

# **Native Administration in Dar Humr, Sudan**

Shifting leadership and socio-political structures in a tribal society

1900-1940



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### **Notes on transliteration**

In transliterating the names of persons, titles or geographical areas I have mainly followed the British practice of spelling words in Arabic. Still, many of the central names found in the source material are spelled differently according to writer. I have chosen to use the names that are most common, which means that some names might deviate from the classic British transliteration. For example is the writing of the name Humr with a “u” inconsistent with the general rule of writing names with an “o”. As a general rule however “o”, “g” and “i” substitute “u”, “q” and “y”, resulting in words such as Umda, Baqqara and Messiriya being transcribed as Omda, Baggara and Messiria. It can also be noted that the British also used the letter “g” for the Arabic “j” (jim), which explains why I have spelled the name Agaira with a “g” and not written Ajaira like it is pronounced.

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Picture on first page: Omda of the Humr Agaira with his elders.<sup>1</sup>

### **List of appendices**

1. The Governors of Kordofan
2. Abbreviation in Norwegian

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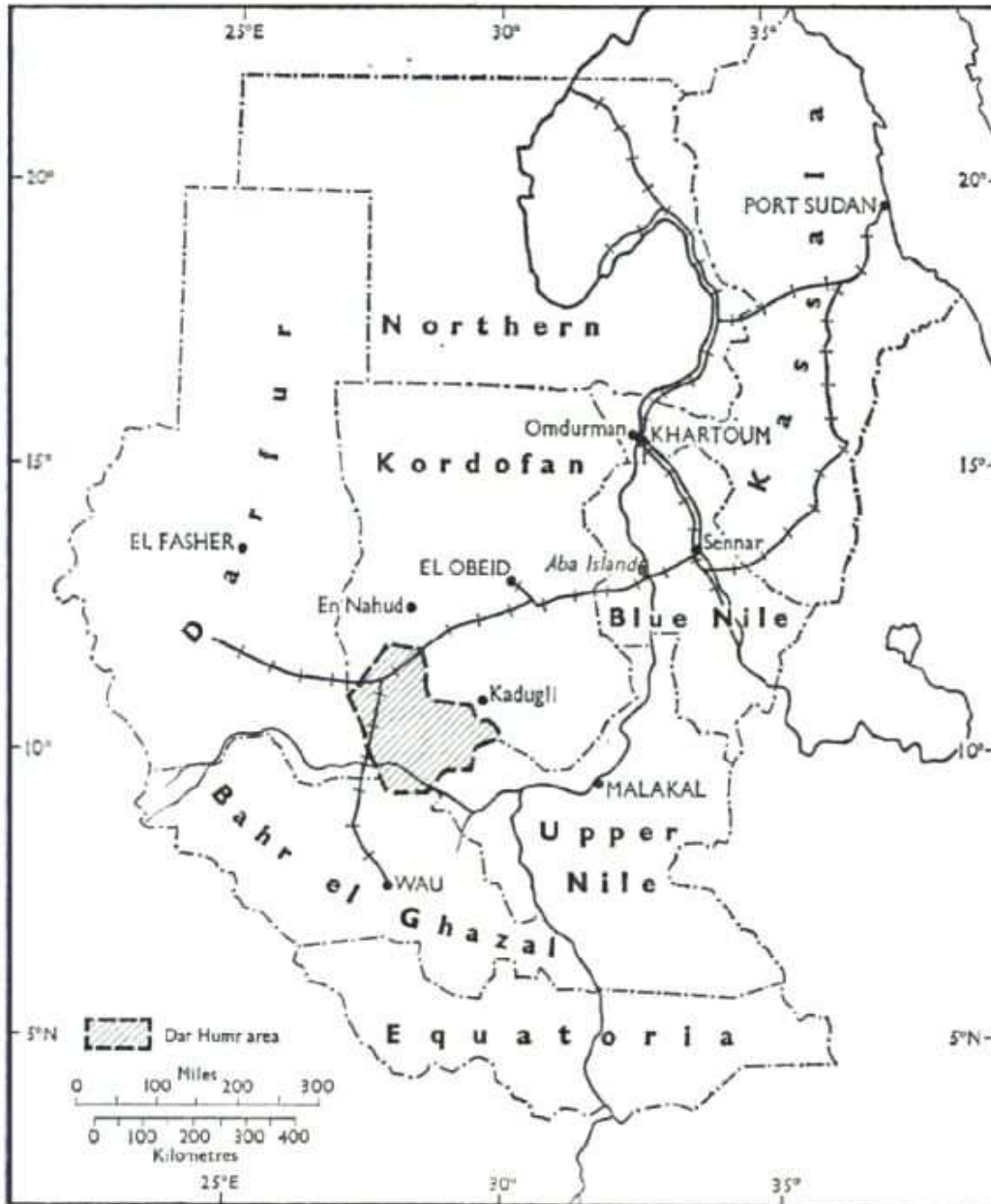
<sup>1</sup> Cunnison 1966: 179

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **The Baggara, Messiria and Humr**

The Arab nomads of the Sudan are divided into two different groups; camelmen and cattlemen. While the camelmen live on the southern semi-desert fringes of the Sahara, cattlemen, called the Baggara, occupy the area even further south approaching the flood plains of the White Nile basin. With the semi-desert in the north being too dry, and the wet areas further south being too muddy and having many flies, the Baggara inhabit the belt in between where the environmental conditions makes it suitable to keep cattle. This area has the capacity to support enough cattle for the Baggara to be self sufficient. The Humr, together with the Zurug Messiria, the Rizeygat, and the Hawazma form a block of Baggara which inhabit the southern regions of Kordofan and the south-eastern areas of Darfur. These four tribes are known as 'Ataya, but do not form any political unit of any kind. The Messiria live in the south-western corner of the Kordofan province.

The Humr and the Zurug were regarded as two segments that had grown apart as a result of tribal evolution. After previously forming one Messiria tribe they became separated throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century establishing two distinct tribes. Hence, the Humr did not regard themselves as Messiria on account of their many differences and conflicts with the Zurug, and were known only as Humr. The name Messiria was therefore often used with reference to the Zurug alone. However the term Messiria was also used to refer to the Humr and the Zurug as a unified group. In order to make less confusing I have chosen to distinguish between the two segments by using the names Humr and Zurug, and only using the name Messiria when referring to both.



Map 1: The position of Kordofan province and Dar Humr within the Sudan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cunnison 1966: 5

The modern history of the Sudan is marked with changing regimes and shifts which naturally also has affected the Sudanese people. The Anglo-Egyptian presence in the Sudan lasting from 1898 to 1956, and the colonial policies regarding the different groups of the Sudanese society laid the foundation for the country's further development in modern times. During this period an administrative reform was introduced which influenced the population in the less central regions of the country and had a significant impact on the tribal societies. This new form of local administration was referred to as Native Administration and it is the study of the implementation and effects of this reform that form the basis of this thesis.

### **Definitions**

The term "tribe" can have different meanings and limitations. A common definition is that the word tribe refers to a group of individuals tied together by kinship through mutual decent or marriage.<sup>3</sup> This refers to flexible units that change in accordance with inner dynamics and external pressure. The definition of a tribe can however vary according to the purpose of its use and who was defining it. A Sudanese can also regard his tribal affiliation differently according to the situation and how far he is from his tribal homeland. The sources show that the Sudanese and the British perception of a tribe could diverge. The British understanding of what determined a tribe is central to this thesis because of its significance regarding the introduction of Native Administration. This theme will be further discussed in chapter 3.

It is also important to specify what is meant with the term Native Administration, which was also referred to as "devolution" and in the 1930s went on to being called "indirect rule". Native Administration was based on Fredric Lugard's ideas of a practical form of administration and control which intended to provide the local government with the freedom to take care of its own affairs lead by their own leaders.<sup>4</sup> The local leadership was never the less to be controlled by British government officials and the rules and

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<sup>3</sup> Abu Shouk in Stiansen og Kevane (eds.) 1998: 120

<sup>4</sup> Lugard 1965: 94

regulations set by the central power. In my thesis I have chosen to use the term Native Administration and not indirect rule

### **Problem and method**

The question which I seek to answer in this thesis is: *What were the consequences of the Anglo-Egyptian regime's introduction of Native Administration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century for the Humr Baggara in western Kordofan?* I have chosen to mainly focus on the Humr tribe on account of it being a significant group of the Baggara living in southern Kordofan that has yet to be studied in light of this administrative reform. The Humr can be further divided into two primary segments, called the Agaira and the Felaita. Because of my source situation I have mainly directed my attention towards the Agaira, and will sometimes study this section more closely. The history of the Humr tribe, and its development of a strong leadership in the Anglo-Egyptian period, also makes it interesting to look at the government's influence on the tribal organization. Did the changes that followed with the introduction of Native Administration have any impact on the socio-political structures within the tribe, and if so, what were the results of this impact?

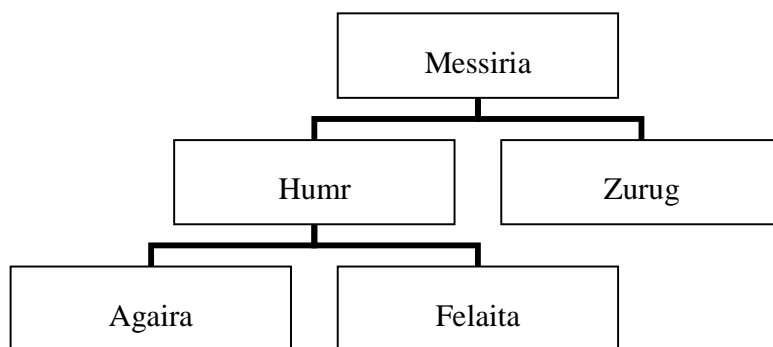


Figure 1: The structure of the main Messiria segments



In order to answer the above questions, it is useful to compare the impact on the Humr tribe with previous studies on what effects Native Administration had on other Kordofan tribes. The Bideiriya tribe of central Kordofan and the Kababish camel nomads living in the north has previously been viewed in light of the changes that followed with the introduction of a new local administration in the Anglo-Egyptian period, and its impact on the division of power among the tribal members.<sup>5</sup> Both tribes have been studied in light of different analytical models in order to be able to understand the process of change and in what way the external influence had an effect on the internal tribal structures. While Ahmed Abu Shouk has focused on using the patron-client model in his study of the Bideiriya, Talal Asad has used an elitist model to analyse the Kababish tribe.

Prior work done among the Humr tribe is generally quite scarce with the research done by anthropologist Ian Cunnison in the 1950s standing out as the most significant.<sup>6</sup> This study views the Humr in light of the agnatic-segmentary model. A significant aspect of this thesis will be to evaluate the agnatic-segmentary model opposed to the patron-client and the elitist models. To what extent are these models optimal tools in order to fully understand the political structures of the Humr society? And can one of the models give a more accurate understanding of how the introduction of Native Administration affected the Humr, and whether or not it can be said to have lead to any socio-political changes within the tribal society?

For the purpose of limiting the focus of this study I have chosen not to elaborate greatly on the further development within the local administration after Native Administration had been introduced, nor its dissolution. I will also not go in to the subject of the Sudanese movement towards self rule which grew in the 1940s and 50s, or the political impact of this on local and national scale.

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<sup>5</sup> Abu Shouk 1997 and Talal Asad 1970

<sup>6</sup> Cunnison 1966

## Source material

When I started the work on this study, my initial plan was to travel to Khartoum in order to search in the National Records Office (NRO) for material written on the Humr or the Messiria tribe. My hope was to find sources by British government officials who had stayed or worked in the Western Kordofan region in the early decades of the 20th century that had not yet been studied with regard to the introduction of Native Administration and hence could shed some new light on the developments that followed. However, because the NRO unexpectedly closed in order to move its collection right before my planned stay, I had to cancel the trip. In stead I went to Durham in Great Britain to look for sources that could be used for my purposes in the Sudan Archive Durham (SAD). This archive holds a large collection of papers written by members of the British administration, and others who served or lived in the Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian period. Still it lacks the papers of a few significant members of the Sudan Political Service which were stationed in Kordofan during the 1920s and 30s, like for example the collection of Sir John Maffey who worked as the governor-general from 1926-1933 which are to be found at the NRO in Khartoum.

The most important primary source that I was able to find in Durham was the writings of P. P. Howell from 1948.<sup>7</sup> In addition I found some material regarding the Humr and the Messeria among the records of other British official such as K.D.D. Henderson, J. Robertson and A.C. Beaton. I have also searched the Sudan Notes and Records and have been able to find some relevant material here. Some travel tales have been written and published by British government officials who lived and worked in Kordofan in the relevant period, there does however not exist any such publication by a British member of the administration who stayed among the Messiria.

Among the data regarding Sudan at the Centre of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (SMI) and the Mahmoud Salih collection in Bergen, unfortunately little can be found on the Messeria tribes of Western Kordofan. The exception is an interview of Babu Nimr done by Francis Deng in 1984. This interview is valuable since it is the only available

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<sup>7</sup> For a general overview of my source material, see the bibliography.

source material that describes the relationship between the leadership of the Humr tribe and the British rulers from a Sudanese point of view. A collection of the most important laws and regulations which created the framework for Native Administration found in Khartoum, El-Obeid, Durham and London was published by Bjørkelo and Abu Shouk in 2004, and has also been one of the key sources in my work.

The value of the sources must be estimated individually according to probable motive and situation. It is naturally a weakness that I depend mostly on material written by the British members of administration since lacking the views of the members of the Humr society may create an unbalanced perception of the reality. The interview of Babu Nimr is hence a welcomed exception which can help to create a more balanced analysis of the relation and power balance between the Sudanese members of Native Administration and the British colonial rulers. All in all the primary sources on the Humr tribe are rare, and without access to the records in Khartoum it is difficult to draw any very certain conclusions. The sources are nevertheless sufficient to give a general impression of the situation, but I am sure that a closer look at the NRO in Khartoum would give a more nuanced image of the introduction of Native Administration in Dar Humr.

When it comes to secondary source material, the situation resembles the case of the primary material. Although it is possible to find written material on several Sudanese tribes with regard to their interactions with the British administration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, little research has been done on the Baggara tribes in Western Kordofan. Ian Cunnison's anthropological study of the Humr tribe from the mid 1950s is the only secondary source which focuses on the Humr tribe and can give some insight in the tribal society and political structures. Other studies done on other Sudanese tribes with regard to Native Administration has been useful in order to get an insight on how this administrative reorganization influenced the tribal societies in general, and has been very useful as comparative tools. The most important of these sources has been Ahmed Abu Shouk's work on the Bideiriya tribe and Talal Asad's study of the Kababish. Willy Pettersen's master thesis on the introduction of Native Administration in Darfur can also be mentioned in this respect.

The publications of Harold MacMichael's on the composition of tribes in both Kordofan and the Sudan in general, shed a light on the British government's policy toward tribal societies. Other useful studies on how Anglo-Egyptian rule in the Sudan affected the tribal societies in Kordofan can be found in publications by Stiansen and Kevane and Nicole Grandin. When it comes to works done on Sudanese history in general, there is more material to be found.

### **Structure**

The thesis starts by viewing the historical background of the Humr tribe from entering the Sudan around 1770, up to the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation 1898. The next section evaluates the reason behind the shift towards Native Administration and how the new administrative policy was introduced. Chapter 3 focuses on the Humr tribe, its pastoral way of life, migration cycle and the importance of genealogical descent. In respect to this I try to address how the British rulers aimed to structure the tribal societies, and how they used these structures in order to ease the organization and government of the Sudanese population.

Chapter four looks at how power was distributed among the Humr both before and after the Condominium rulers took over power in the Sudan. Here I also focus on how a member of the Humr tribe was able to obtain a position within tribal leadership, and whether or not he was able to remain in this position. The final two chapters seek to answer the questions asked in the beginning of my thesis, and analyse whether or not the administrative policies of the Anglo-Egyptian period influenced the structure of the Humr society or its political organization. In order to do this I will look at three different analytical models previously used to study other tribal societies within Kordofan, and try to evaluate if any of these models are more useful in order to understand the socio-political structures of the Humr tribe.

## **Chapter 2: Historical background; Western Kordofan**

### **18th century migrations and internal strife**

The Baggara nomads are estimated to have arrived in Western-Kordofan around 1765-1775. At this point in time the Sudan was not a united country, but consisted of a few mighty sultanates which controlled different regions. After having first lived around the Bagirmi and Wadai<sup>8</sup> sultanates in the west, the Baggara were forced to move eastwards and finally settled around the Muglad in Western Kordofan.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the history of the Messiria periods of fairly stable administration have been interrupted by internal strife which has created shifts in the power-balance. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century different Messiria factions were drawn into devastating wars over power within the tribe. The struggle over leading positions created conflicts on different levels of segmentation. Although the Humr gained control over the Muglad area, internal strife made the leadership unstable. However, during the 1860s and 70s internal peace was established as Faris Saluha obtained control within the Felaita, one of the two segments that together formed the Humr tribe, and Ali Messar securing the leadership among the other segment, the Agaira.<sup>10</sup>

### **From Turco-Egyptian to Mahdist rule**

In 1821 the Sudan was invaded by Ottoman Egypt forces, who overthrew the previously powerful sultanate of Sinnar which had existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Kordofan was conquered the next year by Muhammad Bey Khusraw<sup>11</sup>, also known as the Daftardar, who founded the administrative structure of the province making El-Obeid the headquarters. The new rulers brought with them an extensive bureaucracy and formed a new Sudanese administration based on an Egyptian model. The central government was

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<sup>8</sup> Bagirmi and Wadai are today a part of Chad.

<sup>9</sup> Henderson 1935: SAD 478/5/8

<sup>10</sup> Henderson 1939: 69

<sup>11</sup> Muhammad Bey was the son-in-law of Muhammad Ali Pasha who came to power in Egypt in 1805.

placed in Khartoum, while local government was structured to operate on three different levels.<sup>12</sup> Firstly the country was divided into provinces, or *mudiriyas*. Provincial governors entitled *mudirs* were chosen by Cairo to preside over the provinces, supervised by a *hikimdar*, translated as Governor-general.<sup>13</sup> The provinces were further divided into districts, and sub-districts, lead by a *kashif*, and a *hakim* or a *nazir el-khatt*.

Although a new form of rule was established, the Turco-Egyptian administrators did not try to eradicate the tribal system or tribal loyalties.<sup>14</sup> Previous territorial divisions within the sultanate of Sinnar had often followed tribal lines in both sedentary and pastoral societies, and each tribal group had been assigned its own *dar*.<sup>15</sup> Tribal sheikhs were made to pay tribute to the sultan, and powerful positions had been reserved to members of certain families who had attained a prominent position. After the Turco-Egyptian takeover many sheikhs, or “nobles”, were confirmed in their positions as agents of the foreign government, and were given duties such as to collect tribute and the liberty to administer their own affairs without being greatly bothered by the central government. A large part of the old system hence survived with the new administration, even though a permanent body of local representatives as consultants to Turkish rulers was not established.<sup>16</sup> One claim has been that the Turco-Egyptian colonial regime did not intend to establish an administration in the district, but practiced a “divide and rule”-policy in order to obtain control and be able to extract tax payments.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the fact that the Sudanese to a large degree were able to sustain their old tribal systems, the Turco-Egyptian rules were unpopular because of their alien and demanding nature. This was carried out through heavy taxation, plundering and exploitation at the expense of the Sudanese, with the *Daftardar* as ruler being particularly known for his cruelty.<sup>18</sup> Another issue that formed the basis for resistance against the foreign

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<sup>12</sup> Bjørkelo 1989: 40-44

<sup>13</sup> The *mudiriyas* were initially named *mamuriyas*, and was lead by a *mamur* in stead of a *mudir*. Bjørkelo 1997: 33

<sup>14</sup> Holt 1977: 16

<sup>15</sup> *Dar* means land or area. For example when referring to *Dar Humr*, this means the land of the *Humr* tribe.

<sup>16</sup> Bjørkelo 1997: 53

<sup>17</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 57

<sup>18</sup> MacMichael 1912: 22

administration was its attempt to abolish the widespread slave trade. Slave raiding was a very lucrative business for the traders and had initially blossomed under the Turco-Egyptian rule, reaching a high point in the 1870s.<sup>19</sup> In addition to being a source of revenue for the traders, the use of slaves had become an important source of agricultural labour in the Sudanese society.<sup>20</sup> The Baggara, who had become one of the major purchasers of slaves in the Kordofan region, were now able to acquire guns and horses which gave them a technological advantage.<sup>21</sup> However, the British involvement in Egypt starting in 1875 also had an impact on the Sudanese society and the possibility to commence in slave trade.

In 1877 the British general Charles George Gordon<sup>22</sup> was appointed Governor-General of the Sudan, and the same year Egypt and Great Britain concluded on a convention stating that slave trade was prohibited. Although this reform in reality only lasted a couple of years, the attempt to halt the slave raiding was met with great resistance, and resulted in the slave traders forming one of the significant groups that supported the Mahdist revolution at its outbreak in 1881.<sup>23</sup> The Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad b. ‘Abdallah, led the religiously founded uprising which was strengthened by the political, social and economic strains inflicted on the Sudan. The Mahdists were able to defeat the Egyptian forces, and by 1884 the rebels had obtained control over most of the country. The battle of Khartoum on January 26<sup>th</sup> 1885 marked the Mahdist’s final victory over the Egyptian administration. The British, who in 1882 had won the battle of Tel El-Kebir making Egypt a *de facto* British protectorate, attempted to aid the Egyptian forces. Their contribution was however insufficient and resulted in General Gordon being killed by the Mahdists. After coming to power the Mahdist established an indigenous Islamic state with a new leadership built on the administrative foundation laid by the Egyptians.

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<sup>19</sup> Bjørkelo 1989: 78

<sup>20</sup> Daly 1986: 232

<sup>21</sup> Beswick in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 152

<sup>22</sup> Charles Gordon was the British governor-general over the Sudan before the Mahdist’s took over power (1877-1879). One of his principal objects was to abolish slave trade. Bjørkelo 1989: 98

<sup>23</sup> MacMichael 1912: 35

## **The Mahdia**

During the Mahdist years the tribal system was subjected to a number of changes. The Mahdists recruited supporting sheikhs and members of their tribes for military positions, while other tribes were forced to move and seek refuge an account of their resistance against the new regime. Tribal leaders not in favour of the Mahdists were dismissed from office, kept under house arrest or killed. The result of this was that the Mahdia regime undermined the political structure of the tribal organisation in the Kordofan province.<sup>24</sup>

During the Mahdist uprising the Baggara formed one of the three most important groups who supported the Mahdist revolution and made its success possible.<sup>25</sup> The Baggara had suffered greatly in the hands of the foreign rulers, and were also driven by economic motives such as being able to continue making profits out of slave trading, escaping high taxes, together with the possibility to acquire booty from defeated rivals. The religious aspect of the revolt was on the other hand a less important factor for the Baggara. The support was based on the close relationship between the Mahdi and the Khalifa ‘Abdallahi b. Mohammad El-Ta’ishi of the Rizeygat.<sup>26</sup> Among the tribes previously forming the Messiria the Zurug were opposed the Mahdist movement, while the majority of the Humr joined the Mahdists under the leadership of Hammad Rigeyat. The non-Mahdist Humr were thrown out of Dar Messiria and sought refuge among the Ngok and their Chief Arob Biong until the end of the Mahdia.

When the Mahdi died in 1885 he was succeeded by the supreme Khalifa ‘Abdallahi.<sup>27</sup> As a measure to secure his position as the new leader, the Khalifa ordered his Baggara supporters to move and settle in Omdurman. The result of this was that many of the Humr followers left their home around the Muglad and migrated north. This compulsory migration severely depopulated Dar Humr, which again had an effect on the spread and organization of other tribes in the region. When the Mahdist state collapsed in 1898, the tribes who had been scattered by the Mahdist rebel forces began returning to their

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<sup>24</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 59

<sup>25</sup> Holt 1977: 134

<sup>26</sup> Henderson 1939: 69

<sup>27</sup> "Khalifa" means successor.



previous homes and gradually restoring their old tribal systems. The Baggara who had moved to Omdurman also begun heading back towards their dars in Western-Kordofan and Darfur.

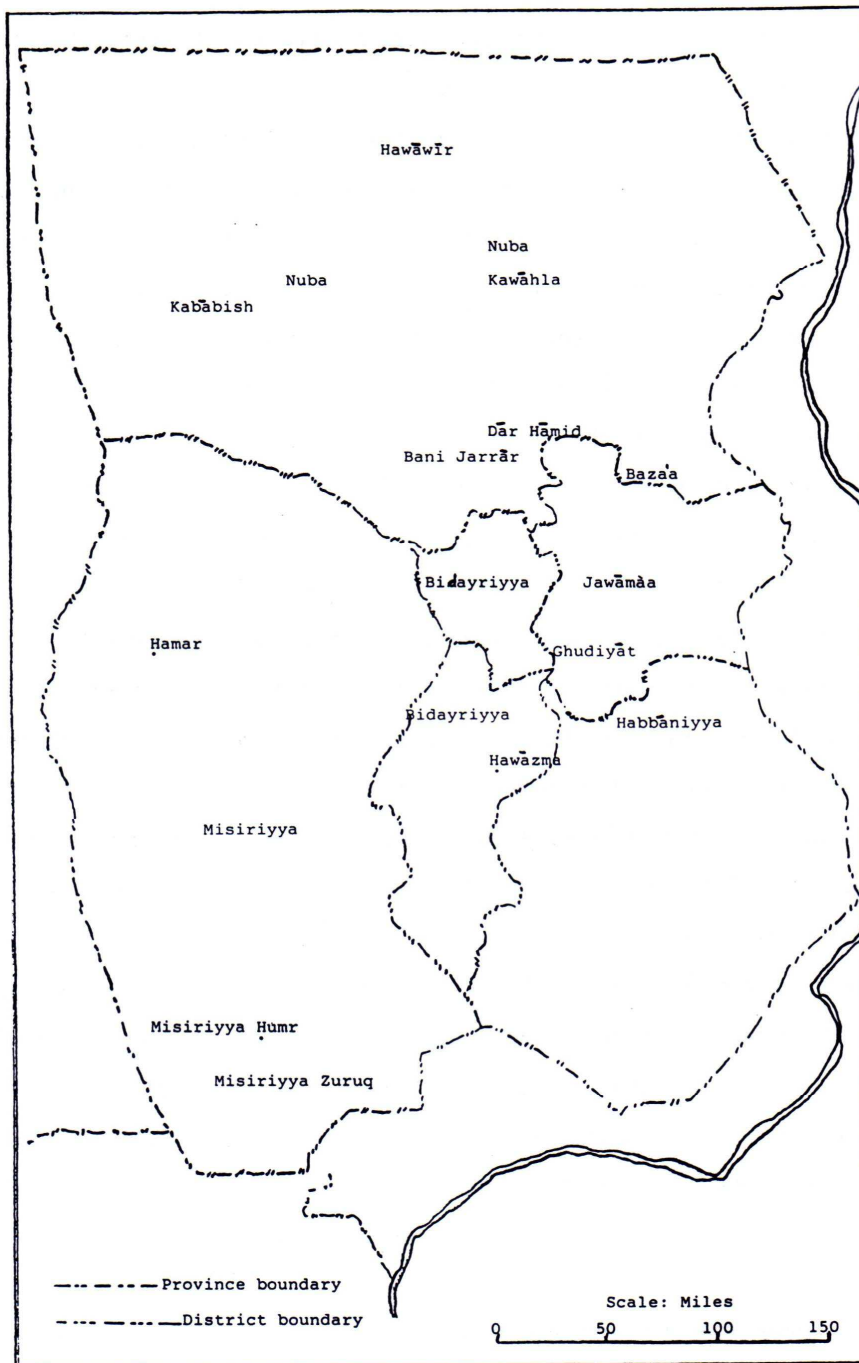
### **Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation and direct rule**

In 1898 Egyptian and British forces defeated the Mahdists and ended the almost fifteen year long era of indigenous religious rule. An agreement was signed on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January the following year, establishing a shared British and Egyptian rule known as the Condominium. Although the two countries had agreed on a joint rule, the administrative power to a large extent fell into the hands of the British, and a British Governor General was appointed as the highest ruling officer in the Sudan, subordinate to the British Consul General in Cairo.<sup>28</sup>

In the early Condominium years the new administration was dominated by the central government in Khartoum. The whole Kordofan province was placed under the Anglo-Egyptian forces which took over the province headquarters El-Obeid. The ruling hierarchy in the provinces was built on the administrative foundation created by the Turco-Egyptian rulers. Provinces were ruled by a British governor (*mudir*), assisted by a few British inspectors (*mufattishin*) and several Egyptian sub-governors (*mamurs*). The province governor was in charge of security, tax collection, land registration, the provincial treasury and the judicial system. He was also responsible for other provincial matters such as agricultural and industrial recourses, sanitary arrangements and education.

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<sup>28</sup> Bjørkelo 1997: 25



Map 2: The district division and major tribes of the Kordofan province (1929)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 37

In each province two British Inspectors were appointed to act as supervisor for the other members of the local government, and to make sure that the orders and regulations issued by the governor were rightly executed. The provinces were further divided into districts administered by sub-governors who were appointed from among Egyptian officers. Kordofan province was initially divided into ten districts, but these were later reduced to six.<sup>30</sup> The sub-governors' job was mainly to fill in reports on the information that they collected while travelling around the province in order to provide the British government with an overview of the rural areas of the Sudan.<sup>31</sup> This information was forwarded monthly to the central rulers in Khartoum through Intelligence Reports. The sub-governors were also in charge of registering land and cattle, collecting tax, as well as instructing village sheikhs in the rules and regulations of the government and making sure that these were followed.<sup>32</sup> They were again assisted by a small number of police staff also recruited from the Egyptian army. In addition to this there were a few other members of the local administration with various duties. While government officials in the earliest years of the Condominium had a military background, the administration became more civil throughout the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

The Condominium government encountered various difficulties that could potentially threaten the new rule. To gain legitimacy and undermine the former Mahdist rule it was important for the British to mark a separation between the new government and that of the “dervishes”<sup>34</sup>, which had created unrest and division within the traditional tribal systems. It was ordered that the new administration should try to establish a good relationship with the Sudanese population, and that they should be treated with respect.<sup>35</sup> The British sought to base their governing power on personal dealings with tribal leaders

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<sup>30</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 36

<sup>31</sup> *Kitchener's First Memo-randum to Mudirs* (1899) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 54

<sup>32</sup> The role of the sub-governors however gradually changed, and they ended up mostly working as local assistants to the inspectors, who on their hand became involved in both administrative and judicial matters.

<sup>33</sup> The British government officials in the Sudan became more and more replaced by civilians during the first two decades of the reoccupation. One of the reasons behind this was that the military personnel were needed in the South-African war as well as in the First World War. Another was the need for better educated and more suited personnel as members of the Sudan administration. There was hence a shift towards dividing the roles of the civilian and military personnel. Daly 1986: 92

<sup>34</sup> The followers of the Mahdi were originally called “Dervishes” (*Darawish*) and this name stuck to them in European writing. Holt 1977: 121

<sup>35</sup> *Kitchener's First Memo-randum to Mudirs* (1899) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 50

whom they could rely on. Many members of the British administration established strong positions in the provinces and close relationships with tribal leaders. However, this form of direct administration led by the central powers in Khartoum and built around personal connections to influential tribal members in the provinces, proved to be less than optimal. The disadvantages of this system became more and more apparent throughout the first two decades of Condominium rule.

### **Motives behind a new provincial administration**

The shift towards a new form of local administration was motivated by several factors, caused both by problems within the government and outside forces. The number of British officials in the Condominium administration, both military and civilian, had always been low, and due to financial reasons only the highest posts of the administration could be filled. Posts filled by other nationalities, mainly Egyptians, created the backbone of the district administration, but these members of the administration never attained an equally high rank in the central or provincial government.<sup>36</sup> During the first period of Condominium rule a growing dissatisfaction with the Egyptian members of the administration became evident. A general negative attitude towards the Egyptian co-rulers had become common among the British officials and they were accused of corruption, insensitivity and unscrupulous methods. While the British inspectors were given credit for government success, the mamurs were blamed for administrative failures.

In 1912 the British started to appoint Sudanese sub-mamurs to assist the Egyptian mamurs with the increasing work in the districts. The sub-mamurs were selected from members of important Sudanese families, but who also had to have the right education, age and character to be chosen.<sup>37</sup> The employment of sub-mamurs was motivated not only by practical benefits, but also by the wish to reduce the influence of the mamurs. The Egyptian element in the Sudan was also resented by the Sudanese. Influential religious leaders were among those who expressed their concern with the Sudan being

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<sup>36</sup> Daly 1986: 91

<sup>37</sup> MacMichael: *A Note for the Annual Report of 1921* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 92

under Egyptian control.<sup>38</sup> They preferred the Sudanese to be a people governed by their own laws, customs and administration, guided by the British and strongly felt the urge to eliminate the disliked and mistrusted Egyptians from the government.

The uneasiness of the British government officials was enhanced by the suspicion of the growing Egyptian nationalism. From 1919 to 1924 three different events took place which worsened the already tense relationship between the two condominium powers. The first of these incidents were the Egyptian revolution that sprung out in Cairo in 1919.<sup>39</sup> After this the British urge to weaken the Egyptian influence in the Sudan grew stronger. The trouble was that the Egyptian officials made up a large number in the administration which needed to be replaced. One alternative was to replace them with members of the educated Sudanese elite (the *effendia*) which originally had been needed in order to fill the subordinate positions within the bureaucracy of the new Condominium administration. However, the British fear was that the nationalist Egyptian tendencies had influenced the *effendia* and created a discontent with the alien ruling power, and educating more Sudanese would eventually lead to a similar situation as in Egypt.<sup>40</sup> This made the British officials apprehensive of this alternative, and instead turned to the thought of using tribal authorities as their governmental agents. Their choice stood between changing personnel and changing the administrative system in itself.<sup>41</sup>

The hope was that by strengthening the traditional power structures within the tribal society and giving them positions within the local administrations would help combat several dangers; Firstly to stagger the expansion of the *effendia*, and weaken the growing individualist and nationalist ideas.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, rebuilding a strong tribal leadership could weaken the power of religious leaders who potentially represented a threat to the British

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<sup>38</sup> Stack: *Note on the Growth of National Aspirations in the Sudan* (1919) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 74

<sup>39</sup> The Egyptian revolution of 1919 was a nonviolent protest against the British occupation. The revolution resulted Egypt gaining independence in 1922.

<sup>40</sup> *Extracts from Milner's Report* (1929) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 84

<sup>41</sup> Daly in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 109

<sup>42</sup> *Northern Governors Meeting, 1920. Powers of Native Chiefs and Sheikhs* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 79, Bence-Pembroke: *The Administrative Policy and Sudanese Nationalism, 1927* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 135

central government, like Sayyid Abd El-Rahman El-Mahdi<sup>43</sup>, Sayyid ‘Ali El-Mirghani<sup>44</sup>, and El-Sharif Yusuf El-Hindi<sup>45</sup>, since neglecting the wishes of the Sudanese people might lead to a re-occurrence of religious fanaticism and a spread of Pan-Islamic ideas.<sup>46</sup> Thirdly it was a wise move to grant the local leadership with more power before this became a demand, and hence a possible cause of local agitation. Also, the Sudanese had supported the government during the First World War which underlined the British reliance on cooperation with tribal leaders, and made it fair to recognise and reward this support.<sup>47</sup>

In 1924 two more instances took place that shook the British rulers. The first was the demonstration of the White Flag League in Khartoum which was a result of the British having lost the confidence of the educated Sudanese.<sup>48</sup> The same year the British Governor-General of Sudan, Sir Lee Stack, was shot and killed in an assassination in Cairo. This was the last of three serious events causing outside pressure on the British and lead to a change regarding the governing of the Sudan. The same year the Egyptian mamurs were dismissed from their positions in the Sudan and they were soon expelled. The British government’s loss of confidence in the educated Sudanese elite also resulted in the powers of the sub-mamurs being reduced and finally in 1927 the recruitment to these posts ceased altogether.<sup>49</sup>

Some of the motivating factors behind an administrative reorganisation were problems which sprung up inside the government itself, and one of these was the need to cut

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<sup>43</sup> Sayyid Abd El-Rahman El-Mahdi (1885-1959) was the son of Muhammad Ahmad El-Mahdi. After his fathers in 1885 Sayyid Abd El-Rahman El-Mahdi inherited his followers and used this support to establish a religious and political position and a relationship with the British rulers. He became the leader of the Ansar sect and the Ummah Party.

<sup>44</sup> Sayyid ‘Ali El-Mirghani (1884-1968) was the head of the Khatmiyya which were one of the most influential Sufi orders in the Sudan. The Khatmiyya were rivals of the Mahdists and supported the Condominium rulers after the overthrow of the Mahdist regime in 1899.

<sup>45</sup> El-Sharif Yusuf El-Hindi (1865-1942) was a influential religious leader and founder of the Hindiyya. After having first supported the Mahdists he became a strong supporter of the Condominium government after their takeover and collaborated with the British.

<sup>46</sup> Stack: *Note on the Growth of National Aspirations in the Sudan* (1919) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 74

<sup>47</sup> Bonham-Carter: *Note on the Administrative Policy* (1917) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 66

<sup>48</sup> Daly 1986: 293, Vezzadini 2007

<sup>49</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 171

expenses. Delegating power and responsibilities to local tribe members was cheaper than hiring educated civil servants to do the same job. Although the number of British officials in the Sudan was relatively low, the number of staff had slowly grown as the Condominium rulers had become more and more settled in the country.<sup>50</sup> British administrative officials were also carrying out routine services which could easily be done by less educated staff, and the establishment of a Native Administration could hence let them concentrate on carrying out more advanced assignments. The British government's previous reliance on men with military background to fill the roles of the mudir and inspectors had not proved to work out well, and rapid change of staff was a problem. This resulted in the personnel not having enough intimate knowledge of the district under their supervision and was an additional reason why a change was needed.

Finally, it has been claimed that one of the reasons behind a new administrative policy was the passing of the gilded age in Europe. The result was an alteration in the way of thinking which made representatives of the British administration in London and Western anthropologists wanted to preserve the remnants of the local communities in the colonies and resurrect the Sudanese social system which had largely broken up.<sup>51</sup> It was regarded as Britain's duty to guide the Sudanese back to a path on which they had been embarked for centuries, before outside forces had diverted them.

### **Early steps towards Native Administration**

The political and administrative challenges that the British faced in the Sudan during the early years of the Condominium had revealed a need for a structural reorganisation. This resulted in the gradual shift towards a new administrative system in the districts called Native Administration. The groundwork for shaping the principles of Native Administration were laid by Fredric Lugard who had served as British High Commissioner (1900-1906) and later also Governor General (1912-1919) in Nigeria. He

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<sup>50</sup> Reginald Arthur Bence-Pembroke, a British official serving in the Sudan from 1907-1927, staying in Kordofan from 1908-1915, claimed in 1927 that the number of British Administrative Officials had increased one hundred percent between 1908 and 1926. Bence-Pembroke: *The Administrative Policy and Sudanese Nationalism, 1927* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 133

<sup>51</sup> Daly 1986: 361, Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 16

presented a system of indirect rule that had previously been tested in other colonial areas such as the Gold Coast, Malaya, and both Eastern and Northern Nigeria. The policies used in these areas were further developed by Lugard into a more elaborate system based on four fundamental factors; Local sheikhs being appointed to rule and form a political hierarchy in the districts, a parallel hierarchy of native courts being established, local treasuries being formed, and British staff being appointed to supervise and guide the members of the local administration.<sup>52</sup>

The principles of Native Administration were not introduced to the Sudan as a whole, but were first tried out in suitable areas. Darfur and Kordofan in the west were ideal for this purpose because of the tribal structures in these provinces were still largely intact, and tribal leaders already had been able to maintain a great deal of authority.<sup>53</sup> As a contrast other areas of the Sudan had become greatly detribalized, which made it more difficult to get people to accept tribal leaders as new members of the local administration since customary powers of tribal sheikhs was previously recognized. Kordofan was inhabited by a large number of nomadic tribes living in vast rural areas, and the traditional hierarchical structure was still widespread.

The process of integrating Sudanese representatives in the local administration had begun already in 1912 with the appointing of sub-mamurs to assist the Egyptian mamurs. The British rulers carefully selected these among sufficiently educated Sudanese from important families and made up a class of minor officials who was to be in close contact with the people in the districts. In this way some of the local sheikhs were included into the hierarchical power structure and regained some of the political influence they had had prior to the Mahdist uprising. During the next few years small steps were taken towards giving more power to both sheiks of nomad tribes, as well as sedentary tribal groups in Kordofan. The result of these changes was a growing interest in the new administrative system.

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<sup>52</sup> Davies: *Note on Native Administration in Nigeria* (1925) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 95

<sup>53</sup> Daly 1986: 362



In his note on the administrative policy from 1917 C. A. Willis<sup>54</sup> pointed to the benefits of enabling influential Sudanese to administer justice, and suggested that a court of a few appointed leading men should be established in the “more enlightened districts”.<sup>55</sup> This court would be supervised by the British authorities who could overrule its decisions if felt necessary. Willis argued that an opening of the representation of the country families would not only increase the government’s authority by this being a popular idea among the native population, but also because it meant that the Sudanese would learn more about the administrative difficulties and hence understanding and accept the methods of the government better. In addition it would lessen the workload of the province sub-governors. The Darfur province was considered even better suited for the introduction of Native Administration, and in 1917, one year after the British had conquered this province from Ali Dinar<sup>56</sup>, the tribal leaders in this province were given the same administrative powers as those in Kordofan.<sup>57</sup> The current provincial governor of Darfur, R. V. Savile further extended this system by giving tribal leaders the powers to hear minor criminal cases and impose certain punishments.

One important step towards setting up a system of Native Administration in the provinces was the re-establishment of *nazirs*. This title had also been used during the Turco-Egyptian period to describe tribal leaders with administrative position. The first to be appointed nazirs were the leaders for the largest nomadic tribes in North and South-Kordofan. In 1911 the position of Omda was introduced as a part of the local government. This title was given to leaders of sub-groups within a tribe inferior to the nazir on top. The omdas were also appointed as an attempt to reduce the influence of

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<sup>54</sup> C. A. Willis was a member of the Sudan Political Service from 1905-31. In 1917 he served as Assistant Director of the Intelligence Department.

<sup>55</sup> Willis: *Note on the Administrative Policy* (1917) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 63

<sup>56</sup> Darfur was conquered in 1874 in the name of Egypt by Zubayr Pasha. In 1881 Slatin Pasha was appointed as governor over the province by Gordon, as the last Turco-Egyptian governor. Two years later Darfur fell in the hands of the Mahdists. After a period of unrest Ali Dinar succeeded in establishing a position as sultan and was able to remain in power until 1916 when the British forces eventually invaded Darfur with the help of the Kababish. Ali Dinar was killed the same year and Darfur came under British control. Daly 1986: 171-191

<sup>57</sup> Willy Pettersen 1986: 32

nazirs who were regarded as too powerful by the British.<sup>58</sup> In the central areas of the province inhabited by more sedentary tribes, omdas were appointed as leaders for their respective omodias.<sup>59</sup> In addition to this a number of sheikhs were given smaller responsibilities on the lowest administrative level. The sheikhs were appointed among the villagers by the central government, and functioned as an extended arm of the central government carrying out duties which needed to be done.

### **The introduction of new administrative ideas and a dual policy**

In the early stages of introducing new administrative ideas opinions differed about whether or not a shift from direct to Native Administration was a step in the right direction. Many of the British officials in provinces other than Kordofan and Darfur were less enthusiastic about the reform, and doubted the sheikhs' ability to be integrated as members of the provincial government. Skilled representatives were however hard to find, and sheikhs were tried out as poorly paid members of the administration generally viewed with a "watching" eye by the British rulers. Notes from the province governors meeting in January 1918 show that the process of including members of the Sudanese tribes in the local administration had spread to the Blue Nile, Kassala, and Red Sea Province.<sup>60</sup> This tendency became stronger in the following years, and notes from the Northern Governors Meeting in 1920 express a general agreement to adopt the policy used in Kordofan to the other Northern provinces to support the "solid elements of the country" in order to weaken the powers of the educated elite.<sup>61</sup>

In 1921 Lord Milner<sup>62</sup> published a report which supported the idea of Native Administration stating that the Sudan was best served through a decentralized administration in the hands of Sudanese authorities, supervised by the British central

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<sup>58</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 786/6/7. Paul Philip Howell was an officer of the Sudan Political Service from 1938-1955. During this time he was stationed in Kordofan from 1946-1948.

<sup>59</sup> The omodia consisted of the village and area around which was a part of the tribes Dar.

<sup>60</sup> *Governors' Meeting, January 23, 1918* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 69

<sup>61</sup> *Northern Governors' Meeting, 1920. Powers of Native Chiefs and Sheikhs* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 79

<sup>62</sup> The British statesman Lord Alfred Milner led a commission assigned to investigate and report on the reasons behind the Egyptian revolution in 1919. In this report he also commented on the situation in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan

government.<sup>63</sup> He felt that although a common platform needed to be maintained with regard to regulating the waters of the Nile which both countries depended on, the Sudan should be governed without Egyptian interference. However, the establishment of a centralized bureaucracy was not desired, but a decentralized administration made up by members of the Sudanese population. These authorities could be separated into two groups; the officials selected from leading Sudanese families who already served as members of the local administration (sub-mamurs), and the sheiks who ruled the different tribes and had attained a powerful position on the basis of this.

The Assistant Civil Secretary Harold MacMichael<sup>64</sup> had studied the tribal societies of Kordofan and Darfur during his years of serving there. He was of the opinion that the tribal organization of the nomads as very suitable as a basis for a local administrative system.<sup>65</sup> Although many tribes had disintegrated with their leaders losing a lot of their power during the Mahdia, MacMichael still felt that the sheik's traditional authority was strong enough among the nomads to be revived so that they could be further integrated in the local administration. He was nevertheless not among the most radical promoters of Native Administration and remained a supporter of Sir Lee Stack's dual policy until 1924. A result of the growing support of decentralized administration was the passing of "The Powers of Nomads Sheiks Ordinance" in 1922. This ordinance intended to regulate the judicial powers of sheiks of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. This meant that the sheikhs were granted the power to rule among their tribesmen within the limits considered desirable in each case by the province governor, and gave them the power to decide a suitable punishment in criminal cases and settle conflicts within the tribe.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Extracts from Milner's Report* (1929) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 84

<sup>64</sup> Harold A. MacMichael (1882-1969) was a British official who served in the Sudan from 1905-34 and became an important figure within the Sudan Political Service. From 1906-18 he served in Kordofan and Darfur, until he was transferred to the central government in Khartoum where he was Assistant Civil Secretary, before becoming the Civil Secretary from 1925-34. During his stay in Sudan he did a lot of research on the nomadic tribes, especially in the Kordofan province. These studies were published in *The Tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan* (1912) and *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan* (1922), and highly acknowledged by other British officials in the Sudan. (See more on this in chapter 3.)

<sup>65</sup> MacMichael: *The Administrative Policy of the Sudan Government Towards the Native Population* (1921) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 85-90

<sup>66</sup> MacMichael: *A Note for the Annual Report of 1921* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 93

More serious crimes were still handled by the British officials, who also had the power to overrule any decision made by the local courts.

The ordinance of 1922 did not open for a full scale introduction of Native Administration, but kept some restrictions regarding the powers given to the tribal leaders. The current governor-general, Sir Lee Stack (1917-1924), was sceptical of a total administrative reform, but fronted what has been called a dual policy.<sup>67</sup> Stack still recognized that the Sudan's financial problems, as well as other potential difficulties, could be solved by taking steps in the direction of Native Administration. His dual policy hence sought to reduce administrative expenses in the rural areas by giving the local sheiks more power, but at the same time established village courts and public advisory councils to make sure that some of the administrative power remained in the provincial centres under government supervision. Advisory Councils were informal meetings with sheiks and should be held by the Governors and District Governors from time to time in all the Northern Provinces.<sup>68</sup> Bence-Pembroke was one the critics of a dual policy and in his opinion a trial and error period of Native Administration was meaningless and had no real effect. It gave the Sudanese authorities no real power since the administrative system as a whole was on trial, and he meant that stalling the process of letting the Sudanese run their own administration meant opening the door further for education and nationalism.<sup>69</sup>

The assassination of Sir Lee Stack in Cairo in 1924 threw the political future of the Sudan out in a serious discussion. Many were now in favour of a more speedy development towards Native Administration. The many events which had taken place, as well as the general atmosphere of the early 1920s, made it ever more clearly to the British officials that the Sudan was ready for an administrative reorganisation. The 1924 crisis hence marked the end of the dual policy, and opened up for a broader introduction of Native Administration.

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<sup>67</sup> Daly 1986: 363

<sup>68</sup> *Northern Governors Meeting 1925* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 119

<sup>69</sup> Bence-Pembroke: *The Administrative Policy and Sudanese Nationalism, 1927* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 144

### **Further expansion of the Native Administration policy**

The tendency to support the new administrative policy was further strengthened by Sir Reginald Davies<sup>70</sup> handing over his notes on Native Administration in Northern Nigeria in 1925. Davies he had stayed there in order to observe the organization and functionality of this administrative system in order to see whether or not a similar administrative system could be adapted in the Sudan.<sup>71</sup> His notes described the hierarchical organisation of the Native Administration, how it differed from the central government, and the relationship between the Political Officers and the different personnel and organs and of the Native Administration. Although he felt that the system would have to be developed to suit both the sedentary and nomadic population, Davies believed that it would be possible to apply the Nigerian system without considerable modifications to large regions of the Sudan. He found the Sudanese system of nazirs, omdas and sheiks perfect to correspond with the Nigerian system of emirs, district heads, village heads and hamlet heads, and was certain that the tribal leaders of the Sudan was capable of administration given the same amount of responsibilities and under the same supervision as their Nigerian counterparts. On the basis of this Davies came to the conclusion that “no administration of native races by white men” could be perfect, but the policy of Native Administration had proved fruitful both economically and politically looking at the Nigerian results.<sup>72</sup>

The Northern Governors Meeting’s reaction to Reginald Davies report from Nigeria was positive, and recommended the drafting of a “Native Courts Ordinance” establishing Sudanese courts appointed by the province governor. Before the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation there had been no formal structures that could help the tribal leadership to exercise their power, such as courts, prisons or police to handle disputes. The tribe depended on a council of elders who made their decisions based on tribal custom or the

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<sup>70</sup> Reginald Davies (born 1887, dead?) was a British official and member of the Sudan Political Service. After having been stationed in Kordofan and Darfur he was transferred to the Central Government in Khartoum where he stayed as an official until 1935. In 1957 he published “The Camels Back: Service in the Rural Sudan”.

<sup>71</sup> Davies: *Note on Native Administration in Nigeria* (1925) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 95-109

<sup>72</sup> Davies: *Note on Native Administration in Nigeria* (1925) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 109

general opinion of the lineage. These loosely organized councils were now transformed into local courts whose powers and jurisdiction were founded on British legislation. The local courts were created for three purposes: to establish a local system where to settle local disputes based on customary law and government regulations, to organize the leaders of different tribal groups into courts who could settle inter-tribal conflicts, and to give the members of administration judicial powers in order to be able to execute their administrative duties with efficiency.<sup>73</sup>

The religious elements within the courts however caused reason for debate. The meeting found that the Native courts should not be religiously founded as the Nigerian courts, but continue to stay secular to prevent any religious leaders to take advantage of the Native court system to gain political influence. Instead religious notables were to be made magistrates of the courts. MacMichael on the other hand went further in précising that these Native courts should be definitely secular in order to strengthen the powers of the secular leaders as a counterweight to the men of religious standing, who always, according to him, would carry much weight in the Sudan.<sup>74</sup> In MacMichael opinion it would be wiser to not establish village courts as suggested by the governors in the Village Courts Ordinance, but to restrict these to towns in order to not create a conflict in authority with the nomad sheiks power to administer their own tribes.

With the new Governor-General Sir John Maffey<sup>75</sup>, the old dual policy was abandoned and the advisory councils, previously favoured by Stack, seen as dangerous platforms for the Sudanese Intelligentsia to take advantage of. Sarsfield-Hall, the current governor of the Kordofan province, supported Maffey's new direction regarding Native Administration and stated that a bold forward policy should be adopted which gave the tribal sheikhs a large amount of independence and definite powers of governance over their people in order to make them real and effective rulers.<sup>76</sup> In 1927 "The Power of

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<sup>73</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 96

<sup>74</sup> MacMichael: *Remarks on Item 17 of the Northern Governors Meeting* (1925) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 116

<sup>75</sup> Sir John Maffey (1877-1969) came from the Indian Political Service and was appointed Governor General in 1926 after the assassination of Sir Lee Stack two years earlier, which he remained until 1934.

<sup>76</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 68

Sheikhs Ordinance” was passed. This ordinance extended the grant of judicial powers to include tribal leaders of sedentary tribes, as well as territorial sheikhs, and not only nomadic sheikhs as the ordinance of 1922. Further it opened up for an increased authority of the nomadic sheikhs. In some cases Native Administration was introduced among people who lacked any memory of a tribal structure or authority power was granted to “sheikhs” without any form of hereditary precedence. One of those in favour of this was Reginald Davies, who pointed out that not only existing or formally existing tribal authorities should be made members of Native Administration, but that it also should be considered legitimate to add “evolved” authorities to the list.<sup>77</sup>

The 1927-ordinance first delegated more power to Sudanese authorities with regard to judicial activities. Introducing the new administrative policy first on the judicial side had the advantages of meeting little resistance, and made it possible to include tribes where the tribal organization had become weak and the hierarchy was dissolved.<sup>78</sup> Three types of courts were established under Native Administration: The tribal courts, village courts and civil courts (government courts). In addition to this there existed Mohammedan Law Courts. Tribal courts were set up in the large tribes with a nazir functioning as court president with a panel of important members of the tribe. These courts had the power to rule in criminal, civil and domestic cases arising within the limits of their jurisdiction. To avoid jurisdictional clashes between sheikh’s courts and Mohammedan Law Courts, guidelines were set up.

An additional point expressed in the ordinance of 1927 was that the sheiks could no longer “eat” the fines obtained through the judicial system, but were paid a regular salary and had to pay all imposed fines to the government.<sup>79</sup> The year after an amendment of this ordinance was passed in order to correct errors and point out that a court could not have a wider scope than the administrative jurisdiction. It also established courts for

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<sup>77</sup> Davies: *Further Steps in Devolution* (1929) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 173

<sup>78</sup> Davies: *Further Steps in Devolution* (1929) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 170

<sup>79</sup> Members of the Native Administration had previously been able to keep the fines collected within their jurisdiction as a part of their salary. Keeping this wealth was commonly referred to as “eating” it by the local population. This expression described how the nazir or omda was viewed to spend their wealth on entertaining guests or other luxury that could help to increase their personal status.

settling of inter-tribal and inter-regional disputes. One argument behind the need for inter-tribal courts was that most tribes was too small to keep their courts busy, another was that most disputes was inter-tribal anyway.

After the new policies of 1927 and -28, there still existed members of the British government who felt that the sheikhs should be freer to exercise their individual powers, and wanted to shorten the list of offences which were excluded from the tribal and village courts.<sup>80</sup> In 1932 “The Native Courts Ordinance” was passed as the last important Native Administration legislation under Maffey’s Governor-Generalship.<sup>81</sup> It aimed to provide one statutory basis for Native Administration in Northern Sudan where all the various previous enactments were incorporated. However, at this stage the attitudes towards further extending the limits of the tribal leadership had begun to shift. Now even Reginald Davies, who had been one of the keenest promoters of Native Administration, agreed that the administrative advances should consider the various administrative needs in the different areas of the country, as the dual policy of Sir Lee Stack originally had done. This trend gradually grew stronger and “The Local Government (Rural Area) Ordinance” of 1937 marked the end of the expansion of Native Administration.

The reasons behind why Native Administration had gone from being viewed as a successful policy, to a being perceived as failing, were several; Sudan’s economic development, the bureaucratic government, an emerging educated class, nationalist politics and Anglo-Egyptian rivalry.<sup>82</sup> Kordofan and Darfur were not equipped to deal with these changes and the lack of governmental effort to focus on administration of law, public order, education, public health and other necessary goods led to Western Sudan ending up in a permanent backwater. According to Daly it had become clear the Native Administration policy was at a dead end already in 1934 when Maffey left the position of Governor-General and was succeeded by Sir Stewart Symes.

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<sup>80</sup> Davies: *Further Steps in Devolution* (1929) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 173

<sup>81</sup> *The Native Courts Ordinance 1932* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 239

<sup>82</sup> Daly 1986: 373



### **When was Native Administration really introduced?**

Viewing the official documents of the British government one can argue that the Sudan was more or less centrally governed until Lord Milner published his report in 1921, and that Native Administration was only fully introduced until after Governor-Generalship of Sir Lee Stack had ended.<sup>83</sup> The events of 1924 convinced the British officials that a change was needed and led to a shift towards a faster and more extensive inclusion of the tribal leadership into the local administration. Still, it can be debated whether Native Administration in reality was introduced much earlier in provinces such as Darfur and Kordofan.

The British administrators placed in Kordofan had from the beginning of the Condominium been authorised to govern the province with little interference from the central powers. This vast province was inhabited by a population who were alien to the British not only regarding language, but also with respect to political institutions and customs. In order to gain control in spite of the communication difficulties and the shortage of staff, the administration hence adopted a form of Native Administration.<sup>84</sup> According to Daly, British officials who had worked in the Kordofan province knew that an informal policy of Native Administration had existed ever since 1898, and the annual “inspections” that took place should rather be viewed as an act to show its presence than the British rulers actually laying down the law.<sup>85</sup> This meant that there was little change with the adoption of Native Administration in the 1920s. Everything depended upon the sheiks personality and the willingness of the government to support him even where the new policy made discernible improvements.

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<sup>83</sup> *Extracts from Milner's Report, 1920* in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 83

<sup>84</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 62

<sup>85</sup> Daly in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 114

## Chapter 3: The Humr

### The ecological premises of Dar Humr

The Humr and Zurug, together forming the Messiria tribe, inhabited the southern regions of the Western Kordofan district. This district was an administrative unit which they shared with the Hamar, who lived in the areas covered with rolling sand dunes further north. The district capital was Nahud, situated within Dar Hamar approximately 140 miles south-west of the province headquarters, El-Obeid. Further north of Hamar land were the even dryer areas of the Kababish nomads. East of the Messiria lands lay the Nuba Mountains, and in the west was Darfur. The landscape surrounding the Messiria was mainly flat and contrasted the mountainous areas of the Nuba. Southwards Dar Messiria bordered Dinka territory along the Bahr El-Arab. The Bahr El-Arab was the most distinctive river in the district, its size naturally being at its' largest during the rains.<sup>86</sup> Other important streams in the district were the Wadi El-Ghalla and the Shalengo, both drying up during the dry season. The Keilak and Abyei lakes were the most significant lakes. Many different types of grass grew in the region, and vast areas were thickly forested.

Muglad was the primary town within Dar Humr, and was also the Humr's administrative capital. During the Mahdist period many towns and villages had been destroyed, and people were driven from their land. As a result several regions within western Kordofan experienced population growth in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>87</sup> Muglad had the largest organized market within Dar Humr.<sup>88</sup> Throughout the years Muglad also became an important centre of Dar Humr in other ways by attaining a double pump station set up by the British government, a hospital (although without a doctor), an elementary school,

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<sup>86</sup> This river was known as "Kiir" in the Dinka language. It was also sometimes referred to as the Bahr El-Humr.

<sup>87</sup> Nahud town had an estimated population of 7 000 in 1905, and 19 000 in 1947. Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 768/3/31. Arthur Charles Beaton was a British officer stationed in Kordofan from 1945-1947. His total service in the Sudan lasted from 1927-1954.

<sup>88</sup> In 1947 this market had a total of 81 traders, compared to Nahud who had 670 license paying merchants. Howell 1948: SAD 768/4/82-86

and a sub grade school. Muglad town was connected by road to El-Odaia all year round, and to Lake Keilak and Abyei between November and April, when the weather was dry enough.

### **The annual migration cycle**

The savannah belt which the Humr inhabited had a various amount of rainfall from north to south.<sup>89</sup> This made it necessary to move with the seasons in order to obtain enough drinking water for both men and cattle. The nomads moved in a regular cycle throughout the year, depending on rainfall. The rains' influence on the soil and vegetation regulated the conditions for grazing and cultivation of millet and cotton. Also if the ground became too muddy it affected the cattle's ability to move around and the humidity level affected the number of insects present.<sup>90</sup> Throughout the year Humr moved within four main regions: The Babanusa, the Muglad, the Goz and the Bahr. The Babanusa was a relatively small sandy area in the north and north-west of Dar Humr. This area was thickly wooded with low trees and bushes, and was used for grazing during the rains from approximately July to September. In the dry periods however, the area was not inhabitable, and the nomads moved south towards the Muglad.

The Muglad region had rich water supply, good grazing and was the main cultivating area for the Agaira section of the Humr tribe. The nomads stayed here for two parts of the year; before (Mai-July) and after (September-December) the rainy season. It was common to camp together while staying here, and grow millet fertilized with manure from the cows which they kept inside the camp during the night. When the grazing in the Muglad was finished around December, the Humr moved further south towards Wadi El-

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<sup>89</sup> The Humr migration has been described by several British officials who had served in Western Kordofan at different times, and made observations on the lifestyle of the tribes in the district. With reference to the Humr the observations of P.P. Howell, A.C. Beaton and Ian Cunnison stand out. Their descriptions may not be precisely coinciding, but small variations may have been caused by yearly changes in the physical environment of Dar Humr. I have tried to make a general description of the migration cycle based on notes from all the various sources. A good overview may be also found in Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/68-69.

<sup>90</sup> The most common insects in Dar Humr are mosquitoes and flies of different sorts. The flies are avoided since they can disturb the grazing or be carriers of disease. The tsetse fly, which can cause sleeping sickness among humans and nagana (leads to reduced growth, strength, milk quality, and eventually results in death) among cattle, does not occur in Dar Humr.

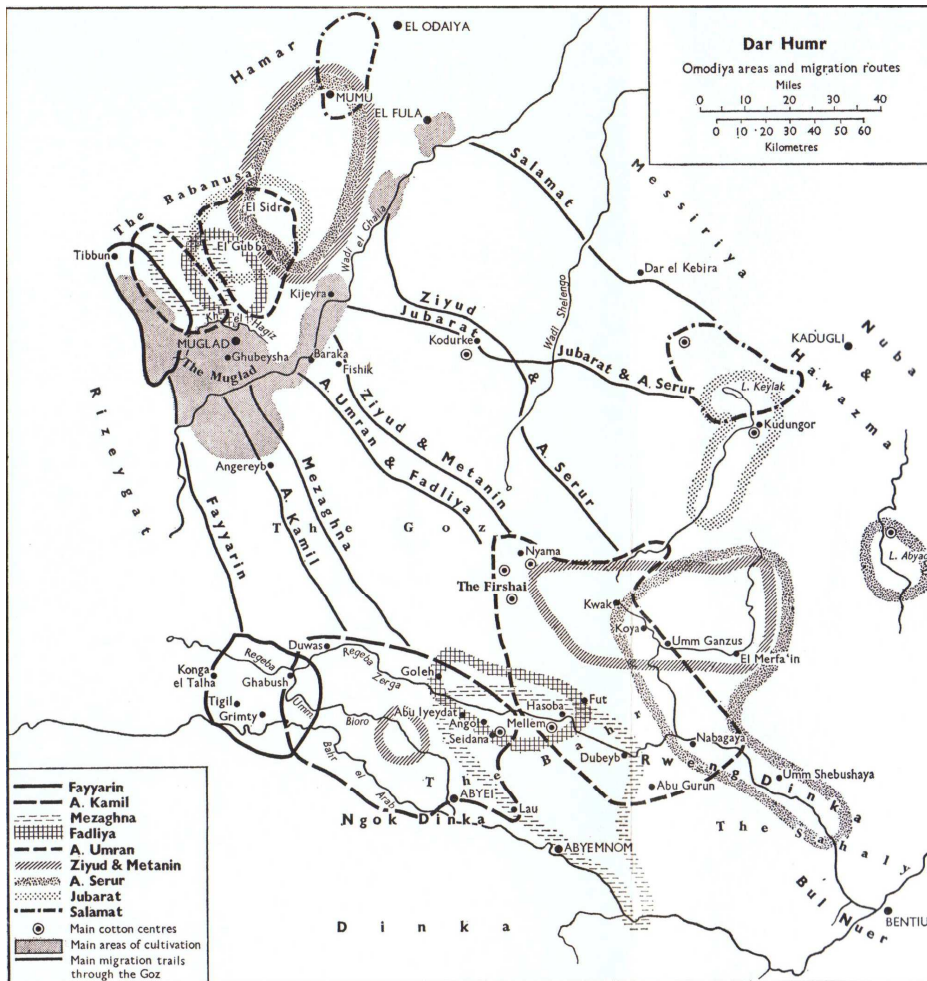
Ghalla in the Bahr region, named after the Bahr El-Arab that penetrated the area in the south.<sup>91</sup> On their way they moved through the Goz, an area similar to the Babanusa lying between the Muglad and the Bahr, but more wet and less infested with insects. The Goz was seldom used for camps of long duration.

For the latter part of the dry season the Humr camped in the Bahr region and took advantage of its watercourses connected to the Bahr El-Arab and eventually to the White Nile. The Bahr was a varied area with rich grasslands and swamp zones. Further east was an area with less water and in the south-east lay Lake Keilak, and Lake Abyad on the Ruweng Dinka border beyond. Towards the end of the dry season lack of grazing, more bothersome insects and muddy ground made it more difficult to stay in this region. In addition to the physical conditions, relationships with neighbouring tribes influenced the Humr migration cycle. The Dinka had permanent settlements in the Bahr region, but stayed south of the river for most of the dry season. Around April/Mai they started moving northwards, and the Humr begun returning to the Muglad where they then stayed until the rains again forced them to migrate further north to the Babanusa.

The Humr's two main sections lived and moved in different areas, where the Felaita movement was more north-west to south-east compared with the Agaira north-south movement. While the Agaira migrated south into the Bahr, the Felaita moved south-east to the area around Lake Keilak. The Zurug lived east of Dar Humr and also moved in three different zones throughout the year, with the Dagag corresponding to the Muglad region. The equivalent of the Babanusa lay along the Hamar border, and in the south-east the upper reaches of the Wadi El-Ghalla were used during the dry season.

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<sup>91</sup> The word "bahr" means river in the Arabic language.



Map 3: The migration routs of the Messiria omodias.<sup>92</sup>

### Pastoralism, agriculture and the importance of cattle

The Humrs' primary concerns were their cattle and the seasonal movements mainly depended on which area the cattlemen judged to have the best combination of factors for the cattle. The Baggara in general were called the "parasite of the cow", and their most essential household products came from the cow; milk, butter, cheese, meat and leather etc.<sup>93</sup> Both Humr and Zurug cattle were very mixed and therefore of poor quality. This

<sup>92</sup> Cunnison 1966: 224

<sup>93</sup> Kenneth David Druitt Henderson served as an officer in the Sudan Political Service from 1927-1953, and was during this period stationed in Kordofan from 1930-1936. He described the Baggara as "Arabs who

was a result of the drop in the number of cattle during the Mahdia which made it necessary to purchase new live stock from different neighbouring cattle owners in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>94</sup> The stock however grew fast during the early decades of Anglo-Egyptian rule, and it was lack of water supply rather than lack of grazing that controlled its further expansion.<sup>95</sup>

Crop production in Dar Humr was limited. The main reason behind this was that agriculture demanded weeks of settlement and was therefore naturally incompatible with nomadic migrations over long distances. A second reason was the strong prejudice against activities which interfered with the pastoral lifestyle. The Humr viewed a sedentary lifestyle based on agriculture as inferior to the free nomadic way of life, and those who were forced to become agriculturalists as a result of outer circumstances, would return to being pastoralists as soon as they had enough money to buy new cattle.<sup>96</sup> If there was a shortage in grain, this was bought with money acquired through the sale of cattle, sheep, goats, or animal products such as butter or hides.

The Humr however saw the advantage of producing grain for their own use and hence limiting the sale of cattle. Ian Cunnison, who stayed among the Humr in periods between 1952 and 1955, claimed that it was a wonder that the Humr cultivated as much as they did.<sup>97</sup> To manage the task of crop production combined with the pastoral lifestyle, the nomads had developed a cooperative system. This included shared herding in the planting and harvesting seasons, and leaving some of the camp members behind to look after the crop or grain depot in seasons when the rest of the tribe moved to a different area.<sup>98</sup> The

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had been forced by circumstances to live in a country which would support the cow and not the camel". Because of the Baggara did not treat their stock in a similar manner as other cattle-owning people in Africa, a difference which not only lied in the use of cattle as a beast of burden, but in the whole cattle culture. Henderson 1939: 49. Howell also notes that the Messiria had both camel- and cattle-owning sections while living in French Equatorial Africa. Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/5 and 59.

<sup>94</sup> Important qualities of the cattle were mainly the ability to walk fast so they didn't fall behind, the milk quality, and regular calving. Dinka cattle had few of these qualities, and were therefore not preferred among the Humr. Cunnison, 1966: 37. Another reason behind the poor quality in cattle was suggested to be inbreeding. Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/37

<sup>95</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/28

<sup>96</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/5/24 and SAD 768/6/71

<sup>97</sup> Cunnison 1966: 22

<sup>98</sup> Cunnison 1966: 74

Humr mainly cultivated bulrush millet, ground nuts, maize, and a few vegetables. A small number had settled down permanently in villages or near watering points and become sedentary.<sup>99</sup>

Throughout the 1930s the British government introduced cotton growing schemes to Dar Humr, and in 1935 a cotton growing scheme was established at Lagowa. The money made by the nomads was used to buy more cattle.<sup>100</sup> However, the cotton schemes had little effect on the pastoral lifestyle of the Humr and the variations in the world marked after the outbreak of the Second World War led to a severe decline in production, and finally to a halt.<sup>101</sup> Melons also grew in the region, and were valuable as a water source for both men and animals during the dry season. The melon seeds could be dried and sold for a good price at the market. Other important products that were traded at the markets were grain, butter, and other animal products. Gum trees which grew in certain areas of Kordofan, were not common in Dar Humr.<sup>102</sup>

For a pastoral nomad keeping cattle was the main interest, and not one of many elements of the economic life. The nomadic lifestyle of the Humr made it difficult to accumulate material possessions, and wealth was therefore measured in cattle. The number of cattle a man owned influenced his position and possibilities to become politically powerful.<sup>103</sup> Cattle were essential for a man to be able to provide food and transport for his family, and the products the cows made were the families' basis for livelihood.<sup>104</sup> For the Humr cattle were better than cash savings and material goods because they usually increased in numbers, and they were always useful. Cash, on the other hand, were necessary at times, but was of little value if a man was short of grain and far from the market.<sup>105</sup> Other means

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<sup>99</sup> In 1948 approximately 20% of the Zurug, and 7% of the Humr, were registered as sedentary.

<sup>100</sup> According to Howell it was mostly Zurug and Felaita Messiria who focused on cotton as cash crop.

Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/28

<sup>101</sup> Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 763/4/38

<sup>102</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 121

<sup>103</sup> Cunnison 1966: 28

<sup>104</sup> The liquid butter produced in excess was taken to the market by the women and sold there. The money they made were used to buy what the family needed, but didn't produce themselves, f. ex. sugar, tea and scents.

<sup>105</sup> Cunnison 1966: 38

to pay for expenses such as taxes, marriage costs and labour could be found through selling agricultural products, sheep, goats, or labour for a short period.

The British government made attempts to introduce new innovations to Dar Humr motivated by their wish to stimulate economic growth and improve the nomads' return on agriculture and pastoralism. Because of the difference between the British and nomadic way of thinking such innovations were not always met with the same positive attitude by the Sudanese. Improvements that allowed the nomads to prosper in their own traditional ways were however welcomed. Two of the more significant British introductions were the production of cotton as well as veterinary clinics and the use of vaccines to improve the stock quality.<sup>106</sup>

The Humrs' wish to remain pastoral nomads, with their main goal being to acquire as much cattle as possible, also had an effect on their view on education. Few children were sent to school but instead kept at home to learn how to take care of the cattle, which was a full time activity. Members of the tribe were raised to believe that all that was sweet in life came from the possession of cattle. Educating their children would therefore represent a threat since this could result in them becoming urbanized and give up the traditional pastoral lifestyle. Still the number of schools in Dar Humr grew somewhat in the Condominium period, with the British wanting to improve the possibilities for both boys and girls to obtain a low grade education.<sup>107</sup>

### **The organization of the Humr tribe**

The land in Dar Humr was formally owned by the government, and there were no sectional land rights. The sectional boundaries were vague and this allowed the pastoral nomads to move to the areas where rain had fallen. Although the Humr in theory were free to move around as they wished, the seasonal movements tended to follow a relative set pattern. The various tribal segments inhabited different regions in the south-western

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<sup>106</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/39. The administration of the veterinary services was built up around members of the local administration.

<sup>107</sup> Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 768/4/18



corner of Kordofan, and while the lines of migration went from north to south, the tribes organized themselves from east to west. The Humr's two main segments, the Agaira and the Felaita, moved in separate regions with the Agaira staying further west bordering the Rizeygat Baggara in the southern regions of Darfur. The Zurug occupied the areas east of the Felaita.

The territorial divisions were organized according to omodia. Omodias was an administrative unit which had been introduced by the British government in 1911. This unit corresponded to the next level of segmentation within the tribe, often referred to as *bedana* by the tribal members. Although the omodia was regarded by some as a rather vague term, it had a value in producing administrative stability.<sup>108</sup> The omodias could vary in size and was further divided into maximum and minimum lineages, called *khasm el-beit* (*beyut* – pl.), or clan.<sup>109</sup> These were again divided into smaller segments, with the *furqan* (*feriq* – pl.) being the smallest segment of a tribe, corresponding to the size of an extended family.<sup>110</sup> The tribe was built up around the idea that the segments were all connected by relation through patrilineal descent, with kinship ties being closest within the smallest segments.

The term tribe was used somewhat fluently, and could refer to both larger and minor segments within a lineage. At the same time as the Humr and the Zurug were called tribes, the Agaira and the Felaita segments were referred to in the same way.<sup>111</sup> Because the Felaita and Agaira preferred to solve their differences peacefully more often than they engaged in war, it was suitable to view them as “primary tribal segments” of the Humr tribe.<sup>112</sup> In contrast the Humr and the Zurug did not solve conflicts through peaceful negotiations unless this was a result of government pressure, which made it more appropriate to regard these as two distinct tribes. Still, if referring to the Humr and the Zurug in relation to other tribes of the same Baggara group, such as the Rizeygat and the

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<sup>108</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/5/47

<sup>109</sup> The terms for the tribal divisions could differ according to the different tribes and the context, and the words *bedana*, *khasm el-beit* and *omodias* were used variously. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/1. A *khasm el-beit* was also referred to as a clan, and *feriqs* as lineages.

<sup>110</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/5/48

<sup>111</sup> The common Arabic word that was used meaning tribe was *Qabila*. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/1

<sup>112</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/2

Hawazma, the name Messiria was often used. In Howell's opinion the Messiria had shown clear signs of being one tribe while arriving and settling in Western Kordofan, but expansion through natural increase and assimilation of late-comers made the Messiria grow apart and form two tribes.<sup>113</sup> This he reckoned as usual characteristics of tribal evolution.

The division of the Messiria into "Humr" (from the name *Ahmar*, meaning red) and "Zurug" (from the word *Azrak*, meaning blue or black) was interesting because it suggested that the two tribes to a various degree had mixed blood with members of black Dinka or Nuba tribes, which were mainly kept as slaves in the Messiria society. However, this did not correspond to the complexion of the two tribes, and the Humr could not be said to have any lighter skin than the Zurug. MacMichael pointed to a theory stating that these sub-divisions may have coincided originally with the division of all Arabic camel-owners and cattle-owners living in the north and south in general, and these names had been used as distinctions not only within the Messiria.<sup>114</sup> There was however no real evidence to back up this statement.

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<sup>113</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/2

<sup>114</sup> MacMichael 1922: 284

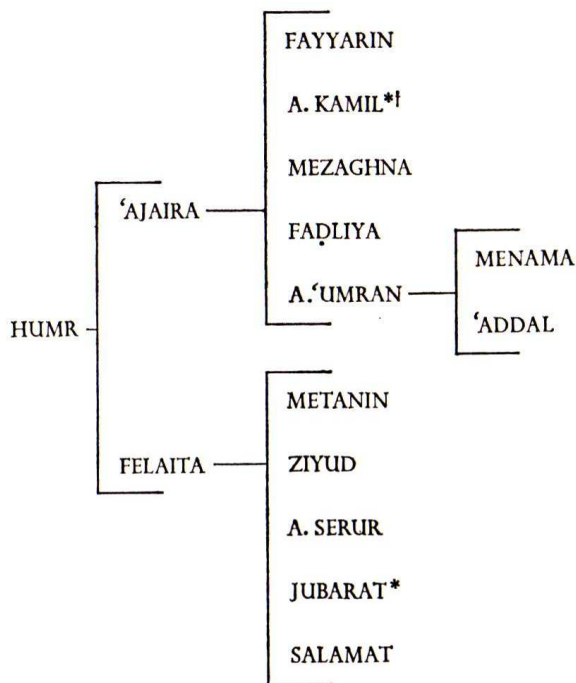


Figure 3: The Agaira and Felaita omodias.<sup>115</sup>

The different omodias occupied recognized areas throughout the year.<sup>116</sup> Whether or not the segment moved as one body or was dispersed over a larger area, varied according to the season. Members of the same clan tended to settle closer to each other during the dry or wet season, but this was not an absolute rule.<sup>117</sup> While staying in the cultivated area around Muglad, the members of the same segment could to be more dispersed. Although

<sup>115</sup> Cunnison 1966: 138. The A. (as in A. Kamil) is short for “Awlad” which means descendents of. Awlad Kamil ergo means descendents of Kamil. This overview was noted by Cunnison in 1966. Slightly different overviews over the omodias of the Agaira can be found in other sources. This might be an indication of how the relationship between the segments slightly changed over time, or it could be an example of how difficult it was to record an accurate listing of the tribal compositions. The Agaira were historically divided into five main segments (or bedana), but was for administrative purposes divided into six with the Addal and the Manama clans of the Awlad Umran being given the status of omodias. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/21. The Zurug consisted of seven omodias. Although five of these sometimes were vaguely classified as *Alawna* the Zurug was not divided into primary segments like the Humr was divided into the Agaira and the Felaita. The seven Zurug omodias were: Diri, Um Salim, Awlad Abu Nu’uman, the Ghozaiya, Awlad Heiban, Eineinat and the “Zurug”. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/3

<sup>116</sup> Organization from east to west, Agaira: Fayyarin, Awlad Kamil, Mezaghana, Fadlia, Awlad ‘Umran. Felaita: Metanin, Ziyud, Awlad Serur, Jubarat, and Salammat. Women are also organized according to this pattern when selling their products in the Muglad market. Rizeygat women are hence situated west of the Humr, and Zurug women to the east. In the same way Dinka are situated south of the Humr in the cattle market. Cunnison 1966: 26

<sup>117</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/61

the majority of one clan usually occupied one area, smaller lineages could be spread and more mixed than they would normally be. This was connected to the fact that each furqan could claim its own recognized plots of land, which was marked and returned to as long as the crops stayed good.<sup>118</sup> If a new and more fertile piece of land was found that no one had previously claimed, the extended family could switch plots. In this way cultivation rights were upheld by a tribal customs, although no formal landownership rights existed.

The Awlad Kamil was the largest of all Humr omodias and was a part of the Agaira branch.<sup>119</sup> A large portion of this omodia was sedentary since it was not particularly rich in cattle. The omodia was further divided into 6 clans; Awlad Kimeil, the Kelabna, Dar Um Sheiba, Sar Salim, Dar Mota and Awlad Tuba.<sup>120</sup> These clans were further divided into maximal and minimal lineages as follows:

- Awlad Kimeil
  - Awlad Bakhit
  - Awlad Kahil
  - Awlad Zbdel Aziz
- Kelabna<sup>121</sup>
  - Awlad Suleiman
    - Dirdiri
    - Rashim
  - Awlad Haran
    - Awlad Abdel Rahman Abu Nila
    - Nota'a
- Dar Um Sheiba<sup>122</sup>
  - Zarga

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<sup>118</sup> Cunnison 1966: 75

<sup>119</sup> Its estimated population in 1948 was approximately 15 000. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/13

<sup>120</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/13

<sup>121</sup> The Kelabna was the largest clan in Dar Messiria in 1948. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/17

<sup>122</sup> The division of the Dar Um Sheiba into Zarga (referring to "black" or "slave") and Hamra could be compared to the Messiria division into Humr and Zurug. In the case of Dar Um Sheiba the names were explained by some sons being freeborn, and others slave born. Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/15

- Awlad Shaili
  - Awlad Dakir
  - Awlad Gefeil
  - Awlad Um Helagi
- Hamra
  - Awlad Abu Sabun
  - Awlad Abu Mamun
- Dar Salim
  - Awlad Ghasibi
  - Awlad Bor
  - El Fadalla/Awlad Fadl
- Dar Mota
  - El Karamalla
  - Awlad Fadl
  - Awlad Taluh
- Awlad Tuba
  - Aiyal Safini
  - Awlad Abu Duheiba
  - Aiyal Fukkara
  - Aiyal El-Ghadani

As a general rule the territorial cooperation grew stronger the smaller a segment was, and more reliance could be placed on mutual assistance in economic activity. Still, economic cooperation did not create an automatic social organisation, and the only social unit that was constantly bound up to economic and territorial bonds was the *furqan*. As the smallest tribal the *furqan* described a group of people with close kinship ties. This unit formed the group that moved and set up camp together throughout the year.<sup>123</sup> A camp

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<sup>123</sup> Ian Cunnison calls this unit the *surra* and refers to a *feriq* as the camp. Cunnison 1966: 59

consisted of a maximum of 20 tents, and was organized according to the extended family's composition.<sup>124</sup>

In its economic activities and seasonal movements the Humr tribe was sufficiently homogenous for a description of one furqan to count for the whole tribe. Ideally a camp should make up a unit named after the furqan's senior living male and consist of the males of a furqan and those dependent on them. It should move, settle, look after the herds and shear the burdens of hospitality together, as well as exhibit complete solidarity. In reality, however, a furqan seldom stayed together in one camp. Instead some of the furqan members stayed in splinter-camps, who settled near the other furqan members. The camp's composition hence varied according to the season since members of one furqan could move differently according to cultivation and grazing possibilities.

The close family ties within a furqan were generally upheld through marriages between members of the extended family. Marriage between cousins was usual among the Humr, and was preferred in order to retain wealth within the kinship group. The fact that a man had to ask permission from the male cousin of a girl who was intended to marry her, before he himself could show an interest, emphasized this principle. Still there was generally much freedom regarding marriages, and often a man would marry his cousin and then divorce her.<sup>125</sup> Divorces were quite common in Baggara societies, especially among the ideal cousin marriages. After a divorce both parties were free to marry again, including someone from another furqan. The result of this was that a camp could include members of different feriqs and be more mixed than the ideal aim. According to Islamic law a man was allowed to have up to four wives, and usually some of these were from another furqan, or even from a different clan.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> According to Howell, a feriq could vary in numbers ranging from 12-50 people. Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/63

<sup>125</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/75

<sup>126</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/75

### **Common features of a tribal segment**

If not for the purpose of marriage, people outside the furqan could become attached to a camp for economic reasons. A rich man with a big herd attract followers who were poorer and in need of a stronger and wealthier man for economic assistance. By lending or receiving a cow, or another form of economic assistance from a wealthier kinsman, the poorer party became in debt to his benefactor. In such cases the family-ties were not necessarily close, and a poor member of another furqan could join a new camp and change his affiliation to the furqan of his supporter. This form of dependency could develop into a patron-client relationship, which often also affected the patron's political position. Since a man with many followers was more likely to make a name for himself, a man who owned a lot of cattle naturally acquired a leading role. His reputation and popularity was influenced by his generosity through the loans and gifts he handed out, or by his hospitality towards both kinsmen and strangers. Cattle ownership was linked to both domestic and political interests, and the ability to fulfil political aspirations started in the ability to control and maintain a family. In this way economic and political power was connected within the Humr tribe. Wealth brought both power and responsibility, and this created a drive towards always attaining a larger herd.<sup>127</sup>

The significance of a camp, with the furqan at its basis, was clear. No matter how mixed the origins of a camp were it took its name from the furqan with which it was associated. A man's reputation was associated with the reputation of his furqan. The cattle of one furqan were a unit, and the number of people dependant on this herd showed the ability of the furqan's leading mans to attract kinsmen as economic dependants and adherents, which again boosted his reputation.<sup>128</sup> A khasm el-beit or clan generally moved as a body, although feriqs often would break away temporarily, or even permanently, to join other clans. Throughout the year, members of the different segments could split and

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<sup>127</sup> This was by Cunnison described as "the cattle urge". Cunnison 1966: 31. It was the number of cattle that was important and the real measure of wealth, not the quality. However, Howell pointed to the reason for this might be that in that in a country where disease was a common problem it was better to own three bad cows rather than one good, for then at least one cow might survive an epidemic. Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/59

<sup>128</sup> Cunnison 1966: 58

reunite according to the seasonal conditions for the cattle, cultivation and division of labour.<sup>129</sup>

Different segments had certain features in common, generally shared by the members of the same clan. Among these were having the same distinct drum call which was guarded and followed by the men, as well as the cattle, within the same group.<sup>130</sup> These drum calls helped the members of one clan to stay close, even though they for some periods of the year were dispersed over a wide area. In thickly forested regions of Dar Humr these drum calls were also necessary for both men and cattle in order not to get lost. The drum calls were guarded, but could be sold to another clan in exchange for cattle. An additional feature which contributed to distinguish one segment from another was cattle branding. The Agaira, Felaita and Zurug cattle were all branded with different marks, and while for instance the Agaira marked their cows with a long curving line on the left hand rump, the Felaita's mark was placed over the left eye.<sup>131</sup> Further more each clan had its own distinctive mark, and each lineage had a special brand or ear mark. Marking the cattle two or more times made them easy to recognize.

As an example of the common features of a segment, one can again look closer at the clans of the Awlad Kamil. All of the six clans had distinct drum calls shared by all the members of the smaller segments. The cattle brands were on the other hand much more detailed according to lineage and family, and the markings indicated for instance that members of the Hawazma Baggara had changed their affiliation after having married into the Awla Fadl lineage of the Dar Mota clan and settled among the Agaira.<sup>132</sup>

The duty to avenge in the event of a homicide was also closely linked to kinship rules. The tribal society was structured according to the ideas of common descent, which was clearly expressed if a tribal member was killed. If for example a Humrawi was killed by a Zurug, every member of the Humr tribe had a duty to avenge his death. In a case of a

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<sup>129</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/6/69

<sup>130</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/9

<sup>131</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/8

<sup>132</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/17



Felaita killing an Agaira, all members of the Agaira section had the same obligation. This system was applicable regarding all segments of a tribe, including omodia, clan and furqan-level. In order to prevent a blood feud, the offended party could demand that the family or clan of the violator should pay them blood money, or *dia*, in order to make up for their loss. The rules for what the blood money payments should amount to was decided by the leadership of the segment which both the effected families belonged to. This meant that in a case of a Felaita killing an Agaira this matter would be settled by the Humr common leadership. However, in the case of a man killing another man from a neighbouring furqan of the same lineage, this would be settled by the elders of from this lineage. The obligations regarding blood money later became integrated and regulated as a part of the local administration through formally agreed on rules.<sup>133</sup> Failure to fulfil these rules was a clear sign of internal friction.

The organization and unity of a tribal society was largely shown in times of unrest. In times of conflict segments could collaborate on according to common descent on a higher level. Still, groups could also unite across the kinship lines. The Felaita omodias could for instance unite against each other, with the Metanin fighting the Awlad Serur and the Ziyud, the Salamat and the Jubarat joining one of the two sides.<sup>134</sup> According to Howell, it also happened that an omodia could split up to support two rivalling parties in a conflict. Political alliances did therefore not always follow the lines of segmentation, but could form across the lines of kinship ties. Neighbouring omodias from different tribes could for example unite based on common territory and moving together through the seasons. Another source for alliance building was intermarriage. Marriage could this way be used as a mean for two groups to find unity if this would give benefits.

The need for peaceful relations was strong when the tribes had to stay close to each other during the cultivation period and while camping near water points in the dry season. The fact that the Felaita, who had the opportunity to spread more than the Agaira, also had a long and bloody history of feuds could be an example of this. Since the boundaries

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<sup>133</sup> Babu Nimr gives an overview of the amounts that were settled on as blood money payments between the Humr and larger neighbouring tribes such as the Hamar, the Rizeygat and the Dinka. Deng 1982: 18

<sup>134</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/31

between the different segments were not closely defined or guarded, small groups could move across boundaries without much consequences. Large scale invasions were however resented. There was however generally few internal disputes between members of the Humr tribe regarding water or grazing rights. Most disputes of any importance affecting the Humr occurred between them other groups such as Zurug, Dinka and Rizeygat.<sup>135</sup> During the reign of Babu Nimr the Humr had good connections with the Ngok Dinka and this prevented any major outbursts of conflict.<sup>136</sup> Still, some clashes occurred with the Malwal and Rueng Dinka who moved into Humr grazing areas in the south.<sup>137</sup>

In 1942 the Humr and the Zurug was amalgamated into one Messiria tribe. Before the amalgamation all of the three factions, Agaira, Felaita, and Zurug, could be compelled to contribute to paying blood-money to settle a feud in case of murder, but after 1942 this was limited to the killer's omodia. The agreement of common responsibility was essentially an admission of unity, but this unity was broken only five years later in 1947 when the Zurug refused to pay dia.

### **The importance of genealogy**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was generally recognized that the tribal societies of the Sudan who had not suffered a great deal for detribalization, was organized after a segmentary system where power followed the linear kinship ties on the father's side. Members of the same tribe descended from a mutual ancestor and the relation grew closer as the segmented units became smaller. Segmentation theory and the organization of tribes in the Sudan, was greatly influenced by the writings of the British official Harold MacMichael. He started collecting information and creating genealogical overviews of the different tribes of Kordofan early in his official career, based on the information he had gathered while on trek in the district around El-Obeid.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Cunnison 1966: 27

<sup>136</sup> Deng 1982: 50

<sup>137</sup> Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/18

<sup>138</sup> MacMichael was posted in Kordofan from 1906-1912.

In 1912 his first book “The tribes of Northern and Central Kordofan” was published. Here MacMichael gave an account of the organizations of every tribe in Kordofan, which included also listed the subdivisions of the Humr.<sup>139</sup> This publication was accepted as an authority on its field, but has later been criticized on account of its few documentary sources and the fact that most of it is based on interviews with local people who remained unidentified.<sup>140</sup> MacMichael was instead more interested in *nisbas* (genealogies) which formed the basis of his historical judgements.

The genealogies that formed the backbone of MacMichael’s studies, was based on the assertion that a tribes was a static unit. The tribal segments had however never been static, and although explained superficially in terms of kinship, the kinship pattern were most often only a fact within the smaller tribal segments.<sup>141</sup> If there was a benefit to be gained by changing their association from one lineage to another, members of tribal segments would readily do this and accordingly provide a fictional link to their new genealogical tree to justify their transition. As seen among the Awlad Kamil a careful investigation of cattle brands and their distribution within the different tribal segments, could demonstrate how the Humr society was made up of many different combinations.<sup>142</sup>

Howell pointed out that his investigation of genealogical trees had sometimes resulted in a show of opposition and statements like “Are we not all Messiria?”.<sup>143</sup> A thorough investigation of tribal origin was not welcomed since the theory of common descent in most cases was more an ideal than actual reality. It was not to the benefit of the tribal members to question the validity of the kinship which their society was built upon. The political associations and social obligations between members of a tribe or tribal segments were normally an expression of kinship, and it was hence important to sustain the fiction of a common lineage. Any attention drawn to the fact that segments within the same clan or tribe differed in origin was hence resented, and the tribal members would in

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<sup>139</sup> MacMichael 1912: 144

<sup>140</sup> Daly in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 104

<sup>141</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/5/56

<sup>142</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/16

<sup>143</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/7

stead provide the British inquirers with information that backed up the theory of tribal unity.

In 1922 MacMichael published a second book regarding the tribal organisation “A History of the Arabs in the Sudan”, the same year as “The dual mandate in British tropical Africa” by F. Lugard came out. MacMichael’s book was used to provide a scholarly apparatus for discussion of Native Administration. In retrospect it has been claimed that this book was warmly received, deeply misunderstood, but probably little read. This book, like the former, gave massive evidence that the northern Sudanese “tribes” were far from static entities and in some cases not tribes at all.<sup>144</sup> Although this book really reflected how families or clans created coalitions within the rural administration, and that authority could shift between various lineages, MacMichael and other members of the British administration used the book to argue the opposite, namely that the Sudan’s rural political organisation was stable and unchanging. In spite of the many flaws in his research MacMichael was largely adopted as an official historian and his publications from 1912 and -22 were treated as classics and not disputed.

The reason behind why these publications were so greatly embraced and used as a basis for the structuring of Native Administration is connected to the British need for control. By organizing the nomadic population living in hard to reach areas, it became easier for the British to obtain an overview. The tribal society was structured into units which were considered to be static. These structures were ideal for the purpose of government and as the foundation for the establishment of Native Administration. The fact that different segments of a tribe could form alliances crossing lines of kinship, and even break away and become attached to another lineage, conflicted with the British way of organizing the tribes. In such situation the government officials would hence try to mediate between the quarrelling groups in order to keep the tribes unified.

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<sup>144</sup> Daly in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 110

## Chapter 4: Power and administration in Dar Humr

### Traditional leadership and administration in early Condominium years

The socio-political structures of the Humr tribe after arriving in Kordofan in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a part of the larger Messiria group were largely influenced by rivalling tribe sections and shifts in power balance. In 1838 the Humr revolted against the Zurug at the battle of Fut, making them the masters of the Muglad region and leaving the Zurug leaderless after killing Sheikh Abdul Gadir Abu Agbar.<sup>145</sup> The Humrawi leader, Ali Abdel Gurun of the Awlad Serur, was first able to strengthen the Felaita's position among the Humr at the expense of the Agaira, but did not manage to create a stable and lasting administration. After his death the power shifted to the advantage of the Agaira who now prospered at the Felaita's expense. Still, the descendants of the Awlad Serur were able to sustain their leading position among the Humr which did not please the Metanin, another Felaita segment who formally had held a high position among the Humr.<sup>146</sup> The Awlad Serur eventually lost the battle for power among the Felaita and were driven out of Dar Humr around 1865. The new leader of the Felaita, Faris Saluha, was able to attain a ruling position and establish internal peace, although he continued to be pressured by outside forces. Among the Agaira Ali Messar of the Awlad Kamil obtained control, and by being the first to seek alliance with the Mahdi through the agency of his godson, he was able to preserve his leading position in the following years.<sup>147</sup>

After the defeat of the Mahdists in 1898, the Messiria quickly came under steady government control.<sup>148</sup> In 1903 it was decided by the present Governor of Kordofan, Miralai J. R. O'Connor that the Agaira should be chosen as the leading branch among the

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<sup>145</sup> According to Henderson the Messiria had originally been united under the strong leadership of Abdul Gadir Abu Agbar after arriving in the Muglad region, but the situation changed around 1838 when Abu Agbar's continuous oppressive ruling drove the Humr to revolt, and divided the two Messiria factions. Henderson 1939: 64.

<sup>146</sup> Henderson 1935: SAD 478/5/9

<sup>147</sup> Henderson 1939: 69

<sup>148</sup> The Messiria in this way contrasted for example the Rizeygat Baggara living further west who managed to stay more or less independent until the overthrow of Ali Dinars' rule in Darfur in 1916.

Humr based on their two thirds population majority. Ali El-Gulla of the Awlad Kamil was appointed as head of the Agaira after Ali Messar had waived his claim for power on account of his old age and illness. This was a decision made on Inspector-General Slatin Pasha's recommendation.<sup>149</sup> One view has been that his role and the later importance of his descendants within the Agaira may have been founded on his family's sudden access to wealth through their connection with General Gordon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>150</sup>

In the early years following the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation, the Nazir had supreme power among the Messiria and was not challenged by any sectional leaders. Ali El-Gulla was the first nazir appointed by the British government in Dar Humr, and became a very significant figure in Humr politics. He agreed to establish a separate nazirate for the Felaita and in 1915 Aris El-Mahi of the Awlad Ziada was made nazir of the Felaita, after having pushed Mekki Hassib of the Metanin Awlad Arifa off the throne.<sup>151</sup>

The Felaita suffered more from the internal struggle for power than the Agaira in the earliest decades of Anglo-Egyptian rule. After having been appointed as omda of the Jubarat, El-Hag Agbar was able to take advantage of the unsettled situation. He was later elected as nazir and managed to establish a solid political position. The family of El-Hag Agbar obtained a similar position as the descendants of Ali El-Gulla, both becoming the leading branches within their tribe and remaining in power for many decades. As nazir of the Agaira faction Ali El-Gulla however maintained a superior position, and acted as the highest nazir, Nazir Umum, for the whole Humr tribe.

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<sup>149</sup> Rudolf Karl von Slatin, also known as Slatin Pasha (Bey) was an important figure within the administration during the early years of Condominium rule. He had been the Governor of Darfur under Turco-Egyptian rule, but was imprisoned after the Madhist takeover. Here he made friends with Ali El-Gulla during Gulla's time with the Khalifa in Omdurman. (Cunnison 1966: 136) He later managed to escape and made his way back to the Sudan with the reoccupation forces as Director of Military Intelligence. Through his position he was able to help Ali El-Gulla who had been put to jail after the condominium seized power in 1898. As a member of the Condominium administration Slatin had a better grip on Sudanese political affairs from 1900 to 1914 than very few others. (Daly 1986: 54-92) His many connections on the local level with tribal leaders and sheiks gave him very influential role, and he was hence appointed to Inspector-General as an official member of the government. As the local administration was built out Slatin lost his position. The old contacts gradually became fewer as old tribal leaders were exchanged. Finally the position as Governor Inspector became obsolete, and was terminated after his Slatin's resignation in 1914. Daly 1986: 62

<sup>150</sup> Cunnison 1966: 135

<sup>151</sup> Henderson 1939: 71

Although under official British control, the double nazirate suffered from little interference from the British administrators. Slave trading continued even though it officially had been made illegal. Ali El-Gulla was for many years able to profit on slave raiding because of the present confusion around the Bahr El-Arab, which was caused by the lack of clear division between the Humr and the Rizeygat in the area.<sup>152</sup> A common problem in the Baggara regions was the rivalry between Baggara and Dinka tribes. In the early Condominium years the Twinj- and Malwal Dinka neighbouring the Ngok Dinka had been harassed by Rizeygat returning from Omdurman, at the same time as they were trying to resist the new government. The Ngok Dinka living closest to Dar Humr had on their hand been spared from many troubles by coming to terms with the Humr, and their leader, Kwal Arob<sup>153</sup>, having accepted the British overlords and enrolling himself in El-Obeid as a subject of Kordofan. The Humr and the Ngok started bringing their grievances against each other to government officials at Nahud for settlement already in 1912, and their good relationship worked to prevent any serious friction in their shared areas around Bahr El-Arab.<sup>154</sup> Still, some sections of the Humr kept up the slave raiding among the Ngok, which resulted in the Ngok seeking protection from the government after having initiated a more serious collaboration in 1922.<sup>155</sup>

Ali El-Gulla managed to rule quite unrestrained in Dar Humr up to 1910. His continuous “eating” of the tribe’s wealth however made him less popular among his tribesmen and this developed into a desire for change. In 1911 omdas were introduced by the British government as an attempt to reduce the nazirs’ powers. In the absence of having another strong leader who could push Ali El-Gulla off the throne the opportunity to reduce his power through the omdas were therefore welcomed. Ali El-Gulla’s influence rapidly declined, and he was finally persuaded to give up his power in favour of his son Ali Nimr

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<sup>152</sup> Henderson 1935: 478/5/12

<sup>153</sup> Kwal Arob was the son of Arob Biong and came to power when his father died in 1905. Kwal Arob ruled for almost 40 years and became together with his son, Deng Majok, one of the most important Ngok leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>154</sup> Abiem in Henderson 1977: SAD 661/8/18, Deng 1982: 50

<sup>155</sup> Beswick in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 156

El-Gulla who was elected as nazir of the Agaira in 1918.<sup>156</sup> Still, after having resigned Ali El-Gulla tried to maintain a form of political influence and through interference with the dismissal and appointment of omdas of the Awlad Kamil created much trouble for Ali Nimr who eventually managed to settle the dispute and prevent further rivalry within the Agaira.<sup>157</sup>

In 1924 Ali Nimr died of pneumonia. This was considered a great loss to the Agaira as well as the government, since he was generally regarded as a strong and honest leader. Gebr Ali Messar was appointed regent as Ali Nimr's son, Babu Nimr, who was only 15 years old and still too young to take over his father's position. Because of his tendency to cause alarm within the local administration and in order to stop him from trying to attain power while Babu Nimr was still a minor, Ali El-Gulla was exiled to Omdurman by the British. In 1932 Babu Nimr was old enough to assume power. During the course of his nazirship he became regarded as an able and reasonable leader, qualities which, according to Henderson, to a large degree should be viewed as a result of the advice and discretion shown by the ruling men around him while growing up.<sup>158</sup> In 1937 the Agaira and the Felaita were amalgamated into one unit under the leadership of Babu Nimr, with El-Hag Agbar stepping down to become a *wakil*.<sup>159</sup> Although the two segments were now united, the separate control continued. Still the amalgamation of the two segments functioned reasonably well with Babu Nimr as Nazir Umum of the Humr.

After the establishment of the Condominium government the lineages of two Humr nazirs had managed to stay in power for several generations, and they were hence considered as royal families by the British.<sup>160</sup> According to Babu Nimr he had not been granted the power to rule over the Agaira on account of the position of nazir being hereditary, but because of his father's respected position among his tribesmen.<sup>161</sup> The nazir of the Zurug,

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<sup>156</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 786/6/7

<sup>157</sup> Henderson 1939: 72.

<sup>158</sup> Henderson 1939: 72. Sir James Robertson, a British officer serving in the Sudan from 1923-1953, staying in Kordofan from 1934-1936, also commented on Babu Nimr qualities as nazir. He characterized Babu Nimr as an intelligent and just leader with a strong personality. Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/17

<sup>159</sup> A *wakil* was a deputy or agent within the local administrations that held a lower position than the nazir.

<sup>160</sup> Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/17

<sup>161</sup> Deng 1982: 11



Hemeida Kamis, was on the other hand described as weak by the British.<sup>162</sup> The Native Administration was not strong within the Zurug tribe, and was neither expected to grow stronger because of its lack of royal house and permanent personnel. The central government viewed a unification of the Humr and the Zurug as positive and hoped that this would strengthen the Native Administration in the region, as well as help solve the Zurug's problems regarding cattle grazing.

In 1942 the Humr were amalgamated with the Zurug who was led by Nazir Hameida to form a united "Messiria" tribe, making Babu Nimr the overall ruler, and turning the nazirs of the Felaita and the Zurug into junior sectional nazirs.<sup>163</sup> This second unification did not go as smoothly as the first since the question of who would fill Babu Nimr's position as the leader of the Humr section became a problem to be solved. The line of Hag Agbar and the Metanin clan within the Felaita quarrelled over power, both trying to secure power through administrative positions.<sup>164</sup> The agreement between the Humr and the Zurug was still viewed as a milestone in the history of the Messiria by members of the British administration. They saw the uniting of the segments after a century of dissociation as a triumph for the persuasive powers of British government officials, lead by Morrison<sup>165</sup>, and the statesmanship of Babu Nimr.<sup>166</sup> The fact that Babu Nimr in 1943 was chosen as a member of his Excellency's Advisory Council for the Northern Sudan, and for a short time was also a Member of Parliament, illustrated his importance as a member of the Native Administration and his relationship with the British government. Other members of his family also obtained important positions around the Muglad.

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<sup>162</sup> Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/12

<sup>163</sup> Cunnison 1966: 136, Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 768/3/44. The Messiria was expected to develop into a rural district council with the Dinka, Nuba and Daju as junior partners. The new leader of the Ngok Dinka, Deng Majok, had taken over power after staging a coup of his father Kwol Arob the same year. He wanted to establish a close relationship with the Humr in order to undermine his father's influence with the British government and hence ensure his own position among the Ngok. Beswick in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 159

<sup>164</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 786/6/9

<sup>165</sup> John Knarston King Morrison was a member of the Sudan Political Service from 1929-1944, serving in Kordofan from 1939-43.

<sup>166</sup> Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 768/3/23

### **Establishing new leaders in Dar Humr**

The early administration of the Messiria was largely the history of strong personalities, such as Abdul Gadir Abu Agbar, Ali Abdel Gurun and Ali Messar. The mix of people who had settled in Kordofan, after having migrated eastwards in order to escape the dominant sultans of Bagirmi and Wadai, were believed to have been of an independent spirit and lacking constant political form. These immigrants, largely drawn from the Messiria of the west, gradually developed into one tribe with certain strong sheikhs gaining temporary power. The rulers were dependent on the consensus of their tribe and support from the heads of the lineages to be able to stay in power, and this forced them to limit their use of excessive power over their people. Although strong sheikhs could hold a lot of power for quite some time, authority had no permanent institutionalized form.

The changes in authority were connected to shifting political alliances between the different segments. No segments had ever been permanently dominant, although the Messiria like other Arabs liked to idealize about their power being derived from hereditary rights. After the Anglo-Egyptians forces had defeated the Mahdist and reoccupied the Sudan, they needed to create an administration that could help them consolidate their position as new rulers. In the rural districts inhabited by nomadic tribes who had not suffered greatly from detribalization during the Mahdist years, administrative control was sought through establishing relationships with tribal sheiks who still had authority among their tribesmen. The person, family or clan who managed to take on a leading position in the early condominium years, were through the agency of the British able to preserve their role. As a result political power within the Humr tribe went from being shifting to becoming more stable on the highest level of administration. Through cooperation with the British government the appointed nazir were able to obtain “hereditary” rights, and leadership within the Humr developed into tribal ruling family.

Although it was important for the British that an elected leader within the local administration had general support among his tribesmen and the ability to act as an authority, their choice often fell on the representative who was most willing to cooperate

with British administrators. This British policy was clearly shown in MacMichael's<sup>167</sup> note on "The administrative policy of the Sudan government towards the Native Administration" in 1921:

"... So long as the Sheikh remains loyal to the Government, carries its orders with reasonable expedition and efficiency, and retains the respect of his people, he is supported. If he proves himself disloyal or if from moral failure he ceases to retain the respect of his people, he is replaced. If he is merely inefficient he is given every chance and is only deposed if his failure is complete, -in which he would almost certainly have also lost the respect of his people..."<sup>168</sup>

When it came to acquiring control over the scattered nomads in the vast areas of Sudan the British was hindered by the chaotic tribal system with changing relations and alliances. The efforts made by MacMichael to create a system and organise the different tribes according to their linear descent, was a way of achieving a greater overview over the various nomadic groups which made them easier to manage. Whether "tribes" had only recently emerged or had existed for some time did not matter, since the new policy supported superior lineages which served as focal points and worked to solidify, and sometimes even create, tribes.<sup>169</sup> By refusing to deal with individuals outside tribal institutions the government could provide powerful support to this process.

The powers of the new nazirs were not necessarily based on previously having had a leading role within the tribe, which the leadership of El-Hag Agbar was an example of. He belonged to the Jubarate lineage within the Felaita segment, and was able to take advantage of the situation in the early condominium years. The dominant lineages holding the political authority and attracting other lineages among the Felaita had however been the Awlad Serur and the Metanin according to tradition. No such dominant

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<sup>167</sup> MacMichael was Assistant Civil Secretary at the time.

<sup>168</sup> MacMichael: *The Administrative Policy of the Sudan Government Towards the Native Population* (1921) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 89

<sup>169</sup> Daly in Stiansen and Kevane (eds.) 1998: 113

power had existed among the Agaira, even though the Awlad Kamil had been the holders of the nazirate since its establishment under British government.<sup>170</sup>

The introduction of omodias established sectional representation, which was a new idea according members of the Humr tribe.<sup>171</sup> Previously power had been restricted to “the sheikh” alone because the tribe was much smaller in numbers and hence more united. The appointment of omda was decided by the province governor based on the recommendation of the nazir and the district commissioner. Although the province governor in theory could decide on an omda without the consent of a Humr majority, this was rarely a preferred solution.<sup>172</sup> In general the Baggara aspirations of this kind were too strong to be ignored by the British officials. However, the rivalry between the different factions of an omodia made it difficult to settle on a common candidate. This continued to be a problem after the introduction of Native Administration.

### **Power balance and tribal unity**

If an omda was to be elected, a council meeting between all the clan leaders was called. The different clans of one omodia instantly split into different factions with some clans forming alliances, in order to promote their own favoured representatives. Agreement around one candidate was only reached after hours of debate, compromise and promises of future agreements. The process of deciding on one candidate often entailed that the clan members committed to follow a plan which in theory secured a representation of all the factions: A member of clan A could be chosen the first time if it was agreed that a member of clan B was to be elected the next time, and so on a member of clan C was to be favoured in the following election. Agreements such as this were however often disrupted by the fact that one or more lineages claimed hereditary rights, and refused to agree to give up power.

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<sup>170</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/29

<sup>171</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/63

<sup>172</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/66

Once having obtained power, many omdas resented following the rules and regulations laid down by the central government. The omdas powers were weakened by the fact that their position was not hereditary like the title of nazir. The British could chose to remove an omda who had taken advantage of his powers for his own personal benefit and acted contrary to the government's desires. Local sheikhs were often labelled by British officials as irresponsible drunks, and reported of sheiks ordering flogging and beating of tribal members in order to extort money or express their power. In many cases other members of the tribe would direct a complaint to the British local officials in order for them to take action. It was also common that clans rivalling to the lineage of the ruling omda could form conspiracies against him based on old antagonism and their own aspiration to rule.<sup>173</sup> The omda's dependency on his electors largely prevented him from taking advantage of his power. A traditional Humr ceremony described how a local representative before an election was reminded of his place. By beating him with grass and twigs he was praised good luck, but at the same time reminded that although he as leader and may not be beaten like a common man he could very well fall from his ruling position if acting unjust, and become a common man again.<sup>174</sup>

In Howell's opinion the process of shifting omdas had more or less developed into a political institution. The events after electing an omda follow a fixed set of events; a man was appointed omda, but after a while lost his grip on his electors and becomes unpopular. Both true and false accusations were then raised against him and he became discredited and finally sacked. This left the position open for his rivals who had engineered the process to try and fill it with a candidate of their own. The rivalry within the Awlad Kamil omodia of the Agaira gave a good example of how clans could argue over the right to administrative power.<sup>175</sup> After having elected and later sacked a member of the Dar Mota clan, a member of the Dar Salim was appointed as omda. Both representatives were resented by the Dar Um Sheiba based on the fact that they themselves had held the omodia several times before and therefore saw it as their right.

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<sup>173</sup> Beaton in Howell 1947: SAD 768/2/36. Robertson commented regarding this that he only investigated real complaints and did not follow up outcries based on false accusations. Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/19

<sup>174</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/65

<sup>175</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/65

The Dar Um Sheiba later allied with the Kelabna to secure that one of their clan members an administrative position, while the other Awlad Kamil clans united to elect their own. Agreements regarding blood-money payments between the different clans were also broken.

Sir Douglas Newbold remarked on the difficulty of settling on nazirs and omdas among the Messiria after having attended several council meetings and witnessed numerous and long lasting discussions.<sup>176</sup> He had reached the conclusion that the best way to act in order to make the processes more efficient, was to implement a stronger line and let the nazir and the British representatives of the district administration decide on which omda to elect unless the tribal council was able to come to a conclusion within a set time limit. Newbold had settled on this opinion after having failed while trying other methods against the disagreements, these being persuasion, dividing omodias and splitting the areas of the conflicting sheikhs among different omodias.

Henderson also remarked on the powers of the omdas and pointed out that the creation of omdas among the Baggara tribes had not been an entirely success.<sup>177</sup> The intention of establishing omdas in 1911 had been to check on the nazirs, but this was after a while considered undesirable. The elected omdas were weak and harmless and acted more or less as puppets of their people. As soon as they tried to function as effective assistants to the government in collecting taxes or general administration, they were agitated against. The question of how the omdas should receive compensation for the expenses that followed the responsibilities of their office, such as showing hospitality towards their tribesmen, caused another problem for the British. If the omdas were given salaried this lead to a rush of clients seeking to get a piece of the wealth, and at the same time the competition over the omdas position would become stronger. On the other hand if the British let the omdas “eat” the fines they collected through their powers of their office, they were accused of extortion and protested against. This led Henderson to conclude that

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<sup>176</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/66

<sup>177</sup> Henderson 1935: SAD 478/5/16

the omdas' only real function was to divert the local political intrigues away from the nazir.

In order to uphold the significance of the Native Administration it was important to balance the power of the tribal leadership. While strong sheiks were controlled the British tried to guide the weaker sheikhs, without any of them losing too much prestige in front of their own tribe.<sup>178</sup> The government continued to suspend, remove, and replace tribal sheikhs, but could not as easily remove actors on a higher level of administration since a stable leadership was important to be able to maintain a functioning administration. Interference from the British was carried out with the intentions of causing as little disturbance as possible and new leaders were therefore often of the same family as the old, and could be a brother or a son. The government's promoting of a family or individual and dealing with others through it in this way strengthened the tendency to re-establish the old tribal structures and could create clans where there before only had been loosely associated groups.

It was not uncommon that quarrels between different segments could lead to clans wanting to break away from the main body of the tribe. Because of the shifting leadership on the lower levels of administration and the many quarrels over power, clans every now and again wanted to break away from their omodias. Still, these separations were usually only temporary, and in most cases Humr clans who broke away would return.<sup>179</sup> The fear of social and political disintegration drove members of the larger tribal segment to try and persuade the out breaking section to return by using mediators and offering a sum of money or camels as means for reconciliation. As a result the Humr omodias stayed more or less the same.

The Dar Um Sheiba clan, who initially wanted to break away from the Awlad Kamil after a member of the Dar Salima had been elected as new omda through a majority vote, later regretted their decision to leave and wanted to make peace and rejoin the larger section.

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<sup>178</sup> Davies: *Note on Native Administration in Nigeria* (1925) in Abu Shouk and Bjørkelo (eds.) 2004: 105

<sup>179</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/67

Although the Dar Um Sheiba did not admit to have been wrong, they resented the members of their own clan who had acted badly during the conflict and wanted to exclude these from the tribe in order to restore a good relationship with the other clans. Nevertheless, the Dar Um Sheiba clan did not admit to having any guilt in arousing the conflict, but instead wanted the other clans of the Awlad Kamil to pay them a sum of money in admission of guilt.<sup>180</sup>

By shaping Native Administration to fit the organization of the tribe into segments, the British regarded these segments as static units. Shifting alliances within the tribe and outbreak of certain units therefore conflicted with the central governments desire for stability. Still, the larger segments of the tribes were generally stable enough for the administration to function, and even though some segments might break away, they would more often than not rejoin their original group. It was more common that smaller segments would become affiliated to a new lineage, but this had little effect on the administration and was of no concern to the British.

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<sup>180</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/68. In Howell's opinion this demonstrated the fact that the Dar Um Sheiba was the most unreasonable clan within the whole Humr tribe.



## Chapter 5: Analysis

When analysing the political behaviour and structures of the Humr tribe, many aspects fit the description of an agnatic-segmentary society. This way of organizing a society is based on the notion that power follows the lines of patrilineal descent, implying that a son would inherit the powers of his father and that several sons would form different branches of one lineage. A lineage consists of autonomous and equal segments which are politically integrated. These segments act as cooperative groups in situations such as tribal conflicts, uniting on various levels depending on the extent of the conflict.<sup>181</sup> An important question is nevertheless whether or not the agnatic-segmentary model is an optimal tool for fully understanding the political structures of the Humr society. Can other analytical models be applied to analyse the political organization of the tribe? And if so, do these give a more accurate description of the mechanisms which can lead to shifts in power balance and the alliance building between different tribal segments? Which model is most useful in order to observe the consequences of the Anglo-Egyptian regime's introduction of Native Administration, and can it help us detect whether or not this lead to any socio-political changes in the Humr society?

In the following chapter I will try to answer these four questions through comparing the qualities of the agnatic-segmentary model with the patron-client and the elitist models, which have been used to analyse the process of establishing a local administration among the Bideiriya and the Kababish tribes living in other regions of Kordofan. By doing this I must also view in what way the Humr are similar or differ from these tribal societies.

### **The agnatic-segmentary model**

The agnatic-segmentary model has previously been used by Ian Cunnison in his anthropological study of the Humr tribe. This model fitted the functionalist approach that had influenced the earliest research done by anthropologists on tribal societies in

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<sup>181</sup> Hylland Eriksen 1998: 209

Africa.<sup>182</sup> Viewing the Humr in light of this model, the tribe is classified to fit this structure and leadership and political power is explained as a result of linear descent. Many features of the Humr society fits the form of the agnatic-segmentary model; the geographical distribution of the omodias and clans, the migration pattern and camp settlement according to lineages, the sharing of cattle brands and drum calls according to segment, economic cooperation between closely related groups, marriage arrangements and the settlement of feuds with the transaction of blood money.<sup>183</sup> The validity of the agnatic-segmentary theory was strengthened by the British government's integration of the tribal linear system in the new local administration through establishing omodias and choosing tribal leaders to serve as omdas and nazirs.

On the other hand the agnatic-segmentary model has several weaknesses which make it inadequate in order to fully explain the political organization of the Humr tribe, a fact that Cunnison himself pointed out.<sup>184</sup> First of all an agnatic-segmentary society is based on a system of autonomous segments which join together and cooperate on different levels according to the various circumstances. This structure conflicts with the idea of having a superior leader who rules over a segment or sub-segment as a whole, since this entails that one of the members of a segment has to rule over his peers. In the case of the Humr this would for instance mean that the appointment of Babu Nimr as leader of the whole Humr tribe diverges with the idea of the Felaita and the Agaira segments being autonomous entities.

Secondly the agnatic-segmentary model implies that the tribe consisted of stable lineage segments which could function as political units. In reality the different factions within the Humr often formed alliances based on their own interests, crossing the traditional lines of linear descent. The example of the Dar Um Sheiba and the Kelabna clans allying against the other clans within the Awlad Kamil in order to secure the position of omda, therefore conflicts with the theory of the model.<sup>185</sup> Alliances between neighbouring feriqs

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<sup>182</sup> Evans Pritchard 1940

<sup>183</sup> As described in chapter 3, page 49.

<sup>184</sup> Cunnison 1966: 188

<sup>185</sup> As described in chapter 4, page 61.

formed on the basis of common interests, but who according to lineage belongs to different segments, is another example of this.

Cunnison found it strange that the members of the Humr tribe themselves to a large degree emphasized the patrilineal system, if it was so obvious that alliances were formed despite this.<sup>186</sup> He felt that the agnatic-segmentary model did not have the necessary flexibility to be a model for political actions. Based on this he came to the conclusion that even if the model did not fit the reality of Humr life, the ideology was sustained by the tribesmen because it created order in the genealogical chaos and the continuous political shifts. In this way a stronger feeling of continuity was created, and at the same time all members of society were included. According to Cunnison the value of the system was demonstrated through the fact that leaders of the mid-level segments without any real official authority or any practical tribal functions were sustained.

### **The patron-client model**

Because of the many weaknesses of the agnatic-segmentary model, alternative models may be more useful in order to understand the socio-political structures and dynamics in the Humr society. One alternative is the patron-client model which has previously been used by Ahmed Abu Shouk for analysing the introduction of Native Administration among the Bideiriya tribe in central Kordofan. This model is based on a mutual dependent relationship between a weak and a stronger part that creates a vertical relationship between the ruler and the ruled.<sup>187</sup> The strong patron offers protection and support, which is often of a financial character, to the weaker client who in exchange promises to perform duties or to follow certain rules laid out by the patron. In a society based on patron-client relations it is common for one patron to have many clients. The patron therefore has the opportunity to influence and exercise power over those who are dependant on him in order to obtain high positions within a community.

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<sup>186</sup> Cunnison 1966: 192

<sup>187</sup> Meyer 1998

According to Abu Shouk, the patron-client relationship could be seen on three levels of the administration in Dar Bideiriya; between the central government and the members of Native Administration, between the members of the Native Administration within one nazirate (meaning the relationship between the nazir, the omdas and the village sheiks), and between the local leadership and the village people. These patron-client relationships must be viewed as a control mechanism which evolved under Native Administration, rather than a type of political system.<sup>188</sup> Can similar patron-client relationships also be detected within the Humr tribe? In order to evaluate this, a comparative study of the Humr and the Bideiriya tribe is necessary.

In pre-colonial times the Bideiriya, like the Humr, were lead by a sheikh who was responsible for the protection of the land against cattle raids, and taking care of intra-tribal relations as well as the Bideiriya's connection with other tribes. The sheik's powers and his relationship with the leaders of the dominant lineages within the tribe were not regulated by any formal structures, but were based largely upon mutual interest. This meant that the sheikh had no real powers of coercion to back his decisions, and this made him dependent on the cooperation of the other tribal members. A good leader would therefore need to have persuasive and negotiating skills in order to sustain his position. A leader also had to offer leadership, support and access to resources. In return he was given political support, but also other forms of assistance. Like within the Humr, groups could break away and join other neighbouring segments in periods with weak leadership and limited tribal unity.

Because of this, and the fact that every household within Dar Bideiriya had free access to pasture, water, land and gum trees, Abu Shouk regarded the tribe as a flexible political entity at that time rather than a static body.<sup>189</sup> Still, the ideology of descent was an important political factor among the Bideiriya since a tribe could act as a centre of power and claim its right over economic resources. Such a centre would naturally attract followers, or clients, given that these would be able to benefit from the wealth and

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<sup>188</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 4

<sup>189</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 46

protection of the tribe. New followers would adjust their genealogical associations in order to be connected to the dominant tribe. Descent could hence be viewed as a source for maintaining political integration and establishing collective obligations among members of a tribe.

The socio-political structures of the Bideiriya in pre-colonial times in other words clearly resembled those of the Humr. However, there were certain aspects which separated the tribes and influenced how they were integrated in the local administration set up by the British government after the reoccupation. Before the Mahdist revolution in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, both the Humr and the Bideiriya were largely dependent on cattle and a nomadic lifestyle. During the Mahdist years the political structure of the tribal organisation was broken up, and tribal members were dispersed or relocated as members of the Mahdist army. After the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation the tribal members began returning home. The tribes of central Kordofan were resettled in villages with little regard to their tribal affiliation. This created a mosaic of tribes which undermined the tribal structure based on agnatic-segmentary bonds.<sup>190</sup> The Bideiriya were forced to settle down and become sedentary farmers on account of having lost most their herds during the Mahdia. The villages were established as independent units with political authorities and economic recourses attached to them, replacing the traditional political structures which had previously been connected to the ideology of descent.

The Humr on the other hand did not suffer as much from detribalization as the Bideiriya. After the overthrow of the Mahdists they started returning to their homeland and rebuilding their herds in order to continue their nomadic way of life. One of the obvious reasons for the different development among the two tribes was that Dar Bideiriya was closer geographically to the province centre and therefore much easier for the new rulers to reach and control. The Humr inhabited a much vaster and less accessible area, and their annual migrations made them even harder to get to.

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<sup>190</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 66

The dynamic characteristic of a tribe conflicted with the British desire for order and control after the reoccupation. This had different outcomes within the Humr and the Bideiriya tribes. The attempt to map the tribes of the Sudan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led by Harold MacMichael sought to create order among the fluctuating segments and “locking” them in specific positions to form stable units which fitted an administrative purpose. The Humr was integrated in the local administration based on a tribal hierarchical structure, with the large segments becoming omodias and tribal leaders being confirmed in their ruling positions. However, in the case of the Bideiriya the British disregarded the political value of descent, and instead focused on establishing ruling families who derived their power from the support of the state. Abu Shouk feels that undermining the traditional concept of leadership in Dar Bideiriya proves that the British was not really interested in resuscitating the old tribal system, but rather the benefits of using it for administrative purposes.<sup>191</sup> The new local administration was heavily dependent on the central government, and this gave the state access to decision-making within local Bideiriya politics and created a strong patron-client bond.

### **Patron-client relations between the British and the Humr leadership**

Is it possible to detect patron-client bonds on the same three levels of administration within Dar Humr as Abu Shouk describes in the case of the Bideiriya? To analyse this I will start by looking at the relationship between the tribal leaders of the Humr and the central government. After the Anglo-Egyptian forces reached Dar Humr, the Agaira was chosen as the leading branch of the tribe based on their majority in the population. In 1903 Ali El-Gulla became appointed as leader of the Agaira, a decision largely based on the personal relationship between Ali El-Gulla and Slatin Pasha, who had a prominent position within the government. This created a bond between the British rulers and the local leadership within Dar Humr, but did not necessarily imply any strong patron-client relations. The continuous slave raiding in Dinka territory which was condemned by the government demonstrates this.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 73

<sup>192</sup> Henderson 1939: 71

Ali El-Gulla's ability to continue ruling more or less unstrained until 1910 suggests that he was not very dominated by the central government. During the first decade of Anglo-Egyptian government administrative units were set up in the districts with representatives of the central powers. In Dar Humr a mamur and 15 policemen were stationed at Muglad during the wet season, and the British inspector rarely visited the region more than twice a year. This force was not a large enough to establish a steady control in the region and take over the role of the Agaira and Felaita nazirs. Ali El-Gulla's position was not significantly weakened until omdas were appointed and given administrative assignments such as the assessment or collection of herd tax in 1911. In the early condominium years the British had not yet established an administration that could reach the remote regions of Kordofan, and therefore lacked the ability to employ much force away from the ruling centres. This made it difficult to regulate the actions of the nazir or his urge to "eat" taxes, and to build up strong patron-client relationships, between the nazirs and the central government.

The members of the Humr tribe lacked the ability to remove Ali El-Gulla as nazir although his exploitations made him unpopular. This might be an indication that his links to the central government helped strengthen his position although the British were not fully pleased with his actions. On the other hand his ability to remain in power might just be a result of his personal leading qualities favoured by the tribal members. An unpopular sheikh would traditionally lose power if he lost the support of his clients, at the same time as a client would lose the benefit of being connected to a strong leader if he chose to free himself of their bonds. Howell points out that there were no strong candidate to push Ali El-Gulla off the throne, and this could also have been a reason behind him staying in power for so long.

The British support of the Humr nazirs was shown in 1939 when members of the Awlad Kamil section who opposed the descendants of Ali Gulla's claim for power was imprisoned by British province officials.<sup>193</sup> This incident was described by J. Robertson

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<sup>193</sup> Robertson 1936: SAD 517/3/19

the current District Commissioner in Western Kordofan. His relationship with Babu Nimr was described as a very good relationship based on mutual respect and friendship by Babu Nimr himself who generally refers to the British as gentle rulers who did impose their decisions on the Humr.<sup>194</sup> This description of the relationship between the Humr leadership and the British officials might be an indication of the British general manner of governing in the nomadic areas, but might also just be an illustration of the position of Babu Nimr and his special relationship with the British.

In 1934 the Bideiriya omodia were transformed to a nazirate with Sheikh Husayn Zaki El-Din being appointed nazir after previously having held the title of the highest omda, or omda umum. The main motive behind this was to consolidate the position of the leading family favoured by the British. The office of omda umum had no hereditary status, while the Nazir authority was “based on the recognition of his hereditary right, or claim, to the position by fellow tribesmen”.<sup>195</sup> The British government in this way chose Sheikh Husayn before other families who claimed their right to power and through making him the strongest political authority in the district a strong patron-client tie was established. In Dar Humr the position of nazir was not formally made hereditary, but in reality this was the case. The two leading lineages of the Agaira and the Felaita remained in power from having been chosen as rulers in the early years of the Anglo-Egyptian period.

After Ali El-Gulla resigned, the power was passed on to members of his lineage, and through them the administrative powers within the Agaira, and later the Humr tribe as a whole was consolidated. Although the attempt to amalgamate the Humr and the Zurug under a joined leadership failed after only a few years, the establishment of a stable leadership within Dar Humr was as a success. The Agaira and the Felaita sections were lead by the descendents of El-Hag Agbar and Ali El-Gulla, who was able to preserve the power rarely challenged by rivalling lineages seeking powers. Their positions were secured by a good relationship with the British as their patrons. This relationship was beneficial for both parties. By keeping their clients satisfied and offering them lucrative

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<sup>194</sup> Deng 1982: 68

<sup>195</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 75



positions and the powers to rule over their own tribesmen, the British gained the support of the tribal leaders who also took care of the practical administrative tasks in the districts and made sure that the rules and regulations laid down by the central government were followed.

### **Patron-client bonds within the Humr tribe**

Is it also possible to detect patron-client bonds between the nazirs and the lower sectional leaders within Dar Humr? In Dar Bideiriya the nazir had the power to appoint and dismiss the omdas, which in reality gave the nazir ability to choose omdas who were supportive of him.<sup>196</sup> This established a relatively strong patron-client relationship within the nazirate where loyal clients were rewarded with administrative positions including prestige, economic advantages and other benefits. The omdas of the Humr tribe were officially appointed by British officials according to the nazirs' recommendations. This decision was however largely overshadowed by the desires of the different tribal lineages which competed for the position. Compared to the Bideiriya, the Humr nazirs' were less influential in the election of omdas which weakened the patron-client bonds.

Leadership on the lower levels was shifting and Howell points out that the election process could to a certain degree be called democratic.<sup>197</sup> This however created a very unstable situation, with constant fights over power and discontinuing administration. The omdas were distinct groups and because rivalry between them was common, they seldom were able to form alliances in order to remove the nazir. This indicated that the inability to decide each others positions was mutual both from the nazirs' and omdas' perspective. Still, the tradition of clients resenting to support a leader that was incompetent seemed to have remained strong among the Humr, and this influenced the patron's aspirations to keep his clients happy. This was underlined by Babu Nimr who claimed that the respect he got from his tribesmen was based mutual cooperation, good relations and mutual courtesies between him and his people.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 94

<sup>197</sup> Howell 1948: SAD 768/7/65

<sup>198</sup> Deng 1982: 37

The differences between the Humr and the Bideiriya made it easier for the sectional leaders of the Humr tribe to maintain a strong position within the tribal leadership. While the Bideiriya had become sedentary and the nazir were given control over the recourses, the Humr maintained their lifestyle as pastoral nomads. The annual migrations in bodies according to clans made it more difficult for the nazirs to maintain absolute control the year around. The lack of controllable resources also strengthened the omdas position. A Humrawi had generally independent control of the number of cattle in his herd. Cattle were also an unstable value since cattle plagues were a constant threat and could reduce a herd drastically over a short period of time. There existed no rules regarding ownership for grazing and agricultural land, although certain feriqs could claim the right to grow crops on a chosen piece of land for a period of time.

The important resources within the Bideiriya tribe was however land rights and the access to gum tree gardens. After the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation the new regime had declared itself the owner of the tribal lands in Kordofan by rights of conquest. In Dar Bideiriya the local leadership was recognized as the trustees of the resources and the nazir was made responsible for distributing these rights downward within the local administration. The only controllable resource of any value among the Humr were the access to water points which might be exploited by leadership. In the dry periods members of the administration could claim the rights to natural or constructed watering point that the nomads gathered around for a period of time. By deciding who should first be granted access to these, a local omda or sheikh could strengthen his role as patron. This affected the relationship between the tribe and the members of the administration more than it influenced the bonds between the members of Native Administration.

The powers of the nazirs were consolidated through establishing institutionalized courts. The local leadership drew their powers and jurisdiction from the state, rather than relying on the support and consent of their lineages. The court system helped strengthen the patron-client ties on all three levels. The villagers were judged by the local administrators and the system of appeal made it possible for the nazir to control the omdas, while the

decisions made by the nazirs could again be monitored and overruled by the central government. These relations were expressed through clients staying loyal to their patron's desires in order to maintain their judicial roles. Abu Shouk views the local courts as a factor behind the dissolving of the old tribal system, since this gathered more power on the top and made it easier to control the local actors.<sup>199</sup>

The rivalry concerning the position of omdas shows how the elected representatives of the Humr tribe were not safe in their positions. The omdas were more dependent on the tribe since an exploitation of power always lead to him being removed. This indicates that the patron-client ties in Dar Humr were weaker on the levels below the top. The tribal customs which were still important in Dar Humr had been largely broken down among the Bideiriya. The villagers in Dar Bideiriya had to a larger degree become clients dependent on the village sheiks, since these were given the authority to collect taxes and administer the resources. The Humr on the other hand was independent of the tribal leadership in order to maintain his pastoral lifestyle and was hence more free than the Bideiriya.

On the other hand patron-client bonds could be established between a Humrawi seeking the patronage of a stronger tribal member. The position of patron was in this regard closely related to the number of cattle a man possessed since this made him more able to help his clients financially by lending or giving them a cow. In return for the financial assistance, the patron could expect his clients to support him. A man who attracted many clients would strengthen his position within his lineage and this would also influence his ability to attain political influence. But like the leaders on the higher level of Humr society his powers were dependent on him being able to stay popular among his clients through acting in accordance with the clients' general wishes. If not the clients could break away and seek the patronage of another leader. This made the patron-client bonds more fragile and made it harder for the leader to use excessive force. Still, we see that major lineages such as clans often returned to their omodia after a while after action had

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<sup>199</sup> Abu Shouk 1997: 114

been taken to mediate between the disagreeing parties.<sup>200</sup> Smaller lineages however were more likely to become permanently attached to a new segment.

### **The elitist model**

An elitist model used by Talal Asad in his studies of the Kababish represents a third analytical approach to viewing the socio-political structures of a nomad tribe in Kordofan. This model assumes that leadership is limited within a small group of society favoured by birth or social position. The Kababish were camel nomads living in the northern regions of the province and in many ways differed from both the Bideiriya and the Humr. Their administration was built up around the leadership of Ali El-Tom.<sup>201</sup> Ali El-Tom had been appointed nazir by the government in the early Condominium years, and his powers and authority was based on his control of the highly centralised administrative hierarchy. All the higher offices within the Kababish administration were held by the small Awlad Fadlallah lineage which consisted of Ali El-Tom's agnatic first cousins and their offspring. This in reality resulted in a monopolisation of the political power concentrated in the hands of the tribes leading elite.<sup>202</sup>

Administrative power was given to sectional sheikhs who acted as tax-collectors and as communicators between the Nazir and his tribesmen. Although the office of the sectional sheikh was prestigious and lucrative, his wealth or status was not adequate in order to exercise any real political power or heighten his personal authority.<sup>203</sup> This meant that he did not have the legitimate powers to enforce his power, but was backed by the coercive force wielded by superior officials. The elitist model viewed the Kababish in light of being governed by the Awlad Fadlallah lineage as the dominant decision-making group.

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<sup>200</sup> See chapter 4, page 64.

<sup>201</sup> Ali El-tom (1874-1938), Nazir Umum of the Kababish. His relationship with the British was unique and his personal prestige was great both in government circles and among his tribesmen. His highly renowned and respected position was expressed through his visit to England in 1919 to show his support to Great Britain, and also by him being knighted as a member of the "Order of the British Empire" by King George V in 1925.

<sup>202</sup> Asad 1970: 177

<sup>203</sup> Asad 1970: 154

The fact that all outside this lineage was prohibited from attaining any political authority makes it reasonable to regard this as a society built on elitist structures.

Talal Asad pointed out that patron-client relations did exist within the Kababish society, but only between members of the Awlad Fadlallah being the patrons, and non-Awlad Fadlallah who were the clients.<sup>204</sup> Like among the Humr the unity of the Kababish was based on the ideology of kinship through agnatic descent and the tribal segments were organized according to closeness of lineage. Clients were however not organized in lineages of their own, but remained loyal to their patron as individuals and supporting him both morally and physically. The patron-client relationships described by Asad did in this manner differ from the clientelist structures that characterized the Bideiriya society.

The socio-political structures of the Kababish also contrasted those of the Humr with regard to consent of leadership. Even though individual Kababish could consider the tribal leadership as legitimate and accepted political the decisions made by them, consent was not needed. Consent was according to Asad only present when people had the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, a possibility which did not exist within the Kababish tribe since the Awlad Fadlallah were the only lineage with political power.<sup>205</sup> Among the Humr consent of the tribal members was still important for the leadership to be able to maintain his position. This was especially visible with regard to the position of omda, which shifted regularly between different lineages based on the omda's subjects being displeased with his actions.

The highest positions among the Humr had become consolidated in the hands of the families of Ali El-Gulla and El-Hag Agbar, and in many ways resembled the tribal leadership of the Kababish. Still, it is not adequate to analyse the Humr in light of the elitist model since it was possible for members of other lineages than the ruling families to attain political powers on the lower levels.

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<sup>204</sup> Asad 1970: 191

<sup>205</sup> Asad 1970: 245

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Changing socio-political structures?

Did the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation of the Sudan in 1898 and the establishment of a Native Administration have an impact on the socio-political structures in Dar Humr? It is clear that the British influenced the political organization on the highest levels of Humr society by consolidating the powers within lineages that was willing to cooperate with the central government, and in this way creating “royal families”. Abu Shouk and Cunnison both agree that the central powers after the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation played a role in reorganizing the socio-political structure in tribal societies, and according to Cunnison this was particularly done through establishing offices over the tribe.

My study of the Humr has however shown that the British took advantage of already existing tribal structures in order to shape the local administration. By choosing tribal sheikhs who already had a leading position within their tribe, it was easier for the new government to legitimize the administrative system. Native Administration was therefore based on the tribal hierarchy that had shaped the Humr society before the interruption of the Mahdīa. The appointment of local leaders by British officials did not necessarily reflect the traditional division of power within the tribe. In the case of the Felaita power were put in the hands of men who had not been among the traditional leaders of the section. The British was free to choose any family among the tribes who was willing to support the government and act according to its wishes, if this family could muster a minimum of political support from their tribesmen.

The work done by Harold MacMichael in order to organize the tribes of Sudan was a useful tool for the British, although an evaluation of the theories shows that they were incompatible with reality. It has been claimed that the Humr originally consisted of mobile and fluid groups who prior to the Anglo-Egyptian reoccupation formed and

dissolved in relation to internal conflicts and clashes regarding neighbouring tribes.<sup>206</sup> In Nicole Grandin's opinion the Humr never formed a compact group before the Condominium period, and that the power did not follow any rules of descent with tribal leaders only having a function in times of conflict and unrest. She regards the fluidity of the smaller tribal segments as defining for the structure of the whole tribe.

Even though the structures of the Humr tribe might not have been as rigid as assumed by the British government, my study has shown that there existed a structure static enough to construct the foundations of a tribal society. Some segments could break away from the larger groups for short periods with political disagreements often cutting across the boundaries or other groupings explained by a common genealogical descent. The tribe was still generally quite stable when it came to maintaining a unified social structure. This explains the British government's use of the tribal organisation for administrative purposes. This implicates that although the government in some cases could have revived the segmentary structure and reinforced its hierarchy based on kinship ties, and also in some cases constructing such a hierarchy in societies largely influenced by detribalization, they did not create the tribal society which Native Administration was founded on. In order for the local administration to function, it had to be based on the leadership of sheiks who already had a legitimate position and was supported by many clients.

The introduction of Native Administration affected the Humr through altering the balance between the segments. The new administrative organisation raised some of the major lineages to become omodias, while others were organized under other omodias. The same process also took place regarding the smaller segments of the tribe with the British understanding of the tribe's genealogy defining the segments' positions. In Cunnison's opinion the new administrative system undermined the traditional social and political structures and created a shift in the power balance since an absence of established power positions were needed in order to preserve the agnatic-segmentary system.<sup>207</sup> The study

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<sup>206</sup> Grandin 1982: 321

<sup>207</sup> Cunnison 1966: 187

of the Humr has however shown that the tribal society was not merely based on agnatic-segmentary structures. Lineage does not explain the political reality of the Humr, but stands as a part of it. Regarding the Humr in light of a patron-client model it is possible to detect such bonds existing both before and after the introduction of Native Administration.

Even though the nomadic pastoralists of the Humr tribe did not become as dominated by patron-client relations as the sedentary Bideiriya, such bonds existed on several levels of the tribal society. The British central government supporting the appointed members of the tribal administration by giving them the powers to rule over their tribesmen and establishing local tribal courts strengthened the patron-client bonds. The Humr's nomadic way of life and the common access to resources on the other hand weakened these bonds. The Humr differed from the Bideiriya since the patron-client bonds did not have an equally strong effect on the tribe as a whole, but were strongest on the highest and lowest levels of the tribal society. The power struggle and frequent shifts regarding the position of omda shows how these bonds were weaker on the mid-levels of the tribal administration. The power balance between the nazirs and the British government had many characteristics resembling a patron-client relationship, but these bonds weakened downwards through the administrative hierarchy. Still, wealthy men owning a large herd were able to attract many clients on the lowest tribal levels.

### **Summing up**

My study of the Humr tribe has shown that socio-political changes did occur based on the influence of the Anglo-Egyptian rule and the introduction of Native Administration. In order to fully understand the dynamics of the Humr tribe it is not sufficient to apply one of the analytical models, but it must be viewed in light of both the patron-client and the agnatic-segmentary model. The establishment of patron-client bonds on the highest political levels of the Humr society and a consolidation of the ruling powers represents one of the most significant changes that happened as a result of British interference. However patron-client relations had existed within the smaller segments also before



Anglo-Egyptian times. While leadership on the highest levels of administration was dependent on pleasing the central government, leadership on the lower levels of the tribal society was still dependent on the consensus of the tribe. It is hence reasonable to conclude that Native Administration had a more significant effect on the socio-political structures of the Humr tribe on a higher level.

The ideology of common descent was sustained by the tribesmen because it created order in the genealogical chaos and the continuous political shifts. This helped create a unity which the economic and political cooperation within the smaller tribal segments was largely based on. The British rulers also influenced the socio-political structures of the Humr by trying to keep the tribal segments more stable since the rigidity of Native Administration had no room for segments breaking away from the ruling authority and become an independent political entity or attaching themselves to other tribal groups. But like in the case of stabilising the political power, this had little effect on the smallest tribal units, but rather affected the Humr on the highest levels of administration.

#### **Post script: Looking ahead - The Abyei conflict and Sudan's opportunity for peace**

The south-western corner of Kordofan still is an area of conflict that requires attention, and this was one of the reasons why I found it interesting to focus on this region in my master thesis. Today the Messiria nomads find themselves living on the border that divides the Sudan into a northern and southern region. Inhabiting an area with scarce resources and at times a harsh environment lying so close to the much different Dinka tribes further south, the fight over land rights has been an important source of conflict.

The hostile relationship between Baggara Arabs and Dinka has existed for centuries with a history of the Baggara raiding the Dinka territory for the purpose of slave trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the degree of instability varying through different periods of time with more or less stability and peace in the region, the conflict was again fuelled by the civil wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the arming of the two parties as means to fight for the government and the revolting groups. The discovery of oil in the Abyei region has also

been an important factor that enhances the government's interest in securing land rights. The unsteady situation in the area continues to be a cause for concern, and bloody clashes between the Messeria and the Dinka remain a problem.

In January 2005 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by the government of Sudan and SPLM/A. Here they agreed upon the establishment of an Abyei Boundary Commission (ABC) which was intended to settle upon a just border between the Dinka and the Messiria based on scientific analysis and research. This meant interviewing representatives from both parties and consult relevant sources from British and Sudanese archives. The ABC conducted their research from April to July 2005. Their conclusions were published in the ABC report which was officially and formally presented to the Presidency of the Government of National Unity of the Republic of Sudan on 14 July 2005.<sup>208</sup> The ABC's decision, which according to the CPA were to be final and binding, was not respected by the leadership of the National Congress Party headed by President Bashir, who claimed that the experts of the Abyei Boundary Commission had acted in a manner that was beyond their mandate. As a result there have recently been more fights in the region. The matter has now been taken to the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague. As the situations remains today the conflict between the Messiria and the Dinka in southern Kordofan could prove to be the Achilles heel of the CPA, influencing not only the people of the Abyei region, but the opportunity for peace in the whole Sudan.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *The Abyei Boundary Commission Report, 2005*

<sup>209</sup> Alemu, Lecture in Bergen 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2008

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Governors of Kordofan 1900-1955

1900-1903	B. T. Mahon
1903-1907	J. R. O'Connel
1908	H. D. W. Loyd
1909-1917	R. V. Savil
1917-1922	J. W. Sagar
1922-1926	J. D. Craig
1926-1928	Sarsfield-Hall
1928-1932	J. A. Gillan
1933-1938	D. Newbold
1938-1947	E. Campell
1947-1948	J. F. Tiernay
1949-1950	D. Cummings
1950-1954	G. Hawkenworth
1954-1955	F. C. A. Lorimer

## Appendix 2: Abstract in Norwegian

### **Indirekte styre innen Humr-stammen i Sudan**

Skiftende lederskap og sosiopolitiske strukturer i et stammesamfunn  
1900-1940

I 1898 vant de Anglo-egyptiske styrkene over det revolusjonære mahdist-regimet og overtok med dette over makten i Sudan. De to første tiårene var preget av en direkte styreform, men britenes gryende mistenksomhet ovenfor egyptisk nasjonalisme, samt et ønsket om å redusere administrative utgifter, fremmet et ønske om en administrativ omlegging. En innføring av et indirekte styre ble ansett som gunstig og en rekke reformer ble derfor vedtatt som skulle styrke de lokale stammeledernes evne til selvstyre i sitt område, kun overvåket av de sentrale styresmaktene.

Indirekte styre ble i første omgang innført blant nomadestammer i Kordofan og Darfur som i stor grad hadde bevart sin opprinnelige stammestruktur. En av disse stammene var Humr-stammen som levde i det sørvestlige hjørnet av Kordofan-provinsen av Sudan og livnærte seg gjennom kvegdrift. Stammen var bygd opp av flere mindre segmenter basert på lineært slektskap på farssiden, og denne strukturene ble integrert i lokaladministrasjonen. De av stammesjeikene som viste seg samarbeidsvillige ovenfor det britiske sentralstyret ble utnevnt til ledere innen stammen og ble gitt titlene Nazir og Omda.

Er det mulig å spore noen sosiopolitiske endringer innen Humr-stammen som følge av britenes omlegging til indirekte styre? En agnatisk-segmentær modell, en patron-klient modell og en elitistisk modell har tidligere blitt tatt i bruk for å analysere ulike stammesamfunn i Kordofan. Gjennom mine studier av Humr-stammen har jeg kommet frem til at det er nyttig å se den i lys av en patron-klient modell, siden lederskapet innen stammen stor grad ble preget av deres klientistiske forhold til britene. Denne modellen kan imidlertid ikke benyttes for å forstå stammesamfunnet på lavere nivå siden patron-klient båndene ble svakere lenger ned i administrasjonen. Tilhørighet og politisk makt var

på dette nivået fremdeles i stor grad basert på slektskap, og det blir derfor feilaktig å forkaste bruken den agnatisk-segmentære analysemodellen for å forstå Humr-stammens sosiopolitiske dynamikk. Innføringen av indirekte styre kan i lys av disse modellene sies å ha endret de sosiopolitiske strukturene på øverste nivå ved å konsolidere makten og gjøre stammesegmentene mer statiske, men i liten grad påvirket stammesamfunnet innen de mindre segmentene.

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