local authority, and the local councils continued to be heavily influenced by the ‘native administration’, since government still relied on this. Nimeiri’s dramatic abolition of ‘native administration’ in 1971 reflected the frustration of radical intellectuals who hoped thus to overthrow, once and for all, what they saw as a reactionary force which held rural Sudan back from progress. Arguably, this was a decision which profoundly weakened the Sudanese state at a local level since, despite the ambitious plans for a pyramidal structure of authority based around the Sudan Socialist Union, there was no effective replacement for the system which had been abolished; the consequence was uncertainty, rather than the new, clear, progressive system which Nimeiri had hoped to create.

Rain-fed agriculture, while rewarding for some of the well-connected individuals who acquired tenancies, has been widely identified as ecologically destructive, with brief short-term benefits leading to long-term decline: it has been variously characterized as ‘agricultural strip-mining’ or as ‘briefcase farming’ by well-connected investors who extract wealth from

¹ Mechanized farming was based on short pay-off period and high profitability besides very low land rents, ‘on a kind of cultivation which can be depicted as "agricultural mining,"’ as Oesterdiekhoff put it. For full information see Peter Oesterdiekhoff and Karl Wohlmuth, ‘The "Breadbasket" is Empty: The Options of Sudanese Development Policy,’ *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 17:1 (1983), p.46. Johnathan B. Bascom, ‘Food, wages, and profits: mechanized schemes and the Sudanese state,’ *Economic Geography* 66:2 (1990), pp.140-55; Jay O’Brien, ‘Sudan: an Arab breadbasket?’ *MERIP reports* 99, *Land and Labor* (1981), pp.20-26.

the land in order to invest in other sectors.² And in both short and long-term, the negative impact of the rain-fed agriculture on pastoralism in several parts of northern Sudan has been widely noted, as pastoralists themselves are forced into increasingly unsustainable practices: as Jay O'Brien notes: 'pastoralists tend to be the most vulnerable and the first blamed'.³ The schemes were, essentially, large-scale diversions of to intensive partly-mechanized agriculture; they meant that pastoralists lost access to grazing, to water and to the migration routes on which pastoralist livelihoods relied.⁴

Morton's work has located changes in Lahawiyin society very much in the context of these economic and political changes, and emphasised their destructive impact on Lahawiyin livelihoods. The main consequence of these changes was a forced kind of settlement in areas where resources for subsistence agriculture were meagre. This left some Lahawiyin on an impoverished rural wage as labourers.⁵ Additionally, settlement accelerated when the administrative law that regulated the distribution of *juruf* was enacted in the 1950s. The distribution of *juruf* was brought under the jurisdiction of the Gedarif Rural Council where the allotments of areas within the *juruf* to families were the responsibility of the Lahawiyin *umdas* and sheikhs. This was done according to the seasonality and area left by the flood which determined the size of the *juruf*.⁶ This chapter will largely follow Morton's analysis, but will move beyond it to explore the consequences of this for Lahawiyin identity and the internal politics of authority.

It argues that the agricultural mechanisation that took place did not impact negatively on all Lahawiyin. Indeed it increased individual land rights among the well-off Lahawiyin, which

² Bascom, 'Food, wages and profits,' p.145; O'Brien, 'Sudan: an Arab breadbasket,' pp.24-25; Oesterdiekhoff and Wohlmuth, 'The "breadbasket" is empty.'

³ Jay O'Brien, 'Sowing the seeds of famine: the political economy of food deficits in Sudan,' *Review of African Political Economy* 33, *War and Famine* (1985), p. 28; also O'Brien, 'Sudan: an Arab breadbasket,' p.26.

⁴ Abu Sin argued that 'the amount of water consumed is directly related to the density of animal population as water is mainly used' and that about 1 million to 1.3 million m³/year of water (excluding Kharif months) for 1967 and 1977 was consumed by the total estimates of animals. However this amount of water might not be available every season, so the herders were forced to migrate to other places (usually in March to June or July) with their animals to places such as the Blue Nile (Gezira Scheme) and Atbara River (Khashm el-Girba Scheme); see Farouk D. Ahmed and Mohamed D. Abu Sin, 'Water supply problems in the Butana region-central Sudan with special emphasis on Jebel Oeili Area,' *GeoJournal* 6:1 (1982), p.17.

⁵ John Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism (Kassala Province Eastern Sudan),' Overseas Development Institute (1988), pp.13-14; **Mohamed Hashim Awad, *Sedentarisation of nomads in the Butana region of northern Sudan*** (Cairo: Institut français d'Archéologie orientale, 1964), pp.1-33.

⁶ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.12; There were three types of *juruf*; the early *juruf* from September to November, the intermediate *juruf* from December to March and the late *juruf* from March to May.

would later support their campaign for improved political representation and claim for a *nazirate*. Murdock describes a transformation in the local economic relations in the Butana from simple livelihood of nomadic groups into a much more complicated entrepreneurial economy.⁷ But in the process, differentiation and variation continued to increase within and between the Lahawiyin sections, as did competition with neighbouring ethnic groups – notably the Bawadra, with whom Lahawiyin relationships became increasingly complex and fraught. These processes were then greatly accelerated by the devastating effects of drought in the mid-1980s.

⁷ Muneera Salem-Murdock, *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa: a study of settlement and irrigation*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), p.4; see also Tony Barnett, *The Gezira Scheme: an illusion of development* (London: Cass, 1977).

1. Local government and authority

Despite the introduction of new legislation in 1951, Local government in the late 1950s still relied heavily on the native administration, with local councils heavily dominated by tribal leaders and sheikhs who retained both executive and legislative powers. The military coup of 1958 brought limited change to this. The military government lacked the experience to run the country's civil service and relied on bureaucrats at national and local levels, following an increasingly interventionist policy, as el-Bashir has noted

Consequently the military rulers in the provinces and various districts began to interfere constantly with normal work of the local government institutions.⁸

Such interference not only resulted in nepotism and corruption in the service but rather led to politicization of local services at local level.

To further its control, the government introduced the Provincial Administration Act 1960 which was designed as part of the policy to accomplish a fully-fledged political hegemony over the jurisdiction and views of the civil servants at local levels. This was the primary feature of the local government structure of this period. The Act however led to the establishment of a "statutory council", called the Provincial Council, in each of the nine provinces with executive, legislative and advisory powers. The chair of each provincial council was appointed by the supreme military council, and members were carefully selected for loyalty. Those who showed disagreement with the government were excluded and disqualified from the Provincial Council. And the most significant action that the government implemented in this regard was the Compulsory Pension Act of 1962 which was enforced against officers who were considered politically opposed to the government. Hence the executive provincial authority tended to be directed by the provincial council in each of the nine provinces as an assisting political body.⁹ At the district level, the district administrative body continued. So, for example, the Rural Council of Northern Gedarif was dominated by the Shukriya as stated by Awad

⁸ Mutasim el Bashir, 'The political role of the Local Government Officer,' in Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan*, p.81.

⁹ Ibid., p.82.

its chief is the Nazir of the Shukria, who does not concern himself only with his own tribe but also with the Lahawiyin and others whose territories extend over the greater part of the Butana,..... [he] occupied a permanent post, presided over the meetings of the council and exercise considerable power and was paid by the central government and assisted by officers from the ministry of local government.¹⁰

The *nazir*, sheikh Mohamed Hamad Abu Sin, was the 'chief' of the council with responsibility towards the other tribes in Butana. The main duties of his council members, leaders of other tribes including the Lahawiyin, were to collect the taxes which were assessed according to the size of herds. Awad reported that the size of the Lahawiyin's herds was estimated at 114,000, camels compared to 92,000 for the Shukriya; he believed this was an underestimate. The Lahawiyin used to pay £S 30,000 annual tax.¹¹ This suggests the very great responsibility placed on the sheikh of the Lahawiyin, and the huge taxes he had in hand. It also constituted a peak in the authority given to the Lahawiyin by the local government system.

By the end of the Condominium, Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein had become *sheikh khut*, and the tribe grew from six (wad Isa/Sowar, wad al Faki, al Gaborab, Magait, al Gawamis, Blulab/ Helalb) to seven *umudiyyas*, with Sowar becoming a separate *umudiyya*. The Hardan remained a section until in late 1970s they became an *umudiyya*.¹² The al Faki *umudiyya* continued to rule the Lahawiyin, and this *umudiyya* had remained in the hands of the family of Adam el Zein. This leading position enabled them to acquire land in the traditional farming system and to diversify their economic activities (breeding and sorghum cultivation).¹³

Ahmed Adam al Zein, the brother of the *sheikh khut*, al Zein Adam al Zein, was growing in importance as the *katib khut*. In September 1958 the *nazir* of the Shukriya wrote a complaint against Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein claiming that the latter had overstepped his assigned responsibilities and tasks. Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein was responsible for tax collection, tribute, and looking after unattended herds, but he had begun to take over the authority of the *nazir* by signing on his behalf without the latter's knowledge. He received a memo from the local government officer, Taha Osman warning him to abide by his designated tasks and to

¹⁰ Awad, *Sedentarisation of nomads in the Butana region*, p.12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹² Interview with Abdalla Suleiman, former Governor of Gezira, Gedarif, January 2008.

¹³ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin Pastoralist,' pp.4-5.

stop signing for the *nazir* because that was the responsibility of the deputy *nazir* or someone assigned by the *nazir*.¹⁴

This suggests that the power of Ahmed Adam al Zein had grown beyond that of his brother, the *sheikh khut*, and his ambition was threatening the authority and jurisdiction of the *nazir*. It also revealed that Ahmed Adam al Zein was willing to challenge the *nazir*. Ahmed took charge the collection of taxes from the Lahawiyin tribe; this was an opportunity that the Lahawiyin, and particularly the wad al Faki, had been waiting to benefit from as they were no longer directly linked to the Shukriyya tax system. Ahmed Adam al Zein and Sheikh Al Zein Adam al Zein as representative of the Lahawiyin expected that the government would similarly be rewarding the Lahawiyin in their settlement with basic social services. They felt that the Lahawiyin villages received inadequate water, health and education facilities in comparison to the herd tax they paid and in comparison to what the Shukriyya received in relation to the tax they paid. Sheikh Ahmed wanted to please the government by collecting tax from his own people, among whom he was seen as unfair to. Ever shrewd, he saw tax collecting not as a job but rather as a favour to the government which he could manipulate.¹⁵

At a national level, during the period running up to independence the Lahawiyin were more concerned with seizing land, settlement, pasture and grazing boundaries than with any claim to a nazirate. Wad al Faki were lobbying the National Unionist Party (closely linked to the Khatmiyya) at party level, to acknowledge their right to the area east to Atbara River and up to the Ethiopian border.¹⁶

¹⁴ Memo from Taha Osman, Local Government Officer, Kassala, to Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein September 1958. Kept with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein as part of the archives of Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein in his house in Mugtta wad al Zein.

¹⁵ Extracted from interviews with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein.

¹⁶ Interview with Abdulah Suleiman, former Governor of Gezira, Gedarif, January 2008.

2. Intensifying pressure on land: 1960s

In the mid-1960s, a threat to Lahawiyin land-use became – briefly – a matter of national concern in Sudan. In May 1966 the Deputy Minister of Interior wrote a letter to the Minister of Defence informing him that there had been a large-scale encroachment by Ethiopian farmers into Sudanese territory, and that this was part of an Ethiopian government settlement scheme.

Sudanese area located east of the Atbara River, between the Setit River and the Ba-Salam River is outlined by the Border Agreement between the two Governments of Britain and Ethiopia in 1902 and 1903 and was not recognized by the Ethiopian Government until after the visit paid by the Sudanese–Ethiopian friendship delegation last July (1965). In addition the area which is the subject of this letter is located within our boundary according to the Agreement and the Protocol mentioned.....

They destroyed the basic signs of the border and confiscated some of the local population's land, appropriated and killed Lahawiyin herders assuming that this area east of the Atbara River was Ethiopian land and were supported by Ethiopian authorities. This belief was encouraged by the presence of a delegate of the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture in 1964 to allocate an agricultural scheme in this area for Ethiopians. It has been found that an Ethiopian force entered the border up to 30 km towards Gedarif and harassed farmers and forced them to pay taxes and tribute to the Ethiopian Government and in case of failing to pay they were threatened with confiscation of their lands.¹⁷

Previously, border crossing by Ethiopians in the past had not gone beyond scattered attacks by bandits – *Shifta*, as they were called locally - and the crossing of some individual Ethiopians into the area that lies east of the Atbara River, who cultivated small areas. But now Ethiopians had advanced tens of miles over the borders in organized movements and in great numbers and started to cultivate large areas, estimated at approximately 1,776 square kilometers, accompanied by plant, and large heavy machinery. The Ethiopians were encouraged to cross the borders into Sudan by the rich soils of the area east of the Atbara River and the ready availability of water compared to that in the poor land in Ethiopia. The territory involved was not permanently occupied by Lahawiyin, but this was a threat to

¹⁷ Letter from the Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Amir Al- Sawi, Khartoum, May 1966, NRO Dakhliya 2/16/200 (translation by the author).

grazing lands. This raised the concerns of many Sudanese particularly the national assembly authorities and officials in 1966. A brisk correspondence was exchanged between officials in Kassala and Gedarif provinces. The officials who discussed the incident were the Governor of Kassala Province, the eastern army commander, the Gedarif resident army officer, the police commander, a local government representative and the resident Judge in Gedarif. However it seems that a previous meeting in late 1965 between the Army, the police and the security in Kassala preceded this discussion.

The discussion continued in Gedarif province, between the Governor, the resident Judge and police commander who gave the conclusion of their discussion in a report dated February 1966 to the deputy minister of Interior in Khartoum. The matter was handled and discussed within the Ministry of Interior until May 1966 when Mr Amir al Sawi, wrote a confidential letter to the Minister of Defense enclosing the report of the governor of Gedarif. In this letter al Sawi presented the security measures that the army and the security committee in Kassala province had decided upon in late 1965 and which were set out in the governor of Kassala letter. He also referred to the police commander of Kassala province's visit to the eastern frontier and the latter's report on the Ethiopian violation of the border agreement.¹⁸

Surprisingly the police commander's report mentioned that the invaders were not only Ethiopians but included large numbers of people from the Hadhramaut and elsewhere in Yemen, and Sudanese living in Al Hamra and Um Haja districts in Ethiopia who entered this area every rainy season and, when the rivers became full, remained and expanded the cultivated areas using modern tractors. The crops cultivated would be smuggled or taken to Ethiopia. The report also mentioned that this area had been neglected for a long time and it required the government to take some urgent measures. These measures were suggested in the report as the reinforcement of the existing police stations and establishment of new ones at Hamadbeit, Jebel Alkuddi and Baslam River. It also mentioned the need to establish an army border checkpoint without specifying a location, leaving that for the army to decide. In addition it suggested that the army should patrol the border. Also, it suggested that roads,

¹⁸ Letter from the Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Amir Al- Sawi to the Minister of Defense, Khartoum, May 1966, NRO Dakhliya 2/ 16/200 (translation by the author).

bridges, water and health facilities should be provided to help the nomads on the Sudanese side to settle in an area considered empty.¹⁹

Despite this drama, the real threat to Lahawiyin livelihoods in this period came from the Sudanese state, not from invading Ethiopians. The first post-colonial government from 1956 to the 1960s pursued a range of policies that encouraged the expansion of the mechanised farming system and alienation of land through schemes that deprived many of pastoralist grazing land. A systematic attempt to settle some Lahawiyin began with the New Halfa (Khashm al-Girba) Agricultural Scheme, which was initiated in 1965.²⁰ The initial purpose of the scheme was – as its name suggested – providing resettlement for farmers (about 50,000)²¹ who had been displaced from Halfa by the creation of Lake Nasser, as part of the Aswan High Dam project; the Atbara was dammed at Khashm el Girba to allow the creation of a new irrigated settlement scheme for these farmers. But the ambitions of the scheme went well beyond this; 24,000 feddans were assigned in small freehold plots to the Halfawis, but 330,000 feddans were included in the scheme²², with the stated aim of settling 20,000 nomadic families on fifteen feddan tenancies.²³ The scheme ran into significant problems; the supply of water proved inadequate, many Halfawis left the scheme in disappointment, and by the 1980s only around 150,000 feddans were actually being irrigated.²⁴ But it had substantial effects, nonetheless. The settlement and its related benefit of the tenancy system perpetuated a process of differentiating between the Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* and also between them and other groups within the scheme: the Shukriyya and the people from Halfa themselves, who were mostly Nubians, members of communities which had long been settled along the Nile and which, while they identified had come to identify themselves as Arabs, lived very different lives to those of the Lahawiyin. The Lahawiyin sense of their distinctive Arabness was further stimulated by the scheme's policy of distinguishing in terms of areas and villages based on ethnicity, which arguably nourished their Arab identity. The New Halfa Scheme

¹⁹ Letter from the Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Amir Al-Sawi to the Minister of Defense, Khartoum, May 1966, NRO Dakhliya 2/ 16/200 (translation by the author).

²⁰ Gunnar M. Sorbo, *Tenants and nomads in Eastern Sudan: a study of economic adaptations in the New Halfa scheme* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1985), p.6; Gunnar M. Sorbo, *How to survive development: the story of New Halfa* (Khartoum: Development Studies and Research Centre, Faculty of Economic & Social Studies, University of Khartoum, 1977).

²¹ Awad, *Sedentarisation of nomads*, p.8.

²² At the first stage 150,000 feddans were included, to be expanded to 500,000 feddans in later stages.

²³ Bret Wallach, 'Irrigation in Sudan since independence,' *Geographical Review* 78:4 (1988), pp.417-34; Mustafa Mohamed Khogali, '**Nomads and their sedentarization in the Sudan**' (Department of Geography, University of Khartoum, 1979).

²⁴ Khogali, '**Nomads and their sedentarization in the Sudan**,' p.424.

issued tenancies to residents of the area, which included the Shukriyya, and also aimed to resettle the Nubians who had been displaced in the 1960s. However, there was a clear basis on which tenancies were allotted - Arab and non-Arab. The villages were set up according to ethnic backgrounds. The Nubians were allotted villages separate from the Arabs or nomads (Lahawiyin and the Shukriyya).²⁵ The Shukriyya households were allowed to remain and their subsistence livelihood was kept on. The Nubian and the Lahwiyyin villages were numbered and each group was given a set of numbers; the southern part of the scheme was dominated by the fourteen Lahawiyin villages, which were named 'Arab One', 'Arab Two', and 'Arab Three to 'Arab Fourteen' all of which were found north of al Eizzba village.²⁶ Salem-Murdock carefully documented the process of ethnic grouping in the case of New Halfa scheme. She was quoted by Miller as saying:

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).²⁷

The New Halfa Scheme allocated about 2,358 tenancies allocated at New Halfa for the Lahawiyin, most went to a section called wad Hussein, mainly from Blulab *umudiyya*.²⁸ The closeness of this *umudiyya* to the area of the scheme made settlement painless for them and made it easy for the scheme management to accommodate them.²⁹ In some cases tribal leaders were involved in the distribution of the tenancies and some were given a quota of tenancies for their people, but this may not have been the case for the Blulab as much as for the Shukriyya, as the Blulab were just an *umudiyya* under the Sheikh khut of the Lahawiyin, who were themselves still under the *nazir* of the Shukriyya.³⁰ Also no other recognized Lahawiyin *umudiyya* was involved in the scheme apart from Blulab.

²⁵ M. Pearson, 'Settlement of pastoral nomads: a case study of the New Halfa irrigation scheme in Eastern Sudan' (School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, 1980).

²⁶ Awad, 'Sedentarisation of nomads,' p.17; Salem-Murdock, *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa*, p.27; interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

²⁷ Salem-Murdock, *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa*, in Miller, 'Introduction,' in Miller, *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.20.

²⁸ A population of 22,990 Lahawi; see Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*, p.154.

²⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

³⁰ Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*, p.105.

According to Sorbo the standard of settlement and location of houses, materials for building and location of tenancy differed between those provided for the people from Halfa and the nomads (Shukriyya and Lahawiyin). The original plan of the scheme was explained by Sorbo:

It was intended to accommodate the nomads into 22 villages at cited location; however they proceeded to make their settlement in haphazard way all over the scheme area. As a result, 57 new communities emerged in addition to the 15 villages which were founded before the establishment of the scheme.³¹

Settlement in villages did not stop seasonal migration with the herds or the nomadic livelihood. The Lahawiyin in the scheme tended not to abide by the scheme's agricultural rules and regulations in terms of schedule, agricultural practices etc. Rather they caused damage to the crops by allowing their herds into tenancies of other tenants which resulted in conflicts between them and other tenants and between them and the scheme's management.³² The scheme management often resorted to bringing in police and army personnel during the cotton picking season in order to prevent animal trespass.³³ Because the Lahawiyin lacked interest in becoming fully settled, were not used to proper cultivation and lacked agricultural skills, their tenancies were left unattended or in some case were shared with other settlers.³⁴ The tenancy system appeared to them as another form of 'confinement' which they had often resisted.

The scheme also made internal distinctions among the Lahawiyin more apparent, as those who took up the tenancies were seen as less 'Arab' than their camel-herding neighbours. As one Lahawi put it, characteristically combining ideas of wealth in livestock, Arabness and independence: 'those of the Lahawiyin who settled in New Halfa didn't care much, they didn't have many camels, and had a less strong Arab identity, enabling them to endure the authority of others.'³⁵ On the other hand, accepting the terms of settlement in New Halfa was an opportunity for some Lahawiyin to secure land even though it was perceived differently by some of them as degradation to their Arab identity.³⁶ Though the Lahawiyin tenants kept their distance from other settlers in terms of any social interaction, particularly marriage, this did not explain the non-tenant Lahawiyin's contempt for those Lahawiyin who were identified as

³¹ Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*. p.104.

³² Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

³³ Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*. p.118.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.154.

³⁵ Interview with Sheikh Siddig Yousif, Showak, December 2008.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

tenants. The latter were seen to have been forced to settle by their poverty. Though it was a planned settlement, it caused the rest of the Lahawiyin who lived in villages outside the area of the scheme to pigeonhole those within the scheme as being too submissive.³⁷ Despite the fact that those who opposed the settlement in the scheme were a number of *umudiyya* who also experienced some sort of submission to the ruling *umudiyya*, *wad al Faki*, to them the exercise of authority and power when applied by the Lahawiyin was allowed and accepted.

In fact not all Lahawiyin submitted to their tribal leadership. *Wad al Faki's* leadership was challenged by *wad Hardan*. Up to the 1960s *wad Hardan* was not a separate *umudiyya* as a former administrator stated: “*wad Hardan* was not an *umudiyya* of its own but rather part of an *umudiyya* under their sheikh”.³⁸ In the late 1960s and probably during the second parliamentary government, the most prominent figure in *wad Harden*, Sheikh al Bashir, contacted some figures from the Umma party for an upgrade to his section to an *umudiyya*.³⁹ This would have appeared as a challenge to the leaders of al Faki *umudiyya*, who felt bypassed as *Hardan* was *Ansar*; followers of Umma, and al Faki were religiously and politically aligned with the *Khatmiyya*. Although many had expected a challenge to come from the *Magit*, who had long competed for leadership of the tribe, the main threat came from a newly growing *umudiyya*.

The challenge suggests that circumstances had helped *wad Hardan* to grow, and given its leaders new ambitions: to become a viable *umudiyya*, and ultimately to aspire to the leadership of the tribe, to increase their individual rights over land and to expand and upgrade their authority in the *Showak* area. The early involvement of members of *wad Hardan's* in agriculture had worked to their advantage and had allowed them to diversify their economic resources by realising the importance of *juruf* land. Consequently the number of Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* increased to eight.

The *juruf* was of increasing importance from 1950, and its economic importance of *juruf* grew in 1970 after the 1971 Act.⁴⁰ The land laws which existed in the Sudan declared all

³⁷ Interview with four members of staff, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

³⁸ Interview with Abdalla Amer, former Deputy Governor of Gezira State and District Administrator for the Lahawiyin. Gedarif, December 2007.

³⁹ There was no evidence regarding the exact year Sheikh al Bashir made his demand, but most of the interviewees mentioned the late 1960s.

⁴⁰ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the *Showak* Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996)

native land to be under the ownership of the government, but local authorities had, in practice, control over all land. The land laws did not grant any proprietary title to cultivators of the land, only a right of occupation. Usufruct grazing land rights were not formally recognized by Sudanese law, though some nomads, particularly settled ones, had registered their arable lands. A few families of al Faki, Hardan and Gaborab had registered some of the land as agricultural schemes in 1966.⁴¹ At this juncture, 1969, registration guaranteed some security of tenure for rain-fed land in the sense that the government or the mechanised schemes owner were unable to confiscate, a rule that did not apply to grazing lands. These were assumed to be 'empty' and, as Morton stated, pastoralists did not make the political connection to block its expropriation.⁴² He suggested further that, although the Lahawiyyin generally had access to *juruf*, recently-settled groups did not have sufficient rain land (held by customary tenure) to guarantee prosperity.⁴³ This suggested that land for agricultural purposes was increasing at the expense of the security of herds. Up to 1960, however, the expansion of mechanised farming did not infringe on grazing, and it may actually have increased the availability of 'residue' land during the dry season. The type of land the Lahawiyyin on the east bank possessed was rain land under "customary" land tenure. The average cultivator might have farmed between twenty to twenty-five feddans by tractor but this might have been on behalf of an extended, rather than a nuclear, family.⁴⁴ Not many Lahawiyyin had tractors to tackle large rain-fed areas. Overall, then, the increasing importance of cultivation of *juruf*, as other kinds of land and land-use became difficult, pushed many Lahawi families to farming on the *juruf*.

Shazali has suggested that a major difference between the Condominium policy towards land and that of post-independence governments has been the consistent tendency of the latter to withdraw recognition from usufruct rights; as private landownership was accepted in areas where it had previously been unrecognized; people like the Lahawiyyin were deprived of access to land.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that, as Shazali posited, some forms of relative 'communal landownership' were allowed in some cases 'there was apparently no justification not to

⁴¹ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former Katib Khut and president of the Pastoralists Union, Showak, Mugattaw al Zein, June 1997; The Lahawiyyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyyin Planned for April 1996), p.4.

⁴² Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawiyyin pastoralism,' pp.6-7.

⁴³ Ibid., p.7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁴⁵ Shazali et al., 'Share The Land Or Part The Nation,' p.19.

settle and register land that belongs to sedentary villages.’⁴⁶ This trend encouraged many sedentarised Fellatta, Ja’alin and Taisha to use a usufruct argument to justify ownership of land that was formerly cultivated by customary right by nomads, which was the beginning of mechanization.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.19.

3. Competition over land in the 1960s: acquisition of '*juruf*' land

The expansion of mechanisation together with shrinking grazing land led the Lahawiyin to seek new land. The land became a prime source of competition between the Lahawiyin and others such as the Fellatta tribes on the banks of the Atbara and Setit Rivers. The *juruf* covered an estimated area of 20 kilometres along the River Atbara from al Shareif Hassaballa village to al Tirtir village north. Though claims to *juruf* were limited to the southern part of the river in the early years of the establishment of Khashm al Girba Dam, they were later extended to cover larger areas to the north. It was also mentioned that the first *juruf* were found in Shareif Hassaballa village, one area of Hardan *umudiyya* in the mid the sixties.⁴⁷

John Morton outlined that

a Lahawi '*mesheikha*' [*umudiyya*] has, in most areas, a customary right to its riverside *juruf* (a dry season site) and collectively to the grazing and tree-browse areas around it (although there are no strict boundaries)⁴⁸

The 1970s were a crucial time for the Lahawiyin as much land was seized by the newcomers. The majority of these were actually Hausa and Fellatta Sokoto, Katsina and Melle Fulani. These were tribes from Nigeria and West Africa and other non-Lahawiyin from Sudan who occupied the riversides of some villages along the Atbara and Setit Rivers and restricted pastoral access to the rivers.⁴⁹ Awad Al Karim suggested that there might have been a tribal and ethnic intermingling between the original residents of the Butana tribes and particularly with the newly-arrived migrants.⁵⁰ But I would suggest that this was limited to members of tribes who lived in towns, especially in Showak, where livelihood changed and market and trade relations affected tribal affiliation, so that tribal relations became less and less strong. But elsewhere, villages remained separate. The Lahawiyin had remained in their exclusive summer villages, initially trying to maintain a predominantly nomadic livelihood. As they always wanted to remain 'Arab' they remained separate, and the exclusivity of their villages presented less chance of intermingling.

⁴⁷ Interview with Awad al Karim Ahmed Adam al Zein, Ministry of Agriculture, Showak, December 2007.

⁴⁸ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawiyin pastoralism,' p.6.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.8-9.

⁵⁰ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, Showak, December 2007.

The expansion of mechanised farming by other tribes in the area resulted in the restricting of grazing land. However, it was evident that the upper land of the Atbara River banks was in great demand as it was considered rich. These were previously known as the Lahawiyin dry season sites where they seasonally migrated. However recently most of this land had been taken over by Taisha, Fellatta and Dabayna, who claimed it on the basis of customary rights and in doing so denied previous customary grazing as well as tree browsing rights along the riverside; by doing so pastoral access to the river became impossible.⁵¹

Settlement accelerated when the administrative law regulating the distribution of *juruf* was enacted in the late 1960s. The distribution of *juruf* was under the jurisdiction of the north Gedarif Rural Council where the allotments of areas within the *juruf* to families were the responsibility of the Lahawiyin *umdas* and sheikhs according to the size of the *juruf* and seasonality.⁵² The semi-settled Lahawiyin were therefore still mainly herders and continued to send their herds into the Butana during the rainy season. They mainly relied on extensive herding and their migration pattern came to be increasingly long, due as both pastures and the routes between them were taken by mechanized farming.⁵³

Most of the Lahawiyin communities along the east bank claimed ownership of *juruf* land by the mid 1970s.⁵⁴ About 37 Lahawiyin villages had a total of 7,130 feddans of *juruf* land; giving people in these villages cultivated an average of 2.3 feddans for each family. However, not all Lahawiyin had a right over the *juruf* because the *juruf* lands were owned by

⁵¹ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism,' pp.4-8.

⁵² The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.12; there were three types of *juruf*; the early *juruf* from September to November, the intermediate *juruf* from December to March and the late *juruf* from March to May.

⁵³ During the rainy season (from June to September), they set up temporary headquarters at Jebel Mukheiriq. They could move north as far as Jabal Urn Batikh or Jabal Mayemba and west as far as Khor Atshan. From September to December most of the camels could drink from the Atbara River and continued to graze in the Butana. They could go as far as the Shukriyya Butana *khut* territory (Jabal Nawasil) and they could graze as far as Jabal Kasamor and Jabal Maganis in the southern part of the Butana. Grazing borders were not easily crossed as many farmers and scheme owners began to set grazing rules for nomads. The following grazing routes were used during the rainy season and were considered by the Lahawiyin as part of their traditional pasture land. Four routes were located west of the Atbara River and two in the east. They could go from south to north, parallel to the railway line passing Showak- al Mugataa - Shagarab - Remeila and west to Nigarat, Jabal Nawasil to the Butana in order to claim land that was regularly grazed by them. Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.330-331. See also Victoria Bernal, *Cultivating workers: peasants and capitalism in a Sudanese village* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Leif O. Manger, *Survival on meagre resources: Hadendowa pastoralism in the Red Sea hills* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996).

⁵⁴ Over thirty-five villages developed as sedentarization continued between the 1950s and 1960s. The latest established villages were al-Madina Arab and Mabruka in 1991-92. These two villages were mainly inhabited by the Gawamis, the last *umdiyya* to partially settle; al-Hadi, Katuta, al-Mabruka, Shangaraira, al- Muharagat, Hajer al-abyeed etc. (see map of Lahawiyin settlements).

a small group of well-to-do Lahawiyin. The division of land between villages was apparently done equally by the North Gedarif Council, according to each village's residents; but division within the area allotted to each village was not equal.⁵⁵ The type and size of the *juruf* varied according to the rains in Ethiopia's highlands and the flooding season and, to a large extent, to the volume of silt that the Atbara River brought with it. Since the Lahawiyin began cultivating *juruf* which was in late 1970s they tended to cultivate three times a year: (September to July) which are early *juruf*, intermediate and late ones. The Lahawiyin mainly cultivated watermelons, okra and tomatoes during the dry season and sometimes, pumpkins. On the west bank of the Atbara, upstream at the junction with Setit, the Lahawiyin were being pushed out of the area by increased mechanized farming and also pressurized by the expansion on the *juruf* lands by villagers. In addition, land available for dry-season grazing was retreating and, due to increased activity from *shifita*, the area around Safawa on both the east upstream side of the confluence and the west upstream were unsafe. The Lahawiyin were unable to enjoy the customary land they had previously used during the dry season because most of this land was taken by villagers (non-Lahawiyin) in 1979/1980.⁵⁶

As dry-season cultivation on the *juruf* became ever more important, conflict became more common. By 1980 a problem over *juruf* arose between some Lahawiyin and some Fellatta near Showak town. The Atbara in this area was not rich in *juruf* and the villagers had already claimed what little there was.⁵⁷ Both sides claimed rights over these *juruf*. The Showak rural council formed a committee to solve this problem in which representatives from both parties were included. At the same time a sub-committee in the village was also established to ensure that the *juruf* were distributed according to the outlined areas set by the council committee, and the disputed *juruf* were divided according to the family members of both sides. Accordingly each family on the basis of size, was given 12 *habil* [*habil* = 60 meters] for a large family, average sized families were given eight *habil* and a single man was given six *habil*.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Interview with Yusif Hasb al-Gawi, Deputy President, Legislative Council, Showak, January 2008; interview with Mohamed Hassan, Sudanese Red Crescent, Showak, June 1996.

⁵⁶ Khalid et al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.331.

⁵⁷ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism,' pp.9-13; see also The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996).

⁵⁸ Interview with Mohamed Hassan, Sudanese Red Crescent, Showak, June 1996.

The Lahawiyyin faced another challenge. Not only were they competing over *juruf* ownership but also over labour; both because Lahawiyyin themselves sought to avoid cultivation work as far as possible, and because the *juruf* were seasonal and required intensive labour within a limited period of time before the next season's river flood.⁵⁹

This raised new issues in gender relations. Women were also drawn into the discussion of the *juruf* because this was the only area where Lahawi women were allowed to work outside their homes. About five Lahawi women owned *juruf* by 1970 which were reported to be in al Sharif Hassaballa and Mereibiaa villages. It was also mentioned that there were women owning *juruf* among the Fellata and Taisha. The number of Lahawi women involved increased in the following years.⁶⁰ However, this was restricted and had to be authorised by their male counterparts or guardians. Women and girls were engaged to pick tomatoes and okra, mainly for the household only, because in most cases the *juruf* owner would hire a non-Lahawi (mostly Fellatta) to work on the *juruf*. This shows that *juruf* cultivation set a different boundary for Lahawi women. It provided women with a space but that space was bounded and authorised. It is quite interesting to note the contradiction here that though the Lahawiyyin often saw boundaries as imaginary and hardly respected them, when they touched on tribal values, as well as on gender relations, there they would be strictly imposed. Even where women were permitted to work, they were within the vicinity of their villages.⁶¹

On the upper Atbara, north of Showak there was a small amount of arable land. Here water points, both *meshraa* – fords on the river and *hafirs*, were subjected to customary rights. Such restrictions presumably intensified during the dry season when water became scarce and less during the rainy season when *hafirs* would be filled and the river would be flooded. By the late 1970s, the drying-up of, and damage to, water points had changed the movement of the nomads to the northern parts of the Butana by shortening the period of their stay to less than five months, before they would head south searching for water. This increasingly early caused trespassing over cultivation and forests. Although many *hafirs* had not been rehabilitated since the independence, they were reserved especially for the Lahawiyyin and the eastern Shukriyya in eastern Butana.⁶² In this area, customary rights to rain-fed land (*bildat*)

⁵⁹ Interview with Awad al-Karim Ahmed Adam al Zein, Agricultural and Forest Department, Showak, December 2007.

⁶⁰ Telephone interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, historian, August 2010.

⁶¹ Khalid, 'Dynamics of changing gender relations,' pp.455-456.

⁶² Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*, p.154.

were also held on a loose family basis of 23 feddans per each after 1974.⁶³ These rain-fed areas, however, remained under the mechanised farming cooperation [MFC] and were cultivated by tractors that owned by few families and were sold by Agricultural Bank on instalment which was facilitated by MFC. However, they were regulated by the Showak Rural Council Agricultural Department.⁶⁴ As many Lahawiyin families were still on the move most of them were deprived of that right and thus their customary rights were more or less arbitrated by their *sheikh* or *umuda*.⁶⁵

Up to 1971, while the expansion of mechanisation continued, the Shukriyya Confederation continued to hold its traditional authority over the Bawadra, Kawahla, Magarba, Messlemiyya, Ahamda, Bataheen and Lahawiyin. All of these tribes lived in vicinities that recognised, approved and were protected by the customary laws of the hosting tribe, the Shukriyya.⁶⁶ But the abolition of native administration ended the formal existence of the Confederation, and some of those tribes had expanded their tribal territories beyond the original boundaries set and approved by the Condominium by purchasing agricultural schemes, and so tribal territorial boundaries were changed as new mechanisation farming schemes were added. Therefore the relationship between tribes in Butana was put at stake. The Shukriyya generally suffered at the hands of the non-Butana tribes (those from Sinnar, Gezira, Khartoum, the Nile, Kassala, Gadarif and Blue Nile), and the Lahawiyin suffered at the hands of the Bawadra who closely bounded them.⁶⁷ This grazing land of the Shukriyya was greatly reduced (the grazing area used to encompass an area roughly from 79 km north of west Atbara to 250 km east of Atbara by 70 km south to the railway line) to a third of its original size.⁶⁸

Thus, from the above discussion, competition for land was not limited to the rain-fed land but went beyond that and extended to the river banks, the *juruf* land where the Fellatta presented a new force challenging the Lahawiyin. Within the tribe itself a different change took place

⁶³ That was after the establishment of the Showak rural council in 1974. Khalid et al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.324.

⁶⁴ Al-Tayeb Omer al-Tayeb et al. 'The present and the Future', in The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.4.

⁶⁵ Interview with Awad al-Karim Ahmed Adam al Zein, Forest and Agriculture Department, Showak, December 2007.

⁶⁶ Interview with Babikir al-Daw Shula (Shukri), President Pastoralist Union, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶⁷ Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.330-331.

⁶⁸ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, deputy manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gadarif, January 2008.

with women becoming relatively 'public', playing a role yet remaining within the territorial vicinity of the Lahawiyin villages. During this period of the 1970s the Lahawiyin of Atbara lived within one administrative unit; the Rural Council of the Showak which was created in the early 1974.⁶⁹ Most of the settled Lahawiyin were within the council's area, with the exception of those in the New Halfa Agricultural Scheme who were part of the rural council of Gash al-Girba.

While these administrative changes may have diminished tensions with the Shukriyya, the Lahawiyin relationship with another neighbouring tribe, the Bawadra, was increasingly problematic.⁷⁰ The Bawadra were already living on the edge of the Butana on the border with the Lahawiyin rural council. They were enjoying a degree of relative cohesion and prosperity which instigated envy and jealousy from the Lahawiyin.⁷¹

⁶⁹The Jurisdiction of the Showak Rural Council includes areas between 35-43 and 53-55 longitude and 14-16 and 14-61 latitude. The Council was bounded to the north by Dwaideg village, to the south by Almurabaa village, to the west by al-Feil forest and Kasamor Hill, and to the east by the Atbara River.

⁷⁰ Extracted from various sources: Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*, p.154; Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.326-27; Salem-Murdock, *Arabs and Nubians in New Halfa*, p.27.

⁷¹ Dalmau, 'Camel Production and trade in Showak,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.215-17.

4. Emerging Competition with the Bawadra

A number of Bawadra, members of a formerly a nomadic tribe, had begun to invest in mechanized agriculture. As they did so they crossed former boundaries, including the former pasture line 'Sindy Four'.⁷² This line was recognized by the Lahawiyin as a major Lahawiyin migration route. The mechanized farming owners converted the former customary pastoral land into private ownership and charged the Lahawiyin for passing through. As the Bawadra developed property ownership of most of the water points and agricultural schemes, they also began to set grazing rules for nomads.⁷³

It has been argued that the relationship between the two tribes reflects the intense competition over land at the peak of expansion of mechanised farming in Butana from the mid 1960s.⁷⁴ By 1967 the total area under mechanised agriculture increased from less than one million to more than three million *feddans*.⁷⁵ This coincided with the period in which the local government structure was being developed, first with the abolition of the post of district commissioners, and then, from 1971, with the formal abolition of native administration.⁷⁶ The effects of this were felt not only among the traditional confederations but also within small tribes. With the absence of DCs, who had been in close contact with tribal affairs a kind of administrative vacuum had been created. More political and economic dynamics emerged. Party politics became more important as local communities tried to open up new means of communication with the state, and the Lahawiyin were trapped between the Ansar and the Khatmiyya. Within these growing dynamics the Lahawiyin were faced with rivalries from within and with others. Externally it was the Bawadra who represented a new rivalry. The Bawadra's political affiliation to the Ansar brought them closer to wad Hardan *umudiyya* which constituted internal rivalry. Moreover, the leaders of these two groups shared a common ground, an interest in education, settlement and expansion in agricultural mechanised schemes.⁷⁷

⁷² A pasture line set by the British Administration in 1940.

⁷³ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism,' pp.8-12.; The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996)

⁷⁴ Staniforth, *Imperial echoes*; Ahmed, *Development of agriculture in the Sudan*.

⁷⁵ Bascom, 'Food, wages and profits,' p.143. 1 feddan equals 1 acre.

⁷⁶ Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics*, p.43.

⁷⁷ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed al Zein, former *khut katib*, member of Pastoralist Union, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997; see also I. Dalamu, 'Camel Production and Trade in Eastern Sudan: A Case Study of Showak Market', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy in Eastern Sudan*, pp.215-217.

The Bawadra political affiliation to the Ansar was made clear by events when the Unionist leader al Azhari visited Um-Shajara. According to a non- Lahawi informant Al Azhari was touring the east as part of a political campaign; the Bawadra slaughtered a dog in front of their village Um-Shajara, on the road he took, was an open insult. This informant believed that this was the reason al Azhari subsequently promised the Lahawiyin ‘the no-man land’ east of Atbara River as their *dar*. Another, Lahawi, man stated:

The late president of the NUP Ismail al-Azhari (also a president of Sudan) was on a tour for a political campaign in Eastern Sudan. While he was on his way from Kassala he passed by Um-Shajara, the headquarters of the Bawadra, the Bawadra, instead of welcoming him by slaughtering camels or sheep (as customary for many Arab tribes), they slaughtered a dog instead on the road he passed by.⁷⁸

The Lahawi man thought that this had happened because of Bawadra loyalty to the Ansar and because al Azhari was aligned with the Unionists and the Khatmiyya. Al Azhari must have been disappointed and perhaps offended by the Bawadra attitude. As for the Bawadra, they probably wanted to show their true loyalty as Ansar. It was an act of intense disrespect to al Azhari’s position and title as a political activist and political party leader. It also did not reflect the generosity of the Arab tribes. Its relevance here is the political feeling that was growing among the people at that time.⁷⁹ The Lahawi man while telling this story showed pride in distinguishing the Bawadra behaviour from the Lahawiyin’s. In other words no Lahawi would do what the Bawadra did. Although he could not question the Bawadra’s Arabness he related the incident to their political affiliation without any details.

⁷⁸ Interview with a Lahawi sheikh, Showak, January 2008.

⁷⁹ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim, historian, Showak, January 2008; interview with Abdalla Suleiman, former governor, Gedarif, January 2008.

5. New legislation in the 1970s

The 1970 Unregistered Land Act (ULA) and the 1971 People's Local Government Act (PLGA)⁸⁰ impacted on the Lahawiyin grazing land while granting them much more political influence to negotiate land. The ULA on one hand introduced the Government as the main owner of all land in Sudan and the PLGA showed the Government to be a partner in the political arena. The development of the 1970 Act was effectively synchronized with the abolition of native administration and gave the Government more authority to dispossess the *dar* rights of some tribes and repossess land rights to new groups. The PLGA established 'People's Councils' from which former members of the Native Administration and traditional political leaders were excluded.⁸¹ It also established new administrative boundaries for rural villages and nomad councils, though these more or less coincided with the former *dar* boundaries. It created parallel lines of authority: formal authority led by educated groups and informal led by traditional and tribal leaders. This Act posed challenges in terms of the authority and the jurisdictions of the rural councils as well as national government in Khartoum. In line with the rapid agricultural expansion as well as the local orders to regularize, grazing activities were completely stopped.⁸² This was because the May 1969 Government had acknowledged that the new system of local government, had limited resources and staff and was incapable of delivering the administrative responsibilities that the abolished Native Administration in the rural areas used to deliver. It was difficult to fill the administrative gap and therefore some Shukriyya continued to enjoy considerable power, both within their tribal structures and in the newly-instituted local government of 1971.⁸³

Article 4 (1) of the ULA stated that:

all land of any kind whether waste, forest, occupied or unoccupied, which is not registered before the commencement of this Act shall, on such commencement, be the property of the Government and shall be deemed to have been registered as

⁸⁰ Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics*, pp.117-123; see also Delmet, 'The Native Administration', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.151-52.

⁸¹ Aboushouk and Bjorkelo, *The Principles of Native Administration*, p.151.

⁸² An interview with Abdalla Amir, former deputy Governor of Gezira State and a District Administrator for Lahawiyin; see also Salah Shazali and Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, 'Pastoral land tenure and agricultural expansion: Sudan and the Horn of Africa', a paper presented at the DFID workshop on Land Rights and Sustainable Development in sub-Saharan Africa at Sunningdale Park Conference Centre, Berkshire, UK on 16th-19th February 1999, p.11.

⁸³ Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics*, pp.93-94.

such, as if the provisions of the Land Settlement and Registration Act, 1925, have been duly complied with⁸⁴

The enactment of this law sharpened the tension between the *dar* owners and those without a *dar* and also between different ethnic groups.⁸⁵ But more basically it called the whole idea of *dar* into question. It became a source of discontent in rural areas, though Nimeiri's radical government viewed it as a positive step on the way to liberation from colonial heritage: the government was determined to reallocate land and other resources in the country for activities which it believed would give higher returns. By this Act the government claimed ownership of all unregistered land in the country, and so the government vested in itself the power to limit nomads' movement and their livelihoods.

The enactment of the ULA disposed of the 1904 Grazing Agreement and thus the special grazing areas in central Butana were no longer exclusively available to the Shukriyya alone, creating opportunities for other tribes such as the Rashaida, Beja, Kawahla and others including the Fulani groups from Southern Blue Nile State who gradually moved to central Butana.⁸⁶ That is, there was reason to exclude them as the Fulani were known to be cattle herders which would affect the safety of the camels. This of course implicated more on the Lahawiyin pasture and grazing rights. The Sindy Four pasture line was then completely dismantled.

Despite the fact that the Bawadra had already trespassed over this line, the encroachment this time was much heavier and more damaging. It brought both heavy grazing from the herds of newcomers, alongside the expansion of mechanised farming by both Butana tribes (Bawadra) and non-Butana residents.

developed

At this point in time the grazing land came under the Department of Pasture, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, which was a department with no power or decision in terms of protecting pasture and ensuring routes or preserving water points. Land lease and selling were under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture who distributed land to those politically supporting the government. The Mechanised Farming Corporation gave much power to lease

⁸⁴ Kibreab, *State Intervention*, p.278.

⁸⁵ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, deputy manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁸⁶ Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, 'Transforming Pastoralism: A Case Study of the Rufa'a Al-Hoi Ethnic Group in the Blue Nile State of Sudan,' *Nomadic Peoples* 13:1 (2009), p.9.

land without referring to the Federal Ministry which had caused a conflict of interest between the Corporation and the Minister.⁸⁷ This overlapping of authorities led to further expansion in grazing land to the South of Gedarif province.

Undoubtedly the effect was the dismantling of grazing pasture, congested migration routes and dried up water points; inevitably customary seasonal movement north in Butana was reduced. The land was no longer under customary rule of the Shukriyya. The New Halfa Agricultural scheme from the east and the Rahad Agricultural Scheme from the west into the Butana had left little for the nomads. Even the 'no man's land' along the Ethiopian border which was previously a Lahawiyin grazing boundary was taken over by traders and businessmen for mechanised schemes, Little by little the rest of the *umudiyya*, like Sowar and the unsettled part of Magit, began to settle and the exchange of camels for land began to emerge.⁸⁸ The two *umudiyyas* realised that the camels they raised were highly valued as racing camels by the Rashaiyda, and that selling them would enable them to purchase land in agricultural schemes.

In the early 1970s grazing became confined to what had been formerly recognised as Shukriyya land and which primarily fell under the old specific grazing land of the Shukriyya. Water resources were limited on this land. *Hafirs* and wells were privately-owned during the 1970s, especially by the Bawadra who continuously expanded on mechanised agriculture.⁸⁹ The remaining *hafirs*, which were under the ownership of the Shukriyya, were not maintained. Water had become a commodity which the Bawadra seemed to monopolise and they commercialised water resources, introducing a new income-generating activity with the commercialisation of watering livestock. Therefore, another dimension in pursuing a political legitimacy for the Lahawiyin was not only grazing pasture but water points as well which were contended for, by a new rival tribe, the Bawadra.

This system indicated, in essence, that once native administration was abolished, the former system of land control by big confederations opened the door to those investors who came to exploit uncertain situations of land tenure by establishing large, unauthorised tractor schemes.

⁸⁷ Interview with four staff members, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁸⁸ Interview with the late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former *khut katib* and President of the Pastoralists Union of Showak, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997.

⁸⁹ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Idris Hamid Mohamed, Agricultural Inspector and Ali Mohamed, Agricultural Inspector, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

By this time, the size of granted schemes had reached three times the size of the schemes in the early 1960s.⁹⁰

As part of their grazing movement the Lahawayin, tended to cultivate sorghum as a stable crop. They combined sorghum cultivation within their movement with the herds whether in the dry season camps or the rainy season pasture. Wherever land was available they made use of it. It was noted by Morton that those Lahawiyyin who stuck to yearly migration were the well-off who were able to afford to take land on large agricultural schemes where hiring tractors was essential for agricultural operations. But only 7% of those who had recently settled in villages north of Showak continued to practise any seasonal migration and tended to lack capital. The average tractor would be hired for £40 per hour and paid in advance in the late 1970s. On the other hand, supply of labour did not form a major challenge, it however was performed jointly by family and extended family members as long as division of labour and herding role were clearly set.⁹¹

According to Assal the merchants who increasingly dominated the area, were not mostly from riverain tribes from northern Sudan. These were dominated by Jaaliyyin, Shaigiyya and some of non-Sudanese origin such as Kurds, Yemeni and Copts. The Bawadra and Shukriyya, who were in the minority,⁹² rejected any interference by traditional authorities and, moreover, claimed Government support; in fact they usually obtained some form of official authorisation. Such support allowed relatively easy legal access to, and allocation of, land by the Mechanised Farming Corporation.⁹³ However, such a situation affected poor Lahawiyyin families more, preventing them from purchasing agricultural schemes; those who were still nomads were also directly affected by this act as they were prevented from obtaining agricultural land. Gawamis *umudiyya* for instance, because they were continuously moving and often far off near the Ethiopian borders, were not troubled by the diminishing of grazing land in Butana and east to Atbara River. This *umudiyya* was ranked particularly wealthy in camels.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁹¹ Morton, 'The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism,' p.6.

⁹² M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.190-93.

⁹³ Mechanised Farming Corporation, established with assistance of the World Bank in 1967/68 to supervise the rain fed agriculture and to provide 'mashrooah' owners with additional finances. See Bascom, 'Food, wages, and profits,' p.143.

⁹⁴ Interview with Siddig Yousuf, trader, Showak, December 2007.

Overall, the 1970 Act had enhanced the settlement process of the remaining Lahawiyin who were still on the move in Butana, remapped resources and was a further step towards the dissolution of old tribal allocative power⁹⁵ by the implementation of the Local Government Act, 1971 (LGA) which is discussed below. insult

The abolishing of Native Administration was first raised in 1965 when the October 1964 Government realised the strong link between the Butana tribal leaders and the traditional political parties, especially that of the Shukriyya and the Khatmiyya, and the Lahawiyin with both the Ansar and the Khatmiyya, surely this was not a localized issue in Butana. In order to control the political situation the government tried to gradually alienate these coalitions by attracting the young generation to active participation in the process of rural development. The tribal leaders were evidently becoming involved in Government decisions at a higher level, which did not please many educated young Sudanese who developed an interest in gaining political authority. Apparently the involvement of the tribal leaders in the higher level of Government led to a conflict of interest with the educated groups which subsequently led to the abolition of the Native Administration in 1970. Within this context the Government adhered to and endorsed the policy of local participation. A.M. Ahmed argued that the abolition of the native administration system had created an administrative vacuum with no alternative institution to stand for and had deprived certain tribes the political voice, right to negotiate and even collect taxes.⁹⁶ Abu Shouk has argued that there was a cliental relationship between the Sectarian leaders in Khartoum and tribal clients in rural areas which depicted a close political relationship of a hierarchical nature where those who 'have *dar*' and 'have no *dar*' were treated equally. However, quite interestingly he deviated from Abdullah Ali Ibrahim's concept of cliental relationship that was limited to the relationship between Confederations 'with *dar*' and client tribes 'with no *dar*'.⁹⁷ Cliental relationships existed during both political periods yet developed differently. On one hand, during the Condominium it was tribal and horizontally endured between tribes. On the other hand, during Nimeiri's government that same cliental relationship took a different form and was of a more vertical nature between the peripheries and the centre. The argument is that the Lahawiyin were part of both the horizontal and the vertical relationship whenever it interested and benefited them.

⁹⁵ Awad, 'The evolution of landownership in the Sudan,' p.35.

⁹⁶ Ahmed, 'Transforming Pastoralism,' p. 6.

⁹⁷ Ibrahim, *Fursan Kanjarat*, pp.13-14.

The 1971 administrative reform called for keeping the judicial and administrative functions separate. Local courts were resolved during this period and were replaced by popular courts. Local courts in Subag, Rufaaa, Marareg, Khashm al-Girba and the special local court in Mugataa for Lahawiyin were no longer enforceable either. For instance the former court of Showak (al Mahkama ahliya) which had been presided over by the *sheikh khut* of the Lahawiyin and *umdas* and sheikhs from the Lahawiyin was abolished. This was replaced by a 'popular court' in 1974. The court consisted of a judge, and three senior court members who were selected by their localities. This meant that one or two members would often be Lahawiyin because of the predominance of Lahawiyin in the rural council. However the court worked on a rotational basis which ensured that every three months one of the three members would fill the presidency position. Most of issues related to crop damage or *juruf* would be dealt with locally. However some cases related to land were transferred to Cedarif where the courts were ruled by law as opposed to custom.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Interview with sheikhs Siddig Yusuf, Babikir awad al Karim, Yousuf, al-Ruda, Mohmed (teacher) and Salah Shashug (executive director of Showak Rural Council), Showak, December 2007.

6. Impact of the legislation: internal and external competition

The abolition of the Native Administration in 1971 particularly acute because it dismantled institutions that catered for enforcement of grazing lines, at the same time as an expansion in irrigated and rain fed sectors was under way. Unauthorized schemes traversed the grazing lines, blocked access to watering points, and disrupted most of the pastoral routes. The abolition of the Native Administration removed pastoralists' representation in government institutions as it formerly existed as venues to express their complaints. According to Shazali this was because "changes in the parliamentary electoral system adversely affected the weight of pastoralists in Sudanese parliamentary politics".⁹⁹ The Lahawiyin (like many other pastoral groups) therefore had to face deteriorating conditions. Some Lahawiyin villages adapted to the changes in Butana. Some leased their rain-fed land to farmers.¹⁰⁰ The confiscation of customarily-held lands from some people was justified by an argument put by an official that nomads were unable to effectively cultivate; if this task were left to those who could afford machinery, and thus fodder would be assured for nomads all seasons.

Butana is a dry land and doesn't bear pressure. It was a rich pasture and was limited to limited groups, couldn't stand the desert expansion too. Pasture was no longer enough but now agricultural remnants can be used by nomads. Pasture becomes available all the year.¹⁰¹

This statement reflects the point of view of those who supported mechanised farming. This argument disregards the fact that the heavy use of machines and the exhaustion of the soil by owners of the schemes had exhausted the soil and the environment of the area had changed drastically. Thus the sustained provision of fodder throughout the year for herders would not continue for long. Since the native administration courts had been abolished, cases between the Lahawiyin herders and the farmers over residues and migration routes, which were the inevitable result of the expansion of agricultural farming schemes, were mostly decided against the pastoralists. As mentioned earlier some cases were transferred from local courts to Gedarif. However with so many cases in the Gedarif court, transferred cases would not be treated with priority, resulting in aggression and conflict by the nomads.¹⁰² There used *had ben eight migration routes* (including the famous Taya-Karkura and Galabat-Mugataa) that

⁹⁹ Shazali et al, 'Share the Land or Part the Nation,' p.13.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with four staff, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

¹⁰² Interview with staff members, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

extended from south to north Butana, linking the summer camps and the rainy-season camps (the *makharif* and *masarif*). By the 1970s only three routes were left.

The sons of Sheikh al-Beshir were among the first of members of the Wad Hardan *umudiyya* to enter the governmental and political structure. With entrepreneurial skills, they managed to guarantee their own land rights, particularly in the agricultural schemes earlier than other *umudiyyas*, even an *umudiyya* like Magit who historically held political authority. By the late 1970s Wad Hardan had developed a distinctive position in terms of individual ownership of agricultural farming schemes. The first tractor was owned by Sheikh al Beshir.¹⁰³ But this did not end the communal claims to land of the *umudiyya* that Sheikh al-Bashir had maintained and preserved as the wad Hardan property right.¹⁰⁴ Wad al Faki and Gaborab followed the path of wad Hardan, but with the difference that both *umudiyyas* valued camels much more and kept the tradition of herding alive.¹⁰⁵

The Lahawiyin were unable to stop the Bawadra's agricultural expansion. They lacked the credit worthiness and initial capital which Assal has identified as the essential for obtaining land in mechanized farming.¹⁰⁶ Again this resulted in an inequality which increasingly characterized the relationship between members of a section or an *umudiyya* and the Lahawiyin tribe in general. Moreover client relationships among certain families began to emerge as social networks which often provided some basic support for poor tribal members. According to Holter and Kirk 'social networks within lineages are still remaining important means to acquire land, or find work',¹⁰⁷ or even accumulating herds. This was evident among residents of Mugatta al Suq, who relied closely on wad al Faki, as did the the Jaborab. However some of the elite Lahawiyin families of Hardan, wad al Faki and al Gaburab began to search and strengthen their social networks beyond the tribe, in order to gain political support within the Gedarif State vicinity, Kassala and Khartoum, mainly to maintain authority and land in the mechanized schemes at the right time and to act as 'entrepreneurs' for their own tribal members.

¹⁰³ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former *khut katib* and President of Pastoralists Union Showak, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Sheikh al-Bashir Musa, al Mansura, June 1996.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director Statistic Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Assal, 'Economy and politics in Gedarif: a symbiotic encounter,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.186-193.

¹⁰⁷ Uta Holter and M. Kirk, 'Access to resources and social networks,' *Animal Research and Development* 39, pp.177-187, quoted by Khalid et al. in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.332.

In conclusion, al Faki *umudiyya* therefore faced competition internally with wad Hardan over authority and externally with the Bawadra over land title. The crucial problem of access to land then went beyond the local level authority; it was more linked to decisions made at higher level politics in Khartoum. Following their past political and administrative experiences wad al Faki wanted to establish their authority and headship of the tribe and that would not have been achieved if they did not have the resources, camels and land. The Lahawiyin realised that they needed to acquire stronger political representation within the new local political set-up

However, the abolition of the Native Administrative system in 1971, together with other factors, contributed to important consequences in eastern Sudan as in other rural and nomadic areas of northern Sudan. The new 1971 administrative system quickly proved unable to deal with the most crucial issue of these areas: the handling of ethnic conflicts linked with competition over resources (land and water). The deterioration of the pastoral grazing land in the Butana and Gedarif area has been well documented.¹⁰⁸ Changes in land tenure and land use systems, as well as uncontrolled expansion of mechanized farming, led to the closing of the traditional grazing routes and to the loss of grazing areas.

¹⁰⁸ Mohamed Ibrahim Abu Sin, 'Population Mobility in North and Central Sudan', (PhD thesis, London: University of London, 1975); Mohamed Ibrahim Abu Sin, 'Transformation of Camel Breeding in the Sudan,' in National Seminar on Disaster Prevention and Management in Sudan (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1991); A.G.M. Ahmed (ed.), *Some aspects of pastoral nomadism in the Sudan*, (Khartoum: Sudan National Population Committee and Economic and Social Research Council, 1976)., Salah Shazali, 'On Bleeding Pastoralism', (unpublished paper presented to CDEJ workshop in Gedarif, 1996); Sorbo, *Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan*; Hassan Abdel Atti, 'A socio-economic Survey of Central Butana', UNDP/ ADS Report: Central Butana Project, (Khartoum, 1993)

7. The 1980s drought and the emergence of the ‘ashraf’

The prolonged drought which gripped Sudan in the early 1980s impacted on the Lahawiyin in a number of ways. In 1984 the drought was followed by a famine in which many lost their lives, particularly in Kordofan and Darfur regions.¹⁰⁹ It resulted in the displacement and destitution of some Lahawiyin families, and a new identity was formulated: *ashraf*, the collective version of *sharif*, a title which usually implies a claim to descent from the Prophet Muhammad. While Some Lahawiyin were rethinking their nomadic livelihood and another stage in the tribe’s settlement came about as a result of the impact of the impoverishment of herders.

Livelihood and the movement of the Lahawiyin tribe like many other tribes was disturbed and they began to pasture their livestock further south, towards the Rahad River, which lies outside the Butana. According to al-Shazali ‘they were among the largest Arab groups grazing in the Rahad area and they usually followed the dust roads used by trucks’¹¹⁰ which had been recorded as animal corridors by the Ministry of Agriculture. About 41 percent of the Lahawiyin who were directly hit by the drought were displaced, and after 1984 the majority began to cultivate and settle.¹¹¹ However, by the time they started to do so conditions were not in their favour. Land was reserved and taken by others, including traders from Gedarif.¹¹² With other, more attractive, land now claimed, the *karab* land – the hard, clayish soil along the Atbara, prone to erosion and previously used only for seasonal grazing, was now discovered as a last reservoir of available land and many Lahawiyin began to compete for it, drawing even this land into mechanized farming.

Manger, in his study of the Hadendawa, described the different coping mechanisms for coping with the drought very well. The three phases he used in identifying relevant strategies and implementing them explained the level of vulnerability of the Hadendawa when faced with the drought, in term of selling their herds and accepting external aid. At the last stage they resorted to mass migration, as Manger described:

¹⁰⁹ Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: politics and the disaster relief industry in Africa* (London: African Rights & the International African Institute, in association with James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1997).

¹¹⁰ Al-Shazali, *South Kassala Nomadic Survey* (Khartoum: CARE International, 1988) quoted in Khalid et.al, ‘The Lahawiyin,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.330.

¹¹¹ Morton, ‘The decline of the Lahawin pastoralism.’

¹¹² Ahmed Mohamed El Hassan, *The environmental consequences of open grazing in the central Butana, Sudan* (Khartoum: Institute of Environmental Studies, University of Khartoum, 1981), pp.1-28.

In the third phase of the drought there is mass migration out of the famine prone areas ...in search of food, mainly to the towns and along main roads ...Drought ... not only leads to destitution of the many, but also to enrichment of the few...¹¹³

When the 1984 drought hit the Lahawiyin, those who had small herds were more vulnerable and their herds mostly perished during the drought. They left the boundary of the Lahawiyin villages and moved out to seek jobs. They went south crossing the Bawadra tribal boundary near 'Um Shajara', the headquarters, and settled nearby.

The degraded pasture and loss of livestock were evident. Some poor Lahawiyin families had become waged labourers for the Bawadra; and it was at this time that they were given the new name *Ashraf*¹¹⁴. The so-called *Ashraf* were dispossessed of their Lahawiyin identity because they were considered, by the rest of the tribe, as 'no camel owners and wage labourers'. The late Sheikh Ahmed tried to distance this group from the Lahawiyin and thus *Ashraf* to him seems to have been used ironically, and really meant 'of no origin'.¹¹⁵ This view differed from another interesting account told by A. M. Ahmed which explains why the late Sheikh Ahmed rejected the *Ashraf*:

One important point that should be mentioned here is that the identification of oneself as a member of Rufa'a al-Hoi tribe has important significance not only vis-à-vis non Arabs, but also in relation to the Arab in the Sudan as a whole . By assuming an identity as a Rofa'a al-Hoi, a nomad is suggesting that he belongs to the Rofa'a group which in terms of descent assumes higher status vis-a-vis other Arab groups.... The Rofa'a group appears in all of Juhayna genealogy. .. Rofa'a al-Hoi, as part of the large Rufa'a group, should thus be classified as Juhayna. However they do not accept this classification. Instead they have tried to assume a higher status by tracing their descent to Husayn Ibn 'Ali and saying that they are Ashraf.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Manger, *Survival on Meagre Resources*, pp.138-39; see Alex de Waal, *Famine that kills: Darfur, Sudan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹⁴ Khalid et.al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.332-333.

¹¹⁵ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed, katib khut and former Pastoralist Union member, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997.

¹¹⁶ Ahmed, *Shaykhs and Followers*, p.91.

In this view, the adoption of the collective identity of *Ashraf* by these former Lahawiyin was a defiant assertion of Arabness in the context of a new situation. By linking themselves to a privileged ethnic group that was genealogically linked to the Prophet Mohammed, they sought to safeguard their social status which might otherwise have been lost within the social structure of the Lahawiyin, as well as within the Bawadra, their new guardians. Within the structure of their new guardians, the Bawadra, they were not fully accepted as full members because their status indicated another form of clientship between animal owners and animal herders.¹¹⁷

The *Ashraf* attachment to the Bawadra, and their new role as workers, disturbed the Lahawiyin tribal image and pride. In spite of the existence of the Lahawiyin's disapproval of this wage-labouring relation by the Bawadra, it had in fact created a labour market for some Lahawiyin. One feels a growing tension between the two tribes. Having realized this opportunity which was created because of the *Ashraf*, the Lahawiyin countered their argument and claimed *nazirate* on the grounds of population increase. Heightening the Lahawiyin's fear regarding this matter the Bawadra Sheikhs once stated that because within the Lahawiyin social structure the *Ashraf* had previously held a lower rank they presented themselves as good herders and worked as *anagib* (shepherds) to the well-off Lahawiyin as well as to their own herds. The new position presented them as absolutely destitute with no herds and solely as shepherds to the Bawadra.

This shifted their tribal loyalties in this context and changed their identity. Turning to the Bawadra had another aspect. According to the tribal customary laws any tribe has to protect its members in times of need. The expulsion of the *Ashraf* from the Lahawiyin would deprive them of that customary right and therefore they had to seek tribal protection. Such protection helped to bind these people, who had lost livestock and land, in to providing services as herders, and reduced the possibility of any tribal disputes over herd, land or grazing.

Sheikh Ahmed Adam, the former *katib khut* of the Lahawiyin, brushed off the loss of this group as a matter of 'no origin'.¹¹⁸ But apparently not all Lahawiyin thought along these lines; other Lahawiyin thought the *Ashraf* could and should still remain Lahawiyin.¹¹⁹ For the *Ashraf* some satisfaction was gained from being with the Bawadra. Interestingly enough none

¹¹⁷ Khalid et al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.333.

¹¹⁸ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former *khut katib* and President of Pastoralists Union Showak, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

of the *umudiyyas* had claimed the *Ashraf* as a former sub section. However, the Lahawiyyin's first reaction was disapproval at an Arab nomad being a waged labourer. As the late Sheikh Ahmed pointed out, 'A free Arab would not let his life and herds be controlled by others'.¹²⁰

The *Ashraf* were satisfied with their new identity because it provided food, shelter and tribal protection together with a recognized tribal boundary. As a group they had a leadership who represented them to Sheikh al-Bashir of the Bawadra who in turn had to accept them. Some Lahawiyyin argued that if it was not for their skills they would not be accepted. The *Ashraf* were a group who were trapped in the dilemmas of the identity debate. The well-off of the Lahawiyyin tribe, the herd owners, perceived the *Ashraf*'s new position as a loss of their Arab as well as Lahawiyyin identity.

One has to bear in mind that in many pastoralist societies, households or extended families often favoured recruiting relatives when they needed to employ herdsmen¹²¹, while they did not mind employing non-relatives for agricultural work.¹²² This indicated a close patron-client relationship between the animals' owner and the herder. In the case of the Bawadra and the *Ashraf*, this familial relationship was absent, and this was the reason for the Lahawiyyin condemning the arrangement. The Bawadra came to be considered as the main economic and social threat for many Lahawiyyin. Wad al Faki feared that if they failed to acquire more land than the Bawadra an increasing number of poor families would join the labour market, and that this process might affect their tribal identity in the long run. This fear was somehow fuelled by the Bawadra *sheikh* who stated 'We Bawadra are able to accommodate any non-Bawadra who seeks our support and who wants to be called a Bawadra.'¹²³

In conclusion the New Halfa scheme granted limited land rights (in tenancy) those who owned fewer camels among the Lahawiyyin which gave rise to a new form of land ownership among them. This was yet another form of confining the Lahawiyyin through a new form of control, the tenancy system. From independence up to the 1980s large grazing lands were

¹²⁰ Interview with late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former *khut katib* and President of Pastoralists Union Showak, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1997.

¹²¹ Morton, 'The Decline of the Lahawiyyin Pastoralists', p.5.

¹²² Interview with Amna Mohamoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

¹²³ An interview with late Sheikh al-Bashir, Bawadra leader, Um Shajara, June 1996.

appropriated by the mechanised farming schemes. This impacted differently on resident tribes in the area, and the effects were compounded by changes in government, which excluded traditional leaders from political representations, depriving them of power and authority and rendering their sheikhs and courts inactive to convey demands, express resentments or exercise authority.

For the Lahawiyin, internal economic disparities were exacerbated. Some remained tenants with small herds, some combined herds with mechanized farming schemes, some remained nomads but all continued to be identified as Lahawiyin – and some who resorted to wage labouring were deprived of that tribal identity. This was the case for the *Ashraf* whose identity was shaped and formed by a new relationship of clientship and labour.

Chapter Six

New Claims for a *Nazirate*: the Politics of Native Administration in the 1990s

The crisis which so drastically affected Lahawiyyin and other pastoralists in 1984 was far-reaching. It was, in many ways, a crisis of the state as well as a crisis in livelihoods. It roughly marks the beginning of a shift in the political context in which Lahawiyyin sought to negotiate their identity, and their access to resources: from the early 1980s, the Sudanese state was painfully conscious of its weakness, and began to revise its ambitions accordingly. In particular, the developmentalist rhetoric of the 1970s, which had laid emphasis on large-scale plans and state control, and which had exalted modernity rather than tradition, was considerably modified. From the early 1980s, a succession of regimes in Khartoum was increasingly interested in seeking a new accommodation with tradition, and in identifying themselves with an ideal of Arabism in which the pastoral nomad figured prominently. This did not reverse the multiple changes which were undermining the actual viability of pastoralism, but it offered opportunities to the men who competed for leadership of the Lahawiyyin, and to their followers, to try and improve their political and economic positions.

1. Regime changes

By the early 1980s, the government of Gaafar Nimeiri was in serious difficulty. The development schemes of the 1970s had added hugely to Sudan's debt; the attempts at central economic management had been disastrous.¹ These economic problems were matched by political difficulties. In the late 1970s Nimeiri, feeling that his political base was weakening, had sought rapprochement both with the old sectarian political parties, and with the emerging force of Islamic radicalism: known at various times through this period as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Charter Front, and led by Hassan al-Turabi.² Nimeiri's increasing reliance on the support of this group led in 1983 to the passing of the 'September

¹ Peter Woodward (ed.), *Sudan after Nimeiri* (London: Routledge, 1991).

² Abd Allah Ali Ibrahim, *Manichaeism delirium: decolonizing the judiciary and Islamic renewal in Sudan, 1898-1985* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); **Musta A. Abdelwahid**, *The rise of the Islamic movement in Sudan (1945-1989)* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); **Peter Woodward**, *Sudan: political transitions past and present* (Durham: Durham University, Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2008); **J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins**, *Revolutionary Sudan: Hasan al-Turabi and the Islamist state, 1989-2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

Laws', which established shari'a as the basis of all law in Sudan. A few months earlier, significant armed conflict had already emerged in southern Sudan, as a result of Nimeiri's attempts to redraw boundaries and ensure Khartoum's dominance over southern Sudan and its oil reserves.³

The civilian government which took power after Nimeiri's regime was overthrown by popular unrest in 1985, headed by Sadiq al-Mahdi, proved unable to improve Sudan's economic or political situation. In 1989 a coup brought in a new military regime – which, as soon became apparent, was guided by Hassan al-Turabi and his allies. This group had since 1985 reconstituted themselves as a new party – the National Islamic Front. The exact power relations within the regime, and the relationship between soldiers, al-Turabi and various of his allies remain a matter of some debate; but very roughly it would seem that al-Turabi was the dominant force in the regime until around 1999, after which his influence rapidly diminished, and he became an increasingly vocal critic of the ruling National Congress Party and President Omer el-Beshir.⁴ The position of Beshir's regime had been very fragile initially, but by around 2002 it had become more securely established than any of its predecessors in independent Sudan. Its relative stability rested partly on the development of oil production – which began to have a significant effect on government revenue from around 2001. While the regime maintained a commitment to radical Islam, it became increasingly pragmatic in many ways, and growing oil revenue allowed the development of a corporatist state in which a political and business elite were entwined.

The consequences of these changes for those on the margins of the state – like the Lahawiyin – were multiple. As Nimeiri's regime weakened, it had looked to a revival of the structures of traditional authority which had been abolished at the beginning of the 1970s. The Government passed the Local Government Act in 1981 which created regional administrations;⁵ the Butana came under a region which included the Red Sea and Kassala,

³ Woodward (ed.), *Sudan after Nimeiri*; Anthony Sylvester, *Sudan under Nimeiri* (London: Bodley Head, 1977); Johnson, *Root Causes*.

⁴ Abdelwahab A. El-Affendi, *Turabi's revolution: Islam and power in Sudan* (London: Grey Seal, 1991).

⁵ Al Agab A. al Terafi, 'Regionalization in the Sudan: Characteristics, problems and prospects,' in Woodward (ed.), *Sudan after Nimeiri*; Kamal Osman Salih, *The Kordfan [Kordofan] Region of the Sudan, 1980-1985: a case study of the problems of regionalism* (Khartoum: Development Studies and Research Centre, Faculty of Economic & Social Studies, University of Khartoum, 1989).

with Kassala as the capital. This Act allowed tribal leadership membership in local courts.⁶ In 1984 the revival of Native Administration was approved at the Fourth National Conference of the Sudanese Socialist Union; and in 1985, the regional headquarters was transferred to Gedarif.

Sadiq's brief government followed the same policy. The revival of Native Administration was formally effected in 1986, when the government approved the Native Administration Bill.⁷ The Bill then reinstated Native Administration and granted tribal leaders authority in administrative, judicial and security matters. After the military coup of 1989, this policy was continued; the federal system announced in 1989 was not much of a change from the regional system in terms of jurisdictions or authorities but the Lahawiyin benefited from this federal system through the reinstatement of their Native Court in its new form as Showak Court in 1990.⁸ The Native Administration Ordinance of 1991/92 marked another important step in reviving Native Administration.

There were multiple causes for this revival of tradition. Struggling to defeat insurgency, Sadiq had encouraged tribal militias to act as proxies for the government; the military government continued to do this after 1989, and in doing so encouraged celebration of the nomad Arab as an embodiment of virtue.⁹ Alongside this there was a new enthusiasm for the traditional authority, which had been denounced as reactionary and backward in the 1970s, abolished in favour of the 'popular' structures of the Sudan Socialist Union. Now it was idealized for its 'Arabness', and for its potential to support the weak structures of the bureaucratic state; while officials also feared that the displacement of nomads would not only cause extra financial burden on the Government but would also create the social disintegration of a whole sector.¹⁰ The revival of native administration was often perceived, at the regional level, as an avenue of participation for new groups or new segments in the

⁶Most information extracted from Christian Delmet, 'The Native Administration', in Miller (ed.) *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.155.

⁷ The government of Sadiq al Mahdi' of 1986 introduced the Four-Year Economic Salvation, Recovery, and Development Program, which was not different from previous economic development efforts, had broad objective of achieving sustained economic growth.

⁸ Delmet, 'Native Administration', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.152. Interview with Abdalla Amir, Former Governor Gezira and Gedarif Provinces, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁹ **Gunter Schlee and E.E. Watson, *Identities on the move: clanship and pastoralism in northern Kenya*, Vol. 3 (Manchester: Manchester Univ. P., 1989), p.9.; P. M. Holt and M.W. Daly, *A history of the Sudan from the coming of Islam to the present day* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).**

¹⁰ M. E. Abu Sin, 'A change in struggle of animal herding among the nomads of the Butana, eastern Sudan,' in G. Heinritz (ed.), *Problems of agricultural development in the Sudan* (Göttingen: Herodot, c1982), pp.87-104.

general context of political detribalization.¹¹ Yet even as ‘native administration’ was revived, the bureaucratic forms which had been originally introduced to supersede it were not only maintained but elaborated, as part of a notional process of ‘decentralisation’.

Moreover, this new enthusiasm for nomadism, and tradition could not undo the economic changes of the 1960s and 1970s. If anything, the emerging corporate state, intimately allied with wealthy individuals, exacerbated such change. The use of land for mechanized agriculture continued; wealth now meant investment in control over land, not in maintaining a nomadic livestock economy. So even as the rhetoric and structures of government nominally favoured nomad Arabs, their position was further undermined by the continued loss of grazing land and of pastoral migration routes: the Lahawiyin were involved in the ‘process of struggle at every level of existence’ which Vigdis Broch-Due has identified as characteristic of many African societies.¹² Even as traditional administration was being recreated, more Lahawiyin were forced by economic circumstances to abandon nomadism: the settlement of Gawamis *umudiyya* took place by 1991/92,¹³ one year before the national census of 1993 – a census which put the Lahawiyin population at 50,000, the same size as that of the Bawadra. The settlement of the Gawamis at al Madina Arab and Mabruka¹⁴ affected the Showak Rural Council; it increased the population living under the Council, and increased demand on *juruf* land and rain-fed land in the area which implicated friction between the newly-settled *umudiyya* and the already existing population of the Tayesha and the Fellata.¹⁵

Prior to 1984 access to and utilization of water were regarded as elements of a common property and pastoral groups grazing in the Butana had free access to the traditional wells and water points.¹⁶ However, none of the existing *hafirs*¹⁷ on the migration routes in Butana -

¹¹ Extracted from Delmet, ‘Native Administration,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.154-55.

¹² Vigdis Broch-Due (ed.), *Violence and Belonging: the quest for identity in post-colonial Africa* (London: Routledge, 2005), p.6.

¹³ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), p.6.

¹⁴ Two villages exclusively inhabited by the Gawamis.

¹⁵ Extracted from the following: interviews with sheikhs Siddig Yusuf, Babikir Awad al Karim, Yousuf, al-Ruda, and interviews with Mohmed, teacher, and Salah Shashug, executive director of Showak Mahaliya municipality, Showak, January 2008; interview with Awad al Karim Ahmed Adam al Zein, Ministry of Agriculture, Showak, December 2007; see also The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996).

¹⁶ Kibreab, *State Intervention*.

used for keeping rain water - had been rehabilitated since the sixties, and they could not meet the needs of the nomads. Water became privatized. Families or sub sections of the Bawadra, who were the nominal owners of the wells, came to see them as private property and began to sell water to outsider groups. The Lahawiyin maintained their own water drinking points within their villages in Showak Rural Council, on the east bank of the Atbara from the Setit south going north parallel to the Atbara River.¹⁸ These came to be increasingly used by other nomads as common *masharib*, or watering points.¹⁹ They were originally free of charge, except for occasional nominal fees for maintenance purposes. However, with the influx of 'strangers' the Lahawiyin learned from the Bawadra the practice of charging at least a nominal fee for water from the *masharib*.²⁰ The revived tribal administration was unable to solve the conflict which emerged between the Bawadra farmers and the Lahawiyin herders over grazing pasture.²¹

There were other economic changes in this period too. Since the 1980s northern Sudan had been exporting people. The education system established in earlier years had created a population with a relatively high skill-level in regional terms.²² As opportunities within Sudan vanished in the economic crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s, Sudanese – especially, educated Sudanese – moved overseas. Some went to Europe or North America, but many went to the Gulf. The flow of remittances from these migrant workers – the *mughtaribin* – was to become a major economic factor by the 1990s. When these migrants returned to Sudan after years of work abroad they brought back with them not only money, but new kinds of experience and ideas, in fields which spanned, religion, economics and politics. Of all the Lahawiyin, *umudiyya* wad Hardan were most involved in such migrations, travelling particularly to Saudi Arabia. Gaborab also followed the same path and members of the *umudiyya* also left for Saudi Arabia. As the *umudiyya* which was historically poorest in livestock, wad Hardan had invested more in education, and so were better placed to take these opportunities. This created for them the option of a new identity that might serve both

¹⁷ Al-Maganis lies in route one, Kasamour in route two and al- Nawasil in routes three and four.

¹⁸ Remaila, Shagarab, Mugatta'a wad al Zeini , Mugatta'a al-Sug, Gaborab, al-Mansura, al- Tomat, Magait, al-Sharif Hassaballah, wad al Hadi, Katuta, Hagar Abied. See the The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996).

¹⁹ These watering points were from wad al-Hilew, Abuda, al- Amara, Karda, Katuta, al-Mugatta'a East, Khur al-Girgif al-Hajiz to Malawiyya and from Zahana to Khor al-Gardda to al-Hajiz and Malawiya.

²⁰ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Department of Statistics, Gedarif, December 2008.

²¹ Interview with Amna Mahmoud, Deputy Manager, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

²² Ahmed al-Shahi, 'Response to Nimeiri's Policies: some observations on social and political changes in northern Sudan', in Woodward (ed.), *Sudan after Nimeiri*, pp.144-159.

leaders and individuals better in their pursuit of power and authority, aligning them with the newly emerged class of agricultural schemes of businessmen and traders in Butana.

In combination, these factors set the context for renewed internal debates over leadership and identity among the Lahawiyin – and for a renewed attempt to secure government recognition for a nazirate. This was mostly perpetuated by politicians at the local level, as the transfer of political power from the national capital to rural councils that was under way encouraged attempts at redefining loyalties. The concern of the Lahawiyin regarding this formation of identity, whether social or political, by attaining *nazirate* was largely determined by one or another ‘variable of power’.²³ These variables, as defined by Doornbos, were related to migration, and economic change and were evident in the case of the Lahawiyin in their livelihood and their integration into the larger political system whether at Showak or Khartoum levels.

Once again, the question of a nazirate was also inextricably linked with the issue of access to land. While an outsider might comment that ‘A nazirate is a right of every tribe of population and herds’²⁴; the nazir of the Shukriyya explicitly saw the idea of Lahawiyin nazirate as a threat to Shukriyya claims on land.

This chapter discusses three main events in the development of the Lahawiyin quest for nazirate in the 1990s. These were the 1994 Decree, the Lahawiyin Conference of 1996 and the election of the Showak Rural Council in 1996.

²³ Martin Doornbos et al., *Beyond conflict in the Horn: prospects for peace, recovery and development in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies; London: Currey, 1994).

²⁴ Interview with Salah Shashug, the Executive Officer of the local government in Showak Rural Council, Showak, December 2007.

2. 1994 Decree: New Representation for the Lahawiyin

In the early 1990s, there seems to have been a concerted effort by Lahawiyin to establish a position on the local government structures which existed alongside the revived 'native administration'. Members of the Rashaida tribe were following the same strategy at this time. In each case they focussed on a particular rural council – al-Showak for the Lahawiyin and Mabruka for the Rashaida – trying to win control of the popular committees which were the lowest level of these, and to win seats on the councils themselves.²⁵

The 1994 decree on federal administration was a milestone in the native administration history of eastern Sudan.²⁶ Its significance was that it divided Eastern Sudan into three states and re-established the Council of Native Administration throughout the country.²⁷ It also enabled the government to control all tribes, by, as Lesch puts it, drawing 'all the influential tribes into the local and state governing processes, providing them with a stake in the system'.²⁸ This might not have been the case for other tribes in other parts of Sudan such as Darfur. In 1994 another important dimension was added in the eastern Sudan. The Beja Congress, campaigning for improved political and economic position for the Beja of eastern Sudan, had been active since 1989; in the mid-1990s it began to prepare for guerilla action along the Eritrean border, led by Mohamed Tahir Abubakr. This complicated tribal loyalties.²⁹ This government responded by imprisoning religious leaders of the Beja in the town of Hameshkoreb who were resisting government policy to alter the traditional Qur'anic schools – which had been a place for recruitment to the Beja Congress. It was against this background that the significance of events in 1994 must be understood. By issuing Decree No. 89 of 1994 – which was in line with the Native Administration Ordinance of 1992 - the

²⁵ T. Khalid et al, 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.335; also Eman Bushra, 'Local level Political Dynamics in Kassala State: The Rashayda,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.301.

²⁶ The al-Bashir government defines the eastern Sudan region as the Red Sea and Kassala states while the Eastern front includes the three states of Red Sea, Kassala and Gedarif. Historically, the three states have been grouped as one region. According to the World Bank, the population of the eastern Sudan region (Red Sea, Kassala, and Gedarif) is about 3.7 million of which half are the Beja. The population of the Red Sea state is 800,000, Kassala state is estimated at 1.5 million, and Gedarif state is approximately 1.8 million. John Young, *The Eastern front and the struggle against marginalization* (Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies, Small Arms Survey, 2007), pp.1-53.

²⁷ Hassan M. Salih et al. (ed.), *Federalism in the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1995); Mohamed al-Amin Khalifah, *Reflections on the Sudanese Political System* (Khartoum: Sudan House for Printing and Publishing, 1995); **Al-Agab Ahmed Tarifi, *Regionalization in Sudan: an evaluation of the Regional Government Act of 1980*** (Khartoum: University of Khartoum, Council for Studies on Regionalism, 1990).

²⁸ Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan: search for national identity* (S.I: s.n., 1987), p.127.

²⁹ 'The Asmara Conference,' *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 1 July 1995, in International Crisis Group, 'Sudan: Saving Peace in the East,' Africa Report N°102, 5 January 2006.

government launched its first Native Administration Conference. This was held in Kassala State, with the aim of settling some of the issues over loyalty and authority among a number of tribes in eastern Sudan. The outcome of the conference was the establishment of a Native Administration Council for Kassala State, which was composed of major tribes in the state of Kassala and Gedarif, with representatives of other sub-groups: the two nazirates of the Hadendowa and the Shukriyya, the Bani Amer, Halanga, and Rashaida; Nubian residents in Khashm al- Girba agricultural scheme; and residents of Kassala *umudiyya*. The Lahawiyin were represented by the *sheikh khut*: the long-serving al Zein Adam al Zein.³⁰ At this juncture Wad al Faki *umudiyya* were back at the front line of the Native Administration and representing the Lahawiyin. The Council was mandated with several functions which included an advisory, consultative role to the Governor – the *Wali* - of the state, in matters regarding tribes' affairs as well as issues related to native administration and local government.

This 1994 Conference in Kassala was a pioneering event: it took place prior to conferences in other states in the Sudan. This Tribal Council created a new forum for representation, in which the Lahawiyin appeared as a political authority in its own right and as an independent entity from the Shukriyya.³¹ It also helped them to revive the idea of a political claim for nazirate with the support of an educated younger generation of Lahawiyin.

From the point of view of the Lahawiyin and, according to al Zein Ahmed al Zein, the main reason for the Lahawiyin's participation in the conference was to address the issue of nazirate and what sheikh al Zein Adam had discussed with the government representatives.³² However it was argued by some that this was not formally presented but that the Lahawiyin leaders lobbied the government authorities, who were dominated by military officers at that time, in the corridors of the conference. Whether it was discussed formally or informally, inside or outside the conference room, the Lahawiyin employed cunning in bringing this to the conference, though it was not on the original agenda, and making it public. The Shukriyya were opposed to this move and threatened the authorities and the Lahawiyin with the land charter they possessed. This proved to be a good tactic, because the government was not

³⁰ Delmet, 'Native Administration,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.159. See also Report: The Conference of Native Administration: final Manifesto and Recommendations, Ministry of Social Planning, Khartoum Soba, 1995[unpublished, AR].

³¹ The Rashayda as well were represented as an administration in the list of the members of the 1994 Conference. See Delmet, 'Native Administration,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*.

³² Telephone Interview with Al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, Member of National Assembly, July 2010.

disposed to compromise another influential tribe in eastern Sudan given that the developing conflict with the Beja suggested that they had lost already the Hadendowa's support.³³

The conference was held to promote the policies of federalism and decentralisation, which government rhetoric had emphasised. In retrospect, federalism and decentralisation have been identified by some observers as simply rhetorical cover for a continuation of strong central control, which came to be exercised through informal structures and through the omnipresent security and intelligence apparatus.³⁴ In the case of 1994 Conference, it could also be argued that the intention was not to revive the Native Administration system but rather to dilute the power and authority of big confederations and tribes whose loyalties were doubted by the government. The Shukriyya were widely seen to be allied to the old sectarian parties; anything which undermined their authority could be useful to the new regime.

The Council was intended to resolve tribal disputes; but its members were also given the responsibility of mobilising supporters for the government: as Delmet observed, 'The tribal leaders are called upon by the state to bring their support to the state political initiatives.'³⁵ The leaders of smaller tribes were more than willing to use this role to try and enhance their own positions, and that of their followers. Immediately after the 1994 Conference, Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein visited Khartoum to meet with senior government officials; it was rumoured that he promised his loyalty and support to the Government.³⁶ Some Lahawiyin blessed such a move, seeing it as a way to show tribal allegiance and so ensure Government support.³⁷ In order to gain the support of the Lahawiyin the government tried to bribe them with some administrative rewards, such as allocating exclusive administrative boundaries to the tribe. The government also established a new administration structure by dividing Gedarif State into a number of governorates.³⁸ By creating al Fashaga Governorate a different boundary was imposed which outlined a new district territorial boundary to Al Showak on the east of Atbara River. This reward brought its own limitations: it seriously limited the

³³ A telephone interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, historian, July 2010.

³⁴ Extract from telephone interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, historian, July 2010 and Delmet, 'Native Administration', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.155-61.

³⁴ Interview with an informant, Showak, December 2007

³⁵ Delmet, 'Native Administration', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.155-61.

³⁶ Interview with an informant, Showak, December 2007.

³⁷ Interview with late sheik Ahmed Adam al Zein, former president of Pastoralist Union Showak and katib khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

³⁸ Gedarif became the capital of Gedarif State which includes Gedarif city, Faw, Gallabat, and Fashaga areas.

movements of the Lahawiyyin nomads to the vast grazing areas between Atbara and Setit Rivers up to the Ethiopian border.³⁹

Within this process of reviving the Native Administration, other political structures developed, which entwined native administration and local government. The Showak Rural Council had in redefined *umudiyya* boundaries administratively; politically each *umudiyya* was represented by its own popular committee. A new leadership was elevated from within the Lahawiyyin, deriving administrative and financial support from the state through filling the newly-created positions in the political hierarchy at all levels of the federal system.⁴⁰ This leadership was dominated by educated members of the Hardan and Gaborab *umudiyya*, who filled government positions at national and state levels.

This dominance itself reflected both the consequences of labour migration⁴¹, and the political calculations of the government in Khartoum. Wad Hardan expatriates were able to invest in mechanized agriculture and built strong political connections with the government. On the other hand it was believed that many returning Gaborab migrants were members of the Salafist religious group known as Ansar al Suna. According to one informant, they were the most organised group within the Lahawiyyin at that time. They purchased cars, lorries, tractors and agricultural schemes (*mashruuas*), and began to expand in Showak with shops in Showak market. They also invested in *juruf* through owning water pumps. They tried to build an economic base to compete with businesses of other ethnic groups in Showak, challenging the existing domination of Showak market by the Jaaliyyin and Fellata). This helped them to dominate the popular committees within their villages. However, as another informant pointed out, Ansar al Sunna were 'influenced by the Saudi religious outlook'.⁴² By and large the Ansar al-Sunna perceived themselves central to the Muslim world as well as pure in principle to the Islamic discourse. The Ansar al Sunna in Sudan tried to reject and oppose any Sufi practices or innovation. Ansar al-Sunna identities were thus constructed by the influence of religious, economic, political and social elements that were described as being against the 'traditional' or 'orthodox'. Brenner has criticised the Ansar al-Sunna

³⁹ Interview with Mohamed Fadallah, former Governor of Fashaga, Gedarif, 1996.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁴¹ For more details see Tim Niblock, 'The background to the change of government in 1985,' in Woodward (ed.), *The Sudan after Nimeiri*, pp.34-44.

⁴² In some African countries they call themselves *Ahl al-sunna* or the Sunni; Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, *Manichaean delirium*; Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.335.

movement generally as “associated with being aggressive and self centred”.⁴³ However this was not the case in the Lahawiyin area as they had shown peacefulness, perhaps because of the presence of strongly dogmatic followers of the Khatmiyya *tariqa*. This might explain how much of the tension that naturally might have occurred between the Ansar al-Sunna and the Sufi was minimized. A few confrontations were reported but they were in cities like Medani and Omdurman, not in rural areas. Nonetheless, the presence of Ansar al Sunna offered a new version of Islamic discourse and interpretation, which gave a strong motive for the government suppressing them and stopping their expansion, fearing that their presence would bring a new violent culture. The government was suspicious of the potential influence of the Ansar al Sunna since, as Catherine Miller has argued: ‘Ansar Sunna were able to co-opt not only rich individuals but also segments of population unsatisfied with the traditional parties.’⁴⁴ But the government sought to restrict their influence not by repression but by using state patronage, appointing other influential members of the Lahawiyin - particularly Hardan, whose returnees were seen as much more loyal to government – to local positions in Showak Rural Council, and to more senior positions in state administration. Al-Jaili Karar, a Lahawiyi from the Gaborab section, was appointed State Governor of Kassala. The government also rewarded their own supporters by granting loans, seeds, machinery and land.⁴⁵ The government also tried to buy off some members of the Hardan through this sort of state patronage – Ahmad Mohamed Abdalla Jabel, for example, was made head of the Showak Legislative Council.⁴⁶ This was a clear indication of the rivalry and competition between the two *umudiyyas*; al Faki and Hardan.

⁴³ Brenner (ed.), *Muslim Identity*, pp.61-62.

⁴⁴ Miller, ‘Introduction,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, ethnicity and Political legitimacy*, p.24.

⁴⁵ Extracted from interviews with Babikir al Daw Shula, president of Pastoralist Union, Gedarif, December 2007, and Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁴⁶ Interview with Salah Shashug, Executive director Showak Mahliya municipality, Showak, January 2008.

3. Showak Rural Council Election 1996

In addition to the internal competition within the Lahawiyin themselves, between al Faki and Hardan, the mid-1990s also witnessed an external challenge by the people from western Sudan, particularly Taaisha and Fellata, against the Lahawiyin. The competition was played out through a new sort of local politics: for the Lahawiyin, participating in electoral procedure *i.e.* nomination, voting and exercising power was a new experience even though it was at the lower level of the local politics structure.⁴⁷ These procedures were central to the struggle for position in the complex structure of local government and native administration that had developed: Rural Council, Local Court and Legislative Council. The competition was also evident in the Pastoralists Union, which was established in 1994 as a national body and in Showak in 1996. The Pastoralists' Union was meant to formulate livestock policies at the national and state levels – but it became another arena for local political competition.

The 1994 Council created new alliances, and new rivalries. It brought the Lahawiyin and the Rashaida close on the basis of a common cause which was their claim to a kind of political autonomy which could be used to assert rights over land.⁴⁸ For the Rashaida, their campaign for this led to the granted of an 'administration' – rather than a *nazirate* - in 1994, after fierce opposition from the Hadandowa.⁴⁹ This was used by the Lahawiyin in their negotiation at a higher level.⁵⁰

This shared cause was complemented by an increased commercial relationship between the Lahawiyin and the Rashaida,⁵¹ who helped to meet the high demand for camels in the local market of al-Showak, much of which came from wad al-Faki. At the same time, other new political relationships were developing, driven by the dynamic of local electoral politics. Though the 1994 Council had augmented the Lahawiyin position in the Butana it had also created increased rivalry between the *umudiyyas*, especially among wad Hardan and wad-al Faki. Wad Hardan and Gaborab returnee migrants competed for offices in the revived native

⁴⁷ Interview with sheikhs Siddig Yusuf, Babikir awad al Karim, Yousuf Hasb al Gawi, the late al-Ruda, Eid al Zein and Salah Shashug, executive director of Showak Mahaliya municipality, Showak, January 2008.

⁴⁸ Dalmau, 'Camel Production and Trade,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.218.

⁴⁹ For more details see Eman Bushra, 'Local level political dynamics in Kassala State: the Rashayda,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.227-208.

⁵⁰ Interview with Ali Suleiman, director, Statistics Department, and interviews with Siddige Yusof, Gedarif, and Yusuf Abdel Gawi, Showak, January 2008.

⁵¹ Dalmau, 'Camel Production and Trade,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.219.

administration, or to acquire other political positions within the developing system of state government, such as governor, vice-governor, minister or commissioner etc.⁵²

Ahmad Mohamed Abdalla Jabel, for example, was made head of the Showak Legislative Council and a new focus of leadership for Hardan was created. He became, in effect, on an equal footing to Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein. The basis for this appointment was the level of educational background and the experience of working for the civil service that Jabel had accomplished. However Sheikh al-Zein had much more experience of tribal leadership and greater acceptance by other members of the council. The boundary of the Showak Rural Council was from Gaily in the Butan, al Fashaga east to the Ethiopian border, (where a large number of long-standing Ethiopian refugees were found) and south to al Rawashada forest in north Gedarif.⁵³ This council was mandated to control local issues such as herds' tax on local market days, local transport tax and grain transport tax as well as assisting the Gedarif Legislative Council (the state-level council) in performing its duties. The Rural Council could not act without the approval of the Gedarif legislative council, however. The council represented many ethnic groups that relied heavily on the services provided by this council, but the Lahawiyin, whose resident population dominated the northern part from Showak to Khashm al Girba, were in the majority. The Showak Council had two components; Executive and Legislative. The Legislative Council was often presided over by a tribal figure while the Executive Council was the responsibility of a civil servant - at that time Ali al Hadab Ali. As mentioned, Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein served as president of the legislative council (*Majlis*), appointed by Governor of Kassala Mohamed Abdel Gadir with Osman Haj Omer al Zaki (from the Ababda tribe) as deputy president and as representative of the other resident tribes in Showak town.

Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein left office in 1994 and his post was filled by Ahmed Mohamed Abdalla Jabel.⁵⁴ After this, the post of the President of the Legislative Council was no longer appointed, but elected from a list of candidates presented by the popular committees in the villages. However, this procedure was not based on open voting; the list of candidates was not always announced. Instead the choice of President was the outcome of a kind of

⁵² Interview with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former president of Pastoralists Union and katib khut, Mugataa wad al Zein, June 1996.

⁵³ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996).

⁵⁴ Interview with Salah Shashug, executive director of Showak Mahaliya municipality, January 2008.

consensus of social and tribal networks within the village committees, mediated by the influence of the Gedarif Legislative Council. This state Legislative Council was presided over by the sheikh Ahmed Hamed Abu Sin, *nazir* of Shukriya; Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein was his deputy. The presence of Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein in Gedarif showed further political representation and recognition of the Lahawiyin. To the Lahawiyin this was a confirmation of their tribal territorial boundaries; the Atbara River area. It also meant security of their livelihood and an acceptance by the state government of their Arab identity in an area subject to a heavy influx of non Arab tribes.⁵⁵

Another event that had helped the Lahawiyin to improve their position was the establishment of the national Pastoral Union (*Itahd al Rua'a Showak*) in 1994 by a presidential decree. For the first time since independence, the pastoralists had won the support of a government. This may be attributed to the fact that the government of al-Bashir had set a target in the Comprehensive Strategy document to triple the livestock and increase exports in that sector. Following his first decree, President al Bashir issued another in which he announced the re-opening of pastoralist routes that had been taken over by agricultural schemes. The Pastoralist Union was thus mandated to stand for and support the interests of herders to government and non-governmental organizations as well as to endorse government policies that aimed to upgrade and raise the standard of living of pastoralists.⁵⁶ However, membership of the Union proved to be dominated by traders, veterinarians, and rich herders. Small herders suffered and lacked representation. The Union set branches at local, state, and national levels; membership varied according to pastoralist population in each rural council while the total number of membership in the National Pastoralists Union was about two hundred drawn from the state organizations.⁵⁷

As was discussed earlier, the challenge and competition between the Lahawiyin and the non-Arabs in Showak Rural Council was evident. However this did not continue for long. In 1996, immediately after the election of the Showak Council, the Lahawiyin and the Taaisha – an immigrant group from the west, but Arabs - went into tribal alliance for more political gains in the Showak and at this time for a higher political position, to represent the municipality at a

⁵⁵ A telephone interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, historian, July, 2010; also interview with Salah Shashug, executive director of Showak Mahaliya municipality, January 2008.

⁵⁶ Dan Fahey, 'The political economy of livestock and pastoralism in Sudan,' Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Livestock Policy Initiative working papers Nos.06 – 08, pp.7-8.

⁵⁷ Shazali et al., 'Share The Land Or Part The Nation,' p.23.

state level. They agreed to have one candidate from the Lahawiyin to represent both tribes, the Lahawiyin and the Taisha. The candidate was Sheikh al Ruddya Bakheit, a Lahawi and a trader. They allied against the candidate of the ruling National Congress Party, a Bawadra business man called Wad Dekain, the Lahawi sheikh won.⁵⁸ This raised many questions regarding first the alliance and the reasons why and how it took place and second the implication to the presence of the National Congress Party in Showak area. As was discussed in Chapter Four, al Faki *umudiyya* had previously made alliances with the Fellata and Tayisha at one point regarding the *juruf*. I argue here that based on this long-standing relation between the two groups a mutual interest was expressed and therefore it was nourished and continued to be reflected in local level politics. There had always been benefits (trade, land and labour) that the two tribes had to protect and this is why such an alliance took place. Surprisingly the government candidate was from the Bawadra who had always challenged the Lahawiyin and their grazing rights. With the anticipated political position, the Bawadra might have expected and hoped that with support from the Government, they might have defeated the political aspirations of the Lahawiyin. Instead, the implication of this event was that the government unexpectedly lost its chance to fully control Showak Rural Council politics. There was also an element here of the old sectarian politics of Ansar and the Khatmyia. Wad al faki had a long standing loyalty to the Khatmyia as did the Taisha to the Umma (Ansar); this was to some extent a coming together of the old sectarian rivals against al-Bashir's government, which had suppressed both of them. This in turn led the government to change its stand and strategies; the consequence was an increasingly official support for the Haradan *umudiyya*. The election caused the government to acknowledge the presence of the Taiysha in Showak town as well.⁵⁹

By 1996/97 many of wad Hardan *umudiyya*'s educated members were absorbed in the new government structures.⁶⁰ They presided over the Showak Rural Council.⁶¹ Members of the wad al Faki, in striving for greater representation, were trying to develop a new political relationship with their former slaves and other dependants to secure their support as voters in election at local levels. In addition, other formerly-marginalised tribes in the area, such as the Fellatta and the Taiysha, were drawn into the on-going power struggle, taking sides in a desperate attempt to safeguard their existence in an area dominated by large Arab tribes.

⁵⁸ Extracted from field notes based on an interview with the late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former president of the Pastoralist Union and khatib khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996; also from a telephone interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, historian, July 2010.

⁵⁹ A telephone interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, Historian, July 2010.

⁶⁰ Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

⁶¹ Interview with Babikir Awad al Karim, Historian, Showak, January 2008.

While wad al Faki sought the support of their former slaves and on alliance with the Taisha, Wad Hardan counted on the Fellatta.⁶² I would argue that wad Hardan built a good working relationship between themselves and the Fellatta because both of these groups had built their strength from agriculture, whether from the private agricultural schemes - as in the case of wad Hardan - or from the *juruf* - as in the case of the Fellatta whose *juruf* were located mostly within the vicinity of the Hardan *umudiyya*. Hardan members had, by contrast, owned fewer slaves, the majority of whom had belonged to members of the wad el-Faki and Magit, who had been so prosperous as nomadic livestock herders.

Wad al Faki initially sought to maintain their monopoly of the leadership of the Lahawiyin, relying on Magit, Gawamis and Gaborab to support them against Hardan, despite the long-standing animosity between the Magit and wad al Faki over the tribe's leadership. The reason why these *umudiyya* agreed to follow wad al Faki was that they were all rich in camels and it was hard for them to give up their herds and become farmers. Choosing to retain the nomadic identity, rather than working on the land, was perceived as fundamental to that Arab identity. The tension over leadership between wad Hardan and wad al Faki *umudiyya* drew in other tribes in the area, such as the Shukriyya and the Bawadra; wad Hardan *umudiyya* provisionally leaned more on the Bawadra, while wad al Faki *umudiyya* kept its old ties with the Shukriyya.⁶³ The leaders of the Shukriyya sought to use this split to attempt to regain their previous authority over the Lahawiyin political involvement in Gedarif state and the national capital.

The Lahawiyin were a clear majority of the population in the area of Showak Rural Council: in 1996 they were said to compose about 75 percent of a population estimated at 38,735.⁶⁴ The total number of Lahawiyin who had settled in villages in Showak was 14,401; the rest were still formally considered nomads.⁶⁵ The conflict over leadership raised the possibility that the Lahawiyin might nonetheless lose control of the council. But, strikingly, the leadership of both wad Hardan and wad el-Faki evidently decided that Lahawiyin unity was more important than their rivalry. Aware of their disadvantages in terms of education, the

⁶² Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director of Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁶³ This caused an internal tension between the two Shukriyya nazirs and this had left the Shukriyya with little interest in interfering in an internal affair between the Lahawiyin that might have affect the Shukriyya's resources more than benefiting them as far as land rights and authority were concerned.

⁶⁴ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996). See also Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (eds.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*.

⁶⁵ Information from the Ration Card Section, Showak Rural Council.

leaders of wad al Faki allied with those of wad Hardan, when it came to the politics of the Showak Rural Council.⁶⁶ Fearing that the other tribes might take over their constituency in al-Showak was a strong factor for wad al Faki in taking that step even though they might not have liked to do so. Whether he approved or disapproved of the wad Hardan's stand against wad al Faki, al Zein Adam al Zein had decided to work together with them as one tribe to guarantee that the Showak rural council should be a 'Lahawiyin territory.'⁶⁷ And so in 1996, on the basis of the more or less united support of the wad al Faki, a member of Hardan *umudiyya* won the election for the presidency of Showak Rural Council. In return, Ahmed Adam Al Zein had to be content with winning the presidency of the local Pastoralists' Union as al Faki's domain, in 1996.⁶⁸

This in turn was the result of an interesting deal between the Lahawiyin and the Bani Amir tribe in 1996. Before describing the deal, one has to differentiate between two distinct institutions: the Showak Rural Council and Showak Township. The Bani Amir composed the majority in al Showak Township as herders while the Lahawiyin made up two thirds of the members of the Rural Council, with few living in Showak Township despite being dominant in the Rural Council. However other ethnic groups in Showak Township who were considered in the majority were the Taisha and the Fellata, while Hawsa, Jaleeyin, Rubatab and Nuba and refugees⁶⁹ were minorities. The most common activities of these tribes were agriculture and trade. Once these two issues are understood the election for the president and membership of the Showak branch of the Pastoralist Union becomes less complicated to comprehend. The National Pastoralist Union in Khartoum was the only office mandated to approve and dissolve the establishment of any Pastoralist Union branch. When the establishment of the Pastoralist Union branch was decided by the National Union, an election was called in the same year. There were 11 seats competed for by the Bani Amer, of whom a number lived as dairy cattle-keepers in Showak town, and the Lahawiyin. 130 candidates from Bani Amer and 80 candidates from the Lahawiyin competed. It was a tough competition and the result, when it was announced, was surprising to all. The Lahawiyin won the majority

⁶⁶ Interview with Awad al Karim Ahmed al Zein, Ministry of Agriculture, Showak, December 2007.

⁶⁷ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Statistics Department, Gedarif, December 2007.

⁶⁸ Interview with Awad al Karim Ahmed al Zein, Ministry of Agriculture, Showak, December 2007.

⁶⁹ Showak town was the headquarters of the UNCHR in the east of Sudan and particularly the refugee rehabilitation and repatriation projects. It was mentioned in the report on the Lahawiyin, that the refugee population increased and their cattle and sheep also increased, which posed another problem regarding pasturing. The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), pp.73-74.

of seats in the Union given the fact that they had presented less candidates. It was obvious that the two tribes had reached a compromise. Little information was given out, and hardly any knew how a consensus was reached; the late Sheikh Ahmed al Zein mentioned this, but he was reluctant to share the details. The eleven seats were divided between them, eight for the Lahawiyin and three for the Bani Amer. Interestingly enough this was not proportionate to the number of candidates (80-130) but it seems likely that the 130 were not purely Bani Amer. They included other tribes such as the Taisha, Fallatta and other smaller tribes. The most important posts, those of President and Treasurer, went to the Lahawiyin; that of Director General went to the Bani Amer. These positions granted them the facilities and opportunities to link with key officials in places like banks and political offices. The Lahawiyin argued that having been integrated into this political institution they were able to safeguard other aspects such as grazing and pasture rights. In fact the Pastoralist Union had also given them more publicity at the national level.⁷⁰

The Lahawiyin's domination of the al Showak Rural Council⁷¹ sent a powerful message to the Government that they were a force in the Butana and that they might support the Government politically and ideologically, if rewarded. The Government then had to make a careful judgement in this partnership as to whom it should rely on and trust. Should it count on a tribe with a history full of intrigues such as the Lahawiyin or should it trust the growing economic power of the Bawadra?

⁷⁰ Extract from field notes collected from the late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former head of Pastoralist Union and katib khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

⁷¹ The Showak Rural Council was established in 1974 by the late president Numeiri, who laid the corner stone of the council; Showak Rural Council Documents 1996.

4. 1996 Lahawiyin Tribal Conference

In the wake of the elections, the Government allowed the organisation of the first conference of the Lahawiyin Tribal Congregation in 1996. The conference aimed to draw attention to the tribe's past, present and future roles in the Butana and the East of Sudan as a strategic region. It also meant political recognition as one of the resident tribes of the Butana and Atbara River areas. It was an initiation for the young educated Lahawiyin and saw involvement by members of all *umudiyya*, though the wad al-Faki, Hardan and Magit were the leading ones.

In terms of the individual leaders of native administration, there had been remarkable continuity over a period of four decades. Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein remained the *sheikh khut* while Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein remained the *katib al khut*. But it was Sheikh Ahmed who achieved a new kind of status through the Congregation, which brought attention to the Lahawiyin as a tribe, not only within the Showak council territory but also at the level of the Gedarif State. In April 1996 Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein organised the first Conference on the Lahawiyin, mobilising the Lahawiyin of Atbara River. The event drew on the local efforts and resources of local Government, in the form of Showak Rural Council. While this support made the event possible, it also limited its inclusiveness, since Lahawiyin who lived under other councils were not part of the Conference. But by drawing on local government resources Sheikh Ahmed succeeded in securing himself a place at a level of a tribal representative similar to his brother Sheikh al Zein. Ahmed drew the attention of the government and enhanced his position within the tribe.⁷² The Shukriyya were, conversely, provoked by the Government's permission to allow a client tribe such as the Lahawiyin to hold their conference after first consulting with the Shukriyya leaders in this place.⁷³

Building on this new status, Sheikh Ahmed began to lead and engage much more in formal gatherings and meetings, more than Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein whose quiet character and poor sight did not allow too much travelling.⁷⁴ Government officials seemed to be supporting Sheikh Ahmed, arguing that he had a natural charisma and proved articulate and well-versed

⁷² Interviews with: al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, member of the National Assembly, Gedarif, December 2007; al-Igba Ahmed al Zein, Gedarif, December 2007; Ali Sueliman, Director General, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁷³ All information in this page were extracted from interviews with, Ali Suleiman, Abdalla Amir, Babikir Awad al Karim and al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, in Mugatta, Showak and Gedarif, in December 2007 to January 2008.

⁷⁴ Interview with late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former head of Pastoralist Union and katib khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

in tribal politics. This situation led to a subtle internal competition within the al Faki *umudiyya* and, more precisely, within al Zein's family itself. However Ahmed al Zein's shrewdness and wisdom contained any chances of dividing the family. Thus the status of the *sheikh khut* was retained symbolically.⁷⁵

The conference was explicitly concerned with the position of nomads. Thematic papers were jointly prepared and presented by Government officials and tribal members who provided another level of participation to the Lahawiyyin. This conference was seen by the Lahawiyyin as a victory and was highly appreciated by all Lahawiyyin regardless of their differences, though some non-Lahawiyyin argued that the Lahawiyyin were trapped into supporting the government. I would argue rather that the conference, like other events discussed in this chapter, showed the consistent tendency for Lahawiyyin political leaders to pursue what they saw as the collective, shared, interest of the Lahawiyyin.

The desire of Lahawiyyin leaders for recognition was achieved through the media announcement of the Conference and the highly political participation of the Government. This worried the Shukriyya and other tribes greatly. The leadership of the Shukriyya had made clear their opposition to changes in administrative boundaries which might weaken their authority with respect to the Ahamda on the Atbara River, where a proposal for a new *umudiyya* was not approved simply because it meant splitting from the rule of the Shukriyya and would be an invitation to other sub-tribes to follow the same path.⁷⁶ The Lahawiyyin, on the other hand, wanted to make the maximum use of the conference by bringing up the issue of the land, grazing and *nazirate*. However there was no opportunity to formally raise the issue of *nazirate*, because the government participants aimed the conference more at education and health matters and tried hard to avoid the political issues. This was, on one level, a conference about the consequences of marginalization; but it avoided any serious consideration of the political basis of the Lahawiyyin predicament. Land and grazing was more or less discussed from the point of view of the need to regularise pasture routes and services needed by the nomads and how co-existence between the nomads and agriculturists might be endured.

⁷⁵ Interview with a Lahwi sheikh, Showak, December 2007.

⁷⁶ For more details on Ahmada, see Barabara Casciarri, 'Dynamics of Tribal Re-composition in an Arab Population: the case of Ahamda,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.310-349.

The main papers presented as well as the discussion throughout the conference were about land, grazing and education and health services. However, land rights were the essence of the gathering, both for those who were involved and for the non-participating tribes within the constituency of Showak Rural Council who were following the event closely.⁷⁷ The leaders of the Bawadra watched with particular concern; alongside the developing Rashaida role in the camel trade, the growing power of the Bawadra in the grain trade was the most significant economic feature of the 1990s in Butana.⁷⁸ Throughout their history the Bawadra had not had strong political representation and they had always been content to be a section of the Shukriyya.⁷⁹ Nevertheless they managed to own the majority of mechanized schemes in the Showak area and south Gedarif, largely because they had shifted earlier and more successfully to mechanized agriculture as we saw in the previous chapter.⁸⁰

Put simply, Bawadra economic prosperity was not based on any tribal claim to autonomy and to associated collective land rights. Asked about the idea of the nazirate the late Sheikh al-Beshir, a Bawadra *sheikh*, said that

Our needs are met without a *nazirate*, it doesn't serve us in any way, it is just a symbol. We leave it for the Shukriyya.⁸¹

For many Lahawiyin – both the leaders of the *umudiyya* and their followers– the new economic success of the Bawadra made them the focus of resentment, and the most obvious manifestation of the economic processes which were undermining pastoralism. In some ways the Bawadra had replaced the Shukriyya as a focus for Lahawiyin resentment, as they controlled what had become an important aspect of the Lahawiyin livelihood: the fields of sorghum residues which could be used to feed livestock, in the absence of pasture. The Bawadra rented access to such land to Lahawiyi herders at an hourly rate; and bought Lahawiyi livestock cheaply for grain: ‘They exchange one sheep for three sacks of sorghum.’⁸²

⁷⁷ The Lahawiyin Development Conference Report, compiled by the Conference coordination committee (this report includes 8 working papers Presented at the Showak Conference on the Lahawiyin Planned for April 1996), pp.2-37.

⁷⁸ I. Dalmau, C Millar, ‘I. Dalmau, ‘Camel Production and Trade’ in. Miller (eds.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp. 215-18.

⁷⁹ Interview with Ammar Abdalla Suleiman, Ministry of Agriculture, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Interview with Sheikh al-Beshir, Um Shagra village, Gedarif, 1996.

⁸² Interview with Yusouf Hasab al Gawi, Showak, January 2008; see also Dalmau, ‘Camel production and trade,’ in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.215.

Through the mechanized agricultural schemes the Bawadra managed to develop a strong economic trade base that enabled them to promote their business skills and gradually control the grain market in Gedarif. Dismantling the pasture line, Sindi Ford, had not only enabled the Bawadra to control the grain market but had also deprived vulnerable Lahawi herd owner families. The control of marketing sorghum residues and tax levying at times of herding by the Bawadra had offended the pride of Lahawiyin, who saw the Bawadra as a minor tribe that had never had a *sheikh khut* or a court, and neither was it rich in camels. The Bawadra control over land extended to imposing fines on Lahawiyin herds if the latter entered Bawadra's mechanised farms. On occasion fines of millions of Sudanese pounds were reported to have been paid by the Lahawiyin. While it has been argued that there was a level of cooperation amongst all Arab tribes in the Butana, which excluded non-Arabs, there were profound divisions amongst the Arabs, which set the basis for prolonged political struggle.⁸³ The Lahawiyin told stories about the Bawadra which emphasised their lack of status as a proper Arab tribe: according to Lahawiyin legend the Bawadra were cursed by a religious group called al Sadgab. The curse was "Katirkum fil turab wa galilkum far bel gurba," which means 'may God let the majority of the Bawadra die and the few left be scattered.' Thus the Lahawiyin mocked the Bawadra for being too scattered to possess any tribal cohesion and entirely money-oriented: the leadership of the Lahawiyin deliberately cast their own identity and political ambitions in contrast to those of the Bawadra. The Bawadra were too fragmented and organizationally weak to make a political demand for a *nazirate*, as they were too busy collecting money and buying more land to get involved in politics. The Lahawiyin, on the other hand, would rely on their status as a real tribe to pursue a political strategy which would give members of the tribe some sort of claim over land which rested not on money but on identity. Establishing a nazirate would mean that the Lahawiyin had succeeded in becoming a unified tribe clearly distinct from other neighbouring tribes (i.e. the Shukriya who held the traditional political leadership, the Bawadra who held the economic power, Bani Amer, Ta'aysha, Fellatta with whom they competed for grazing and arable land, etc.). In this process of tribal re-composition they emphasized tribal unity in the face of competition from other tribes.⁸⁴

⁸³ Assal discussed the exclusion of the non-Arab in the mechanised farming; see M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.186-89. While camel trade was exclusively an Arab tribes' livelihood in Butana, as explained by Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.309-348.

⁸⁴ Khalid et al., 'The Lahawiyin,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.16.

Though the Lahawiyin told these stories of Bawadra fragmentation, it is striking that the Bawadra had not experienced internal conflict and friction among its *umudiyya*. This was in direct contrast to the Lahawiyin, where each *umudiyya* had grown in a political environment that was inspired by the Ansar, the Khatmiyya or the Ansar al-Suna. Therefore the sheikhs of the *umudiyyas* obviously sought the help and support of the political parties to which they belonged. The Bawadra were, in fact, quicker than the Lahawiyin in seeking alliance with the new regime after 1989, as it was seeking local political support.

5. 1996 Claim for *Nazirate*

As we learned in the previous chapter the Lahawiyin had also claimed a *nazirate* in 1928 and in 1948. Their claim for *nazirate* this time had a different dimension in that it was not merely a result of long-term dissatisfaction, or resentment of their status and a renouncing of the cliental relationship with the Shukriyya. This time it revealed a mutual interest of both the Lahawiyin and the government which was expressed by the 1994 Decree which developed into tribal council in allowing the representation of the Lahawiyin and the Rashaida as members of the Council equal to other Confederations in the region. Therefore the 1994 Council encouraged the Lahawiyin to pursue their claim.⁸⁵ Ten years earlier the Rashaiyda had only three *umudiyas* moving in the land of the local tribes. However, after the drought of 1984/84 they considered sedentarization. They cleverly supported the Umma party in a locale dominated by the Khatmiyya, and in return the Umma promised them a territory and a *nazir*.⁸⁶ The Lahawiyin had to follow.

In 1996 the Lahawiyin made a formal request for a *nazirate*. Their timing in raising this issue was due to two factors: First, the Lahawiyin thought that by leading a majority of two rural councils out of eight, they were indicating to the government and the Shukriyya that the weight of their presence could not be avoided and that they should be taken seriously by the government. A group of Lahawiyin went to Khartoum and met with al Turabi, the president of the National Assembly at that time. The group included, representatives from al-Faki, Hardan, Gaborab and other *umudiyas*. The trip was initiated by a member of Hardan and supported by Faki members, which reveals another level of politics between the two *umudiyas*.⁸⁷ As stated by Ali Suleiman,

Wad Hardan very much demanded this nazirate because of the educated members of the *umudiyas*, the rest [*umudiyas*] are not interested in education this may be attributed to the political affiliation of the different *umudiyas*. Strong reason also is the lifestyle of *awlad* Hardan; they have mixed with other tribes.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Delmet, 'The Native Administration,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*.

⁸⁶ This was utterly refused by the *nazir* of Halenga, Hedandawa and Bani Amer, to the extent that they claimed "they have welcomed and considered as guests (*duyuf*) and who in fact, tempted to take the land between the Atbara and Setit rivers, less to become farmers than to get more facilities for their smuggling activities through that frontier area". Despite that Saddiq al Mahdi's government acknowledged the Rashayda as an independent political entity. Delmet, 'The Native Administration,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.165.

⁸⁷ Interviews with Al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, Member of National Assembly, Gedarif, December 2007, Siddiq Yousuf, member of the Legislative Council, Showak, January 2008, and Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistics Department, Gedarif, January 2008.

⁸⁸ Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim, historian, Showak, January 2008.

The decision to contact al-Turabi separately from the rest of the politicians was to do with his political position as president of the national assembly. The call for *nazirate* was a priority on the meeting's agenda and Turabi pledged his support and assistance to the delegation.

In this third attempt at obtaining *nazirate*, the Lahawiyin developed a new argument based on historical and economical interpretation. Historically the Lahawiyin claimed they were the only tribe that had grazed on the land between the Atbara River and the Setit River up to the Border of Ethiopia and which the Hadendawa had also strongly considered to be within their boundary and part of their *dar*. The Lahawiyin claimed that these lands used to be forest and were previously a habitat for animals. They had cleared them and had become known to the Hadendawa and Shukriyya. It should be remembered that this territory belonged to the Dabyana *nazirate* which was dissolved by the British administration in 1910 and attached as a client tribe to the Shukriyya.

This same land was later offered by the Shukriyya to the Lahawiyin and also claimed by the Hadendawa as part of the latter's boundary. Apparently neither the Shukriyya nor the Hadendawa had taken the Lahawiyin's claim sincerely, but having won the majority of seats of the Showak Rural Council and the other local political institutions, gave the Lahawiyin a new sense of entitlement.

It was the wad Hardan section, who were heavily involved in mechanized agriculture, who were actually leading the whole issue of the *nazirate*, a fact which implied a conflict between them and the wad al Zein family. This was not an isolated case; in several areas of Sudan, the process of revitalising the Native Administration system often led to internal competition concerning tribal leadership. In some cases, challenging the traditional leadership came from a segment of newly-educated members who improved their economic status.⁸⁹

It is interesting to note the difference in the responses of the Shukriyya *nazirs* in 1901 and 1996 respectively, especially when it came to land and to the Lahawiyin's claim for *nazirate*. In 1901 the Lahawiyin were perceived as a support and a new ally to the Shukriyya by Abu

⁸⁹ Ahmad, *Shaykhs and Followers*; Eman Bushra, 'Local level Political Dynamics in Kassala State: The Rashayda,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.277-308; Barabara Casciarri, 'Dynamics of Tribal Re-composition in an Arab Population: the case of Ahamda,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp.310-349.

Sin, while in 1996 they were denounced as intruders and as not belonging to Butana. It was stated that Kordofan was their land. During the Condominium the Lahawiyin paid taxes to the Shukriya and then to the British administration, while in post independence and in the absence of the Native administration the Lahawiyin resumed more autonomy from the Shukriya. In view of such a claim the Lahawiyin distinctively appeared as rivals to the Shukriya even though the latter had proved their good intentions earlier by welcoming the former to Butana.

Education had played a role in shaping views and decisions at very low level politics that had become associated with the claim for a nazirate.⁹⁰ Education had also shaped the contest over leadership: wad Hardan wanted to represent the Lahawiyin in any national political manoeuvre while wad al Faki believed that leadership was their historically-granted and unquestionable right. But despite this competition, the Lahawiyin's new and active involvement in politics was intended to allow at least some of them to preserve their livelihood as nomads.⁹¹ The key to activating the claim of the *nazirate* was the subtle competition between the educated younger generation of Gaborab who had the chance to migrate to Saudi Arabia and who followed Sunni teachings and principles strictly and those who had not left but grew and were saturated by the notion of revived Native Administration and development in the area.

The claim for *nazirate* was not, however, developed as a consensus among the different *umudiyas* across gender, ethnic and economic status. It was engineered and led by privileged *umudiyas*, Hardan, Faki and Gaborab, and even by groups within those *umudiyas*. The educated elite of wad Hardan who were economically empowered led the issue of *nazirate*. They were interested in transforming the pastoralist nature of the Lahawiyin survival mechanism from herders to mechanised farmers with the belief that the future of Sudan was in mechanised agriculture. This was the exact opposite of al-Faki's point of view which supported the idea of combining camel herding and agricultural schemes. These differences led to the competitive polarisation of followers over land and pasture and became the essence of a hidden tribal contest; but the contesting parties found a temporary common cause in the call for a nazirate.

⁹⁰ Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009

⁹¹ Interview with the late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, former president of Pastoralist Union and *khatib khut*, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996.

This was a turning point in the story of the Lahawiyin's claim for a *nazirate*, which had really now come to be primarily a claim for a territorial boundary.⁹² Politically, some federal government representatives thought that a political solution to this claim to *nazirate* might be a "wali" or a ministerial post, which might have granted the Lahawiyin some political authority to compensate for *nazirate*. The Lahawiyin showed determination in pursuing a *nazirate* and managed to voice their claim at all political levels, not only in terms of political representation at the Showak Council level, but also at a higher level in Khartoum where the support of Turabi was evident. A *dar* had always been a precondition for a *nazirate* but in the case of the Lahawiyin this was not so.

⁹² Delmet associated titles and boundaries with full authority yet he divided administrative from judicial powers given to tribal leaders in a complete revival of native administration though but for the Lahawiyin the picture was different. Title [nazir], boundaries [territorial] and authority all had to come together to guarantee a non clientage relationship with Shukriya particularly. See Delmet, 'The Native Administration,' in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.157.

6. A new trajectory in Lahawiyin identity formation

Previously and for a long time in Kordofan we needed to stick together because we were mixed, from all the sections. Our identity was Lahawiyin. Since we moved to Butana and after all the Lahawiyin had sedentarized and each section lived in one vicinity, we needed to identify ourselves by our *umudiyya* much more than being a 'Lahawi'.⁹³

Some Lahawiyin see a recent tendency toward identity construction which gives primacy to the *umudiyya*, rather than to tribal identity as a Lahawi. This implies a kind of internal disintegration. But such disintegration was only partial, and it ran alongside a continuing and widespread evocation of the idea of collective Lahawiyi identity. It was merely a matter of political gains and positioning oneself within the government structure and system. Hardan were always far-sighted in claiming for themselves a leading position above the al Faki which was revealed in this new trend. Yet al Faki with the hereditary tribal leadership would continue to gain a unique position, and leaders of all *umudiyya* could use the idea of collective identity to bargain with a government which wanted to preserve that form of native administration.

It is a matter of political gains and positioning. The Hardan's forward thinking is revealed in this new trend; if the nazirate is achieved what next? Who gains most from the internal power restructuring which implied shift in tribal leadership? This appears to be a contradictory process because the evolvement of an *umudiyya* might have excluded the Lahawi tribal identity. Nevertheless, leaders played on their identity both as Hardani and as Lahawi as they strove for power, authority and leadership in an external political environment in the eastern region (Butana and Gedarif) which faced considerable instability.

From 1997-98 two members from the Lahawiyin of Atbara, Ahmed Jebel from Hardan and Al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein from al Faki, called on Lahawiyin living in six identified states – Blue Nile, Gezira, Sennar, Gedarif, Khartoum and Kassala - to support the Lahawiyin of Atbara in calling for a nazirate. This was a direct appeal to tribal identity and their Arabness. Central institutions for this would be the 'Association' or *Rabitaab abnaa al-Lahawiyin* and the 'Confederation' or *Hayat al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*, which revolved around the idea of consensus on the claim for the nazirate. Although the call was meant to include the entire tribe, the executive structure and authority was in the hands of the Lahawiyin from Atbara.

⁹³ Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

Within the context of emerging political institutions, the Lahawiyin chose to stick to its old ‘symbolic’ leadership; in the person of Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein (this might arguably be called a ‘leadership without portfolio’).⁹⁴ This choice confirmed the continuation of a hereditary ruler of al Faki *umudiyya* over the headship of the Lahawiyin and over the Lahawiyin both within and outside the Butana. It also confirms consensus by the Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* to the claim for the nazirate.

⁹⁴ Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

Chapter Seven

Contemporary Politics of the Lahawiyin 1990-2008

One of the most significant developments which have affected Sudan during the last two decades has been the progressive fragmentation of Sudanese politics in general. The country has also been faced with a severe national identity crisis. While this has often been presented as a north-south dichotomy,¹ equally important has been what de Waal calls 'the much-neglected east-west axis,'² which originated in the pre-colonial period, and was reinforced by Condominium rule and post-independence governments in the North.

The instability in the South, Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile and the East were the most palpable demonstration of this trend.³ The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005 followed by another two peace agreements: the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006 and more recently the Eastern Peace Agreement in 2008. These led to a relative peace, but at the same time, as Patey has commented 'the lack of a peace dividend and environmental degradation from oil continue to spawn armed resistance at the local level.'⁴

The Lahawiyin did not live in isolation from the ongoing conflict in the eastern region of Sudan. They were affected by two different dynamics: regional dynamics on the border with Ethiopia and Eritrea; and national dynamics between the Eastern Front and the rest of Sudan. Sometimes the challenges this brought were relatively straightforward: the establishment of the international highway between Ethiopia and Sudan, which was completed in 2007, heralded the encroachment of Ethiopian farmers, a challenge which alarmed many Lahawiyin.⁵ Other challenges were more protracted and complex.

¹ Sharif Harir, "Arab belt" versus "African belt": ethnic and political strife in Darfur and cultural and regional factors', in Sharif Harir and Terje Tvedt (eds), *Sudan: Short Cut to Decay* (Nordica Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 1997), pp. 144–85; Doornbos, Paul, 'On becoming Sudanese', in T. Barnett and A. Abdelkarim (eds), *Sudan: State, capital and transformation* (Croom Helm, London, 1988), pp. 99–120.; Heather J. Sharkey, "Arab Identity and Ideology in Sudan: The Politics of Language, Ethnicity, and Race" *African Affairs*, 107/426, 21–43

² Alex De Waal, Who Are the Darfurians? Arab And Africans Identities, Violence And External Engagement, *African Affairs*, 104/415, p. 181.

³ Conference on the current Peace and Security Challenges in the Horn of Africa, Organized jointly by the Centre for Policy Research and Dialogue and Inter Africa Group, March 12-13, 2007, pp.1-108.

⁴ Patey, Luke A, 'Crude Days Ahead? Oil and the Resource Curse in Sudan', *African Affairs*, 109/437 (2010), pp. 617–636.

⁵ For more details see Chapter Three.

In eastern Sudan, a new movement of political and military resistance had been formed in the 1990s which drew together several eastern tribes, members of which argued that they had suffered from political marginalization. The Eastern Front was formed after Beja Congress joined the National Democratic Alliance in 1996, having launched an armed struggle in the early 1990s.⁶ This occurred as a result of marginalisation and negligence which was exacerbated by the exploration for gold and other resources in the Hadandowa land, which led to a loss of grazing land and pasture for many herders.⁷ The Bani Amer joined the Front when the tribe began to lose its labour market opportunities in the Red Sea state as a result of the modernisation of the port.⁸ The Rashaida joined also, driven by a different grievance, which was their claim for a nazirate and recognition by the government that they were Sudanese.⁹ Crucially, the Eastern Front did not recognise the rights of other tribes in the east of Sudan because their definition of 'Eastern Sudan' consisted of only the Red Sea and Kassala states. In consequence, the Eastern Front did not build a wide representation with many tribes in the east excluded, and membership remained limited to the Hadandawa, Bani Amer and Rashaida tribes.

The consequence was that both peace negotiations raised tensions between these groups and others in eastern Sudan. By the government's definition, Gedarif state was part of 'Eastern Sudan', and so was affected both by the peace negotiations which began in Asmara in 2003, and the eventual ESPA.¹⁰

Resident Arab tribes in eastern Sudan such as the Shukriyya, Lahawiyin, Bawadra, Dabayna and Ahamda had reservations about being represented by members of the Eastern Front

⁶ At its founding conference in opposition-held areas in March 2005, the Eastern Front attempted to broaden its support base to include the Shukriyya and other non-Beja tribes in the East

⁷ John Young, 'The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization', (Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva 2007), pp.11-23.

⁸ The Bani Amer population predominantly occupied the sea port labour force for many years until 2002-03 when the modernisation of the port began to take place. Many of them lost their jobs and the impoverishment and marginalisation of the tribe was evident. Tamador A. Khalid, 'Red Sea State' , un-published report', Khartoum: Dutch Embassy, Nov.2005;

⁹ Eman Bushra, 'Local Level Political Dynamic in Kassala State: The Rashayda', in Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, p.293. **William C. Young, *The Rashayda Bedouin: Arab Pastoralists of Eastern Sudan* (Texas: Harcourt Brace, 1996) and Mustafá 'Alī i Ahmad. *al-Rash`ayidah*, (al-Khart`um: Matba'ah Misr, 19--?)**

¹⁰ John Young, 'Eastern Sudan: Caught in a Web of External Interests', *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 33, No. 109, Mainstreaming the African Environment in Development (Sep., 2006), pp. 594-601.;Cliffe, Lionel (1999), 'Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa.' *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 20. No. 1; Los Angeles Times (2005), 'Official Pariah Sudan Valuable to America's War on Terrorism', 29 April. Young, John. 'Sudan: A Flawed Peace Process Leading to a Flawed Peace' *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 103.Vol. 32. (March 2 005), pp 99 — 113.; J. Migdal, *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressures Towards Political and Social Change in the Third World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1974),

because these tribes saw themselves superior based on their Arabness.¹¹ Though the Rashaida are also an Arab tribe, they had no *dar*, and so were viewed as of lower status by *dar* holders such as the Shukriyya, while others viewed them as late-comers who should not represent other tribes;¹² and as Dalmau put it ‘the Rashaida were regularly in conflict with the local tribes.’¹³ These tribes resented the status which negotiations and agreement had given to the Beja tribes; the Hadandawa were already established while the Bani Amer and the Rashaida were gaining authority at the expense of other significant groups. Lahawiyin and others feared a growing influx of non-Butana tribes, including those who had been in exile as part of the opposition. Like the conflict in Darfur, that in eastern Sudan could be seen as a resource conflict, and could be presented as “between Arab and non Arab.”¹⁴ This heightened the tension between tribes, and encouraged identity politics.

Apart from the Hadandawa, the other two tribes were not widely popular which can be attributed to three reasons: their smuggling habits; their border links with Eritrea and Ethiopia; and their links with Saudi Arabia.¹⁵ The consequences of the peace negotiations were further complicated as each of the three tribes of the Eastern Front experienced internal divisions as each *umudiyya* attempted to secure a bigger share of political power under the ESPA. The gains of the three tribes ranged from assistants to the presidency to federal ministerial posts.

This chapter looks at the contemporary politics of the Lahawiyin in the context of this period of political conflict, peace negotiation and their consequences, during which debate over a Lahawiyin identity became very much a matter for negotiation between new elite – which shows some continuity with the old – and the government.

¹¹ Assall and Ali, ‘Eastern Sudan: Challenges Facing the Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Gedarif State’, p. 7.

¹² Group interview with the Lahawiyin sheikhs, January 2008, Gedarif.

¹³ Isabelle Dalmau, ‘Camel Production and Trade in Eastern Sudan: A Case Study of Al-Showak Market’, in Miller (ed.), *Land*, pp. 203-228.

¹⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009), p.71.

¹⁵ Both tribes had a long standing history of arms and border smuggling. See also Dalmau ‘Camel Production and Trade in Eastern Sudan’, p. 210 and Bushara, ‘Local Level Political Dynamic in Kassala State’, p. 293, Mustafá ‘Alī Ahmad, *al-Rash`ayidah* [AR], (al-Khart`um: Matba'ah Misr, 19--?).

1. Political dynamics of Gedarif State post 1998

Vered Amit-Talai has commented that “The notion of home (and hence by extension of homelessness) is tied to the notion of identity, but equally correct in asserting that ‘identities are not free-floating, they are limited by borders and boundaries’”.¹⁶ This period has seen new developments in Lahawiyin ideas about movement, and boundaries and identity. While the Lahawiyin had had resisted the imposition of boundaries since the Condominium, they came to accept their recent confinement to the Atbara River area, defining this as a Lahawiyin ‘home land’, a territory they had identified with since their move to Butana.

Movements in administrative boundaries, which located Gedarif firmly in ‘Eastern Sudan’ threatened the traditional authority of some *sheikhs*, which was already under pressure from the authority of other *sheikhs* and *umdas*.¹⁷ The Lahawiyin, whose *sheikhs* resided in Mugataa and other villages along the Atbara River, were indifferent to official meetings and events in Gedarif that were an attraction to other tribal *sheikhs*. On the contrary they preferred to return to their village on a daily basis. The Lahawiyin, now increasingly sedentarized, nonetheless remained independent and developed new ways to maintain and secure their identity, linking it to an idea of home. According to one informant ‘we the Lahawiyin, stick to our home no matter how far [away] it is.’¹⁸

Historically, Lahawiyin identity existed as purely ‘Arab’ and ‘Lahawi’. Since the 1990s, the tension between membership of particular *umudiyya* and membership of the tribe has reemerged, as part of the kind of cliental politics Asad, Ibrahim and Southall;¹⁹ some Lahawiyin see this as a natural corollary of what has been happening in the Eastern region generally.²⁰ Others argue that these internal divisions are encouraged by educated members of

¹⁶ Madan Sarup quoted in Vered Amit-Talai, ‘Risky Hiatuses and the limits of Social Imagination: Expatriacy in the Cayman Islands’ in Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson (eds.), *Migrant of Identity; Perception of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), pp 55.

¹⁷ Gedarif had historically been considered part of Eastern Sudan and was specifically part of Kassala province until 1994. *Kassa Province Annual Report*, CEIVSEC, 3/138/610. However, after 1994 the Ingadth government re-extended the boundaries of Eastern Sudan region to include Gedarif within its new boundaries. See C. Delmet, ‘The Native Administration System in Eastern Sudan’, in Miller (ed.), *Land*, pp. 145-172.

¹⁸ Interview with al-Igba Ahmed al Zein, December 2007, Gedarif State.

¹⁹ Talal Asad, ‘Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe’, in Ian Cunnison and Wendy James (eds.), *Essays in Sudan Ethnography, presented to Sir Edward Evans-Prichard* (London: Hurst, 1972), pp 126-148; Abdalla Ali Ibrahim, ‘The Mahadiyya and the Kababish: Towards Legitimacy and Resistance’, (unpublished MS, University of Khartoum, 1976); and Aidan W. Southall, ‘The Illusion of Tribe’, in Roy Richard Grinker and Christopher B. Steiner (eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass : Blackwell, 1997),

²⁰ Interview with a group of Lahawiyin from Hardan, Abdalla Musa, Ali Sueliman, Gedarif 2008-09.

the Hardan in relation to external territorial dynamics.²¹ As we shall see, both were intimately tied up and closely linked to the government's attitudes towards the Lahawiyin.

Nonetheless, Lahawiyin 'Arab identity' retained continuity and consistency in the face of new arrivals and boundaries changes. The period since the 1990s reveals a political and economic struggle to maintain and retain the boundaries set by the local government in 1974.²² The administrative boundaries identified by the Showak Council became the main tribal domain and territory. By 1998 the Lahawiyin found themselves confined administratively to the Showak Rural Council, in the al Fashaga locality. At the same time, Arab identity became very much related to relations with the government, as the tribal authority was busy building its economic and political power, and the the leadership of al Faki and Hardan tried to identify politically with the government in order to serve their interests. This was parallel to, and regardless of, the growing distances in social terms between the different *umudiyyas* as some grew rich as land owners (al Faki and Hardan) while others were unable to benefit because of the limited educational opportunities (Gawamis). However, such social divisions did not result in the al-Faki *umudiyya* being abandoned by the rest of the tribe. Nevertheless the centralisation of authority in the hands of al-Faki was never able to completely replace the power of the different *umudiyyas*; landowners continued to expand their economic, social and political powers beyond the tribal boundary of al-Mugataa, and al-Showak which represented the administrative and political boundary. This was achieved by building networks and contacts in Gedarif.

Gedarif state continued to preserve the structure of the five nazirates, each of which was bounded within the administrative area:²³ the nazirate of Bakur is bounded by the south of Gedarif State and is populated by Fur, Masaleet, Fellatta and other west Sudan tribes; the Shukriyya nazirate is home to the Bataheen, Kawahla, and Lahawiyin; Dabaina, the smallest nazirate in terms of population, is found in the east of Gedarif with a population made up of entirely Dabaina and other minor groups; the Bani Amir have traditionally dominated the fourth nazirate, Gedarif city; the Nahal nazirate which includes the Nahal and Hawata area and is home to the Bargo and other minor groups.

²¹ Interview with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, Eid Al Zein Adam al Zein and Mugatta wad al Zein.

²² Showak represented them with a clear majority of seats which made the Lahawiyin a majority in the area. The Showak election took place in 1998.

²³ Munzoul A. M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif: A symbiotic Encounter', in Catherine Miller (ed.), *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy* (Cairo: CEDEJ-DSRC, 2005), pp. 1-6, 177.

Recent changes within Gedarif, including the signing of the Eastern Peace Agreement, contributed to bringing to the forefront another dimension of 'Arab' identity and to the voicing of the issue of representation by the Lahawiyin and other unrepresented tribes in the region. The recent changes in Gedarif on the one hand challenged the structure of many nomadic tribes as their leaders moved to the city in Gedarif. On the other hand the Lahawiyin tribe remained confined to Mugataa wad al Zein, although the new political institutions into which they were incorporated required a regular presence of the leadership in Gedarif.²⁴ Gedarif has been an urban centre since the nineteenth century, attracting religious and political leaders;²⁵ its continued growth in the twentieth century can be explained by the fact that Gedarif is strategically located close to Kassala and Gallabat which were considered two important administrative centres, close to the border and surrounded by natural open grazing areas.²⁶ Also, in recent times Gedarif became the residence for many *nazirs* and the headquarters of many tribes, including the Shukriyya of Gedarif, the, Bani Amer and the Bakur.

By the 1990s, Lahawiyin perceived al Mugataa wad al Zein²⁷ as their only home and thus a place to return to with a principal focus of control. The Lahawiyin opted for this control not because they had a sense of ownership of the land in which they lived, but because the home as a concept became associated by contrast with the sense of a wider, less controlled space. As Douglas has argued of the way that 'home' can assume a relationship to community identity, , "Home is a physical space in which certain communitarian practices were realised. Home began by bringing space under control and thus giving domestic life certain physical orientation direction of existence."²⁸

²⁴ Interview with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, December 2009, Mugatta wad al Zein; The history of Gedarif shows that the town was part of Kassala province until 1994. According to Galal al-Din al Tayeb, quoted in M. Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif', in C. Miller, *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, pp. 173-201; that in the early nineteenth century Saad al-Dibanayi (from the Dabaniya) had established a small village which expanded in quarters established by al-Makk Nimir in 1840, Abu Sin in 1865, al-Sufi al-Azrag and al-Nour Angara who added Deim al-Nour during the Mahdiyya. See Galal ed-Din al-Tayeb, *Gedarif District Study Area* (Khartoum Institute of Environmental Studies: University of Khartoum, 1985),

²⁵ The early history of the town can be found in al-Tayeb, *Gedarif District Study Area*, and Assal 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif', pp. 178-185.

²⁶ Assal, 'Economy and Politics in Gedarif', pp. 178-185.

²⁷ Al-Mugataa wad al Zein' had been always a resident of the al-Feki *omudia* and the ancestors of Sheikhs Adam al Zein, *sheikh* of the Lahawiyin. Even members of the al Zein family who work as government employees in nearby towns like the Gedarif, Al-Showak and Gashm al-Girba still commute on a daily basis. In recent years, the village expanded and housed a secondary school which reflects an expansion in social services.

²⁸ Douglas quoted in Rapport and Dawson (eds.), *Migrant of Identity*, pp. 7, 55-56.

While the situation in the east of Sudan, particularly in Gedarif, encouraged the members – and leaders - of some tribes to make their new homes in Gedarif, the Lahawiyin considered al Mugataa wad al Zein their actual home. For them the presence of their *sheikh* and leadership, whose political drive maintained the tribe’s identity and secured its physical characteristics, had always preserved the Lahawiyin. The link between movement and identity was now entirely historical – Lahawiyin identity was rooted in a defined space, not defined by movement.²⁹

²⁹ Madan Sarup quoted in Rapport and Dawson (eds.), *Migrant of Identity*, pp 55-56.

2. In the Footsteps of the Bawadra

In the course of the peace agreement process, wider economic exchanges took place with new forms of entrepreneurship emerging among the Lahawiyin. A group of agricultural scheme owners developed different economic links, political affiliations and tribal authority. This resulted in new patterns of tribal movements, interactions and political participation whereas the contested livelihood strategies of the Lahawiyin in general fostered a new order of domination and hegemony by land owners.

The Lahawiyin who owned agricultural schemes began to increase their holdings gradually by selling and trading grain similar to the pattern of livelihood adopted in the 1980s by their neighbours the Bawadra tribe.³⁰ The Lahawiyin were critical of the Bawadra and dismantled the pasture enclosures and crossed grazing lines in Butana. However, after more than 20 years they followed this lead, openly claiming that this might preserve their right in the Butana in the light of the influx of a foreign population.³¹ The Lahawiyin's role and position in the tribe took on a different shape. They became creditors.³² While some Lahawiyin families, who were seasonal investors but did not have sufficient capital to buy into schemes, began to receive financial support or share crops with others members of the Lahawiyin; most of these agricultural scheme owners were more or less the same as the *juruf* owners. This meant that certain families within certain *omudias* owned lands and established business relationships with the Bawadra, Jaaliyin and Shukriyia agricultural scheme owners and other traders in Showak and Gedarif. This gave these families economic power which strengthened their role in local politics and thus shaped the politics of the tribe.

The increase in land entitlement among the Lahawiyin not only changed their perception from being herders with no *dar*, it augmented their Arab identity in their struggle for recognition. They were influenced by personal political interests to gain power and authority which grew alongside their claims for nazirate. It is necessary to discuss recent developments in terms of tribal land rights and in view of the peace process in the last few years. Mechanisation increased during the 1990s through foreign investment encouraged by the

³⁰ T. Khalid, I. Dalamu and C. Miller, 'Lahawiyin in al-Showak Rural Council: Imposed Boundaries and the Quest for Political Recognition', in Miller (ed.), *Land*, pp. 309-348. Group interview with staff at the Ministry of Agriculture, January 2008, Gedarif.

³¹ The foreign population here meant Ethiopians, displaced peoples from South Sudan and tribes from the Blue Nile region. Group interview with Lahawiyin men, December 2007, Showak.

³² Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director of the Statistics Department, January 2008, Gedarif.

government, which indicates that foreign investment would continue. The increase in Lahawiyin land holdings to over 500,000 feddans in the last ten years revealed structural changes in the Lahawiyin's livelihood as well as in relation to herds and grazing.³³ But while this may seem to be a large area, it is small by comparison with that held by landowners from the Bawadra and Shukriya tribes, where some individuals own as much.³⁴ Thus, the Lahawiyin realised that scheme ownership alone might not enable them to compete with other tribes who had been in the business for the last 40 years; and they relied on a combination of politics, herding and agricultural schemes to attain their goal. Having large agricultural areas in Gedarif require employment of casual and seasonal labourers. Newcomers found it difficult to compete with traditional employees, unless they paid higher than the established market prices. Almost all of the schemes owned by the Lahawiyin were in Butana and were granted by the Mechanised Farming Corporation.

The percentage of those who owned schemes was small, not exceeding 13% of the total population. However, this 13% became a class aspiring to a different way of life. They were the same group who held political and administrative positions within the local political institutions in Gedarif and al-Showak rural councils and the Ministries of Education, Agriculture and Social Welfare. In addition, they were represented in the legislative council in Showak and Gedarif. Scheme owners also aspired to a good education for their children.

The Pastoralist Union (*Itahd al Rua'a Showak* 1998) was another new avenue for the Lahawiyin to gain power. Those involved in it found that their position granted them the facilities and opportunities to link with key officials in places like banks and political offices. The Lahawiyin argued that having being integrated into this political institution they were able to safeguard the other aspects such as grazing and pasture rights. The Pastoral Union also confirmed the position of Ahmed Adam al Zein as president which had added to his authority over many tribal issues.

Simultaneously, Lahawiyin presence at the National Assembly (*majlis watani*) changed the perception of the government towards the Lahawiyin and provided the latter with basic

³³ Interview with Amna Mahmood, Deputy Manager, Department of Pasture, Ministry of Agriculture, January 2008, Gedarif state.

³⁴ The average holding size of agricultural schemes is between 100,000 to 500,000 feddans in Gedarif state.

services that had not been available for many years.³⁵ It is pertinent to mention that the first elected Lahawiya, from the Showak area, to the National Assembly was sheikh al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein who resided in his constituency that was Mugatta wad al Zein, whereas the other two Lahawi members lived in Khartoum. This took place after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement [CPA]. Those members of the National Assembly managed to preserve an authoritative image among their people and were keen to keep the Lahawi profile high. The damage the tribe faced during the 1980s drought needed to be avoided to provoke a survival strategy which called for an association and later a *shuraa*. However, such a step could not be achieved without the educational background to influence the government through being members in the National Assembly.

In 1991, the Decree of Local Government for Restoring the Local Courts because this Decree had excluded places, mostly inhabited by nomads, where the local population was expected to retain hold of their courts. This decree was not effected and according to the Native Administration “a *nazir* remained a *nazir* and a *sheikh* remained a *sheikh*.”³⁶ However, a duplication of authority dictated by the Native Administration was kept intact and simultaneously the newly-appointed political figures were also devolving authority at different levels. However the government of al-Bashir was aware of the continued role of traditional authority and thus tried to keep both systems alive; maintaining the position of traditional authorities and improving and valuing their work at the same time. Any *nazir* was remunerated and his salary could reach up to one million Sudanese pounds per month³⁷ while the *umda* could get up to half of the *nazir*'s pay.³⁸ These remunerations were vested to attract loyalty and support.

Continuing to revive the Native Administration the government drafted a new law in 1998 in which it proposed that any *nazir* or *sheikh* had to be elected, but this was not successful, and it encouraged competition amongst the younger generation over positions within their tribes.

³⁵ The National Assembly is the [National Legislature](#) of [Sudan](#) which stands as the Lower House. The Legislature was previously one legislative chamber while the Upper House is the [Council of States](#) (*Majlis Welayat*). The National Assembly consists of 450 appointed members who represent the government, SPLM members, and other opposition political parties. The National Assembly in which a membership served up to six-year terms replaced the elected parliament.

³⁶ Interview with Abdalla Suleiman, a former Commissioner of Gezira and Gedarif state, January 2008, Gedarif state.

³⁷ Approximately £250. This figure was given by Abdalla Suleiman, a former Commissioner of Gezira and Gedarif States, January 2008, Gedarif.

³⁸ About £125. This figure was given by Abdalla Suleiman, a former Commissioner of Gezira and Gedarif States, January 2008, Gedarif.

More generally, governmental initiatives to revive traditional authority, on the one hand, ran counter to the other initiatives to create 'popular committees' which would be loyal to the government. As one informant put it regretfully, "Old leaders [have] lost their image, a Shukri sheikh *used* to be recognised from a distance."³⁹ The Shukri *sheikh* has lost his power and authority within his locality because of the growing role of the popular committees. The president of a committee appears to be more authoritative and important than a traditional *sheikh*.

The growth of the popular committees may explain a shift in terminology. According to the former commissioner of Gedarif the estimated number of Lahawiyin *sheikhs* in the 1990s was over 300, while there were only eight *umdas* and one *sheikh khut*.⁴⁰ He attributed the increase in the number of *sheikhs* to the fact that members of popular committees were now called *sheikhs*. As long as these members were active, attended meetings and assisted in implementing the required work, they received an honorarium from the government as an incentive and thus their number increased according to rising needs.

This set-up led the Lahawiyin *sheikhs* and *umdas* to engage in those committees and the tribe became more organised in addressing issues related to the need for services in the area of Showak's rural council along the Atbara River. This gradually began to attract more *umdas* and *sheikhs* who were previously not active in politics but were only interested in increasing the size of their herds. However, this also revealed an internal competition between *sheikhs* and *umdas* over political nominations to the rural councils, courts and committees.⁴¹ In addition, the educated elite of the Lahawiyin tribe, who had largely used their education to secure jobs in the civil service, began to show an interest in the issue of the nazirate and offered their expertise in extending their services and contact with officials in the government. They were motivated partly by an awareness of the insurgency of the Eastern Front. Land was a central cause of the recent conflicts in Sudan, and Lahawiyin feared that they might lose the gains they had made over the years and also the chance to seize more agricultural land in the future given the situation in Eastern Sudan.

³⁹ Interview with Abdalla Suleiman, a former Commissioner of Gezira and Gedarif States, January 2008, Gedarif.

⁴⁰ Interview with Abdalla Suleiman, a former Commissioner of Gezira and Gedarif States, January 2008, Gedarif.

⁴¹ Interview with Sakh Shashog, Director Al-Showak Rural Council, January 2008, Gedarif.

The Lahawiyin were consistently attempting to be accepted through asserting collective and individual rights to land the use of two parallel dynamics: becoming politically active; and being close to financial institutions.

3. 1998 Local Government Act

The relationship between the Lahawiya and the government of President al-Bashir was one built on mutual interest. The government issued a number of laws which were favourable to the Lahawiya's political aspirations but less favourable in terms of their pasture rights. The 1998 Local Government Act (LGA) authorised the different states to pass their internal Native Administration State Acts. It was also meant to establish *amirs*, a form of native administration⁴² to mobilise the rural population to support the government in its war in the south of Sudan. This idea of *amirs* was similar to the system established during the Mahdiyya; like that system, it potentially challenged the existing traditional system because it created a parallel authority. The Bill granted authority to non-traditional sheikhs in villages and towns, with extra customary usufruct rights within their vicinities. This again put the pastoral resources at stake.⁴³

In this context the government developed an amenable relationship with those Hardan who were returning from periods of migrant labour. The government wanted to win their support, despite the traditional political affiliation of the Hardan to the Umma party, in a region faced with high competition over land rights.⁴⁴ Granting the nazirate might ensure loyalty, but it would also create a more complicated situation whereby new identities were encouraged within the political framework set by the higher-level federal government. The political framework of federalism also permitted the growth of political and social identity of resident tribes in the Butana area as well as constructing an ethnic identity.

The administrative boundaries were being altered in the years after 1998 by the Native Administration State Acts.⁴⁵ As a result Gedarif state was extended to incorporate the former boundaries of al Gezira state on the border of al-Fao locality. This administrative re-planning was taken in order to control tribal movements and the influx of labourers and displaced people which had entered Gedarif. The impact of these immigrants was perceived by the

⁴² Most of information extracted from Dr. Omer Awadalla Ali, 'Local Government in Sudan During The Interim Period-Inputs From Switzerland', Final Draft, May 2008, Khartoum, pp.7-9.; Christian Delmet, 'The Native Administration', in C. Miller, *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*, , pp.159-169.

⁴³ This was so because the pasture land was considered to be an unregistered waste land that the Government owned and had the right to manage.

⁴⁴ As the land issue became problematic between many nomadic tribes in Darfur, Kordofan and Eastern Sudan during the early days of the Ingadh government, conflict began to spread rapidly, fuelled by groups who were politically marginalised or discontented.

⁴⁵ The Local Government Act 1998 was important in terms of decentralising Native Administration. The Act authorised the different states to pass their internal Native Administration State Acts.

local authorities as damaging to the local infrastructure and resources. Thus, in order to control such changes, confinement in some localities was evident. There were also unexpressed political reasons for the change. Gedarif state represented another level of political engagement for the Lahawiyin in their quest for the nazirate. After 1998, having been actively engaged at the Showak Rural Council level and with the escalating importance of politics in Eastern Sudan, the Lahawiyin felt the need to institutionalise their struggle and to attract the attention of the national government.

The government divided each locality into administrative units and assigned specific towns as capitals of these localities. Gedarif remained the capital with the headquarters of the administrative, executive and judicial powers which were run by borrowing from a federal and traditional system of governance. All the nazirs kept their authority, in line with state authority, and most had a residence in Gedarif. The proximity between the State government and the *Wali* of Gedarif played an important role in the political situation.⁴⁶ *Nazirs* and sheikhs in the area saw it as a privilege to be close to political and social events that the *Wali* would organise and attend in the evenings; each wanted to be publicly associated with government power, and to assert his role as representative of a group. Previously, nazirs would have lived in the vicinity of their homeland among their people; however with the changing political system and norms they divided their time between their villages and the Gedarif in order to keep up-to-date with affairs.⁴⁷ This situation also saw a greater number of the tribal population living around their sheikhs and *nazirs* in order to show support and loyalty, which resulted in an expansion of the tribal homeland into a new setting in Gedarif. The tribal population was often socially and economically dependent on the *nazir*. These changing relations weakened the tribal authority away from the town, however, because the leader was always in town. But the nazir still remained influential in mediating between his people and the government.⁴⁸ Any problems he was unable to address were dealt with by courts of law. As Assal points out, 'This way, traditional authorities and government authorities seem to be parallel, but they collaborate; often the government co-opts traditional leadership and uses it for its own purposes.'⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Alwan* Newspaper No. , 31 January 2007.

⁴⁷ Interview with Abdel Moneim Yousuf, Dean High Studies, University of Gedaf, January 2008, Gedarif.

⁴⁸ Interview with Abdel Moneim Yousuf, Dean High Studies, University of Gedaf, January 2008, Gedarif.

⁴⁹ Assal and Ali, 'Eastern Sudan', p.3.

4. 'Rabitaab abnaa al-Lahawiyin' the Lahawiyin Association 1998

The establishment of the Lahawiyin Association in 1998 was driven by an internal motive to promote a distinctively Arab Lahawiyin identity that would protect it in the context of the increasingly violent political conflicts in eastern Sudan'. In this context, some Lahawiyin hoped that the Association would assert their autonomy as a tribe; at the same time they disconnected themselves genealogically from the dominant tribes, the Shukriyia and the Bawadra in Butana. This disconnection offered interesting insights into the tribe's growing political institutions. The Lahawiyin simply no longer wanted to be attached to or represented by any other tribe. As one among many tribes the Lahawiyin in 1998 called upon its scattered tribe members, concentrating on educated members, to gather and mobilise efforts to initiate dialogue at all levels.

Education was now considered a major issue; Lahawiyin argued that they were disadvantaged by the Shukriyia's failure to build schools and *khalwas*⁵⁰ in their area. There was only one school in the whole Lahawiyin. Although the Lahawiyin argued that education for girls had not begun until 1989 attributing this to the discrimination by the Shukriyia, they had not shown interest in educating girls. Furthermore, their education was not broadly available in Butana. The Lahawiyin were bitter when discussing the issue of illiteracy and they felt that was the cause of the tribe lagging behind. As one Lahawi opined:

We were so deprived in the past years from the social services by the Shukriyia...and no land;...separation from the Shukriyia is a must...We didn't have any schools except the one in Mugataa wad al Zein.⁵¹

The Lahawiyin alleged their loss was twofold; the Shukriyia deprived them of both land and education. This was attributed to the firm hold of the old Shukriyia leaders over Lahawiyin affairs, and the way in which some leaders abused their power and authority to control the Lahawiyin.

In this context it can be presumed that the Lahawiyin asserted their autonomy as a tribe and also disconnected themselves genealogically from the dominant tribes, the Shukriyia and the Bawadra in Butana. This disconnection offered interesting insights into the tribe's growing

⁵⁰ Religious school.

⁵¹ Interview with Sheikh Siddig Yousif, member of the Al-Showak Legislative Council, January 2008, al-Showak.

political institutions. They disconnected from their political proximity to Shukriya replacing it with their own institutions. The Lahawiyin simply no longer wanted to be attached to or represented by any other tribe.

The interesting explanation to this is that the Lahawiyin had interpreted political proximity in terms of the unavoidable presence of the Shukriya. As one amongst many tribes the Lahawiyin in 1998 called upon its scattered tribe members to join the *Rabitta*, concentrating on educated members, to gather and mobilise efforts to initiate dialogue at all levels.

A natural corollary of this, they had to organise well in advance and had to figure out that the only feasible solution was to come under the *Rabita*. The idea was to create a formal coalition of the different *umudiyyas* within the Showak rural council and in other states. The immediate objective was to merge all the existing opinions into one voice and promote solidarity amongst its tribal members.

Apart from the immediate objective, there was a long-term objective and an agenda far beyond the *Rabita*. However, the Lahawiyin realised the more divided the tribe the more it would remain subject to be assimilated and being taken over by other tribes. Thus a new form of tribal authority began to emerge which resulted in the establishment of '*Rabita abnaa al-Lahawiyin*' or Lahawiyin *Rabita* in 1998. One informant suggested that the *Rabita* instigated another level of subtle 'generational competition' among the youth on two levels.⁵² The *umudiyyas* such as al-Faki, Hardan and Gaborab in the Showak rural council represented one level and the Lahawiyin in other states such as Khartoum, Gezira and Sinnar was the other level. In addition, competition over executive posts evolved between the two levels which indicated that although they all strived for the same objective of Lahawiyin recognition; there were differences over authority and offices.

Interestingly, for the Lahawiyin in other states their past experience working in the Government civil service helped them win executive posts. At this time some Lahawi figures had not been closely engaged in the affairs of the tribe for a long time but had been busy at a different level of politics. This can be found to be true to a degree when looking at the structure of the *Rabita*. The Lahawiyin *Rabita* was chaired by the former Minister of Interior, former

⁵² Interview with Dr. Abdullahi Musa, State Ministry of Health, May 2009, Gedarif.

Minister of Commerce, and other dignitaries of the Lahawiyyin including a former *Wali* of Kassala, the head of the Parliamentarians' Corporation, the president of the Farmers' Union in the Showak Rural Council and other ordinary members.⁵³

This group organized themselves well and surprisingly the newly-selected committee gained overwhelming approval from the tribal members, which was a step towards its first congregation at which representatives of the Lahawiyyin from the six states were gathered. It was a difficult task for the *Rabita* executive committee to provide a concrete figure of the population as the only statistics to which they had access were based on the 1993 census, and a continued degree of nomadism in some areas made it difficult to produce an accurate population figure. The *Rabita* executive committee relied on the Lahawiyyin who worked within the government departments and the rural councils in Showak and al Fashaga where the majority of Lahawiyyin lived⁵⁴ to obtain the relevant information. In addition, resources were made available through these connections to lay the basis for the work.

Another challenge they faced was the selection of representatives. The leaders of each *umudiyya* had to work on their own to choose their representatives according to the executive committee criteria. Representatives were selected from the six states and delegates were familiarised with the main goal of the *Rabita* and the tasks that were expected of them. These were mainly issues related to their claim for the nazirate and the tribe's vision to consolidate itself in the face of the dynamics in the Sudan.⁵⁵

The Lahawiyyin of al-Showak were dominant in this process of political institutionalisation and manipulated it for their benefit. This put them ahead of the Lahawiyyin in other states as their concern was based on what was happening in the Eastern Region. The idea of a nazirate was the driving force, even more than land. The representatives were given roles to communicate and disseminate such information back to their *umudiyyas*. Therefore they had to act on behalf of their own people and thus abide by their constituencies.

Three motives drove the Lahawiyyin to establish the *Rabita*. First, since 1928 most of their claims had been voiced by either al-Faki or the Hardan *umudiyya*, and Lahawiyyin outside the

⁵³ *Rabita* documents, list of membership, objectives and date of inception, provided by Dr Abdallahi Musa.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ahmed Jebel, former president of Showak rural council and member of the state legislative Council, December 2009, Gedarif.

⁵⁵ Interview with al Zein Ahmed al Zein, member of the National Assembly, January 2008, Gedarif.

Butana area had no representation.⁵⁶ Second, the Lahawiyin were scattered, as a result there was little contact between the Butana and their peers in other states. Third, the Lahawiyin were always concerned that the *umudiyyas*, which were further away, could more easily be absorbed or assimilated by others. The three motives are closely inter-linked.

For many years up to 1998 the Lahawiyin had not formed any networks or organisations except for the Lahawiyin tribal conference which was discussed in the previous chapter. Following that conference the late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, who felt the need to keep the momentum going, adopted the idea of initiating a form of association to bring the whole tribe together. After his death Sheikh al-Eiser of the Sowa *umudiyya* pursued the idea and cherished it with the help of others until the *Rabita* was registered. It was chaired by the Commissioner of al Girba, Sayed Hamduk.⁵⁷ The *Rabita* developed gradually to become an institution that served the political agenda of the tribe. Like many other such associations in Sudan, it became attractive to the young generation, particularly among Lahawiyin university students. It strengthened their tribal identity and acted as a framework for collective social and political activities in the name of the Lahawiyin; however, this was not strongly felt at the local political level in Showak area.

A/Salam argued,

The political impact of social associations based on ethnic ties was tempered by circumstances of organizational strength and position. Organizational resources are most readily mobilized for defensive politics, that is, when a basic tenet of the ethnic group, ultimately its survival, is threatened.⁵⁸

However, within the outlined policies of the INF government, political and social policies could only survive without the support of institutions like *al Rabita* and the like through transformation of these tribal associations into political parties which would serve the interests of a specific ethnic, tribal or regional constituency.

The Lahawiyin were also concerned with the growth of the population of other tribes, such as the Shukriyya and the Fellatta. The negotiations between the NCP and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement which led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement had encouraged

⁵⁶ For instance, those Lahawiyin in Gezira were represented by the Masselamia; in Sennar by the Kawahla tribe; and in the Blue Nile by the Rufaa al Hoy.

⁵⁷ Interview with al Zein Ahmed al Zein, member of the National Assembly, January 2008, Gedarif.

⁵⁸ Elfatih A. A/Salam, 'The politicization of ethnic sentiments in the Sudan: implications for nation-building', the International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/>

ideas about the sharing of power and wealth, and how these might be linked to population: a number of Lahawiyin suggested that the increase in population could be used as a strong argument for Lahawiyin claims. This argument was presented not by the everyday Lahawiyin but by those who were involved in the civil service.⁵⁹ It was hoped that having a single association would consolidate the tribe's position, as well as helping them express their need for basic services such as education and health. Literacy among the tribe members was low. Although *Rabitaa abnaa al- Lahawiyin* contributed to the consolidation of the tribal position it did not receive political recognition from the local authorities and was not taken as a legitimate body as it was considered a social organisation.

⁵⁹ This was the pattern of views among most informants who worked in government institutions. Laymen Lahawiyin presented another interesting argument which was related to an increase in herds rather than the population of the tribe.

5. *Al -Bayaa*: making formal alliances with the National Islamic Party 1998

The establishment of the *Rabitaa* coincided with the swearing of an oath of loyalty to the government by some Lahawiyin leaders. In 1998, a Lahawiyi delegation to Khartoum swore an oath of loyalty to the National Islamic Party when they met with al-Turabi their second meeting with him since 1996. The delegation had already visited President al-Bashir, thereby putting their claim to the highest authority in the country. However, al-Bashir did not make any formal commitment to grant them the nazirate and delegated the Minister of Federal Government to pursue the matter. The Lahawiyin meeting with al-Turabi led to both their oath and to a verbal commitment from Turabi to support their claim for a nazirate. Obviously, al-Turabi felt compelled not to let the Lahawiyin down because as the leader of the Islamic Front he wanted to build new alliances in a region that was highly dominated by the *Khatmiyya*. Furthermore, he thought that the rising conflict in the Eastern Region over resources might bring him a new footing. It may also have been related to the subtle rivalry between al-Turabi and al-Bashir over power, which would soon lead to a rift between the two. Whatever the reason, the meeting seemed to be the winning step for the Lahawiyin in their quest for land.

This oath, *al-Bayaa*, filled a gap left by the *Rabitaa* which was a social-cultural organisation from which people expected to hear about welfare issues and services. *Al-Bayaa* acted complementarily to the *Rabitaa* by providing the political dimension. *Rabitaa* and *al-Bayaa*, became two linked processes carefully maintained by the Lahawiyin. However, the two processes presented a challenge to neighbouring tribes and threatened the Shukriya.

By granting *al-Bayaa* (oath) to the government the Lahawiyin entered formal political alliances. Perhaps as a tribe the Lahawiyin underestimated the impact of such an oath and what it would mean in terms of their relationship with the government, which had taken into account a long-term commitment defined. More than that the Lahawiyin focused on competing with other groups over the emerging boundaries.⁶⁰

The Lahawiyin leadership anticipated that the combination of the oath, and the cultural work of the *Rabitaa*, would offer a special position among the alliances which other tribes in eastern Sudan had already established with Khartoum. This agreement created a new form of

⁶⁰ Isak Niehaus 'Lowveld Ethnicity and the Boundaries of Belonging: Reconfiguring Shangaan Identity in the South of African', *101 African Affairs* (2002), pp. 557-583.

clientalism between the Lahawiyin and the government which would guarantee the former legalised status and space in which to manoeuvre. This was based on long-standing worries over the roles of the Shukriyya and Bawadra.

Only by looking at *al-Bayaa*, can one comprehend the threats posed to the parties in its signing. At the time most Lahawiyin, in so far as they had any political allegiance, gave it to one of the two parties which were associated with the sectarian leaders: the DUP (Khatmiyya) and the Umma (Ansar). These had been excluded from government and banned from operation since 1989, but remained influential. *Al-Bayaa* was undertaken by the leaders and sheikhs of the tribe but the majority still supported *Ansar* or *Khatmiyya*. Such multiple ties of allegiance did not necessarily trouble individuals; as one professional Lahawi man explained: “We are Muslim and this al-bayaa is for the Shari’a, but we remain Ansar and Khatmiyya, for a long time we have been so.”⁶¹ The Lahawiyin were familiar with crossing boundaries that did not contradict tribal independence.

Al-Bayaa showed how the performance of an oath of loyalty by the Lahawiyin contributed towards an institutionalisation of an Arab identity, which was depicted in relation to the government as suggested by al-Turabi. As has also been argued by Comaroff, ‘their construct is wrought in the particularities of ongoing historical construction.’⁶²

Put more simply, the Lahawiyin presentation of their Arab identity implicated others including neighbouring tribes such as ex-slaves, Fellatta and Taisha, and also the government.⁶³ A group of former civil servants and politicians deployed this Arab identity to mobilise a governmental political constituency for their claim for the nazirate that might grant them a *dar*?⁶⁴ The manipulation of identity by the tribe was possible precisely because the government attached it such importance.

A representative group from the delegation was assigned the task of meeting the Minister of the Federal Government in Khartoum.⁶⁵ After the meeting with Turabi and the Minister of

⁶¹ Interview with a Lahawi man (who requested to remain anonymous), January 2008, Gedarif.

⁶² J.L. Comaroff, ‘Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Politics of Differences’, quoted in Lowveld, [NIEHAUS?] ‘Ethnicity and the Boundaries of Belonging’, p. 166.

⁶³ Gerd Bauman, *Contesting Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 97-116. Quoted in Lowveld, [??] ‘Ethnicity and the Boundaries of Belonging’.

⁶⁴ Lowveld, [??] ‘Ethnicity and the Boundaries of Belonging’, p. 6. See also Harries, ‘Exclusion, Classification and Internal Colonialism’. See Patrick Harries, *Works, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, 1860-1910* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1994).

⁶⁵ Among the representatives were Ahmed Jebel, the late sheikh al Rudda, and sheikh Yousuf Hassab al-Gawi.

the Federal Government a sub-committee from the delegation was established and was assigned specific tasks. The establishment of a tribal *Majlis al-Shuraa* and the selection of a *nazir* were close at hand.

Immediately after the delegation returned to al-Showak, they took a number of practical measures; the claim of the nazirate at state level had to be presented to the state authorities including the state *Wali* and the State Legislative Assembly. At this point they also established a small subcommittee to monitor the issue. The delegation repeated the visit to Gedarif *Wali* Mohamed Ahmed al-Dalil. The Minister of Federal Government responded by sending a formal letter to the state government in Gedarif to encourage the establishment of the nazirate.⁶⁶ The follow-up sub-committee represented al-Faki and Hardan *umudiyyas* and was composed of three members, al Zein Adam al Zein, the *Sheikh Khut* Lahawiyin (who was accompanied by his nephew al Zein Ahmed al Zein), Yousuf Hasab al-Gawi, the Deputy President of the Legislative Council for Showak area, and Ahmed Jabal, the Director General of Youth and Sport in Gedarif.

It is noteworthy that the nephew of Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein obtained that close position and held prominent position at most political and social events. Al Zein Ahmed al Zein, one of the five sons of Sheikh Ahmed al Zein, *wakil khut* of the Lahawiyin, was always the closest son to his father. He bore a strong likeness to his father, and was said to have acquired much of his late father's (Sheikh Ahmed al Zein) charismatic character and personality, and shrewdness.⁶⁷ He was actively involved in the purchase of camels and was aware of the market transactions and dynamics in Showak. His experience accommodated all sorts of skills, from deals to negotiation. Al Zein Ahmed al Zein began his career as a school teacher which made him popular among many Lahawiyin because he worked in the Lahawiyin's only primary school. His teaching provided him with the opportunity to become acquainted with most of the parents and families, as well as giving him early contact with the Local Council Authority and the Ministry of Education.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The letter was not available to the researcher but the researcher was informed by sheikh al Zein Ahmed al Zein that a letter had been issued on the matter and was held by the State Government of Gedarif.

⁶⁷ Interview with a Lahawi man (who requested to remain anonymous), January 2008, Gedarif.

⁶⁸ Interview with al Zein Ahmed al Zein, member of the National Assembly, December 2007, January 2008, Gedarif.

6. Being Arab and being Lahawiyin

The leadership of the Lahawiyin had three encounters with al-Turabi. After the first encounter in 1996 and 1998, they paid a third visit to him in 2005 when al-Turabi's own position was very different: no longer a member of the ruling party, he was now a persistent (if not entirely consistent) critic of the government, who continued to engage in politics with groups who considered themselves to be marginal. The 2005 delegation that went to meet al-Turabi was a little different in composition to that of 1996, and its nature reflected the complex interplay between local and national politics and the changing way in which Lahawiyin leaders were trying to build a constituency and reshaping identity as they did so. The delegation was composed of five members of the Lahawiyin tribe who were selected as representatives to go to Khartoum to meet with al-Turabi, whose opposition party was now called the Popular Congress Party. The delegation included Sheikh Yousuf Hasab al-Gawi and the late sheikh, the former deputy president of the Legislative Council of al-Showak, Araki Mohamed Araki *umda* of al-Gaborab *umudiyya*, Sheikh Ahmed Jebel from Hardan *umudiyya*, Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein of al Faki *umudiyya* and the Sheikh Hassabo.⁶⁹

The inclusion of Sheikh Hassabo was crucial, for this made the 2005 delegation a mixture of Lahawiyin and members of ex-slave families from Mugataa al-Suq. The intention of the Lahawiyin leadership in deciding the composition of the delegation was clear. The delegates were eager to impress al-Turabi.⁷⁰ Al-Turabi himself had been increasingly critical of the marginalization of non-Arab groups by the Sudanese government, particularly in the context of the developing violent conflicts in northern Sudan. Even before the outbreak of large-scale violence in the western Sudanese region of Darfur in 2003, there had been a running low-level insurgency in eastern Sudan, which drew its energy from the sense of many in the east – including non-Arabs – that the Sudanese state was not only indifferent to their needs, but had actively contributed to their impoverishment. Al-Turabi was widely suspected of encouraging this regional disaffection, in the context of his political dispute with his former colleagues in the government, and he had publicly used the universalistic and egalitarian element of Islam – the insistence that all Muslims were equal – to critique the policies of the government. Al-

⁶⁹ Late sheikh al-Rudda was the member who was referred to in al-Turabi's statement as an ex-slave

⁷⁰ Interview with Sheikh Yousuf Hassab al-Gawi, December 2007, al-Showak

Turabi's vision for an Islamic community 'without border' presumably would include both Arabs and non-Arabs.⁷¹

The Lahawiyin delegation was responding to this wider political dynamic, as they continued to pursue their goal of a nazirate, and the control over land which this might offer. They wanted to show that diversity mattered to them and that the tribe would cater for all its members whether they were ex-slaves or masters. It was all about getting the objectives of the visit achieved and therefore was sheer political manoeuvre. There was another reason for having an ex-slave in the delegation which was rather linked to his personal qualities. Sheikh Hassabo was articulate and knowledgeable about the history of the other Lahawiyin tribes in the Butana as well as the area itself. His ancestors were also 'privileged among the slaves'⁷² and thus close to the ruling family of al Zein al Faki *umudiyya*, having attended most of their meetings and accompanied them in their movements (particularly Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein , the head of the tribe and his brother Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein).⁷³

But this gambit backfired, in ways which were very revealing of the continued power of ideas about Arab identity and Arab distinctiveness. The composition of the delegation shocked al-Turabi when he first saw them. He welcomed the delegation with the words *Mali Araa fikum Tabayunan* – 'why do I see diversity among you?' The members of the delegation took this as a rebuff, and an explicit criticism of their decision to involve ex-slave families.⁷⁴ Al-Turabi indicated that he had expected all the delegates to be Lahawiyin and not mixed and this astonished them: al-Turabi's message was clearly that being a 'Lahawi' was being 'Arab'.

This contradiction was perhaps unsurprising; when he had been a member of the government, al-Turabi had been party to decisions which clearly assumed that Arab tribes should be distinct, and should not be subject to non-Arab 'native administrations': the division of *dar* Masalit between the Masalit and Arab tribes in Western Darfur State and the establishment of Rashaida Administration in a formerly Hadandawa *dar* each demonstrated this belief in the need for Arab distinction.⁷⁵ As Burr and Collins argued, 'al-Turabi had a

⁷¹ Burr and Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan; Hassan al-Turabi*, pp.6-75-79.

⁷² Interview with Yousuf Hassab al-Gawi, January 2008, al-Showak

⁷³ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Statistic Department, January 2008, Gedarif and with Yousuf Hassab al-Gawi, January 2008, al-Showak

⁷⁴ Interview with Yousuf Hasab al-Gawi Yousuf , Deputy President al-Showak Legislative Council , January 2008, al-Showak

⁷⁵ Assall and Ali, 'Eastern Sudan, 'Challenges facing the implementation of the peace agreement', pp.1-10

strong sense of his own superiority, and was notorious for his arrogance: al-Turabi himself was a member of the Sudanese elite and an intellectual snob. He believed that the people should be led by the learned in the ICF [Islamic Charter Front],⁷⁶

So, despite his rhetoric of equality, the presence of a member of a former slave family offended al-Turabi's sense of propriety and his ideas about Arab identity. The response of the delegates varied according to Sheikh Yousuf:

Some had just smiled and some of us had to reply to him but with courtesy and keeping a low profile so as not to embarrass 'akhouna' [our brother] in the delegation."⁷⁷

To conclude, the 1990s local Government ordinances and revived Native Administration had granted the Lahawiyin a limited representation in political institutions. The mechanisation of rain-fed areas expanded at the expense of the grazing lands and commercialisation of fodder and water set a context in which young, educated Lahawiyin resorted to a new form of power and political representations in the hierarchy of political institutions as well as building economic authority through ownership of mechanised farming. Federalism allowed some tribes the authority to practise limited power within the new structure of administration of local rural councils, alongside the power and authority associated with revived institutions of native administration.

While doing so, internal dynamics between the *umudiyyas* continued and strong allegiances developed to bargain for a Lahawiyin *nazirate*, and at the same time to challenge wad al Zein's leadership. However, the other Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* seemed to be ready to accept wad Hardan's leadership on the grounds that the tribe's political legitimacy would be maintained. In other words *nazirate* was an issue strong enough to unify the Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* under any viable *umudiyya* leadership. The Lahawiyin case also showed that, at the regional level, the issue of revived Native Administration was not simply a matter of marginalizing the "educated Sudanese elite" versus "the traditional leadership".

⁷⁶ J. Millard Burr and Robert O'Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan; Hassan al-Turabi and the Islamic State 1989-2000*, (Leiden Bill, 2003), p.7.

⁷⁷ Interview with Sheikh Yousuf Hassab al Gawi, December 2007, al-Showak

The Shukriyya rejected the Lahawiyin claim for a *nazirate* and considered it unfounded. They believed that this claim would not be awarded as long as the Shukriyya remained the official lords of the Butana. The issues of the revival of a kind of Native Administration transcended political affiliation. Supporters of or opponents to this kind of administrative system could belong to any political party or ideology. The distinction relied mainly on economic criteria. Moreover the Lahawiyin's claim for *nazirate* combined the issues of pasture and grazing land with questions of political gain, position and authority in the Butana. The Lahawiyin, faced by new economical and political dynamics, were led to a new way of thinking regarding their identity and *dar*.

7. 'Majlis Shuraa Al- Lahawiyin' (Hayat Shuraa Al- Lahawiyin) 2005

The 2003 Local Government Act separated the executive organ from the legislative organ of the locality, established an elected legislative council, defined the local council competencies and specified local financial resources.⁷⁸

In 2005 al Zein Ahmed al Zein was appointed a member of the National Assembly of Khartoum. Such a position put him in contact with many politicians and tribal leaders and his knowledge, authority and power now exceeded that of his uncle, the head of the Lahawiyin. He became an important figure to the Lahawiyin tribe with growing power and authority, and represented many issues to the local and national authorities; according to some, doing so in ways which would 'suit al-Faki *umudiyyas*' interest.⁷⁹ al Zein Ahmed al Zein was sufficiently popular to gain the consent of most of the *umudiyya*. and he continued to provide advice to his uncle on both large and small matters of the Lahawiyin,⁸⁰ which entailed the family's rule over tribal affairs. In addition, family consent from his brothers and their families gave him the necessary loyalty to support him in his new endeavour. This helped to remove plots against him by those thinking of competing for the leadership or undermining the confidence of his uncle. Furthermore, al Zein Ahmed al Zein did not meet any rivalry from his cousins, the sons of Sheikh al Zein Ahmed al Zein.

The leading group of the Lahawiyin began to use diverse processes for manipulating the *al-Bayaa* and to encourage ordinary Lahawiyin to adopt terms of their own definition as the basis for collective assertion, '*Majlis [Hayat] al- Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*.'

On becoming a member of the National Assembly Sheikh al Zein Ahmed al Zein emerged as a new leader among the Lahawiyin, leading the tribe vigorously with a political stance almost equal to their host, the Shukriyya, and much better than most Lahawiyin had anticipated. He was active in certain institutions (the Association and the *Shuraa*) that were intended to serve the quest for the nazirate.

⁷⁸ Dr. Omer Awadalla Ali, 'Local Government in Sudan during the Interim Period–Inputs from Switzerland', Final Draft, May 2008, Khartoum, pp.7-9.

⁷⁹ Interview with a Lahawi man (who requested to remain anonymous), January 2008, Gedarif.

⁸⁰ Interview with al Zein Ahmed al Zein, member of the National Assembly, January 2008, Gedarif. In 1996 the researcher lived at the premises of the late sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein in Mugataa wad al Zein for two months.

In this section the argument is that while the Association would serve the Lahawiyin's internal consolidation and authority it might not grant them the nazirate if the Shukriyya were to strongly oppose it. The Lahawiyin assumed that by establishing the Confederation they would be treated as equals to the Shukriyya which may help the granting of the nazirate. The absence of client tribes would be a determining factor in the Lahawiyin being given the title Confederation unless each *umudiyyas* was treated as an independent unit and each *umda* was treated as a head of his unit by the ruling family of al-Faki *umudiyya*. This might bring about a notion of a cliental relationship between the various Lahawiyin *umudiyyas*, which the Lahawiyin had previously resisted. However what really mattered to the Lahawiyin was not the name, Confederation or *Majlis Shuraa*, but the authority and power that it would bring.

Majlis Shuraa al-Lahawiyin or *Hayat Shuraa al-Lahawiyi*⁸¹ is a body similar to a Confederation to which the Lahawiyin tribe resorted; the titles were used synonymously. However, for the purpose of consistency the research will use *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*. It is always easy to rally people to a cause but not as easy to maintain the momentum after achieving the cause. The call for a tribal confederation gradually increased following the rapprochement brought about by the peace agreement and the Lahawiyin's concern about losing the opportunity to call for a nazirate. This proved to be the motive for the call for a general meeting which took place in 2007.⁸¹

The *majlis* aimed to enlist the Lahawiyin population and uniting them as one tribe. In a complete departure from the cultural idealization of nomadism which had once characterized Lahawiyin discourse on identity, it also called for the settlement and sedentarisation of the tribe in order to help provide them with basic services. In addition it highlighted the importance of obtaining education and literacy for the tribal members. Furthermore it stressed the importance of documenting and preserving important tribal culture and norms.

Following the terms of the mandate⁸² of the *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*, the council worked as an advisory board to the person selected to be the Nazir, al Zein Adam al Zein, and would also shoulder the responsibility of running the Lahawiyin nazirate once it gained approval. In addition, the council sought to maintain strong relations with neighbouring tribes in the Atbara River and Butana areas.

⁸¹ Interview with Dr Abdullahi Musa, State Ministry of Health, May 2009, Gedarif.

⁸² A draft of the mandate of the *Majlis al Shuraa*, its constitution and a list of membership of *umudiyyas* and their *umdas*.

All the *umudiyya* which participated in the formation of *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* headed by their *umdas* (Ahmed Ibrahim Fadallah for Hardan; Ibrahim Jumaa Idris for Sowar; Ali Abdel Gadir Abdalla for Magit; Abdalla Ibrahim Ahmed for al-Faki; Barakat Ahmed al-Eiesir for Isa; Hasab al-Gawi Hasab Allah for Gaborab; Ali al Zein Abu Jumaa for Gawamis; and Mohamed Fadallah for Balulab) were members of the council.⁸³ They acted as one constituency for the Lahawiyin tribe and suggested that the council should be the advisory body to Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein in order to preserve the right of each *umudiyya*.

Looking at the composition of the membership list of *Majlis al-Shuraa* one realises that the presidency was given symbolically to the former *Sheikh Khut* of the tribe, Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein. However, the executive members were carefully chosen. They represented a group of educated and senior officials in the civil service belonging to Hardan, Guborab and al Faki. However, the majority (44) were from Hardan, highlighting the hegemony of those three *umudiyyas*.⁸⁴

The dynamic behind the organisation to set up the meeting was characterised by constant and committed work that involved several Lahawiyin who had the resources to deliver the message attractively to their peers in other states. Any misunderstanding about the agenda of the meeting might have caused unnecessary delays to the holding of the meeting. The Lahawiyin were in a race with events in the east and they wanted to set out their demands within the political offices in Gedarif and in Khartoum. They wanted a commitment from the government before any changes might take place. However, there was a further level of political manipulation from within the Lahawiyin by those who were seeking political positions. There was a fresh move by a number of the active elite members of the Eastern Front. At this juncture the issues of the nazirate and land became more or less politically intolerable and were alternatively used. Having said this, representatives from the six states, Khartoum, Gedarif, Gezira, Sinnar, Blue Nile and the White Nile responded to the call for a meeting at which the tribe could collectively announce the nazirate.⁸⁵

⁸³ List of members (*Umdas*) of the *Majlis al Shuraa*.

⁸⁴ *Majlis al Shuraa Lahawiyin*, a document presented by Dr Abdalla Musa al-Bashir.

⁸⁵ *Majlis al Shuraa Lahawiyin*, a document presented by Dr Abdalla Musa al-Bashir.

8. Renewal of “al-bayaa” 2007

A meeting was arranged to take place in 2007 in Gedarif at the *Amanat al-Hukuma* (the State Government Building). The meeting was a venue to renew the Lahawiyin *al-bayaa* (oath) to the government, with much wider participation at state level to the *Wali* of Gedarif, who also represented the National Islamic Party. The Lahawiyin addressed him in the following letter that asserted not only their loyalty but their continuing claim for the nazirate:

We address you today with happiness filling our hearts, we, the sons of the Lahawiyin tribe. We address you to meet with you, our dear Governor, in order to renew our support for religion, remaining loyal to the support given by our forefathers, and to extend this support to the President of the Republic, Field Marshal Omer al-Beshir, confirming our previous pledge of allegiance to him. Our dear Governor, we come to you not to say that we are oppressed or marginalised, for we are certain of this. Rather, we come to you to tell you that we are ready, behind the leader, to support the laws of Allah to which we are committed.

Our dear Governor, we come to you to tell you that we have ambitions and aspirations to have a nazirate for the Lahawiyin, an institution that goes in line with our abilities and aspiration, not being the enemies of any man, or even the enemies of our main opponents, the Shukriyya, the ancient loyal tribe to which we have been joined by the closest relations throughout the previous eras, and for whom we have complete respect and hold in high esteem, reflected in their great leader Abu Sin and those behind him. True to the words of the leader of the Butana region, who said that the Butana had become a culture for all who live among its tribes, we uphold this culture which was founded by the people of the Butana.

Our dear Governor and President of the National Congress Party in the State, we aspire to assimilate with this tribe with respect to various services. We have already told you that we are not marginalised, but we are not fully assimilated either. Taking part in the different forms of governance, the executive and legislative body in particular, is strengthening for the leadership of the tribe, enabling them to perform their role among the people effectively in the future, which, through elections, requires efforts at securing a project of cultural salvation and the unity of Sudan, strong and stable, God willing.

We come to you as a group of leaders to confirm to you that we will be of assistance to you in carrying out your development and political projects, through our commitment to all of the tasks entrusted to us for this project, assisting with both money and manpower.

We would also like to commend your efforts in developing the state that you have cherished and cared for. We regard the abundance of agriculture as a good omen, and we hope that you will help us to invest completely, ensuring infrastructure such as roads and mechanical aids for the modernisation of agriculture, as well as livestock, which we hope will profit from this abundance, as this is an integral part of agriculture, ensuring a decent life and stability for the keepers of this livestock.

We are delighted to tell you, our dear Governor, that we have now taken steps to set up framework and institutions within the tribe, enabling us to perform our active roles in society and in politics, as well as strengthen relations between individual tribe members and inter-tribal relations, thus strengthening the principles

of peace and peaceful coexistence between citizens, in the hope that the basis of any effort will prevail in the state in its entirety, preserving the social fabric within the state. In conclusion, we would like to thank you, our dear Governor, for allowing us this opportunity to let you hear of our aspirations and see for yourself our stance with regards the National Congress Party and our support for it. May it satisfy Allah and His Messenger.⁸⁶

The letter, in which the Lahawiyin stated their grievances at being not fully assimilated, their need for a nazirate, while also offering their respects to neighbouring tribes, specifically the Shukriyya tribe, was presented to the *Wali*. The meeting was headed by the *Wali*, a minister and a commissioner who was the only Lahawi among the higher status attendants. Interestingly, the commissioner was there in his capacity as a Lahawi and not as a representative of the Eastern Front. Again this shows the strong attachment the Lahawiyin have towards their tribal identity. The commissioner was choosing to show his tribal membership before his political affiliation, as this would give him protection and strength and would also support his authority were he to be appointed for any tribal position. The tribe backed him and his involvement in Eastern Front politics might possibly be a facade for his possible aspiration to local and regional politics. A second aspect of this situation was the intermingling between local politics and internal tribal politics as shown by how each *umudiyya* sought to control or influence tribal affairs; some, notably the Gawamis, were deprived and thus excluded from such opportunities having being treated as late-comers to the Butana or in other words late sedentarised.

The letter included five objectives in addition to the main goals of achieving the nazirate that *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* hoped to implement. The tribe then sought an official reply from the *Wali* on the issue of their claim to the nazirate to authenticate their request. The Lahawiyin went further in their demands; they wanted to have constitutional representation of the tribe in terms of secured positions such as the *Wali*, and ministerial posts. They also raised the need for specific services such as the extension of the Northern Rural Electricity Project to reach their villages along the Atbara River, in addition to a water supply system, and restructuring of schools and health services.

After the approval of the *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* by the state authorities, it held four meetings during 2007 after the meeting with the *Wali* and one general meeting for 2008 and

⁸⁶ Letter [AR] presented to the *Wali* of Gedarif state by the Lahawiyin representatives in July 2007, Gedarif. Translated by Michael Whiteside, Modern Language Centre?, Durham University October 2009.

2009. The meetings held showed several levels of participation and introduced new faces to tribal politics. One interesting change was the presence of women and youths. It was no longer exclusively the domain of the elderly nor a *majlis* for old men. The issues for discussion revolved around the nazirate, education and health.⁸⁷

While the *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* was being introduced, the government allocated the *Majlis* a car. However, many of the Lahawiyin took this to be a signal of approval for the nazirate. Although the government had made no formal announcement of the nazirate, it had begun to offer assistance and to allow the Lahawiyin tribal sheikhs and dignitaries' public space in which to negotiate. The interpretation of the offer of the car might have misled the Lahawiyin thus possibly bringing them into confrontation with the Shukriyya. Why would the government offer a car to a tribe that had contested with another tribe over land for so long? It can be argued that the government had been seriously thinking of the election and promising the Lahawiyin a nazirate might have been intended to appear impartial but at the same time preserve the Shukriyya's traditional and customary right to land. The government wanted to please both sides and thus giving the Lahawiyin partial success would serve both tribes' interests while not damaging the government's relations with either tribe. In doing so the government could guarantee security and stability in the region. This was interpreted by one Lahawi, thus:

We think that the land we lived in for a century was never being claimed by anyone and no one had shared it or fought over it with us and we refer to the east and west of Atbara River. The same thing applied to our people in White Nile state.⁸⁸

A new trend in the Lahawiyin argument for the nazirate was that land should not be the only reason to obtain a nazirate. It should be borne in mind that there was always a linkage of the nazirate and *dar*. However, being Lahawiyin the claim for nazirate was also a matter of status and a general assertion of Lahawiyin identity, as one sheikh put it:

Every Sudanese national has a right to land and it is not a condition for nationality. We want to have our own identity, to keep our own originality. We rarely marry from outside the tribe because of this we preserve our identity.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Most of information on this page was extracted from documents [AR] on the establishment of the *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*, included list of membership, mandates and objectives.; Interviews with Dr. Abdalla al Basher , Director Ministry of Health, December 2009, Gedarif; Interview with al Zein Ahmed Adam al Zein, Member of National Assembly Khartoum, December 2009, Mugattaa.

⁸⁸ Interview with Yusuf Hassab al-Gawi December 2007, al-Showak.

⁸⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director, Statistic Department, December 2007, Gedarif.

The Lahawiyin maintained that feeling of originality and purity to the extent that they believed their Arab identity could be distinguished by anyone entering any Lahawiyin village. For the Lahawiyin, identity was not simply a matter of the ‘consolidation of the pastoral ideal which Spear has identified as so important for Maasai; for most Lahawiyin had by this time abandoned that ideal and turned to land-owning.’⁹⁰ But their Arab identity remained vital, still asserted through physical markers - the concern over skin colour, and the refusal to have body-marks.

The Shukriyya response to this Lahawiyin agitation came in a collective decision by the *nazir* and his council members, which was expressed in a *Wathiga* [document] which was sent to the presidential office in Khartoum in 2007.⁹¹ The *Wathiga* ranks as an official complaint presented to the higher authority. In this regard the Shukriyya wanted to confirm their rights to the land in Butana as well as in the Atbara River area. The *Wathiga* established that their *dar* covered the entire area extending from the Blue Nile to the Atbara River.

Negotiations took place to resolve this tension. In this respect the Lahawiyin established that the *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* served the tribe socially by addressing the social needs of the tribe with the delegated authority of the people and it also addressed their main concern which is the nazirate. In addition, it established a mechanism for coordination between the tribe’s members all over Sudan. ‘Now we are owned by the Shukriyya. With *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* we can call for a nazirate and we can reach out for constitutional posts.’⁹²

The *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* provided the Lahawiyin with confidence to claim the nazirate. It was seen as the authority by which the tribe delegated and channelled its demands supported by contributions from members of the *Majlis*. In other words, the growing insights and knowledge of the tribe along with their resources were used to support the argument. For instance, the Lahawiyin claimed (although there was no evidence for the figures they presented) that the tribe owned seven million camels, one and one half million sheep and one

⁹⁰ Spear, (*Being Maasai; Ethnicity and, Identity*), p. 22.

⁹¹ ‘The Lahawiyin is Claiming for a nazirate’, *Alwan* newspaper No. , 31 January 2007.

⁹² Interview with Sheikh Siddig Yousif, member of the al-Showak Legislative Council, January 2008, al-Showak.

million feddans of agricultural schemes.⁹³ In their view this was evidence to back up and support being able to run their own affairs separately from the Shukriyya.

In conclusion, the experience of the Lahawiyin was enduring in that there was a clear continuity of preserving an Arab identity throughout the process to claim the nazirate through social and political organisations (*Rabita* and *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*) as similarly argued by Spear that claim of a prestigious origins existed with other means (expansion of land rights) to legitimise their authorities.⁹⁴

However the establishment of these political institutions helped the Lahawiyin grow politically close to the government at all levels which maintained their constructed image in a less cliental relationship than with their traditional master, the Shukriyya.

The Lahawiyin also vowed to develop collective and individual land rights that would bring them onto an almost equal footing with their former rivals in Butana, the Bawadra. However the difference was that the Lahawiyin wanted to preserve the nomadic livelihood alongside agricultural scheme owners.

The very recent events regarding the establishment of *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin* and the reconstruction of an overall tribal unity revealed two aspects: the rejection of the tribal confederation; and the adoption of a more Islamic-sounding idea, *al-Shuraa*, that fitted in with al-Turabi's earlier notion of an Islamic State. In this regard the Lahawiyin considered al-Turabi an entry point to gain legitimacy and political authority. Their history shows also that they were not far from achieving their aspiration of the nazirate while carefully authenticating their Arabness.

The peace agreement created havoc among many tribes of which the Lahawiyin was one. The opinion was that they were being marginalised and excluded by the main players in the region. When it came to peace dividends the Lahawiyin were excluded as Gedarif state was considered part of the east by the Eastern Front signatories. This also applied to other resident

⁹³ Interview with Idris Hamid Mohamed and Ali Mohamed, Agric Inspectors, Pasture Department, State Ministry of Agriculture, December 2007, Gedarif.

⁹⁴ Derek Nurse and Thomas Spear, *The Swahili; Reconstructing the History and Language of an African Society 800-1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 85-98. See also Thomas Spear, **Mountain farmers: moral economies of land and development in Arusha and Meru** (Oxford: James Currey, 1997).

tribes⁹⁵ in Gedarif State; however, the Lahawiyin had a valid case because they were trying to avoid a cliental relationship with the Shukriya that might curtail their opportunities. The Lahawiyin understood the implication of the peace agreement which only included Kassala and Red Sea states, thereby excluding Gedarif state. Thus the Lahawiyin expected the developmental projects and programmes resulting from the peace agreement to be granted to the two states, Kassala and Red Sea. One of the salient outcomes of the agreement related to the local government where article 18 stipulated the full right of the Eastern Sudan Front to nominate three administrators (*mutamedin*) in each of the three states (Kassala, Red Sea and Gedarif) of Eastern Sudan. In addition, five of the members of the assembly of each local government (*mehalya*) were to be appointed by the Eastern Front.⁹⁶ This indicated in particular that dominance of the appointments would be from the Beja, the Bani Amir or the Rashayda minimizing any chance of other tribes being appointed. Looking back at the Eastern Front and with the membership and their marginalisation in mind, the picture in Gedarif state was no different. It was evident that those tribes were also marginalised from political participation in comparison to the major groups in Khartoum. The Shukriya, Lahawiyin, Bawadra, Fellatta and groups from Western Sudan were also excluded from the Eastern Sudan Front. According to Assal and Ali, the signing of the agreement was not warmly welcomed by a number of figures in Gedarif and the speaker of the State Legislative Assembly in Gedarif who represented the National Congress Party “resigned in protest over the provisions of the agreement.”⁹⁷

One implication that the Lahawiyin anticipated was that if there would be any new restructuring to the Butana tribes, the Lahawiyin would still be considered as under the Shukriya. Another implication was that the Lahawiyin were scattered across the country which was perceived to weaken their Lahawi identity which underpinned their Arab identity and supported their claim for a nazirate. They believed that they needed a strong constituency which would enable them to win that claim and which might be the way to achieve their goal.

⁹⁵ The tribes that constitute the five nazirates discussed earlier include the Teysha, Bakr, Bani Amir, Dabayna and Shukriya.

⁹⁶ “Two were *Mutamedin Mehalyyat* and one *Mutamed Re’asi* ; in Gadaref State one will be *Mutamed Mehalyya* and two will be *Mutamedin Re’asi*; and in the Red Sea State two will be *Mutamedin Mehalyyat* and one will be *Mutamed Re’asi*. [Also] The Parties agree that as long as the total number of Eastern Front nominees in the assemblies of the local governments is maintained there can be variance in the number of Eastern Front nominees in each local government (*Meahalya*) See Eastern Sudan Agreement, www.sudantribune.p. 15.

⁹⁷ Manzul A. M. Assal and Samai A. M. Ali, Eastern Sudan: Challenges Facing the Implementation of the Peace Agreement in Gedarif State’, *ISS Situation Report*, 20 Nov. 2007, pp. 1-10.

The 2008 census⁹⁸ was considered a way of showing the real weight of the tribe; as Suleiman put it “we might be the largest in Butana.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ See the 2008 Censuses. Arabs constituted the largest proportion of the population but were not an overall majority, even in the north, where they accounted for around 40% of the total. They were followed by Dinka (12%), Beja (7%) and Fellatta (6%). The census also raised expectation among other ethnic groups in Sudan as stated by Santschi “that they would be provided with services by the government”. Martina Santschi., Breifing Counting ‘New Sudan’, *African Affairs*, 107/429, p.640.

⁹⁹ Interview with Ali Suleiman, Director General, Department of Statistics, December 2008, Gedarif.

Conclusion

The main conclusion of this thesis is the enduring Arabness of the Lahawiyin identity. The introduction stated that the history of this identity – and the stories of the past which have been told around it – offer a new insight on the nature of Arab identity and the complex relationship between authority, land and group identity.

Much of the existing literature on Arab identity in Sudan has tended to view it either as something racial and longstanding, or as something recently invented and imposed by dominant cultures and government policies. However, this thesis shows a long historical process of producing and sustaining an Arab identity by a particular ethnic group which has largely been ignored in the existing literature, i.e. the Lahawiyin. By studying one small group in detail, the thesis challenges the simplistic assumptions about Arab identity that have been so divisive in Sudanese history, and it shows how internal and external factors combine to make particular identities valuable and meaningful.

The thesis explains how, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Lahawiyin left Kordofan because of their reluctance to be incorporated into a 'Kababish' identity, and their dislike of the tax and tribute requirements imposed by Ali el Tom. The Lahawiyin expressed their concern through questioning the Arabness of the Kababish; and Mohamed wad al-Zein, having been an *amir* during the Mahdiyya, used these concerns to develop a new style of leadership for the Lahawiyin as a whole. He led the movement to Butana, a process that witnessed internal restructuring of the tribe and more power struggles between its sheikhs.

Under Condominium rule, the administrative demands of the colonial state and its attempts to impose grazing controls and boundaries encouraged the emergence of a new, more centralized authority within the Lahawiyin. Sheikh el-Igba was removed as a result of illegally grazing camels across a boundary, and Sheikh Adam al Zein's appointment as *sheikh khut* created the Lahawiyin as a single administrative unit in its own right. Now Adam al Zein stood between the *nazir* of Shukriyya and his people, and while the government's relationship with Adam el Zein may have made him unpopular among his own people, it also gave a political focus to the feeling of distinctiveness among the Lahawiyin.

In Butana, Lahawiyin wealth was initially based on camels; at the same time the cross-border trade, particularly in slaves, was an important source of wealth, and Lahawiyin ideas of status placed a heavy premium on the use of slaves for certain kinds of work. Maintaining these resources, particularly camels, required the crossing of administrative, grazing and national boundaries; and was also bound up with the assertion of a distinctive Arabness. As chapter four shows, there was a steady process of locating authority in local councils and courts, which partly ran against the previous policy of decentralised power through the tribal *sheikhs*. These local government bodies, finances, powers and personnel were more or less dependent on the central government.¹⁰⁰

The later chapters of the thesis show how the post-independence government policies on land changed livelihoods and internal relations for the Lahawiyin. The New Halfa scheme offered the possibility of a new livelihood to some Lahawiyin who owned fewer camels, turning them into tenants on defined areas of land. From independence up to the 1980s large grazing lands were appropriated by the mechanised farming schemes, making camel pastoralism effectively unsustainable. At the same time, the model of Lahawiyin engagement with the state which had developed since the early Condominium was disrupted by changes in government, which excluded traditional leaders from political representations, depriving them of power and authority and the ability to express resentments or exercise authority. By the mid-1980s increasing numbers of Lahawiyin were no longer camel-owners, but had become waged labourers, farmers or traders. This led to questions about an ‘Arab’ identity that had been built upon nomadic camel-herding (and slave-owning). But, as these chapters show, the Lahawiyin idea of their distinctive Arabness continued to be used by leading families to maintain their privileged position within the tribe, and at the same time to be central to way that ordinary Lahawiyin thought about their status and history. Only a small number of Lahawiyin lost their identity in this period, partly through their own decision, and partly through the reaction of others. Having resorted to wage labour to survive, these *Ashraf* developed a new identity which was shaped and formed by a new relationship of clientship and labour.

¹⁰⁰ G.M.A. Bakheit, ‘The Condominium and Indirect Rule,’ in Howell (ed.), *Local Government and Politics in the Sudan*, pp.30-32.

Chapter six explores the consequences of the crises in pastoralist livelihood and state legitimacy from the mid 1980s. This saw a further shift in the political context in which Lahawiyin sought to negotiate their identity, and their access to resources. Although members of other *umudiyya* were increasingly influential and wealthy, most Lahawiyin chose to continue to accept the established, if increasingly nominal hereditary leadership of al Faki *umudiyya* – represented by Sheikh al Zein Adam al Zein, the holder of what one Lahawiyi called ‘leadership without portfolio’.¹⁰¹ This choice affirmed the consensus among the leaders of Lahawiyin *umudiyyas* on the issue of the nazirate; and in subsequent years an educated group of Lahawiyin leaders maintained their own claims to status, and the wider Lahawiyin claims to a privileged political position and access to land, through social and political organisations (*Rabita* and *Majlis al-Shuraa al-Lahawiyin*) and through seeking to exploit the anxieties of the state, offering themselves as loyal allies in a turbulent area. The establishment of these political institutions helped the Lahawiyin grow politically close to the government at all levels, reducing their cliental relationship with their traditional masters, the Shukriya.

The thesis argues that throughout these multiple changes, Lahawiyin identity has been closely linked with a particular idea of 'Arabness', which is defined by a nomadic existence, camel keeping, and the independence and mobility of male family heads. The thesis suggests that emphasis on an idealized Arabness has been consistently maintained - even in a period where it has no longer been possible for most Lahawiyin to maintain that lifestyle. Unable to live the ideal lifestyle, Lahawiyin have nonetheless continued to try and maintain a group separation and political distinctiveness, perhaps as a surrogate for the lifestyle itself.

The thesis has addressed the question: why has this relatively small group remained distinct, and committed to this particular idea of identity, in the face of enormous changes? The thesis suggests that the resilience of a distinctive Lahawiyin identity, which is closely linked to this idealized Arabness, has been partly due to the instrumental use of the idea by men who sought positions of authority as leaders of the Lahawiyin, and who have served as intermediaries between 'the Lahawiyin' and a succession of regimes. But more importantly, the self-reproducing culture of 'ordinary' Lahawiyin has also constantly reaffirmed this Arab identity. Lahawiyin subscribed to this idea because of an economic and social interest: they

¹⁰¹ Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir Musa, Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

believed that this was the best way to maintain their life style as nomads because it provided a basis for arguing their rights to move their herds in search of grazing and water, and because it underwrote their dominant relationship with slaves (and then ex-slaves). Even more fundamentally than this, the idealized idea of Arabness shaped Lahawiyin culture in a way that reproduced itself - Lahawiyin constantly talked about their past and their identity, and discussed behaviour (who they should marry, how they should relate to other people) in ways which asserted the importance of this distinction. This sustained an idea of themselves, and their rights and interests.

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Appendices

List of Interviews

Interview with Mohamed Fadallah, former Governor of al Fashaga Locality, Gedarif, June 1996.

Interview with the Late Sheikh Ahmed Adam al Zein, Former President of the Pastoralist Union and Khatib Khut, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996

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Interview with Ali Abdel Sakhi, Member of the *Majlis Shuraa al Lahawiyin*, Showak, December 2007.

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Interview with Dr Abdalla al-Bashir Musa, Director Primary Health Care., Ministry of Health, Gedarif, December 2009.

Interview with Ahmed Mohamed Jebel, Former President of Showak Rural Council, former Director General of Hihger Council for Sport and Youth and Member of the State Legislative Council and Member of the *Majlis Shuraa al Lahawiyin*, Gedarif, December 2009.

Interview with Mohamed Idris, Representative of National Congress Party for Showak, Mugatta wad al Zein, 1996, 2008 and 2009.

Interview with Haja Bakhita, Widow of Late Sheik Ahmed al Zein, Mugatta a wad al Zein, June 1996, December 2008 and December 2009.

Interviews with Anonymous women from Lahawiyin and members of late Sheikh Ahmed al Zein Adam al Zein's Family, Mugatta wad al Zein, 1996, 2007, 2008.

Interviews with Anonymous Women from Mugatta A Suq, 1996, December 2007

Group **interview** with Lahawi Women, Mugatta wad al Zein, June 1996, December 2008 and December 2009.

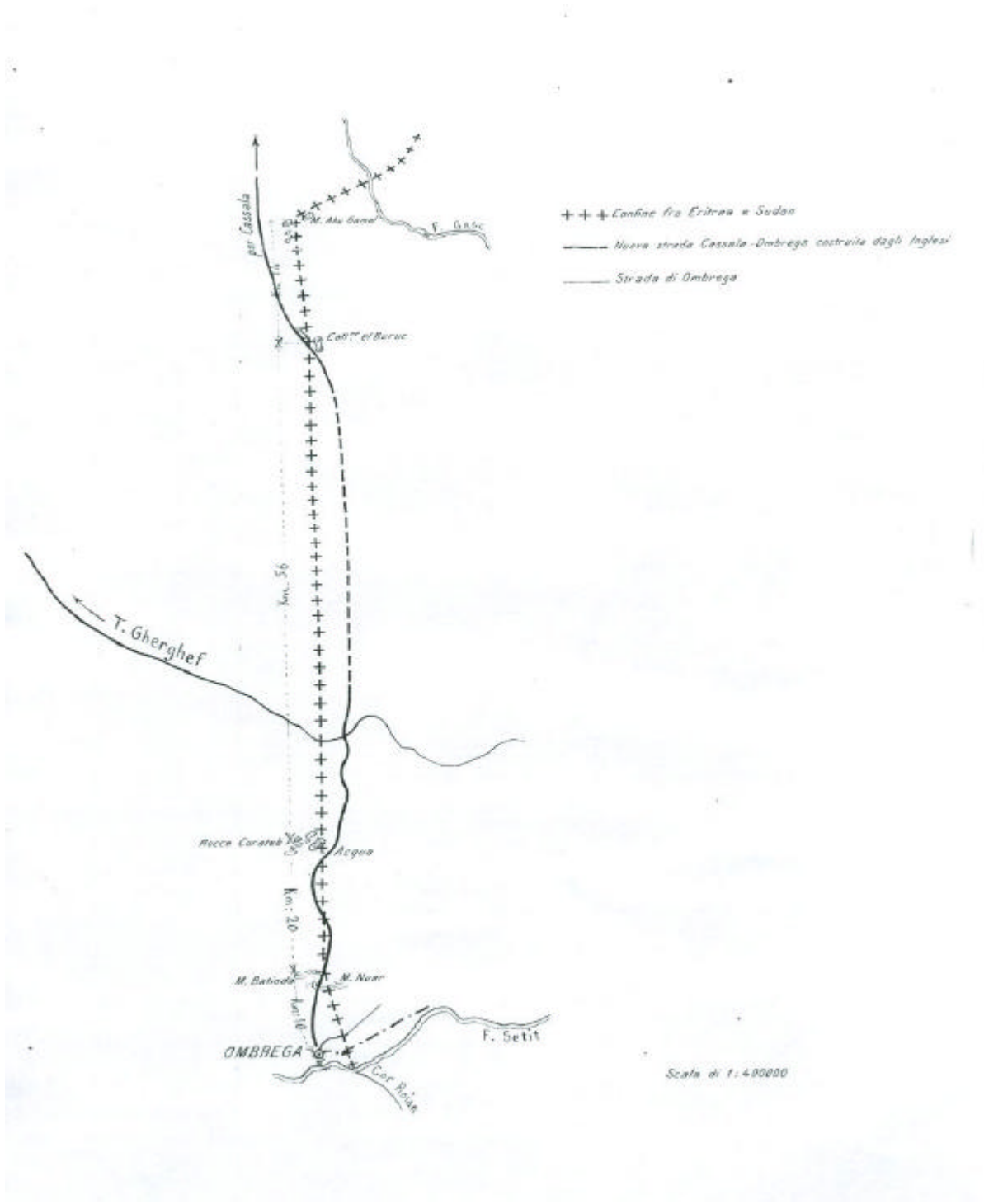
Interview with Samia Abdalla, Dean Community Development College, Gedarif University November/ December 2007 /January 2008 and December 2009.

Interview with al Zein Ahmed al Zein, Member of the National Assembly, Member of the *Majlis Shuraa al Lahawiyin* June 1996 Mugatta wad al Zein, December 2007, Gedarif January 2008, Mugatta wad al Zein December 2009 and a telephone **interview** July 2010.

Interview with Babikir Awad al-Karim Babikir, Historian and Local Radio presenter, Showak Rural Council, December 2007, January 2008, December 2009 and . and a telephone **interview** July 2010

Maps

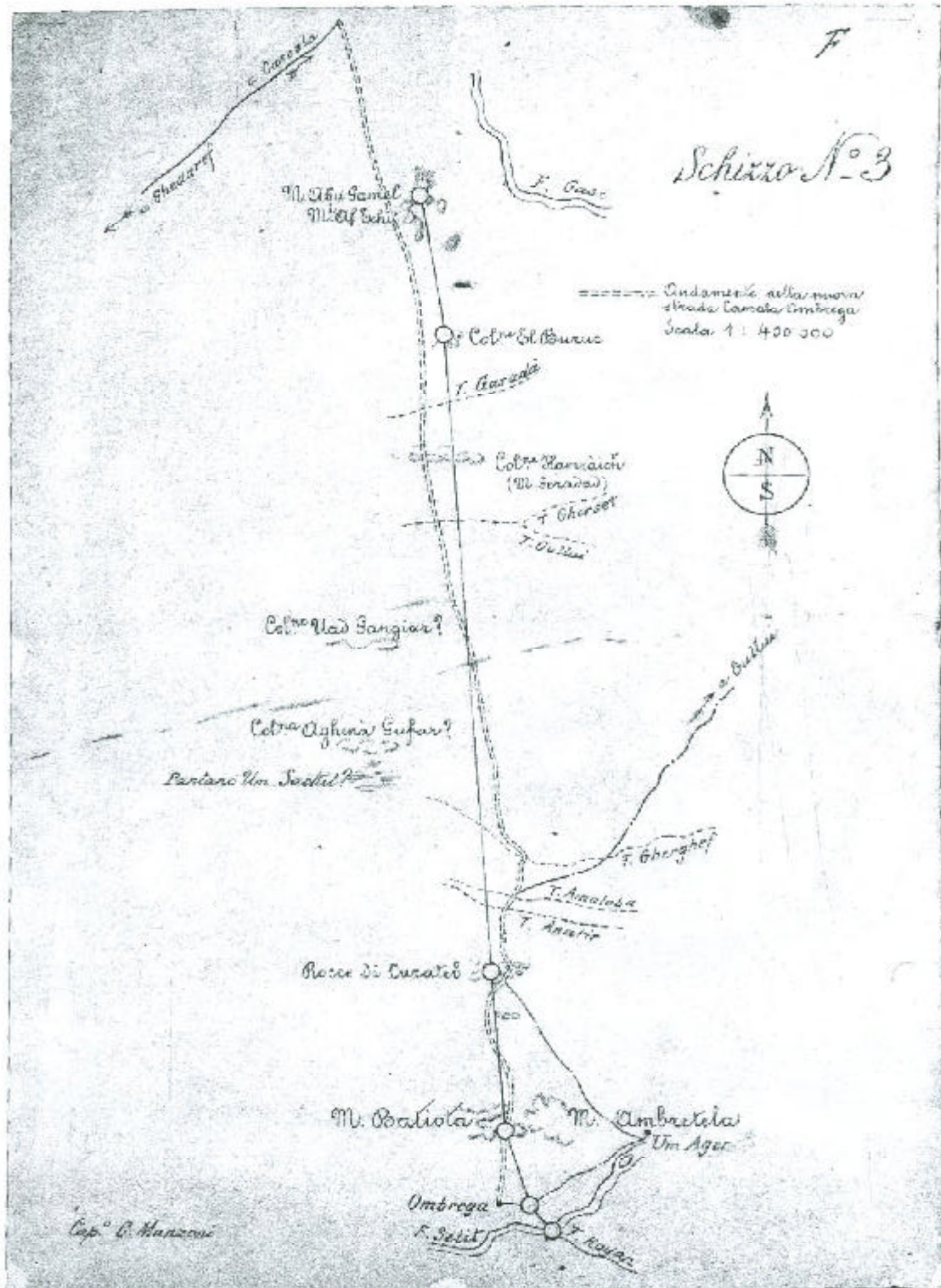
Old Sudan - Eritrea Border and Boundaries



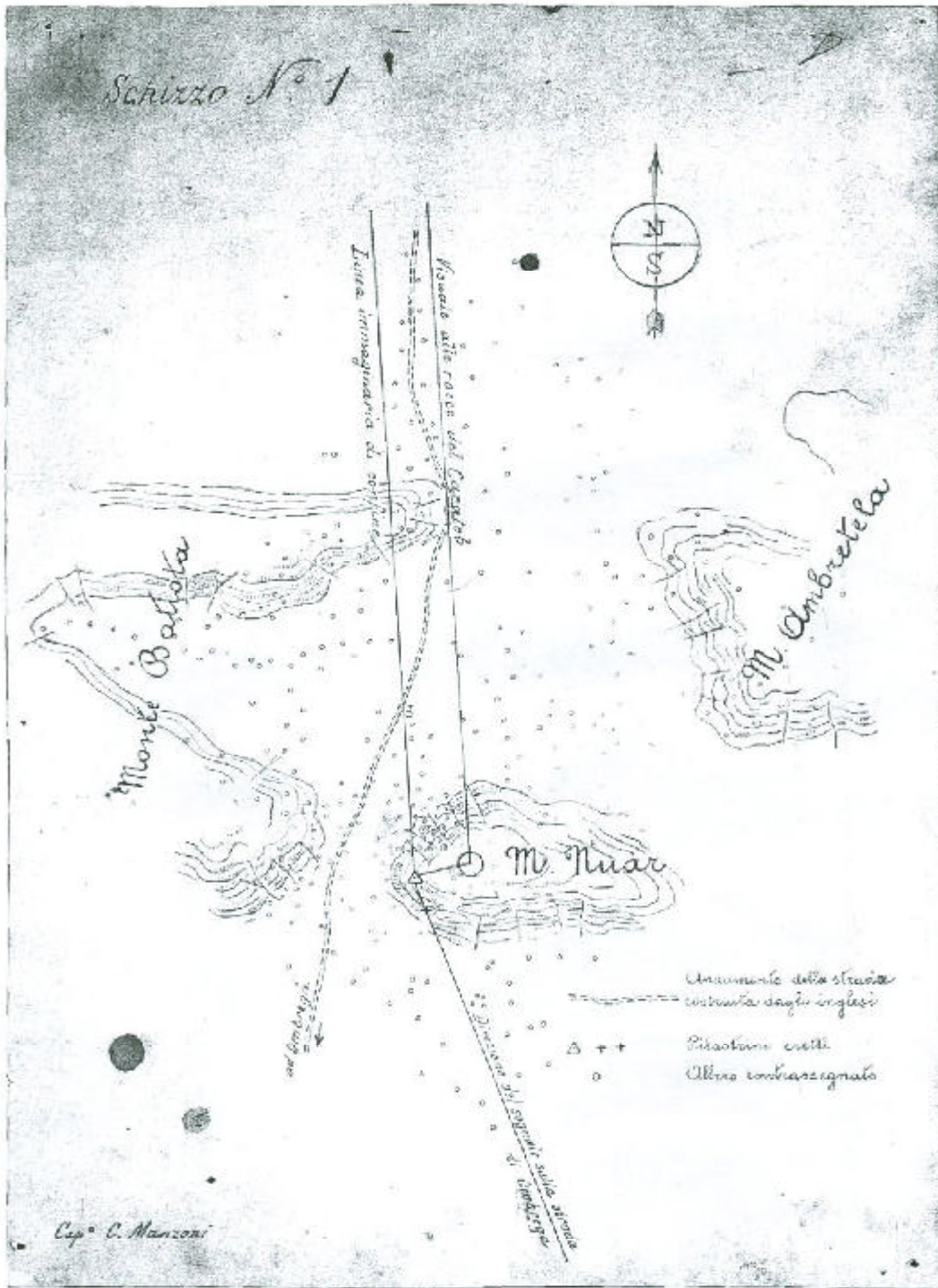
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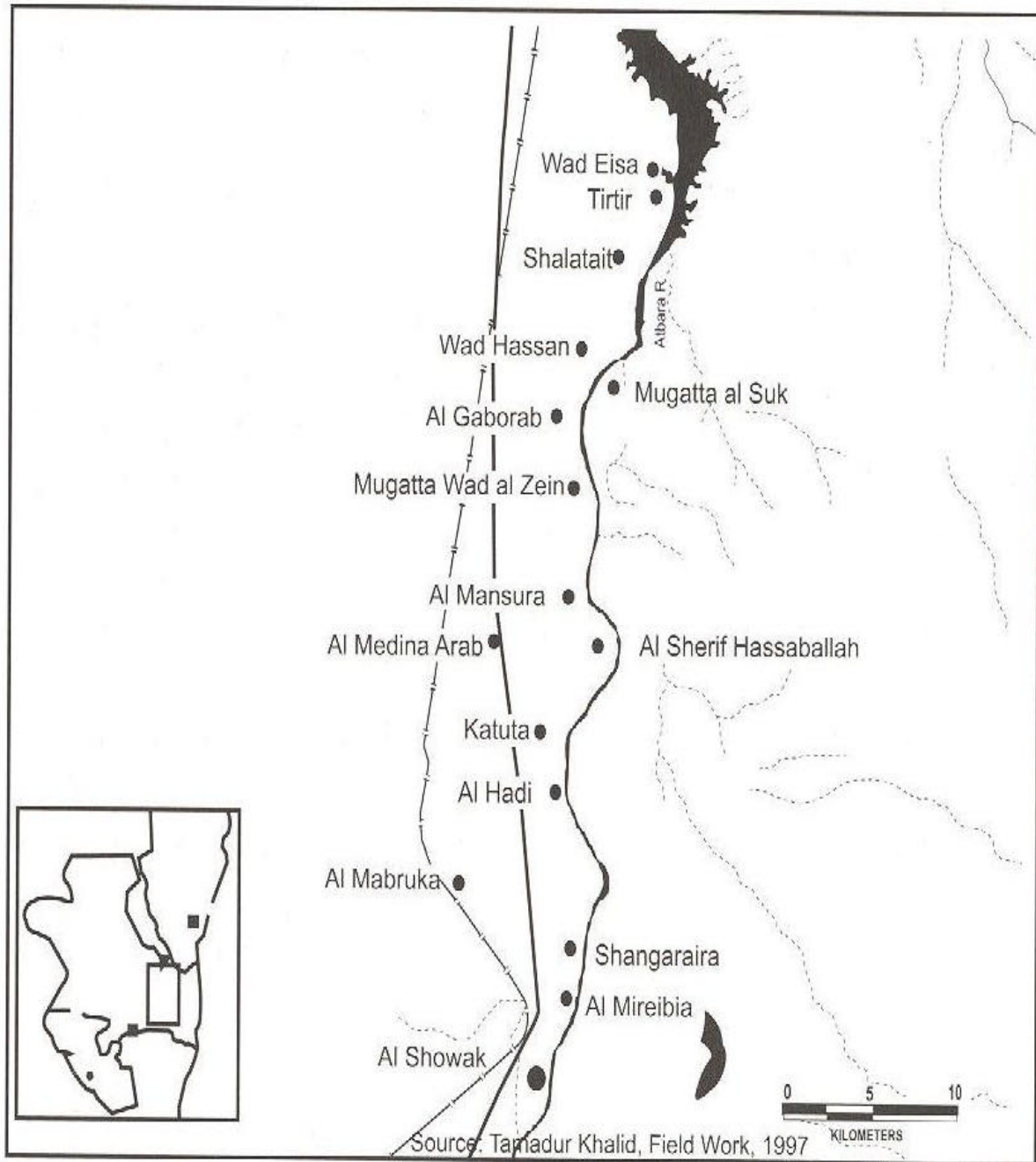


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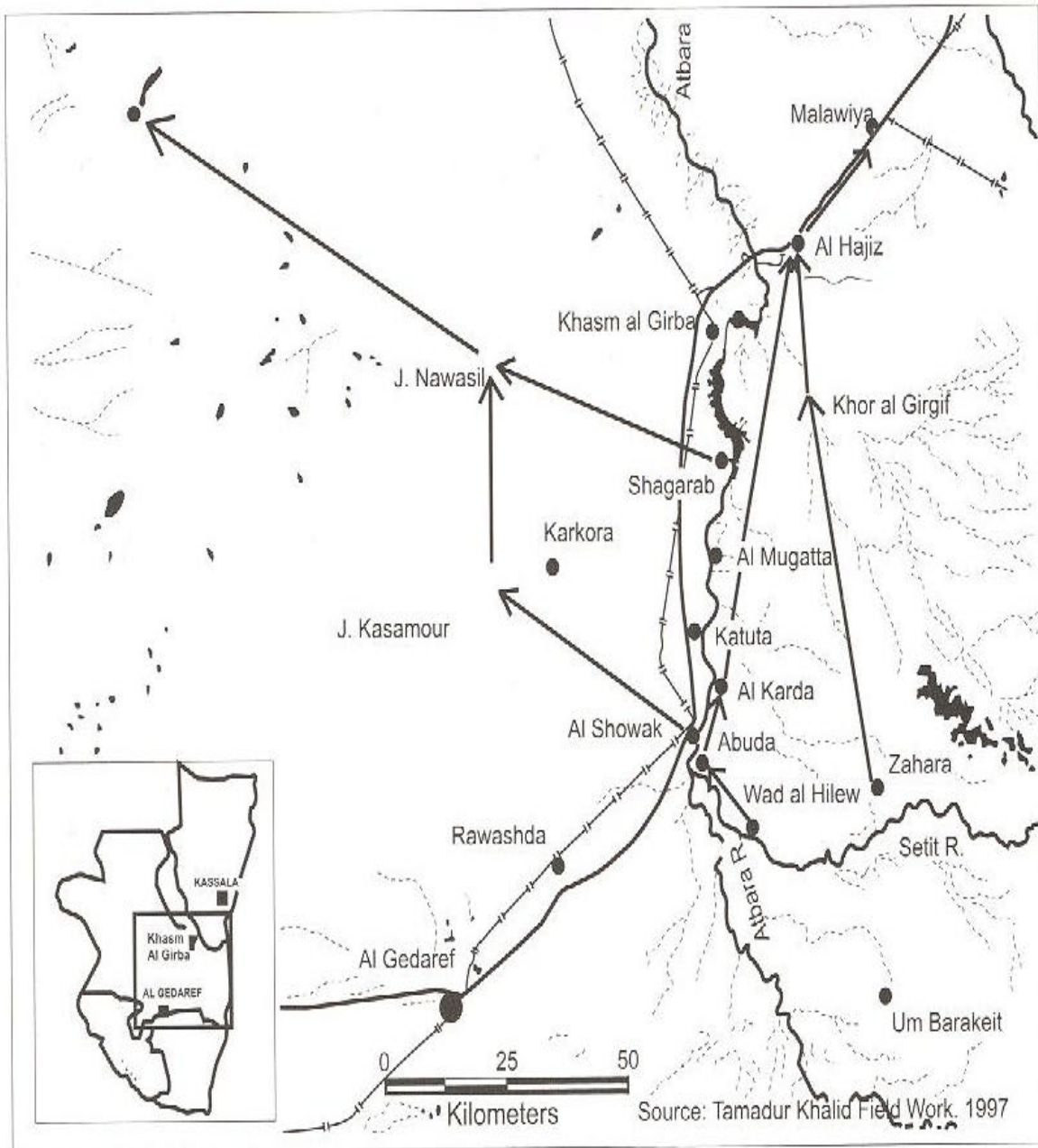


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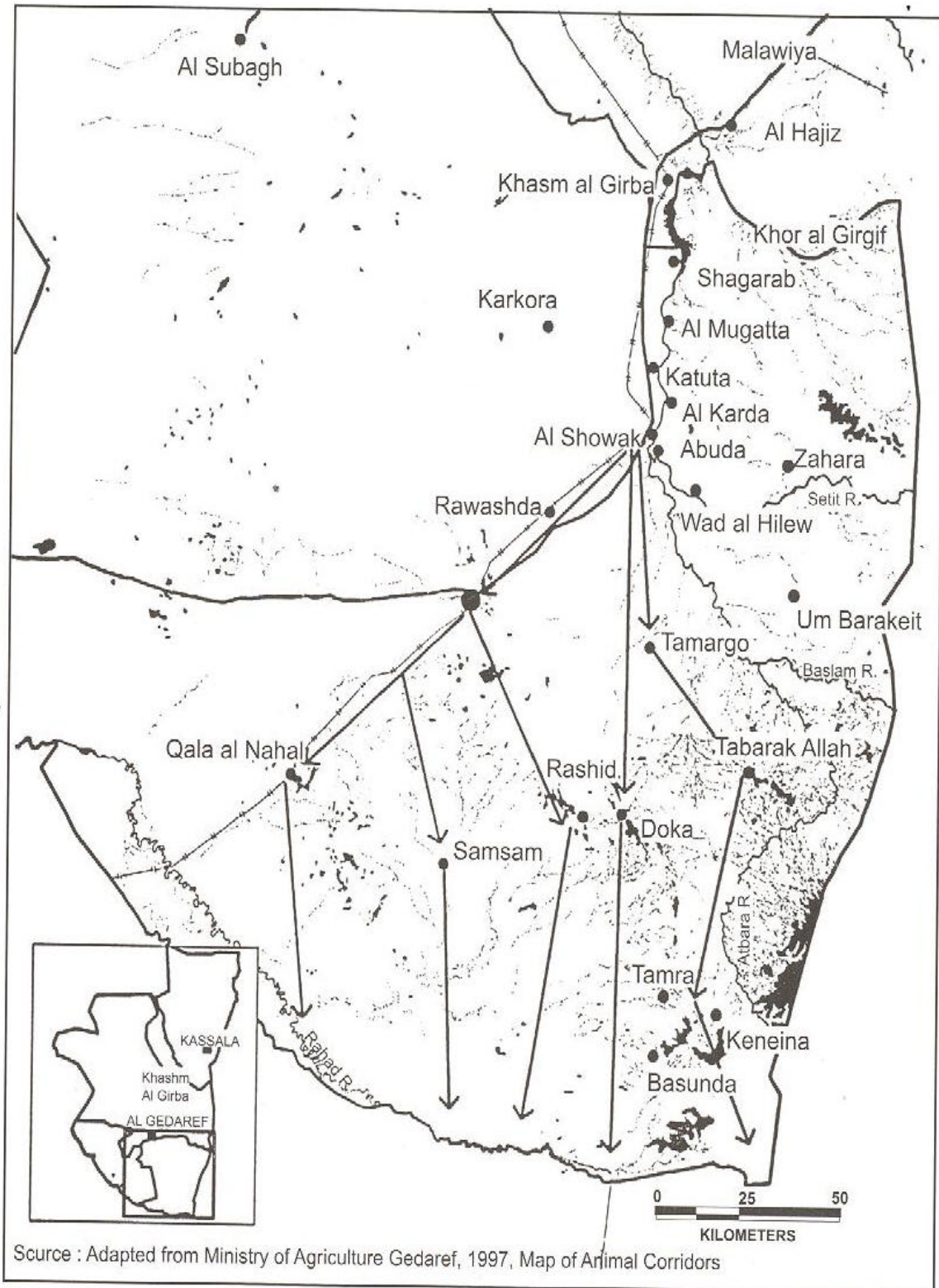
Main Lahawiyn Settlements in Al Showak Rural Council



Lahawiyin Grazing Area
Main Animals Corridors to Butana and North East



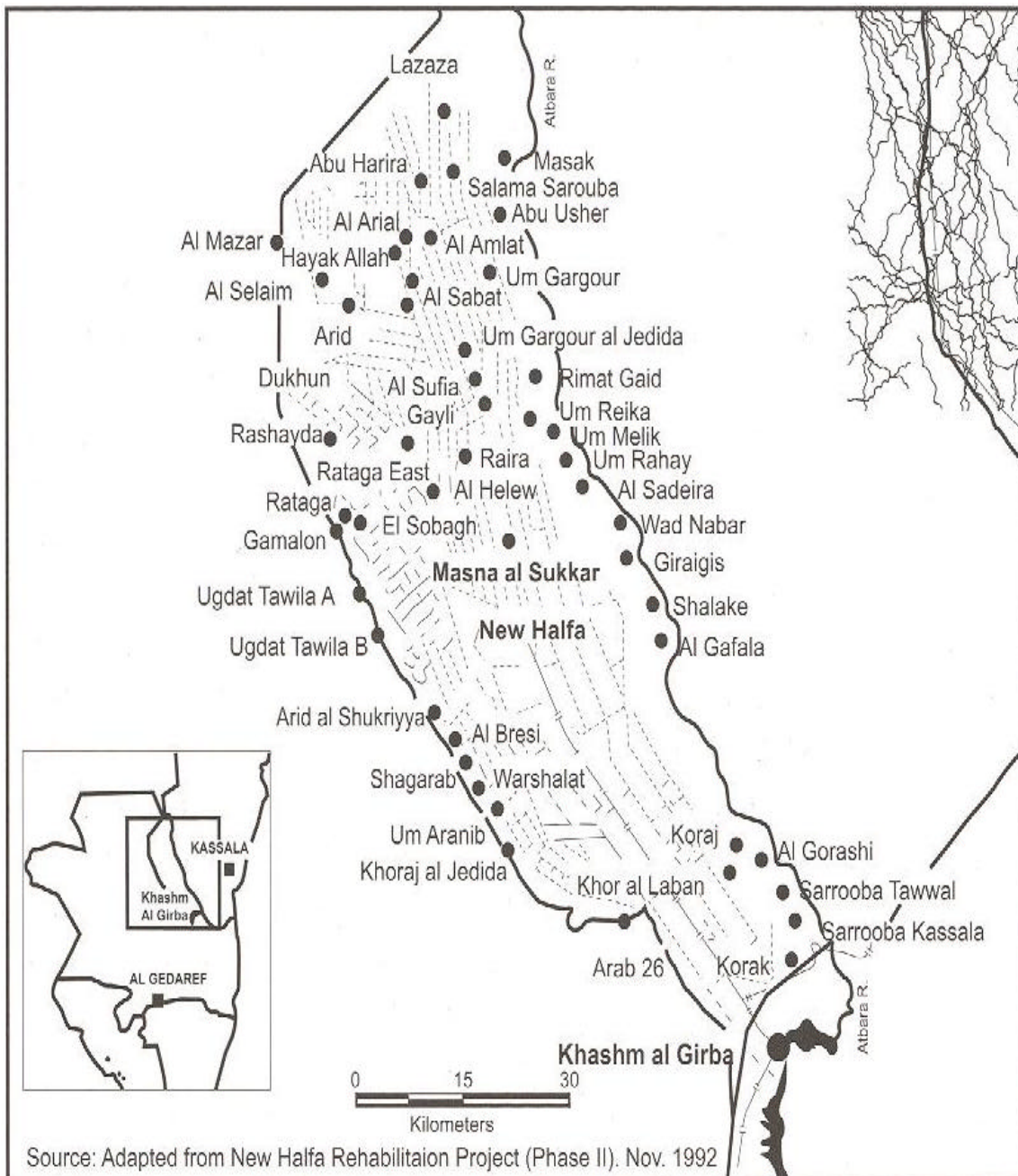
Lahawiyin Southern Animal Corridors to Rahad



1946 Administrative Divisions of Kassala Province



Arab Villages in New Halfa Scheme



Maps in pp.294 to 298 are extracted from Catherine Miller, *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy*,