

Local Resource Management in the Context of Civil War and Genocide: Identity, Cultural Tradition and Territory among the Nuba of the Sudan

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ABSTRACT Many Nuba groups in Central Sudan are today in a situation of open conflict with their government. The Khartoum regime is staging military "jihad" campaigns to force their version of Islam and Arabism upon the Nuba, denying them access to land necessary for their survival and relocating them to "peace villages". The paper sets this contemporary crisis in the historical context of Nuba resistances and shows that they relate to issues such as Nuba access to land in competition with neighbouring groups and also government land grabbing, and fighting for a Nuba identity in an environment of Muslim and Arabic Groups. But such issues should not only be seen in the context of "outward struggles". Through time, changes in economic adaptation, in land use, in leadership forms, gender roles, and religious affiliation have been ongoing processes within Nuba societies, signifying "inward struggles" through which various Nuba groups have sought to find their place in the wider Sudanese context. The paper also looks at such Nuba discourse about themselves and the Others, focusing on land and labour relations, morale discourses about being a good Muslim, or a good man and women and issues of consumption. The conclusion is that the ways Nuba individuals position themselves in such discourses provide a constraint in the definition of a clear-cut Nuba identity, and also on the mobilizing potential in the physical struggle. This forms basis for a critique of the very term "Nuba" itself and the ways it has been essentialized.

INTRODUCTION

Today the inclusion of socio-cultural factors in analyses of resource management seems to be generally accepted by most social scientists. However, the way such an inclusion should take place is still an analytical issue worthy of debate. Often so-called "pre-colonial traditional societies" are portrayed as integrated entities, in which there is a smooth balance between the "base" and "superstructure", whereas modern, colonial, Western etc. developments by necessity leads to ruptures and disintegration.

The focus of this paper is on the resource management among certain Nuba groups of Central Sudan. Certainly the paper demonstrates the importance of including socio-economic practices in understanding such processes of adaptation. However, the paper also warns against simplistic notions of man-land relationships, of narrowly defined and clearcut tenure situations. Rather, the paper suggests a broader avenue of discussion, including a historical perspective showing how local groups can exercise "agency" in relation to the "structures" that dominate them, but at the same time avoiding to present the same groups as champions of justice, out to safeguard "moral economies". Differently positioned actors pursue different strategies, engaging in particular relationships.

Such a starting point must include a variety of actors in our analysis, from the nation state, seeking to control resources in order to promote "development", to local groups and people's cultural values; from the ways in which individuals, households and communities conceptualize resources to the way they perceive management of the same resources. In this broader perspective is hidden many tensions. Resources are not objective entities, seen by all actors in a similar way, but are rather charged with different meanings, depending on who is watching.

The present paper focuses on the Nuba groups of Central Sudan, a people many of whom today find themselves in open conflict with their government. The Khartoum regime is staging a military *jihad* campaigns to force their version of Islam and Arabism upon the Nuba, denying them access to land necessary for survival, and relocating them to so-called "peace villages". On the other hand, the Sudan people's Liberation Army has liberated parts of the Nuba

Mountains and are setting up their own systems of government and administration in such areas. However, the way the Nuba are involved in the struggle immediately takes us to the heart of my argument. Some Nuba are very involved in the contemporary developments, whereas others position themselves differently vis à vis the fighting parties of the Sudan government and SPLA. It is significant that the people I shall focus on, the Lafofa and other Nuba groups of in Liri in the south of the mountains, are still within government territory, outside the areas controlled of SPLA. Nor can we operate with a clearcut "Nuba" identity or culture, in which the different groups appear as one unit. Rather, we should specify regional and local contexts that will create differences between different Nuba groups. Thus it is important not to reify terms like "Nuba", and to be careful on which level such a term should be used. The use of the term, and the content it is given in the contemporary political situation is certainly different from earlier usages, and also different from what ordinary "Nuba" might mean with the term. Their primary identity is not as Nuba, but as members of various groups with distinct languages, distinct systems of social organization and cultural traditions. Thirdly, the paper seeks to provide some historical depth to the Nuba resistance in the south of the mountains, not to provide historical chronologies but to demonstrate how certain *themes* seem to stand out in the history of the Nuba people in their dealings with neighbouring groups and powerholders. The two themes I shall focus on are first, the one of *territory*, and second, the one of *identity*, both combining in a constant struggle of the Nuba for their *sovereignty* and their right to deal with their own development. The historical presentation shows how Nuba groups have been living in their hills with Arabs on the plains, not as a result of any natural situation but rather unequal strength during periods of slavery; that the British colonial rulers moved the Nuba down to the plains, pacified the areas and started economic developments, the plains being exploited to grow cash crops, first through traditional technology, later the introduction of mechanised farming. These processes have been continued through the decades of Sudanese independence,

promoted by independent governments back by foreign development aid. All through the periods the competition over territory and resources has been couched in ethnic terms, in religious terms and in racial terms, with the Nuba history as a slave population being a central part of how the relationships between groups have been conceptualized. These processes are part of ongoing process in the Sudan labelled Arabization, Islamization and Sudanization, and what we see is a constant positioning of people within such processes.

Such a broad perspective necessitates a two sided view of how specific Nuba groups have been involved in the history of their region. First, there is the *outward struggle*, in which the Nuba have been fighting for access to land in competition with neighbouring groups and also government land grabbing, and fighting for Nuba identity in an environment of Nuba and Arabic groups, and later also Fellata groups. Such struggles have been going on through different means, from armed struggles as we see today, through political organizations and traditional leaders (*Meks*) arguing the case of their people, to more informal protests. However, such struggles also have inward consequences, and through time we see processes of changing economic adaptations, changes in land use, in leadership forms, gender roles and religious affiliation all exemplifying *inward struggles* through which the Nuba groups have sought to find their place in a wider Sudanese context. This inward struggle shows that processes of change have been going on during the different phases of outward struggle, and are in basic ways related to the maintenance of various Nuba groups as cultural traditions.

What appears then, is a situation in which the Nuba agricultural adaptation, and the way various socio-cultural practices are tied to resource management necessitates a broad ranging discussion of dynamics that are not necessarily within the immediate field of resource management. Although a focus on the environment is important, a narrowly defined conceptualization of environment as ecology only would not catch these complexities. Natural environment also mediates social relations, relations that not need to be in harmony. Rather,

such a situation dramatises the general point that access to resources is best seen as linked to entitlement relations that range from the social to the political arenas, not fixed but continuously challenged and realigned. Furthermore, entitlements may be obtained at the local level, the national level or an international level, involving complex processes with a variety of actors. Rather than seeing entitlement issues as clearcut, and based on individual ownership of assets and resources, we see a fuzziness that also invites a broader perspective.

LIRI

Liri is a mountain area in the very south of the Nuba Mountains, almost on the border of Southern Sudan. The area is dominated by a large hill massif which has given the area its name. The land surrounding the mountain is sandy, whereas further away are the clay plains so characteristic of southern Kordofan. Most of the inhabitants live in villages around the foot of the mountain. However, two villages are still found on the top of the mountain itself. The inhabitants of Liri are Hawazma and Kawahla Arabs and also Liri, Lafofa and Talasa Nuba. In addition there are some Jellaba trading families, in the main markets, West African Fellata and Southerners, mainly Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk.

The adaptive system in the area is based on agriculture. People living both on the mountain and in the plain cultivate different types of fields called *house fields*, *adjacent fields* and *distant fields*. The first two types are in and around the villages on the sandy soil. Quick maturing varieties of sorghum, maize and beans are planted here together with peanuts. For the majority of people, however, the distant fields are the most important ones economically. They are found away from the mountain on the clay plains. They are planted with slow maturing sorghum in June and harvested in January and February. Apart from rainfed agriculture people keep some animals, especially cattle and goats. In addition the inhabitants exploit possibilities to earn money in the agricultural schemes in the region, both the cotton schemes and the bigger, mechanised schemes growing sorghum. Many people also leave the area for wage labour, espe-

cially in Khartoum and other big cities in the Sudan.

The Lafofa Nuba, among whom I did field work in the late 1970s and early 1980s, also follow this general pattern of adaptation, but some decades ago they were much more confined to one of the villages on the mountain, also called Lafofa. Today there are some 400 inhabitants in the village, living on a plateau some 200m above the plain. Most of the Lafofa have, however, moved down from the mountain and are today found in the villages at the foot of the mountain or in some regional town centres. But many decades ago the situation was different. Many more people lived on the mountain, depending on a system of intensive cultivation. This system was based on the building of terraces to control water flow and erosion, the manuring of house fields and to some extent the near fields, and the collection of fodder for their animals. It is to this type of agricultural system we shall first turn.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE MOUNTAINS

The Nuba populations in the southern parts make up groups of matrilineal people (Seligman, 1932; Nadel, 1947), the matrilineal principle being expressed in a descent ideology placing descendants together in the mother's line as a unilineal group. The kinship system is of a classificatory kind. All cousins are termed siblings, since father's and mother's siblings are classified as mothers and fathers. According to Seligman (*ibid.*) the lineages are shallow ones and relationships are not remembered for more than three generations.

Marriage was not a major ceremonial occasion. Young people arranged their own love affairs and if two people decided to marry they would tell their parents who would normally accept this. The link between the bridegroom and the bride's family was institutionalized in a bride service relationship. The wedding itself was a minor thing, although there was a party in which the drinking of beer was important.

The institutions that were important in regulating any person's life, and providing him or her with people to cooperate with, were not only

found within the realm of the family and in-laws. In the daily life of a person the *age-mates* were also of great importance. There were seclusion ceremonies that took place shortly after puberty had been reached. Boys would spend the rainy season taking care of the cattle and they would live in cattle kraals. At the end of such a period of seclusion they would return and a ceremony would be performed. For girls, the transition ceremony implied seclusion in the granary, thus clearly bringing out the relationship between menstruation and female fertility, with that of the production of food for the reproduction of the groups as such. The age organization was not, however, elaborate and complex in the ways found elsewhere in the Nuba Mountains (see e.g. Nadel, 1947; Rottenburg, 1988).

A final institution that regulated people's lives was the existence of certain experts in the villages, called *kujor*. The most important of them was the rainmaker. He was a man of great dignity, possessing powers from the ancestors to bring the rain that is so crucial for cultivation. For his services to the community, the rainmaker had his plot cultivated for him, and was also paid in beer. Apart from the rainmaker, there were departmental experts who operated along the same principles. There were experts for each of the important crops. Sickness experts were also important, as they could cure people through their powers. And finally, there was an iron expert. A common way of paying all these experts was in beer.

The organizational principles within the Lafofa social organization also provided important contexts for local economic life. When all Lafofa stayed on the mountain, they practiced a quite intensive system of cultivation with multiple linkages between agriculture and livestock and labour-intensive dry terracing. This intensive cultivation evolved in the context of population pressure on the confined mountain plateau.

In spite of the fact that the Lafofa kept animals such as cattle and pigs, they were predominantly agriculturalists; and crop production was the mainstay of their economy. On the *house fields* and the *adjacent fields* men and women cultivated sorghum of different varieties, planting it in May and harvesting it in October-No-

vember. The harvested grain was tied in bundles and put on the roof of a *rakuba*, which is a roof supported by poles, used to provide shade. This public display of the harvest was talked about and was the basis for the classification of people as good or bad farmers. Grain was threshed in small quantities for consumption, but the main part of the threshing normally started in January. Apart from using grain for their own consumption it was used to make beer to mobilize labour and on other occasions.

The matrilineal principle among the Lafofa of course also provided contexts for the Lafofa to operate in agriculture. For the Lafofa the transfer of both house fields and adjacent fields was defined by their matrilineal descent system. Members of the same matrilineage would live near each other up on the mountain, within an area defined by a water course, a hill or some stones. Within such an area, the owner of a homestead would also cultivate around his house; and when he died, the person taking over the house would also take over this house field. Access to and ownership of house fields was thus obtained through the processes deciding residence. The ideal was to be brought up with a mother's brother, and to take over his house. But with the classificatory kinship system this meant that this relation could be used for many different people. Although matrilineal relationships defined access to fields, they did not determine which people actually would be involved, and, therefore, what the actual relationships were.

This pattern of residence would also be influenced by marriage and divorce. As we saw earlier, the wife's family built a house for the new couple, but did so on the man's land. The ideal situation would then be for some sister's son to move into the house to be brought up there, the children of the couple moving elsewhere to their matrikin. In case of divorce this pattern could be broken; and children would stay on with their fathers, the land of the matrilineage thereby also being used by the sons of men, who belonged to different matrilineages.

This flexibility was also the case for the transfer of adjacent fields. Such fields could be obtained from the side of the mother as well as that of the father, and fields could be obtained at

different times during a person's life. The transfer of land was thus determined by the opportunities available to several people. The flexible system permitted pragmatic solutions to the land problem by allowing people in need to get the plots they required. The factors influencing residence patterns, and access to house fields, did not operate at random. Rules of descent as well as the various opportunities available to the people involved influenced the choices that were made. Taking over the site and the housefields that go with it depended on the situational context at the time the transfers took place.

Turning to the issue of labour, a prominent feature to note among the Lafofa is the extensive use of communal labour. During the cultivation season, work parties were seen every day. In the dry season communal labour was used for threshing, for collecting grass and branches for house-building and for the house-building itself. The ordinary type of work party among the Lafofa was the *nafir*, which is the same as we know from elsewhere in the Sudan and in Africa (Netting, 1964, 1965; Barth, 1967a,b; Gulliver, 1971; Nypan, 1971; Storås, 1976; Shazeli, 1980). A man will invite his neighbours and relatives to help with a certain piece of work. The organizer will provide beer, or food for those who do not drink. The amount of food and drink may vary according to the amount of work, and consequently, on how many people will have to be invited. It is, therefore, not possible to generalize about the size of a work party.

This ordinary work party is not the only form of group labour found among the Lafofa. Two other types, which are much more elaborate in their organization, were also found. The more important one is an institution called "*hakuma*" which literally means "government". The second one is called "*maliki*" which comes from the Arabic word "*maliki*" meaning civilized. The two are somewhat similar in organizational structure.

A *hakuma* will be a group of around 30 people, who hold different grades in an organization. These grades are organised in relation to each other, forming groups of equals who will sit together when there is a gathering. It is thus a highly formalized type of work organization. With a *maliki* the elaborate grade system is absent, and the ritualized occasions are not there,

but basically it works like a *hakuma*.

THE RITUAL CYCLE AND AGRICULTURE

Apart from providing access to production factors, the system of social organization and culture described above was also closely tied in with the agricultural system through the ritual cycle. Rain-making and the activities of the rain-maker were an important prerequisite for starting cultivation among the Lafofa. Seligman describes how the rain-making ceremony of the Lafofa of *jebel Eliri* was preceded by elaborate secret preliminaries. The site of the rain-making was at the foot of *jebel Eliri*, where there are ruins of a sizable settlement.

"Here are certain features traditionally associated with Geberatu: the foundations of his house, showing remains of large pots and his granaries; his grave, indicated by a depression in the ground with pieces of wood at the sides of a narrow hole, and at the side of this a slab of rock bearing the foundations of a hut in which Geberatu performed the rain ritual. These remains were excessively holy, and it was only after prolonged negotiations that we were allowed to visit the spot." (1932: 399)

Based on descriptions by MacDiarmid, a missionary working in the area in the early century, Seligman was able to give the following description of the ritual itself:

"When rain is due people come from their villages to the rain-maker's hut, carrying branches of trees. They dance and call on the rain to fall. The rain-maker then goes into his hut, where three fairly large white stones (*mone'e*), brought many years ago from the old home in the Tikeim hills, lie in a row. The rain maker spits on his finger and places it on the ground near the central white stone, next touching his eyes, the front of his neck, his navel and his big toe. The assistant kills a large pig provided by the rain maker and brings the blood in a gourd inside the hut, placing it on the ground near the central stone. The rain-maker touches the blood with his finger, which he carries to his eyes, neck, navel and

big toe. Then he takes the gourd of blood, comes out of the hut backwards, and turning around throws the blood into the air." (ibid: 401/2)

This ceremony was also the sign for people that cultivation may start, and they proceed to sow their seeds. But the participation of the grain-expert was also important. He would mix grain of his own with that from people before they took it to their fields to plant. This is, however, done individually, not in elaborate ceremonies as was the case with rain-making.

The harvesting of grain was also very important for the Lafofa, but not as an expression of the role of rain-making but rather as a metaphor expressing basic relations between people. This can be seen by the ways the harvest period is also the period for the important transition ceremonies and ceremonial acts that celebrate life. First of all, harvest time was also the time for *wrestling*. For boys the wrestling matches seem to be only a sporting event celebrating their strength and manhood, but for girls this was also related to ritually signalling the transition from being a girl to becoming a woman. There was no seclusion of girls in the granary as is the case among the Masakin (Nadel, 1947), but wrestling and the scarring of the body were symbolic expressions of the same transition. The link between fertility, women and grain also came out later, when the grain was to be threshed. Only women would carry threshed grain from the threshing ground to the granary. The harvest, wrestling and scarring went together for girls to signal a transition from girlhood to womanhood. It was tied to basic notions of *fertility*, which can be linked to the harvesting of the life-giving sorghum. The same period, i.e. after the rainy season, was also the period for the important transition ceremonies among boys. For boys the *age-grade* system was the basic integrative element. Through the ceremonies, basic elements of the matrilineal system were dramatized, as well as fertility, through the act of the boys being cared for by their future wives.

RITUAL, MEANING, AND THE ROLE OF GRAIN

The two examples of how the agricultural

system was tied to the ritual cycle differ significantly. The rain rituals were basically secret and depended on the expertise of the rain-maker. This expertise was transferred through a matrilineage but its transfer was closely related to spirits arriving in a person's dreams and taking him away to teach him, thus further underlining secrecy and the process of special selection. The knowledge on which a rain-maker acts was thus partly part of a relationship between this individual and the holy spirits, partly a socialization process in which an older rain-maker trains the new one. The details of the ritual are thus sure to change and vary over time, although the basic outlines of the acts may have stayed the same. But the relationship between the rain-maker and the people is one in which the rain-maker mediated between them and the spirit world to bring the rain on which life depends. Rain-making thus underlined and was dependent upon a certain cosmological order.

Rituals relating to harvest time were quite different. The elements of secrecy were not there, only public rituals in which people themselves were the actors and in which they celebrated relationships that tied people to each other, not to the spirit world. The links to reproduction and fertility were there, the transition ceremonies that marked important changes in social status were there, and the realities contained in the matrilineal system and matrilineages were also present. I am not saying that this bears no relationship to the spirit-world or that notions of fertility may not be related to cosmological notions, but that by the very way these rituals were socially organized, they implied very important differences in the messages they contained. They thereby also underlined different existential aspects of Lafofa life.

Sorghum was the basic subsistence crop among the Lafofa, and its availability would determine the future of the Lafofa. Grain also served as an idiom for various other important values among the Lafofa. We have said that the display of grain on the roof of the *rakuba* indicated the presence of a good farmer and thus had to do with notions of rank. Apart from being cooked as porridge for subsistence, grain was also made into beer to be used on different occasions. As in other African communities, beer

among the Lafofa was important in mobilizing labour for cultivation, house-building and other activities that require communal efforts (see e.g. Manger ed., 1987). Beer was also important to those who made it, i.e. the women. It was important for a woman and wife to be a good beer maker, thus acquiring rank in the female sphere. But beer was not only significant in such economic contexts. Beer was an integral part of all the ritual occasions that we have described. I do not have details on the use of beer during the period we are discussing, but we may safely state that beer served as an important idiom on several levels of Lafofa society.

The agricultural process thus provided not only subsistence products but also basic idioms for the expression of Lafofa unity and solidarity, thus further underlining the close interconnection between the economic and socio-cultural levels of society.

LAFOFA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN A WIDER CONTEXT

One major characteristic of the Nuba Mountain region is that it is inhabited by many groups that are not original inhabitants of the area but who have settled there due to the effects of earlier events. A major factor relates to the situation on the southern frontier in eighteenth and nineteenth century Sudan. The distribution of adaptive groups in the region during this period was very much influenced by the problem of *security*. The area was a frontier region, like the Ingessana and Dar Fartit, being subject to human and economic exploitation by the various powerholders that controlled the regions to the north. These powerholders were, first, the larger pre-colonial savanna states, Funj and Darfur, the Turco-Egyptian regime (after 1821) and finally the Mahdist state, but some areas were also within the area of one of the smaller pre-colonial states, the Tegali kingdom. As mentioned, the general theme during this period was the exploitation of the Nuba Mountains for ivory, gold, and, most importantly, slaves. All the powerholders mentioned were Muslims, who were attacking the non-Muslim Nuba population—the Nuba being the main target of slave raids.

The identity of the slave hunters varied, but apart from official slave hunting expeditions organized by the states themselves, the main groups involved were the immigrant groups, i.e. the Arab pastoralists and the *jellaba* traders. The pastoralists used the Nuba Mountains area for pasture, which brought them deep into the mountains and into contact with the inhabitants. During these migrations the Arab pastoralists would raid and take slaves from different Nuba groups. The system varied. In some hills they would develop relations with Nuba leaders, who would provide slaves from other groups in order to save their own populations. In other areas the Nuba were raided directly by the pastoralists. In all instances, however, the system was based on military superiority. The traders' involvement in slave hunting and the slave trade was also significant. Many traders became rich through these activities and the capital gained through the slave trade became the start of many *jellaba* trading houses in the west (O'Fahey, 1982).

The basic pattern of this exploitation of the Nuba Mountains did not change much throughout the period before 1900, except in the intensity of exploitation. The Turco-Egyptian regime demanded more slaves and taxes from the inhabitants than had the pre-colonial kingdoms, and they had a stronger machine for securing what they wanted. The level of exploitation thus increased in the nineteenth century (Ewald, 1982). But generally, developments during these periods left the Arab pastoralists and the traders as superior groups, able to exploit the Nuba inhabitants. Developments during the Mahdist period increased the pressure on these outlying areas and led to the dramatic resettlement of various groups. The most important of these developments was the outbreak of war in the 1880s.

For the Nuba a basic problem was how to organize themselves for defence in order to survive in their home areas. This could be partly achieved by hiding in their mountains where the horses of the slave raiders could not enter, the task of defence being thus made easier. But political allegiances were also at work, showing that the situation was not completely anarchic. There were smaller political units ruled over by local

leaders called *Meks*. They owed allegiance to greater rulers above them, and the link was maintained through payments of tribute. This description is particularly relevant for the Lafofa who, before settling in Liri, lived in Tikeim, an area to the east of the Liri mountain. Tikeim was part of the area controlled by one of the Tegale *Meks*, at *Jebel Gedir*. The *Mek* of *Gedir* ruled over areas of Nuba inhabitants as well as various Arab groups. The people under him were the Kau, Fungor, Werni, Kalogi, Tira, Talodi and possibly eastern Moro. My own material shows that according to the Lafofa tradition a daughter of the Lafofa *Mek*, Deldung, was married to the *Mek* Bosh of *Gedir*, indicating the existence of a political relationship which could well be related to the need for security.

The security situation we have described influenced the accessibility of fields. The distribution of house fields and adjacent fields in the mountain itself and at the foot of the mountain certainly was a defensive move through which the Lafofa could combine cultivation and at the same time being ready for defence, returning into their mountains. The organization of labour power was also related to this situation. An important point about the labour institutions described above is that they are not indigeneous Lafofa institutions but seem to have been adopted as a result of the Lafofas' contacts with other groups. The background of the *hakuma* is not clear. It might be related to the *baramka*-institution which is found among the Baggara Arabs (Arber, 1940; Cunnison, 1966). These groups of men form a club for the ceremonial drinking of tea, and usually sing songs in praise of sugar. From the Baggara groups it may have spread to the other groups of the area, also to the Nuba, where it was transformed to an institution for agricultural cooperation.

"....the Awlad Himeid who came north to Habbania country in the rains picked it up and took it south where it caught on among the serf-like communities of the southern Kawahla at Errio, at Werne and at El Liri." (Arber, op.cit.: 142.)

When the British Administration heard about the tea drinking, they forbade the gatherings because they might have some potential for mobilizing resistance against the British. This

could be related to the fact that apart from being labour institutions, these groups probably also served as defensive units of the Nuba. People always took their weapons with them to the fields, and they worked in lines which, if attacked, could quickly become lines of defence (Vicars-Miles, 1934). And indeed, among the Nuba there was a tendency to militarize the institution. Arber mentions that in El Liri the titles were those of Turkish military grades, like *Bey* or *Mufattish*; and the *baramka* itself was called *turak*, later to be changed to *hakuma*.

It is also possible that the *hakuma* might be related to the *ghazwa* organizations. These were raiding parties organized by rulers in the early Sultanates in order to collect slaves. Once outside the sultanate these *ghazwas* were organized as strict hierarchies, using titles from the royal house. Later this organization developed into the *kubbaniya*, the major difference being that firearms were used in the latter. (O'Fahey, 1977, 1980.) This likelihood of connection is further substantiated by the fact that the word *turak* denotes a unit within the Turkish army.

The *maliki* is known from the Tegale Kingdom. Arber says that it evolved among Arabized Nuba from the simple work party (*nafir*) of the other Nuba and its rules strikingly resemble those of the *baramka*. Among the Lafofa the difference between the two is in the number of participants, the use of grades and the use of sanctions.

Without reducing all the complex labour organizations found among the Lafofa to a mere functional unit within the intensive agricultural system, one implication was surely that the making and repairing of terraces, weeding and harvesting as well as house building and other tasks were made easier through the mobilization of such groups. The reciprocal nature of the mobilization of such groups also secured a distribution of labour within the society. This did not mean that there were not economic differences. There were individual differences, and they were shown in the bundles of grain seen on the *rakuba* roofs. A surplus of grain could be used to make more beer, and would thus enhance the status and prestige of an individual who could treat the workers lavishly. The work-parties also operated on the borders of Lafofa

territory where people were susceptible to attacks from enemies and thus also served in a defence function. Because such labour organizations were recruited from within the matrilineal lineages and from people living on lineage land, the work groups were very much part of the basic system of social organization among the Lafofa, as sketched out above.

CHANGES IN ECONOMIC LIFE

The agricultural system described was an adaptation to specific socio-political and economic developments in the southern Nuba Mountains during certain historical periods. In a contemporary context they change and deteriorate as distinct systems of agricultural intensification. Today the Lafofa have to a large extent left these activities. They have adopted the more extensive cultivation practices found among their neighbours. One major factor contributing to this is the general pacification of the areas. Governments in this century have been able to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants in a different way from earlier ones. Groups like the Nuba have been able to move into areas in which they can start more expansive cultivation again (see Roden, 1972 for details about the Nuba Mountains, McCown et al., 1979 for similar trends within the broader Sudan savanna belt). In this changing context the factors making up the Lafofa agricultural system also appear in new forms.

Today, with less pressure on land in the mountain, the rules for land transfers are less critical, and people have a wider variety of choices of fields. The most important alternative now is, however, the opening up of *far fields* down on the clay plain. Land is not scarce on the clay plains in Liri. Inheritance is, therefore, not of crucial importance in obtaining land there. A son may clear his own fields independently of the ones of his father. Since the area is declared and understood by all to be Government land, one does not ask anybody's permission to clear it. This situation obtains of course, because land is plentiful. Further north, in the Central Nuba Mountains where population densities are higher, all land has been used and there the transfer of plots and also of far fields, is

important (Roden, 1972; Salih, 1983).

Most often people from the same village cultivate fields close to each other. They feel more secure if they can go together with neighbours. Another advantage of being together is that people can arrange small work parties in the fields. Since clearing land is hard work, a person may prefer to cultivate a field which is already cleared. He may ask someone he knows who is not working his field whether he could borrow the field, or he may contact a relative. In the first case a cultivator is always in danger of being told to leave, but in the case of a relative one is more confident of being left in peace. No compensation is paid for borrowing fields.

The far fields are planted and harvested later than the mountain fields. Various types of sorghum are planted together with sesame and beans. Some years ago cotton was an attractive cash crop, but today this production is approaching zero. The people who cultivate far fields stay there for several days at work time. They build shelters to stay in and try to get relatives and others to come and help them during peak periods. After the grain is harvested it is brought back to Liri in lorries.

With the far fields we also find that land use differs from what is common in the mountain. A plot is cleared, all the trees are cut, and the grass is removed by fire (*hariq*-cultivation). Fire breaks are made round an area to prevent the fire spreading. When the new grass is coming up, with the first rains, a fire is made to remove both the old and the new grass. After this, the land is ready for planting. There is a general rule in this system that the fallow period should last as many years as the land was cultivated. The normal cycle is four years cultivation, four years fallow. But people usually clear a field, rectangular in shape. After a number of years the user leaves one part of it fallow and expands at the other end. The far fields receive a certain amount of manuring since the cattle nomads come to the area towards the end of the cultivation season. The cattle can, therefore, feed on the stalks that are left on the fields and simultaneously leave their waste.

RESOURCE COMPETITION

One major effect of the down movement from

the mountain, and the pacification policies, was the changing relationships between Nuba and the Arab populations in the economic field. In their early period in the Sudan the British built the Sennar Dam on the Blue Nile to get water for the Gezira irrigation project. To do this they needed many labourers, some of whom came from the Nuba Mountains. The people of the southern region, especially from Liri, were among the first to go (Vicars-Miles, 1934). But after some time, the British saw that this created "detrified" Nuba. The migrants settled elsewhere in the country, took up Arab and Islamic customs, and showed several signs of cultural change, which the British wanted to avoid. Thus the Closed District Ordinance was introduced to regulate movements of people.

Another element was British awareness that, if they wanted the Nuba to stay at home, they had to create economic opportunities in their home areas. This, as well as the general need for revenue, led to the introduction in the early 1920s of the cultivation of cotton as a cash crop. The Nuba were already cultivating some cotton, short in staple and poor in quality, but one, which suited their looms and required little work in the fields. The British attempted to introduce a higher quality cotton and the government scheme introducing new cotton in 1924 is generally considered to be the beginning of cotton growing in the Nuba Mountains. The first people to adopt it were the *jellaba*, followed by the pastoralists, whereas the Nuba were reluctant. But in the 1920s and 1930s there were large increases in the cultivation of cotton, and this success even made people leave grain production; thus endangering the food supply of the area. By the 1930s British administrators warned against food shortages and famine in bad years, and they encouraged people to grow some grain. They also began to introduce alternative food crops, such as groundnuts and sesame, that could also be used as cash crops (Vicars-Miles, *ibid.*).

The developments sketched above were to have an important impact on the various groups living in the region. For the pastoralists, the abolition of slavery took away their main labour supply and forced them to start herding and cultivating themselves. Many pastoralists had lost

much of their livestock during the Mahdist wars and were, therefore, less nomadic than before. They took up cultivation in the Nuba Mountains, especially cotton growing, to earn money to rebuild their herds. This led many of the Hawazma into an agro-pastoral adaptation, and only a minority continued to lead a purely pastoral life.

For the Nuba, the most significant transition was their down-migration from the mountains into a safe life on the plains. This also meant a decrease in the intensive hill cultivation, as they transferred cultivation to the more fertile sand and clay plains. The Nuba, however, did not enter this economic development as early as the Arabs. Their past experiences made them reluctant to go into new activities, as did their limited cash needs. But eventually the Nuba also became integrated into the expanding economy of the area. They took on wage labour on the *jellaba* and Arab cotton farms, and started to cultivate the new crop themselves.

Through this process of economic development the *jellaba* managed to establish a central place for themselves in the economy of the region. Due to their capital and organizational experience (Manger, 1984), they were able to make a future for themselves, in spite of British reluctance and occasional active discouragement. The government was hostile to the *jellaba* because of their involvement in the slave trade and their gun-running to locals, and because it suspected them of cheating the Nuba and teaching them how to drink liquor. But from their bases in towns and market centres, the *jellaba* were an integral part of the regional economy, dominating trade as well as the cultivation of cash crops.

The last important development in this period that must be discussed is the effect on the area of the new distribution of groups and resources. With the down-movement of the Nuba as well as the settlement of Arabs, a new situation arose in which land rights had to be defined. The result of the British policies in this field was that the pastoral Hawazma who migrated through the area received no land rights, but had to negotiate agreements with the local inhabitants to be allowed to use pasture and water. For the sedentary Arabs, the British solved their problem partly by opening up new areas for

cultivation, partly by drilling wells and building *hafirs* (dams), and partly by giving the new settlers ownership rights in these areas, to avoid mixing Arabs and Nubas in Nuba-dominated areas.

This system, designed to avoid conflict between groups, was further strengthened by the introduction of Native Administration. As we have seen, it ensured the various tribes had the right to administer themselves through their own tribal leadership. The same structure of leadership was also effective in working out agreements between tribes about the use of resources, of pasture and water rights. Through their leaders, the Hawazma pastoralists negotiated acceptance by the Nuba and other Arab groups of their use of pasture and water. They did the same with the tribes of the Upper Nile in the Southern Sudan. For the settled populations, the tribal leadership became an important mechanism for solving land disputes between groups and for negotiating acceptance of territorial borders.

THE NUBA/ARAB DISTINCTION

Apart from pacifying the Nuba area, British policies towards the Nuba Mountains were dominated by their wish and determination to keep the Nuba apart from the Arabic population and to promote development for the Nuba without turning them into Arabized Muslims. This policy has been documented in various fields (see, eg. Sanderson, 1963 and Nasr, 1971). Small entries in government reports also indicate that the administrators were well aware of this overall strategy. For instance, in February 1933 Mr. Hawkesworth was said to have told the Nuba at Werni to stick to their tribal customs. In an entry, about a dispute settlement between the Kawahla tribe and the Tira Nuba, one important point noted is that visiting between the two tribes should be constrained, as it leads to Arabization, which must at all costs be avoided. It is also noted that the administrators must find ways to prevent the Arabization of the Nuba without making them hostile to the Arabs.

The British views on socio-cultural integration between the Nuba and Arabs come out clearly in the field of *education*. The policies of

education show how the administrators experimented with different types of schools and different languages of instruction as well as with involvement by Christian missionaries, all in order to contain the Nuba as an indigenous group, which differed from the Arabized Muslim population.

The policy of education was dependent on who at any particular time was governor of Kordofan and the systems in the Nuba Mountains were shaped during the times of Gillan and Newbold. Gillan tried to teach Arabic to the Nuba in Roman script, to block the immediate relation between the Arabic language and Islamic religion. When Newbold took over in 1932, however, he saw that the Nuba would need Arabic, in Arabic letters, in order to get jobs and that it would also help improve contact between Arab and Nuba chiefs. He thus opened the way for the teaching of Arabic to Nuba people in Arabic script. In 1940 the British abandoned the special schools for Nuba children and as of this date they could attend any school. The importance of education to the Nuba was not so much for their intellectual enlightenment, as to produce people capable of working for the government, e.g. clerks for the *Meks*, staff for the police, army, medical services, agriculture, ginneries as well as clerks. The appointment of the third *nazir* of Liri, as described earlier, is a case in point.

British policies also show regional differences. Those areas with an Arab population or a population of Nuba stock that had long been Islamized were treated as "Northern" and offered their education in Arabic, and the Koranic schools, *khalwas*, were allowed to operate. This applied to the Tegale areas and hence also to the Liri region. The Central Nuba areas were treated differently. Here the Government experimented with Christian mission education and also with secular education in *kuttab* schools (Sanderson, 1963; A.A.R. Nasr, 1971).

THE ROLE OF ISLAM

Although the British in the eastern areas (Tegale) to some extent accepted the existence of Islamic influence and allowed Islamic forces to work, this did not occur without problems

arising. These problems were related to the British fear of Islam as a political force following the Mahdiya period.

The period after the fall of the Mahdi was one of religious unrest in the Sudan, an unrest that also led to incidents in the Nuba Mountains. The problem as viewed by the British was that of *sufism*. The British administration under Wingate developed a policy of support and encouragement to orthodox Islam, creating a Board of *Ulema* in 1901, building mosques, appointing judges (*qadis*) to judge according to *Sharia* law, etc. (Warburg, 1971: 96).

The Islamic brotherhoods, however, were restricted and regarded as a form of dangerous fanaticism that could create political problems. It is a fact that in the early years of the new century hardly a year passed without some religious uprising or some *fuqara* (sing. *faqi*, pl. *fuqara*) being arrested and deported. Death penalties were not uncommon after such uprisings (see Warburg, op.cit., 100ff.). The uprisings usually started when a local *faqi* declared himself a new *mahdi* or as *nebbi Isa* (the prophet Jesus), secured some supporters, and attacked a British station. The most important uprising under Wingate took place in 1908, when Abd el-Gadir Muhammed Imam Wad Habuba and his followers attacked and killed some British administrators in the Masalamiya district of the Blue Nile Province.

The uprisings that took place in the Nuba Mountains are of a later date. The British thought first that the 1906 Talodi Mutiny had religious overtones, but it turned out to be related to the Government's policies on slave raiding. However, in 1912 there was an uprising in the Eastern *jebels*, started by a Tunisian *faqi*. He proclaimed himself *mahdi* near *jebel Gedir* but was shot dead with seven of his followers by the British. This "*sherifi* uprising" as it is called was the first of several incidents.

In 1915 a *fellata faqi*, Ahmed Omer, proclaimed himself *nebbi Isa* and retreated to *jebel Gedir*. This case is interesting because it was the first time a West African (*fellata*) was involved in such an event. The British had been positive to the *fellata* and their contribution to the economy, but in 1910 it was clear that their numbers were increasing fast and that they repre-

sented a potential threat. For example, after the battle of Burmi in 1903, some 25,000 Fulani refugees fled from Nigeria and settled in the Sudan especially along the Blue Nile where the British gave them land. Ahmed Omer, who originally came from Sokoto in Nigeria, first settled in Omdurman but later went to the Nuba Mountains encouraging fellow *fellata* to follow him. Although his success was meager, some did follow him.

The end of this uprising started a period of peace in the Eastern district, but elsewhere in the Nuba Mountains the problems continued. A serious incident took place in 1915 in *jebel Miri*, close to Kadugli, in which a Nuba *mek*, Fiki Ali, rebelled. But this incident turned out to be a local affair. On the whole, the religious uprisings were small incidents; but since the Mahdiya had happened only a decade before, the British were sensitive to religious unrest. This continued up until the 1920s.

The above discussion gives an important context for our understanding of the developments in Liri. This is so because a significant Islamic influence was brought to Liri by a *fellata*. He did not present himself as a prophet, but did work within the structure of an Islamic brotherhood, a *tariqa*.

Such brotherhoods acted as an important factor through which the *Lafafa* and others were influenced and taught new values and norms. In Liri the *Qadiriyya* sect is the dominant one, and within this sect is the *Makashfiyya* branch with its center at Gezira. The history of this *tariqa* in the southern Nuba Mountains in general and in Liri in particular goes back to the beginning of the present century and is related to the coming in 1906 of a *faqi* (Islamic Holy Man) to work as a missionary. He was *sheikh Bernawi*, a West African, who had been initiated by the leader of the *tariqa*, the *Makashif*. He travelled around for many years, teaching the locals, as well as intermarrying with them. Eventually he settled down in Liri and built his *mesid* (local center) there. After his death his son, *sheikh Abdel Bagi*, took over as religious leader and currently is the religious leader in Liri.

Around these leaders a group of followers developed, the dervishes (*faqi/fuqara*). These local converts became propagators of the new

religion among their own people. The *faqi* performs the Islamic rituals at important events like name-giving, circumcision, marriage and death. He also operates as a healer to the extent he has been given power (*baraka*) to do so.

The Qadiriyya in Liri appears as a ritual and organizational unit with the great *sheikh* at the pivotal point, and with lesser *sheikhs* as his representatives. This network of Dervishes is very important for teaching illiterate people about Islam. The teaching of Muhamed and the content of the Koran are conveyed through direct contact between a *sheikh* and his followers. To an adherent, being a Muslim thus means going to the places where the teaching goes on, be it a *noba* dance, a *karama*, a wedding in the village or a visit to the *mesid*.

INDEPENDENCE

The period of independent Sudan, starting in 1956, represents a continuation of earlier developments towards greater commercialization of the economy, but with new factors appearing that provided new opportunities for people in the Liri region. In the field of wage labour, the development of an industrial sector in Khartoum in the early independence period provided people with new opportunities for seasonal migration (El-Hassan, 1976). This particular history of migration has resulted in a clear pattern among the Lafafa men, in which those over about 50 years of age have never been on migration, whereas those who are younger have made at least one trip. Today migration is an essential part of the process of a young Lafafa man establishing himself with a wife and family. Many continue to migrate, making this migration and the money brought from it an integral part of the local economy of contemporary Lafafa.

The first period of civil war between the north and the south created a great demand for soldiers in the northern army, and many Hawazma boys enlisted during this period (Osman, 1986). Duty in the southern war zone brought good incomes, and the money was invested mostly in animals. At home, the prices of cotton were good, and finally, the demand for meat in the Arab world raised the price of animals. The first decade of independence was thus economically

a fairly good period for the people. The number of animals grew. Some Nuba groups acquired so many animals that they took up a pastoral way of life.

But there were also new developments related to the state's involvement in farming. In 1967 cotton growing was organized in a new way. The cotton company stopped being only a distributor of seeds and a market organization and was given development tasks (Kerzani, 1983). The Nuba Mountains Agricultural Production Corporation (NMAPC) was formed to 1) increase productivity, reduce cost of production and provide crop protection through research and extension services, 2) to improve economic, social and cultural standards of farmers through the provision of drinking water, social services, rural development and the encouragement of cooperative movements, and 3) to encourage group farming, mechanized farming and the organization of rotational rules for the cultivation of cotton and sorghum. These ambitious aims were not followed up with an adequate administrative structure. Rather, the result was a drastic drop in cotton production.

This led the Nimeiri regime to go even further in 1970 by introducing the concept of "modernization schemes". But they were also a failure. During the first years the results were a reduction of cultivated areas within the schemes by 55 per cent, whereas administrative costs increased by 81 per cent (*ibid.*). Thus a crisis in this sector started that was to last into the 1980s. People were reluctant to grow cotton because of bad prices. They were constrained in their sorghum cultivation because of the rules of rotation within the schemes. Productivity was also low on the schemes due to late planting of the crops, which in turn was related to mechanical problems with the fleet of tractors. Studies of these schemes in the late 1970s and early 1980s showed that the traditional sector was at least as productive as the cotton schemes and that the reluctance on the part of the farmers to participate was indeed a rational choice (Manger, 1979).

A second direct state intervention in the agricultural sector was the introduction into the southern Nuba Mountains of large-scale mechanized schemes, comprising farms of 1,000 acres

each. These were administered by the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC) established in the 1960s. The first scheme of this type in the Nuba Mountains was Habila, in the late 1960s, and in our region further south, the Beida scheme was established in 1976. Unlike the modernization schemes, these types of schemes were not aimed at small-holder farmers, but rather at people with capital who could afford the investments. There is an initial fee to the MFC in order to get a scheme, and then a yearly rent. But the real cost lies in clearing land of trees and buying mechanical equipment (tractors and dicers). Furthermore, the management of such schemes, with all the capital involved, the organization of hundreds of wage labourers and the marketing, is way beyond the competence of the local farmers, be they Nuba or Arab. It was the *jellaba* who most effectively exploited this opportunity. In 1979, only seven of thirty-seven farms in the Beida scheme, were owned by non-*jellaba*, and none of them was operating (Manger, 1984).

The impact of the schemes can be seen on several levels. Economically they have been a success for their owners. The profits reaped by the traders are considerable, and this success has created increasing income differences in the region. In 1979 I did a calculation of the distribution of incomes on the schemes among the owners and the workers, i.e. between capital and labour, and found that 53% went to the owner and 47% to the workers (Manger, 1979). Since the owner was one or two persons and the workers several hundred, there was a dramatic difference in the distribution of incomes from the schemes. The traders' position as the dominant economic group in the area has been further strengthened and the workers, i.e. the local farmers and poor migrants from the south, remain poor, with the schemes providing a vital additional income for these groups.

Ecologically these vast schemes also have an impact. First, due to the lack of rotational practices, the farmers let the land deteriorate; when this happens, they get a new scheme. This is contrary to the rules of the MFC, but experience shows that the rules are not applied. The schemes thus appear to be places of agricultural mining rather than agricultural farming (Shazeli,

1980.) The schemes also take up large areas that were previously part of pastoral migration routes. To remedy this, the MFC has made special corridors for the nomads to pass through the scheme areas, but it becomes a problem towards the end of the dry season, when some nomads start their movement northwards. This is the time of localized early showers of rain. For people and animals moving along the corridors it is very difficult to resist the temptation to move their herds across the farms in search of pasture and water at a time when the strain on the animals is great. At this time there may still be some grain left that awaits threshing on the farms, and this the animals then eat. This has led to fighting and court cases.

ESCALATING CONFLICT

The situation for the traders, farmers and pastoralists has thus changed through the period of independence. The scheme sector and the general expansion of the commercial sector during the Nimeiri regime has helped the *jellaba* to dramatically improve their position.

For the majority of cultivators the development schemes have been places of low paid wage work (i.e. the MFC schemes) and places of decreasing interest (i.e. the NMAPC schemes). The main bulk of small-holder cultivation has thus remained within the traditional sector, using traditional hoe-technology and traditional crops. The income from these local activities has been supplemented by labour migration outside the area; but, on the whole, people remain in the low-income categories and have to pursue a number of economic activities to survive.

Most pastoralists have also made losses during this period. They have lost grazing land, and the environmental problem affects the productivity of the herds. A few rich herd-owners have been able to go into the scheme sector, investing surplus herds in tractors; but they remain a small minority.

Ethnic contacts have increased. The Nuba and Arab groups and the *jellaba* are now all operating in the plains areas and are in direct contact with each other as neighbours, employers and employees. In addition, new groups have

entered the regional scene. The West African pastoralists have come during the last decades, and so have an increasing number of Southern Sudanese who have either sought wage employment on the schemes or have been brought to the schemes by the traders going to the south seeking workers. In the contemporary situation the ethnic picture is thus more complex than before, which is a situation one might expect would generate conflict.

The situation is further complicated through the demographic developments in the region, with a significant population increase. While the population in Rashad District grew 3.7 per cent in the period from the 1955/56 National Census to the 1973 census, the growth rate between the censuses of 1973 and 1983 was 6.8%. The growth of towns was also significant, with the total urban population increasing five-fold between 1955 and 1983. This dramatic change cannot be related to demographic processes within the region alone, but is concerned with people migrating into the district. The immigrants are partly coming from drought-stricken North Kordofan where the ecological crisis is more severe, partly from the Southern Sudan, where poverty and, more recently, civil war is pushing people out. Another development is related to the nomadic groups. Their migration routes have traditionally gone through the mountains, but due to the difficulties at both ends of the routes, the pastoralists spend longer periods in the Nuba Mountains, thus adding to the problem.

All these developments are putting the southern Nuba Mountains under severe strain. The causes are complex, involving several ethnic groups engaged in a number of economic activities, and are related to developments in other regions, away from the focus of this study. Although the problems have been building up for several decades, they have become particularly acute since the 1970s. This is partly because the environmental problems have been paralleled by significant political difficulties. This is related to the breakdown of an administrative system that facilitated contact between groups and also facilitated the distribution of resources between them.

In fact, the number of conflicts increased, as

the possibilities for solving them decreased. This is related to the abolition in 1971 of the Native Administration system. People's Councils were introduced to which people were elected according to democratic procedures. This change has placed groups other than the old Native Administration (essentially rural) leaders in central political positions. The new system is biased in favour of the settled populations, as their opportunities to elect their representatives are better than those of the nomads.

For the nomads the new system of the 1970s has resulted in a loss of influence in regional politics and, therefore, also in fewer opportunities to secure their interests in the region's resources. They lose court cases about trespassing; they have to accept the encroachment of West African pastoralists on their traditional pasture areas. The increasing number of conflicts arising from this situation take dramatic turns, with villagers covering water points that the nomads use (as happened in el-Gardud), burning pasture areas, and expelling nomads from the areas of the modernization schemes (as happened in Um Dual).

Among the settled population, the elite groups of *jellaba* and some Arab elites have benefitted from the system through their participation in its most profitable activities, notably the scheme sector and trade. Their economic position has given them political influence, through which they can protect their interests *vis à vis* other groups. But the majority of settled people are experiencing an increasing marginality and have problems with securing their livelihood. They end up in debt-relations with the rich groups and through such relationships become supporters for these groups in the political field.

When the political crisis culminated in the civil war in the early 1980s, the Nuba Mountains also became involved as an area bordering on the conflict areas of the Upper Nile Province. One significant aspect of this political crisis is the ethnic, or cultural one. The major north-south crisis is expressed in the Nuba Mountains through a conflict between groups of Arabic origin and the indigenous Nuba groups. Such problems are escalating due to the environmental problems and famine.

THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY

As in earlier periods the issue of Nuba identity has played a central role, also in the independent Sudan. Developments such as those sketched above relate directly to the contemporary distribution of social power on the plural scene in Liri which is clearly in favour of the Arabic groups against the non-Arabs and non-Muslims. This is related to the long history of Arabization and Islamization in the Sudan, through which local groups have adopted new cultural traits. There is also a contemporary process of change going on in the Sudan, which is not one of accepting the Islamic religion or Arabic language and customs alone, but rather that ethnically diverse groups living in the Sudanese periphery adapt to the dominant life-style of the centre. Non-Arab and non-Islamized groups like the Nuba show the most dramatic expression of such processes, but already Islamized Arab groups are also going through similar processes.

This process does not mean that people only want to catch up with the mainstream Arabic culture, but rather that they want "materially and spiritually to participate as a member of the Sudanese top stratum of traders and officials, and to be taken seriously, be considered trust and creditworthy throughout the Sudan" (Doornbos, 1984). This is a general process of social change in contemporary Sudan. Traders are among the major agents of this change, but so are modern schools, local courts and Islamic brotherhoods. This way of life is characterized by non-manual labour, non-drinking, seclusion of women, a clear public display of Islamic identity (Doornbos, op.cit.). In Liri, the *jellaba* represent such a way of life, while the Nuba represent the opposite. The Nuba are still considered a non-Muslim, non-Arab population, with a past history as slaves and they are still marginalised in society.

However, the process is not a unified one, and is certainly not a "law of nature" rolling over communities and people. There are various types of reactions to the developments. African Rights (1995) discusses this from a focus on the SPLA dominated areas of the Mountains, areas in which military struggle dominates, whereas Liri is in Government controlled territory. There

are also earlier attempts at political organisation. The General Union of the Nuba Mountains (GUN) headed by the Catholic Father Philip Abbas Ghaboush and Mahmoud Hazeeb, a Muslim. This was for many years the only Nuba political organization, but based on a regional idea of securing resources for the regional populations, i.e. it focussed on the lack of development of this particular region, and clearly organised its supporters around a claim for territory. This strategy also meant that GUN sought to include both Nuba and Arab groups in the same region. In the early 1970s a new organization was formed, called KOMOLO, by a certain Yusif Kuwa Mekki. This youth organization took a more racial stance, and worked explicitly for Nuba issues, first through government organisations, later in opposition to the same government. Yusif Kuwa is today the SPLA commander in charge of the liberated areas in the Nuba Mountains after having joined the movement in 1984. In 1985 Philip Ghaboush formed Sudan National Party (SNP), allying themselves with Southern parties, whereas GUN has continued and is now more influenced by younger Nuba intellectuals and trade unionists. However, as such political organizations developed the government of Sadiq al Mahdi (1986-1989) encouraged the arming of Baqqara Arabs, and made them form militias (*murhaleen*) that spread terror among Nuba and Southern groups just south of the border. This brought the SPLA, in alliance with KOMOLO, now organised into a military wing, The New Kush Division, into the mountains, and today they control sizeable areas in the central parts of the mountains. The SPLA/New Kush try to establish "rule of law" in the area, introducing a civil administration since 1992, combining the SPLM Penal Code and customary law, and electing village councils. This is being met by the government declared *jihad* in the area since 1993. The government strategy is a mixed one, with military initiatives and uprooting of people to Peace Villages (*dar al salaam*), and low-intensity warfare called "combing" (*tamshit*), but also attempts to recruit prominent Nuba (Peace from Within, *salam min dakhal*) and mobilization of pro-government Nuba (*nafir al shabi*).

The drama of this situation can be illustrated

with the following quote from the beginning of the *fatwa* in which holy war was declared on the area in 1993:

Bismillahi Al-Rahmani Al-Raheem
(In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful)

Praise be to Allah, and Thy prayers and Peace be unto the messenger of Allah...

The Conference of the Ulama, the Imams of Mosques, and the Sheikhs of the Sufi Sects in the State of Kordufan, which was held at the Peoples Committee Hall, in El Obeid, on 24 Shawal 1413 (the Muslim hijrah calendar), which corresponds with 27 April 1993;

Hereby, issue the following Fatwah about the imperativeness of mobilizing for Jihad in the Southern part of Kordufan State and in Southern Sudan, and therefore resolve the following:

1 - Rebels in Southern Kordufan or in Southern Sudan have rebelled against the "State" and have waged war against Muslims, with their prime objective being the killing and massacre of Muslims, the destruction of mosques, the burning of copies of the Quran, and violating the honour and dignity of Muslims, while, the rebels are being driven and instigated by the enemies of Islam from among the Zionists, the Christian Crusaders, and forces of arrogance, who have been supplying them with food and arms. Therefore, the rebels who are Muslims and are fighting against the State are, hereby, declared apostates from Islam, and the non-Muslims ones are hereby, declared Kaffirs who have been standing up against the efforts of preaching, proselytization, and spreading Islam into Africa. However, Islam has justified the fighting and the killing of both categories without any hesitation whatsoever with the following Quranic evidence; Allah said: "Oh you who believe, if there will be anyone who becomes an apostate from amongst yourselves away from Islam, Allah will bring about another nation who will love him and He loves them, of those who are humble towards the

believers, and proud (in their behaviour) above the Kaffirs, they will struggle in Jihad for the sake of Allah, and will not heed to any blame which may be levelled against them by anyone. This is the favour of Allah which He gives to whom He wishes, and that Allah is omnipresent, and All knowing". (Quoted from the English translation given by the xxxxx newspaper Nuba published in Cairo (Jan..XX.19XX).

This particular "climate" in the Nuba Mountains of course gives the Nuba struggle a distinct characteristic, no matter on which side the various Nuba might be. And it also involves a developments of new Nuba organizations that are mushrooming abroad (like Nuba Mountains Solidarity Abroad in London, Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Society in Nairobi), and the following cropping up of newsletters like "Nafir" in London, and the various positions in the Nuba struggle being presented in various Western foras, like The House of Lords in the British Parliament. In this process we also find Western organisations like "Africa Watch" providing information on atrocities and also engaging themselves in solidarity work. A quick look at issues being raised in the newsletter "Nafir" shows, however, that the topics are by no means new: What is Slavery? (October 1995), Agriculture in the Nuba Mountains (January 1996), The Question of Land (April 1996), Nuba Songs, Nuba Culture (both in April 1997).

The sadness of the situation aside, the dynamics provided by contemporary developments are similar to those of many other situations in regions and among people who take up struggle against oppressive powerholders. The discourse of resistance is taken into international arenas, and the exploitation of modern media provides new flows of information. However, on the ground, among the Nuba who are still in their home areas, the various Nuba groups must deal with their predicament, as groups and as individuals. And as we have indicated, such particular processes of "adaptation" create internal changes, and internal struggles among the Nuba themselves. It is to this field I shall now turn.

LAFOPA "INWARD STRUGGLES"

For a long time the Lafopa have been involved in an interactional game in which they have used signs and symbols to show an Arabic and Muslim environment that they are human beings, that they are respectable persons and not slaves and pagans. This process of ethnic dichotomization has also had important repercussions on the Lafopa's cultural traditions. We have outlined the changes relating to economic life, but general changes in social organization occur, and also notions of physical and sexual shame have changed and so have their transition ceremonies. Food taboos have changed, as have notions of gender relations, to mention but a few.

To explore this we have to return to the point about relationships as the basis for the dynamics we are watching. It is one important premise for the discussion of the Lafopa in this paper that the processes of change sketched out above are not uniform, nor do they affect all Lafopa in the same way. For instance, while doing fieldwork I could clearly see how young men involved in labour migration and local trade were much more inclined to present Islamic identities and to argue for the necessity of adopting Arabic customs, than were the old-timers.

Likewise, among the women, the wives of these migrants showed similar characteristics when compared to their older sisters. The ways of old people are «backwards» they said, and they still hold on to their «superstitious» beliefs. Such observations may not be surprising when we see the different economic and social strategies these various groups of Lafopa are following. One of my aims is thus to show how some Lafopa, by becoming involved in new economic strategies, not only have created new economic realities for themselves, but also come to act as agents of change to produce new socio-cultural realities for all Lafopa.

The changes are thus clearly tied to the *degree of mobility* among different categories of people. Young Lafopa, when reaching out from their local communities become exposed to and must deal with wider socio-cultural environments than was the case before. To participate in meaningful ways, they have to present social identities that are acceptable to this wider environ-

ment.

As the Lafopa, and the Nuba in general, are considered a former *slave population* with a *stigma* on their identity, this process of social adaptation becomes particularly crucial. The ways different categories of people deal with this stigma is an important factor explaining differentiated behaviour among the Nuba themselves, how networks are established and how they relate to the outside world. This internal variation provides an entry into the actual processes by which wider cultural variation occurs.

It is, however, important to note that we are not talking about a change from a unified, traditional Lafopa culture into a more disintegrated one, with new elements existing along with old ones. What I have called «traditional» Lafopa culture is not altogether gone, nor have old people living a «traditional» life disappeared. But with the emergence of new adaptive opportunities, the complexity of Lafopa adaptation has increased and new «agents of change» have entered the scene. A major aim is, therefore, also to try to uncover the processes affecting the reproduction and change of the Lafopa culture, a task which clearly not only involves a need to understand major aspects of how the Lafopa culture is constituted, but also how new elements have been adopted and have affected processes of reproduction and change.

Earlier in the paper we described the matrilineal descent system among the Lafopa, and tried to show how this system was at the basis of Lafopa social organization. Membership of clans secured access to land and labour, determined the succession of important ritual experts, and provided an essential context for Lafopa notions about themselves. Clan exogamy was also important and marriage was not an elaborate thing, with easy and frequent divorce. The domestic unit was a loose one. Basic Lafopa notions about the world were related to how the principles of social organization were tied to ritual life and the agricultural cycle, the interconnectedness being expressed through Lafopa rituals.

Many traditional matrilineal elements are still operating among the Lafopa. It is also clear that there have been changes. Major changes relate to the demise of matrilineal clans as corporate

groups. Today the only field in which we can recognize such corporateness is in the field of blood-money. Residence, agriculture and so on no longer have those elements. For people still living on the mountain elements of this remain, but for the Lafofa as such, their down-migration from the mountain has brought changes towards a strengthening of patrilineal principles in the transferring of resources.

With the fading corporate status of the Lafofa matriline, the hold those matriline have on their members has also weakened. Replacing the strength of the matriline is the emerging strength of the nuclear family. Marriage has now become a major investment and a major occasion in peoples' lives. With the rising cost of marriage and the ways divorces are obtained, it has also become increasingly difficult. The family unit thus seems to be of greater importance now than before. This is true both in production and in defining relationships between people. The role of men and women has changed, and so have the relationships between them. All in all, the domestic unit now appears as a much more significant unit within Lafofa society than before, relations around it replacing those of the matriline in importance.

Among the women there is no clear differentiation in economic activities, but there are differences in the extent to which they adopt a life-style based on Sudanese standards. There is also a difference between older and younger women in this respect; the younger ones adapting to the Sudanese ideals about a woman's appearance, behaviour and involvement in socio-economic life. Furthermore, the economic units are changing. Earlier the individual spouses made up a production unit, whereas in the contemporary context there is a development towards joint households. Relations within the units, i.e. relations between the sexes, are also changing, the women becoming more dependent on the men. New patterns of local differentiation are also emerging, as cash invested in local cultivation opens up new possibilities for those Lafofa who control such cash.

I have outlined different aspects of such changes elsewhere (e.g. Manger 1994), here I shall end the paper by outlining some of the changes that relate most directly to our discus-

sion on resource management.

CHANGES IN THE MOBILIZATION OF LABOUR

The settlement of the Lafofa on the plains has also led to a disintegration of the communal work groups. Such changes can be seen both in the organization of the groups and the possibilities for their mobilization.

First, there is the question of who can be mobilized. For the ordinary *nafir*, the people who are to work together are told to come to the one arranging the work. The organiser will ask neighbours, relatives and in-laws. In the more formalized parties, it is mainly place of residence which will determine what unit someone will join. Thus there are *hakumas* and *malikis* from different parts of the village; and their names denote what part of the village they represent, e.g. *hakuma teht* (down-under) which is in the western part of the village that lies lower than the rest, as it slopes down towards the western end of the mountain; or *hakuma LoTiro* which is from LoTiro, the name of the northern part of the village. It may reflect the old organization of such work groups within lineage groups, but today the membership pattern is different. One factor to interfere with this is that the Lafofa are spread out and have fields in the mountain village and on the plain. The same goes for a man who has moved down to the plain but who has fields on the mountain. He will join the *hakuma* of the place where the field is. A second factor is that the people from the Liri village further up the mountain can now join a Lafofa *hakuma*. This village is small, and the two largest cultivators in Liri are both members of one of the Lafofa *hakumas*. Thirdly, the Islamized non-beer drinkers have a *hakuma* of their own. This is a new principle for recruitment, for it is religious identity and attitudes towards beer which determine which *hakuma* one joins. Such people are often members of other work groups as well, because of the greater working capacity of those groups where the experienced elders are members.

A second important aspect is a change in the type of work the groups can be mobilized to do. Communal labour is used to collect grass

and branches for houses and for the actual building work. It is used in cultivation, for planting, weeding, harvesting and the clearing of peanuts. An interesting development in the mountains is that people refuse to be mobilised for far field cultivation. People cultivating far fields can, therefore, not expect to have their *hakumas* work for them there.

Through involvement in a regional labour market, hired labour is now more common on the far fields than are communal work groups, even among the Lafofa, who still remain in the mountains and cultivate far fields, since the work group in which they belong, are of no use.

However, for those still living in the mountain village, the best way to mobilize people is still through the traditional labour parties. Since all cultivators work on their own fields, there is a limit to how many people one can mobilize at any one time. In the institutionalized *hakuma* and *maliki* organizations, between twenty and thirty persons are likely to turn up.

Those organizations are still found, but with the developments in this century they have also taken on new functions. In addition to the work they do for each other, the *hakuma* members may give each other money instead of labour. The one whose turn it is to have a party may decide that he needs money instead of labour. All the arrangements are made, the food is prepared etc., the only difference being that every member gives 20 Pt., which is the rate of one day's work, to the person involved. With 30 members this makes a total of £56 (based on field-data from the late 1970s. After decades of economic collapse and inflation in the Sudan the figures can now only serve as a reminder "good old days").

A *hakuma* can also serve as a saving's club. All the fines and money paid by members on various occasions are collected in a box and taken care of by a cashier. This money may later be redistributed among the members when they need them.

Women may also have *hakumas* on their own. They can work in each others' fields or provide money for each other. They do not fetch grass and branches from the mountain, since house building is men's work. Women may also be members of the men's *hakuma*; they then

get their work done and work for other men on the same basis as any other member.

CHANGES IN THE PRODUCTIVE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN

The way people adapt varies according to age. Older men and women seem to manage on their mountain cultivation only. The men have been engaged in far field cultivation before, but have terminated this and manage today on near fields and house fields. This adaptation seems to be normal for men above 50 years of age, and is related to the lack of opportunities for other than local cultivation. In the 1960s the possibility of labour migration developed and men under 50 years of age have taken part in this or have at least had the option of doing so.

For the women there is also a difference in adaptational choices that is related to age. Older women are full producers to a greater extent than their younger sisters. The old women cultivate sorghum and peanuts on house fields as well as near fields, whereas the younger ones seem to be confined to house fields only or do not cultivate at all. This difference cannot easily be correlated with changes in the economic opportunities available to women. No new option like labour migration for the men has appeared. The changing female role should, therefore, be seen in relation to men's changing activities as well as within the framework of a general household adaptation.

What emerges from such a procedure is that households differ not according to age only but also according to their basic adaptive strategies. Although the people above 50 have adapted in roughly the same way, those under 50 vary in their choices. There are young people who try to manage on mountain cultivation alone. Others combine migration with cultivation in the mountain and still others choose the «traditional» adaptation of combining far field cultivation with mountain activities. However, all the men had worked as migrant labourers, mostly in the Khartoum area. There is thus an increasing tendency towards greater incorporation in the commercial sector among younger units, a tendency manifested by more involvement in wage labour and trade, which are «modern» activities.

In the following we shall look at some factors affecting this.

CHANGING RELATIONS WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

I have said that wife and husband are independent production units, each cultivating different plots. The spouses are tied to each other through various claims on each other. The wife is responsible for cooking food, making beer, etc. She can sell beer and make mats to get an extra income for herself, thus strengthening her position as economically independent. A woman may make beer for sale about ten times a year, earning £\$15-20 from it. The husband will give grain from his own cultivation to his wife (wives), and he should bring clothes from the market. He is also responsible for building and maintaining the house. He can earn additional income from the making of ropes and small beds (*engrib*) and the collecting of grass and branches to sell to people building houses.

The pattern of consumption of a traditional household does not put great demands on the wife's time. During the day both sexes may be out drinking beer, or they may both be at the market place. If a guest comes, he/she will be brought to the place where beer is drunk to drink with the host. The only solid meal in the traditional Lafofa diet is dinner in the evening. This meal may consist of warm grain (*belila*) or the porridge (*asida*) with a sauce made of beans (*mullah lubia*). The wife is responsible for cooking and can make this meal in a couple of hours in the afternoon. Domestic duties make no great demand on the sexes, who have considerable time to be with other people, go to the market, etc.

This household pattern can still be observed, but younger households display a different pattern in which the wife is less active in productive work and, in beer-making and, on the whole, is more confined to the house than is the case with older women. Many of the young men do not drink beer and do not frequent the beer-houses. While the old men and those among the young who do drink beer spend time at these gatherings, the non-drinkers may spend time in the market engaging in petty trade or visiting

each other.

In households with people of this kind we can also observe a change in consumption patterns, modelled on the ordinary Sudanese household's customs. In these households, the consumption pattern is to have three meals a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner. If guests come, they should be treated to tea first and later to food. As guests of the house it is important that they should stay there and eat. To make tea and food a wife is needed; and if three meals are to be prepared each day, there will not be much time to do other things. She would have to stay in or near the house in case guests should come.

Men who have been migrants together will visit each other and expect treatment like the one outlined. If a man is not able to fulfil these requirements, he will be scorned. In cases where people come to the house of a friend in which the wife is not present, the demand for tea will be extra strong and there will be jokes about the host not being a «man» since he cannot stop his wife from going out. Conflicts between the spouses were not uncommon after such events.

One important explanatory factor is the increasing cash needs that have affected the households. Such cash needs are related to the consumption patterns. As food requirements have changed, more things have to be brought from the market, like tea, coffee, sugar, etc. The availability of these things in the house, especially for treating guests, is a matter of prestige. Sugar is a case in point. Since sugar is rationed, people only get part of what they want from Government quotas, the rest they have to buy from traders at black market prices. Only people with cash can do this, and a common way for fellow villagers to express that a person has money is to say «he drinks sugar every day.»

Requirements for clothes increased with Islam. People are expected to be decently dressed, and a family should have new clothes at the Islamic celebrations (*id al dahia*, *id ramadan*). Women want dresses, *taubes* and shoes which has directly affected the demands women make of their men. They not only want clothes but also modern things for the house, like glasses, pots, and personal items like perfumes and mirrors.

The changing needs of the women are clearly

displayed in their homes. Whereas a «traditional» woman will have a house with pots of various sizes hanging from the roof and standing on the floor, mats and beds for guests, small chairs, stoves for cooking, and tools for cultivation; the «modern» woman will have such things but also a table on which glasses, mirrors and bottles of perfumes are displayed. She will also have an iron box for keeping her dresses and *taubes*.

The needs of the women have changed. To fulfil these needs more cash is needed and the husband who is supposed to supply these things will have to bring in money. At the same time we have seen that women become less involved in income earning activities. They cultivate less and to an increasing extent stop making beer, because it is as regarded sinful in an Islamic context and shameful in a «Sudanese» context. The wife will, therefore, lose sources of income. These women still braid mats, but they cannot make up for this loss. They become increasingly dependent on their husbands to provide them with things. The relative status of the women is, therefore, greater dependence on the activities of the husbands.

The cash needs of the household are also affected by the changes in the socially necessary consumption. Public occasions like births and namegiving, circumcision, weddings and funerals were all occasions at which the traditionally major item of consumption used to be beer. Today, however, tea, sugar, coffee and oil are necessary for these occasions. Such occasions, being of social importance and necessary for the maintenance of a respected status in the village, further increase the significance of the husband's position since he is the one who earns the money to provide the necessities. The need for cash within the household is, therefore, increasing and, as we have said several times, the opportunities to acquire money have changed as well. This has also implied a change in the relationships in which the Lafofa have been involved.

The cultivation of sorghum and peanuts on the mountain and sorghum and some cotton on far fields entailed contacts with *jellaba* traders and the Government officials dealing with the purchasing of cotton from the producers. As

the majority of people were solely dependent on the mountain cultivation, and only during certain periods on far fields cultivation, we are justified in saying that in the traditional adaptation the opportunities to take part in income earning activities were equal for husband and wife. They could both cultivate food and cash crops like peanuts. The overall economic importance of this cultivation is declining since it cannot satisfy the increasing needs for cash. With the growing importance of labour migration, Lafofa men have found a new possibility for earning money that is not available to their wives.

There is thus a general tendency among Lafofa households to require more cash to meet their increasing demands for consumption. This development has forced the men to bring in an extra income from outside the local village and migration to Khartoum has provided one such possibility. Since the men are now bringing in more cash, the wife is also more dependent on this cash. This, together with the impact of new values brought by the migrants as well as others, has brought about a change in the female role in Lafofa. We have seen how this manifests itself in a declining participation in beer-making and cultivation and in an increasing degree of domestication. The general development of stronger ties between the spouses, leaving the man as the more powerful party, is also reflected in the development of divorce and the lack of ease with which women can get divorced nowadays.

CONCLUSION

Returning to our point of departure in the introduction of this paper, we have shown empirically that the ways socio-cultural elements affect resource management are complex and relate to historical and contemporary events on different levels of scale. Understanding resource management is therefore also an understanding of broader socio-cultural processes implying maintenance and change of total cultural traditions. For the Nuba an ecological discourse had to be combined with moral discourses about personhood, and also how people are working with signs, like beer, women's clothing etc. Such processes varied as to whether they took place

within the group, in this case the Lafofa, i.e. within a local space, or whether it was part of an inter-cultural space in which the Nuba were directly confronted with their position in a wider Sudanese society. We see tendencies towards assimilation as well as towards resistance, and we see how different actors position themselves differently, like traditional leaders (*mek*s and *kujors*) versus modern types of leadership in various political movements, women versus men, old versus young etc. What we see is a lot of *variation* and *cultural creativity* at a local level, in a constant interplay with various pre-colonial, colonial and independent-Sudan types of contexts. Processes we have termed the "internal struggle" certainly appear in different ways in Liri from elsewhere in the Nuba Mountains, but the general themes of territory and identity are prevailing ones in the "outward struggle". But we do not see a harmonious past, nor do we see that the colonial period was more disruptive than the various types of Khartoum based regimes. They all affected the Nuba, but did not leave them as helpless victims, allowing themselves to be passively rolled over by larger structures. Rather, we see real people who try to make their lives come together.

It has not been my aim in this paper to explore the theoretical implications of my arguments (see e.g. Manger 1994, 1997 for discussions on various aspects of this). Here I shall only conclude in the broadest possible way, by quoting Raymond Williams, who reminds us that words like peasants, society, culture, class, community, kinship, tribe, race, ethnic groups and nation state (and we may include resource management) are not definitional but denote ongoing social process, embedded in history (Williams 1977, *Marxism and Literature*). Such a reminder seem to me particularly important today, during the civil war, which is a period in which reification of concepts such as those mentioned above, is not only an academic fallacy, but used to promote specific political agendas.

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