Abbreviations

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
CIVSEC	Civil Secretary
DC	District Commissioner
DPMD	Darfur Province Monthly Diaries
£E	Egyptian Pounds
FEA	French Equatorial Africa
NDD	Northern Darfur District
NDDMD	Northern Darfur District Monthly Diary
NRO	National Records Office, Khartoum
RHL	Rhodes House Library, Oxford
SAD	Sudan Archive, Durham
SDD	Southern Darfur District
TNA	The National Archives, London
WAC	Western Arab Corps
WDD	Western Darfur District

Glossary

Aba diimang: hereditary governor of the southwest province of Darfur under the Sultans

Aba uumo: hereditary governor of the southeastern province

abid: slave

agawid: elders, mediators; sometimes used by the colonial administration to refer to chiefs participating in inter-tribal mediation efforts.

amanat: held in trust

angarib: rope bed

awaid: customs

Baggara: cattle-keeping 'Arab' peoples

bey: Turco-Egyptian official/chief

dar : abode, land, territory: under Condominium rule, an ethnic homeland, in which the majority ethnic group had dominant rights.

dimlij : sub-chief in central and northern Darfur

diya: blood-money

durra: sorghum

effendi: educated man; often used in derogatory way by colonial officials

faqih : holy man (*fiki* in Condominium documents)

fashir: royal residence

feriq: Baggara cattle camp

fitr: Islamic due

firsha: district chief among Masalit

genabek: form of address, 'your honour'.

goz : area of stabilized sand dunes in Central, Eastern and Southern Darfur districts

hakura : land; estate

hakuma: government

jallaba : in Darfur refers to riverine traders (*gellaba* in some Condominium documents)

jibba: Muslim robe for men

khashm beits: lineage segments

kuttab : government elementary school

magdum: viceory

mandub: agent

meglis/mejlis: council, often used for meetings or gatherings involving local elites and officials

melik: king, title for paramount chief common in Northern Darfur

merkaz: district headquarters

muawin: subordinate administrative government official

mudiriyya: sub-province

mulahiz: police inspector

murasla: messenger

nahas: copper kettle drums, symbol of autonomous leadership

nas: ordinary people

nazir: paramount chief, used of Baggara leaders

omda: sub-chief

qadi: judge of Islamic law

shaibas: wooden neck restraints for prisoners

sharia: Islamic law

shartay: district chief, in central and northern Darfur

sulh: peace

tirja: fortified hills marking the boundary between Darfur and Wadai in the pre-colonial period

wadi: seasonal river, riverbed

wakil: deputy

wot: Dinka cattle camp

zariba: a thorn enclosure; camp

zeka: Islamic due

zol: ordinary man

zulm: oppression

zurug: dark blue, black

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Introduction

In recent years the peoples of Darfur have experienced horrifying inter-ethnic violence, to some extent encouraged and facilitated by the Khartoum government, and leading to a wide debate over whether or not Darfur has experienced genocide. In the mass media the violence is often portrayed as racially motivated, with Arab perpetrators killing 'African' victims. This is, of course, an extremely problematic perspective from which to understand the events of recent years. Recent works seeking to explain the reasons for the crisis in Darfur have generally invoked a complex of interrelated environmental, demographic and political factors, which are regarded as developments of the post-independence period.[1] Yet the period of British rule in Darfur, between 1916 and 1956, has also become increasingly prominent in debates about the current crisis. A characteristically forceful intervention by Mahmood Mamdani has argued that the British policy of 'Native Administration' in Darfur created an inherently discriminatory and exclusionary system of governance and land rights, which made serious inter-communal conflict only 'a matter of time'.[2] This is in sharp contrast to Sean O'Fahey's view that the British had a minimal impact on local structures of authority: in his view colonial administration more or less replicated the Sultanate system.[3]

This disagreement centres on the question of the transformative impact of the colonial power, itself a key question in African history, though a historiography with

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[1] Most accounts have argued for the importance of rapid environmental and social change within Darfur itself, prompted by drought, mass migration, and intensified resource conflict, combined with central government's dismantling of the mediatory 'Native Administration' system in the 1970s. See G. Prunier, *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide* (London, 2005); M. Daly, *Darfur's Sorrow* (Cambridge, 2007); R.S. O'Fahey, *The Darfur Sultanate* (London, 2008), pp. 301-304; J. Tubiana, 'Darfur: A War for Land?' in A. de Waal (ed.) *War in Darfur* (Harvard, 2007), pp. 68-91. Cross-border conflicts between Sudan, Chad and Libya have also been presented as crucial in the destabilisation of Darfur, exacerbating or causing the factors mentioned above. See especially J.M. Burr and R.O. Collins, *Darfur: Long Road to Disaster* (Princeton, 2008), and J. Tubiana, *The Chad–Sudan Proxy War and the 'Darfurization' of Chad: Myths and Reality* (Geneva, 2008). Many analysts have also emphasised the role of the Sudan Government, often perceived as motivated by religious and racial ideology, in creating, or at the very least greatly exacerbating the conflicts of recent years, in some cases attributing genocidal intent to actors at the heart of government. See E. Reeves, *A long day's dying: critical moments in the Darfur genocide* (Toronto, 2007); A. de Waal and J. Flint, *Darfur: A new history of a long war* (London, 2008); Prunier, *Gencoide;* Daly, *Sorrow.*
[2] M. Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror* (New York, 2009), p. 169.
[3] See also J. Tubiana, 'Darfur: a conflict for land?' in de Waal, *War*, p. 80.

which much of the scholarship on Sudan still avoids explicit engagement.[4] There has been considerable discussion of the extent of the colonial state's ability to re-make Africa in order to suit its own political and economic goals.[5] This question can be expressed rather baldly: was the colonial state weak or strong? Alongside the endeavour to understand the character of the colonial state, has run another key enquiry: why did Africans put up with their subjugation to colonial governments at all? Was this the result of the overwhelming coercive power of colonial states? Or, if colonial states were in fact weak, did their authority depend rather on collaborative bargains with colonial subjects, bargains that benefited those subjects as much, or even more than, the state itself?

Asking whether the colonial state was simply 'weak' or 'strong' may be a rather misleading approach, as Alex De Waal has argued: strength may stem from apparent weakness, and *vice versa*.[6] Contemporary analysis often assumes that violent states are weak states, as they rely on coercion rather than 'capillary' flows of power in order to exert power. But equally, a consistently coercive government may be very well able to achieve its goals, and appear a very strong government from the perspectives of its subjects.[7] On the other hand, the making of accommodative bargains with local elites, like the chiefs of Darfur, may appear to be a sign of a colonial government's weakness, its incapacity to rule directly through its own staff. And yet, the ability to strike such bargains may be seen as precisely the source of a colonial government's strength: its capacity for accommodation and compromise, its essential pragmatism.[8]

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[4] The obvious exceptions being J. Willis, '*Hukm*: the creolization of authority in Condominium Sudan', *Journal of African History*, 46 (2005), pp 29-50; C. Leonardi, 'Knowing authority: Colonial governance and local community in Equatoria Province, Sudan, 1900-56' (PhD thesis, Durham, 2005); C. Leonardi, 'Violence, sacrifice and chiefship in Central Equatoria, Southern Sudan', *Africa* 77 (2007), pp. 535-558. D. Johnson, 'Judicial regulation and administrative control: customary law and the Nuer, 1898-1954', *Journal of African History* 27 (1986), pp. 59-78) and S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas* (London, 1996) also discuss the transformative impact of colonial rule.

[5] See, for a recent discussion of this debate, B. Lawrence, E. Osborn, and R. Roberts, 'Introduction: African intermediaries and the 'bargain' of collaboration', in B. Lawrence, E. Osborn, and R. Roberts (eds.), *Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks* (London, 2006), p. 7.

[6] A. de Waal, 'Sudan: The Turbulent State', in de Waal (ed.), *War*, p. 7. Also B. Berman, 'Structure and process in the bureaucratic states of colonial Africa', in B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Book One: State and Class* (London, 1992), p. 141.

[7] J. Roitman, 'Productivity in the margins: the reconstitution of state power in the Chad Basin' in V. Das and D. Poole, *Anthropology at the Margins of the State* (Oxford, 2007), p. 193.

[8] Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 144.

This thesis, therefore, addresses broad questions about the character of the colonial state in the specific context of Darfur. As the first detailed study of Darfur's colonial history, it enables an assessment of the colonial government's intervention in local politics and societies in greater depth than has previously been possible. It provides a new view of state formation in Darfur's colonial past, demonstrating that the entanglement of officials in local politics simultaneously constructed and recognised state authority in the heat of contest and debate.[9] Darfur is generally seen as one of Sudan's several peripheral zones, remote from the 'core' of state power. This thesis argues, however, that the politics of the margins are central to understanding the character of the Sudanese state and the nature of state power in these regions.[10] I analyse state formation in Darfur by discussion of the three-way encounters between colonial officials, Darfuri chiefs and ordinary people, encounters which took place at the border between state and society, colonizer and colonized. Clifton Crais has noticed a scholarly reluctance to explicitly analyse the role of local bureaucrats in the construction of colonial authority in Africa at the local level, or to think through the ways in which state formation was itself a cross-cultural encounter.[11] In the specific case of Sudan, Douglas Johnson has emphasised the need for more detailed research into the 'fundamental question of the administrator's relations with the people he ruled'.[12] This work addresses these issues.

Chiefs are central to the thesis: they are considered as 'intermediaries' between the state system and society, in line with recent analyses of their position.[13] But the thesis also regards British officials as 'intermediaries', both interpreting state policy at the local level and attempting to translate local conditions in reports to their superiors. Furthermore, rather than viewing chiefs as 'local' and officials as 'alien', I

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[9] J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State-making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Oxford, 2006), p. 5.

[10] V. Das and D. Poole, 'State and its margins: comparative ethnographies', in V. Das and D. Poole (eds.), *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* (Oxford, 2004), p. 29.

[11] C. Crais, *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power and the Political Imagination in South Africa* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 7.

[12] D. Johnson, *Governing the Nuer: Documents by Percy Coriat on Nuer History and Ethnology, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 1993), p. vi.

[13] See Leonardi, 'Knowing'; E.A.B. Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and R. Van Dijk (eds.), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 1-20.

argue that both chiefs and officials were attempting to construct a personal authority to which neither was 'naturally' entitled. Chiefs and officials both posed as 'experts' on 'their' people, while in fact neither possessed the extent of knowledge about their people that they claimed. In short they formed a mutually dependent local political elite, performing effects of both distance from and intimacy with 'their' people, drawing on a common political discourse in order to emphasise their mutually reinforcing position.[14] The contradictory pursuit of effects of both intimacy and distance has important implications for how we understand the conflicted ways in which the state was locally manifested.

Timothy Mitchell has analysed the importance of what he terms the 'state effect' in the construction of modern political authority: the effect of an 'inert "structure" that somehow stands apart from individuals, precedes them, and contains and gives a framework to their lives'.[15] Admittedly, the colonial administration did try to produce 'state effects' at times: in the enactment of 'tribal gatherings', and in inter-district meetings, where the existence of an unbroken, ordered hierarchy linking the local to an imagined centre was asserted. But a focus on the points where such state effects break down, for instance in the heat of chieftaincy or inter-tribal, cross-border disputes, allows investigation of the divisions in colonial hierarchies and suggests the importance of the personal ties between administrators and their local clients in determining the local character of colonial authority. Officials often wanted to protect the interests of 'their' people against their rivals under a neighbouring administrator. Yet neither did these local, highly personalised dynamics stand apart from the very real relevance of institutions and structures. For example, chiefs reinforced their positions as powerful individual patrons through their control of the increasingly bureaucratised systems of 'Native Courts' and, later, local councils. The experience of colonial authority in Darfur suggests that drawing a binary distinction between the 'oral' and the 'written', 'formal' and 'informal',

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[14] The point that officials and chiefs were a mutually dependent local political elite has been made before in the case of Sudan. See M. Daly and F. Deng *'Bonds of Silk': The Human Factor in the British Administration of the Sudan* (East Lansing, 1989).
[15] T. Mitchell, 'The limits of the state: beyond statist approaches and their critics', American Political Science Review, 85, (1991), p. 93.

'bureaucratic' and 'patrimonial', is analytically misleading.[16] Forms of authority and strategies of coping with or accessing power combined these modes to differing extents at different times and places: the personal and the institutional interacted with and reinforced one another. As Nugent states, institutions are not 'abstract things, but… the product of social practice'.[17] States and institutions are not necessarily 'weak' because they are embedded in society: a distinct boundary between state and society may indeed be more inhibiting to the exercise of power than a blurred border zone.

This combination of bureaucratic and highly personalised cultures of authority had implications beyond both Darfur in a geographical sense and beyond colonialism in a temporal sense. The neo-patrimonial political culture of post-colonial Sudan was a direct inheritance from British colonial rule.[18] Indeed, the Sudanese state was primarily built not centrifugally from the government offices of Condominium Khartoum, but centripetally, from the outside in: from the chieftaincy politics of the so-called peripheries, engaged in by officials, chiefs and ordinary people. This would be the legacy of colonial rule in Darfur, and, by inference, elsewhere in Sudan.

This introduction proceeds by giving an outline of Darfur's geography and populations, before considering interpretations of the recent violence in the region, particularly contending assessments of the impact of British colonial rule and the policy of Native Administraion. It then examines existing interpretations of colonial chiefs, both in Darfur and Africa more widely, before considering Darfur's relationship to the modern Sudanese state, particularly through the lens of the influential 'core-periphery' model of Sudanese political geography. Proposing a greater focus on the politics of the 'peripheries' as a means of understanding the formation of the Sudanese state, the introduction then goes on to consider the

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[16] For similar points see Derek Peterson, 'Morality plays: marriage, church courts, and colonial agency in central Tanganyika, ca. 1876–1928,' *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006) pp. 984-985 and for a direct assertion of the relevance of bureaucracy and states against the views of Chabal and Daloz, see P.Nugent, 'States and social contracts in Africa', *New Left Review* 63 (2010), pp. 35-39.
[17] Nugent, 'Contracts', p. 54.
[18] Foer the neo-patrimonialism of the the post-colonial Sudanese state see P. Woodward, *Sudan 1898-1989: The Unstable State* (London, 1991), p. 9. Also see Alex De Waal's 2009 review of J.F. Bayart's 'The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly' at http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2009/dewaal191009.html

position of the district commissioner in Darfur (and colonial Africa more generally), and the complex, fragmented ways in which 'the state' was locally manifested. It finally suggests the extent to which a limited political hegemony was constructed by the interactions between officials, chiefs and ordinary people in colonial Darfur, within the context of existing discussions of colonial hegemony.

Darfur: Geography, ecology, populations

Darfur is a huge territory, lying in the Sahelian zone, that 'vast transitional belt that runs across Africa south of the Sahara'.[19] Before 1916 (except between 1874 and 1898) it had been ruled by an independent Sultanate, which built a variety of institutions to enable centralised rule, but which also co-existed with a number of autonomous groups who inhabited the geographical and political margins of the Sultanate. Darfur encompasses a wide range of ecological zones and an equally wide range of ethnic groups. The edge of the desert, in Northern Darfur, was primarily inhabited by camel pastoralists in the colonial period, although as early as the 1930s quite large-scale migration southwards occurred due to environmental pressures. The main groups in this particular zone were the Zaghawa, the Meidob (both non-Arab camel pastoralists), the Zayyadia, the Beni Hussein (Arab pastoralists and semi-pastoralists) and various smaller groups of Arab camel pastoralists, collectively labelled 'the Northern Rizeigat' by the colonial administration, due to their alleged links to the Rizeigat of Southern Darfur. The district of Northern Darfur encompassed all of these groups, as well as the Berti, another major group of non-Arab agriculturalists, and various other smaller ethnic groups. Most of the groups mentioned had their own *dars* (defined territory in which the ethnic group has presumptive primary rights) within the single administrative unit of Northern Darfur District.

Further south, and east of the Jebel Marra (the north-south mountain range in Darfur), lies the *goz*, an area of stabilized dunes which sees greater rainfall than the northern semi-desert, and where a range of agriculturalist and pastoralist peoples

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[19] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 3.

lived: it covers the colonial districts of Central, Eastern and Southern Darfur. The provincial capital, El Fasher (the old capital of the Sultans since the late eighteenth century) is within this region, as were the various settlements of people in Eastern Darfur pursuing gum arabic production. The *goz* also encompasses the southern Baggara belt, where the various (mainly Arab) cattle nomad groups were located: Rizeigat, Habbania, Taaisha, Beni Halba and Fellata.

The most fertile land in Darfur lies to the west of Jebel Marra and indeed also in the Jebel Marra itself. Here a very broad range of agricultural crops were grown. O'Fahey terms the area the Fur heartland, although this ecological zone also encompasses the Masalit, on Darfur's western frontier with Chad, which was part of French Equatorial Africa in the colonial era. However, Dar Masalit was a separate administrative district during colonial rule (and afterwards), under the 'Indirect Rule' of its Sultan. Other ethnic groups also inhabited this western part of Sudan, including the Gimr, Daju and others.

As this summary of Darfur's ethnic and ecological geography suggests, the region is hugely complex and heterogeneous, and attempts to describe (as here) a correspondence between territory and ethnicity stumble on the same flaws as colonial attempts at ethnic naming.[20] The description given here of key livelihood strategies is also a simplification of a more complex reality: as Johnson and Anderson suggest, production systems in Darfur, as in much of the north-east African region, might be best understood as a 'continuum, along which individuals and groups may move through time – back and forth from herding to cultivating… when opportunity or need dictates. This flexibility is… an important part of the strategy of security against ecological adversity.'[21] In practice, the Baggara grow crops and keep cattle, the Berti herd and cultivate: the difference is (very importantly) one of extent. Moreover, in the fragile environment which Darfur's

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[20] See P. Worby, 'Maps, names, and ethnic games: the epistemology and iconography of colonial power in northwestern Zimbabwe' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20 (1994), p. 371.
[21] D. Anderson and D. Johnson, 'Introduction: Ecology and society in northeast African society', in D. Anderson and D Johnson (eds.), *The ecology of survival* (London, 1988), p. 6. See also G. Haaland, 'Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes' in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London, 1973), pp. 58-73; Haaland, 'Nomadism as an Economic Career among the Sedentaries of the Sudan Savannah Belt' in I. Cunnison and W. James (eds.), *Essays in Social Anthropology* (London, 1972), pp. 149-172.

populations inhabited, interaction across ecological zones was critical to livelihood and survival strategies. Notably the numerous markets on the edges of the Jebel Marra mountains and the Wadi Azum in western Darfur, a key dry season watering point for Beni Halba Baggara and (since at least the 1930s) Zaghawa, have long been points of economic exchange between pastoralists and cultivators.[22] Violence between the pre-colonial state and pastoralists on the margins of its authority was sometimes intense, reflecting both the state's frustrated demands for tribute from these groups and, more significantly, tensions over access to the slave raiding zones which lay south of the Baggara belt. Yet the Sultanate was also a key destination for the sale of slaves captured by Rizeigat raids.[23] Alongside rivalry and tension, there was also a significant degree of economic complementarity between pastoralists and the Fur heartland.

To some extent, the drawing of more rigid territorial boundaries between these peoples during the colonial period 'threatened rural societies by fracturing linkages and networks, preventing mobility, and thereby increasing vulnerability'.[24] This was perhaps particularly obvious in attempts to restrict Beni Halba movement to the Wadi Azum and other areas of Western Darfur and Dar Masalit.[25] But colonial reports and post-colonial anthropological accounts demonstrated the continued vitality of economic exchange and complementarity across the ecological niches described above (and indeed an attendant flexibility in ethnic identity).[26] This in itself suggests the resilience of local livelihood strategies even against the backdrop of state-led attempts to draw lines and fix boundaries between peoples and territories.

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[22] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 3, 241; Haaland, 'Economic Determinants'.

[23] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 83.

[24] Anderson and John son, 'Introduction', p. 17.

[25] DC SDD to DC Zalingei and Resident Geneina, 6 Mar. 1939, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2. See also Chapter 6 of this thesis.

[26] Haaland, 'Economic Determinants'; P.J. Sandison, 'Notes on the Geography and Trade of the Emirate', SAD 511/4.

The past of the present: land and resource conflict

The violence of recent years in Darfur has required interpretation and simplification by the international media, so that periods of multi-layered, multi-stranded conflict could be rolled into one easily-grasped narrative fit for mass consumption. This has created the caricature of the Darfur conflict as a racial, Arab versus African conflict, a caricature which feeds into the continuing genocide debate. The caricature is easy to attack: yet it is based in part on the way participants in the violence have themselves expressed their motivations. 'Arab' militia members are known to have used terms like '*abid*' (slave), or '*zurug*' (dark blue, or black) to describe their victims. These terms have long been in use, partly reflecting the history of slavery in the region as well as the history of often violent relations between Arab nomads and the Darfur Sultanate. The force of such terminology, and its historic roots should not be underestimated, however much we also know about the ways in which ethnic boundaries are porous, genealogies are invented, and identity may shift with changes in livelihood strategies and inter-marriage.[27]

Yet conflict in Darfur has really been centred over questions of land and resources rather than of race: inter-ethnic rivalry is not somehow divorced from concrete concerns about livelihoods and survival, as recent reports have emphasised.[28] Chadian refugees moving across the border in large numbers since the 1970s to escape conflict and environmental degradation have intensified pressure on land and grazing resources in Darfur. Several groups from northern Darfur have also moved south under pressure from declining environmental conditions. As a result, from the 1980s, farmers in the fertile regions of western Darfur have increasingly fenced off their land from the nomads who previously had access to it on their migratory grazing routes.[29] The symbiotic aspects of relationships between farmers and

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[27] Prunier emphasises race as the 'real logic' of Sudan's civil conflicts. See *Darfur*, pp. 162-3, and also A. De Waal, 'Who are the Darfurians? Arab and African identities, violence and external engagement', *African Affairs*, 104 (2005), pp. 181-205; H. Sharkey, 'Arab identity and ideology in Sudan: the politics of language, ethnicity and race', *African Affairs*, 107 (2008) pp. 21-43.
[28] See for instance, Young, H., AM Osman, AM Abusinn, M Asher, O Egemi, *Livelihoods, Power and Choice: The Vulnerability of the Northern Rizeigat, Darfur, Sudan* (Feinstein International Center 2009).
[29] See Daly *Sorrow*, pp. 215-217 for an effective explanation of this.

pastoralists have thus been eroded, and tensions have intensified: conflict between Fur and Arabs exploded from 1987 to 1989.[30] Moreover, the NIF (National Islamic Front) central government subsequently attempted to recast structures of local government along lines which would benefit Arab incomers into Darfur. Severe conflict between Masalit and Arabs was provoked by these government reforms in the 1990s.[31]

Moving away from the prevalent emphasis on relatively recent causes for conflict Mahmood Mamdani has recently focused on the significance of the British colonial period in Darfur. Mamdani considers British rule as imposing a 'retribalisation' of politics and social life on Darfur. By elevating ethnicity as the organizing principle of administrative and land rights, the British created a structure of fixed tribal *dars* (homelands), each of which was deemed to belong to the dominant tribe of that *dar* and their chiefs. Those who came into the *dar* but who did not belong to this dominant group ('settlers' as opposed to 'natives') could only have access to land on sufferance, if they agreed to pay dues to the local chief. They also came under the jurisdiction of the dominant 'native' chief. Essentially such groups were politically subordinated and marginalised in the *dars* they moved into. In Mamdani's view, the government interventions of the 1990s were to some extent a necessary response to the long-term marginalisation of 'settlers', mainly Arab pastoralists. And many of the Arabs who were ready to take up arms in support of recent government counter-insurgency were victims of this marginalisation, especially the *abbala* (camel nomads) of Northern Darfur. For Mamdani, conflict in Darfur is largely a conflict between 'haves' and 'have nots', each of whom were defined as such by British colonial rule.[32]

Mamdani also regards colonial 'retribalisation' as a reversal of modernizing progress made under the 'detribalising' pre-colonial Darfur Sultanate, which by granting land rights to favoured individuals (*hakura* rights), and by appointing state agents to govern particular localities or regions, had eroded tribal authority over

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[30] Ibid., pp. 242-247.
[31] Ibid., pp. 260-264.
[32] Mamdani, *Saviors*, pp. 145-170.

time.[33] But O'Fahey has indicated the flaws in such an interpretation, emphasising the limited geographical reach of the *hakura* system within Darfur: large parts of modern Darfur, especially to the far north and south, were entirely untouched by *hawakir*.[34] In these areas we know much less about pre-colonial land rights and therefore can say fairly little about how far British rule brought about a wholesale ethnic re-orientation of those rights. Indeed, Kibreab's work suggests that British rule in Sudan in general maintained the existing customary structures of land rights. In particular, the 'native' and 'settler' distinction was not entirely a colonial invention: the rights of 'first-comers' to land were always privileged.[35]

Between Mamdani's and Kibreab's interpretations there is a disagreement about the nature of colonial government's intervention into existing regimes of land rights and whether or not it had a truly transformative impact. The question of land rights is also closely bound up with questions pertaining to colonial 'Native Administration' policies. The process of bolstering or inventing the powers of chiefs to enable them to govern local territories effectively, included a further process of giving them rights to determine access to the resources of their *dar*. However, it could be argued that while colonial officials attempted to settle these issues in favour of chiefs, the outcomes of their intervention were quite different from their intentions. Influential work by Sara Berry has suggested that colonial rule in Africa more generally, mainly failed to fix land rights and boundaries.[36] Rather, by fetishising the idea of tradition, colonialism opened a pandora's box of competing versions of history, and competing 'traditional' rights. Disputes over land paralleled disputes over chieftaincy: 'tradition' was more shifting sand than bedrock. In colonial Darfur, there were many long-running disputes over territory, in which pre-colonial and colonial rulings were invoked and re-invoked over time, creating considerable confusion for officials attempting to resolve these conflicts. Mamdani's rather straightforward top-down analysis of colonial land and administrative policy, whilst

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[33] Ibid., pp. 118, 128.
[34] See O'Fahey's comments at http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/2009/04/20/prof-mamdani-and-darfur-some-comments-on-the-land-issue/
[35] G. Kibreab, *State Intervention and the Environment in Sudan, 1889-1989: The Demise of Communal Resource Management* (New York, 2002), p. 14.
[36] S. Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, 1993) and *'Chiefs Know Their Boundaries': Essays on Property, Power and the past in Asante 1896-1996* (Oxford, 2001).

revealing of local power dynamics between dominant and subordinated peoples, ignores the crucial ways in which land and indeed governance rights remained a centre of contest throughout the colonial period.

Chiefs in colonial Darfur

Closely related to the issue of land rights, the role of chiefs as potential peace makers in attempts to resolve the crisis in Darfur is an important focus of political discussion. And such discussion is intimately related to debates about colonial chieftaincy. For some analysts, the dismantling of the Native Administration system in the 1970s by the Nimeiri regime (reversed by the current government) is crucial to understanding the failure to mediate the conflicts that increasingly broke out from that time. One of the more astute proponents of this view, James Morton has suggested that the strength of the Native Administration in the colonial period, coupled with the strong emphasis of the colonial state on maintaining order 'controlled and settled disputes in a manner that lasted.'[37] Yet there are doubts as to whether present-day chiefs in Darfur still have the legitimacy to broker local peace. Although the Native Administration was re-established by the NIF from 1989, in Darfur it has become *de rigeur* to draw attention to the 'politicisation' of the system in recent years due to the interference of the Khartoum government.[38]

However, as some have already noted, the Native Administration was always inherently 'politicised': colonial government established the system, and appointed men it believed would be effective allies at the local level.[39] Moreover, Prunier depicts colonial–era chiefs as 'incompetent, illiterate and corrupt': for Martin Daly such weaknesses meant Native Administration was clearly a 'failure' by 1939.[40] But the persistence of the perception (as De Waal has noted) that chiefs are somehow still tied to their local community and distinct from 'the state' is striking, in Darfur

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[37] J. Morton, *Conflict in Darfur: A Different Perspective* (Hemel Hampstead, 2004).

[38] M A Abdul-Jalil, AA Mohammed and AA Yousuf, 'Native Administration and local governance in Darfur: past and future', in de Waal, *War*, pp.42-66, esp. pp. 49-51. Also see more broadly, E.A.B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and R. van Dijk, 'Introduction', in E.A.B. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and R. van Dijk (eds.), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (Hamburg, 1999), p. 10.

[39] A. De Waal, 'Sudan : the turbulent state', in De Waal, *War*, pp. 27-30.

[40] Pruner, *Darfur*, p. 29; Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 152.

and elsewhere, right up to the present day.[41] The role of chiefs in Darfur under colonial rule therefore needs more careful analysis and historicisation.

Alongside land and boundary disputes, chieftaincy in Darfur was a focus of intense local political contest and conflict in the colonial period. Indeed, chiefs are at the very centre of attempts to understand the character of colonial authority. There are two key, interlinked questions to consider in any discussion of chieftaincy. One has been posed by Mamdani's earlier influential work on chieftaincy: were colonial chiefs fundamentally despotic stooges of the colonial state, unaccountable to their subjects, and essentially enacting the devolved violence of the colonial state?[42] Secondly, why did subalterns accept the greatly expanded authority of chiefs, particularly in the field of dispute resolution, where new technologies of power and punishment were used by chiefs sitting as presidents of so-called 'Native Courts'?

A key paradigm for understanding the character of colonial rule in general is 'the invention of tradition', in which chiefs occupy a central place. In British Africa, officials were particularly preoccupied with the idea that working with the leaders of 'tribes' (colonially imagined cultural and political units), was critical to building effective colonial authority. Even before 'Indirect Rule' was adopted as formal policy, *de facto* dependence on local elites was obvious. Administrators also believed that 'customary law' should be used to settle disputes and maintain social order within the tribe, and that chiefs were the men to implement that law. Yet a substantial body of scholarship over the last thirty years has argued that 'tribes', chiefs and customary law were not simply waiting to be used by colonial administration, but rather required a considerable amount of colonial 'invention', or at least 're-invention'.[43] Customary law was not a set of codifiable rules with penal

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[41] De Waal, 'Turbulent', p. 27.

[42] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton, 1996), p.23.

[43] For an extensive, excellent review of the literature to 2003 see T. Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism and the limits of invention in British Colonial Africa,' *Journal of African History*, 44 (2003), pp.3-27. Particularly important studies include L. Vail *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London, 1989); Ranger, T., 'The invention of tradition revisited: the case of colonial Africa', in T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa, Essays in Honour of A.M.H.Kirk-Greene* (London, 1993), pp. 62-111; M. Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order* (Portsmouth, 1998); K. Mann, and R. Roberts (eds.), *Law in Colonial Africa* (London, 2001). More recently see R. Roberts, *Litigants and Households: African Disputes and Colonial Courts in the*

sanctions attached; ethnicity was dynamic and fluid, rather than fixed and impermeable; chiefs were rarely the judge and jury for the whole 'tribe' that they often became under colonialism. In the case of Sudan, recent literature has paid particular attention to the construction of colonial structures of chieftaincy, showing that senior chiefs were given a very broad range of judicial powers by colonial government via the creation of Native Courts, powers which many had never before wielded.[44] This was also the case in many parts of Darfur.

However, it is also important to emphasise that chiefs in Darfur, like the tribes they governed, were rarely outright inventions of the British colonial period, although the sources and character of their pre-British authority varied greatly. Some, especially in the predominantly sedentary Fur heartland, had been closely tied to the pre-colonial Sultanate and had significant existing powers of dispute resolution and punishment over their subjects. Others, especially in predominantly pastoralist southern Darfur, were much more recent innovations, originating in the attempts by earlier riverine governments to rule through effective intermediaries in Darfur in the late nineteenth century, and with far less power over the internal affairs of the 'tribe'. And none of these chiefs operated free of restraints either from above or below.

This thesis discusses political culture in colonial Darfur as a whole, but much of the richest evidence analysed here is taken from records concerning local politics and administration in predominantly pastoralist areas of northern and southern Darfur. The thesis therefore has an implicit focus on the relationship between pastoralist elites and the colonial state. A great deal has been written about the difficult relationship between colonial and post-colonial African states and nomadic societies: the mobility of pastoralist populations has often been perceived as a threat to state control and territorial order. The resulting restrictions on that mobility have been viewed by existing research as damaging to pastoralist livelihoods.[45] This

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French Soudan, 1895–1912 (Heinemann, 2005); C. Lentz, *Ethnicity and the making of history in Northern Ghana* (Edinburgh, 2006); D. Pratten, *The Man-Leopard Murders* (Edinburgh, 2009).

[44] Willis, '*Hukm';* Leonardi, *Knowing*, 'Violence'.

[45] For some examples see Anderson and Johnson, *Survival*; D. Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The politics of ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890-1963* (Oxford, 2002); D. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington, 2001).

thesis focuses rather more on the ways in which local state officials and pastoralist elites constructed and maintained a mutual dependence in their attempts to exert authority over highly mobile peoples. Nonetheless, some comment on the deeper history of authority among the pastoralist groups of this region, and in comparative perspective, is important.

In both northern and, particularly, southern Darfur, authority in pre-colonial pastoralist groups was less centralised than under British (and indeed Turco-Egyptian) colonial rule: the centralisation of authority was a common experience to many pastoralist societies under colonial rule. Centralised leadership in nomadic societies has been regarded as inherently unstable, often time-limited to deal with specific circumstances, and more limited in scope than in sedentary societies.[46] Khazanov outlines the various factors which bring about a demand for centralised leadership at specific points in time:

> the need to allocate rationally key resources; the establishing and regularizing of routes of pastoral migrations… need for defence; the struggle for livestock, pasture and arable lands; migrations and wars; the desire of certain groups of nomads to subdue others; particularities of relations and interaction with the outside sedentary world.[47]

Nicolaisen's study of the Tuareg suggests that pastoralist chiefs in this stratified pastoralist society had both judicial and military powers even before French colonial rule. But he also shows that French rule led to the concentration of authority in the hands of individual chiefs over entire federations, whilst the leaders of other drum-groups within those federations faded into insignificance.[48] Asad has demonstrated how the Awlad Fadlallah lineage became dominant among the Kababish during the colonial period, also thanks to their close relationship with the state.[49]

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[46] A.M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 166.
[47] Ibid, p. 148.
[48] J. Nicolaisen, *Ecology and culture of the pastoral Tuareg* (Copenhagen, 1963), pp. 398-401.
[49] T. Asad, *The Kababish Arabs* (London, 1970), pp. 157-179.

In Darfur, Sharif Harir suggests that pre-colonial Zaghawa paramount chiefs were defined mainly by their role in providing defence and security rather than by a judicial role or by the allocation of land.[50] These latter powers must have remained in the hands of individual clan leaders.[51] Whilst there is little direct information on pre-colonial Baggara *sheikhs*, in the absence of any stable paramount chiefs, we might surmise that here too lineage or section leaders held a relatively broad range of responsibilities.[52] Perhaps, as among the neighbouring Baggara Humr in Kordofan, individual men rose to leadership of the tribe for brief periods of time and for specific purposes, but paramount leadership was never permanently institutionalised.[53] Therefore colonial rule in Darfur, as elsewhere in Sahelian Africa, by creating or empowering individual paramount pastoralist chiefs, making them permanent salaried employees of the state and presidents of Native Courts, and giving them the power to allocate resources across the entire tribal *dar*, engaged in a significant restructuring of authority within local societies. Access to scarce resources of grazing and watering in the fragile environment of the Sahel was and is critical to the survival and reproduction of individual households: the power to allocate and protect rights to these resources is of equally critical importance to the authority of pastoralist leaders.[54] The overall result of the colonial policy of Indirect Rule in Darfur was therefore a concentration and stabilisation of authority in the hands of individual chiefs and their lineage: most people were now more dependent on leaders outside their own section or lineage to guarantee access to scarce resources than they had been before. However this thesis takes this extremely significant but also now commonly made observation as a starting point rather than a key conclusion. Colonial chiefs were powerful, but the novelty of their powers, their closer association with government, and the persistence of inter and intra lineage competition also created in-built limits, hazards and dilemmas which not all chiefs could successfully navigate. If anything the empowering of individual leaders often

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[50] S.A. Harir, 'The politics of numbers: Mediatory leadership and the political process among the Beri Zaghawa of Sudan', PhD thesis (Bergen, 1986), pp. 8,
[51] Ibid, pp. 18-23, 84.
[52] Cf. T. Asad, 'Political inequality in the Kababish tribe', in I. Cunnison and W. James (eds.), *Essays in Sudan Ethnography* (London, 1972),
[53] I. Cunnison, *Baggara Arabs* (Oxford, 1966).
[54] Asad, *Kababish*, p. 157.

increased rather than decreased the vigour of political competition within tribal units, as the spoils of leadership became that much greater.

Emphasising the continued limits on chiefly authority runs counter to Mamdani's famous characterization of chiefs as 'decentralized despots.' One of Mamdani's main arguments is that mechanisms of accountability tying pre-colonial chiefs to their subjects were destroyed by colonial rule, which simply made chiefs into state salaried civil servants. He suggests 'an unwritten norm of indirect rule was that the lower authority [the chief] must never be short-circuited'.[55] Chiefs could rely on the support of officials, whatever their methods, as long as they kept order, carried out instructions and balanced the books. But the colonial records for Darfur are littered with accounts of the dismissal or at least punishment of chiefs, after they lost support from the administration, a loss sometimes prompted by forceful local protest organized by rivals for chiefly office. Amongst the Baggara, chiefs had to be seen to be sharing the proceeds of their wealth with clients and other elite families: stinginess could prove fatal. Moreover, a chief who failed to achieve the effect of a cultural 'resonance' with their subjects, particularly if he was associated with 'the river' (Omdurman and Khartoum more specifically), or did not speak the dominant local language, struggled to maintain his authority.[56]

So in the case of Darfur, people did not always put up with their chiefs, particularly when they were blatantly despotic, or if they were not felt to represent adequately the people they governed. Equally the state could lose patience with a chief who appeared to have little connection with his subjects, or proved too obviously 'corrupt'. Rather than asking simply whether chiefs were despots, or why people accepted their authority, account should be taken of the varied character of chiefs, even the varied behaviours of individual chiefs over time and in different circumstances. We also need to examine the circumstances under which people did or did not accept their authority, and under which the government gave or withheld support: why some chiefs succeeded, and others failed. Therefore we have to

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[55] Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 54.
[56] For the importance of 'resonance' for the legitimacy of traditions see Patrick Harries, `Imagery, symbolism and tradition in a South African Bantustan: Mangoshuthu Buthelezi, Inkatha and Zulu History', *History and Theory*, 32 (1993), pp. 106-7.

understand chieftaincy as a performed role, where limits imposed on chiefs from above and below defined a set of norms which had to be broadly adhered to. If chiefs performed their role satisfactorily, they could construct great personal authority: if their performance was unsatisfactory, they could lose everything. Understanding chieftaincy as a role performed within certain discursive and practical limits, and its performance as being contingent on individual strategies and circumstances, refocuses attention on the dynamics of colonial authority as it worked on the ground.

In line with recent research, this thesis argues for chiefs to be seen as intermediaries between the state system and society, translating and mediating between 'bureaucratic' and 'personal'/'traditional' modes of authority.[57] As well as delivering taxation and labour for the *hakuma* (government), chiefs sometimes played a protective role from the perspective of their subjects, acting as a buffer or even a shield against the extractive demands of the *hakuma*.[58] At times they were used by their subjects to make demands on the *hakuma*; more often they were accepted as a means of deflecting the *hakuma*'s vision away from local affairs.[59] Recently, however, historians have become wary of overstating the distinction between the worlds of 'tradition' and 'modernity' (which are in any case ideological constructions of colonialism) or the 'local' and the 'state', even perhaps between the oral and the bureaucratic.[60] Understanding chiefs as mediating between these two worlds sets up what is perhaps a false dichotomy between analytical categories that are heavily implicated in one another: the local is after all 'unbounded', in Feierman's phrase.[61] Van Nieuwaal and Van Dijk prefer the term 'mutational work' to 'mediation', as 'more horizontal in its connotations' suggesting 'actors who are capable of transferring one form of power from one domain to a different form of power in another domain'.[62] But even their view still somewhat reifies 'tradition' and 'modernity' as separate 'domains'. 'Tradition' might be best understood, as

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[57] See D. Hatt, 'The development of chiefly authority in the western High Atlas mountains of Morocco', p. 137.
[58] Leonardi, 'Violence', p. 542.
[59] Willis, '*Hukm'*, p. 47.
[60] Peterson, 'Plays', pp. 984-985.
[61] S. Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals* (London, 1990), p. 35.
[62] Van Rouveory Van Niuewaal and Van Dijk, 'Introduction', p. 5.

Willis suggests, as 'a discursive resource which gives [chiefs] a morally advantageous distance from the state'.[63] This view allows for the way that the distinction between 'tradition' and 'modernity' is still powerfully imagined, however false the dichotomy is in practice. Ultimately, if our understanding of the precise location and source of chiefly power and legitimacy remains somewhat ambiguous, and tests the meaningfulness of some of our primary analytical labels, this reflects the very real ambiguity of the chief's own position.

Darfur as periphery? The Sudanese state at its margins

Analyses of the Sudanese state have often emphasized its divided and fractious character. Earlier works focused on political and sectarian factionalism at the centre of the state;[64] more recently, greater attention has been paid to the dynamics between 'core' and 'periphery'. The riverine 'core' of Sudan, centring on Khartoum, has been regarded as the exclusive centre of wealth and power in the country, governing its various remote peripheries (over which it has very little regularised authority), by the production of chronic disorder.[65] The core-periphery dynamic has been explained most clearly in Douglas Johnson's influential analysis of Sudan's civil wars. Johnson proposed that Sudan's civil wars were primarily the product of a destructive relationship between 'the centralizing power of the state and its hinterlands or peripheries', based on exploitation and marginalization.[66] This was a historicised development of the dominant ideology of the SPLA (Sudan Peoples Liberation Army) itself, particularly its leader John Garang. For Johnson, the historical roots of this relationship can be traced back to the

> ideas of legitimate power and governance developed in the Sudanic states of
> the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which were incorporated into the

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[63] J.Willis, 'Chieftaincy' for Oxford History of Africa, forthcoming, p. 20. See also W van Binsbergen, 'Nkoya royal chiefs and the Kazanga Cultural Association in Western Central Zambia today: resilience, decline or folklorisation?' in Van Rouveory Van Nieuwaal and Van Dijk, *Chieftaincy*, pp. 98-135, for perspectives on the imagined, purely discursive nature of tradition.

[64] P. Woodward, *Sudan: The Unstable State* focuses on the high politics of the state (Boulder, 1990).

[65] De Waal, 'Turbulent'. For a generalised statement of a core-periphery analysis of political geography, applied across sub-Sarahan African states, see J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton, 2000), p.252.

[66] D. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2005), p. xviii.

structures of the Turco-Egyptian empire, achieved new force in the *jihad* state of the Mahdiyya, and were… occasionally adapted by the twentieth century colonial state.[67]

Johnson applied this analysis in less detail to Darfur than to other marginalised areas of Sudan, though he did note that Darfur 'has always had an uneasy relationship with the Khartoum-centred state'.[68] After all, Darfur was, as has been noted, an independent Sultanate incorporated into Sudan by force. O'Fahey also asserts that Darfur 'has never really been part of the northern Sudan'.[69]

Martin Daly's work has demonstrated the difficult relationship between Darfur and the various states governing Sudan from the Nile Valley since the late nineteenth century, in particular emphasising the roots of contemporary marginalisation and poverty in the period of British rule. The exceptionally limited budgets for economic development and education devoted by the Condominium Government to Darfur meant that the region 'arguably suffered even more than the famously neglected south'.[70] Even in the period of so-called modernisation and development after the second world war, Darfur remained the poor relation of northern Sudan.[71] Daly also notes that after independence, local government officials continued to be appointed from outside Darfur: this was a politico-administrative as well as economic marginalisation.[72] Redressing these grievances has been central to the stated agendas of rebel groups involved in recent fighting against the government.[73]

The relevance of problematic relations between Khartoum and Darfur is clear in the present crisis. However, the core-periphery analysis has its limitations. Most obviously, much of the recent violence has been between groups *within* Darfur, even if this has been significantly engineered or participated in by the Khartoum

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[67] Ibid., p. 7
[68] Ibid., p. 139
[69] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 41.
[70] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 157.
[71] Ibid., pp. 162-171.
[72] Ibid., p. 184.
[73] Particularly the influence of the 'Black Book', published in 2000 and detailing the long-term marginalisation of Darfur by successive Khartoum governments, a key text inspiring the establishment of the JEM rebel movement; see Ibid., pp. 275-277.

government: hence the value of analysing local dynamics. There is also a broader critique of the core-periphery approach to political geography, presented by recent anthropological approaches. This work has demonstrated that 'core' and 'periphery' are often shifting perspectives rather than analytical labels: core can become periphery, and *vice versa*. Moreover, it is increasingly argued that states are actually constructed at their peripheries: that dynamics in the so-called margins significantly influence the very heart of state authority.[74] Historicising the conflict in Darfur therefore requires a recognition of the two-way interpenetrations between the local and the (inter)national. Such insights also inform the analysis of colonial authority in this thesis.

In Darfur, evidence to support the idea that states are created at their margins can be found in a close examination of borderland politics, around both internal and external boundaries. Here, local elites and subjects engaged with state officials to pursue local agendas, with the awareness that rival officials across either side of an administrative boundary could be played off against one another. In so doing, they also made the *hakuma* real at its borders: officials were pulled into playing a meaningful role in local politics. Borders were thus both a political resource for local elites and an important site of state formation, making manifest a configuration of power which was created by the mutual dependence of chiefs and officials. Indeed, to some extent the authority of the state was *most* accessible and malleable at its margins, because of the desire of officials to show themselves effective patrons in a situation where the interests of 'their' people were in conflict with another, outside group.

To understand such dynamics, we must turn explicitly to colonial officials themselves, and account for their willingness, at times, to align themselves primarily with their chiefly clients, even against their fellow colonial officials across their borders. Moreover, a deeper examination of their role in the construction of colonial rule provides a way to develop a complex view of state formation in Darfur: in their own persons, officials, like chiefs, blurred the boundary between state and non-state,

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[74] Das and Poole, *Margins*; T. Wilson and H. Donnan,, 'Introduction' to T. Wilson and H. Donnan, *Borders: frontiers of identity, nation and state* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 3-4.

yet, simultaneously, they often embodied the state in remote peripheries. The history of British officials in Darfur, some of whom left rich source material, should then also alert us to the difficulties of defining where the state began and ended.

The men who would be sultans

Jeffrey Herbst has defined 'the fundamental problem confronting leaders of almost all African states' as the question of 'how to broadcast power over sparsely settled lands'.[75] Herbst, to his credit, views this crucial issue in the *longue duree*, demonstrating that leaders before, during and after colonialism have followed 'remarkably similar strategies' in their attempts to resolve this question.[76] For Herbst, a core-periphery distribution of state power is inherent across all African polities. States secure effective control over a core political and economic area, and then rule over large peripheries in a more 'varied manner': power 'tends to diminish over distance' from the political core. Others have made similar points about the limited reach of the colonial state: in their analysis of the spatial turn in African studies, Engel and Nugent note the extremely uneven establishment of 'colonial space' in Africa.[77] Cooper, taking on Foucault, has argued that colonial power was 'arterial' rather than 'capillary', 'concentrated spatially and socially, not very nourishing beyond such domains, and in need of a pump to push it from moment to moment and from place to place'.[78]

However, a concentration on the spatial limits of colonial government obscures ways in which state actors were often highly mobile, not fixed in or to a particular space. Colonial space included district offices, prisons, schools, and hospitals, often located in the district *merkaz* (headquarters). But colonial space also moved with state agents as they went on tour and interacted with the spaces of the colonized. One might imagine Nyala, Kuttum, Geneina, Zalingei and Fasher (the locations of each district's *merkaz*) to be cores of the local state system in Darfur: centres of

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[75] Herbst, *States*, p. 3.
[76] Ibid., p. 252.
[77] A. Howard, 'Actors, places, regions, and global forces: An essay on the spatial history of Africa since 1700', in U. Engel and P. Nugent (eds.), *Respacing Africa* (Leiden, 2009), p. 22.
[78] F. Cooper, 'Conflict and connection: rethinking colonial African history', *American Historical Review* 99 (1994), p. 1533.

government prestige, separateness and authority. These towns certainly served as the loci of government buildings and institutions in their districts, and represented to some extent the flow of colonial power and culture down and out from Khartoum: the 'broadcasting' centres of colonial power, as Herbst would have it.[79] But, aside from those stationed at El Fasher, the province headquarters, British officials were often isolated from their colleagues, and were for much of their time on trek, and exceedingly mobile. On trek they became, in a sense, mobile states in their own persons. Herbst notes the obsession of officials with movement: in his view the absence of a permanent physical government presence in rural peripheries meant that the state had to be brought to the people. As one senior French official noted: 'only one's personal presence, personal contact, counts. The circular [written government directive] is zero.'[80] This quotation provides some insight into the relative weakness of bureaucratic practices in 'peripheral' zones. But we should not assume that the trek was merely a signifier of state weakness, as does Herbst. Colonial officials exaggerated the importance of their own presence, but the interactions between mobile state officials and local elites and subjects certainly were important in the construction of colonial authority.

Yet there has often been reluctance among historians of Africa to fully conceptualise or problematise the position of colonial officials at the local level, perhaps, one suspects, because of the deeply engrained imperative in the field since its origins in the era of African nationalism to concentrate on African agency in shaping African history. There is a justified concern about fetishising the power of men who already dominate the colonial archive and thus, to some extent, also dominate our view of the colonial past. More concretely, administrators are often seen as 'distant' from their subjects, and ineffective and weak as a result. Fields has noted the infrequency of even symbolic tours by administrators in more remote areas of central Africa. She suggests it was always unlikely that communities would entrust their protection to men who appeared only intermittently and who might in any case reject their complaint, rather than take their chances with an authority which was always

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[79] cf. Garth Myers, *Verandahs of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (New York, 2003). Myers' work actually shows that even in urban spaces, colonialism's attempts at 'enframing' fell very far from achieving their goals.

[80] Van Vollenhoven, quoted in ibid., p.87.

present: the chief.[81] Spear has suggested that British administrators shared few understandings of current concerns or ideas derived from the past with their African subjects, and that colonialism was a 'working misunderstanding' as well as being 'mutually constitutive'.[82] And it can hardly be straightforwardly argued now, as Anthony Kirk-Greene attempted, that 'the DC [District Commissioner] was the government and the government was the DC': we know far too much about the crucial roles of local intermediaries, translators, and policemen in forming local experiences of colonial government to suggest this.[83] Yet if we want to understand how colonial power was projected, how it might have appeared to Africans who lived with it, we have to take account of the role of officials, even if those officials were remote and weak. Moreover, if we are to evaluate the argument made by Chabal and Daloz that, during colonial rule, European norms were subsumed by enduring African political logics, then we have to examine the practices of the colonial administrators who are so often represented as embodying the ethos of the colonial state.[84]

The role of the DC in Condominium Darfur changed over time; initially the DC had a broad judicial authority, hearing a wide range of cases. The introduction of Native Administration in the 1920s reduced the DC's judicial role to principally hearing homicide, slavery and arms cases, and any cases involving the police. The DC had responsibility for checking district accounts and Native Court records (from the 1920s). The DC was also responsible for supervising the district police and prisons and often for overseeing large scale vaccination campaigns against epidemic disease. DCs also had the authority to set boundaries between 'tribal' *dars*, and could recommend the dismissal or appointment of senior chiefs and *omdas* to his superiors in El Fasher and Khartoum, as well as appointing and dismissing *sheikhs* on his own authority. Each district, for most of the colonial period, also had at least one ADC

[81] Fields, *Revival,* pp. 54-56.
[82] Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism', p. 27.
[83] A. Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858–1966* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.186. For the roles of 'subordinate employees see Lawrance *et. al., Intermediaries*, and, for Sudan, H. Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 2003). Also see A. Gupta, 'Blurred boundaries: The discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state', *American Ethnologist*, 22 (1995), pp. 375-402 for a view of local experiences and imaginaries of the state in contemporary India that can be usefully applied to analysis of colonial states.
[84] P. Chabal and J.P. Daloz, *Africa Works* (Oxford, 1999), p. 1.

who was sometimes based at a sub-*merkaz*, and was responsible in the ways mentioned above for a particular sub-district or group of people: the ADC Baggara, for example (a prominent role in this thesis) was responsible for the affairs of the Baggara peoples of Southern Darfur, and was stationed in Abu Gabra, Kubbe, or Buram (changing over time) and answering to the DC of Southern Darfur. Below ADCs were *muawins*, Sudanese assistants to the district staff. In the early years of the colonial period they had a prominent role in tax assessment and collection, but their importance faded with the onset of Native Administration, and the passing of these responsibilities to local chiefs. In the later years of colonial rule, DCs often became chairmen of the local councils established by government.

DCs spent a considerable amount of time on trek (especially in districts inhabited by nomadic populations) inspecting Native Court records, discussing local affairs with the chiefs, sometimes hearing complaints against chiefs, and attempting to maintain peaceful relations between neighbouring groups. DCs also wielded in practice a considerable amount of autonomy within their district: the outline of responsibilities given here indicates the breadth of their role, and the influence they had in local politics.

In the course of touring their districts, it appears some officials in Darfur tried to project an image of their authority that attempted to fit with what they perceived to be local expectations of how government or those in authority appeared and behaved. In short, officials sometimes perhaps imagined themselves (and were sometimes imagined by their subjects), not just as representatives of the state, but also as Sultans of their districts, or, as Mamdani has put it, 'white chiefs of Africa'.[85] This experience in Darfur has similarities with Caroline Hamilton's analysis of colonial government in nineteenth century Natal and the practices of Theophilius Shepstone as Secretary for Native Affairs. She argues that while local discourses 'limited the colonial imagination', it was also clear that the incorporation of these discourses into colonial rule was 'not the consequence of African resistance, but rather a result of the recognition by the colonial bureaucracy of the strength and

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[85] Mamdani, *Citizen*, (Princeton, 1996), p. 114; also M. Crowder 'The white chiefs of tropical Africa,' in M. Crowder, *Colonial West Africa* (London, 1978), pp. 122-150.

suitability of African ideas'.[86] Shepstone, in Hamilton's account 'drew on existing African conceptions of rulership articulated in the image of Shaka to establish a model for colonial domination and native administration, and as a legitimization of colonialism'.[87] This incorporation, or what might be termed mimicry, of the local, was therefore a key strategy of colonial power in Natal. Recent interpretations of British intelligence agents in the early twentieth century Middle East also provide useful insights that can be applied to the practices of isolated officials working in remote rural areas in Darfur. Satia's work demonstrates that these agents believed they could gain a profound, intuitive understanding of subject peoples and their environment by complete immersion in local culture, and by mirroring the movements and practices of the people amongst whom they gathered intelligence. Indeed, 'long immersion in the desert would, they thought, allow them to replicate the apparently intuitive knowledge-gathering and navigational practices of nomadic Arabs'.[88]

There is only occasional evidence from the colonial records for Darfur that officials explicitly formulated strategies of 'complete immersion' or the incorporation of 'existing African conceptions of rulership' into their own practices and performances of government. Yet this thesis argues that the practices of some of the most famous and significant of the British administrators speak for themselves. Men like Dudley Lampen in Southern Darfur or Guy Moore in Northern Darfur did indeed try to immerse themselves almost completely in local culture, being remote from the centre of colonial culture in Darfur, the provincial capital of El Fasher. They were reassured of their authority by the local practice of terming them 'Sultans' of their districts and they really did had considerable autonomy. It also seems clear that such local immersion reinforced the status of the district official within the colonial bureaucracy as an 'expert' on 'their' people, aiding their claims to act as uniquely effective intermediaries and translators between local societies and the *hakuma*. The opinionated correspondence of Moore and Lampen that runs through the official records for Darfur demonstrates a clear belief in their unique

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[86] C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: the powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention* (London, 1989)*, pp. 128, 207.
[87] Ibid., p.73.
[88] P. Satia, *Spies in Arabia* (Oxford, 2008), p. 5.

abilities to understand the administrative requirements of their districts. Work by Deng and Daly on the Sudan Political Service has demonstrated that officials often felt European technical knowledge, gained from years of formal education, was useless in rural Darfur, and indeed many other parts of Sudan. In contrast knowledge of local life and local conditions were all important.[89]

Nonetheless, the official's desire for intimate knowledge of their people remained a fantasy rather than a reality. Lonsdale is rightly sceptical of the 'myth' that officials were 'within African life rather than above it'. He argues:

> However much it was denied by taboos on inter-racial sexuality, however often unmasked as self-deception at moments of despair and desire, only this assumed inwardness of their presence allowed white officials to believe in the kind of civilizing mission that could be crowned by the cross-cultural gift of their own modernity.[90]

But Lonsdale's analysis, while denying the truth of the myth, also suggests just how important it was to the psychology of the district official and thus to the very functioning of colonial rule. Von Trotha dismisses European fantasies of chiefship as mistaken beliefs resulting from the performance of being treated like chiefs by their subjects.[91] Yet this indulging of European fantasies is more revealing than Von Trotha admits. British desire for recognition created opportunities for local elites in Darfur (and indeed sometimes ordinary local subjects) to flatter and manipulate the state representatives in their midst. Sultans, even temporary, white ones, had obligations.[92] And local actors emphasised the freedom of 'sultans' (DCs) to make decisions on their own initiative, as a means of creating better opportunities to influence government. Attempting to straddle the coloniser-colonised divide could therefore be both a strategy of rule by administrators, but simultaneously create an

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[89] Daly and Deng, *Bonds*, p. 25.
[90] J. Lonsdale, 'Wealth, poverty and civic virtue in Kikuyu political thought' in Lonsdale and Berman, *Unhappy*, p. 323.
[91] T. Von Trotha, 'From administrative to civil chieftaincy: some problems and prospects of African chieftaincy', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37-38 (1996), pp. 79-107.
[92] See T. McClendon, 'Interpretation and interpolation: Shepstone as native interpreter' in Lawrance *et al*, *Intermediaries*, for the demands made by African elites on Shepstone in Natal as 'chief', pp. 87-89.

opportunity for the co-opting of rulers into local agendas by the ruled.[93] If officials wanted local knowledge, they could only gain it from the local people they talked to. These individuals thus had a great opportunity to shape the views of a particular administrator, and even to draw him into particular local political agendas. Chiefs had a particularly important role here, as they seemed to offer officials an entry point into intimate knowledge of their people. In retrospect, colonial officials in Sudan sometimes commented that because of the obvious gap between chiefs and themselves in terms of local knowledge, they in fact felt some chiefs to be their 'superiors'.[94] This had important implications for the local negotiations that constructed colonial rule: chiefs and officials in particular had a mutually reinforcing relationship built on the impression and perhaps sometimes the reality of personal intimacy. And officials might become the tools of their chiefs, rather than *vice versa*. The 'distance' between administrators and local people, especially their chiefly allies, was, in some contexts, relatively limited: and this had significant implications for the local construction of state authority.

These arguments extend Berman's seminal analysis of colonial officials in Kenya: he argues that colonial order was sustained by 'a process of bargaining in which colonial officials often were participants… not arbiters.' Berman's positioning of the district official also has obvious parallels with the position of the chief: the DC had to decide how far he could 'press central directives' before local order was threatened, much as chiefs had to decide how far to 'press' the local orders of the DC. Strikingly, Berman also suggests that the central state had to decide how far 'the field agent's accommodation of local social forces could be tolerated before they became in fact agents of those interests against the centre'.[95] Berman is therefore alive to the tensions of the DC's position although he frames this principally as an expression of the state's contradictory objectives of control and accumulation. While this is a productive analysis, this thesis analyses these same tensions as expressing the ambiguous position of the DC at the very point of the

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[93] Ruth Watson also emphasises the mutual appropriations and manoeuvrings across the state-local divide by officials and chiefs in colonial Ibadan. See R. Watson, *'Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan': Chieftaincy and Civic Culture in a Yoruba City* (Oxford, 2003), p. 161.
[94] Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, pp. 24-25; for chiefly perspectives see pp. 120-121.
[95] B. Berman, 'Structure and process in the bureaucratic states of colonial Africa' in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy*, p. 152.

colonizer/colonized boundary, and indeed the fragility of the idea of a coherent or detached unitary state in Darfur.

None of the interactions or alliances between officials and local people ever fully dissolved the powerfully imagined boundary between coloniser and colonised, and indeed, in the course of contact and mutual mimicry across that boundary, a sense of division and separation was also simultaneously reconstructed.[96] Officials were often well aware of the dangers of creating too much intimacy with the people they governed: they tried to keep a distance even as they were dragged into local politics. And, critically, nor does this thesis argue that officials were simply absorbed into local networks of patronage and accumulation. Officials became patrons principally because they could make political decisions in disputes over chieftaincy or tribal boundaries; they did not, of course, have the kin-based obligations of chiefs. They were salaried administrators, operating within a relatively meritocratic professional hierarchy; they did not use the powers of their positions for private material gain. And officials were often appealed to by local subjects on the grounds that they had obligations to enforce colonial legal norms, particularly in the disciplining or dismissal of an 'oppressive' chief. Yet these were far from consistently enforced: the state in practice accepted the blurred distinction between private and public in the exercise of chiefly authority. The complex interaction and tensions between bureaucratic norms and the dynamics of personal rule is thus exemplified in the behaviour of officials caught up in chieftaincy or inter-tribal disputes.

Performance and authority

As some officials performed the role of 'Sultan' or 'chief' as well as that of the local representative of a distant, less personal state, chiefs attempted to present themselves as both connected to and distant from government and local society, depending on

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[96] cf. the Comaroffs on the coloniser/colonised distinction: 'the more tightly they were interwoven, the deeper the conceptual contrast drawn between them.' J. and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Volume 2* (Chicago, 1997), p. 25. McClendon's work on Shepstone is also well aware of the continued 'distance' of the white official: see T.McClendon, 'Interpretation' in Lawrance *et al* (eds.), *Intermedaries*, p.89. And see N. Jacobs, 'The intimate politics of ornithology in colonial Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 48 (2006), for the ways 'boundaries controlled but did not prevent interchange between colonizing scientist and colonized research assistant' in the context of colonial ornithology, at p. 599.

their audience. The various roles that both had to play, and the theatrical manner in which these were performed, suggest that colonial authority might be productively analysed as being constituted in a continual set of theatrical performances, with multiple audiences imposing expectations on the actors from above and below, and indeed sometimes participating in and imposing their own meanings on the performances themselves.[97] Chiefs were more vulnerable to the audience's disapproval, either from officials or from their 'subjects'. Therefore, this thesis argues that what Derek Peterson terms the 'theatrical work of agency' (from above, as well as from below) is crucial to understanding the success or failures of chieftaincy careers, as well as understanding how the local state presented itself to local people in a multiplicity of individual interpretations.[98]

What were the content of these performances? Chiefs presented themselves to officials as both part of their local society, and also as masters of the discourses of colonial rule, standing apart from their subjects and gazing down on them from the stage they occupied with officials. To their subjects they performed both the role of familiar local chief, obliged to share the proceeds of office, and the master of new, unfamiliar colonial technologies of bureaucracy, courts and prisons. For their part, officials made theatrical gestures presenting themselves as generous redistributers of the imagined wealth of office, as well as stern keepers of the lash: a patron to their many clients as well as the discipliner of their bodies. In their willingness to overlook illegal activities in the behaviour of the chiefs they worked with, officials often acquiesced in what were presented to them as 'local' or 'traditional' norms. On the other hand, they would not abide the failure of chiefs to bring in labour and revenue. They showed themselves to be part of the remote world of the *hakuma*, yet also still sometimes separate from its bureaucratic rules and alien moral norms. And even officials were constrained by the expectations of 'their' subjects. Officials were well aware that their performance as dispensers of justice were widely discussed by local people.[99]   And when Darfuris 'contracted' with colonial power, when they interacted with officials to make complaints about the behaviour of their chief, they

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[97] E.A.B. Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal, 'Chieftaincy in Africa: three facets of a hybrid role', in Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal and van Dijk, *Chieftaincy*, p. 32.
[98] Peterson, 'Plays', p. 984.
[99] Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, p. 166.

reminded officials as well as chiefs of the obligations implied by their performances as rulers.[100]

The intermediacy of chiefs and officials meant they both were required to play a series of quite different roles at different times. Their performances tested the limits of the imagined categories of coloniser and colonised from both sides, and often produced powerful allegiances across that boundary, as these elite men performed to one another and looked down on their subjects. Both chiefs and officials often also had a shared distaste for the bureaucratic paraphernalia of the modern state, preferring to do business man-to-man. This highly personalised model of authority has important implications for our understanding of the colonial state in Darfur, to which this introduction now turns.

Chiefs and officials at the boundaries of 'the state'

'Nor was the state an institution… it was a chief with an eye to keeping allies and isolating enemies.'

J.Lonsdale[101]

Lonsdale's comment, suggests an important question: was it the colonial state that was being constructed in local eyes through the performances of officials and chief, or something rather more like a series of quasi-independent district chiefdoms or sultanates? To begin to answer such a question we need to have some idea of what we mean by 'the state'. Understandings of what the state is, or even whether it exists at all, have become very complex. Abrams' seminal work, published in the 1980s, suggested that analysts should discard the term 'state' altogether. Abrams admits the existence of a 'state system', a set of competing agencies and individuals, and a 'state idea', the powerful concept of a state, that itself legitimizes what would otherwise be an unacceptable domination, but makes it clear that the state idea refers to something which does not actually exist. The creation and maintenance of such an

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[100] Peterson notes that in the setting of colonial church courts, 'as actors within missionaries' morality plays, Africans obligated churchmen themselves to play out a part. 'Plays', p. 985.
[101] Lonsdale, 'Civic Virtue', p. 363.

idea however, Abrams argues, requires serious scholarly attention.[102] This argument has influenced approaches which emphasize 'the practical and processual dimensions of ['the state's'] dynamic evolution or formation,' in short the study of 'state' formation.[103] Timothy Mitchell has argued, for instance, that it is necessary to recognise that the state *is* a 'powerful, metaphysical effect', rather than an 'actual structure,' and that the object of a critique of the state should be to uncover how such an effect is produced or formed.[104] This approach does not throw out the concept of state altogether, but rather argues for a radical redefinition of what the state is – an effect or an idea, which is in a constant process of being formed and reformed, not a structure or thing.

To what extent was the creation of a 'state idea' – the sense of the state as a 'thing' that exists – part of the formation of colonial authority in Darfur? Away from the grandiose settings of hierarchical ritual (the tribal gatherings, for instance, that can be seen, in part, as attempts to create 'state effects') officials were perhaps primarily interested in being seen as individually powerful and, sometimes, responsive political patrons. They wanted to be seen as the government in their own person. Berman suggests that the decentralized nature of colonial administration made it possible 'to construct the *apparent autonomy* of the colonial not simply as a disinterested arbiter among conflicting interests, but even as a benevolent guide and protector… Colonial domination was thus disciplined by an ultimate dependence on local consent.'[105] So in the negotiations between officials, chiefs and subjects, the dynamics of colonial authority were often produced locally within the district, without meaningful intervention from any higher authority. 'State effects' were therefore often not what administrators were actually aiming to produce, if such an effect is always intended to mark off the 'state' as (to take Mitchell's definition) an 'inert "structure" that somehow stands apart from individuals'.[106] Rather, the aim in Darfur was instead perhaps to show that the state was indivisible from the

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[102] P. Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1 (1988), pp. 58-89.
[103] G.M. Joseph and D. Nugent 'Popular culture and state formation in revolutionary Mexico' in GM Joseph and D Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (London, 1994), p. 19.
[104] Mitchell, 'Limits', p. 94.
[105] Berman, 'Structure', p. 158.
[106] Mitchell, 'Limits', pp. 93-94.

individual: the production of a more personal 'chieftaincy' or perhaps 'sultanate' effect.

In theory, the holding of inter-district, or inter-provincial, meetings was another way to produce a 'state effect,' through a show of state unity, demonstrating that the DC was in fact meaningfully linked into a wider network of power and authority that went beyond the personal ties he built up with chiefs. But what these meetings sometimes achieved was quite different – they demonstrated the limits to the state idea, rather suggesting that its constituent elements were 'manifestly divided against one another, volatile and confused,' as Abrams suggests of political institutions more generally. At such occasions it might become obvious that the vertical connections between chiefs and officials were more powerful than the horizontal connections between officials across administrative boundaries. Again, to apply Abrams' thinking, a state system, a pluralistic 'institutional field that is primarily a field of struggle', most certainly existed in colonial Darfur, but the existence of the 'state' in the singular is much harder for the historian, or the local Darfuri, to ascertain.[107] Local initiative that mobilised the patronage of the district official, and contested his connections to the wider 'state' apparatus, pointed to the power of imaginations of authority that were personalistic, not abstracted. This also suggests that Darfuris were in fact very little mystified by 'state effects': that they understood very well the fractures in the state system, and the potential for that system to break down. In short, perhaps they understood the fundamentally illusory nature of the 'state effect.'

In the specific context of Darfur, this is perhaps unsurprising. While Darfur has a long history of statehood, the Sultanate had a relatively weak institutional presence outside of its 'core' area of control. Moreover, when the pre-colonial state sent agents of the centre out to govern these peripheries, these agents often became domesticated by local societies, marrying into local elites and obtaining local estates of land, becoming more powerfully tied to local societies than to the state they supposedly served. The 'state' in Darfur had therefore always been fragmented and

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[107] P. Abrams, 'Notes' (1977), p. 79. Berman and Lonsdale have of course also noted the conflicted character of the colonial state in Kenya: see B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, 'Coping with the contradictions: the development of the colonial state 1895-1914' in Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy*.

manipulable: the idea of the state was probably always somewhat personalised rather than abstract. When local subjects flattered district officials by calling them 'sultans' they were drawing on a history of experiencing the state as an individual, or a network of individuals, rather than an abstracted structure.[108]

But simultaneously many local actors in colonial Darfur could also conceptualise the ways in which local state officials were connected to broader networks of authority. Gupta, writing about contemporary India, suggests that

> at the local level it becomes difficult to experience the state as an ontologically coherent entity: what one confronts instead is much more discrete and fragmentary… Yet … it is precisely through the practices of such local institutions that a translocal institution such as the state comes to be imagined.[109]

Local elites in particular knew that DCs, apparently autonomous, very influential patrons, were also part of the *hakuma*, or government. Some of the political strategies followed by local actors demonstrate a clear awareness of administrative hierarchies. DCs sometimes had to take instructions from above which countered their own judgement, and which occasionally reversed decisions already made, sometimes at the behest of protest from below. So the apparent autonomy of the district official which made the state appear personal (and more knowable), existed side by side with awareness of a wider structure (also the state) that constrained his action. Local actors therefore well understood the linkages between the apparently distinct versions of the state as individual and the state as system: maybe, to put it simply, they grasped well the contradictory nature of the colonial state, its performance of order, rules and law, alongside the realities of its production of exceptions, its divisions, its personalisation. And the constraints on the personalised authority of the DC could also be a resource to be accessed. When the white 'sultan'

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[108] Cf G. Lienhardt, 'The Sudan: aspects of the south government among some of the Nilotic peoples, 1947-52', *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 (1982), pp. 22-34, esp. 27 where he asserts that Dinka in southern Sudan made a distinction between the DC and the *hakuma*: the former might not always attract the same 'opprobrium' as the latter.
[109] Gupta, 'Blurred boundaries', p. 383.

failed to do his duty, then actors were able to switch their appeals to more remote authorities in the state hierarchy, in an attempt to counter the decisions of the DC. Perhaps the DC was the preferred point of claim-making on the state, being easier to influence while gossiping on trek than the remote bureaucrats sitting in offices in El Fasher or Khartoum. But it would be misleading to suggest that political authority worked at a local level without reference to the wider state. Written petitions and personal appeals to the highest level of government went hand in hand: even the most remote officials in Khartoum were imagined to have obligations to their subjects.

Hegemony in Darfur?

Some have regarded intense local disputes over chieftaincy succession, and indeed over the legitimate boundaries of chiefly behaviour, as reflective of the limited success of colonial 'Indirect Rule' policy. By concentrating power in the hands of individual chiefs, and claiming legitimacy for this policy in the grounds of 'tradition', the colonial state invited endless disputes over the meaning of 'tradition' as it related to chieftaincy.[110] Spear notes that opponents of chiefs could challenge their legitimacy on both 'traditional' and 'modern' grounds, and argues that 'the invention of tradition was a perilous process that could both challenge and support colonial hegemony'.[111]

This thesis suggests, in contrast, that moments of dispute and tension within communities over the behaviour or legitimacy of their leaders actually reinforced an overall hegemonic political discourse that both linked and separated chieftaincy and state power. While the legitimate occupancy of chiefly office might be at issue, the existence of the institution was certainly not.[112] Struggle over who should be chief

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[110] S. Berry, 'Debating the land question in Africa', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 44, (2002), p. 645.
[111] Spear, *Limits*, p. 13.
[112] Feierman also discusses the enduring focus on chieftaincy politics in local debate, although his view of 'off-stage discourse' informed by his own deep local knowledge of the Shambaa enriches his work in a way this study cannot match. See Feierman, *Intellectuals* pp. 17, 39. Berry also acknowledges the usefulness of these local debates to the maintenance of overall colonial authority: *Chiefs Know*, pp. 37-39.

was also essentially a struggle over who should have privileged access to the state, who would be performing on the stage that administrators and chiefs shared, and who would be best able to mediate and interpret between government and people. If the language of colonial authority that both chiefs and officials spoke was a restricted 'pidgin', which excluded significant elements of both colonial and local political discourses, it remained a powerful, creative discourse, which drew strength from the fact of its multiple, yet calculatedly restricted inputs.[113] Moreover, when people protested against their chief, they used the power of the DC, or even his superiors, in order to achieve their goals. The state was then not simply something to be evaded, but could rather be seen as a resource as well as an imposition: a capricious, unreliable and sometimes inaccessible resource, but a resource nonetheless. And by using, or contracting with the state in this way, Darfuris played a key role in the construction of a regional hegemony in Darfur. [114]

The question of hegemony in the colonial context is fraught, largely due to the importance of consent in creating hegemony: coercion is a 'necessary but not sufficient condition for hegemony'.[115] Given the degree of violence and coercion associated with so much of the colonial experience, Guha argues that colonialism rested on 'domination without hegemony'.[116] In contrast, in their work on the 'colonisation of consciousness', the Comaroffs propose this definition of hegemony:

> that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from a historically situated cultural field - that come to be taken for granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it.[117]

They apply this definition to the way in which, they argue, the forms of 'the European worldview' were 'authoritatively inscribed on the African landscape' by

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[113] P. Pels, 'The pidginization of Luguru politics: administrative ethnography and the paradoxes of Indirect Rule', *American Ethnologist*, 23 (1996), pp. 738-761

[114] For similar processes see P. Nugent, 'Abandoned project - the nuances of chieftaincy, development and history in Ghana's Volta region', *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 37/38 (1996), p. 215.

[115] T. McCaskie, *State and Society in pre-colonial Asante* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 5.

[116] R. Guha, *Dominance without hegemony: history and power in colonial India* (Cambridge, 1997).

[117] J. and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Volume 1* (Chicago, 1991), *Revelation*, p.24.

contact between missionaries and the Tswana of southern Africa.[118] Similarly, McCaskie, suggests that 'a prime consequence of the state's success in implementing hegemony, or in legitimating its authority, is a persuasion away from plural argument to consensual statement'.[119] But the Comaroffs also make it clear that a hegemonic world view rarely supplants everything which existed before its dominance: that other ideologies constantly threaten to contest its dominance, and therefore it is constantly being remade. Hegemony is 'always uncertain, realized through the balancing of competing forces': crucially, it is a process more than a 'thing', perhaps much like the state itself.[120] It is also important to note that Gramsci saw hegemony depending 'on the incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated': hegemony never rests solely on the imposition of ideology from above.[121] Nor does it rest solely on consent: the forms of coercion that lie at the heart of Gupta's account can be integrated into a view of hegemonic authority.

The arguments presented here about Darfur suggest that a regional, specifically political colonial hegemony did exist, in its complex mix of coercion and consent, but particularly in its production of a singular dominant (though not totalising) way of seeing politics. The institution of chieftaincy, and its ambivalent, yet significant association with the authority of the state was the persistent focus of local political ambition and authority.[122] Sara Berry has argued similarly that debates over chieftaincy in Asante formed the 'core of the colonial political process'.[123] While Gramsci saw consent as being extracted from subjects rather than freely given, here it seems that local subjects were equally extracting the price of their grudgingly given consent from their rulers, in the form of disputes and challenges to individual

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[118]   Ibid., p. 18.
[119]   McCaskie, *Asante*, p. 20.
[120] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, pp. 20, 25. See also Ian Copland, 'The limits of hegemony: elite responses to nineteenth-century imperial and missionary acculturation strategies in India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 49 (2007), p. 639.
[121]   A. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London, 1998), p. 31.
[122]   Cf. T. Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of the invention of tradition in British colonial Africa', *Journal of African History* 43 (2003), pp. 26-7, who suggests that consent was not gained for British policy, but that 'compliance' with British rule was. Exactly what the distinction between these two is remains somewhat underdeveloped.
[123]   Berry, *Boundaries*, p. 37.

chiefs.[124] Nonetheless, colonial authority, in its hitching together of 'traditional' authority and the local state, thus became, for a time, a hegemonic form of power. Moreover, even after the colonial rulers were forced to leave, chiefs, and local state administrators (increasingly Executive Officers of councils or local government inspectors) remained central to the working of local authority. The nature of the relationship between local officials in the post-colonial state and chiefs requires a separate study. But none of the disputes which might be viewed as restrictive of government authority actually challenged the way colonial power worked in Darfur: rather, they were also factors which were ultimately constitutive of a colonial political hegemony.[125]   This does not imply that there was a 'colonisation of consciousness' in a cultural sense: rather, I am proposing a rather more limited definition of political hegemony, which allowed a thinly spread colonial administration to achieve its equally limited goals of collecting taxation and maintaining local order.

Sources and structure

This study is based on a mixture of official and personal written records. Documents from the Khartoum National Records Office and the UK National Archives are combined with the personal papers of DCs who worked in Darfur, which are kept at the Sudan Archive in Durham. The most obvious problem with this reliance on the written is the absence of oral histories from Darfuris themselves apart from a limited number of interviews which the author carried out in Khartoum during 2008 with Southern Darfur Fellata leaders. But generally this account relies on the reports and personal perceptions of British administrative officials, which is a problematic source base. Officials, of course, knew rather little of the peoples they governed: they spent relatively little time with any one group in a year, and their knowledge of these communities was in many cases based largely on their interactions with chiefs, who tried to control and monopolise the access of officials to local knowledge in line with their own interests. As a result of this, official and personal papers have

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[124] See Copland, 'Limits', p. 637.
[125] This is similar to the Comaroffs' view on hegemony: that apparent acts of resistance in fact reinforce dominant discourses, by leaving their fundamental assumptions unquestioned. *Revelation*, especially p. 26.

rather more to say about the relationships of officials with chiefs and vice versa, rather than providing a broader view of the interactions between local subjects and the state system. That said, the predilections of some individuals to access sources of local knowledge that were not simply controlled by chiefs means that the colonial archive does record other sorts of interactions, away from the mutual constructions of elite authority. Officials sometimes quoted these informants in their reports or diaries. While these representations of the speech of ordinary Darfuris are inevitably filtered and translated by the authors of these sources, they are nonetheless included as providing some amount of 'local voice' – local voices never being pure, or unmediated forms of knowledge in their own right in any case.

The nature of the sources has led the thesis to focus very much on elite interaction and performance: it therefore inevitably makes claims for the significance of these interactions in shaping colonial political culture, claims that may have been more balanced by a different kind of source base, particularly one that allowed more access to the experiences of interaction between low-level officials and local subjects. It also plays down quotidian experiences of state coercion which oral sources would perhaps discuss at greater length, although the experience of early pacification campaigns is well recorded in the colonial archive. But a focus on the relationships and performances between individual officials and chiefs draws attention to an important point of interface between coloniser and colonised that is increasingly neglected by scholarship. The richness of particular individual accounts (for instance the memoirs of Dudley Lampen, ADC of the Baggara in the late 1920s, and the reports of Guy Moore, DC of Northern Darfur from 1934-1948) are particularly helpful in providing insights into the making of state authority, although again, they inevitably focus the thesis on experiences that are by no means universal or typical.

The thesis develops its core argument of the interconnection and interdependence of state power and local politics through the particular periods and contexts of its individual chapters. Chapter I examines the relationships between state and society during the Darfur Sultanate, and in the late nineteenth century under Turco-Egyptian and Mahdist rule. It places strong emphasis on the limits of the control of the Darfur

Sultanate over the peoples it claimed as subjects (c.1700-1874), while identifying tendencies towards greater government intervention in the 'peripheries' of the old Sultanate in the late nineteenth century (1874-1916). Moreover, it shows that the character and fortunes of the Darfur Sultanate were greatly influenced by its so-called peripheries: inter-marriage between central and local elites, for instance, sometimes brought supposedly peripheral peoples into the very centre of the Sultanate's political life. The chapter also argues that, to an even greater extent than during the colonial period, the boundary between state and non-state forms of authority was blurred. State agents appointed from the centre often became domesticated into the local societies they were supposed to regulate. Moreover, autonomous leaders in the so-called peripheries, often reached out to the Sultans to legitimate their authority. The dynamics of patron-client relationships between rulers and ruled were thus clearly operational in the years before British colonial rule, and strategies of co-opting state agents into local politics were well established techniques of accessing and manipulating external, remote authorities. British rule continued many of these dynamics.

Chapter II assesses the early years of British rule (1916-1922), focussing particularly on the Nyala rising in Southern Darfur in 1921. This rebellion resulted in terrifying government reprisals which destroyed livelihoods across the region. The chapter argues that the causes, events and effects of this specific episode provide general insights into the character of the colonial state in Darfur. It demonstrates one of the ways in which colonial administration was partially recognisable by Darfuris: patterns of colonial violence mimicked pre-colonial state violence against rebellious subjects, albeit with the use of new, more powerful technologies. It suggests that state and local political agendas were in constant interplay in Southern Darfur, reflected both in the causes, course and after-effects of the Nyala rising: the state was never somehow detached from the dynamics of local politics. It also demonstrates that whilst the administration moved towards greater reliance on local chiefs as its principal intermediaries with Darfuri society in the aftermath of rebellion, chiefs themselves remained ambivalently positioned between state and society. These themes of colonial 'mimickry' of pre-colonial state practices, and the

complex interpenetrations between state and local politics persist into the period of more established, regularised colonial rule.

Chapter III examines the character of 'Native Administration' policy in Darfur, emphasising the performative aspects of governance as executed by both chiefs and officials, and the mutual dependence of these elite men in constructing colonial authority. It examines the theatre of government in 'tribal gatherings', official treks, conversations between chiefs and officials, and the workings of 'Native Courts'. It argues that the British administration tried to incorporate elements of pre-colonial and local political culture into their own governing practices. 'Tribal gatherings' mimicked the Sultanate's pre-colonial 'festival of drums'; local people and officials colluded in the fantasy that officials could behave as Sultans of their districts. But a key aspect of colonial rule was also its partial, hesitant introduction of bureaucratic institutionalisation of local governance. Native Courts were not purely arenas for the patriarchal application of so-called 'customary' law: they were also institutions that, increasingly over time, kept records, records which could be inspected by officials, and thus be used to judge the performance of chiefs. Chiefs also managed to perform new roles as councillors in the bureaucratic structures of 'Local Government' after 1945, and increasingly in national representative institutions, performances which further cemented their position at the local level. The chapter therefore emphasises the interpenetration between patrimonial chieftaincy politics and bureaucratic state forms.

The fourth chapter assesses the importance of local protest in constructing colonial authority in Darfur. It examines disputes arising from the appointment of chiefs perceived as 'outsiders' by the communities they were intended to govern, or from the inappropriate behaviours (*zulm,* oppression) of individual chiefs. Such protests have often been read as demonstrating the inadequacies of colonial 'Indirect Rule' strategies and the way in which colonial attempts to govern through what they imagined to be stable local 'tradition' actually opened up and intensified local disputes over legitimate authority. However, this chapter shows that protestors against unpopular chiefs almost always appealed to the colonial government to answer their complaints, and often made a point of claiming their loyalty to the state.

Protest therefore often imaginatively constructed the state as a resource to be accessed in local disputes. Regardless of what people were saying 'off-stage', the focus on the legitimacy of particular chiefs, and not on the legitimacy of the institution of chieftaincy, or indeed the state itself, meant that chieftaincy politics became part of a regional hegemomic discourse. The methods by which people chose to protest, and deploy agency, ended up creating some degree of tacit consent to colonial authority. This reinforces the arguments of Chapter III concerning the institutionalisation of highly personalised cultures of authority, which were themselves performed within relatively clear practical and discursive limits.

Chapter V discusses the border between British Darfur and French Tchad (a component colony of French Equatorial Africa), and demonstrates that this border was not simply an arbitrary line drawn on a map. Rather, British and French boundary commissioners sought local testimony as to the history of the boundary between the pre-colonial Sultanates of Darfur and Wadai, and integrated this into their delineation of the border. To some extent, boundary commissioners became patrons to local elites, negotiating on behalf of their own territorial claims. The chapter then focuses on the interactions between British administrators in the border districts of Darfur and local elites, and argues that the patron-client dynamics inherent in colonial rule in Darfur can be observed most clearly at such border zones. DCs, like the boundary commissioners of the 1920s, were used as patrons to protect the interests of local elites in cross-border disputes and rivalries. Moreover, British administrators were often relaxed about the continuous eastward flow of people from Tchad to Darfur: they were less concerned about imposing a European model of territorial sovereignty in co-operation with the French administration, than they were with adapting their limited resources to local conditions. Chiefs in Darfur, especially the Sultan of Dar Masalit, took advantage of this attitude to expand their following at the expense of chiefs in Tchad. Moreover, the limited direct control of the state over this border region, facilitated the functioning of 'informal' systems of regulation in which chiefs played a major role. Multiple regulatory orders in borderlands were as real in the colonial period as in contemporary Africa. Colonial authority at its borders was thus characterized by the complex interplay between state and local politics as elsewhere in Darfur.

Chapter VI discusses pastoralist borders within Darfur and in particular the border between the Rizeigat of Southern Darfur and the Malual Dinka of Northern Bahr el Ghazal. This 'internal' boundary (being located within Sudan) was a key line of division between British administrators in Northern and Southern Sudan. At times, though these administrators were in theory all representatives of one *hakuma* (government), they nonetheless aligned themselves with the agendas of their local clients, and acted in rivalry with one another. In this instance the state was locally manifested in divided, competing, highly personalized form. And pastoralist elites, across Darfur, seem to have been extremely capable of using the state on their own terms. This chapter thus emphasizes the engagement between local state representatives and pastoralists in the context of boundary and territorial disputes, as a contrast to the prevailing view of pastoralist marginalization and disengagement from state power and, particularly, from boundaries set by the state. Pastoralist disputes over land and territory were an important field of interaction in which state authority was made manifest at the local level.

Chapter 1 – State authority and local politics before 1916: the Darfur Sultans, Turco-Egyptian rule and the Mahdiyya

British rule in Darfur built on a long history of state formation in the region. The Darfur Sultanate functioned as an independent state for two centuries before colonial interventions in the region. Then Darfur experienced a brief period of rule by the Turco-Egyptian colonial administration in Sudan (1874-1885), followed by attempts by the Mahdist state to assert its authority in Darfur (1885-1898), and the restoration of the Sultanate under Ali Dinar (1898-1916).

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that the British colonial state became subject to many of the local political dynamics with which its predecessors had previously engaged. This chapter considers some of these pre-existing dynamics, emphasising the limits to the Sultanate's power and its capacity to impose centralisation beyond a relatively limited core territory. It argues for the existence of a complex mode of governance in pre-1916 Darfur where state and non-state forms of authority remained mutually dependent and mutually influential.

In presenting this account, this chapter makes considerable use of O'Fahey's work on the Sultanate. But it also attempts to clarify and emphasise important arguments that remain somewhat under-developed in O'Fahey's account, whilst trying to create a more coherent view of continuities and changes in political culture across the sweep of Darfur's history before 1916. The chapter will demonstrate that even in areas that were peripheral to the authority of the Sultans, the state still had a important role in local chieftaincy disputes, sometimes intervening at the behest of local actors. The extent of state intervention in the politics of the peripheries also intensified in the late nineteenth century under Turco-Egyptian and even Mahdist rule, as local chiefs were increasingly used by the state as local representatives. British colonialism thus appears as the next stage in this increasing trend to state intervention in local politics, rather than as a break with existing historical trends. This chapter also focuses on the mutual interpenetration of 'cores' and 'peripheries' of state power, which O'Fahey's work implicitly demonstrates but does not explicitly discuss. The argument presented here is that so-called margins have often

been formative of the 'core' of state power in Darfur, and that in the pre-colonial period this is even clearer than during British colonial rule. Rather than centralisation or 'detribalisation', mutual accommodation and influence between state and local was a more obvious tendency under the Sultans. Indeed, even in the core areas of the Sultanate, state power was not simply imposed on local populations: rather state agents also had important responsibilities to the communities they governed. Whilst this was not exactly reproduced in the British colonial period, we will see that British officials also might become distanced from the central state they claimed to embody, and more linked to the interests of their local allies and clients. And finally, politics was saturated with patron-client relations at all levels. Close personal association with the sultans in particular was crucial to advancing political interests or ambitions in the pre-colonial state: likewise, colonial-era chiefs endeavoured to build good relationships with the officials of the colonial administration. In sum, these important long-term political dynamics in Darfur's history shed considerable light on the character of British colonial authority (and indeed on more recent history), and they require explicit attention at the outset of this thesis. The chapter first examines authority in the 'core' of the Sultanate, and then authority in the 'peripheries'. While there are very obvious differences between the level of state influence in these areas, there are also commonalities: the blurred line between state and non-state forms of authority in particular.

The Darfur Sultanate is first referred to in late seventeenth century travellers and traders accounts.[126] The precise origins of the Sultanate are unclear, as is the relationship of what is readily termed 'Fur identity' to the state itself, despite the name of the area: Darfur (land of the Fur). Fur, now understood as an ethnic label, needs to be understood as primarily a political identity, linked to the southward expansion of the Keira descent group from the Jebel Marra mountains.[127] From the late seventeenth century, the Keira also enjoyed increasing involvement in long-distance trade, and Darfur became an increasingly significant commercial crossroads, most famously on the Forty Days Road to Egypt (being heavily involved

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[126] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 32-33.
[127] Ibid., pp. 36-39.

with the slave trade), though also with other trading links to the north, west and east.[128] Within these earliest years Islam was also introduced as the state religion for the Sultanate. O'Fahey makes it clear, however, that away from the 'core' of the kingdom, 'earlier patterns of belief were hardly disturbed by nominal conversion to Islam'. Indeed, 'Islam spread from the ruling institution outwards and downwards' and did so in very 'uneven' fashion. [129] This 'Islamic hybridity' was also reflected in judicial practices which worked by a combination of *sharia* and local 'customary' law.[130] Meanwhile the Sultan's person remained sacred, surrounded by a mix of Islamic and non-Islamic ritual.[131]

1. The Darfur Sultanate

1.1 Government and administration at the core

A close examination of governance in the core of the Darfur Sultanate reveals that while authority was to some extent regularised by the state in this heartland area (roughly central and western Darfur), state representatives also acquired socially and politically meaningful ties to the localities they governed. Beneficiaries of the *hakura* system, whilst at one level agents of state centralisation, also became locally domesticated through ties of marriage to local elites. This was a continual process of interpenetration between state and locality, which also greatly influenced the political culture of colonialism. This section examines the role of the *shartays*, or local administrative chiefs, of Darfur, and also the *hakura* system of land grants to favoured individuals to draw out these arguments.

The administrative system of the Sultans in the core regions of its power relied on a mixture of officials and chiefs with varying ties to centre and localities. O'Fahey asserts that in the first sixty years of the eighteenth century there was a decisive shift away from the powers of 'Fur' chiefs, towards the sultans, with the creation of a 'supertribal bureaucracy', the increasing use of Islam to supplant local institutions,

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[128] Ibid., pp. 239-244.
[129] Ibid., pp. 230-231.
[130] Ibid., pp. 212-219
[131] Ibid., pp. 92-99.

and the recruitment of slave troops to lessen the sultan's dependence on local chiefs.[132] However this was not simply an assertion of 'state' against 'non-state' authority. O'Fahey argues that senior 'lineage chiefs', in the course of state expansion, 'had grown into a class of hereditary title-holders': they were a key part of the state itself.[133] Darfur was split administratively into four provinces with ruling lords or governors like the *aba diimanga* or the *abbo uumo*. These men were from dynasties probably as well established as the Keira line itself, dynasties which had become incorporated in the expansionist state.[134] Like so many other subsequent officials and notables, they therefore had one foot in local structures of authority within the communities they inhabited, and one foot in the state's hierarchy. Sultans tried to create an elite accountable only to the centre by creating new layers of authority on top of that which already existed, or by parcelling out land that lay within the territories of existing chiefs. But, repeatedly, as 'emissaries acquired local interests, the sultans were forced constantly to renew their rule from the centre'.[135]

Below these major lords, local state representatives also played a complex role between state and non-state: whilst their secular powers were defined by the state, they also seem to have had an important sacral role within the community. The four provinces of the Sultanate were each divided into district chiefdoms or *shartayas* These were very much defined as territorial, not tribal units: *shartays* were associated with particular *dars,* each of which contained a variety of 'Fur' lineage groups. *Shartays* were either appointed or confirmed by the sultans: they were hereditary positions, although as we will see, their heritability was at the will of the sultan. O'Fahey gives the following description of the *shartay's* role in Dar Diima in western Darfur:

> The *shartay*'s village was the district centre for taxation, justice and military levies. His compound was a smaller version of the sultan's *fashir* [palace], within which was the *shartay*'s stone where the chief sat to render judgement on cases brought by the *dimlijs* to his attention... other duties included the

[132] Ibid., p. 45.
[133] Ibid., p. 47.
[134] Ibid., p. 117
[135] Ibid., p. 163.

allocation of land to newcomers and grazing and livestock migration routes… His revenues came from a proportion of the fines and blood money he could impose, and from his land, to which his people were obliged to contribute labour [seven days a year].[136]

This all appears to be a relatively well worked out system of state defined authority. Moreover, the Sultans often preferred to appoint outsiders to the position of *shartay*, men who were not already identified with the communities they would administer. For instance, many of the *shartays* of the Berti in eastern Darfur appear to have been descended from two West African pilgrims who had settled in the area on return from pilgrimage, and who gained the Sultan's favour.[137] And as the Sultanate expanded southwards from the Jebel Marra region, it imposed *shartays* over the territories and peoples it acquired: the local community might 'become Fur' over time, as assimilated subjects of the state, but their chiefs might originally have been outsiders to a great extent.[138] Administrative chieftaincy could therefore be very much an 'invention' of expansionist, centralising sultans: O'Fahey alludes to a 'common pattern of relative instability among middle-ranking chiefs'.[139] *Shartays* might thus appear purely the instrument of state power from above.

Yet *shartays* seemed to have a sacral as well as a secular role. The sacral aspect of the *shartay's* role entailed significant obligations to the social health of the communities they governed. This is perhaps surprising: pre-colonial African rulers and village chiefs both often had important spiritual and sacral roles, though intermediate officials, whose authority mostly derived from their appointment by the ruler, usually did not have spiritual roles.[140] In Darfur, this was not the case. *Shartays* were installed in their positions with non-Islamic, or sometimes a mix of Islamic and non-Islamic sacral ritual, enacted by the 'old men and women of the customs'. These elders stripped the candidate of his clothes and sprinkled him with

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[136] Ibid., p. 177.
[137] Ibid., p. 52.
[138] Ibid, pp. 172, 175-6.
[139] Ibid.,p. 176.
[140] J. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savannah* (Madison, 1966), p. 80; M. Tymowski, *The Origins and Structures of Political Institutions in Pre-Colonial Black Africa* (Lampeter, 2009), p. 82.

water, before the newly made *shartay* donned a new set of clothes.[141] O'Fahey suggests that these rituals were authentic local customs, and argues that the sultan's own 'ritual cycle was essentially the magnification by the state of local life: the accession ceremonies paralleled those of the provincial and local chiefs'.[142] It was certainly true that these ceremonies served to create a tie between the *shartay* and the land and community he would govern: as one informant put it in the colonial era: 'Who except the lord of the land could have customs?'[143] Local elders installed the *shartay*, not a more senior figure in the administrative hierarchy. And when the *awaid* (customs) were not performed by an acceding chief, it was believed that famine or the death of animals belonging to the communities they governed would be the outcome.[144] *Shartays* clearly had a crucial role to play in preserving the social health of their people: perhaps this role evolved over time, when the office of *shartay* was kept within the same family. Pre-colonial s*hartays* therefore might be understood as occupying a somewhat ambiguous position between state and society, with obligations both upwards to the state, and downwards to the communities they administered. The line between state and non-state authority was therefore rarely clear.

The Sultans also used a system of land grants (*hakura*) to expand the reach of their authority, though the holders of these grants rarely remained simply agents of the state. *Hakura* privileges over land (or, less often, people) were made to favoured individuals, particularly holy men (*fuqara*) and merchants, from the early eighteenth century. Estate holders had rights to customary taxes and labour from their tenants, and often enjoyed exemption from state taxation.[145] O'Fahey states that the system cumulatively created 'a grid of estates that increasingly submerged the older chiefly order'.[146] A good example of this is the state's response to a Birgid rebellion in the mid eighteenth century, when large parts of Birgid territory were granted as a

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[141] P.J. Sandison 'Notebook on Zalingei' SAD 511/4/34. Sandison was describing the accession ceremonies used by *shartays* in the colonial period, but also believed these followed long-established patterns dating back to the days of the Sultanate. There is no particular reason to doubt this was the case, though the possibility cannot be discounted. Cf. O'Fahey's use of Arkell's accounts of installation ceremonies, p. 176.
[142] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 92-99.
[143] P.J. Sandison 'Notebook on Zalingei' SAD 511/4/34.
[144] Ibid., SAD 511/4/33.
[145] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 137-161.
[146] Ibid., p. 137.

hakura to a favoured Kinani Arab, Sulayman bin Ahmed, originating from the Blue Nile. In the course of this, a local *shartay* (district administrative chief) was dismissed to make way for the outsider. Sulayman's family carved out a new administrative *shartaya* in the south of Dar Birgid, which became known as Dar Birgid Kajjar, with all the previous chiefs in the area subordinated to the favoured family.[147] There are also examples of estate holding *fuqara* whose families became *shartays* and *dimlijs* (sub-district chiefs). In some cases, *fuqara* attempted to tax outside of their estate in the territory of the *shartay*: this was, however, ultimately also a direct challenge to the state's authority (in the person of the *shartay*), which the Sultans were eager to discourage.

Yet this is the very problem with viewing the *hakura* system as simply asserting state against non-state authority. The elites it usually challenged were *shartays* and *dimlijs*, who were already part of the state apparatus, not independent local leaders. *Hakura* grants were often an expression of the transfer of favour and influence between one kind of representative and client of the state to another. Indeed, the *hakura* system did not even transfer the state's authority from chief to estate holder in any straightforward manner. O'Fahey notes that in southwestern Darfur and around El Fasher 'competition for estates led to the submergence of the *dimlijs*', but 'elsewhere accommodation between the local community and its chiefs and their overlord was more characteristic'.[148] In comparison to similar grants of privilege made in the Borno kingdom in West Africa, local chiefs were not so completely subordinated to estate holders.[149] O'Fahey's information about dispute resolution in *hakura* estates suggests a more complex pattern of interaction with *shartays* in particular. The local *shartay* often heard more serious cases, and then would share any fines with the estate holder. In Western Darfur, the stewards of the estate holders also collected the Islamic dues, *zeka* and *fitr*, and took 'a proportion each year to the *shartay* from whom in turn the sultan's emissaries collected a part for their master'.[150] Moreover, *hakura* holders did not remain sealed off from the local

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[147] G. Nachtigal, *Sahara and Sudan Vol. 4* (London, 1971), p. 287.
[148] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 138.
[149] Mamdani cites O'Fahey on this point, but actually reverses his meaning. Mamdani, *Saviors*, p. 118 and cf. O'Fahey, *Sultanate* p. 140.
[150] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 144-5.

elites of the areas they held rights in: inter-marriage between new and old families gradually domesticated these clients of the state into local networks of patronage and kinship obligation.[151] Estate privileges and chiefly authority could segue together, in ways which later became rather confusing for colonial officials attempting to determine rival claims to territory and authority.[152] Rather than the one-way process of 'detribalisation' which Mamdani suggests, or even a top-down overhaul of the existing local state elite, a much more interactive and negotiated process can be observed.

Finally, the personalisation of authority even in the Sultanate's core should be emphasised. Connection to the sultan, via marriage or service, was a crucial means for personal advancement within the state hierarchy. Land grants and appointments to office were made at the Sultan's pleasure, and could always be revoked. Estate-owners took care to have their estates renewed when a new sultan came to power.[153] Moreover, at times individual subjects successfully appealed to the authority of the Sultan against their chiefs. In a dramatic example of this, Sultan Umar Lel in the 1730s 'received complaints of *zulm* (oppression) against thirty leading chiefs; he had fifteen executed by the men's gate and fifteen by the women's gate of the *fashir*' (royal residence).[154] Sultans were well aware of the tensions that could be engendered by *zulm*, and the dangers that too much of it posed to political order: a collective description of chiefs and officials lies in a charter which addresses these men as 'all those oppressive [officials] who are overbearing with the rights of the Muslims'.[155] So the state, while extracting taxation and military service, could also serve as a resource for subjects to use in local political contest. This was to persist into the colonial period.

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[151] Ibid., p. 157.
[152] DC Fasher to Governor, 4 May 1937, NRO 2. D Fasher A (54)/5/26.
[153] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 135.
[154] Ibid., p. 46.
[155] Ibid., p. 191.

1.2 State authority and tributary chiefs on the 'peripheries'

In the various peripheries of the Sultanate, state authority was less regularised and remained in even more obvious co-existence (or competition) with non-state forms of authority. O'Fahey usefully states that 'like other Sudanic states the sultanate may be seen structurally as a series of zones radiating out from the centre, in which the nature and strength of the ruler's authority varied'.[156] In more remote areas, the state's power was very limited. In part this reflected the limited concerns of the Sultans in these zones: in peripheral pastoralist areas, their key concerns were the payment of tribute and, perhaps more importantly, the freedom for trading or raiding parties to pass through pastoralist territories unhindered. Yet imagining outlying zones as only loosely connected to the Sultanate, or somehow peripheral to the state, leads to similar problems as those that can be encountered with a core-periphery analysis of the modern Sudanese state. Core and periphery are as much perspectives as analytical tools, and peripheries of the Sultanate could very much influence, even take control of, the centres of power, to a greater extent than in the colonial period.

Moreover, this section argues that the Sultans sometimes played surprisingly important roles in the chieftaincy politics of the (predominantly pastoralist) peripheries. Accessing the personal patronage of the Sultan was a key means by which local elites could legitimise their own bids for power. And such appeals to the Sultan's authority also imaginatively constructed the state even at its furthest peripheries. Those who claim that chieftaincy was only politicised by the recent Khartoum regimes, or even by the British, ignore this deeper history of interaction between local and state politics.

Many groups at the peripheries of the state retained a substantial degree of political autonomy: the Zaghawa are one example, though this was also true of the Meidob, Zayyadia and Berti in Northern Darfur, and the various Baggara (cattle owning) and Abbala (camel owning) nomadic Arab groups of both Northern and Southern Darfur. O'Fahey notes the importance in these areas of 'the formal and informal mechanisms whereby relations between sultan and tributary were maintained or

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[156] Ibid., p. 179.

adjusted – the marriage alliances, the giving of gifts, the bestowal of drums or titles, or the sending of cavalry to collect tribute'.[157] In the south the Baggara, though sometimes engaging in violent conflict with the Sultans, and at other times paying tribute, also very much controlled their own affairs. However, authority amongst these peoples appears to have been heavily decentralised. Among the Rizeigat, the largest Baggara group, there was no recognised paramount leader before 1874: the heads of the various *khashm beits* (major lineage segments) were said to be almost independent of each other, and were known as *nahasat,* as each man had his own *nahas* and a bracelet as a badge of rank.[158] When Zubayr Pasha, the powerful slave trader, met the Rizeigat in 1866 to form an alliance, he dealt with no less than eighty *sheikhs,* suggesting just how decentralized authority was within the tribe at this point.[159]

In the north of Darfur however, there was a longer history of paramount chieftaincy. And here, the Sultans could decisively intervene at key moments in local politics to decide on who should be the chief: indeed such chieftaincies had probably emerged because of the need to deal with the Sultanate.[160] A lack of regularised institutional state rule thus went alongside a surprisingly strong capacity to decide on the local ruler among the various northern peoples. Keira intervention had at times led to important dynastic shifts even in the most remote area of Jebel Meidob, with shifts in power between different sections depending on the strength of personal relationships between Meidob elites and the Sultans.[161] In one case a contender for the throne successfully won the Sultan's support by the bestowing of gifts.[162] Local actors could then enlist the support of a remote state in local affairs in order to advance their own position. The Berti, neighbouring the Meidob, have a long tradition of chieftainship and kingship associated with the *Basanga* lineage, going back to their 'culture hero', *al-hajj* Muhammad Yambar. This lineage continues to

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[157] Ibid., p. 182.
[158] Dupuis, Deputy Governor Darfur to Governor, 28 Feb. 1925, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/12. It is unclear how these *nahas* were obtained.
[159] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 263.
[160] Khazanov, p. 166.
[161] Report by Cumming on the agitation for independence by the Teukeddi Urrti in 1928, NRO CIVSEC 66/6/43.
[162] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 185.

rule in Dar Berti to the present day.[163] However, the various minor lineages within the *Basanga* were often in rivalry with one another for the position of *melik*. At particular moments the Sultans could intervene to support or depose candidates or existing *meliks*, depending on the ability of the rival candidates to mobilise the Sultan's support. As Holy puts it, 'every choice of a new [Berti] sovereign has been a compromise between the ideas of succession and the demands of higher authorities to whom every sovereign had to be acceptable.'[164] This remained true throughout the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

Of the various 'peripheral', tributary subject peoples, O'Fahey acknowledges that the Zaghawa had 'the most lasting and intimate relationship with the Sultans'.[165] Marriage ties between the Sultans and the Zaghawa elite in the eighteenth century established a particularly intimate relationship between the Fur and Zaghawa. Inter-marriage between central and peripheral elites was one of the principal ways of binding together core and periphery – but it also brought the periphery into the heart of the core. Sultan Muhammed Tayrab was the child of a marriage between Sultan Ahmad Bukr and one Kaltuma, a woman from the ruling family of the Zaghawa Kobbe. Tayrab appointed his maternal uncle, Kharut b. Hilat, as Sultan of Kobbe, presenting him with *nahas* indicating a very direct linkage between supposedly peripheral, non-state chieftaincy politics, and the central state. [166] Tayrab himself also married into the Kobbe royal family. The succession conflict that followed Tayrab's death was in part a struggle between Fur and Zaghawa for control of the state.[167]

In Dar Galla, another Zaghawa territory, various sections were all independent under their own *dimlijs* until the nineteenth century. Then a Zaghawa orphan brought up at the court of Muhammad al-Fadl successfully drove troublesome Ereigat nomads out of Dar Galla on the Sultan's behalf, and was made *shartay* as a reward. His family

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[163] Ibid., p. 52.
[164] L. Holy, *Neighbours and Kinsmen: A Study of the Berti people of Darfur* (New York, 1974), p. 118.
[165] Ibid., pp. 182-185.
[166] *Nahas* were copper kettle drums, and the 'paramount symbol if autonomous authority throughout Darfur': when the Sultan granted them to 'peripheral' chiefs, this was a recognition of both autonomy and loose subordination to the state. Ibid., p. 183.
[167] Ibid., pp. 57-58.

still held office in the colonial period, though rival sections still contested the authority of the *shartay*.[168] In other Zaghawa dars, paramount chieftaincy had a long history: in Dar Tuer, it had moved between three leading families since the seventeenth century. But from 1718 the Sultans ended the principle of rotational chieftaincy, and entrenched the position of the Awlad Agab lineage.[169] The Sultans went on to support their clients against rebellion by rival lineage groups. The Sultans could also take territory from one Zaghawa chief and give it to another if they were dissatisfied with the behaviour of a particular leader.[170]

Chieftaincy in even remote areas was then often importantly linked with the state, as an important intermediary role where the state had little direct control or institutional structures established locally: a particularly common scenario among pastoralist societies more widely. Harir suggests that in general pre-colonial Zaghawa chiefs were defined very much by their management of the relationship between their section and the Sultans, and providing overall defence and security for their people against outsiders. In contrast to colonial chiefs, they represented their people to the Sultans, and not vice versa.[171] This was quite different from the British period, when chiefs were institutionalised as salaried employees of the state, and made into judicial authorities, with wide powers over resources and dispute settlement within the tribe. Nonetheless, some measure of accountability to the centre, if only in delivering tribute to the Sultans *did* matter among pre-colonial peripheral chiefs. And the logic of maintaining some level of influence over remote areas by alliance with local elites, and by intervention in chieftaincy politics, is common to both the Sultans and their colonial successors.

Peripheral zones were also, of course, often the cockpits for military adventure, and thus central to the processes of state formation. It is no coincidence that the state building of the eighteenth century went alongside aggressive military campaigns

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[168] Ibid., p. 108.
[169] El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed-Salih, 'Social stratification among the Zaghawa Muslim community in the Sudan' MPhil (St Andrews, 1988), pp. 121-125; S A Harir, 'The politics of numbers: mediatory leadership and the political process among the Beri Zaghawa of the Sudan', PhD (Bergen, 1986), p. 76.
[170] Harir, *Numbers,* p. 78.
[171] Ibid., p. 8.

against Wadai and Kordofan: the connection between warfare and state power is perennial. But in the mid nineteenth century conflictual peripheral zones became ever more important in determining the fate of the state. The southern Baggara belt, always beyond the reach of regular state control, had by then become 'central to the economic life of the state' as a key zone for accessing the trade in slaves and ivory, in which Egyptian traders were increasingly involved.[172] The raiding zone of the sultanate had always passed though and beyond the Baggara belt, creating a 'continual source of tension between the cattle nomads and the sultans'. This tension grew further in the nineteenth century. Repeated failed attempts to bring the Rizeigat to heel by military expeditions, were precursors to the fall of the Sultanate in 1874 at the hands of Egyptian traders vying with the sultans for the control of this economically valuable territory. The state therefore was destroyed from an area that was once a periphery, but which had become a new core in the formation of economic and military centres of power.

1.3: State authority on the peripheries: magdums

In the nineteeth century, the Sultanate created a new position of *magdum* which was probably intended to assert the state's power and control over the peripheral nomadic populations who were so difficult to dominate, and thus also to increase state control of the increasingly lucrative slave trade.[173] Yet whilst the *magdums* appear an important part of the rise of the state and the decline of communal authority, they did not remain detached from local dynamics.[174] O'Fahey translates the term as 'commissioner or viceroy', and the holders of this position were granted some of the trappings of royal office, in order to emphasise their link to the sultan: 'royal insignia, Qur'an, carpet, stool, and lances, but not the *nahas*'.[175] *Magdums* were thus clearly marked as representing the sultan's person, but were not recognised by the state as having autonomous authority in their own right, as the granting of *nahas* would have implied. They counted *qadis* as part of their entourage, also suggesting that they could play an important judicial role. But

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[172] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 84.
[173] Ibid., p. 186.
[174] Cf. Mamdani, *Saviors*, p. 129.
[175] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 185.

significantly, O'Fahey also suggests their strength lay in the 'warbands they led': they were *de facto* 'semi-autonomous and highly mobile warlords'.[176] They became authorities in their own right, as well as representatives of the state. Nachtigal, travelling through Darfur in the early 1870s, observed that the *magdum* was honoured by those he governed 'as if he were the king himself'.[177] Local societies gained experience in managing these powerful and semi-autonomous officials that would serve them well in their interactions with British DCs.

Some of the *magdums* became closely tied to the societies they supposedly governed as a representative of the state. The role of the *magdum* of northern Darfur became a hereditary and, crucially, landed position. The *magdum* was thus domesticated into the region which he governed. O'Fahey explains this well when discussing government representatives more generally:

> Appointment by the centre was sooner or later converted by the appointee or his descendants into locally-based power, as grants of land became hereditary and intermarriage linked the family to the local elites. Thus to situate a notable fully, one should know the lands he held and his kin onnections, as well as his formal position in the hierarchy. Such information is rarely complete, and the resultant two-dimensional picture produces a sharp dichotomy between rulers and ruled that ignores the localised and communal aspects of their relationship.[178]

The southern *magdumate* was a less stable role, being more oriented towards military conflict with the Baggara. The area the *magdum* covered stretched from Rizeigat country right to the western borders of Dar Sila and Masalit territory. As a result the southern *magdum* was a very mobile warlord, moving with troops to zones of conflict, ordering chiefs to produce taxes, and could even impose the death penalty, previously reserved to the Sultans.[179] Thus the state became mobile in its borderlands, in order to overcome its deficiencies in what Herbst would term

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[176] Ibid., p. 189.
[177] Nachtigal, *Sahara*, p. 309.
[178] Ibid., p. 112.
[179] Ibid., p. 187.

'broadcasting' its power.[180] It did this very visibly: the insignia of royal office would have served as a means for local populations to see the state embodied in the person of the *magdum*. Maybe, as was the case elsewhere in pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, when state authority became mobile, opportunities to appeal to its influence also increased.[181] Yet the *magdums* did not replace or overwhelm other local elites. While there is little detail of how they interacted with local chiefs, there is evidence that *magdums* sometimes shared judicial fines with *shartays*, *dimlijs*, and estate-stewards: rather like the holders of *hakura* grants, they added an extra layer to the local hierarchies of power, but did not efface these.[182] Mobile colonial officials to some extent inherited the role of the *magdum* (minus the explicit military function): they embodied the state at its peripheries, but also had considerable independence and autonomy in the exercise of their authority.

2. Turco-Egyptian rule

Turco-Egyptian rule in Darfur, from 1874-1885, attempted greater levels of state penetration into what had previously been relatively autonomous peripheral regions. This had a significant impact on the centralisation of political authority within 'tribal' units in these areas, which general accounts of this period in Darfur do not sufficiently emphasise. From the 1820s the Turco-Egyptian government in northern Sudan had increasingly involved *sheikhs* and elders in government, as crucial intermediaries between officials and local society.[183] As with the later Condominium, the imperial outsiders sought figures of local authority who could carry out government business in a region where the state had a weak institutional presence. In the course of applying such strategies, Daly suggests, the government was 'as often a pawn in intertribal feuds as it was an arbiter of them', something which would be repeated in the colonial period in Darfur.[184] The Turco-Egyptian state applied this strategy to newly conquered Darfur in the 1870s: simultaneously, communities in Darfur appear to have increasingly accepted the utility of having a

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[180] Herbst, *States*, p. 3.
[181] Tymowski, *Pre-Colonial*, p. 83.
[182] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 215.
[183] A. Bjorkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 46.
[184] Daly, *Sorrow*, p.50; also see Bjorkelo, *Shendi*, p. 11.

single representative to deal with the *hakuma* (government). As a result, even in areas where political authority was previously decentralised and fluid, paramount chiefs emerged as more stable intermediaries between government and local societies. This appears a good example of Khazanov's observation of the general tendency for positions of centralised leadership among nomadic communities to be created out of growing interactions between nomad groups and the 'outside world', especially states.[185] None of this made Turco-Egyptian administration equivalent to later British 'Native Administration': the key judicial innovations of Native Courts were a British development. Nonetheless, Turco-Egyptian rule, the first attempt by an alien Nile-valley based state to exert authority in Darfur, did significantly increase the association between government and previously 'peripheral', autonomous chiefs, an important shift which requires attention.

When Sudan was initially conquered by the Turco-Egyptians in 1821, rebellion in the Nile Valley indefinitely postponed plans to conquer Darfur.[186] It was Turco-Egyptian advance into what we now term southern Sudan in search of slaves that destabilised the Sultanate, as traders competed with the Darfur state for control of its valuable southern slaving zone. Increasingly the slavers pushed westwards into Bahr-el-Ghazal, where they began to interact with the Baggara on the southern fringe of the Sultanate. The most powerful of the traders, Zubayr Pasha made a fragile alliance with the Baggara in 1866, but found the nomads to be unreliable allies when, with the encouragement of the Sultans, a faction attacked his caravans in 1873. Zubayr invaded Darfur in 1874: Sultan Ibrahim Qarad was killed, and El Fasher was captured. The Egyptian administration wasted no time in asserting its authority over Darfur: Zubayr was returned to Cairo.[187]

Despite continued resistance to its rule, the new regime went about setting up administrative structures, dividing Darfur into four *mudiriyyas* or sub-provinces that roughly corresponded to the old *magdumate* commands: the Egyptians therefore maintained some of the spatial organisation of government from the Sultans. But they also introduced the innovation of matching administrative territories with

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[185] Khazanov, *Nomads*, p. 166.
[186] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 76-79.
[187] Ibid., pp. 261-276.

imagined 'tribal' units: sub-provinces were divided into *qisms* which took some account of tribal *dars* in former peripheries of the Sultanate.[188] And the new regime sought out chiefly allies whom it could rely on to carry out some key administrative functions, with significant implications for local political authority in parts of Darfur. Poll tax in western Darfur was assessed, for example, on the estimates of local population made by the remaining local chiefs; amongst nomadic groups, *sheikhs* continued to collect communal tribute.[189]

Turco-Egyptian intervention brought particularly important innovations in the centralisation of authority within some of the previously peripheral tribes, as both the new rulers and their subjects saw the worth of dealing with one another through effective single intermediaries. As we have seen, before 1873 the Rizeigat were very much politically decentralised. However, dealings with Zubayr Pasha seem to have focused politics in the tribe around two key factions by 1873: one supporting Zubayr, led by Madibbu Ali and 'Uqayl al-Janqawi, and the other supporting the Sultans, led by Munzal and 'Ulayyan.[190] Clearly there were differences of opinion over which man was the more likely to emerge as the most powerful. It was Munzal and 'Ulayyan who instigated an attack on Zubayr's caravans in 1873 at the Sultan's suggestion, forcing a rift in the tribe.[191] Madibbu and 'Uqayl now fought with Zubayr against Munzal and 'Ulayyan. These latter two fled to El Fasher when Zubayr expanded his control into al-Shakka, in the heart of Rizeigat territory.[192]

It was around this time that the paramount chieftaincy was created, with Madibbu its first occupant. Local informants during the colonial era suggested differing versions of this process: some said Zubayr himself created the position, and others that the Rizeigat elite decided to unite under Madibbu *against* the continued incursions of Zubayr's mercenaries.[193] (Habbania, Taaisha, Fellata and Beni Halba accounts

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[188] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 50.
[189] Ibid., p. 52.
[190] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 265.
[191] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 38.
[192] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 266.
[193] Saville to Assistant Director of Intelligence 23/10/17, SAD uncatalogued Baring papers; Willis, Director of Intelligence to Private Secretary, 20 Jan. 1923, NRO CIVSEC 66/12/107.

suggest that Zubayr was responsible for the creation of their paramount chief).[194] Once the Rizeigat paramountcy was created, it was immediately contested: the Awlad Um Sallama section (which 'Uqayl headed) did not fully accept Madibbu's authority.[195] But in any case, the Rizeigat chieftaincy soon functioned as a key ally of the new regime. Interactions between Rizeigat leadership and the Turco-Egyptian state afforded opportunities to both sides. In 1877 the Rizeigat fought with Gordon (then Governor-General of the Sudan) to put down resistance from the Mima and Khawabir groups in southern Darfur. This also allowed the Rizeigat opportunity to move against rival, unregulated traders in the Bahr el Ghazal.[196] Gordon, determined to crack down on the slave trade in 1879, let the Baggara cattle nomads in general, including the Rizeigat, loose on the *jallaba* (traders of riverine origin) in southern Darfur who supplied slave traders with arms: the Baggara looted the traders for their many possessions, including clothes and slaves.[197] This is a striking anticipation of the use of the Baggara as local proxies pursued by both British and independent Sudanese states: it also demonstrates how local elites could seize on state agendas to pursue their own independent material interests.

The growing association between Baggara chiefs and the Turco-Egyptian regime was also reflected in a change in their titles. Slatin, Governor of Darfur in the years immediately before the Mahdiyya, titled Baggara chiefs as *beys*.[198] The term *bey* is of Turkish origin: it was used in the Turco-Egyptian empire to refer to administrative and military officials below the rank of *pasha*. But it also has connotations of the idea of a local tribal chief. The title thus captured the ambivalent position of these newly created paramount positions, between the state and their subjects, and of course, anticipated their further incorporation under British rule.

It was also clear that demonstrating administrative ability to the new regime was a crucial means of advancing individual position, as it would be under British rule. In western Darfur, Hajjam Hasab Allah was recognised by the new colonial regime as

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[194] ADC Baggara to Governor ,14 Mar. 1925, NRO 2.D Fasher 54/3/12.
[195] Willis, Director of Intelligence to Private Secretary, 20 Jan. 1923, NRO CIVSEC (1)66/12/107.
[196] Daly, p. 54.
[197] Daly, p. 51.
[198] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur, 'Proposals for Devolution', 1927, NRO CIVSEC 1/20/60.

head of the Masalit following his successful collection of tax. This started the creation of a Masalit chieftaincy (or sultanate as it was termed). Other Masalit *firshas* (chiefs), previously independent of one another, seemed to accept the utility of having a leader able to deal competently on their behalf with this unpredictable outside force. By 1880 Hajjam was made *bey* by the Egyptians but also started to behave very similarly to the sultans of Darfur within his own Dar, exercising powers of life and death, appointing and dismissing chiefs, and making land grants. But interestingly, oral testimonies collected by Lidwien Kapteigns in the 1970s suggest that Hajjam is remembered 'as the precursor, not the founder of the sultanate' and is remembered as *bey*, not Sultan. He would be deposed as an unpopular and oppressive ruler with the coming of Mahdist revolution.[199]

Despite (or sometimes perhaps because of) these innovations, Egyptian rule in Darfur always remained fragile and in the early 1880s discontent with the exactions of the Egyptian government and their troops was mobilised behind a messianic religious revolt to eject the colonisers from Darfur, and the rest of Sudan.

3. The Mahdiyya in Darfur

Mahdism can be defined as the belief in Sunni Islam 'in a divinely guided being who will restore the kingdom of God on earth,' a belief which has inspired a number of politico-religious movements across the Muslim world and particularly in Asia and Africa.[200] In Sudan, discontent with the Turco-Egyptian regime created fertile ground for the mobilisation of such beliefs, and military campaigns led by the Mahdi himself, Muhammad Ahmad Abdallah, a Sammaniyya sufi, had rapid success against the Egyptians, culminating in the fall of Khartoum in January 1885 and the establishment of the Mahdist state in Sudan. Darfur, as a reservoir of support, was key to the success of the movement. And the history of the Mahdist state, particularly under the Mahdi's successor after 1885, the Khalifa Abdullahi Muhammad, had significant ramifications for the peoples of Darfur.

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[199] On Hajjam see L. Kapteijns, *Mahdist Faith and Sudanic Tradition* (London, 1985), pp. 66-72.
[200] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 280.

The Mahdiyya has been regarded as a fiercely centralising, detribalising state.[201] The most startling evidence to support such an argument is the quite extraordinary coercive relocation of many of the Baggara (and other Darfuri peoples, especially local elites) to Omdurman, where they could be kept under the watchful eye of the state.[202] But at other times the Mahdist state, faced with the same dilemmas of transmitting power in remote Darfur as its predecessors and its successors, aimed to govern through local chiefs. It was the failure to establish a productive *modus vivendi* with these elites that led the Mahdist state to some of its more extreme assertions of authority over Darfuri peoples, yet the state continued to oscillate between enmity and towards attempts at alliance with local elites throughout the Mahdiyya. Moreover, in its earliest years, the Mahdist movement was seized upon by local elites in Darfur as an opportunity to throw off the burdens of Turco-Egyptian power, and as a new source of patronage to be employed when making claims to political authority. The Mahdiyya drew much of its early strength from the interaction between patterns of local political competition, discontent with government and its own politico-religious discourse (much as was the case in later rebellions against the British colonial state). And in the period leading up to Mahdist rebellion, the pattern of disfranchised claimants to chiefly office appealing to powerful patrons outside of Darfur, patrons located at the heart of state power in the Nile Valley, began to emerge, a pattern which would also persist into the British colonial era.

In particular, the mobilisation of the Rizeigat behind the Mahdist revolt was very much the product of a chieftaincy dispute at the head of the tribe. In 1881 Madibbu Ali had fallen from grace with the Egyptian government: deposed, he went east to join the Mahdi. Later that year, Madibbu returned with instructions from the Mahdi to raise rebellion among the Rizeigat, which he did very successfully, destroying government forces as he went and also gaining support from Habbania, Beni Halba and Berti.[203] However, the Rizeigat elite again was divided: Madibbu's rival Uqayl stood aside from the rebellion.[204] Nearly a decade before they had split between

[201] Mamdani, *Saviors*, p. 141.
[202] Daly, *Sorrow*, pp. 77-78.
[203] Ibid., pp. 64-67.
[204] P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan* (Oxford, 1970), p. 74.

supporting either the Sultans or Zubayr. Now a reversal of hierarchy within the elite had led Madibbu to seek patronage from outside Darfur, at the 'core' of the new state, and he returned to his people as an agent of revolution. Madibbu's personal ambitions did the Mahdist cause a great favour in Southern Darfur. Indeed, Mahdism depended on local chieftaincy politics for its initial success.

More broadly, the response of the peoples of Darfur to the gathering revolt depended a great deal on the political calculations of local elites and on patterns of local rivalry. Mahdism did not have universal support within Darfur. The Mahdi had written to many of the local chiefs of Darfur to ask for support.[205] But two potential patrons (the Turco-Egyptian government and the Mahdist rebels) now competed for the support of rivalrous local elites, and the potential for intra- and inter-tribal political rivalries to play out in armed conflict was greatly increased. We now know what the outcome of battle between Egyptian and Mahdist rulers was: but local actors at the time could not be so sure. Slatin's forces when he left Dara in 1882 were made up of 2,000 regular troops, but more strikingly of 7,000 irregulars. These were drawn from factions opposed to those local elites who had aligned themselves to the Mahdist movement. These included Zaghawa, Beigo, Beirgid and Missiriyya participants.[206] The force was defeated decisively by Madibbu Ali and the Rizeigat, but the role of locally-recruited troops in supporting what we might see as a lost cause shows that not all of Darfur was waiting to rise up in the name of the Mahdi. Local political calculation, and the playing out of local rivalries was thus central to building and contesting the Mahdist state. And broad political and religious motivations could be manipulated and used as a justification for the pursuit of distinct local agendas.[207]

Nonetheless, the Mahdist state represented a capture of the very core of the Turco-Egyptian state from the periphery: support from Darfur was crucial to the success of the revolt against the colonial government. Indeed, the Khalifa Abdallahi, head of the Mahdist state for most of its existence, was famously a member of the Taaisha tribe, one of the main Baggara groups in southern Darfur. As a result the Taaisha

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[205] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 64.
[206] Ibid., p. 65.
[207] Ibid., p. 66.

remained a key group within the core of the state, making a major contribution to the Mahdist state's military forces, located at Omdurman in the Nile Valley.[208] However, the Khalifa was also well aware of the distaste among the Baggara tribes, especially the Rizeigat, for central state authority: just as they had supported Zubayr against the Sultans only to turn against the Turco-Egyptians less than ten years later, how long would they remain under the control of the Mahdist state? Madibbu Ali, initially such a crucial ally, now attempted to shore up his position in Darfur by recruiting disgruntled members of the Mahdist forces based in the Nuba Mountains: when he refused a summons by the Mahdist governor of southern Darfur, he was attacked, defeated, captured and finally executed.[209] This was an extraordinary reversal in fortune, and suggests just how fragile Rizeigat-state alliances could be. Madibbu's execution was an unparalleled statement of the power of the state in the Rizeigat *dar*.

Yet the Mahdist state also intensified some of the governing strategies of the Sultans, albeit with a new focus on Omdurman as the core of state power. The Khalifa often placed great importance on chiefs making personal journeys to Omdurman to swear allegiance in cases where he was doubtful of their loyalty, maintaining the emphasis on the personal interactions between central rulers and local elites that the Sultans had also pursued, in a more rigorous and demanding manner. While chiefs had previously come annually to El Fasher to pay tribute and participate in the great festival of drums, now they were to proceed across Sudan to Omdurman to pay homage to the ruler. Moreover, those who made such a journey were sometimes imprisoned or killed when they arrived at their destination. The forcible relocation of whole tribes from Darfur to Omdurman was the most complete expression of this policy: this was, in fact, the 'core' quite literally trying to absorb and thus nullify the 'periphery'. In 1888 the Rizeigat, Habbania and what remained of the Taaisha were ordered to relocate from Darfur to Omdurman. Only half the Habbania made it there: half escaped back to Darfur, and their paramount chief was

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[208] Ibid., pp. 71, 77.
[209] Ibid., p. 72.

murdered en route.[210] Another leading Habbania chief, Mahmud Abu Saad, was made a simple *sheikh* of a town quarter in Omdurman by the Khalifa.[211]

Nonetheless, these policies, stopped short of destroying chieftaincy outright. In some cases, the deportation of chiefs provided opportunities to their local rivals (of whom there were often many), to seize power in their absence. In Dar Habbania, the Shibool section asserted paramount authority over the Habbania who remained in Darfur, following the murder of their Riafa rival.[212] Rather similarly, when the Meidobi chief Jami Khir was forcibly moved to Omdurman, Mansur Suleiman, of the rival Urrti section, who remained in Jebel Meidob, proclaimed himself the *melik* of all the Meidob.[213] And Mahdist assaults on local structures of authority sometimes provided leaders with opportunities to gain prestige by the organisation of military resistance. Jami Khir, the Meidobi chief mentioned above, played a key role in resistance to the Mahdist incursions into Jebel Meidob, incursions which were supported by the neighbouring Berti. Accounts from the time suggest this resistance had established Jami for a short time as 'paramount king': Jami would later regain power under the British regime.[214] The policies of the Mahdist state thus perhaps sometimes unintentionally strengthened the *idea* of chieftaincy, even as it attempted to undermine it.

Still, the regime did not recognise 'tribes' nor the hereditary rights of chiefs: in this sense, it posed an ideological challenge to the authority of both recently created paramounts, and longer established hereditary chiefs. The government was ready to confirm or depose who it liked as chiefs: outsiders were often better than insiders. However we have seen that the Fur Sultans often appointed outsiders to run particular territories on their behalf, and that they intervened directly to depose or appoint favoured allies, even at the peripheries of their kingdom. Turco-Egyptian rule had also led to the creation of paramount chiefs where there had been none before, who were recognised or appointed by the state. The right of the state to

[210] Ibid., p. 78.
[211] ADC Baggara to Governor, 14 Mar. 1925, NRO 2.D Fasher 54/3/12.
[212] ADC Baggara to Governor, 14 Mar. 1925, NRO 2.D Fasher 54/3/12.
[213] GD Lampen, 'A short account of Meidob', Sudan Notes and Records XI (1928), p. 59.
[214] Ibid.

appoint 'non-traditional' chiefs, to choose between rival factions, was not a novel development of the Mahdist period. And whatever the rhetoric of the Mahdist state, links between identity and authority *did*, at least at times, have some relevance. Most obviously the Taaisha were *de facto* a particularly important 'tribe': the Khalifa did not forget his origins.[215] Daly's account also suggests that competition over office within ethnic groups did not stop during the Mahdiyya: 'internal tribal divisions were exploited and endemic fraternal rivalries seized upon; sworn Mahdists with no other claim to tribal leadership won appointments'.[216] The other side of this equation is that state patronage must have remained a resource to be accessed in the service of individual ambition. The long established pattern of interaction between state and local politics remained important during (and after) the Mahdiyya. Mamdani's characterisation of the period as a revolutionary 'all-out assault on chiefly power' is thus an overly simplistic analysis.[217]

Indeed, it is remarkable how persistent were Mahdist attempts to rule Darfur through reliable local intermediaries, who sometimes seized on their position to create local chieftaincies. The man remembered as the founder of the Masalit sultanate was Ismail Abd al-Nabi, a *feki* who rose to power as a loyal Mahdist intermediary with the Masalit, essentially occupying the same position as his predecessor *bey* Hajjam, but from a rival clan, the Gernyeng. Ismail was imprisoned in Omdurman in 1888, four years into his reign, from where he never returned to Dar Masalit (his son consolidated the Sultanate in conflict with the Mahdist state). Ismail always referred to himself in official documents as *amil al-Mahdi*: Mahdist agent. Yet local contemporaries referred to him as *jubbay*, a local equivalent for Sultan. Ismail had one title for the government, and another for his people. Thus, the Mahdiyya sometimes directly encouraged the rise of chiefs.[218]

Later in the period, ruling in co-operation with local chiefs became the explicit strategy of the Mahdist administration. After repeated rebellions against the Mahdist state in Darfur, Uthman Adam Jano, the Mahdist general and governor, held a

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[215] Holt, *Mahdist*, p. 160.
[216] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 77.
[217] Mamdani, *Saviors*, p.141.
[218] For Ismail, see Kapteijns, *Mahdist*, pp. 123-137.

province-wide tribal gathering at Dara, the old headquarters of the southern Darfur Magdumate, in 1889, where he attempted to set up, in O'Fahey's words, 'a system of Indirect Rule'.[219] Each tribe would also have an official appointed to them to collect tax and enforce religious conformity. Here the tendency of the modern state to rule remote, troublesome peoples through simple administrative units, seems clear. Mahdist administrative strategy (as well as the local 'tribal gathering' itself) to some extent anticipated British colonial methods: officials 'were to dwell in the midst of the tribes'.[220] Two decades later, after suffering a major rebellion themselves, the British would turn to very similar strategies.

How Mahdist 'Indirect Rule' worked in practice, remains unclear. On Darfur's troubled western frontier the strategy appears to have borne little fruit, judging by the repeated military expeditions in subsequent years: even then, however, expeditions were sent with rival claimants to the local chiefly thrones: rivals, not necessarily simply outsiders. In place of the several existing chiefs deported from Dar Zaghawa to Omdurman, the Mahdist state appointed one Mahmoud Wad Bahr, a member of the Tuar ruling family, as their principal intermediary with the Zaghawa. Mahmoud was unpopular: he had a Fur mother and had been disinherited from the throne of Dar Tuer for this reason.[221] But nor was he exactly an outsider. It is also worth noting that local populations sometimes rejected imposed chiefs: imposed Sultans of Dar Gimr and Dar Tama were both expelled by their peoples in 1894.[222] The Mahdist state did not attempt to destroy the institution of chieftaincy: rather it was appointing more pliable men into these roles: like the later colonial government, where it attempted too obvious an 'invention', its candidates might not be successful.

In sum, while the Mahdist state sometimes undermined or attacked specific chiefs, it remained surprisingly pragmatic, with governors almost certainly aware of their limited resources in a region far from the centre of the state's power. The regime had this in common with its Turco-Egyptian predecessor, and with the states that

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[219] O'Fahey, *Sultanate,* pp. 284-285.
[220] Holt, *Mahdist*, p. 165.
[221] Tigani Salih, *Islam*, pp. 128-130.
[222] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 82.

followed it. Mahdist governors sometimes recognised the need to utilise local intermediaries to assert the state's authority. And some of these intermediaries managed to build up considerable local authority as a result.

4. Ali Dinar, last Sultan of Darfur

In 1898 an Anglo-Egyptian force invaded Sudan, impelled by a variety of motives, not least securing British control of the Nile, and the Mahdist era came to an end. In its place the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was established, with Britain in practice the ruling power. European imperial expansion was thus framed as Egyptian 'reconquest' of an old imperial territory. Ali Dinar, grandson of Sultan Mohammed el-Fadl, who had been brought to Omdurman seven years previously, now escaped with a group of notables linked to the Keira regime, and seized power in El Fasher, restoring the Sultanate. Ali Dinar gave formal recognition to the sovereignty of the Sudan Government in Darfur and agreed to pay annual tribute. For the time being, Darfur was too remote and lacking in economic value to be of further interest to the British. To some extent Ali Dinar's relationship with the Anglo-Egyptian government was rather similar to that of 'peripheral' tributary chiefs with his own royal predecessors Here we examine how Ali Dinar sustained the processes of centralisation in the peripheries of his kingdom which had begun in the 1870s. [223]

O'Fahey suggests that Ali Dinar was 'autocratic' in comparison to the earlier Sultans, adopting more direct methods of rule.[224] However, if he continued some of the centralising tendencies of the late nineteenth century occupiers of Darfur, Ali Dinar also in some ways restored the old order of the Sultanate. His rule saw an assertion of Islamic orthodoxy against Mahdism, and the restatement of earlier *hakura* grants. Ali Dinar also suppressed several localised Mahdist risings, usually executing the ringleaders (which the British were to continue in the early years of their rule).[225] Well-established ways of managing relations with the peripheries also persisted: for example, Ali Dinar married a princess of the Dar Sila royal family, on

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[223] As argued in G.D. Lampen, 'History of Darfur', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 31 (1950), pp. 177-209. Mamdani deals with Ali Dinar incredibly briefly on pp. 152-3 of *Saviors*.
[224] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 287.
[225] O'Fahey, *Sultanate* p. 289.

Darfur's western frontier.[226] But there was also increased administrative centralisation. While Ali Dinar restored the position of the *magdums*, the old provincial governors (the *abo diimang or abo uumo*, for instance) were given no formal powers under his regime, and even the *magdums* were very much less independent figures than before.[227] Rather, Ali Dinar, like the Turco-Egyptians, and to some extent the Mahdist state, started to deal more systematically with paramount chiefs on the peripheries. These men increasingly answered to the sultan via appointed *manadib*, transferrable agents of the state (in this sense, rather similar to colonial district officials). These *manadib* were not given grants of land in the areas they controlled: they had no powers over life and death. Their subordination to the state, and absence of ties to the locality was therefore more marked than the *magdums* who had preceded them.

The Sultan also pursued increasingly direct interventions in the chieftaincy politics of the peripheral cattle and camel nomads, alongside the more frequently noted military expeditions.[228] At least some of the Baggara chiefs whom the British recognised as *nazirs* (in another adoption of Turco-Egyptian terminology for local chiefs), were termed *shartay* by Ali Dinar, emphasising the state as an important source of their authority.[229] And as chiefs became more directly identified as agents of the state, so Ali Dinar became more heavily involved in the intricacies of local chieftaincy politics. In 1900 Ali Dinar appointed a chief of the Ereigat Arabs, a tribe whom had been the target of repeated state violence in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but whose chiefs do not appear to have previously been appointed by the centre.[230] Among the Beni Halba, whom he fought so ruthlessly, he also appointed a paramount chief to whom he granted *nahas*.[231] He also readily replaced established chiefs with his own appointees.[232] As always, personal ties to the Sultan were a great help: the remade Sultan of the Beigo was one Muhammed

[226] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 96.
[227] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 289.
[228] Daly, *Sorrow*, p.94.
[229] Interview with *Nazir* Ahmed al-Sammani al-Bashar, Khartoum, 14 Nov. 2008.
[230] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 289.
[231] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 28 Feb. 1926, NRO CIVSEC (1)66/12/108.
[232] Statement of Daud Abu Hassan, 25 July 1936, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.

Kebkebe, a confidant and fellow prisoner of Ali Dinar in Omdurman.[233] Wingate noted that Ali Dinar had replaced 'men of family' with his own favoured 'upstarts': a simplification, of course, but indicative of the general tenor of state policy at this time.[234] *Shartays* in the core of the Sultanate, previously territorial chiefs with responsibility for a Dar rather than a 'tribe', appear to have been reduced to lineage chiefs, defined by kin ties rather than territorial command.[235]

Overall, this appears a fairly coherent 'tribalisation' of Darfur governance and politics, on a model not far removed from that employed by the Mahdist governor Uthman Adam Jano. But Ali Dinar's system coupled this 'tribalisation' with an intensified degree of control by the state over the affairs of its subjects, especially over the roles of the chiefs it now ruled through: colonial officials were later told that 'tribal heads were kept strictly to heel by the *manadib* and not encouraged to see cases on their own'. These chiefs, with their obvious ties to central government, may also have enjoyed little legitimacy among those they were supposed to rule. Indeed, 'the *nazir* of the Habbania would not have ventured out of his military post in Ali Dinar's time without an escort, and was once chased home by his own section when he attempted to take dues from them'.[236] This suggests a close association between state military forces in the peripheries and the supposedly 'local' chiefs. El Ghaali later made it clear to a British official that he had survived Ali Dinar's reign by 'his faculty in keeping on the right side of the Sultan's local representative and by timely presents to the Sultan himself'.[237] He would partially maintain these strategies in the period of British rule.

Ali Dinar also pursued a strategy strikingly similar to that of the Mahdist government in his dealings with the Zaghawa: the chiefs who had been confined in Omdurman during the Mahdiyya were now confined at El Fasher. Again, it appears Ali Dinar made his own appointments of Zaghawa *shartays* to govern this periphery.

[233] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 121.
[234] Wingate, Governor General Sudan comment on MacMichael's 'Memo Concerning the Future Status of Darfur' (n.d. c.Sept 1915), SAD 127/3.
[235] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur, 'Proposals for Devolution', 1927, NRO CIVSEC 1/20/60.
[236] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/4/45.
[237] Ibid., SAD 734/9/55.

Some Zaghawa chiefs who intrigued with the French against the Sultan, or who attacked trade caravans, were killed by the Sultan's forces.[238]

But the Rizeigat were the major test case for Ali Dinar's centralising ambitions: often in conflict with them, the Sultan nonetheless managed to perhaps exert greater influence over the tribe's internal affairs than had his predecessors, contrary to most interpretations.[239] True, Musa Madibbu, the new chief, enjoyed considerably more autonomy from the state than did his Beni Halba or Habbania neighbours, but internally, his position remained heavily contested, and the *manadib* appear to have penetrated his *dar* periodically with demands for tribute and to hear cases. Autonomy was not the same as independence. Nonetheless, relatively detailed reports of internal Rizeigat affairs suggest that neither were the *manadib* straightforwardly able to assert the power of the state. In fact ordinary subjects were to some extent capable of refusing to recognise the authority of the state agents that periodically appeared in their midst.

The persistence of Rizeigat resistance to state power, and their readiness to make expedient alliances with outside forces to throw off the yoke of government is striking. Musa Madibbu was frequently in close contact with British officials. 'He repeatedly told our informant that he wants a Government post in his country, and that he has asked for this many times' stated one report.[240] But these requests were themselves a sign of the pressure Ali Dinar placed on Musa's position. In particular the collection of tribute to send to Ali Dinar was always unpopular.[241] Musa's key rival, Bishara Wad Abdullahi of the Um Sellama section (the old rivals of the Madibbu family from the 1870s), used consequent discontent to gain support for his opposition to Musa's authority. One officer heard reports that Musa never slept in his own house at night for fear of murder by Ali Dinar. Moreover it was said that 'Musa has little authority over the majority of the Rizeigat Arabs.' He was unable (apparently) to restrain his tribesmen from raids on the Dinka. The balancing act that Musa played under Ali Dinar's rule was described by a Syrian merchant based in

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[238] Harir, 'Numbers', p. 80.
[239] Cf. O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 287.
[240] Kaim SI, Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 11 Nov. 1915, NRO Darfur 1/1/12.
[241] Bence Pembroke to Governor Kordofan, 29 June 1915, ibid.

Abu Gabra, the centre of Rizeigat authority, when Musa Madibbu was chief. Representatives were sent to collect tribute from the tribe in 1915, but they came when most of the Rizeigat had already moved south as part of their regular grazing movements. They still asserted their rights to hear cases however: they said

> "we have been sent as '*Hukkam*' [judges]", Musa said 'alright, you can sit in judgement…' Musa then collected the *Gellaba* (riverine traders) and said 'this *Dar* is the Sultan's and these representatives are the *Hukkam*. Anyone with a case must go to them and they have full power…' Afterwards however the *Gellaba* and *sheikhs* met and went to Musa saying they were in truth very much discontented. Musa refused to listen however.[242]

Later, when the agents grew tired of the disrespect shown to them by Musa's subjects and Musa's very limited collection of tribute (amounting to two shotguns and four children, presumably slaves), they returned to Ali Dinar: Musa sent a letter back with them to Ali Dinar stating they were inadequate tribute collectors.[243] The episode suggests something of the balancing act characteristic of so much of the practice of later colonial chieftaincy: making motions towards fulfilling the requirements of state agents, publicly acknowledging state authority, whilst simultaneously limiting the extractive demands of state agents to preserve one's position with the tribe. Under Ali Dinar however, such an approach often broke down, resulting in the conflicts between the Sultan and the Rizeigat that drove the latter into the arms of the British.

During Ali Dinar's reign, one can also observe the earliest germs of British colonial state formation in Darfur, brought about not by the actions of the Khartoum government, but by the political imaginations of local actors. Darfur chiefs, like Musa Madibbo, petitioned the Sudan Government at times when they wished to appeal to an alternative patron, circumventing the Sultan: their attempts were largely ignored, but already links between Khartoum and Darfur were beginning to be

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[242] Statement of Iskander Belleni, 2 July 1915, ibid.
[243] Ibid.

forged by the actions of 'peripheral' actors.[244] Ali Dinar himself even appealed to the Sudan Government, particularly when reminding the British of their interest in preserving Anglo-Egyptian (and thus, in practice, Darfur's) sovereignty against French incursion. When it suited him to emphasise his tributary status, he was well able to do so.[245] Indeed, eventual French expansion into Darfur's western frontierlands, combined with obvious restiveness on the Sultan's own part, led Kitchener, by 1913 British agent in Cairo, to assert the need to create border posts along Darfur's western frontier.[246] If executed, this would have underscored the reality of Darfur's tributary status. But it would simultaneously have defined the inviolable territorial limits of the Sultanate, as Ali Dinar wished. This was not the last time that events on the ground, and the demands of local allies of the colonial state, would push for the definition of boundaries before state actors themselves were ready to contemplate doing so.

It was in the anxiety of World War I and the increasingly restless ambitions of Governor General Wingate to expand British territory (and prevent the French from getting into Darfur) that Ali Dinar's luck ran out. Portrayed in Cairo and London as a potential ally of the Ottoman enemy in war-time, Ali Dinar became an easy target for British attack. The Baggara, especially the discontented Rizeigat, readily assisted the British in their invasion, as they had helped so many other outsiders: with the British however their leaders finally found a stable and long-lasting alliance. Ali Dinar was killed in November 1916; Darfur was annexed to Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Conclusion

When the British arrived in Darfur, there was no need to impose a 'counter-revolution' against a 'detribalising' Sultanate, as Mamdani would have it: the last Sultan himself, and indeed his immediate predecessors, had actually laid the ground for much of their own administrative policy.[247] While chiefs grew more powerful under British rule, this was very much the continuation and intensification of a

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[244] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 92.
[245] Ibid., p. 97.
[246] Ibid., p. 100.
[247] Mamdani, *Saviors*, p. 143.

process that had already begun under states with increasingly penetrative ambitions in the region. Centralisation had not meant detribalisation. Rather it had brought about the opposite: a growing 'tribalisation' of authority, as governments relied on local elites to govern straightforwardly labelled 'tribal' units, and simultaneously associated these leaders more directly with the authority of the state. The increasing readiness of these centralising regimes to dismiss and appoint chiefs in line with their own administrative priorities also intensified a culture of competition between potential chiefs for the attention and patronage of the state. Local elites were able to present themselves as true Mahdists or pliable servants of the Sultan, in order to gain or maintain their position. These strategies of co-opting state power in line with local elite interests would be continued under British rule.

Yet the pre-1916 history of Darfur also alerts us to other recurrent themes in the region's history. Firstly, despite the image of Darfur as a remote, backward periphery of Sudan, it actually had a long history of linkage and interaction with external states and cultures. The linkages between 'core' and 'periphery', first within the Sultanate itself and later between Darfur and northern Sudan, demonstrate that the process of state formation in Darfur always involved supposedly 'peripheral' dynamics at its very heart. Secondly, state representatives themselves often became semi-detached from the central governments they were meant to serve, requiring either the creation of new officials to supersede them, or their regular transfer to prevent their local domestication. Moreover, because of the relative autonomy of local state representatives, and the great concentration of sacral and secular prestige in the person of the Sultans, authority in Darfur was always forged in highly personalistic ways. Patron-client relations between sultans, governors, chiefs, and estate holders were essential to the workings of government. Finally, in the late nineteenth century techniques of government surveillance of its peripheries became ever more intrusive, sometimes prompting resistance from local populations. Ironically, while we think of European imperialism as introducing 'modern' forms of surveillance into colonial territories, the early period of British rule was to see far less effective strategies of surveillance and control over local chiefs than the Ali Dinar regime had used. Indeed, the first few years of British rule gave paramount

chiefs a renewed opportunity for freedom of action, as well as bestowing a wide range of powers on these men that many of them had not previously enjoyed.

Chapter 2: 'South Darfur is quicksand': the Nyala rebellion, local politics and the early colonial state, 1917-1921.

The archival record of the early years of British rule in Darfur is dominated by the rebellion of 1921, the 'Nyala rising', the largest single episode of violent resistance against the colonial state in the history of Condominium Sudan.[248] The rebellion was followed by a dramatic expression of state power in the form of a military patrol ('Patrol 99') which thoroughly pillaged areas of Southern Darfur. While the overt violence of the rebellion and its aftermath might be seen as exceptions to the general tenor of colonial rule in Darfur, the argument here is that this episode actually provides enduring insights into the overall character of colonial authority. This chapter uses the rebellion as a focal point for discussion of the early colonial state, emphasising the personalised character of the local state from the outset of colonial rule, and the tendency for isolated British agents to be pulled into local political dynamics. This tendency contributed to the outbreak of rebellion in 1921.[249] Moreover, existing accounts pay little detailed attention to the counter-insurgency of Patrol 99, describing it straightforwardly as a re-assertion of state power in Southern Darfur.[250] Yet the dynamics of counter-insurgency violence in the aftermath of the rebellion were characterized by an interaction between state and local elite agendas and interests. Rather than simply an episode of violence between colonizer and colonized, the rebellion and its aftermath also reflected local inter-group rivalry.

Nonetheless, the counter-insurgency of 1921-2 was also a key moment of state formation in southern Darfur: the spectacle and theatre of raid and execution asserted the coercive capacity of state power. Perhaps this event was the high water

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[248] For a useful outline account of the rising and its aftermath see H.A. Ibrahim, 'Mahdist risings against the Condominium Government in the Sudan, 1900-1927', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 12 (1979), pp. 458-463; Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 120-1. For other accounts of the violence of colonial 'pacification', see J.Willis, 'Violence, authority, and the state in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan.', **Historical Journal.**, 46 (2003), pp. 89-114; D. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford, 1997).

[249] Daly gives a useful summary of the rebellion's causes, but does not place these in a more general discussion of administrative practice in Darfur. *Sorrow*, p. 121.

[250] Ibrahim, 'Mahdist', p. 463.

mark of what Nugent might term the early colonial 'coercive social contract' between state and subjects, where 'the right to govern is predicated on the capacity of the rulers to render intolerable the lives of their subjects'.[251] Yet the violence of the patrol was also in a sense an illusory performance. The power it projected was the temporary product of a particular set of circumstances, and certainly not the basis for establishing an effective, durable local administration. Furthermore, while the technologies of military power used by the British were new, this chapter also situates 'Patrol 99' within a deeper history of state violence in Darfur. Large-scale livestock raids on communities at the peripheries of the state which refused to pay taxation had been a familiar tactic of the Sultans. The British also (consciously or otherwise) replicated the Sultans' tactic of making a gruesome public spectacle of vanquished enemies at the spatial centres of state authority. Both Sultans and colonial rulers used similar methods to assert the state's capacity to absorb and nullify 'peripheral' centrifugal political energies.

Finally, the chapter adds complexity to existing views of the impact of the Nyala rising on administrative policy. Daly has noted correctly that this costly outbreak of rebellion fed into a trend of thought among colonial policy-makers which increasingly emphasised the importance of ruling through and with established local elites.[252] These men, the chiefs of local 'tribes', were seen to be effective allies in the aftermath of the rebellion. But while on the one hand colonial officials attempted to rule more 'indirectly', they also set up a new administrative position in Southern Darfur (the ADC Baggara) in order to gain more effective knowledge of and influence over local affairs. This expresses the fundamental uncertainties embedded in the colonial policy of Indirect Rule, or 'Native Administration' as it was termed in Sudan. The Nyala rising was a response to increasing governmental interventions in Darfur's southern peripheries. Yet the government's reaction was to increase its interventions in that same region, first through violence, then through more intense local administration. This was because the Nyala rising was understood to be not just a failure of policy: it was crucially a failure of knowledge and effective surveillance. In practice, the state had already been working with members of local

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[251] P. Nugent, 'States and social contracts in Africa', *New Left Review*, 63 (2010), p. 43.
[252] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 122.

elites: but it had failed to grasp the intricacies of local politics that lay behind these alliances. Fuller, more reliable knowledge of local conditions was therefore required. And, for the colonial state, better knowledge could only be acquired by closer, even intimate, administration.

1. State violence under the Sultans

As already suggested, in some ways the colonial government reproduced the practices of the Darfur Sultanate in its responses to rebellion. State violence was central to the political dynamics of the Darfur Sultanate: this was a state which was ready to use coercion against its subjects as well as its rivals. Violence characterised efforts to expand the reach of the Sultan's authority as well as to assert control of loosely governed peripheries, and was also an expression of competition within the Keira dynasty itself. Internally, the sultans regularly sent war expeditions against nomads who refused to acknowledge the authority of the sultans, especially the Rizeigat and Bani Halba in southern Darfur, but also the Ereigat and Mahamid camel nomads of northern Darfur. When the Baggara did not pay tribute to the sultans, state raids acquired the cattle that had been expected by violent means. After the Nyala rising, the British would use the same tactics.[253]

In the assertion of state power against those who disputed the state's authority, sultans were also very ready to use the impact of spectacles of public execution to assert their power. When rival princes tried to rebel against the young sultan Muhammad al-Fadl in 1830, sixty of them were executed in a field just outside al-Fashir, afterwards known as *qoz al-sittin*, 'the field of the sixty'.[254] Similar tactics could be directed against recalcitrant peripheral rebels. In the late eighteenth century, seven Ereigat chiefs were executed in the Sultan's presence in the market square in El Fasher.[255] Importantly, these capital punishments were enacted at the centre of the state's authority, asserting the state's right to exert ultimate control over the life of its subjects. The Sultans also sometimes brought those found guilty

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[253] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, pp. 81-2.
[254] Ibid, p. 60.
[255] Ibid., p. 82.

of murder by their *shartays* to Fasher where they were beaten to death or (under Ali Dinar) hanged .[256] When Ali Dinar finally defeated Mahdist rebels in 1909, the heads of his defeated enemies were displayed in the market at El Fasher.[257] The British also replicated these strategies in their response to the 1921 rising.

2. 'Far from Fasher': government interventions in Darfur's southern 'periphery'

The Nyala rising of 1921 was led by a self-proclaimed prophet, a Masalati named Abdallahi al-Sihayni, proclaiming the coming of the Mahdi. He gathered the support of an estimated five to six thousand participants, thought by the administration mainly to have been drawn from the Fellata and Masalit of southern Darfur. On 26 September, the rebels attacked Nyala, the administrative centre of Southern Darfur District: McNeill, and the district Veterinary Officer, were both killed. The government was saved from utter humiliation by the arrival of a military relief column just in time to reverse the rebellion's advance.[258]

The rising became a key moment in the historical memory of the communities of Southern Darfur. The DC of the district in 1942, Wordsworth, wrote:

> To the people of Southern Darfur the Nyala Rising marks an epoch. Dates are fixed, births recorded, ages estimated by the year of El Suheini. Similarly tradition will long preserve the record of the *Fiki's* route and encampments. The season of the year ensured water being found in all the *rahads*, and those on which the multitude encamped are now referred to as *Rahad el Derawish*.[259]

But the rising was also a traumatic episode for the British administration, and acquired semi-mythical status among the official community: re-tellings of the events of 1921 allowed several, usually repressed, colonial neuroses to be expressed.

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[256] Ibid., p. 215.
[257] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 93.
[258] Ibid., p. 121.
[259] Wordsworth, DC Southern Darfur, Notes on the Nyala Rising, 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.

Wordsworth's detailed account of events, researched in Southern Darfur in the 1940s, preserves an image of McNeill going down in a crowd, fighting to the last, but simply overwhelmed by the numbers of the attackers. His body was said to have been found 'to have two spear wounds one in the side of the head and one in the stomach or lower ribs. He was lying on his back with his arms outstretched, and there was an empty revolver in his pocket.'[260] As Daly has noticed, there is something reminiscent of the Gordon myth in this representation of McNeill's fate, and a reminder of how imperial power was feared to be constantly on the verge of being overwhelmed by the forces of imagined 'savagery' on every side.[261]

The revolt drew on discontent with the administration that arose from direct state interventions into the affairs of societies in southern Darfur that had previously been on the peripheries of pre-colonial state power. Daly emphasises the British tendency in official reports, particularly those written for or by the central administration, to blame the rising on fanaticism, rather than on the discontent caused by the impact of government administration in the province.[262] However, correspondence from the provincial administration suggests that local officials understood all too well the government's part in provoking rebellion.

Administration in the early years of British rule was as contradictory and conflicted as it would be throughout the colonial period. On the one hand, remote Darfur, with its apparently well-established chiefs, served as a laboratory for the cost-saving policy of 'Native Administration', which would later be applied across the whole of Sudan.[263] Officials granted local chiefs often unspecified and unregulated 'customary' judicial powers; they gave them robes of honour as signs of the favour in which they stood with the government.[264] In the early colonial years in particular, state institutions barely existed in Darfur. Yet administrators also readily intervened in local boundary disputes and chieftaincy politics, dismissing and appointing chiefs

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[260] Ibid.
[261] M.W. Daly, *British Administration and the Northern Sudan, 1917-1924* (Leiden, 1980), p. 89.
[262] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 121.
[263] Wingate, Note on 'Memorandum concerning the Administrative policy to be followed in Darfur in the Immediate Future' n.d. (c. September 1915), SAD 127/7. See also Daly's discussion of administrative policy in *Sorrow*, pp. 117-118.
[264] Dupuis to Civil Secretary, 12 Jan. 1924, NRO CIVSEC (1)66/10/96.

with few qualms. In the person of the touring Inspector and, later, District Commissioner, always a mobile force in local politics, state power flowed in 'arterial' fashion: not through a well-developed capillary network, implying a universal, constant presence, but rather along relatively narrow and concentrated channels, formed by the movements of the individual official.[265] The state attempted to manifest its authority in a highly personalised and unstructured manner. And when subjects did not comply with colonial directives, individual administrators were sometimes ready to use crushing punitive force against local communities. In the early years of British rule, administrators were usually also military officers, and did not distance themselves from the military technologies of colonial power. The well-documented patrol of 1922 was not the first time that military force had been employed as an administrative tool in Southern Darfur. The failure of the Beni Halba to pay the government for the cattle they had looted during the invasion of 1916 led to a crushing military patrol in their *dar* and the confiscation of 6500 cattle in 1918. The DC, Gillan, remarked:

> the seizure of their cattle, added to the ravages of disease has seriously crippled them. … I do not for a moment suggest that in view of their many crimes it has not been richly deserved. I hope … it will also be marked and inwardly digested by the other tribes of Darfur.[266]

In the same year, a prisoner escaped from custody, and was sheltered by villagers in the Jebel Marra mountains. Gillan saw this as 'an excellent opportunity to inflict a sharp lesson on those somewhat turbulent people'. He burnt all three villages in the area where the prisoner was reported to be held. Approaching the last of these villages, 'the people were seen to be fleeing and, as they refused to stop, fire was opened on them, unfortunately with no results, owing to long range'.[267] By such actions the colonial state demonstrated that it was a violent and sometimes predatory force in local life from the outset, and this, *contra* Gillan's own view, was perhaps one of the factors which made a major rebellion more likely.

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[265] Cooper, 'Connection', p.1533.
[266] Gillan, 'Note on Beni Halba patrol', 2 Apr. 1918, SAD 723/3.
[267] Gillan, Report to Governor re tour in Jebel Marra, 28 Mar. 1918, SAD 723/3/2.

More specifically, government demands for taxation were plainly at the heart of the resentments that led to rebellion in Southern Darfur. McNeill was in part personally blamed by central administration for the rising because he had moved too quickly towards imposing individual taxation, and away from 'tribal' tribute. The assessment of taxation on an individual basis, carried out by employees of the state, was a more invasive process than the tendency of the Sultans to rely on chiefs to gather collective tribute. This may have been particularly resented at a time of devastating cattle plague.[268] However, it may have been less the move to a more 'modern', individualised form of taxation that was resented, than the particular manner in which the state made its demands. Wordsworth's research in the 1940s found that the *muawin* (a subordinate colonial official) of Southern Darfur had tied up some of the *omdas* of the Masalit during tax assessment and even publicly flogged them for bringing in insufficient revenue. The same *muawin* was also known for taking women in every village he visited, before he even visited the village headman. It was said that the rebels called out his name in the course of the rising.[269] While this seems to fit with the broader tendency for British officials to blame their 'native' subordinates for bringing the government into dispute, it is also worth noting that the offices of the *muawins* were the buildings in Nyala that were burnt down by the rebels.[270] This provides an important reminder that local imaginings of the state were by no means simply created from interactions between British officials and local people: lower level state employees could also be crucial in these processes. Similar problems were reported in Western Darfur, where unrest was also visible in late 1921: one village there attacked an *ushur* board sent out to assess taxation, injuring three of its members.[271] Savile later acknowledged that in some areas of Zalingei, taxation demands exceeded the total crops of villages. Once more, the district *muawin* saw this as proof of 'excellence of his own administrative capacity', holding the apparently common (and perhaps not entirely mistaken) belief that bringing in more revenue opened up opportunities for promotion.[272] As under previous regimes,

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[268] Savile, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 30 Nov. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[269] Wordsworth, DC Southern Darfur District, 'Notes on Nyala Rising', 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.
[270] *Moawin* Nyala to Governor, 27 Sept. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
[271] OC Patrol 99 to Governor Darfur, 2 Dec. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[272] Savile to Civil Secretary, 30 Nov. 1922, ibid.

predatory demands for revenue created widespread discontent on which millenarian leadership could draw.

Yet while the rising was caused by government interventions in the periphery, it also demonstrated the limits of the local state's knowledge of and control over these same areas. Although inspectors moved around their districts, they did not possess deep local knowledge: for this they depended on local intermediaries. Once more, officials drew attention to McNeill's personal failings in this area. McNeill was thought to have made insufficient contact with those who participated in the rising while he was on trek, and had not grasped the depth of their grievances. Later accounts suggested it was his refusal to acknowledge this failure which prevented him asking for help until it was too late.[273] Correspondence from him to the Governor of Darfur before the rising seems to indicate growing paranoia that stemmed from a sense of isolation:

> I have been quite unable to get definite news of this man. It is so strange that now I fear there is a general conspiracy, and that even those in the town who pretend to be going to fight desperately and scoff at the slightest danger must know it... I regret I am depressed but you need have no fear that everyone inside this fortification will do their utmost.[274]

But McNeill's isolation and depression was more than the manifestation of personal neuroses: it also reflected the weak spatial and institutional presence of the state on its peripheries. Nyala was the local outpost of urban, colonial space in the midst of a vast, unknown, rural, 'native' space. Attempts made by McNeill and other personnel of the local state to penetrate this rural space and assert their authority in the course of treks and tax assessments, had resulted in an attempt led from the 'periphery' to overwhelm and absorb the isolated local centre of colonial power. In the course of the attack, the rebels were remembered to have taunted the police thus: 'You slaves

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[273] Wordsworth, DC Southern Darfur District, 'Notes on Nyala Rising', 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.
[274] McNeill, DC SDD to Governor Darfur 23 Sept. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.

of the Turks, where will you drink tonight? It is far from Fasher!'[275] The rebels well knew that the state was weak and isolated outside of its own core territories. And this isolation had resulted in McNeill actually becoming ever more dependent on local allies, a dependence which in itself also contributed to the outbreak of rebellion.

3. The 'quicksand' of local politics

Given the value of local knowledge to largely ignorant colonial administrators, those who provided versions of that knowledge could acquire great influence with local representatives of the state. Thus local elites also contributed to the very formation of the local state, and indeed moulded it to suit their own personal interests. Even in the earliest years of British rule, when administration was at its most unstructured and coercive, local elites contracted with colonial power. It was easier for local actors to understand and manage the state, than it was for the state to understand and manage local actors. After all, local elites had, often over a long period of time preceding the British arrival, gained experienced in managing the interventions of the state in local politics. The British were the new *hakuma*, but their demand for local knowledge, and indeed their reliance on local intermediaries in the creation of state authority, was similar to that of previous governments in the region.

The influence of local elites over individual British officials often had crucial effects on the direction of policy decisions. For instance, the very small Turrti section of the Meidob had close relations with the family of the old *magdum* of the north. The first inspector of Northern Darfur, Sarsfield-Hall, was persuaded by the future *magdum* to give the section independence in 1917. This decision was seen later as ludicrous and obviously made on the basis of personal relationships with interested, partial intermediaries, not reliable local knowledge. A later DC in the district noted 'I doubt if Sarsfield-Hall realised the Turrti only numbered around 20.'[276]

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[275] Wordsworth, DC Southern Darfur District, 'Notes on Nyala Rising', 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.
[276] Arkell note on Jebel Meidob, 9 July 1928, NRO CIVSEC (1) 66/6/43.

But officials could sometimes be well aware of the potential for their authority to be manipulated by local interests. McNeill was frank about this:

> every *nazir* and *omda* is guilty of slavery offences, of bribery, of misappropriation of property, of extortion etc etc that it is impossible to gloss over them if a determined faction wish to bring them to light. South Darfur is quicksand.[277]

The metaphor is striking: the state sucked into the dynamics of intense local competition, trying to erect its authority on shifting ground. McNeill's comment also suggests that the colonial rules of legality, often bypassed by chiefs in daily practice, could also be a resource for local actors to draw upon. This was not necessarily a novelty: complaints against chiefly *zulm* (oppression) had a long heritage in Darfur. Nonetheless, the application of anti-slavery laws, and legalistic colonial norms expanded the repertoire of protest. Representatives of the early colonial state were uncertain as to how far 'the rules' should be applied, and where the limits of acceptable chiefly behaviour lay. This uncertainty was expressed by McNeill as the feeling of being caught in 'quicksand'. Legal norms were not necessarily a helpful guide to action. McNeill's own tendency was to apply them too thoroughly, a tendency which eventually contributed to the outbreak of the Nyala rising.

McNeill was pushed by one of his most important local allies towards taking action against chiefs who might otherwise have stood against rebellion. Melik Mustafa Galgham was a government assessor at Nyala, and previously an official in the Ali Dinar regime at El Fasher. He was one of the many linkages the British regime preserved with the Ali Dinar years, trusted for his knowledge of the people, serving as 'McNeill's chief native adviser' but later perceived to have 'served too many Governments' and to be 'feathering his own nest'. He consistently underplayed the threat of rebellion, which was later interpreted as suggesting his covert support for its success. In Wordsworth's account Mustafa Galgham was represented as the epitome of the 'lying native': 'weaving the silken web of oriental tact, preferring the words Mr McNeill best liked to hear, most wanted to believe'. Most importantly

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[277] McNeill Inspector SDD to Governor Darfur, 8 Apr. 1921 NRO CIVSEC (1) 16/2/4.

Galgham had informed on many of the local leaders of Southern Darfur to McNeill, pointing out their failure to adhere to colonial legal norms, which resulted in the imprisonment of several of these men. In particular, Melik Dud, the most authoritative figure among the Masalit of Southern Darfur, was in gaol at the time of the rising. The readiness of the Masalit to join the rebellion was later seen to have been facilitated by Melik Dud's absence from his people.[278]

The rising fostered a movement in official thinking towards the idea of closer alliance with chiefs like Melik Dud. Yet the causes and course of the rising should also have raised questions about the reliability of chiefly elites as effective allies, questions which seem to have been ignored in official discourse. Particularly close allegiances with individual chiefs might draw the administration into taking biased positions in local disputes. McNeill took a partial position in inter-group politics between the Habbania and Masalit in Southern Darfur, which was a crucial factor in causing the rebellion. Contest between the Shibool and Riafa sections of the Habbania over the *nazirate* of the tribe had been resolved in the Riafa section's favour, and in 1920, Mahmud Abu Saad had been reappointed as *nazir* by McNeill.[279] Mahmud now exploited McNeill's support to influence a ruling on the location of the boundary between Dar Habbania and the lands of the Masalit who lived in Southern Darfur. McNeill fixed the boundary at what he believed to be the 'traditional' line of division along the Wadi Khaddai, a key watering point. However, Masalit also cultivated south of the Wadi. By defining all land south of the *wadi* as part of Dar Habbania, McNeill gave Habbania elites the opportunity to collect 'customary' dues from Masalit who had almost certainly never paid these before. It is entirely possible that this was one instance of the colonial government converting secondary, seasonal grazing rights of (in this case Habbania) pastoralists into dominant rights of tribal ownership over land which another group - here the Masalit - held to be theirs.[280] Many of the rebels interrogated by officers after the rising, mentioned the boundary issue as a major grievance, one suggesting that it

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[278] Wordsworth, DC SDD, 'Notes on Nyala Rising', 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.
[279] Willis, Assistant Director of Intelligence to Governor Darfur, 17 May 1920, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A)54/3/12.
[280] For more on this, see Chapter 6.

was the chief reason for Masalit involvement in the revolt.[281] Colonial officials would later acknowledge that *wadis* were bad places to mark out boundaries 'since villages tend to cultivate both sides of a *Wadi*. This involves difficulties in collecting cultivation and other dues.'[282] But this crude ethnicisation of privileged rights over scarce, well-watered land was one manifestation of the early colonial state's enthusiasm for establishing rigid boundaries between peoples even in zones of previously long-standing interaction. It also demonstrated the perils of overly close relationships between officials and individual chiefs.

Moreover, several chiefs could not provide effective support to the government during the course of the rebellion itself. When considering sending for reinforcements led by Adam Tow, a Bergid chief, McNeill admitted that 'I fear more possible enemies - one cannot depend on these people at all''.[283] The chiefs of the Messeria and Birgid in Southern Darfur eventually did send troops to assist in the defence of Nyala, and all 'friendlies' were given red bands to wear to 'distinguish them from the enemy' - but in the course of the battle, Messeria and Bergid friendlies removed these bands, and escaped the conflict. Only 30 out of an initial 370 remained to fight the day.[284] The dramatically visible removal of the bands suggested how unreliable and shallow colonial strategies of identifying and labeling allies actually were: 'distinguishing' friends from enemies depended on reliable knowledge and relationships between state and society that did not actually exist. The refusal of the 'friendlies' to stick out the conflict also reflected the limited authority that chiefs actually wielded over their men. Even if personally loyal to the government, chiefs could not necessarily deliver the reliable military support the state demanded in such circumstances.

It is also important to note that some of the most prominent figures of the rebellion were ambitious and/or frustrated players in chieftaincy politics, marginalised by the state. Once more, this suggests a significant continuity with earlier rebellions that

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[281] Savile, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 30 Jan. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.

[282] Assistant Resident Dar Masalit, Report on Darfur-Dar Masalit boundary, 2 Apr. 1932, NRO 2. Darfur, Dar Masalit, 6/1/1.

[283] McNeill to Governor Darfur, 23 Sept. 1921, SAD 727/5.

[284] Burgess, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 22 Feb. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/2.

had also drawn on the discontent of those who had been the losers in state interventions into local politics. One of the ringleaders was a deposed ex-chief of the Ibba Fellata, who had been influential in the days of Ali Dinar. But by and large the ringleaders were also said to be 'young and vigorous' – the rising perhaps drew on generational tensions, with younger men asserting their interests against an entrenched powerful elite of older men, dependent on their allegiance with government for their authority.[285] The rebels appointed the son of one of the established Massalit leaders, Ibrahim Wad Abukr Abdel Rahman, as 'Sultan', with the intention of replacing his father.[286] The factionalism of chieftaincy politics meant that within any community there were some prominent men with a stake in the colonial order, and others without.

In fact the rising provided a powerful demonstration of the colonial state's dependence on its Sudanese employees, who were much more closely tied to the colonial order than any hurriedly assembled 'friendlies.' The eventual victory was led by a Sudanese officer, El Yuzbashi Bilal Effendi Rizk, who commanded a relief column which arrived at Nyala in time to put down the rebellion, and who was reported as a hero in the British press.[287] And it was the perceived heroism of 'native' policemen, soldiers, and even their wives, that prevented further catastrophe: 'each man loading and firing with grim determination, till his rifle barrel boiled, the police women 'luluing' in the background, nearly bursting their lungs. Some five or six of the women came and stood in the firing line.'[288] This was, finally, a victory for the state, but it also exposed the very limited contribution of British officials to the manpower of that state.

4. Effects of the rising on government policy

So while chiefs were perceived as important guardians of social order by colonial administrators, chieftaincy politics was also one of the motors behind the rebellion.

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[285] DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 2 Feb. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/2.
[286] Political Officer Patrol 99 to Governor Darfur, 1 Feb. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
[287] Extract from Al Ahram, 28 Oct. 1921, mentioning reports in the British press, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/2.
[288] Wordsworth, DC Southern Darfur District, 'Notes on Nyala Rising', 1942, NRO Darfur 1/19A/102.

Yet despite the dangers of over-reliance on individual allies, the overall official perception that emerged from the rebellion was that the state needed to be more closely aligned with *strong* local authorities, who could provide effective support to the government. The Civil Secretary noted (rather over-simplistically) in missives to the Governor General's office after the rising that 'practically every tribal *sheikh* in the district (excepting those of the Messalit and Fellata)… acted loyally and gave active assistance to the Government'.[289] Investigations among the Massalit suggested that 'the poorer people joined the *fiki* but the *omdas* did not'.[290] Chiefs also needed to be supported to exert authority over their people. Support for the rising had come from areas in Southern Darfur 'where the malcontents and ne'er do wells of many tribes were collected among three badly controlled and fanatic tribes - the Gimr, Messalat and Fellata'.[291] One of the two Fellata *nazirs* was thought to have had 'no hold whatever over his *nas*'.[292]

The rising also reinforced British assumptions that colonial subjects should be contained within clearly bounded and controlled tribal units. The most significant source of support for the rising was thought to be ex-slaves of the Habbania, who were now concentrated in the 'black' area around Kalaka, where the Masalit were also at their most numerous. By this count, it was not thought to be the Masalit proper who were the dominant majority among the rebels, but rather 'detribalized persons', 'submitting to no proper control'. Many of these rebels lived in villages in the border zone between Dar Habbania and Dar Fellata and they gathered at Um Bellula, a lake on the borders of Fellata and Habbania country. And the rebels moved along the boundaries between different chiefdoms: a later DC suggested 'it almost looks as if the *Fiki* had an insight into the value of running the boundary fence so that all could disown him'. When Fellata and Fur chiefs were asked whether the *faqih* had been in their territory they each claimed that he had been in the territory of the other.[293] The lesson was plain: the rebellion had gained energy in spaces that were at the peripheries even of local systems of authority. Such

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[289] Civil Secretary to Private Secretary, 11 Mar. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.
[290] DC SDD to Governor, 24 Jan 1922, ibid.
[291] Ibid.
[292] ADC Political Officer Patrol 99 to Governor Darfur, 1 Feb. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/2.
[293] Report on the Nyala Rising, Orlebar papers (date unknown), SAD 739/13/26.

peripheries had to be more effectively controlled: a lack of tribal discipline was the greatest danger colonial government faced.

Yet quite how tribal discipline should be enforced remained an unresolved conundrum that dogged British policy throughout the years of 'Native Administration.' As Daly suggests, officials now also realized that despite the official reliance on chiefs from the outset of their occupation, state interventions in Southern Darfur had actually amounted to a system of direct rule, perceived now to be overly intrusive.[294] But low-level disturbances in Dar Rizeigat in 1921, where discontented *omdas* had intercepted the movement of tribute to Nyala, were also seen to have been the result of leaving Ibrahim Musa, *nazir* of the Rizeigat, too much to his own devices.[295] There were no simple lessons to be drawn on how exactly order should be maintained.

As a result, policy changes after 1921 were not wholly consistent. At one level there was an obvious turn towards 'Native Administration', empowering chiefs in order that they wield effective control over their people. But the Nyala revolt also prompted moves towards greater government regulation of local affairs. After all, McNeill's failure had partially been his inability to build adequate relationships between the local state and subject societies, and his resultant inadequate understanding of local conditions. This inadequacy had to be resolved. One manifestation of this thinking was the creation of the position of the ADC Baggara, intended to provide closer supervision of the powerful Baggara chiefs. The ADC should 'hear and rectify grievances' against Ibrahim Musa in particular, and would have an important role in 'restoring confidence and contentment and pacifying the country'.[296] Similarly, the occupation of Dar Masalit to enable closer surveillance of the Janus-faced Sultan Endoka was hurried along partly because of the events of 1921.[297] In essence, the main trend after 1922 was for chiefly and state authority to be more closely intertwined: chiefs were to be given increased judicial powers, yet these powers were to be defined and regulated by the state. The increased visibility

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[294] Daly, *Empire*, p. 283.
[295] DCSDD to Governor 21 Mar. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[296] Governor Darfur to Director of Intelligence, 28 Feb. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[297] Daly, *Sorrow*, p.121.

of colonial officials would also demonstrate the close links between chiefly and state authority.

Full pacification of the province was also thought to require an unparalleled expression of the coercive power of the colonial state. Officials believed that it was the perceived weakness of the government in Southern Darfur that had prompted rebels to believe that they could succeed in 1921: the garrison at Nyala had recently been withdrawn.[298] And the British were anxious about the defences of the province, particularly drawing attention to the exposed position of El Fasher, the centre of colonial power in Darfur, yet also 'a place almost impossible of defence'.[299] It is usual for accounts of British rule in Darfur to stress the very scant manpower devoted to the administration of the province.[300] However it is also critical to understand that in 1921-2 the might of the military technologies available to colonial government were put very directly on display: this was government as spectacle, putting on an exhibition of power. Daly alludes to 'large numbers of animals' being 'confiscated' by the large patrol that was sent out in 1921-2, but gives little sense of the real impact of this expedition, or the rather theatrical violence by which colonial authority was reasserted in Southern Darfur.[301] At this point, colonial government made clear its membership of a long lineage of state violence against recalcitrant subjects in Darfur, though utilizing terrifying new technologies to assert the reality of its power.

5. Patrol 99: showing the government's strength

Patrol 99 of the Western Arab Corps cut a line through Southern Darfur that devastated particular local economies and livelihoods in a ruthless manner. The key objective of the patrol (extremely euphemistically) was to 'reassure the people who were in a state of unrest'.[302] More directly, Savile, Governor of Darfur, wanted to demonstrate that 'the strength of the government is not to be gauged merely by

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[298]   Director of Intelligence to Civil Secretary and Governor, 27 Nov. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.
[299]   Nicholls, Acting Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 16 Oct. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
[300]   O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 299.
[301]   Daly, *Empire on the Nile* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 282.
[302]   OC Camel Company WAC to OC Darfur, Governor, 7 Oct. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.

forces at Nyala'.[303] Savile was trying to create, in the eyes of local subjects, a visible impression of fluid, mobile power. The patrol would show that the power of the government was not confined to the colonial space of Nyala: subjects were to see that the administration there was not as 'far from Fasher' as the rebels had believed. The peripheries were to be reminded of their subordination to the government. During the patrol rural societies saw that the new government was just as able to move among them as were the forces led by the old *magdums* of the south under the Sultanate, and was much more successful in asserting its superior power by the use of alien military technologies. Machine guns replaced the armed cavalry of the Sultanate as the primary demonstration of the government's mastery of military technology. Yet even this patrol, in all its display of coercive power, contributed further to the personalization of the local colonial state, as this section will demonstrate.

Savile's orders for the patrol stated that it should move with 'as much display of force as possible', warning the chief men in the various localities that they would be held responsible for any violence in their *dars*. The patrol would dispel any false rumours in circulation as to the fall of the government by explaining 'what had really happened at Nyala'.[304] Rumour itself was the enemy: government now attempted to control what its subjects would say about the rising. Savile had in mind a particularly draconian approach to the repression of unrest: firstly the patrol was to arrest all ringleaders, and recover Government arms and ammunition which had been taken by the rebels. But all cattle and horses held by both the leaders of the rising and the villages which had supported them were also to be confiscated. Moreover, he wanted the villages of all those who took part in the rising to be razed to the ground, as a 'reprisal for the burning of native quarters and *merkaz* offices at Nyala'. The patrol would also take whatever *durra* (sorghum) it required from 'implicated' villages, and Savile also suggested to the Civil Secretary that the burning of crops should be considered.[305] If the provincial administration had its way, a massive spectacle of colonial violence was to be enacted. There was to be no pretence at determining individual culpability, this was rather to be collective

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303   Governor Darfur to Director of Intelligence, 28 Feb. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
304   OC Camel Company WAC to OC Darfur, Governor, 7 Oct. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
305   Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 17 Nov. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.

punishment on a grand scale. The Civil Secretary placed some restraints on the remit of the patrol: no crops were to be burnt and 'as far as possible' only the houses of ringleaders should be burnt down.[306] But this left full room for the patrol to confiscate the entire animal holdings of implicated villages. Distinctions between innocent and guilty were irrelevant in this context. The use of collective punishment and the raiding of large numbers of animals of course also reproduced the practices of the Darfur Sultanate itself.

While the patrol had its most dramatic and punitive impact in Southern Darfur, the projection of force was executed throughout restless areas of the province. On the border between Zalingei and Southern Darfur, where one village had resisted attempts at taxation, the patrol rounded up fifty men after brief resistance, and the village was collectively fined £E100.[307] At Kebkebia in Northern Darfur, Bimbashi Craig gave 'a demonstration ride... in the Rolls Royce box car which he had with him. The demonstration created a great impression - a large number of the people locking themselves in their houses; and in general, has had a very good effect on the people.'[308] People here retreated to the privacy of the domestic sphere: home remained the last physical space from which the force of the *hakuma* could, for now, be excluded. Meanwhile, Sultan Endoka was also 'very impressed with the cars and machine gun, out of which they fired some sixty rounds of ammunition at a target as a demonstration for the Sultan'. Chiefs were thus to be reminded of the government's power as well as their subjects. Sometimes, though, the effects of demonstrations of force were rather ambiguous: 'the people in Geneina and surrounding villages were also much impressed and interested in the cars, but showed no signs of fear'.[309]

In Southern Darfur the patrol involved two Mounted Infantry companies, three Camel Companies, one hundred Western Arab Corps infantry, seven Vickers Guns and two hundred friendlies: this was a patrol which seems to have encompassed at

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[306] Civil Secretary to Governor, 19 Nov. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.
[307] OC Kubbum Column to OC Patrol 99, 20 Dec. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/2/7. For patrol in Dar Zaghawa see OC Camel Coy Eastern Arab Corps to OC Darfur District 17 Jan. 1922, ibid.
[308] OC Darfur to Chief Staff Officer Egyptian Army, 23 Nov. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.
[309] OC Darfur to Chief Staff Officer Egyptian Army, 26 Nov. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.

least double the numbers of troops regularly stationed in Darfur.[310] The rebels regrouped after their initial defeat at Nyala and an estimated two to three thousand rebels attacked the patrol at the end of January 1922. This attack was repulsed by the overwhelming firepower of the patrol: this really was the end of the 1921-2 unrest.[311] Stories were told by Darfuris about the conduct of the patrol under the leadership of OC Grigg years after the event:

> There he stood with his little stick in his hand, no weapon, but only his stick and held us back till the machine guns had fired burrrrr. Then the Masalat fled and he lowered his stick and let us go after them.[312]

> I heard my father say that when Grigg Bey led the patrol against the Masalat their fikis wrote lists of the Koran on paper and washed off the ink and drenched a bull with it and then sent the bull to charge the Government army; but it was shot dead with a Maxim before ever it reached them![313]

The power of the machine gun is the dominant motif, including its capacity to overpower spiritual means of protection. But it also worth noting the control of this new technology (and indeed in this case also the 'friendly' troops) by the individual British officer, armed with only a stick. This apparently unequipped, weak individual enjoyed direct, personal control over mysterious new weapons and therefore over the bodies of local people.

Individual officers on the ground also determined how punishments would be enacted: the commander, 'owing to the difficulty of distinguishing between innocent and guilty held a meeting of leading men who asked him to fix an indemnity which he did at a thousand cattle and a hundred horses from the Masalit besides those already captured by the Patrol and two thousand cattle and three hundred horses from Fellata'. The leading men 'seemed satisfied and went to collect them'.[314]

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[310] OC Patrol 99 to Governor Darfur, 16 Nov. 1921; Press Release 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
[311] Political Officer Patrol 99 to Governor Darfur, 1 Feb. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)/122/1/1.
[312] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/79.
[313] Ibid., SAD 735/1/170.
[314] Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 18 Dec. 1921, NRO CIVSEC (1)122/1/1.

However by February 1922 8600 cattle had been captured in total by the patrol, many more than this initial indemnity.[315] The Masalit and Fellata, the two groups identified as the key supporters of the rising, were said to have lost almost everything they had after the depredations of the government patrol.[316] Interestingly though, the coercive extraction of animals went hand in hand with the attempt by the new DC of Southern Darfur, accompanying the patrol, to hear and respond to local grievances.[317]

In terms of forging local imaginations of the state in Southern Darfur, this was surely a significant moment. The patrol reminded people that beyond the visible, sometimes ineffectual representatives of the government (the inspector, the *muawin*, a few policemen), there was a force with the capacity for great physical destruction that usually remained invisible. The authority of the DC, who accompanied the patrol, and would later tour with a very different, much smaller retinue, was thus associated with this coercive power. Yet, at the same time, this experience also demonstrated the benefits of trying to resolve disputes with the local DC: if the individual authority of the DC could be flattered, and made real, then he would be less likely to call on the dangerous forces that stood behind him. In pursuing such a strategy, local subjects continued to create a highly personalized version of the local state. Already in the course of the patrol, such a strategy was used: in response to Masalit complaints made to the DC during the course of the patrol, presumably complaints which had never reached McNeill's ears, the government agreed to move the Masalit-Habbania boundary ten miles south of its present location. Subjects in Southern Darfur thus experienced the bi-polar character of the state, what the Nuer in southern Sudan would come to call the 'government of the left' (the useable civil institutions of the state, including the DC) and the 'government of the right' (the military which brought only death and destruction) in the course of a single patrol.[318]

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[315] Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 31 Dec. 1921, ibid.
[316] Savile, Governor Darfur to Director of Intelligence, 28 Feb. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[317] Savile, Governor Darfur to DCSDD, 4 Mar. 1922, ibid.
[318] Hutchinson, *Nuer*, p.110. Also cf. Lienhardt, p. 27.

6. Exhibiting ringleaders

The government also pursued the individuals that it believed to be responsible for leading the rebellion. This involved the administration discarding legal rules in favour of demonstrating its capacity to pursue and punish rebellious individuals. And once more, the profound knowledge deficit of the colonial state was exhibited in the dependence on local information to identify and find the 'ringleaders'. So, in a proclamation of 1921 which classed the ringleaders as 'outlaws', rewards were offered for their capture or killing: these would be payable upon the killers 'bringing the head of each man together with some persons known to the Government who can identify the head as that of the person for whose killing the reward is intended'.[319] The government's means of identifying dead ringleaders killed by people outside of its own circles thus also depended on those it judged to be reliable local intermediaries. This was a state which could not see.[320]

The British also very readily used the spectacular display of the corpses or heads of vanquished enemies in order to reinforce their authority. While the Sultans had enacted such displays in El Fasher, officials now used Nyala as the stage for such performances, representing the appearance of state penetration into the peripheries of the old Sultanate. Two ringleaders were killed by a force of 'friendlies' in January 1922, and were apparently 'thoroughly identified' before their heads were exposed on poles at the entrance to the Nyala police headquarters.[321] Ibrahim Abbakr, the man appointed by the rebels as their own Sultan of the Massalit, had suffered 'a large spear wound in the neck and head' in the course of his capture and died two weeks later.[322] His death provided yet another chance for the administration to put on a theatrical show: the day after, the Western Arab Corps paraded around Nyala, and then Ibrahim's body was carried on a broken *angarib* (rope bed) by four prisoners into the centre of the town, where it was 'publicly burnt before all the

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[319] Proclamation by Savile 11/12/21, NRO Darfur 1/1/4.
[320] This turn of phrase, inverting Scott's 'seeing like a state', was prompted by W. Zeller, 'Chiefs, policing, and vigilantes: "cleaning up" the Caprivi borderland of Namibia' in L. Buur and H.M. Kyed (eds.), *A New Dawn for Traditional Authorities? State Recognition and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York, 2007), p. 98.
[321] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 22 Jan. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.
[322] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 24 Jan. 1922, ibid.

Nyala inhabitants'.[323] *Faqih* Abdullahi's body (the leader of the rising) had also been disposed of in the same fashion, in order to 'prevent his possible exaltation into a 'saint' and his burial place being made a place of pilgrimage'. However on this second public burning, the DC came in for criticism from Savile who reminded him that Ibrahim Abbakr 'was not a religious leader or a Fiki… and unnecessarily to defile his corpse might very likely only serve to make a martyr of him and enrage his people'.[324] Nonetheless, the isolated DC, mindful of McNeill's example, clearly wanted to avoid any risk of understating his own personal power, regardless of the wishes of his superiors in distant El Fasher. Two years later, when one of the final ringleaders, Daw el Beit, was killed, his head was cut off and exhibited to 'the notables and people of Nyala' the same morning. Again, a degree of uncertainty over the man's identity had to be put to rest: 'many' of those who saw the head, 'including some who had known Daw el Beit in life, recognised the head as his. It was buried that day.' The effect of this gruesome spectacle was apparently to deepen 'the impression that the government is too strong to fight against'.[325]

But when those identified as leaders survived their capture, questions remained as how to deal with them, or whether they were quite who the government thought they were. One captured fugitive confidently declared to his captors: 'prove the least thing against me ... and I shall not complain if you hang me'.[326] The DC of Southern Darfur noted that four of the supposed ringleaders captured in February 1922 appeared 'certain to be acquitted if tried before a court as there is no evidence against them. All of them have been arrested on the information supplied by some leader... and in most cases this information has proved accurate.' But this information was mere hearsay, and thus not admissible. His solution was simple: 'As all of them are technically outside the law, there is no fear of doing any of them an injustice by keeping them gaoled. I suggest that they be kept in gaol indefinitely as political prisoners if adequate evidence cannot be obtained to try them on.'[327] Savile suggested rather that the men be tried under Section 93 of the Sudan Penal

[323]   DC SDD to Governor, 11 Feb. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/4.
[324]   Savile, Governor Darfur to DCSDD, 16 Feb. 1922, ibid.
[325]   ADC SDD to Governor, 7 Sept. 1924, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.
[326]   ADC SDD to Governor 17 Apr. 1922, ibid.
[327]   DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 7 Mar. 1922, ibid.

Code, for 'making war against the government' rather than having to be proved as ringleaders. He suggested evidence for this would be easy to obtain 'from some of their deluded followers who could be promised a free pardon'.[328] But two of the men were later released, having found to have been uninvolved in the rising at all.[329] The other two were sent to Fasher as political prisoners 'pending further developments'.[330] Their fate is unclear from the written record. Another supposed ringleader was shot whilst trying to escape but vexing questions remained about his identity. In the testimony of the police officers involved in the shooting, they claimed that after they shot the man they stood over his body and demanded he identified himself. Apparently he confirmed he was Adam el Gellabi, the fugitive they were hunting, just before he expired. When the *sheikh* of the local village was asked to identify the body, he initially claimed it was not Adam, but later changed his tune.[331] This was surely blundering around in the dark. But Savile claimed to be 'very glad Adam El Gellabi was shot' as it prevented the 'farce' of having 'no evidence whatever' against him.[332]

It is worth noting that the exhibition of the corpses or severed heads of the ringleaders of the rising was felt to be a powerful tactic, despite such exhibitions being visible only in Nyala. Administrators were perhaps assuming that news from Nyala would filter out into the surrounding villages, and that stories of the grisly fate of those daring to oppose the colonial state would gain in magnitude as they were repeated around the district. But these spectacles were also a very obvious claim about the dominance of colonial urban space over its rural peripheries, its capacity to absorb and overwhelm the political energy of these remote spaces. Moreover, the mass confiscation of cattle and the public display of defeated enemies, the patterns and strategies of colonial violence suggest an attempt to embody power and authority in a recognisable manner: the colonial state was (consciously or otherwise) masquerading as a pre-colonial African state. It was willing to discard the bureaucratic, legal norms that it claimed to govern by, in favour of arbitrary,

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[328] Savile, Governor Darfur to DC SDD, 19 Mar. 1922, ibid.
[329] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 29 Aug. 1922, ibid.
[330] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 15 June 1922, ibid.
[331] Statements of *Mulahiz* Abdulla Abu Zeid and *Onbashi* Gerinkeik Burham, 3 Apr. 1923, ibid.
[332] Savile, Governor Darfur to DCSDD, 14 Apr. 1923, ibid.

despotic action against its enemies that imitated the very regimes it had labeled barbaric. But by demonstrating the overwhelming capacity of the state's military technology, a new factor in the power balance of Darfur, the government also showed that the potential for concerted resistance to the demands of the state had been much reduced.

7. Chiefs and the counter-insurgency

The aftermath of the Nyala rising was a moment when most of the incumbent local elite in Southern Darfur decisively threw in their lot with the government: some of them were richly rewarded for this. But state imperatives and local politics continued to influence one another in the course of counter-insurgency as they had done in the outbreak of rebellion. Even at a time when colonial power was asserting its dominance in brutal and destructive fashion, opportunities continued to exist for local actors to access state power to advance local agendas and exploit opportunities for individual accumulation. And the government patrol relied on the knowledge and assistance of chiefly intermediaries to achieve its goals.

Most prominently, the Habbania continued to pursue their rivalry with the Massalit by means of participation in government counter-insurgency: the British here continued the strategies of the Turco-Egyptian regime in using local rivalries to assert the authority of the state. Yet elites also benefited materially from their participation in the patrol. Cattle taken from the Masalit and the Fellata were originally to be kept by the state, but having been captured in such large numbers and kept in overcrowded *zaribas* (thorn enclosures) with a high risk of disease, over 5000 of the animals were distributed on loan to the loyal *nazirs* as *amanat* (held in trust). However this turned out to be a permanent arrangement, and many of the chiefs simply did not pay for the cattle nor list them for taxation. Habbania men were the most active in the capture of Masalit cattle in the course of the raid. Their *Nazir* Mahmud Abu Saad brought many of the captured cattle to Nyala, but also 'swapped any good animals among the loot for inferior ones from their own

herds'.[333] Thus while the patrol devastated Fellata and Masalit economies, it also helped some of the wealthiest men of Southern Darfur to make up for their losses in the cattle plague of 1921. Silver and bronze medals were handed out to the chiefs who participated either in the defence of Nyala, or (more numerously) participated in the patrol. Abu Saad was one of those who received a silver medal, and while he was said to have helped himself personally to around 200 Masalit cattle, this clearly did not worry the government.[334]

Some chiefs were thus closely associated with the violent power of the patrol of 1921-2, both in the eyes of their own subjects and to rival neighbouring groups. This might have helped to cement the authority of these leading men. When troops arrived in Darfur, Ibrahim Musa and the *muawin* gathered together the *omdas*, *sheikhs* and people for a 'demonstration of the machine guns': the patrol would then 'make a tour in the Rizeigat country to show off the troops to the people'.[335] Ibrahim Musa, his authority up to then contested by sectional rivals, now became increasingly dominant in Rizeigat politics. As was the case with the authority of the DC, local people perhaps perceived the utility of accepting a chief's leadership in order to keep the military face of the government out of local affairs.

Chiefs also pursued individual political agendas in relation to the state's demand that the 'ringleaders' of the rebellion be produced. The dependence of the state on the local knowledge of these men in order to find the 'ringleaders' could easily be exploited. This was even true at the lowest levels of chiefly authority: a village *sheikh* who sent one of his villagers into the *nazir* of the Fellata in 1923 for participation in the 1922 rising was said to have done so in order to gain access to the man's wife.[336] Similarly it was noted that 'certain *Omdas* in Southern Darfur are in the habit of blackmailing some of their people under threat of denouncing them as having participated in last year's rising'.[337] Most strikingly, the Fellata nazir Abu Homeira had five so-called *fuqara* arrested in early 1922; but it turned out that these

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[333] Director of Intelligence to Governor, 19 Jan 1922, NRO Darfur 1/2/7.
[334] Savile, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 25 Oct. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/6.
[335] OC No 3 Company to OC Patrol 99, 1 Dec. 1921, ibid.
[336] DC SDD to Governor, 4 Aug. 1923, ibid.
[337] Savile, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 16 October 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1) 122/1/2.

men were all plotting to complain against Homeira to the government. Two of them were *omdas* from the Ikka section of the Fellata, rivals to Homeira's Ibba.[338]

But local elites also sometimes sheltered those targeted by the state for arrest, particularly sub-chiefs who had more distant relationships with and affiliation to the state. Before his capture, Adam el Gellabi had hidden in the Massalit village of Deleiba where 'all the people knew of (his) presence and they and all the people of the *omodia* together with their *omdas* and *sheikhs* swore not to divulge his presence to the Government'.[339] Adam was in fact the son of the local *omda,* and once he was killed, the *omda, wakil omda* and village *sheikh* were all heavily fined. Even the confiscation of all these men's property was not enough to cover the full amount of the fine: the DC wanted to impose a collective fine on the village to cover the rest of the amount.[340] Savile refused this request, claiming it implied a duty on private individuals to take action which would be 'contrary to all their traditions'. Collective punishment was then not always implemented: rather it was those who had a 'special and individual duty' in virtue of their 'official position' to report to government who bore the brunt of government punishment in this instance.[341] Government was signaling its expectation that its chiefly intermediaries would put government priorities ahead of their own local and kinship interests.

Where chiefs did assist government in the arrest of those believed to be ringleaders, they stood to gain material rewards and improved standing with the government. Nonetheless the fear of losing legitimacy among their subjects by handing popular suspects over meant that there were limits to how far they simply acted as agents of the 'state' – their position remained awkwardly balanced. The best example of these tensions is Melik Dud Murra of the Masalit, who had been in prison at the time of the rising. He was generally very useful to the state in the capture of ringleaders. The DC of Southern Darfur felt it most appropriate to use Masalit 'friendlies', organised by Melik Dud, to round up the outlaws as there was no risk of the humiliation of failure being attached to government troops this way: moreover 'surprise was

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[338] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 7 Mar. 1922, ibid.
[339] Statement of Mulahiz of police, Abdulla Abu Zeid, 3 Apr. 1923, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.
[340] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 20 May 1923, ibid.
[341] Savile, Governor Darfur to DCSDD, 30 May 1923, ibid.

essential as the rebels were reported to have horses… Uniforms were considered undesirable, and pace essential to make the proposed surprise effective.' The DC was delighted with the outcome: some of the supposed ringleaders were brought in, but even more significantly the friendlies had carried out 'what was practically a disciplined exhibition, with which any force of police or MI (Mounted Infantry) could be satisfied… they were fighting without government supervision of any kind, on behalf of the Government at considerable risk to themselves'.[342] More than anything else, this suggested what could be achieved by working with effective local leaders: 'exhibitions' could be put on by local elites at the fraction of the cost required by government patrols. By the later part of 1922, Dud Murra had been showered with rewards from government and his 'swollen head' had made him unpopular with the other chiefs of the region.[343] His co-leader of the Massalit, Tor Kusha, by contrast completely failed to arrest any of the leaders of the rising, 'probably owing to his fear of them' and claimed no knowledge of the preparations for the rebellion, a claim which his own followers disavowed. He was subsequently arrested and imprisoned in Nyala.[344]

But in 1924, it was clear that under Dud Murra's watch, two leading rebels were hiding among the Massalit with impunity. One of these, Mohammed Kurtal, had escaped whilst awaiting execution in Nyala prison in 1922, wriggling out of his handcuffs and removing the bars from the window of his gaol cell.[345] Since then, he had been on the run. The DC commented that 'if the outlaws were captured or killed the effect on the Massalit would be very beneficial, as both of them have great reputations… if they are left unmolested they will be a continual danger… Kurtal has the reputation of being a magician chiefly owing to his former spectacular escape from Nyala prison.' The DC suggested Dud Murra 'could easily have arrested or killed them, but feared to do so,' perhaps because of this popularity.[346] The fine line Melik Dud walked between losing support from either the government or his people was clear. Upon prompting from the government, an arrest expedition

[342] DCSDD to Governor, 2 Feb. 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1) 122/1/2.
[343] Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 25 Oct. 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/6.
[344] Inspector SDD to Governor, 13 Nov. 1921, NRO Darfur 1/1/3.
[345] DC SDD to Governor, 3 July 1922, NRO Darfur 1/1/5.
[346] DCSDD to Governor 24 Aug. 1924, ibid.

was performed by the Melik but 'the birds have flown, very likely on warning from Melik Dud himself. They were now living in two huts concealed in the bush, but appeared to have plenty of eatables and therefore must have been supplied by his friends.' Melik Dud was encouraged to push on by the appearance of a police *mulahiz* (inspector) at his village with four policemen. The *mulahiz* had no qualms about threatening Massalit villagers to provide information as to the whereabouts of the outlaws. Moreover the *mulahiz* swore an assembled band of fifty of Melik Dud's men, comprising four *omdas* and members of their families, 'that all were "for the Government" and that they would either kill or capture the outlaws or be killed by them'.[347] The success of the expedition prompted the government to grant rifles to Melik Dud and his *omdas*, and Melik Dud threw a big feast for all those involved. Melik Dud had therefore been pushed into a much less ambiguous relationship with government. The *mulahiz* was still remembered several years later as 'the Masalati's bogey man, the giant with his club Um Deldumana terrified them. A word picture of him brings a sickly unwilling smile to the King's [Dud's] countenance.'[348]

For most of the leading chiefs of Southern Darfur, the Nyala rising was a crucial moment in defining their alignment with the colonial state. Government responses to the rising also created opportunities to pursue private agendas of profit and political ambition. And in some cases the impact of the rising pushed chiefs off the tightrope they walked between the demands of government and the need to protect the interests of their people. The various strategies and responses used by chiefs in this context illustrate the complex and contradictory role that these men played as intermediaries. Chiefs were used as proxies of the state to provide military and intelligence support for counter-insurgency. They were more obviously linked to a violent, extractive state, and therefore more difficult for their people to resist. Yet chiefs, like officials too perhaps, could also in future keep the obvious threat of violent government intervention into local affairs at arm's length. Accepting chiefly authority was an unequal bargain, but a bargain nonetheless. And its terms were repeatedly renegotiated over time, as officials were used, as they had been before 1921, as the focus for protest against oppressive chiefs.

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[347] ADC SDD to Governor Darfur, 7 Sept. 1924, ibid.
[348] ADC Baggara to Governor, 5 Jan. 1927, NRO 2.D.Fasher 54/3/13.

8. Aftershock: the Zalingei rising, 1927

This was not however the end of rebellion in Darfur. Six years later, a smaller rising occurred, led by a *faqih* forecasting the coming of the Mahdi, and originating in the remote border area between southern Dar Masalit and Zalingei, a zone which Sultan Endoka of the Masalit continually struggled to exert control over throughout his reign. The majority of the *faqih's* followers however abandoned him even before confrontation with the military occurred, upon hearing rumours of the advance of government troops. The *faqih* himself was shot the same day by a police patrol.[349] The small scale of the rebellion, and the ease of its defeat, has led scholars to almost completely ignore it.[350] Yet the rising also sheds further light on the changing character of the colonial state, and the continued ambivalence of the relationship between local chiefs and the state.

The causes of the rising suggest continuities in the relationship between state and society since 1921, but also reflected growing state penetration into local societies in Western Darfur. This time, the physically invasive procedures of government delousing campaigns (which involved stripping and showering targets, particularly humiliating for women, and the destruction of spiritual charms) were thought to be a key motive for the rebellion.[351] Later it was heard that the *faqih* had in fact blamed relapsing fever on the government, and that only a rebellion would cure the disease.[352] The *faqih* was also said to have promised to end government taxation: 'with God's help, I shall have you relieved from government taxes this year' he said to Fur *sheikhs*.[353] Many Fur on the border with Dar Masalit regularly tried to cross into Dar Masalit at the time of tax assessment to avoid the higher rates payable in Zalingei, but were also apparently regularly captured and returned. Promises of loot (apparently money and clothes) at Zalingei, the centre of government culture in the district, may have been equally important: when one captured participant had been

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[349] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 'Report on the rising of El Fiki el Muhagir in January 1927', 10 Apr. 1927, NRO Darfur 1/23/126.
[350] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 107.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Cavendish, DC Zalingei to Governor Darfur, 'Report on Zalingei uprising', Sept.1927, NRO CIVSEC (1) 5/1/9.
[353] Statement by Abdullahi Bombro, 18 yr old Fur to Preliminary Investigation for Enquiry into the Zalingei Uprising, February 1922, ibid.

asked where he had been going with the *faqih*, he replied 'to eat Zalingei and Geneina'.[354] The centres of government power were clearly understood to be centres of new forms of wealth, wealth that could be appropriated and dispersed within the 'periphery.' Anywhere between 70 and 300 Fur, Masalit, Daju and Tama joined the rising: the official record is unclear. Again, the youth of participants was noted: there was a preponderance of 'unbearded boys' among the captives.[355]

The rebellion was once more a surprise to the government, suggesting the continued limits of government knowledge in peripheral border zones, and the unpredictable responses to sporadic government intervention: Grigg, now the Resident of Dar Masalit, had toured the border area shortly before the rising but had found no sign of trouble.[356] The recurrence of familiar motifs in the government response to the rebellion is striking: the bodies of those rebels who were killed were transported and publicly exposed next day in Zalingei. A company of the Western Arab Corps was sent with the DC of Zalingei to 'demonstrate the government's strength' in displays of 'field firing'.[357] Bence-Pembroke wrote to the ADC Zalingei that 'the spears and other weapons of the inhabitants of all implicated villages may, if you think fit, be collected and burnt in the presence of the villagers'.[358] On this occasion, however, there was a greater focus on punishing individual ordinary participants in the rebellion: there was no repeat of the general amnesty for participants that had followed the 1921 rising. Eighty 'participants' were now sentenced in court to imprisonment terms of between six months to ten years.[359] This was an attempt by the state to demonstrate an increased capacity to distinguish between individual loyalty and rebellion, and an apparently less arbitrary approach to punishment. Many of those imprisoned were 'to be employed making roads throughout Zalingei District in sight of their friends'.[360] So, once more, subjects were to see the results of disobedience. The state asserted the power to transform rebels into productive

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[354] Grigg, Resident Dar Masalit to Dupuis, 8 Feb. 1927; Governor to Civil Secretary, Report on uprising 10 Apr. 1927, ibid.
[355] DPMD March 1927, ibid.
[356] Grigg, Resident Dar Masalit to Dupuis, 8 Feb. 1927, ibid.
[357] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 'Report on the rising of El Fiki el Muhagir in January 1927', 10 Apr. 1927, NRO Darfur 1/23/126.
[358] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to ADC Zalingei, 9 Feb. 1927, ibid.
[359] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 'Report on the rising of El Fiki el Muhagir in January 1927', 10 Apr. 1927, ibid.
[360] Purves, Deputy Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 12 Feb. 1927, NRO CIVSEC (1) 5/1/9.

subjects: executions were unnecessary. Both the causes and responses to the rebellion thus reflected the growing intrusion of the state into the lives of individual subjects.

It is also interesting that despite the shift in policy towards the more consistent empowerment of chiefs from 1922, these men remained, in many cases, unreliable allies of the state. Sultan Endoka's attitude to the rising was 'equivocal' - he later failed to report the appearance of several of the ringleaders in Dar Masalit. However, in contrast, for his crucial role in reporting the rising, and following its movements with his own troops, Shartai Ali Bakheit in Zalingei was presented with £E30 and the King's Medal.[361] Lower levels of the chiefly hierarchy remained particularly unreliable. It was found that village level *sheikhs*, on the lowest rung of the administrative ladder, and with relatively little stake in the colonial order, paid no salary by the state, had either joined the rising or at least made no attempt to stop their people joining it. When the police arrived at Hilla Kabira village pursuing the *faqih*, according to the lead officer's later statement, the village *sheikhs* 'denied any knowledge of the *Fiki*, so I beat one of them, who after ten strokes, submitted that the *fiki* had left the village the night before with thirty followers'.[362] *Sheikhs* also made no attempt to arrest participants afterwards. Officials noted an 'apparently intentional omission to inform their *omdas* and the *merkaz*… As is usual in such cases they preferred to sit on the hedge and do nothing until they saw which way the wind was blowing.'[363] One chief had been reminded by a police officer that he was 'a *melik* under the *hakuma*' but this did nothing to encourage him to talk.[364] Several *sheikhs* who participated in the rising were given heavier sentences than the rank and file followers.[365] 'Native Administration' had not ensured that all levels of the chiefly hierarchy were equally aligned with the state: indeed the gulf in this respect between paramount chiefs and village *sheikhs* has persisted to the present day.[366]

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[361] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 'Report on the rising of El Fiki el Muhagir in January 1927', 10 Apr. 1927, NRO Darfur 1/23/126.

[362] Shawish Fadl Musa statement, 26 Jan. 1927, NRO CIVSEC (1) 5/1/9.

[363] Bence Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 'Report on the rising of El Fiki el Muhagir in January 1927', 10 Apr. 1927, NRO Darfur 1/23/126.

[364] Grigg, Resident Dar Masalit to Dupuis, 8 Feb. 1927, NRO CIVSEC (1) 5/1/9.

[365] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 18 Feb. 1927, NRO Darfur 1/23/126.

[366] C. Leonardi and M.A. Jalil, 'Traditional authority, local government and justice', in J. Ryle, J. Willis, S. Baldo, J.M. Jok (eds.), *The Sudan Handbook* (Oxford, 2011).

Conclusion

The events of the early colonial period suggest significant continuities with the pre-colonial period in both the causes of rebellion (centre-periphery conflict within Darfur) and the state's response to resistance (raiding cattle and exhibiting the bodies of defeated enemies). Nonetheless the 1921 and 1927 rebellions were caused by specific, novel forms of state intervention by the colonial administration: the creation of fixed tribal boundaries and invasive delousing procedures loom large in each case. And Patrol 99 'demonstrated' the theatrics of violence that marked the colonial state as a far more powerful enemy than the Sultans had been. But these events also reverberate down to the present day. Recent violence in Darfur has also been sparked by government restructurings of local authority and administrative boundaries. Moreover, the use of the inappropriately termed 'friendlies' by the colonial state was a use of proxies against rebellious subjects that is not so far removed from the arming of local militias by the Khartoum government in recent years. Finally, the most striking continuity is perhaps the complex interplay of local rivalries, conflicts and ambitions with state agendas of control and repression, in the patterns of state and non-state violence. This interplay is at the very heart of the recent crisis in Darfur.

The rebellions of 1921 and 1927 seem to have been focused primarily on local imbalances in power and wealth. The mention of 'eating' Geneina and Zalingei in 1927 is suggestive of a desire from the peripheries to consume the wealth of the government centres. But even as the rebellions aimed at destroying the authority of the local state and appropriating its wealth, many of the local elites continued to pursue strategies of coping with colonial authority that maintained the greatest possible freedom for them to access and use its power. Indeed it might be argued that in these earliest years of colonial rule, when the knowledge of the state in Darfur was at its lowest, it was particularly easy to influence administrators. And thus the very malleability of the early colonial state may have explained the willingness of local elites, by and large, to deal with the state and acknowledge its authority. The display of overwhelming military force in 1921-2 changed the equation somewhat: there were now clearly very practical reasons to acknowledge

state authority. But state agents continued to be malleable in the hands of their local allies: the continuities in this regard between the years before and after 1921 are perhaps more striking than the supposed shift from 'direct' to 'indirect' rule.

Chapter 3: 'Native Administration' in Darfur: performances of authority

> Who is the Government? ... You say the Government, the *mamur* says the government, even the meanest policeman says the government.
>
> Ibrahim Musa Madibbo, *nazir* of the Rizeigat to G.D. Lampen, ADC Baggara, 1928.[367]

Ibrahim Musa's insistence on wanting to know 'who is the government' is perhaps revealing of the personalisation of government authority in colonial Darfur. Lampen suggested Ibrahim had been puzzled by the shift from 'personal to impersonal rule', yet the opposite view might easily be argued: that the apparent existence of a formal hierarchy did little to control the arbitrary and independent behaviour of government employees at all levels. Chabal and Daloz have indeed suggested that institutions and bureaucracy in Africa in the colonial period (and since) were merely a shallow veneer of 'modern' state forms, and that the 'informal' and personal has persistently characterised authority in Africa.[368] Yet this chapter adds complexity to this view, drawing attention to the consistent interaction between the 'formal' and the 'informal' in the production of colonial authority in Darfur. It examines the political culture of 'Native Administration' in Darfur, focusing on the interlinked performances of officials, chiefs and ordinary people on the various stages of colonial authority.

For example, the importance of personal relationships between DCs and chiefs in the practice of colonial authority, at first appears to be evidence to support Chabal and Daloz's view. Officials often turned a blind eye to the abuses of chiefs rather than undermine the chief's personal authority. Legal norms were not the priority here. Yet this chapter argues that chieftaincy itself, often assumed to be a role which preserved patrimonial practices of authority, was itself a highly institutionalised,

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[367] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/123.
[368] Chabal and Daloz, *Works*, p.12. See also J.L. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London, 1993).

formalised role.[369] Institutionalisation, in this context, refers to the establishment of repetitive and predictable behaviour patterns (conventions and norms) as well as the creation of bureaucratic structures. Chiefs had to ensure they could perform an impression of detached superiority from their subjects, whilst simultaneously projecting the appearance of intimate knowledge of their people: their intermediary position demanded this apparently contradictory performance for the benefit of the local official. Repetitive tropes in the conversations between chiefs and officials indicate calculated performances by chiefs that were intended to satisfy official expectations, and the existence of well-understood, formal norms.

More explicitly and publicly theatrical encounters, especially the 'tribal gathering', were even scripted in advance, with chiefs, officials, and ordinary people acting out pre-assigned parts. Yet, the scripts for such events were not exclusively authored from above: gatherings, as well as being demonstrations of colonial order, could also be settings for planned protest from below. Nor were scripts set from above always adhered to from below. The creation of colonial authority was thus a negotiated, contested process, continuously engaging both 'formal' and 'informal' registers of authority, and marked by sometimes intense contact between elites and ordinary subjects. Moreover, the performances which produced colonial authority were marked by a continued uncertainty among British officials and their chiefly clients (if experienced to rather differing degrees) over to what extent they should assert distance from or intimacy with local societies. The coloniser/colonised boundary was a zone of exchange as well a line of division: colonial government was inserted into historically rooted interactions and negotiations between state and society, within which it appeared at once familiar and alien.

1. Tribal gatherings: 'really wonderful panoramas'?

Cannadine has suggested the importance of a British colonial obsession with 'ornamentalising' their imperial possessions, reproducing in idealised form the

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[369] This echoes Erdmann and Engel's point that 'informality and formality are intimately linked to each other in various ways and by varying degrees; and this particular mix becomes institutionalised'. See G. Erdmann and U. Engel, 'Neopatrimonialism revisited – beyond a catch-all concept', GIGA Working Paper 16 (Hamburg, 2006), p. 19.

status hierarchies of Britain within colonial societies. He argues that British visions of their empire were as much about seeking out points of similarity between British and colonized societies, as they were about the projection of difference and 'otherness'. Cannadine also emphasises the 'observation of status similarities' between colonial elites and the local rulers on whom they depended, and the 'cultivation of affinities' between these elite men, especially visible in the privileged place of local elites in the grand ceremony of imperial rituals and pageantry.[370] The 'tribal gatherings' of colonial Darfur, where officials and chiefs watched the (mostly) orderly parades of their subjects, and where races and competitions were run, might be understood in such a light. Such gatherings were also very common in neighbouring Kordofan. The Governor of this province explained their purpose thus:

> [they] improve tribal discipline more than anything can and necessitate constant obedience to the orders of *nazirs, omdas* and *sheiks* in the presence of government officials. It would be impossible to find a more orderly and cheerful concourse of people at any race meeting in the world than we saw at these two places. These gatherings further provide unequalled opportunities for the meeting of officials and tribesmen on the common ground of sport, where differences of race and position are forgotten in the common interest of watching the finish of a close race.[371]

The explicit aim to dissolve, however momentarily, boundaries between colonizer and colonized - boundaries which colonial governments are typically seen as having been so keen to maintain at all costs - reflects the unfulfilled craving by officials for local legitimacy.

Yet the Governor's explanation also emphasised 'discipline', 'obedience' and 'order'. It stressed the value of these events for re-associating the authority of the chiefs with the authority of the state (chiefs demonstrating closeness with the state in the eyes of their subjects), and the opportunities for chiefs to demonstrate their command of their people: to perform their authority to officials. Such gatherings

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[370] D.Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 8, 64.
[371] Governor Kordofan to Civil Secretary, 21 Dec. 1920, NRO CIVSEC (1)68/2/4.

were indeed the apogee of attempts to create a common ground between individual officials and chiefs, from which to look down upon their undifferentiated 'tribal subjects' and, crucially, to be seen and acknowledged together by those 'subjects'. To this extent, it seems Cannadine's point about the 'cultivation of affinities' between British and African elites seems correct. And in their enactment of hierarchy, spectacle and (in fact) distance between rulers and ruled, these gatherings might be read as 'state effects', attempts to present colonial government (including chiefs) as removed from and simultaneously containing society within a grand framework: elites synoptically viewing and inspecting society in the ordered context of the tribal gathering.[372] Yet simultaneously gatherings provided opportunities for ordinary subjects, or marginalised groups, to make demands on the state, and thus participate in a rather different way in the construction of its authority. The behaviour of local people in the course of these gatherings did not always express distance from the colonial state: it sometimes rather expressed the expectation that the ruling authority should provide patronage to worthy individuals, or act upon the protest of its subjects.[373] Participants might also sometimes present a challenge to the apparent unity of chiefs and state officials by protesting to officials against their chiefs. They could also threaten the order of the 'tribal gathering' in the violent pursuit of inter-group rivalry. Gatherings had multiple meanings, not necessarily simply determined from above.

As well as asserting the affinity between officials and chiefs, the tribal gathering was also a means by which the British colonial state asserted a link with Darfur's pre-colonial past: colonial gatherings were to a significant extent based on existing local scripts. But as usual, pre-colonial practices were not exactly reproduced by the colonial state. The Sultans had brought their subjects together in El Fasher for the annual festival of drums, demonstrating their united attachment to the Sultan's authority. Nachtigal, a European visitor to Darfur in the late nineteenth century, described the pre-colonial festival in detail. Every chief and senior administrative official of the Sultanate was obliged annually to send a prescribed number of cattle

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[372] Mitchell, 'Limits', p. 94
[373] cf. J. Willis, 'Tribal Gatherings: performing government in Condominium Sudan', *Past and Present* (forthcoming, 2011), for a different view of similar events in Kordofan, emphasising the distance between government and subjects.

to El Fasher to be sacrificed as a memorial to the old Sultans as part of the festival of drums. These men were also obliged to come themselves to Fasher with a number of followers where they camped for seven days in front of the royal palace, in itself an display of subordination to the surveying eye of the state. Then seven days later, the military reviews would begin. Men would be lined up on horseback, arranged into seven different groups, each one to be inspected individually by the Sultan.[374] This appears to have been a tightly scripted encounter, with apparently 'modern' practices of surveillance and inspection pursued by an apparently 'pre-modern' state.

Colonial gatherings were not dissimilar to the Sultanate's festival. However, colonial attempts to establish a more regularized authority on the peripheries of the Sultanate, together with the emphasis on governance via tribal units, led to 'tribal gatherings' being enacted throughout the various districts of Darfur rather than a single meeting in El Fasher. Government (sometimes in the person of the governor of Darfur, or even the Governor-General of Sudan) came to the people, rather than the people coming to the government. Moreover, tribes were the relevant political identities on display in the gatherings, and there was no opportunity for the assertion of a common Darfuri identity. Still, the attempt to produce a recognisable performance in the colonial system is clear.

At a Rizeigat gathering in the late 1920s, the arrival of Charles Dupuis, the governor of Darfur, coming out from Fasher, was the first important event: the *nazir* Ibrahim Musa was to ride out to meet him 'wearing his robe of honour and the silver King's medal round his neck', these accessories affirming his place in the ornamental 'imperial chain of being'.[375] As soon as Dupuis met Ibrahim Musa he left the comfort of his car, and mounted a horse. It was in keeping with the gatherings of the Sultanate for the ruler himself to be mounted at such occasions: Dupuis was following a well-established script, consciously or otherwise. The two men rode side by side back to the gathering, emphasising the uniqueness of the *nazir's* own relationship with the state, and clearly separating him from the rest of the tribe. Then, as in the pre-colonial gatherings, rulers paraded before their subjects, and

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[374] Nachtigal, *Sahara*, pp. 338-345.
[375] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/48; Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 65.

subjects paraded before their rulers, in an act of mutual recognition. Lampen, ADC of the Baggara in the late 1920s, described a Rizeigat gathering where he rode past 'the best part of a mile lined on either side by the clans each with their flag, a rag of coloured cloth sometimes worked with the name of the *khashm beit*'.[376] Distinct lineage sections were thus labelled and observed even within the overall tribal framework, adding to the detail of colonial order achieved in the gathering, whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity for often officially ignored sub-tribal identities to be expressed. The parade had been practiced for days previously under Ibrahim Musa's direction, and the men riding past were 'rather solemn and selfconscious' under observation.[377] Ordinary people had been corralled into following scripts written from above. One official described the 'really wonderful panorama' presented by the gathering: this was also a way for officials to observe and inspect subjects who presented themselves in easily viewed, ordered lines.[378]

The gathering presented a reciprocal personal relationship between official and chief, whilst simultaneously demonstrating their common position above and detached from local society. Such events were institutions which attempted to demonstrate the existence of a coherent political elite which spanned the coloniser/colonised divide. They could also be an opportunity for local leaders to put on a show to indulge the romantic fantasies the British had of Darfur. One administrator remembered that at the Rizeigat gathering of 1940, in the midst of wartime, Ibrahim Musa 'put on a guard of honour of about 40 men clad in chain mail and headed by his brother wielding a crusader's sword. It was all very medieval and a pleasant change from this mad world of aeroplanes and tanks.'[379] Wilfred Thesiger's biography recalls the 'thrill' of his first tribal gathering as ADC of Northern Darfur, with Zaghawa participants clothed in 'coats of mail, which were reputed to date from the time of the Crusades, as was the pattern of their long, straight swords'.[380]

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[376] Ibid., SAD 734/9/48.

[377] Ibid., SAD 734/10/89.

[378] F.E. Baldry, 'A Darfur tribal gathering', SAD 646/8/68. This is also suggestive of Timothy Mitchell's 'enframing', *Colonizing Egypt* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 34–62.

[379] Balfour to his mother, 14 Dec 1940, SAD 606/7/10.

[380] W. Thesiger, *The Life of my Choice* (London, 1987) p. 190.

Yet whilst gatherings to some extent produced 'state effects' of distance and detachment between rulers and ruled, and indulged official fantasies of ruling like feudal lords (or Sultans), they could also be seized from below as opportunities for people to make demands on the state's patronage. These demands were sometimes made in a rather intimidating fashion, and partially dispelled effects of detached superiority. Yet officials also wanted tribal gatherings to break down the distance between them and 'their' subjects, as we have seen. Such vigorous interaction with their 'subjects', at close spatial proximity, might have been felt to be indicative of success in this regard. Colonial gatherings indeed partly reproduced older practices of personal contact between ruler and ruled.

1.1 'Horsemen surging': the ruled demanding recognition from the ruler

The participation of ordinary people in pre-colonial gatherings had always involved some amount of negotiation and interaction between rulers and subjects. Nachtigal's description demonstrates this clearly. When the Sultan had passed the horsemen, there would be

> a general stir. Each man sought to press his horse into its most spirited posture and to thrust himself forward. All the musical instruments whistled, drummed, jingled and rattled. The king's drums boomed in the distance… Gourds filled with little stones were brandished on all sides; people with little bells in their hands swarmed around the royal procession. Metal plates were banged against each other, weapons clashed together; in short, everything at the same time made a deafening uproar, which, however, according to the local standards, was dignified to the highest degree… As the royal procession passed, everybody got as close as he could to the prince, so that he might be observed by him and give a greeting, an example which I followed, raising and brandishing my musket in greeting. The king replied to these greetings by gently raising and lowering his sword, and then took up his position in the middle of the broad square.

At this point the assembled horsemen then took their turn to ride past the Sultan, and once this was done 'the horsemen now surged hither and thither, greeting this or that dignitary, and delighting in their horsemanship'.[381] It has been argued that the performances of individual horse riding skill, here and elsewhere in Sudanic Africa, reminded rulers of the physical power of their subjects, and their latent potential for resistance.[382] It seems that therefore these physically vigorous acts were an accepted part of the script for these events.

So, as well as the state ordering and inspecting its subjects, the festival was also about government putting itself on display: as much as the state captured its subjects in its gaze, so subjects gazed back at the state. But the crowding in of horsemen on the ruler in Nachtigal's account also suggests that Darfuris were competing with one another to be recognised by and to gain access to the Sultan. In so doing, the participants also helped to reinforce the Sultan's personal authority, even as they appeared to threaten it. The festival seems to have enacted an interactive relationship between state and society, a 'site of political negotiation' in Apter's words.[383] As such it provided a useful template for colonial government to follow in its efforts to create its own legitimacy.[384]

Although most gatherings were organised around the official hierarchy of the Province, from the Governor of Darfur downwards, there were times when gatherings were used as opportunities to make subjects aware of the full hierarchy of the state, by including a visit by the Governor General from Khartoum. These were rare times when the state directly broadcasted Khartoum's authority in remote Darfur. To some extent, such visits must have demystified the state: they presented the abstract *hakuma* on 'the river', in personal form. The Nazirs of the Baggara were 'troubled' at the prospect of the Governor General's visit to the gatherings in 1928. But as Lampen describes:

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[381] This taken from Nachtigal, *Sahara*, pp. 341-5.
[382] A. Apter, 'The Subvention of Tradition: A Genealogy of the Nigerian Durbar,' in G. Steinmetz (ed.) *State/Culture: The Study of State Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Cornell, 1999), p. 220.
[383] Ibid., p. 224.
[384] Apter suggests such gatherings may have been common across pre-colonial western Sudanic states. 'Durbar', p. 220.

The Nazirs were also elated beyond measure and reason to receive presents, which they took to be marks of enduring favour, and surprised and even hurt at the Hakim's refusal to take any present from them. Indeed this seemed so sinister an act to them that I had to prevail on the Governor General to accept a rhino horn (an incidentally contraband article) from the Rizeigat Nazir and a set of leather bull decorations from El Ghaali.[385]

Older scripts, governing the terms of encounters between rulers and ruled, pushed into the colonial performance, reviving the mechanisms of reciprocal gift-giving practiced in the days of the Sultanate. The mutuality of gift-giving had asserted an unequal yet mutual relationship between Sultan and tributary chief. Chiefs were now asserting, by the presentation of gifts, both recognition of the Governor General's authority and also the obligations that such recognition entailed. They were also trying to create personal relationships with the most senior figure in the colonial state's hierarchy. A deposed Rizeigat *omda* also appealed against his dismissal directly to the Governor General without formally requesting an audience via his DC: once more, the belief in the value of personal, unmediated contact with the person of the ruler was clear.[386]

Tribal gatherings could also be used by ordinary people to build up wealth or status via other forms of contact with the state. For instance, tribal gatherings were intended by officials to 'afford the Government Veterinary Department a chance to purchase good horses for the Defence Force and [to encourage] horse breeding'.[387] The Baggara in Lampen's accounts seized on this opportunity and competed with one another to make money from horse sales. Lampen remarks, with probable exaggeration, 'every Rizegi with a good horse and many with the worst… brought them up to the vets with the hope of getting £10 or so. A large crowd again watched this, and jeered the unsuccessful candidates', the audience investing the act of sale with a competitive character which the government may not have anticipated.[388]

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[385] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/9.
[386] On the practice of gift giving in Buganda. H. Hanson, *Landed obligation: the practice of power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, 2003), pp. 6-7, 16-18.
[387] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/45.
[388] Ibid., SAD 734/9/50.

Even where ordinary people apparently followed the script of the gathering, the meaning of that script was open to multiple interpretations.

Horse races, so idealised by some officials, provided further opportunity for subjects to compete for recognition by the state while simultaneously winning prestige in the eyes of their fellows. Again, spectators invested these events with social meaning. An account of a 1936 gathering describes 'hundreds of tribesmen thickly assembled up against the retaining fence from fifty to a hundred yards from the finishing posts, talking and laughing and waiting eagerly for the start of the next race'. Nearby, in a shaded, cordoned off area, officials, officers, chiefs and notables sat together in ordered fashion to enjoy the spectacle together, in the assertion of a common elite identity, apart from the '*nas*.'[389] But in the course of the race, participants constantly threatened to overturn the rules of the game. The British tried to keep the races under control, but any order was only superficially imposed:

> The races were run with tremendous éclat: whips had to be banned, or the horses would have been lashed outside the course, jockeys wore numbered jackets for the purpose of identification as at the end of each race the majority of the riders claim the race and the judges are surrounded by a circle of horses and jockeys crying their claims.[390]

Lampen again stressed the role of the crowd in attaching meaning to the race: 'Sometimes one wretched man gets left at the post and has to trot the length of the course under the jeers of the spectators.'[391]

This scrambling for recognition, social competition, and the attempts to influence the decisions of the observing authorities were not confined to male participants in horse races. In the bull display competitions, women pushed themselves yet more vigorously into the path of the representatives of the state:

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[389] Blaikie memoirs, SAD 815/17/39.
[390] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/50.
[391] Ibid., SAD 734/10/90.

The bull competitions were not so peaceful, nor so easy to decide… what a jostling for places… The mothers and sisters surround the bull, crying as we inspect... There is only one solution. Everyone must have a small prize of a rial and three shall receive more for the fineness of their bulls and saddles.[392]

The adjudicators were forced to back down from the enforcement of the ideals of 'fair play' and free competition: their subjects demanded recognition and reward too forcibly. Apter suggests that attempts in colonial Nigerian durbars to introduce hierarchies of winning by superior performance were actually translated into the 'populist expectation of prizes for all' and 'a dismantling of hierarchy'.[393] This is also applicable to Darfur. All this is also similar to the pre-colonial crowds pressing round the Sultan as he rode through the square of El Fasher, demanding recognition and reward from the ruler, as the price of accepting his authority. And the 'disordely' participation of ordinary people in horse races reminded the government of their subjects' physical prowess whilst dismantling state effects of distance and order. Such competitions rather saw interactions between ruler and ruled at close, even intimate, spatial proximity. These interactions had more in common with pre-colonial performances of authority than some distinctively new colonial order. Ordinary people contextualised colonial gatherings in deeper histories of interaction with highly personalized forms of government.

Moreover, whilst gatherings were meant to reaffirm the authority of chiefs, they could also be used as opportunities for ordinary people to subvert that authority. Ordinary people understood that one way in which officials judged chiefs was by their capacity to assemble subjects for the gathering. Before a parade in 1928 Ibrahim Musa had 'fumed with anxiety, as he counted the horses day by day on trial parades. His quota was 3000 horses and this year he must exceed it.'[394] At the same Rizeigat show, the Maalia were also meant to parade with the Rizeigat, reflecting their subordination within the Native Administration system to the larger tribe. The Maalia however took exception to this subordination. As a result the *omda* of the

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[392] Ibid., SAD 734/9/50.
[393] A. Apter, 'On Imperial Spectacle: The Dialectics of Seeing in Colonial Nigeria' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002), p. 582.
[394] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/47.

Maalia rode past the British alone: 'his people had in anger refused to parade with him. A roar of laughter went up from the Arabs… "Oh homeless *Omda*", shouted one.' The Maalia had thus prevented their *omda* from adequately performing the script. On some occasions, scripts were authored from below for performance at gatherings: when the chief of the Genigergera section of the Zaghawa in northern Darfur concealed a devastating occurrence of cattle plague in his territory, his people 'threw the tails of their dead bulls at the Governor' at the next gathering.[395] This was a dramatic gesture against the failings of both the chief and the government: the government had, after all, failed to see through the chief's concealment. Yet it also challenged the government to act to put right this failure, implicitly recognising the state's authority to do to.

Moving away from interaction with the government, these gatherings might also be used by Darfuris as an opportunity to express or pursue rivalries with neighbouring groups. Colonial officials imagined 'tribal gatherings' as opportunities to put on display an ordered and stable tribal society. Often gatherings involved more than one single tribe: they sometimes reflected the tendency for the colonial state to amalgamate different 'tribal' peoples in single, more convenient administrative units. But existing rivalries and conflicts between groups that were brought together in gatherings were never far from the surface of these events. Lampen described a gathering at Abu Salaa in southern Darfur where

> mixed tribes took part in the parade, and unless careful watch was kept the young men of the tribes took joy in abusing the riders of other tribes as they went by. Most tribes had some weakness real or imaginary which supplied fodder for the jesters. The Fur commonly supposed to change into hyenas were greeted by yowls, the Beni Halba who ate an evil smelling weed, the Koal, were addressed as Koaleaters… The Messiria whose hill of Nitaiya was the source of all local grindstones were one year abused by the Beni Halba 'You harvested your hill for grindstones.' 'We'll go and prop it up

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[395] 'Note on the Genigergera' Moore, DC NDD c.1940, NRO Darfur Kuttum A 41/3/9.

with stalks of koal' they replied whereupon the tribes fell to fighting with fatal results.[396]

Government attempts at performing a hegemonic narrative of inter-tribal stability, asserting the existence of the 'Pax Britannica', might then be counter-acted by local counter-narratives which asserted the continued relevance of local stereotypes and rivalries. The 'fatal results' which ensued demonstrate clearly that colonial scripts did not completely determine the character of these performances. In 1953 officials had hoped to settle a Habbania – Fellata dispute at the tribal gathering, but given the numbers of men in attendance with 'with spears all sharpened and burnished', this was deferred for a later settlement.[397] Officials were well aware of the latent threat of violence implied in the performances of their subjects: one noted of the procession that followed him that 'the horses… all looked as if they were going out of control and every *Shelekia* seemed to be pointing straight between my shoulder blades'.[398]

The theatre of the gathering could be seized from below for the assertion of group or individual identity, or for the expression of discontent with the established order, contrary to the expectations of the state. The scripts for these events were therefore indeed 'multiply authored' and often drew on longer histories of political ritual in Darfur.[399] Yet protest from below might give the colonial state valuable information to assist it in maintaining effective surveillance over its local chiefly auxiliaries. Moreover, the participation of ordinary people in these gatherings was central to the construction of state authority: people often demanded the recognition of the government in a variety of different ways, in return for recognising its existence. Therefore, tribal gatherings formed part of the continuous negotiations inherent in colonial government between a distant, under-resourced administration with limited means of information gathering amongst its subjects, and subjects who generally kept their distance from an extractive government, but who recognised the value of selective communication with its agents. These shows were, despite their festive

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[396] Ibid., SAD 734/9/48.
[397] Henderson, Governor Darfur to DC SDD, 18 May 1953, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/1/2.
[398] Balfour memoirs, SAD 759/11/38.
[399] Willis, 'Tribal Gatherings', p. 35

atmosphere an important, institutionalised means of constructing and practicing colonial authority. Finally, whilst gatherings were intended, at least in part, to produce modern 'state effects' of order and distance, they often also reproduced older notions of the personalisation of authority, in which individual patrons could be influenced by forceful individual performances from below. This awkward yet potent combination was reproduced in many of the other theatres of colonial authority, as we will now see.

2. Colonial space? The theatre of the district headquarters

Whilst tribal gatherings were key occasions of interaction between chiefs and officials, these men were not always enacting performances of authority on a shared stage. For most of their time, of course, they were apart. The authority of both chiefs and officials was to some extent associated with particular spatial centres. Yet these spaces could be swamped by the vigour of demands from their clients, heading to the centres of local authority from outlying 'peripheries'. For officials this space was the *merkaz*, a centre of 'colonial space' about which officials often had mixed feelings. Yet these physical centres of colonial authority could be the settings where highly personalised claims were made on the patronage of officials as 'big men'. Just as crowds challenged the hierarchies of the tribal gatherings, individual subjects could also invade the formal arena of the *merkaz*. And within their compounds, DCs might acquire clients, and perform their role according to local expectations of authority, as well as going through the motions of their bureaucratic responsibilities. The *merkaz* might thus became a site of hybrid forms of governance, expressing a combination of both bureaucratic and personal rule.

The *merkaz* appeared to be 'colonial space' defined by its isolation and separation from that which surrounded it. Lampen described the government quarters in Kubbe, southern Darfur as 'a civilised colony in this area of 40,000 square miles' – an isolated yet culturally superior island.[400] 'As a community we represented something superior to the undisciplined tribesmen.'[401] At Buram, where Lampen's *merkaz* was

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[400] Lampen memoirs., SAD 734/8/63.
[401] Ibid., SAD 735/1/54.

later relocated, grass fences were erected around the red brick government buildings to emphasise their separation from the local community. Lampen's 'cottage' was finished 'enclosed by a V shaped fence which shut off the servants and passers by, and gave me a free view out to the country'.[402] The isolated official could look out from a position bounded from and above that of his subjects: the layout of government quarters suggests a physical manifestation of a 'state effect', the detachment of state from society. Lampen's memoirs also note the importance of bureaucratic work while based at the *merkaz*: 'building, accounts, police organisation and training, and criminal work'.[403] Revealingly, officials frequently commented on the feelings of uselessness they associated with these tasks, when the real world was 'out there', with the chiefs and the people, trekking in the wilderness.

Still, even here, despite the apparent separation of the ruler from the ruled, colonial authority might remain at least in part orally performed and highly personalised. Some petitioners who bombarded the DC with complaints had their petitions 'written by the office scrivener at a cost of 2 pt on an official form which cost 3 pt', indicating that ordinary people were capable of using bureaucracy to access state power. Yet this bureaucratic process could also be easily bypassed by petitioners.[404] Lampen described how many petitioners would come to see him in the afternoons, to discuss matters which 'could not be reached over the hustle and bustle of the office, but only after an introduction of several cups of syrupy tea'. Indeed so many of these complainants came outside the hours of business, that Lampen had to 'build a rest-house to lodge them at the side of my compound and even hire an ex-slave girl to cook for them'.[405] As he admits, he had to 'conform with ideas of Arab hospitality.'[406] We will soon see that chiefs had similar duties to clients who demanded their cases be settled. Lampen, for one, appears to have been trying to fit into local conceptions of what it was to be a good chief, meeting his obligations as ruler.

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[402] Ibid., SAD 734/10/93.
[403] Ibid., SAD 734/8/86.
[404] Ibid., SAD 735/1/19.
[405] Ibid., SAD 734/8/67.
[406] Ibid., SAD 735/1/72.

In Lampen's case, the *merkaz* became a centre from which he could assert his wealth and authority in Baggara terms: by the keeping of cattle. 'My Baggara boys urged me to buy more cows, and I did so with such persistence that when I left Darfur five years later I had a herd of over 30 animals.'[407] He also kept leopard cubs, eagle chicks and a fierce lynx (which for some time he slept with at night).[408] The boy who looked after the bulls advised Lampen: 'Increase your cattle *Genabek* [your honour] they are wealth and a woman takes a man for his cattle.'[409]

A crucial institution associated with the *merkaz* was the district prison. Bernault has analysed the prison in Africa as 'a front-line bastion of colonial power' and asserts the 'enduring violence of colonial incarceration'.[410] The prison might also be seen as an important way of absorbing the dangerous energies of the rural peripheries into the spatial centres of colonial authority, and nullifying their power. But Lampen's detailed account, once more, confounds stereotype. Prison life, in literal terms, brought the imprisoned closer to the DC and, when released, criminals often 'constituted themselves the mediators and interpreters for the Government when any official appeared in their *feriq* (camp)', utilising their experience of the ways of the government as a means of boosting their own status in local society.[411] Following the trial for a prominent murder case, Lampen wrote that 'one of the young boys who got a light sentence eventually entered my service as an orderly and the whole clan, settled in our prison village while their men folk were serving their sentence, became firm friends of the Government'.[412]

Prisons were in fact quite deliberately intended to create new patron-client ties between officials and prisoners, nullifying rebellious energy in a manner which was entirely consistent with colonialism's highly personalised manifestations of authority in Darfur. Lampen noted that many prisoners had been sentenced for

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[407] Ibid., SAD 734/8/72.
[408] Ibid., SAD 735/1/79.
[409] Ibid., SAD 734/9/45.
[410] F. Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post Colonial Africa' in F. Bernault (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth, 2003), pp. 14-15.
[411] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/58. Lea makes a similar observation in his trek diaries in Northern Kordofan: 'anyone who goes off to prison comes back with his nose in the air, proud as a peacock' C.A Lea (ed. M. Daly), *On Trek in Kordofan*, (Oxford, 1994) p. 66.
[412] Ibid., SAD 735/1/65.

disciplinary offences against constituted authority rather than…crimes, often due to grievances over the protection or redress they could claim from the Government, and a close acquaintance with a government station and with officials turned them from being nervous rebels into strong supporters of the Government.[413]

Lampen states that for many prisoners, imprisonment was indeed their 'first contact' with the state.[414] Imprisonment, especially in smaller sub-district centres, did not necessarily mean being kept in a prison cell: rather, due to limited resources, prisoners sometimes brought 'their wives and families to live in an enclosed village beside the police lines and there the prisoners slept with them by night and paraded for work by day'.[415]

The experience of imprisonment thus provided opportunity for prisoners as well as restriction and upheaval. Some prisoners appear to have believed they had acquired a new patron through the process of sentencing and imprisonment. Lampen recalled one man saying to him 'do you not remember me? It was you who sentenced me. Have you no work for me as an orderly? And how is everyone in the *merkaz?* Greet them all from me.'[416] Another said to him 'you would not know me: I am not one of your people, but of his honour: McIntosh (ADC Nyala).'[417] Ex-prisoners thus asserted they still belonged to their patron: the man who had sentenced them. Prisoners also named their children born in captivity after Lampen. The process of incarceration was far from a simple act of domination and control: its meaning was also transformed by the initiatives of prisoners themselves, in ways which reinforced and fed into the patron-client dynamics of colonialism in Darfur.

The *merkaz* and even its attached prison therefore might become something more complex than simply an outpost of colonial space. By both the strategies of colonial

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[413] Ibid., SAD 734/8/59.
[414] Ibid., SAD 735/1/66.
[415] Ibid., SAD 734/8/58.
[416] Ibid., SAD 735/1/66.
[417] Ibid., SAD 734/8/59.

officials and the demands of local subjects, it could become something like a chief's compound as well as a centre of bureaucratic activity, where 'formal' and 'informal' modes of authority interacted. In Lampen's account the *merkaz* was a theatre within which a cattle-owning, client-collecting, tea-providing D.C. might perform a role very similar to that of his chiefly subordinates, and project an impression of intimacy as well as distance.

3. White Sultans of Darfur – officials on trek

Nonetheless, officials were not supposed to behave like chiefs, at least not according to the imperatives of central government policy. 'Native Administration' was in theory intended to reduce contact between government officials and subjects, which was feared to engender dangerous 'individualism' among subjects.[418] But officials resisted this: they felt contact with the people was essential to their capacity to exert effective control in their district and that in the *merkaz* they could do relatively little, despite the obvious importance of office work to the functioning of government. Crawford, Lampen's successor in southern Darfur expressed this perfectly:

> I have put nothing in the diary for the last five days because nothing has happened in Nyala - it is quite evident that to do any good in SDD one simply must go out on trek and see the people - if you sit in the office you will know of nothing until it has happened.[419]

Indeed, Crawford expressed dissatisfaction with exceedingly laissez-faire interpretations of Native Administration. Paying salaries to *nazirs* and *omdas* he felt had

> bred an inferiority complex in ourselves vis a vis of the native and we shall start apologizing for being here…. I am absolutely against harrying the *nas* without reason but we are the rulers and it is a job to make them all realise it. NA was never to raise up the native and lower ourselves - the further we go

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[418] Bence-Pembroke, 'Proposals for Devolution', 1927, NRO CIVSEC (1)/1/20/160.
[419] Crawford diaries, 29 Jan 1933, SAD 502/5/41.

into NA the more must we of the Political Service appear to play the part of the God sent adviser.[420]

In other words, officials still conceived of themselves as having a key role in the performance of government, 'playing' a 'God sent' part; and, crucially, trekking was imagined to make this possible. The *merkaz* was not simply the core of government authority in the districts: rather authority was also mobile and itinerant, performed on tour. Much government business was done by officials leaving government centres and moving into the vast peripheries, broadcasting state authority in their own person. And, just as Patrol 99 had displayed the violent power of the government in ways that could, in part, be locally understood as linked to historic patterns of state violence, so officials on trek sometimes performed in ways which resonated with local memories of the behaviour of pre-colonial state officials, or even perhaps the practices of local chiefs themselves. Significantly, Darfuris also associated these highly personalized performances of authority by officials with the abstract notion of the state, particularly its legal power, as we will see.

As administrators moved among ordinary Darfuris, some of them attempted to reach across the massive cultural gulf that separated colonizer and colonized. The highly sporadic nature of their contact with local societies, and the fact they were only ever temporarily posted to a particular district meant that they were always far from being fully absorbed into local dynamics. Still, the repetitive and predictable responses of chiefs (and even some ordinary people) to such performances by officials played on British attempts to produce a recognizable effect of authority, and sometimes aimed to draw them more deeply into the protection of local interests. This was the particular importance of the trek. Even more than when in the *merkaz*, the DC on tour could be moulded and given direction by local actors: the state was more easily approached and manipulated.

The mobility of the trek was perhaps particularly important when administrators were attempting to govern mobile pastoralist peoples. In this most fundamental way, administrators were mimicking, even adopting, the patterns of movement of their

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[420] Crawford diaries, 11 Jan. 1933, SAD 502/5.

subjects, in attempts to broadcast their authority more effectively. When the position of ADC Baggara was created in 1921, senior officials argued that the new official, 'like the Arab himself should be a tent dweller'.[421] Mirroring the patterns of movement of nomads was a key part of gaining deep understanding of subjects, and associated accurate intelligence. Indeed Guy Moore, DC of Northern Darfur for fourteen years from 1934 to 1948, and a keen trekker, had actually served under the famous John Glubb in Iraq. Glubb, one of those imperial intelligence agents discussed in Satia's recent work, was a believer in the idea of total immersion in Arab society in order to gather effective intelligence. During this time, Moore, according to another SPS official had 'dressed as an Arab and lived as one'.[422] Yet the importance of trekking was also asserted by officials in sedentary western Darfur. One of the most energetic and despotic of colonial administrators in Western Darfur, Hugh Boustead, was 'engaged in almost constant living in the field' as he tried to set up a network of courts across the district, populated principally by Fur farming communities.[423] Trekking was perceived as an opportunity for officials to become known to their people and to know the people. And the desire of the administrator to achieve such goals, fantasy though this remained, could be manipulated and flattered by local people, and thus contribute to the construction of a highly personalized version of state authority in Darfur.

The administrator on trek can be seen as a mobile 'contact zone' between colonizer and colonized, state and non-state.[424] Administrators had distinct individual performative styles on trek. Moore was famous for his consistently performed austere image of independent manliness, which, according to Zaghawa accounts, resonated with local ideas of masculinity: he had no servant or cooks with him, ate from communal bowls, and observed local feast days.[425] Lampen, in contrast, often traveled with a great retinue of porters, policemen, and escorts provided by the senior chiefs of the district: in 1927 twenty Rizeigat men accompanied him on

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[421] Richards, Report on Baggara merkaz, 31 May 1922, NRO CIVSEC (1)16/2/4.
[422] Thesiger, *Life*, p. 241; Satia, *Spies*, pp. 116-117; Lea. *Trek*, p. 221.
[423] Hugh Boustead, *The Wind of Morning* (London, 1971), p. 118.
[424] M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Oxon, 1992), p. 4.
[425] Michael Asher, *In Search of the Forty Days Road* (Harlow, 1984), p.5; S A Harir, 'The Politics of Numbers: Mediatory Leadership and the Political Process Among the Beri Zaghawa of the Sudan', PhD (Bergen, 1986), p. 160.

trek.[426] In local eyes this might have appeared to be an assertion of Lampen's authority over people, his capacity to command the loyalty of local clients. Crawford's diaries, in contrast, mention that for the purposes of trekking he had 'resurrected the province flag and have had it mounted on a lance - I am and always have been opposed to lack of display by DCs when they go on trek – Ibrahim Musa is very keen about it all.'[427] Crawford associated himself directly with the insignia of the provincial state in Darfur, rather as had the *magdums* of the Sultanate. All of these men, knowingly or otherwise, were projecting images of authority which to some extent chimed with local expectations.

Some chiefs wanted British administrators to be easily visible to their subjects as powerful men: their allies, their patrons had to appear credible to their subjects. Ibrahim Musa had encouraged Crawford to make greater display on trek, and provided escorts for Lampen. Lampen himself also actively attempted to find out how he appeared in local eyes. A trusted Habbania informant told him that British officials lost respect because of their 'close fitting small clothes. A ruler should wear ample clothes and appear imposing.'[428] In his diaries Lampen mentioned that that whilst on trek 'for comfort one pulled one's shirt outside so that what breeze there is can circulate beneath it, thus approximating to the native dress where the *jibba* flows outside the loose drawers'.[429] On at least one occasion Lampen actually costumed himself in 'Arab dress', presumably to assist his efforts to make an 'imposing impression'. Lampen also attempted to disguise himself in other ways too: 'I used myself on arriving at *feriqs* in Ramadan and being asked if I was fasting to claim the privilege of a traveller, in order to avoid the prejudice which would arise had I to remind them that I am not a Moslem.'[430]

The considerable, yet not unlimited, autonomy of the DC was also a crucial aspect of the institutionalisation of a highly personalised culture of authority. The case of Guy Moore, DC of Northern Darfur between 1934 and 1948 is an exceptional case

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[426] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/12.
[427] Crawford diaries, 23 Feb. 1933, SAD 502/5/50.
[428] Lampen, 'The Baggara tribes of Darfur', *Sudan Notes and Records* 16, (1933), p. 118.
[429] Lampen diaries, SAD 734/9/61.
[430] Ibid., SAD 734/9/65.

among the DCs of Darfur, due to the length of his tenure of position, but was also particularly important in forming local imaginings of the colonial state for the very same reason. Travelling in Darfur in the late 1970s, Michael Asher was struck that Moore was still remembered as Sultan 'almost as if he had been independent ruler of Northern Darfur rather than just a district administrator.' One elderly Arab nomad told Asher that 'Sultan Moore was a generous man! By God I've seen him throw money to the people, so that they scrabbled for it like chickens.' Moore had perhaps grasped the importance of redistribution from patrons to clients in the society he governed.[431] The same informant also had other memories of Moore: 'he was a man who did not play. There were no bandits around when he was Sultan. It was the whip or the rope for anyone who was dishonest.'[432] The coercive power of colonial punishment was also a key aspect of what was remembered as Moore's period of personal rule. Lampen, as Governor of Darfur, commented that by the time Moore left Darfur, the inhabitants of Northern Darfur District were terrified of his increasingly despotic and unpredictable behaviour.[433]

The terror which local people felt for Moore should alert us to the fact that there was no direct link between an imagined domestication of local administrators into local understandings of authority and a more benevolent style of rule. Indeed, administrators were often told by chiefs that people expected rulers to behave harshly towards them, and in any case it was a widespread belief among the provincial administration that Darfuris were well used to abusive and despotic behaviour from their pre-colonial rulers. Moore certainly appears to have fitted easily into these stereotypes.

Yet Moore is significant in the memory of Northern Darfuris for other reasons too. Harir, a Zaghawa Sudanese academic, paints this brief portrait of his ruling style:

> while able to produce as eccentric an image of himself as could be imagined,
> he was also capable of the behaviour of a man according to Zaghawa

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[431] Compare the memories of British administrators distributing clothes and beads among the Dinka in an attempt to gain legitimacy in Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, p. 168.
[432] Asher, *Forty Days*, p. 5.
[433] Lampen, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary 16 Nov. 1945, SAD 526/15.

standards. He roved the deserts and tracked the untrackable. He never showed fatigue, lost edge or complained of a hardship and was the first to rise up and the last to go to sleep. Above all, he was accessible to the public. At the Zaghawa level of '*sultani*' i.e. ruling authority, Sultan Moore was capable of observing the strictest sense of justice which the legal code provided: and as he was the law itself, he was also able to enforce more than the letter of the code.[434]

A colleague of Moore's recalled the long days Moore would spend under a tree on trek, listening to the complaints of the famously litigious Zaghawa.[435] Moore's rulings in local inter-group disputes are also still referred back to in the context of present-day reconciliation meetings.[436] In Harir's view Moore 'was the law': there is no more clear statement of the extreme personalisation of the state during his time as DC. Yet Harir suggests Moore also observed the 'strictest sense of justice which the legal code provided'. Moore's authority in Northern Darfur combined the authority of the colonial state's legal code, the abstract rule-bound face of the bureaucratic state, with the personal despotism of an autonomous colonial official, or even a pre-colonial Sultan. It embodied the apparent contradiction with which this chapter is concerned.

When administrators tried to fit into local expectations, they often behaved despotically: yet they simultaneously created opportunities for local people to influence them. Of course, for many people the DC, especially one like Moore, might have represented dangerous, despotic, coercive power. Yet DCs might also be seen in some respects as potentially valuable sources of patronage and power: for instance, they carried medical supplies and guns (which could shoot troublesome animals). They were also, of course, able to hear cases and appeals, and could become patrons for local political agendas.[437] Some Darfuris therefore learnt to manipulate the desire of officials for local recognition in order to advance their own

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[434] Harir, *Numbers*, p. 161.
[435] P. Lumsden, 'Sudan Memories' (2006), p. 23.
[436] R.S. O'Fahey, *Tribal Reconciliation in Darfur* (Bergen, 2005), p. 6.
[437] Ibid., SAD 734/9/66; Interview with Fellata *nazir*, Ahmad al-Sammani al-Bashar, Khartoum, 14 Nov. 2008.

interests. The tendency for some district officials to be termed 'sultans' by their subjects indulged and flattered British fantasies of crossing the boundary between coloniser and colonised, perhaps with the intent of emphasising their responsibilities as quasi-independent patrons to the people they governed.[438] Some ordinary people, in their attempts to access the power of the DC, learned to perform talk in ways that officials expected and desired to hear. Lampen wrote of the Baggara:

> They are masters of flattery and sweet talk as they call it. Listen to an old man who comes up to me when I shot lions: 'The lions are a powerful tribe and you have destroyed them. Our herds can now graze in peace say the words to the herds to go forward oh conqueror of the lions, conqueror of the conquerors!' This flattery to me or the Government they combine with a grovelling self-deprecation 'We are like wild animals, cattle, fools, liars, there is no use in us.'[439]

Administrators elsewhere reported similar statements, and while they were aware that such talk was indeed flattery, some also admitted that these words had the desired effect on their egos.[440] Repeated suggestions that Lampen marry a local girl might also be read as attempts to domesticate the administrator into particular kin or sectional networks and thus create kinship obligations. In other cases in Darfur (and elsewhere in Condominium Sudan) officials did in fact enter into such relationships.[441] Lampen's diaries also document the myriad ways in which local subjects attempted to draw a state agent more closely into their world by the sharing of knowledge: information was given to Lampen about the usefulness of poisonous or ugly trees; on local ideas about bravery and cowardice; on how to survive in the wild.[442] None of this was new perhaps: we have already noted the skills of pre-colonial chiefs in managing relationships with the local agents of the Sultans.

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[438] As well as Sultan, Lampen was also nicknamed 'Lam-bey', *bey* being the office held by Baggara paramount chiefs under the Turco-Egyptian regime. Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/123.

[439] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/174. This latter turn of phrase was also common among the Kababish: in Asad's view, it reflected the perception that the only resistance that could be offered to the absolute power of the ruler was through 'varying degrees of evasion'. Asad, *Kababish*, p. 242.

[440] Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, p.29.

[441] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/27; Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, pp. 44, 51; Johnson, *Nuer*, pp. xxviii., 155.

[442] Lampen menoirs, SAD 734/8/77-79; 734/9/23.

Yet despite such interaction, all DCs remained to some extent unknowable: a cultural boundary between coloniser and colonised was maintained. The reluctance of most officials to marry locally was probably the key factor that kept them outside the community: they 'were not related to people'.[443] Even Lampen knew that the ties he believed he had built with local peoples were easily disrupted by his own movement out of the Baggara belt: his trips to El Fasher were kept as brief as possible as these made Lampen feel 'remote from my people and what was happening to them'.[444] Leave in England also reaffirmed the distance of the DC from the people. In one particularly evocative (and essentialising) passage from Lampen's memoirs, he describes his mud-stained reappearance in Darfur, and his greetings by

> an army of Rizeigat clothed in spotless white and headed by the Nazir. They dismounted in dead silence while the Nazir grasped me by the hand: Kaif Halaf… the well known greetings were soothing to my ear and plunged me from London, Europe and the twentieth century straight back into the timeless desert life. The thick bush closed behind me and shut me off from Western Civilisation like a soundproof door.[445]

But the Baggara also had to return to Lampen.

> On the occasion of my return there was always a silence over the natives for a time… a hesitation while they wait to see if I am the same in myself and towards them as I have been in the past. I had gradually to restore confidence and to hear their tales.[446]

While chiefs and subjects selectively concealed aspects of local politics from administrators, so administrators concealed an entire world from their subjects.

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[443] Deng and Daly, *Bonds*, p. 186.
[444] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/107.
[445] Ibid., SAD 734/10/5.
[446] Ibid., SAD 734/10/6.

Despite the continued reality of the boundary between colonised and coloniser, it remains true that some administrators performed a style of personal rule which in the eyes of local people might have combined many alien novelties with many recognisable motifs and behaviours. This section has argued that such strategies require serious attention as important varieties of the effects which were being pursued by state representatives in Darfur, effects of both detachment and intimacy. In their own person officials appeared both as autonomous despots, and as an embodiment of the abstract legal power of the state: this potent combination made them, in some respects, potentially valuable supporters to bring into local politics and disputes, as will be demonstrated further in later chapters. Of course, however, administrators were not simply performing their own parts. They were also inspecting and observing the performances of their chiefly auxiliaries, and thus also influencing those performances. And it is to the personal interactions between chiefs and officials to which this chapter next turns.

4. Speaking subjects: 'the Arabs are deceivers, twisters and like the wild beasts'

Treks were opportunities to cement the relationships between administrators and chiefs. They afforded crucial occasions for successful chiefs to prove their fluency in the language of the government, while also projecting to administrators the sense that they were legitimate leaders of their tribes. The conversational proficiency of some of the most favoured and powerful chiefs of Darfur, was something that administrators repeatedly remarked on. Skill in talking to the government, it is argued here, was not a marginal aspect of the chief's role, but a central means of building strong personal relationships which reinforced the institutional authority of the chief. And the conversations chiefs had with officials proceeded according to relatively predictable discursive norms: seemingly personal, informal practices were therefore developed with a significant degree of formality at the boundary between coloniser and colonised. An important common elite position shared by chiefs and officials was thus asserted, positioning these men at a distance from ordinary people. Yet chiefs also had to demonstrate intimacy with their people: the contradictory

effects of intimacy and distance that chiefs had to produce remained an awkward balancing act, which not all chiefs could successfully perform.

Formalised welcomes to the DC, feasts put on for him at the chief's camp, and the provision of hospitality were key starting points for the dialogue between chiefs and administrators. One DC described this in Zalingei, where famously oppressive *shartais* treated him as an honoured guest:

> They greeted me with bluff, hearty welcomes, and sent presents of meat on the hoof. They put up straw shelters for me to sleep in, and brought clean white sand from the *wadi* to cover the floor. They carried complete *tukls* out from the village for the police and servants. In this way they did far more for me than I would have expected anywhere else. I believe they regarded me as a representative of the Sultan – and everyone was expecting me to shout 'Off with his head'. So everything possible had to be done to prevent this.[447]

But this was the relatively simple part of the performance. Chiefs then had to converse personally with the DC, and often the more intimate this talk appeared to the DC, the more successful the chief was in building a relationship with the local state.[448]

Among the Baggara of southern Darfur, talk and conversation was a key part of social life, and was often highly theatrical and stylish: talking was a performance art in itself. Ibrahim Musa was a skilled performer of good speech among his own people: Lampen noted that 'to mark the denouement of a story Madibbo would put his hands together and bend his head over them, or a vigorous rubbing of the hands would express delight'.[449] One of the criterion by which colonial chiefs are remembered today is their capacity for good speech, and in particular their command

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[447] Sandison memoirs, SAD 691/5/137.
[448] The trek diaries of ADC Lea in Northern Kordofan detail his many intimate conversations with Ali el Tom, *nazir* of the Kababish, and contain material which supports the points being made here about similar relationships in Darfur. See for instance in Lea *Trek* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 33-36 in particular.
[449] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/173.

of the English language.[450] Ibrahim Musa was well able to converse with Lampen, and indeed with all the DCs of southern Darfur, in a confident and intimate manner. On trek, Lampen wrote, 'Ibrahim Musa used to come every evening and drink tea with me.'[451] Ibrahim seemed to share the deepest anxieties arising from his position: he

> would sit from dusk till late at night talking to me of the worries of being a *nazir*, that no one liked him because he insisted on obedience to government orders, of his health.[452]

Ibrahim also told Lampen of his eagerness to repay any financial debts he incurred to the government. Lampen was suitably impressed: 'a great contrast to the normal Arab whose main idea is to live on a perpetual loan'.[453] And indeed, Ibrahim used language which distanced himself from his people in the eyes of the administrator: whilst he presented himself as personally honourable and trustworthy he did not hesitate to look down, with Lampen, on the Arabs who 'are deceivers, twisters and like the wild beasts'.[454] This latter phrase, widely used by ordinary Baggari, locally expressed the necessity of evasion in order to resist the absolute power of the ruler, but here fitted neatly with existing colonial prejudices against Arab culture: from being part of a local discourse about interaction with a dominant authority, it became part of an elite discourse which distanced the state and its allies from ordinary subjects.

Apparently informal talk therefore was also an attempt to create an impression of shared cultural superiority between chief and administrator, while simultaneously removing them from the world of the *nas* (ordinary people). Chiefs also readily assimilated the use of terms like 'the natives', and Sultan Endoka spoke to his Resident of 'taming the backward areas' of his *dar*.[455] Yet chiefs also had to show

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[450] Interview with Fellata *sheikh* Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla, Khartoum, 12 Nov. 2008.
[451] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/25.
[452] Ibid., SAD 734/8/28.
[453] Ibid., SAD 734/8/28.
[454] Ibid., SAD 734/9/16.
[455] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1928, NRO Darfur 1/34/175; Statement of Mohammedein Adam Sebi, 24 July 1927, NRO Darfur Kuttum (A) 41/2/8.

they could cross this apparent boundary between themselves and their subjects. They had to demonstrate intimate knowledge of their people, knowledge which the administrator could access by conversation with a chief, but never hope to acquire himself. Officials were impressed when Endoka demonstrated a 'very intimate knowledge of remote parts of his *dar* such as the names of sheikhs of small villages etc' and noted 'his amazing recollection of details of [tax] payments made by individual villages.' Even if the Sultan could be uncooperative or obstructive, his views were 'always worth listening to if only as a guide to the native way of looking at a matter': Endoka intuitively understood his people.[456]

Chiefs were thus positioned in between the worlds of coloniser and colonised, sometimes appearing more fully part of one than the other. Some skilful elite players thrived on this intermediacy, and made a great strength out of it. One of the most successful performers of the colonial period was Emir Abd-el Hamid, originally the newly established *magdum*, and later the Emir, of Zalingei in Western Darfur. His success was perhaps surprising given that he had spent most of his life outside of Darfur in Cairo, and later in Kosti, in riverine Sudan. One official wrote

> He was a quiet, friendly old man, rather out of place ruling the feudal barons. I fancy he felt almost as alien to it all as I did… (His) great advantage was that he had the quality of 'Baraka' - divine grace… the most important attribute of leadership according to Islam… People were unusually reasonable when they were with him… Even ill-disposed persons did not circulate lying rumours about him, as they did about everyone else.[457]

The Emir was an unusual case perhaps: he was seen to have both 'hereditary advantages' and the 'prestige of his superior civilisation', he was 'almost' but not quite as 'alien' as a British administrator. The Emir played on this ambiguity. He claimed to be 'appalled by the local prevalence of sloth and drunkenness, and by the obvious retrogression of the Fur people from their former energy and enterprise...

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[456] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1928, NRO Darfur 1/34/175.
[457] Sandison memoirs, SAD 691/5/138.

but he does not, fortunately, turn away from them in disgust as inferior beings'.[458] He thus presented himself as at once a member of Fur society, and a detached yet sympathetic observer of it. Officials noted the Emir's 'almost European disregard of his own convenience in official hours' and suggested that 'owing to his extensive contact with Europeans, Abd el Hamid had gained tolerance'.[459] Officials believed that the trust engendered by the Emir's personal style made it possible to extract taxation and labour from the Fur without the police coercion that had previously been required.[460]

Yet this was a fine balancing act, with tensions inherent in such performances. A chief could not distance himself too far from the state. Officials became frustrated when chiefs selectively disengaged from conversations with their colonial patrons. One Resident of Dar Masalit wrote of the Sultan that he sometimes 'appears deliberately to misunderstand and to take up an attitude of opposition'.[461] A later official reported that 'he [Endoka] occasionally adapts a curiously nebulous attitude when one feels one has somehow lost thought-connection with him'.[462] Equally though, an overly obvious performance of the ways of the coloniser might cause disquiet among an official audience. In the early years of British rule, concerns were expressed that Sultan Endoka might tip from local potentate into the sort of mimic man that colonial officials so feared and despised: one worried about Endoka's 'strong natural tendency to ape the European' which threatened to cause a 'disastrous divergence' between Endoka and his people'.[463] By 1930 nearly all Europeans passing through the town of Geneina, visited the Sultan as a quasi-tourist attraction. Evans, Resident at the time reported the opinion of some that

> He has acquired a repertoire from which he produces conversations suited to
> his audience, these conversations not necessarily conveying his real views on

[458] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 28 Mar. 1929, NRO CIVSEC (1)/1/21/62.
[459] Zalingei Emirate Annual Report 1931, NRO CIVSEC (1)1/22/65.
[460] Zalingei Emirate Annual Report 1930, NRO CIVSEC (1)/1/22/64.
[461] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1928, NRO Darfur 1/34/175.
[462] Campbell, Resident Dar Masalit, Handing-over-notes 1937, NRO Darfur 1/34/173.
[463] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1925/6, NRO CIVSEC (1)1/18/58.

the subject concerned, but merely such views as he thinks will please the audience and create a good impression.[464]

Evans suggested there was 'a certain amount of truth' in the idea that 'he suits his conversation to his audience - I have heard him discuss the tale of Daedalus with 2 RAF NCOs', but stressed 'I do not feel that he has become any less frank in his dealings with the Assistant Resident and myself.' The whole of this discussion of Endoka's conversational prowess was cut by the Governor when forwarding the report to the Civil Secretary.[465] If the performance of a chief was too obviously a calculated artifice, chiefs might lose some standing with the administration. But Endoka's capacity to build good working relations with temporary British Residents ensured these men launched regular, energetic defences of his prerogatives as Sultan, emphasizing the benefits of his intimacy with his subjects as well as with the state. One official asserted that 'the Sultan's establishment and habits faithfully reflect the simplicity of the Masalit, and external influences have not yet caused him to ape the manners of the Omdurman tradesman'.[466] This was despite the Sultan's penchant for expensive Newmarket boots, ordered from London, and his love for the Ford car that he drove across his *dar* 'at speed and with discretion'.[467] Endoka also kept 'well abreast of current news of the Sudan and the outside world… both by conversation with Government servants and by reading various Arabic papers, and unlike most Sudanese he digests and forms his own opinion on what he reads'.[468]

Success in moving back and forth between colonial and local cultural norms paid a great dividend in terms of gaining official support. The overt personalisation of Endoka's authority in Dar Masalit was preserved for an unusually lengthy period to a great extent because of the success of his performances: a 'Consultative Council' was set up in Dar Masalit in 1948, its members (including Endoka's sons) appointed by the Sultan, but there was no pretence of establishing an elected council in the era of supposed late colonial modernisation.[469] Endoka's reluctance to submit to

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[464] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1930, NRO Darfur 1/34/175.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1931, ibid..
[467] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1933, ibid.
[468] Ingleson, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 9 May 1938, ibid.
[469] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1948, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/6/27.

'irksome bureaucracy' was explained by reference by his preference for 'personal contact' and his reliance on 'judgment and memory rather than written instructions and text-books'.[470] Residents argued that change in Dar Masalit should be 'biological rather than mechanical in form,' and 'must originate in the Sultan's mind… That static atmosphere which is common to Africa and the East must be allowed to re-establish itself in order that permanence and stability may result.' Officials could thus become key obstacles to the increasing bureaucratisation of the chief's role, even in the later years of the colonial period. Endoka's mastery of the performance of chieftaincy had resulted in an institutionalisation of his personal rule in Dar Masalit: an official noted in 1951 the 'agreeable haze' which continued to surround him.[471]

The personal patron-client relations between chiefs and officials were crucial to the working of colonial authority, yet these relationships were built around relatively repetitive and predictable discursive norms, and institutionalised the authority of chiefs. But chiefs of course also interacted with their subjects as well as colonial officials. These interactions, especially in the formal arena of the Native Courts, demonstrate the role of ordinary people in the construction of the chief's authority.

5. Native Courts and the authority of chiefs

The institutionalisation of chiefly power via the establishment of 'Native Courts' was a key aspect of 'Native Administration' in Darfur. However, while they were tools of bureaucratisation, intended to increase state control over local affairs, courts also became arenas where the personalised authority of the chief, sitting as president of the court, was reaffirmed. Mamdani has emphasised the role of these courts in producing the 'decentralised despotism' of colonial rule, with great power concentrated in the hands of the chief.[472] Yet courts were also stages on which ordinary people made demands and chiefs fulfilled obligations in the course of theatrical performances of 'good speech' and demonstrations of good judgement.

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[470] Dar Masalit Annaul Report 1935; Dar Masalit Annual Report 1937, NRO Darfur 1/34/175.
[471] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1951-2, NRO 2.D Fasher A (47)8/32.
[472] Mamdani, *Citizen*; See also Chanock, *Law*, which discusses the power of elders in the creation of patriarchal 'customary law'.

Chiefs performed downwards to their subjects, but they also sometimes had simultaneously to perform for visiting officials, projecting an image of personal control over their people in the institutional setting of the court. As well as being sites for the assertion of chiefly authority, courts also displayed the multiple expectations and audiences which chiefs had to perform to, which both limited and enabled the exercise of their authority.

Clearly at times courts were vehicles for the coercive and authoritarian assertion of a chief's authority. Lampen occasionally observed Ibrahim Musa's guards 'wearing cartridge bandoliers and carrying whips' leading away a protesting litigant.[473] And if Rizeigat elders disagreed with Ibrahim on a question of precedent, he regularly overruled them: ultimately the prerogative of deciding what was customary still lay with the *nazir*.[474] But apparently despotic behaviour by chiefs might have in part reflected local expectations of how a ruler should behave. Indeed, ordinary people may have objected less to chiefs asserting their personal authority than to behaviour which suggested a chief was in some way reluctant to hear cases: this judicial role was now part of a chief's obligations as ruler.[475] Ibrahim Musa told Lampen that any failure to hear cases easily led to accusations from his people that 'the Nazir had become proud and would make himself Sultan'.[476] In another case, when Beni Halba people increasingly moved away from their *dar* in the late 1930s, officials suggested that one reason for this was the inadequate functioning of the court: 'the dilatory behaviour of the court mirrors the *nazir's* own laziness and it has been responsible for a feeling of discontent and lack of respect for authority'.[477]

Indeed, what is most striking about some of the more effective Native Courts was their popularity with ordinary people. By making demands that their chiefs should settle the cases, people transacted or contracted with chiefs, rather than simply being subjected to their will. Chiefs could make the most of the popularity of their courts

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[473] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/45.
[474] Ibid., SAD 735/1/45.
[475] Cf the similar points made by Asad's informants in 'Inequality', p. 142.
[476] Ibid., SAD 734/8/25.
[477] DCSDD, Note on Beni Halba, 1940, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2.

to increase their prestige with administrators. Ibrahim Musa complained to Lampen that

> I have no peace in this tribe: I hear their cases till my heads grows dizzy when they come and shake me from my bed to hear their complaints… if I don't settle their cases they stay and live on me for days and must drink tea and sugar and eat meat every day. I would be happier if I was a Rizeqi with no office and could mind my cattle.[478]

This was not merely a calculated performance: in Baggara ideas about authority, there is a strong emphasis on how leaders suffer as well as benefit from their position.[479] But these ideas fitted well with peculiarly colonial conceptions of duty and sacrifice: the 'white man's burden.' There is also an echo here of the demand on Lampen to provide tea and food for his petitioners at the *merkaz*. Chief and official were caught in the same web of obligations implied by their positions of authority.Lampen also observed that nothing would 'prevent the democratic Arab from calling him Ibrahim without any added title of honour, and from demanding an audience at any time of day or night'. Ibrahim 'did not spare himself in seeing cases… often till sunset he sat before his tent or beneath a tree and one by one the petitioners came forward'.[480] It was not just Lampen that was persuaded of Ibrahim's ability as court president: officials throughout the colonial period noted Ibrahim's ability to make decisions that his people perceived as just, and that he was 'personally regarded as *bakhit* [a blessed man]' by his subjects.

Courts were, then, a theatre in which the personal authority of the chief was reproduced in the hearing and settling of cases, and in interaction between chiefs and 'subjects'. Yet on the other hand they were also tools of the bureaucratization of local governance. 'Native Courts' were actually established in Darfur with the intention of regularizing and controlling chiefly power. Chiefs in the earlier years of colonial rule in Darfur had already been given grants of judicial powers, but had operated without effective control on their activity by colonial officials. Attempts to

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[478] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/25.
[479] For instance see Cunnison, *Baggara*, p. 152.
[480] Ibid., SAD 734/8/28.

regularize these powers under the 'Powers of Nomad Sheikhs Ordinance' of 1922 had in fact done little to control what was often seen as widespread corruption. But from 1928, it was hoped that the establishment of formalised, increasingly bureaucratised courts, would allow the administration to more effectively survey chiefly justice. Lampen explained the intended impact of the new system in Southern Darfur in 1928:

> cases should only be heard and fines awarded in open court at a fixed place and so far as possible at fixed times with named elders sitting with the Nazir. This prevented the Nazir holding private courts in their compounds with slaves to overawe the accused and parasites as elders.[481]

Written court records made it possible, to some extent, for the DC to examine the chief's decisions: at the least, failure to maintain records was increasingly seen as a departure from the bureaucratic obligations that now came with chieftaincy. So whilst seemingly a move towards greater devolution and concentration of power in the hands of the chief, the establishment of 'Native Courts' in fact often went hand in hand by greater *merkaz* supervision of local affairs: in one DC's words 'devolution requires in effect more real work in supervision in its initial stages than does direct administration'.[482]

Many chiefs were often painfully aware of the limits imposed on their autonomy by the creation of formal courts. In Dar Lewing in Zalingei, *Shartay* Yusef Abdullahi ran the Guldo district court, but saw it as an 'unfortunate innovation' and 'an infringement on his feudal rights'.[483] Before the Guldo court had been set up, *Shartay* Yussef had been notorious for forcing adulterers to work on his personal cultivations. But the establishment of Native Courts in Zalingei had gone alongside an effort to codify local customary law, and fixed scales of fines were then established. Many of the young men in Dar Lewing subsequently approached the *shartay's* court 'insisting that past punishments had exceeded the powers laid down in the new courts, and that Shartay Yussef should pay up most of the past excessive

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[481] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/178.
[482] Zalingei District Annual Report 1947, NRO Darfur 2.D.Fasher(A) 47/7/26.
[483] Zalingei District Annual Report 1941, NRO Darfur 2.D.Fasher (A) 4/23.

fines'.[484] Thus the newly fixed rules of so-called 'customary law' might be used as resources by local subjects to assert their own rights. Lampen's account of Baggara courts also suggests that when petitioners gained a written court summons for a plaintiff to appear in the court, such a summons could be used as pressure to resolve disputes informally without bringing a case to formal hearing.[485] The bureaucratic technologies of the Native Court might therefore also be used as prompts to ensure an informal, personalised settlement. Indeed, an important flaw with the argument that courts created an all-powerful chiefly despotism was the continued reality of judgements being made informally in more local, intimate settings than that of the *nazir* or *shartay's* Native Court.[486]

Nonetheless, it would be naïve to assert that courts were well-oiled bureaucratic institutions, or that they were intended to be such. The codification of customary law in Zalingei was the exception rather than the rule: elsewhere the 'customary' remained more flexible and therefore more negotiable and personalised. DCs themselves might encourage this flexibility in the workings of the system. Lampen felt that the most valuable role of the Baggara courts was their role in dealing with 'that which gets registered in no book: being the domestic quarrel which has been brought for advice and not for judgement'.[487] Courts were centres for the discussion of moral norms as well as for the imposition of a chief's judgement. Indeed, officials were sometimes unhappy with courts that operated in too overtly a 'bureaucratic' manner. Moore suggested that the Berti court in Northern Darfur paid 'too much attention to law at the expense of justice'.[488] Moore also tolerated the Zaghawa court's failure to bring camel 'thieves' before the courts (given the social, political and economic importance of camel raids in Zaghawa society), and the tendency of the court to impose fines on those 'thieves' who were sentenced rather than impose tougher sentences of imprisonment.[489] Even in 1953 a government report

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[484] Boustead, *Wind*, p. 116.
[485] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/29.
[486] Ibid., SAD 734/9/96.
[487] Ibid., SAD 735/4/73.
[488] NDD Monthly Diary, September 1937, NRO Darfur 5/4/13.
[489] DCNDD to Governor 2 July 1949, NRO Kuttum A (41)/2/8.

complained that DCs in Darfur were careless in their checking of court records, and that bureaucratic control of the courts remained far from complete.[490]

Yet courts were institutions that operated according to certain predictable norms and conventions which were acted out by chiefs, litigants and witnesses in concert. Lampen describes the ordered theatre of Ibrahim Musa's court: 'The petitioners sat in an orderly enough fashion in a big group and on seeing the present case was done with for the time being two or three would start up, and he who was beckoned by the *nazir* would come forward.' Petitioners then performed their part in the drama. They 'told their tale: sometimes with great confidence and gesture, sometimes with downcast eyes and drawing in the sand or marking off their points therein and then rubbing the tale out with a palm as they concluded'. The capacity to tell a good story was highly esteemed in Rizeigat society, and many petitioners showed great skill 'in setting out a case'.[491] Using a chief's court was then not just an opportunity to resolve a dispute, but also a chance to demonstrate individual skills of oratory, skills which might enhance or assert one's standing within the community. And clearly both chief and petitioner had to perform within a set of conventions, the chief inviting the litigant to speak, and the litigant then providing an oral narrative of their case. This was justice as public theatre: and via the acting out of procedural conventions, this oral performance became itself part of the institutionalisation of chiefly authority.

Rather than simply creating opportunities for the enactment of chiefly despotism, courts could also be sites of debate, negotiation and mutual performance between chiefs and subjects, performances which were also intermittently observed and judged by an additional audience member: the touring district commissioner. The DC took note of court records, but their view of courts were shaped more by the extent to which chiefs and subjects put on a convincing performance of mutually satisfactory dispute resolution, than by their adherence to bureaucratic procedure. A

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[490] Haig Chief Inspector Judicial Local Government Branch to Civil Secretary, 5 Jan 1953, NRO Darfur 6/7/19. Also cf. B. Shadle, 'Changing traditions to meet current altering conditions: customary law, African courts and the rejection of codification in Kenya, 1930-1960', *Journal of African History*, 40, pp. 411-431.

[491] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/57.

chief's justice need not adhere to the formal functions of the courts as set out in their warrants, or entail the imposition of the punishments that colonial warrants bestowed on these courts. But it did have to demonstrate the good judgement of the chief, his capacity to keep order in his court, and the (at least apparently) willing participation of ordinary people in the construction of the chief's and thus the court's authority. Native Courts are perhaps the clearest example of the interaction between 'formal' and 'informal' modes of authority in Darfur.

6. From chiefs to councillors

The late colonial period, from the 1940s onwards, offered chiefs opportunities to perform on new stages, beyond the confines of the Native Court and the 'tribal gathering'. At a local level, the shift towards 'Local Government' and the creation of district councils was an important change for chiefs. Local Government was explicitly intended by policy-makers as a turn towards more 'modern', bureaucratic forms of local government in the so-called era of colonial developmentalism, away from the 'amateurish' vagary of complete reliance on the personal authority of chiefs.[492] This created new tensions for chiefs who had become used to the importance of manipulating the personal relationship between themselves and their DC: Ibrahim Musa's chief concern about Local Government was to know 'Is anyone to come between me and the DC?'[493] Increasingly chiefs had to work with their neighbouring rivals, and build relationships along horizontal as well as vertical lines. But councils presented opportunities for chiefs as well as pressures. Becoming councillors added complexity to, rather than replaced, their more established roles as intermediaries, and created new varieties of interaction between bureaucratic and personalised modes of authority. Moreover, chiefs also took advantage of the new opportunity to perform on the national stage, adapting rapidly to the opening up of nationalist politics. And as an important generational shift in the chieftaincy elite also occurred in these years, it was an increasingly educated set of younger leaders who performed these new roles.

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[492] C. Vaughan, 'Reinventing the wheel? Local government and neo-traditional authority in late colonial northern Sudan'. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 43 (2010), p. 261.
[493] Lampen, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 21 Jan, 1946, SAD 524/4.

From 1941 onwards, and particularly between 1948 and 1950, many Darfuri chiefs died or were sometimes dismissed, men who had been fixtures of Darfur politics since the 1920s. The Beni Halba, Habbania, Fellata, Masalit and the Zaghawa of Dar Tuar, amongst others, saw the appearance of new, younger leaders. These new men had been educated as young men in government *kuttabs* (elementary schools) in the various districts of Darfur, and most significantly in the El Fasher *kuttab*, located at the heart of provincial administration. Colonial administrators had always been nervous that this experience might disrupt the imagined natural link between a chief and his people. When Endoka once proposed to stretch the norms and send his sons to Gordon College in Khartoum to be trained as *qadis*, his request was turned down as potentially creating a wedge between his sons who would become '*effendi* princes' and the 'people of the *dar*'.[494] Similarly, officials worried about Ali El Ghaali, *nazir* of the Habbania from 1941, that 'his building of a four-roomed red brick house, his interest in wireless, newspaper, books, his manners towards his elders are all out of place in a young *nazir* of a Baggara tribe and he has not the sense to realise the gap they make between him and his followers'.[495] A factional dispute within the Habbania almost cost Ali his position, but interestingly he was finally supported by officials as 'a modern young man who keeps abreast of events' with 'a quick brain'.[496] The central tension in the role of chief, between his capacity to speak the 'modern' language of the government, and the 'local' language of his people, remained.

Chiefs' sons were undergoing increasingly structured forms of preparation for their future roles. Yet the training they underwent often also continued to encourage the respect of what were imagined to be 'traditional norms' as well as bureaucratic competence. Boustead, DC in Western Darfur from 1935-1948, took personal responsibility for training the sons of the district *shartays*:

> We dressed them simply in white *damur* (local cotton) *gibba* and shorts, with
> a green turban as a distinguishing mark for a chief's son. They were

[494] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1925/6, NRO CIVSEC (1)1/18/58.
[495] DC Southern Darfur District (SDD) to Governor Darfur, 5 Apr. 1945, NRO 2.D Fasher 54/3/14.
[496] Sherman, DC SDD, Report on Habbania-Rizeigat boundary dispute, 3 Jan. 1949, ibid.

nicknamed either Green Hats, or the *Abu arbain* (Fathers of Forty) because they received forty piastres, about eight shillings, a month. When I went on trek, they sat on top of the lorry; and at each chief's centre they had to prune the forest trees around the area in the early morning and check over all the books of schools, courts and health centres. They poured tea for the elders and their fathers, and attended all conferences. On the return journey from tour they were dropped off the lorry to find their own way home on foot, forty or fifty miles across country, within a time limit... This somewhat Spartan training paid a hundred-fold.[497]

Boustead's training was intended to balance and complement the somewhat effeminizing effects of the school-room, to preserve the rugged masculinity of the new generation of chiefs, whilst simultaneously making the boys familiar with the processes of inspecting and evaluating written records. Pouring tea for the elders was also an obvious performance of respect from the young to the old. Once training as 'Green Hats' had been completed, after one or two years of service during school vacations, the young men spent two years with the police, assisting in the management of road or well building, thus gaining experience at the coercive end of colonial governance. They finally returned to act as fully paid executive officers of their fathers' *dars*. The content of this training was a combination of the imagined 'traditional' and the 'modern'.

Nonetheless, it was increasingly clear that the new generation of chiefs were more closely associated with the 'bureaucratic' ways of the government. Ali Mohammedein, son of Melik Mohammedein of the Tuar Zaghawa, acted as Court Clerk for his father from 1938 and Court Treasurer from 1943. Upon coming to power in 1949 after his father's deposition he rapidly cleared up tax arrears, reorganised the court registers and started passing heavy sentences upon camel thieves: very much the efficient bureaucrat, in contrast to his father, dismissed as part of an 'illiterate generation'.[498] He even burnt down sacred trees that were believed to be sapping water from newly dug wells, despite the reluctance of local

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[497] Boustead, *Wind*, p. 124.
[498] NDD Annual Report, 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/6/29.

elders to do so.[499] Moreover, settlements where the Zaghawa chiefs' courts were established were increasingly populated with government institutions such as schools, dispensaries and markets. Zaghawa chiefs were now increasingly sedentary even as their people remained mobile pastoralists, suggesting a growing gulf between chief and people.[500]

This growing bureaucratization of the chief's role was also reflected in the institutional settings in which they functioned. Despite the rhetoric that presented local councils as modern institutions, within which the educated elite could influence local affairs, it was clear that 'traditional' elites continued to dominate these institutions in rural Sudan as they were set up through the 1940s.[501] Well after the major Local Government Ordinance of 1951, which to some extent attempted to draw a line between council membership and employment by the Native Administration, it was acknowledged that 'the initiative and leadership in the affairs of rural councils inevitably comes from the tribal authorities…without their support and experience councils would be spineless'.[502]

In Darfur, this was especially true.[503] In particular, Dar Masalit was only placed under Sudanese local government law in 1953: in 1954 there was still no formal council.[504] Yet elsewhere in the province chiefs were expected to perform new kinds of roles in the theatre of council meetings, theatres which they still dominated. 'Local Government' was, in part, a disciplinary exercise, intended by the British to be a training ground for Sudanese political independence. Chiefs therefore should perform in a more statesman-like way: and one of the key ways they were to achieve this was by abiding by the conventions of bureaucratic council procedure and etiquette. One official noted a perceived improvement in inter-tribal relations in Northern Darfur when its District Council was created: 'the procedure of council discussions and the value of orderly debate was previously unknown to the majority

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[499] El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed-Salih, Social Stratification among the Zaghawa Muslim Community in the Sudan (MPhil St Andrews 1988), p. 37.
[500] Harir, *Numbers*, pp.40, 156.
[501] Vaughan, 'Reinventing', p. 261.
[502] L.M. Buchanan, address to Makerere College in Uganda, 1956, SAD 797/9/113.
[503] For instance, NDD Annual Report 1947, NRO 2.D.Fasher A 47/7/26.
[504] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1952/3, NRO 2.D Fasher A (47)9/33; Dar Masalit Annual Report 1953/4, NRO 2.D Fasher A (47)/9/34.

of its members'.[505] By their orderly performance, chiefs were to assert the existence of more integrated local political communities.

Yet more well-established discourses persisted in council. One DC suggested that Local Government was 'the name given to the umbrella covering tribalism'.[506] The Governor of Darfur noted that councils found that '(tribal) boundaries are more interesting matters to discuss than district development'.[507] Whilst the development agenda of the late colonial era had a very limited impact in Darfur, nonetheless chiefs still competed among themselves to secure the limited resources of the colonial state as patronage for their own clients. A DC remarked that 'to obtain approval for a new school is regarded by one tribal leader as a personal triumph over another who failed'.[508] Chiefs therefore used their increasingly bureaucratic role in council to sustain their own patron-client networks..

Some of the councils were principally seen by ordinary people as the latest addition to the Native Courts system, where chiefs of a district now sat together to decide on cases, not fundamentally new administrative decision-making bodies. This was not an unreasonable view, as Northern Darfur District Council, for example, was the supreme court of appeal within the district, hearing cases from all the Native Courts, and any petitions brought by the inhabitants of NDD.[509] The DC in 1949 expressed concern at this: 'petitioners imagine the NDD council takes place in order that their cases may be heard and they cannot understand that the Council's primary task is to sit as a council to discuss affairs of the district'. The council building at Kuttum was 'often surrounded by a mob of vociferous *mazalim* [oppressed subjects]' and the DC foresaw that any future attempt to remove the judicial aspect of the council's role would cause problems.[510] Chiefs still had obligations to settle the disputes of their clients and subjects.

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[505] NDD Annual Report 1945, NRO Darfur 5/2/10.
[506] SDD Annual Report 1949, NRO Darfur 47/6/29.
[507] Lampen, Governor Darfur to DCs Darfur, 'Note on Local Government', 28 Oct 1948, NRO Darfur 6/7/18.
[508] SDD Annual Report 1949, NRO Darfur 47/6/29.
[509] NDD Annual Report 1945, NRO Darfur 5/2/10.
[510] NDD Annual Report 1949, NRO Darfur 47/6/29.

Alongside changes in local government structures, there was also increasing contact between the provincial chieftaincy elite and Sudan's nationalist politics. Darfur was remote from the centres of political activity but chiefs were very capable of using nationalist discourse to gain access for them or their families to new positions of influence. Some chiefs saw the *Umma* party in particular (which campaigned for outright independence for the Sudan, led by Sayyed Abd al-Rahman, often referred to by the British as SAR, the son of the Mahdi) as a threat to their own authority: an understandable perspective given that chiefs had been used by the colonial state against the spread of Mahdism. Yet most chiefs seized on the opportunities afforded by national politics to extend their influence and resources of patronage. In the build-up to the national elections of 1953, chiefs took an active role in party politics in Darfur. Almost all the *omdas* of the Berti and Zayaddia in Northern Darfur joined the Umma party in 1952. The Berti *melik* at Mellit, where over 1000 supporters greeted SAR on a 1952 visit, was the president of the local Umma party branch.[511] In Western Darfur, in contrast, most of the *shartays* supported the NUP, the party that campaigned for union between Sudan and Egypt. One, *shartay* Ahmed Shatta in Dar Tebella, was elected to parliament: in theory at this point he should have given up his position as chief, but the DC, allowed him to keep this role too, to avoid potential 'plotting' and instability that might result from Shatta's dismissal.[512] Shatta, with the connivance of the state, successfully bridged the national and local stages. In Northern Darfur, all but one of the candidates standing for election in 1953 were chiefs or members of chiefly families.[513]

Chiefs therefore used their personal status and prestige to adapt to the new institutional opportunities and constraints of the late colonial years. Their roles were increasingly bureaucratized, but they maintained their position as crucial intermediaries between local societies and the state. Bureaucratisation in late colonial Darfur therefore depended on the personal authority of the chiefs; chiefs meanwhile expanded the reach of their personal networks by participation in the

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[511] NDDMD Jan/Feb 1952, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/14/48.
[512] WDD Annual Report 1953/4, NRO 2.D Fasher A (47)/9/34. The same happened in Southern Dar Masalit, where the *omda* of Geneina kept both his office and was elected to the Assembly: see Dar Masalit Monthly Diary October 1953, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/14/48.
[513] NDDMD, October/November 1953, ibid.

new institutional settings created by the state. Moreover, whilst younger chiefs appear to have become more culturally distant from their people in these later colonial years, they also continued to be subject to the expectations of their subjects: that they provide justice and represent local interests to government. Finally, the election of chiefs or members of their families to positions in parliament, demonstrated the interpenetration between local elites and nationalist politics: the politics of the periphery was increasingly making its presence felt at the core.

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised the importance of often consciously theatrical performance in the practice of colonial authority. Capable chiefs knew what sort of talk would please the administrator; ordinary people performed according to the conventions of court sessions in order to make demands on their chiefs; some officials performed the part of Sultan or chief, in attempts to disguise their very obviously alien origins. In the course of enacting their performances, officials and chiefs sometimes moved into a border zone between coloniser and colonised, where each took on some of the behaviours of the other, without ever fully or permanently crossing between these two cultural worlds. But in emphasising their points of commonality rather than points of difference, they created a common elite identity, oriented around their access to state power and their mastery of colonial discourse. This separated them from the people at large, the *nas*, as ordinary people were often termed. Officials and chiefs looked down on their subjects from a position of common superiority, watching parades together at tribal gatherings from comfortable chairs in leafy shade, discussing the moral weaknesses of the 'natives', and sharing the power to apply the coercive force of the state to enforce their legal judgements. Yet at other moments both officials and chiefs (to differing degrees) tried to produce effects of intimacy with their subjects. This political elite was therefore caught in the uncertainty of wanting to create both a distant and intimate relationship to local society: to be both part of (or associated with) the remote abstract state, yet simultaneously to grasp the needs and interests of their people. This dilemma in a sense also created opportunities for local actors, who could access and imagine the state in differing ways: they could appeal both to personalised

patron-client ties as well as the abstract legal norms that were associated with the claim to be 'the state'.

Moreover, the repetitive and predictable tropes of the various performances discussed in this chapter contributed to the institutionalisation of colonial authority. In this way the dichotomy between the formal and informal which Chabal and Daloz's account assumes, fails to take account of how apparently informal practices actually operate according to well understood institutionalised norms.[514] This was not just the case with regard to the behaviour of elites: when ordinary people attempted to use or access the power of the state or their chief, they participated in the performances of colonial authority, playing their roles in tribal gatherings, court hearings, or personal contact with district officials. They possessed agency: they could access authority on their own terms, and contribute to the authorship of colonial political rituals, sometimes subverting the meanings assigned to these events by officials. Yet their participation in these various theatres and the ways in which they contracted with state and chiefly power, ultimately reinforced the institutionalisation of colonial authority, in its simultaneously personalised and abstract form.

This chapter has focussed largely on successful performances of authority. Yet chiefs could lose their position if administrators were not convinced by their performance, particularly when their rivals or ordinary people vigorously pointed out deviations from the script. Such depositions, frequent in Darfur, are therefore revealing of just how powerful this process of institutionalisation was. The next chapter develops these points in a close examination of chieftaincy disputes.

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[514] Chabal and Daloz, *Works,* p. 6.

Chapter 4: 'The ruler who has no thorn is of no avail, unless I prick them they will become disobedient': chieftaincy disputes and state authority c. 1921-1956

Chieftaincy was a key focus of local political contest in Darfur throughout the colonial period. Where chiefs failed to perform to the expectations of either their subjects or the officials who supervised them, their position became precarious, and they were sometimes deposed by state officials. Moreover, factional politics was intense: the chief's office was always a focus for the ambition of rival sections or lineages within the 'tribal' unit. Vigorous protest against chiefs, rather than humbled acquiescence, was especially obvious among pastoralist peoples in both northern and southern Sudan, where the crucial centralized judicial role played by chiefs was more obviously a novelty than in the 'Fur heartland' of the old Sultanate.[515] But the protests that arose were rather different from the attempts at violent rebellion against the state of 1921 or 1927, discussed in Chapter 2. Existing interpretations of the protests arising from colonial policies of Indirect Rule have often emphasized the destabilizing effect these had on colonial authority, and the limits of colonial control that were exposed by such conflicts. For Spear, protests against chiefs in late colonial Tanganyika were 'indirectly challenging colonial authority itself'.[516] Yet Berry's analysis of chieftaincy disputes in Asante notes that 'both chiefs and commoners were as likely to appeal to the administration for support in their struggles with one another as to combine in opposition to colonial rule'.[517] In the case of Darfur, protestors were *more* likely to appeal to the administration, than to combine in opposition to colonial rule. Following the failures of early rebellions against government, the politically discontented chose to 'contract' with the state in order to achieve their goals.[518]

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[515] See chapter 1: *shartays* did have significant state-derived judicial roles in the core of the pre-colonial Sultanate.

[516] T. Spear, *Mountain Farmers: Moral economies of land and agricultural development* (Oxford, 1997), p. 194. See also A.E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect rule in southeastern Nigeria* (London, 1973).

[517] Berry, *Chiefs*, p. 37.

[518] Peterson, 'Plays', p. 633.

This chapter argues, therefore, that protest against chiefs, rather than subverting the system of Native Administration, actually reinforced its political hegemony in Darfur. Protest was a form of negotiation between officials, chiefs and local people over the legitimacy of particular chiefs, but not a challenge to the institution of chieftaincy itself, nor to the authority of the state, bar the occasional fight between protestors and police. People demanded a different chief, or their own chief within the existing administrative framework.[519] And protest explicitly recognized the state's authority to intervene in local politics. The form which protests took therefore demonstrated the institutionalization of the system of Native Administration.

The history of chieftaincy disputes in Darfur also therefore adds complexity to histories of Condominium Sudan which have emphasised the distance between government and society, and the local perception of government as an extractive force to be avoided.[520] In the context of protest against chiefs, engagement with representatives of the state, rather than the preservation of distance, was crucial to achieving local political goals. Although ostensibly directed against the chiefs, protest was often also designed to attract the attention of British officials: to bring them into the detail of the chief's alleged misdeeds and local ideas about legitimate or illegitimate sources and practices of authority. And to some extent the practice of protest echoed the demands for the recognition of the ruler (and the status such recognition implied) by subjects at tribal gatherings: one official saw protest in Dar Habbania as characterized by 'the individual Habbani pushing himself forward simply to be known to Government'.[521] People pursued their own political ambition by directing protest against incumbent chiefs to administrators.

Moreover, the methods which protestors used suggest that they were not mystified by 'state effects' – rather than seeing the state as a detached abstract entity, they used both written and oral appeals to gain support from *individuals* located at different levels within the state system. When directing protest to Khartoum,

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[519] A point that Berry also makes in *Chiefs*, p. 39. Demands for 'their own chief' refers to cases where groups were put under the authority of a chief from a dominant neighbouring group, and protested against this.
[520] Willis, '*Hukm*', p. 50; also 'Gatherings'; Leonardi, *Knowing*; 'Violence'.
[521] Baggara ADC to Governor, 12 Dec. 1926, NRO 2.D.Fasher 54/3/12.

activists often made their appeals in writing. While these were often rejected, their occasional success suggested that some Darfuris might have agreed with the Nuer woman who said to Sharon Hutchinson that 'it is better to talk to the *turuk* [government] in his own language … which means you must speak to him through paper'.[522] But appeals to Khartoum might also take the form of personal, face-to-face audiences with senior officials. Personal interactions with actors at the very heart of the *hakuma* meant that local elites perceived, correctly, that government, even the remote bureaucracy in Khartoum, was made up of individuals that could be influenced. The state was not a structure which existed on an abstract plane, containing and ordering everything below it: rather Darfuris knew well that it was made up of multiple and sometimes competing agents. Protestors could, on occasion, exploit the distance between DCs and central government to their own advantage.

Nonetheless, it was not always easy for those discontented with the rule of their chief to gain access to state representatives, in order to make the force of their protest felt. An important skill for a successful chief was the capacity to enforce some distance between state officials and his people: to reinforce the sense of a distinct boundary between state power and ordinary people. Protestors in many cases broke down that boundary, yet some chiefs were successful in keeping contact between officials and ordinary people to an absolute minimum. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates just how important the varied personal relations between chiefs and officials were in determining the outcome of many of these protests. Strong patron-client ties between officials and chiefs could counter-balance the claims made by protestors: weak personal relationships made the work of protest much easier.

Many officials were predisposed to support chiefs against protestors: they often regarded activists as truculent, troublesome types, who were a danger to local order. Nonetheless, as we will see, however strong official prejudice might have been, there were cases in which the sheer persistence of protest forced the administration into taking action against their chiefly allies. Officials ultimately aimed to avoid

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[522] S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas* (Berkeley,1996) p. 284.

direct protest against the state, and to ensure that taxation could be effectively collected and that the Native Court system would keep functioning. These uneasy negotiations over the limits of chiefly legitimacy therefore demonstrate the limits of colonial despotism in Darfur, but not the weakness of the colonial state.

1. Languages of protest

Protestors were well aware of the inherent tensions in the chief's position as intermediary between state and local society. They knew that the state expected chiefs to have 'natural' local legitimacy: in particular, that chiefs were meant to share a common cultural identity with their subjects. They were also well aware that the state, in theory at least, presented itself as an upholder of colonial law. These were central facts behind the formulation of protest. Indeed, protestors marshaled a key aspect of the ideology of Native Administration – that chiefs should rule naturally coherent tribal groups – against their chiefs, particularly when colonial government, for reasons of expedience, amalgamated previously independent groups or communities into single administrative units. Protestors also challenged chiefs on the basis that they did not share a common culture with their subjects – that, in fact, they were too close to the government, or perhaps to the culture of riverine Sudan, to be legitimate local rulers. Such claims therefore often challenged colonial government on the grounds of its failure to effectively implement the policy it claimed to govern by. These claims were not easy to ignore – yet neither did they fundamentally challenge the colonial assumption that local identity units should be governed by their own chiefs. In this way protest, somewhat paradoxically, fed into the overall hegemony of 'Native Administration' in Darfur.

Colonial officials frequently amalgamated groups which they imagined as separate ethnic communities into larger, more convenient administrative units. In particular, as much as they claimed to be ruling through 'natural' tribal groupings, officials often subordinated the chiefs of smaller groups to the chiefs of larger groups. On occasion the creation of a new paramount leadership position was implemented at the behest of demands from below: 'we are like cattle without a herdsman'

complained one *shartay* to his DC.[523] But more often, amalgamation caused discontent when implemented from above, and could result in vigorous protest. In pastoralist areas, groups who previously looked to their own leaders to allocate or settle disputes over crucial grazing or watering resources might have been subordinated to the control of leaders of groups with whom they were previously competing for such resources. Attempts to subordinate the Ma'alia to the authority of the Rizeigat led to repeated protests against Ibrahim Musa's authority by marginalized Ma'alia elites.[524] Such protest was rarely spontaneously produced from below: rather excluded local elites played a key role in mobilizing support. Moreover, as a matter of course, 'tribes' themselves were, as political units, often an awkward amalgamation of relatively autonomous sections under the greatly increased judicial authority of a single paramount. Conflict within the Habbania tribe between the dominant Riafa and Shibool sections over the occupancy of the paramountcy was continuous from the creation of the position under Turco-Egyptian rule and throughout the period of British administration.[525] And the colonial state also sometimes engaged in the unpopular amalgamations of smaller sub-sections into larger administrative units even within tribes. In the Zaghawa *dars* in the 1950s many minor *dimlijs* lost their positions, as the numerous *dimlijias* were amalgamated into *omodias*, in turn under the authority of the *melik* or *shartay*. One disenfranchised sub-group got into an outright fight with police over their refusal to pay taxes via their new *omda*.[526] Meddling with the lower levels of the chiefly hierarchies could be therefore be just as controversial as intervening in the politics of paramountcy: fights with the police also presented a momentary challenge to state authority when government became too overtly associated with an unpopular leader.

It is also significant that some of the most vociferous disputes were over the legitimacy of amalgamations that had been enacted by the Sultans themselves, often in the nineteenth century, and which were still contested. In 1940 leaders of a discontented sub-section of the Galla Zaghawa, the Genigergera, subordinated to the

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[523]   Boustead, DC Zalingei to Perham, 29. Apr. 1938, RHO MSS Perham 536/3.

[524]   See ADC SDD to Governor 10 Apr. 1932, NRO CIVSEC 66/12/107 and Crawford diaries, SAD 502/5-7 passim.

[525] See files NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/12, 54/3/14 for extensive documentation of Habbania disputes, some of which is discussed below.

[526] Harir, 'Numbers', p. 149.

Galla *shartays* since the early nineteenth century, reasserted their independence by rioting in the *shartay's* house and threatening him with a knife. They accused the *shartay* of illegally 'eating' their sheep, as they were 'not his people'.[527] The British therefore did not always simply create the situations which led to protest: sometimes they were faced with existing conflicts which their judicial and administrative empowerment of individual chiefs exacerbated.

Indeed, this empowerment of individual leaders, via the creation of Native Courts with powers of fining and imprisonment, also resulted in predictable abuses by those so empowered. Such abuses were not always passively accepted by ordinary people. When the Beni Halba *nazir,* Ibrahim Debaka, was said to be 'stinging the *nas* for hundreds of cattle in fines', one of his *omdas* was murdered while on tax collection in 1927.[528] Indeed, the Baggara more generally were amongst the most vocal of Darfur's populations in protesting against bribery and personal taxation collected by their chiefs. When criticizing the behaviour of chiefs some protestors appealed, in a clearly instrumental fashion, to colonial legalistic norms: Moore noted of the Meidobi elite that they were 'quick to observe the opportunities afforded by the thorough dislike of the new Government for thieves, robbers and their harbourers'.[529]

Chiefs were intended to be cultural intermediaries and translators between government and 'tribal' society: in official eyes they could not fulfil this function adequately if they did not share a common culture with their people. Protestors, well aware of this expectation, sometimes suggested that chiefs were oppressive because they were not really 'of the people.' Complainants suggested that a Taaisha *nazir*, Zubair Sam, 'was not a Taaishi but half a Salami, a mule they called him in their fury'.[530] Disputing a chief's ethnic origins was a powerful tactic to use in front of government officials who placed tribal identities at the heart of their administration. Native Administration elites also struggled to garner legitimacy when they did not

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[527] Proceedings of the Zaghawa Court, 22 July 1940, NRO Darfur Kuttum A 41/3/9.
[528] McIntosh DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 22 Nov. 1927, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/15.
[529] Moore, note on Jebel Meidob (nd), NRO CIVSEC (1)66/6/43. Cunnison suggests of the Humr Baggara in Kordofan that bribery incurred no shame within Humr society but allegations of bribery were frequently made against leaders to get government attention. *Baggara*, p. 121, 146.
[530] Lampen diaries, SAD 739/9/44.

speak local languages. Only three members of the Zalingei Emirate Court spoke Fur in 1935: when *shartays* gave the DC their opinion on an effective future president of the Court they emphasised that he 'must be one of our own people whom we know and understand and can understand the talk of the poorest Fur as well as the foreign Arab and other strangers'.[531] More generally, if chiefs appeared too close to the government, and too distant from their people, then they could also lose support from below. The Fellata *nazir* of the 1920s, Abu Homeira, is today remembered as having been inaccessible and lazy, unsociable, stingy. But worst of all, whenever he had any problems of governance he would run to talk to the British: he talked too much to the British and not enough to the people.[532] In 1932 Homeira was dismissed following complaints against his rule addressed to the Governor of Darfur at a tribal gathering in Southern Darfur.[533]

Sub-chiefs were perhaps particularly vulnerable to claims from below that they did not protect the interests of their people. This was because sub-chiefs were, by virtue of their position, closer to ordinary people than a paramount chief: to some extent indeed they functioned as a shield against the demands of the paramount, setting some limits to the authority of the *nazir*. One DC was told by a Rizeigat informant that *omdas*

> were most necessary because they acted as a buffer between the *Nazir* and the people - he said that a family like the Madibbos had blood feuds with many families and that *omdas* in a kind of way took the shock of such cases - as a rule the people were only interested in picking an *omda* who was kind to them - this is probably true for on the whole I have never seen such a useless lot of *omdas* anywhere.[534]

[531] Zalingei Emirate Annual Report 1935, NRO CIVSEC (1)1/23/68 and H.Boustead, 'Note on Emir Mohammed Fadl's regime as a Native Administration', RHO MSS Perham 547/5.
[532] Interview with Fellata *wakil nazir*, Mukhtar Abdel Rahman, Khartoum, 12 Nov. 2008.
[533] Note on change of nazirship for Fellata Nomads, 3 Jan. 1932, NRO CIVSEC 1/22/65.
[534] Crawford diaries, 23 Feb, 1933, SAD 502/5/51. This is also consistent with Cunnison, *Baggara*, p. 194, where he also suggests that the key function of Humr *sheikhs* to their community was to advance capital in the form of cattle, and to 'perhaps minimize the number of stock declared' for the purposes of taxation. *Nazirs* were, in contrast, 'the ultimate dispensers of patronage'.

And importantly, while administrators officially appointed both paramount and most sub-chiefs, sub-chiefs were in practice often chosen by senior men of the section or clans whom they would be responsible for. Officials were often concerned to gauge local opinion when making appointments, even if they made their own priorities clear: they really did want these men to have some measure of local legitimacy. In Dar Anka, elders rejected a candidate for *dimlij* suggested by the DC: 'they actually profess to mistrust Hamadan because he could read and write'.[535] Perhaps his literacy might bring him into too close an association with the state. On another occasion a DC appointed a *sheikh* in Dar Artag 'of whom I know nothing' he admitted, but who was unanimously supported by elders of the kin group.[536]

Sub-chiefs were especially at risk if they were perceived to have grown too close to a paramount chief himself seen as illegitimate or despotic. Zaghawa *sheikhs* in Dar Artag complained that their *dimlij* Osman Omar was 'a sneak and is in Melik Tahir's [the paramount's] pocket'. This particular language of protest did not, however, appeal to the government: the DC suggested of this critique that 'I can well imagine that this is correct. Osman is an oily little man but he is also studiously correct as far as can be discovered in his official duties.'[537] This particular protest was ignored. However, at other times the force of local protest prompted by similar concerns might make an unpopular sub-chief's position untenable. Another Zaghawa sub-chief responsible for the Genigergera lasted five years before he was forced to resign by the pressure of protestors accusing him, interestingly, 'of being the Government and the Shartai's man'.[538] The government did not demand his reinstatement.

British officials were also convinced of Darfur's distinct identity from Khartoum, Omdurman and 'the river'. Leaders who appeared to be too obviously linked to this urban, sophisticated 'eastern' culture, struggled to gain the respect of colonial officials, and were easy prey for local rivals. The second Habbania *nazir* of the colonial period, Mahmud Abu Saad, is worthy of detailed consideration in this respect. Mahmud had been paramount chief for some years under Turco-Egyptian

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[535] Dupuis, Governor Darfur, Note on headship Dar Anka Zaghawa 2/4/29, NRO Darfur 31/164/13.
[536] Evans, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 27 Mar. 1923, ibid.
[537] DC NDD Moore 'Note on Dar Artag' 1 July 1935, ibid.
[538] Moore to Governor Note on Genigergera affairs 30 Sept. 1940, NRO Darfur Kuttum A 41/3/9.

rule, but had gone east to Omdurman during the migration of the Habbania under the Mahdiyya, and had become a mere *sheikh* of a town quarter. The British restored him to the *nazirate* in 1920. In the later years of his rule, in the mid 1920s, tribal 'discipline' declined steeply, as *sheikhs* refused to produce tax, men for labour, or suspects for trial. Officials believed this disorder stemmed from Mahmud's greater affinity with the culture of riverine Sudan than with the Habbania of Darfur. The ADC Baggara claimed the Habbania credited Mahmud with 'knowing how to talk to the government', but that they also held him in contempt because of his association with 'the river'.[539] One official noted 'his habits are sedentary… He appears to prefer the company of the *Gellaba* traders [Arabs from riverine Sudan] living at Buram to that of his own tribesmen'.[540] Mahmud did not follow the nomadic patterns of movement of his people; he did not enjoy intimate talk with them. Surely then, officials thought, his knowledge of the people, knowledge upon which the colonial administration was completely dependent, was lacking. Moreover, the richer men of the tribe complained that they were not entertained with 'lashings of tea and sugar'.[541] The ADC Baggara commented that the *nazir's* niggardliness was just 'good management in the east'.[542] Nonetheless the perception that Mahmud failed to fulfil the redistributive obligations of a senior chief persisted: stinginess was a severe failing. Mahmud was seen to be 'too anxious to be a *nazir* after his conception of the qualities the Government seeks in *nazirs*', and not enough in keeping with the expectations of his people.[543]

Just as problematically, the *omdas* who had been appointed at the *nazir's* behest when he took up his position, were 'nearly all strangers from the river… eastern in mode of life and thought, not Habbani of the *dar*'.[544] Additionally, Mahmud's son had previously been employed as a *murasla* (messenger) in the Public Works Department in Khartoum. Officials said he had 'brought his town bred manners and abuse with him and the people hate it'.[545] The chief's whole regime was then seen to

[539] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 12 Dec. 1926, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/12.
[540] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, ibid.
[541] Governor Darfur to ADC Baggara, 6 Sept. 1926, ibid.
[542] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 12 Dec. 1926, ibid.
[543] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 14 Mar. 1925, ibid.
[544] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur 14 Mar. 1925, ibid.
[545] Dupuis, Deputy Governor Darfur to Governor Darfur, 4 Feb. 1925, ibid.

be too distant from the people it governed to work effectively for the colonial state. Mahmud's chiefship was thrown into crisis.

Yet despite the lack of 'tribal discipline', and the claims that Mahmud was despised by his people, the ADC Baggara made quite contradictory statements suggesting that the *nazir* was *not* unpopular among the mass of his people – perhaps precisely because of his reluctance to enforce the demands of the state. Ordinary Habbania said to the ADC that Mahmud was 'an easy ruler and does not oppress the poor'.[546] Habbania elders, the *agawaid* as they were termed by officials, said that 'we like Mahmud. He is so *glahol'* – a word used to describe a horse that does not kick.[547] Mahmud was not necessarily hated by ordinary people – in fact, the complaints which the ADC reported seem to have been made by those Habbania elites who were excluded from power, particularly those who had not gone to Omdurman during the Mahdiyya.[548] This was an elite power struggle, rather than a deep gulf between chief and subjects, as well as a failure on Mahmud's part to fulfil the expectations of the state. Nonetheless, to explain Mahmud's failure to maintain discipline, official reports repeatedly focused on Mahmud's failure to perform an impression of cultural unity with his people. By playing on this perceived cultural difference, Mahmud's opponents had successfully undermined the *nazir's* standing with the administration.

2. Chiefs as gatekeepers: policing the boundary between state and society

Whilst overt perceived closeness to the government might cause a chief to lose support from his people, in the context of disputes and protest a chief might also be saved by a close relationship with administrators. Indeed, chiefs and protestors competed for the trust and attention of the DC to support their opposing positions. Chiefs therefore often tried to monopolise the DC's attention when he was on tour, acting as exclusionary gatekeepers between local communities and the government.

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[546] ADC Baggara to Govenor Darfur, 9 July 1926, ibid.
[547] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 12 Dec. 1926, ibid.
[548] Ibid.

They also attempted to feed the administrator a partial view of local affairs that would reinforce their own position. Enemies of the chief, meanwhile attempted to get around the gate, and establish direct communication with the men who had the power to depose a despised leader. Sometimes this might be achieved by personal, individual contact: at other times the public force of protest was needed to gain attention. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the tribal gathering was sometimes used by protestors to present their grievances to government. Attempting to achieve political goals therefore depended on gaining access to state power - not retaining distance from it.

Some chiefs were very skilled at limiting the interaction between administrators and their people. One of the reasons for Ibrahim Musa's success as *nazir* of the Rizeigat was his capacity to keep officials away from his people: Lampen noted 'an anxious desire to keep me from speaking to anyone whom he could not implicitly trust and I could see his eyes flash at anyone who dared to approach me save through him'.[549] Lampen remarked on the particular difficulties involved in 'getting news' in Dar Rizeigat.[550] Elsewhere, the people of the *shartays* of Zalingei were often kept at a distance from the DC by the chief's retainers.[551] A frequent strategy to prevent complaints reaching the DC was to collect only a part of the fine the chiefs imposed on an individual in a court case: the rest would be collected if an appeal was made against the judgement.[552] Moreover, chiefs were of course permanent appointees: once a DC had left the district they could take the opportunity to exact revenge on individuals who had made unsuccessful complaints.[553]

However, attempts to restrict the knowledge which officials could gain of local affairs were not always successful. Officials were often well aware of the partial view that chiefs provided them with: performances by the chiefs could be more or less convincing. One DC said of the *shartays* of Zalingei:

[549] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/28.
[550] Ibid., SAD 734/10/181.
[551] Sandison memoirs, SAD 691/5/137.
[552] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/4/45.
[553] Ibid., SAD 734/9/25.

I believe they regarded me as a representative of the Sultan – and everyone was expecting me to shout 'Off with his head'. So everything possible had to be done to prevent this. I could almost hear the older men saying to their sons 'Don't tell him more than you must. It always leads to disaster.' They pretended not to understand, they played the idiot boy, or merely told stupendous lies.[554]

Nor could chiefs always restrict contact between administrators and their people. One notable case of this was the notoriously oppressive *nazir* of the Taaisha, Zubair Sam:

Zubair took care to lodge me in his house where I should not hear much of his extortions and bullyings, but the Taaisha were not to be denied and lay in wait for me on my strolls out… He (Zubair) was smooth-tongued and talked much to impress me, but his administration was really too corrupt to stand.[555]

Zubair was at least smooth-tongued. And being able to talk impressively with the DC could sometimes make the difference between retaining or losing one's position. But some time after Lampen had heard these initial complaints, Zubair came to Kubbe, the sub-district headquarters, where Lampen found him 'shaking in fright: when I told him to precede me back to his *dar* he said he would be killed if he went back, so I took him with me.' Upon return to Dar Taaisha, Lampen's attention was occupied by a very successfully organised public protest against the *nazir's* rule:

A large crowd had gathered in the Nazir's village to listen with obvious sympathy to the complaints of a few more vocal Taaishi. The complaints proceeded on two lines: definite complaints of criminal action, he had robbed persons taken into quarantine against relapsing fever, he had underlisted his tribe but collected a surplus on a private listing, his administration of justice was determined by bribery. Apart from these open complaints came a

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[554] Sandison memoirs, SAD 691/5/137
[555] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/40.

number of prominent men to see me secretly and protest against his selfish leadership of the tribe…[556]

Both personal and public protest was thus employed by those discontented with Zubair's authority. Sustained public protest also placed significant pressure on an official to depose a chief. In public the state was on show. Lampen sat for a week listening to complaints in Zubair Sam's village, where 'rows upon rows of interested spectators watched the *meglis* [council] from neighbouring trees, drawing near and having to be expelled'.[557] The audience was crucial: just as chiefs had to perform well in public courts, now Lampen had to perform well in response to the pressure of local complaints. His attempts to expel the audience perhaps reflected a desire to be free of obligations to subjects, to act as a disinterested arbiter: but the persistence of the audience's presence created an obligation that could not easily be denied. Zubair Sam had to go. Chiefs therefore could not always succeed in policing the gate: state representatives were sometimes drawn, quite forcibly, into the dynamics of local protest.

3. 'Bad hats' or oppressed subjects? Official perception of protest

Yet public protest alone might not be powerful enough to persuade the administrator that action needed to be taken. Administrators grew quickly familiar with and sceptical of some of the more obviously scripted and performed forms of protest, just as they might be sceptical of the more obvious performances put on by chiefs. Lampen wrote:

> One of their methods of impressing the DC is for some opponent of a *Sheikh* or *Omda* to stir up an *um koaka* or shouting party who come in a body and shout or swear they will not be under so and so. This may mean nothing except that the present ruler is stingy for which they will reject him at once, or it may mean that the *Nazir* is trying for a bribe to hold a *Sheikh* in office

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[556] Ibid., SAD 739/9/44.
[557] Ibid., SAD 734/9/45.

whom his people have rejected, or it may be some private ambition or enmity of the new candidate.[558]

Information given in an apparently intimate and personal setting, might carry more weight. For some administrators, talking to people they perceived as the ordinary *zol*, particularly whilst on trek, was a key part of effective intelligence gathering, and indeed of fulfilling their fantasies of creating an intimate relationship with their subjects. Lampen describes this in interesting terms:

> I had to fall back on incessant converse with high and low, for these babblers will sooner or later in conversation unburden their hearts, and with keeping my house open for guests and callers day and night I don't think I ever refused to see a man, though he might come and wake me at night to speak to me in secret. To this I had to add a rule that the name of anyone giving me information in confidence was never disclosed and I never employed spies.[559]

Lampen believed that people were sharing intimate information with him by 'unburdening their hearts'. But this sort of conversation was also, of course, an act with political implications: the mere fact of speaking with the administrator made this conversation a public act, even if it took place in 'secret', away from the eyes of the chief.

Not all administrators were as open to the possibilities of chiefly dismissal as Lampen however. Lampen was probably an unusual case: he wrote repeatedly about the corruption and failings of the early years of colonial rule in Darfur and was very concerned that chiefs should not ride roughshod over the interests of their people. Guy Moore, in contrast, was more impervious to the complaints of the Zaghawa of Northern Darfur. This was not, however, merely a matter of Moore's own autocratic style: the Zaghawa were regarded by officials throughout the colonial period as a people inherently opposed to submitting to any authority. Their protests therefore

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[558] Ibid., SAD 734/10/167.
[559] Ibid., SAD 734/9/26.

often lacked credibility in official eyes. In 1935 the opposition of the Awlad Ali of the Artag Zaghawa against their *dimlij* (Osman Omar, mentioned above) became particularly forceful: the *sheikhs* of the section camped in the *wadi* bed in Kuttum for six weeks, coming to the *merkaz* daily to make their complaints. But Moore was blithely unconcerned: 'We would pass the time of day with them going to and from the office and exchange a little banter which always contained the very definite implication that this case was closed and that they were, presumably, simply amusing themselves in Kuttum.' They left Kuttum briefly, only to return with thirty additional *agawid* to camp once more in the *wadi*. Moore drily wished them luck 'should the *wadi*… suddenly spate'. The protest was dismissed as simply an expression of the 'independent and defiant attitude' of Osman's people, and their 'notorious reputation as bad hats'.[560] Later the protests of the Awlad Degain against Melik Mohammedein in Dar Tuar 'practically besiege[d] the district headquarters at Kuttum'.[561] But Moore and even his successors in Northern Darfur as late as the 1950s were ready to use tactics of mass arrest and the confiscation of property to suppress such protest, rather than give in to demands for change. In response to a fight in 1951 between protestors and police, a mechanized army unit was sent to Northern Darfur.[562]

Peoples who were thought to be particularly troublesome, like the Zaghawa, had a difficult job to convince the administration of their cause. Officials were not waiting for protestors to invite them to depose chiefs: they had to be convinced, through a process of hard bargaining, that there was no other option. This was a tense and uneasy negotiation between state and society, which sometimes ended with no discernible benefit to protestors themselves. The persistence of appeals to the state's authority is thus even more striking.

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[560] Moore note on Dar Artag, 1 July 1935, NRO Darfur 1/31/164/13.
[561] Harir, *Numbers*, p.101.
[562] Ibid., pp.98, 149.

4. Relations between officials and chiefs in the context of protest

It is clear that protestors always struggled to make headway when chiefs had maintained powerful personal bonds with administrators: patron-client relations could trump the enforcement of colonial legal norms, or satisfying the demands of 'separatist' movements. Moore and *Melik* Mohammedein, for instance, had a famously strong personal relationship. When Mohammedein was under pressure from the Awlad Deggain section, he provided Moore with false intelligence, presenting his opponents as isolated from the majority of their own section.[563] Moore's strategy was influenced by this intelligence, imprisoning the ringleaders of the protest rather than negotiating a deal. But to retain credibility with the administration, chiefs had to observe certain conventions and norms in their dealings with officials. Despite his general scepticism towards protest, Moore removed an unpopular chief in 1936 in part because he was 'impossible in *meglis* – shouting and exciteable like any *jahil* [ignorant person] and usually tipsy'.[564] Cultivating a good image in the eyes of the local administration, observing certain unwritten conventions, was thus crucial if a chief was to survive the protests of his subjects.

It has been demonstrated that *nazir* Mahmud Abu Saad was perceived to be distant from his people, and that this made him vulnerable to protest from below. But just as importantly, Mahmud made social blunders which ignored the conventions governing the interactions between administrators and chiefs. One report mentioned that Mahmud did not 'meet us properly, but strolled forward like a *Gellabi* [riverine trader] shortly before we dismounted'.[565] The use of the *gellabi* comparison is revealing: Mahmud's behaviour reinforced the official's sense that he was distant from his people *because* he was disrespectful of the conventions that governed interactions between chief and official. On another occasion 'he tried to bribe me with a horse of his (it's a good one which I've had my eye on)… I told the old shit to go away and rest. It just shows the sort of man he is.'[566] Whilst he had cleverly noticed the ADC eyeing this particular horse, Mahmud's rather heavy-handed

[563] Ibid., pp.95, 99.
[564] Moore note on Dar Artag unrest, 27 Mar. 1936, NRO Darfur 1/34/164/13.
[565] ADC Baggara to Governor, 9 July 1926, NRO 2.D Fasher 54/3/12.
[566] ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 14 July 1925, ibid.

attempt to establish a reciprocal relationship by the use of gift-giving backfired, being seen simply as a 'bribe' in the context of colonial legal norms. And more generally, Mahmud did not create any sense of intimacy or trust with officials: one official, in his dealings with Mahmud, found himself 'confronted with a cold wall of ice beyond which I cannot penetrate'.[567] The district staff therefore finally recommended his dismissal.

His successor, El Ghaali Taj el Din, could not have been more different. While 'a most outrageous *zalim* [oppressor]', El Ghaali remained in his role for fifteen years, despite persistent and forceful protest.[568] Why did the local administration back him for so long even with clear evidence of wrongdoing? This was not simply a matter of El Ghaali's ability to deliver taxation to the state: other Baggara chiefs who were also successful in this regard were still dismissed when similar complaints were made against them. A large part of El Ghaali's success lay in forming good relations with officials: immediately before he gained office, reports noted he was 'honest, loyal, hospitable and above all a Man'.[569] References to El Ghaali's manliness and virility abounded: one official simply wrote of him 'he is a MAN'.[570] Recalling Moore's carefully cultivated image of masculinity, it seems that officials and chiefs played on one another's ideas of manliness and virility to assert their suitability to lead. Doing so created a common bond across the colonizer-colonised divide. El Ghaali also provided Lampen with two famous hunters to accompany him on trek, men with whom Lampen formed a close bond (he later made one of them an *omda*).[571] His understanding of the manly pursuits of a colonial official surely helped to create a sense of comfort and ease for isolated administrators.

And El Ghaali was also a good talker: with Lampen, El Ghaali delighted in performing histories of the tribe: he 'led the conversation: his memory and diction were both imperfect, but he leavened his speech with every variety of onomatopoeic

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[567] DCSDD to Governor, 12 Oct. 1926, ibid.
[568] McNeill, Inspector SDD to Governor Darfur, 1 Oct. 1919, ibid.
[569] Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 17 Nov. 1926, ibid.
[570] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 22 Jan. 1927, ibid.
[571] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/9/59.

noise'.[572] He also took every opportunity to verbally counter the protestors who assailed officials in Dar Habbania:

> *Genabek* [your honour] do not listen to the talk of the people. The Habbania are all liars, intriguers, jealous and like the beasts of the field when men drive them. They may say I eat them, but if I take no dues from them nor fine them they will not fear me. The ruler who has no thorn is of no avail, unless I prick them they will become disobedient.[573]

El Ghaali played on the perception that Dar Habbania was a viper's nest of political intrigue: the Habbania were seen in a rather similar light to the Zaghawa, and protest was never seen as worth taking purely at face value. But El Ghaali also convinced officials that he had the best interests of his people at heart. While 'oppressive', El Ghaali was also 'open-handed', in contrast to Mahmud Abu Saad: he re-distributed the wealth that he 'ate' from his people among his clients.[574] Lampen said that for all his faults, El Ghaali had the redeeming quality of loving and furthering the interest of his own tribe, in contrast to other chiefs who were interested solely in their individual interests: El Ghaali really had managed his image very successfully.[575] By the 1940s El Ghaali was under increasing pressure from accusations of illegal due collection and bribe taking, but the district and provincial staff remained supportive of him as *nazir*. The DC of Southern Darfur put it most clearly:

> As long as we support him we are making Native Administration a synonym for maladministration. But there is no denying the fact that his age and personality have given him much prestige within his tribe and he has taken care that no one else will have any at all.[576]

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[572] Ibid., SAD 734/9/56.
[573] Ibid., SAD 734/9/57.
[574] Dupuis, Deputy Governor Darfur to Governor Darfur, 4 Feb. 1925, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/12.
[575] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/4.
[576] ADC Baggara report on Habbania affairs June 1942, NRO 2.D Fasher (A) 54/3/14.

5. The limits to official support for chiefs

So some chiefs could draw on the strength of the patron-client relations between themselves and officials to protect them from deposition. If they were able to maintain the DC's favour, by behaving in accordance with certain conventions, and indeed by projecting the image of a certain affinity with their people, they could get away with a great deal. Nonetheless, when officials had their attention drawn to particular wrong-doings which obviously contravened colonial legal norms, it was difficult for them to simply do nothing. Whilst it is now common-place to argue that colonial states operated by the consistent production of exceptions to their laws, it was important to the self-image of at least some officials to act when their attention was brought to illegal activities.[577] Sometimes punishments were imposed even on chiefs to whom they were personally close, which stopped short of outright dismissal, but which nonetheless limited their freedom of action, and sometimes damaged their prestige. The Habbania named the day when Lampen imprisoned several of El Ghaali's agents and relatives for 'fining without authority' as *'Yom El Akhdar'* (the green day).[578] Green is closely associated with Islam and peace in Sudan: the Habbania perhaps saw Lampen's actions as contributing to a restoration of local order. Even Moore put Mohammedein in prison for short periods when he was found to be involved in camel theft, although it seems likely that both sides accepted this was part of a performance that they had to keep up. Harir suggests in this case that Mohammedein's acceptance of these sentences perhaps also bolstered, rather than weakened, his authority: by accepting the short terms without complaint he was respected by his people for playing 'his role as shield'.[579]

Yet in the later colonial years chiefs became ever more vulnerable to accusations of wrongdoing as the administration aimed at the creation of a more 'modern' style of local government, as discussed in Chapter 3. Melik Mohammedein was dismissed in 1949, following repeated investigations into the workings of his court and his personal affairs by Moore's replacement in Northern Darfur, Charles. Charles's case

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[577] A.L. Stoler, 'On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty', *Public Culture* 18 (2006), p 138.
[578] Lampen diaries, SAD 734/10/182.
[579] Harir, *Numbers*, p.112.

against Mohammedein was built principally on the failings to adhere to procedure in the workings of the Zaghawa Court, reflecting the increasingly bureaucratic priorities of the late colonial state:

> a) some cases are tried without the legal minimum number of members present
>
> b) seals of members present are not always fixed to the record.
>
> c) the court register is badly kept.
>
> d) many cases are left unfinished
>
> e) negligence of animal theft i.e. the accused is sometimes released before a case is completed; the accused on bail often fail to re-appear and no action is taken to enforce guarantees. Guarantors are often unsuitable people. Sometimes the form in which a guarantee is written is such as to render the guarantee useless. [580]

To add to this catalogue of procedural failings, Mohammedein was also collecting private fines and bribes, and was personally involved in camel theft. Other chiefs in Darfur and Kordofan also increasingly complained about thieves from Dar Zaghawa.[581] Reports by Moore had largely omitted these problems, presenting Mohammedein as a man of great prestige and authority, having played a key role in the establishment and success of the Zaghawa Court, and worthy of full support. Now Charles made it clear that while Mohammedein had made a great contribution to government in Darfur, it was 'his tragedy that he could not move with the times or rule by any other methods than those of unfettered autocracy'.[582] He was dismissed, not simply at the behest of protestors (the Awlad Deggain), but perhaps principally because of his incapacity to keep up with the demands of shifting colonial discourses of authority. This only reinforces the point that chiefs had to fit into certain conventions of behaviour set from above, and to demonstrate to state officials that they could adapt to the changing agendas of the state.

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[580] Charles, DCNDD to Governor 2 July 1949, NRO Darfur Kuttum A (41)/2/8.
[581] Henderson to Civil Secretary, 11 July 1949, ibid.
[582] Charles, DCNDD to Governor 2 July 1949, ibid.

6. Chiefs as competitors and mediators in local politics

So far this chapter has examined the interactions between protestors, officials and the chief who was the target of protest, describing local politics as defined by vertical ties which linked officials, chiefs and ordinary people. In theory, these vertical ties extended all the way to Khartoum, and some protestors were aware enough of this to extend their protest beyond the confines of the district or even the province. But there were also important horizontal ties between chiefs, particularly within the same district, which affected the outcomes of local political contest. Chiefs became involved in disputes outside of their own *dar* as mediators either between chiefs and people, or between chiefs and government, or sometimes even asserting their right to judge and punish one of their own, keeping government at one remove from the field of local politics.

At one level, chiefs were local rivals, clashing over followers and land. Yet they also shared certain common interests: the deposition of one chief could set a dangerous precedent for their neighbours. Chiefs therefore played an ambivalent role in the course of neighbouring chieftaincy disputes: they pursued individual status agendas, sometimes taking the opportunity to publicly humiliate chiefs who were caught in the act of wrongdoing, while at the same time often trying to limit the severity of the state's punishment of their rivals. And they also pushed administrators to keep the settlement of disputes and cases brought against chiefs *within* the district. Chiefs seemed to want to keep the higher levels of the state apparatus out of the business of local politics: they could control and manage their local DC more effectively and predictably than they could the Governor of the province and, especially, senior officials in Khartoum. Perhaps they perceived that these more distant authorities were likely to enforce legal norms more rigorously than local officials. Chiefs therefore tried to build up a relatively autonomous local political field, centred on themselves and the DC, a field which protestors and rivals would attempt, sometimes successfully, to circumvent.

Chiefs were particularly involved in the disputes of their neighbours in the later years of colonial rule, when the colonial administration was experimenting with

more ambitious institutional schemes for the amalgamation of local authority. The short-lived Baggara Combined Court was one forum within which Baggara chiefs became more directly engaged in one another's affairs, and the Zaghawa Court in Northern Darfur also encouraged a similar horizontal connection between chiefs in this district. Moreover, as chiefs started to participate in new central institutions created by the Sudan Government (the Governor General's Advisory Council for instance) they became ever more keenly aware of their relative status in the eyes of the administration: Ibrahim Musa in the early 1940s was 'very jealous of the rise of Magdum Abd El Rahman Adam Rigal [magdum of Southern Darfur] and said [to the Governor] that the Government had not done much for him in spite of his loyalty and work for the Government for so many years'.[583]

Chiefs could use the combined courts of the later colonial years to demonstrate to officials that they understood the legal norms of the government, and so publicly reassert their alignment with the state. When El Ghaali Tag el Din was found to be (once more) taking bribes and illegal dues in 1940, the DC, Nightingale, proposed that he should be fined and his agents imprisoned. But the other Baggara chiefs, now sitting on the Baggara Combined Court, approached Nightingale to express their disgust at El Ghaali's behaviour, and argued that 'punishing the agents with prison and letting the principal get off with a light fine was unjust and shameful to them as *nazirs*'. As a result of their approaches, El Ghaali was brought to the Combined Court to stand trial for his offences, under the DC's presidency. But it was clear that the leading actors in the court drama were the chiefs themselves: El Ghaali 'tried to bluster but was sat on by the assembled *nazirs*'. He confessed his wrongdoings in public before his fellows, each of whom were probably involved in similar activities. This was a public performance of vice and virtue, where wrongdoers and upright chiefs were visibly separated. The Taaisha *nazir*, Ali Senussi, took the opportunity to 'lecture' El Ghaali 'on the indignity of a big *nazir* taking bribes… and the shame they all felt in being associated with him on a court, because of his behaviour'.[584]

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[583] Ingleson to Newbold 23/4/41, NRO CIVSEC 66/12/107.
[584] ADC Baggara 'Habbania follies', 15 Dec. 1940, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/14.

But the chiefs then also pursued a rather more subtle strategy. They persuaded Nightingale that he and they should decide on a punishment for El Ghaali's misdeeds without referral to the Governor in El Fasher: this business should be settled by the DC and his chiefs. This was an effort to construct a relatively autonomous field of local politics, oriented around the personal relations between DC and chiefs, yet more powerfully oriented around the new legal and institutional power of the Baggara court. Moreover, the chiefs persuaded Nightingale to drop the fine he imposed on El Ghaali from £E20 to £E15.[585] They ensured that while El Ghaali would be publicly shamed, he would not be as harshly punished as he might otherwise have been by higher authorities. This was simultaneously humiliation and protection. In 1942 a renewed case against El Ghaali was directly brought to the court, during which 'he burst into a rage against the other *nazirs* and declared that he meant to eat his own *Dar* whatever they or I (Nightingale) tried to do to stop him. He also told me that he could not live on his pay and that all *nazirs* eat their *dar*.'[586] There was probably truth in this defence, but the other *nazirs*, of course, gave it no credence. They now suggested that El Ghaali have his *nahas* withdrawn as 'the severest shock that can be administered to the *nazir* personally' – a proposal that was supported by the DC and even the Governor.[587] But it was the intervention of the Civil Secretary that brought about El Ghaali's actual downfall: he commented that the other chiefs were clearly too ready to go easy on El Ghaali's misdeeds and expressed his dissatisfaction that El Ghaali's offences had been kept out of reports addressed to him. He argued that the *nazir* should abdicate or be deposed.[588] At the DC's behest, El Ghaali offered his resignation in October 1942 and died the same month.[589] So the attempt by Baggara chiefs to keep this issue for resolution at a local level, stopping short of El Ghaali's deposition – which the DC and later even the Governor also appear to have conspired in for a time – eventually collapsed in the face of central government scrutiny: Khartoum's tolerance for obvious misbehavior by provincial chiefs was declining by the 1940s.

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[585] Ibid.

[586] ADC Baggara, 'Report on Habbania Affairs', June 1942, ibid.

[587] Ingleson, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 22 June 1942, ibid.

[588] Civil Secretary to Governor Darfur, 1 July 1942, ibid.

[589] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 15 July 1942 and 21 Oct. 1942, ibid.

Chiefs thus followed strategies which at once allowed them to pursue local rivalries, while simultaneously limiting the damage to the dignity of chiefly office that would result from an outright deposition. El Ghaali was perhaps a particular target for humiliation by the other Baggara chiefs because he had been a dominant figure in the southern Darfur 'Kalaka' court in the earlier years of Native Administration, in which the Fellata *nazir* served as co-vice president to Ghaali's presidency.[590] The resentment of the Baggara chiefs towards the Habbania *nazir* continued even once El Ghaali was replaced by his son, Ali. Ibrahim Musa of the Rizeigat was said particularly to dislike the young, educated and assertive Habbania *nazir*, and Ali pursued boundary disputes with both the Rizeigat and Fellata chiefs. Thus when the Habbania *omdas* were collectively dismissed in 1945 for their refusal to sit in court with Ali El Ghaali, the new *nazir*, the other Baggara *nazirs* expressed their shock at this outcome, and made it clear they felt the *omdas* should be eventually reinstated. They also defended the *omdas*, as Ali had prevented them from 'eating', while not distributing the proceeds of his own 'eating' to them.[591] Eventually the *omdas* were reinstated.[592]

On occasion, chiefs went as far as to encourage destabilising protest movements in their neighbour's *dar*, which undermined the authority of their rivals. The *magdum* of the north was suspected to be involved in separatist movements against Zaghawa chiefs in the 1930s: he had personally benefited from the dismissal of *melik* Nurein in Dar Sweini, taking direct control of the judicial affairs of the *dar*.[593] One of the *magdum's* relatives started a separatist movement in Dar Anka five days after Nurein's dismissal: Moore ensured that the *magdum* himself instructed the movement to desist. In another instance, *Melik* Mohammedein himself, as president of the Zaghawa court in the 1940s, publicly warned the Genigergera separatist movement in neighbouring Dar Galla to stop their agitation, yet he actually hid and hosted several leading figures in the movement.[594]

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[590] Dupuis to Civil Secretary, 4 July 1932, NRO CIVSEC 1/22/65.
[591] DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 5 Apr. 1945, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/14.
[592] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 11 May 1945, ibid.
[593] Moore, DC NDD, 'Note on Dar Artag unrest' 17 Mar. 1936, and Moore to Governor Darfur, 2 Mar. 1936, NRO Darfur 31/164/13.
[594] NDDMD June 1940, NRO Darfur Kuttum A 41/3/9.

As suggested in the case of Ali El Ghaali, by the late colonial period there was an increasing gap opening up between a younger, educated generation of chiefs and an older generation, suspicious of these more bureaucratically-minded young men. This became especially obvious in the reaction to Mohammedein's downfall in 1949, and attitudes that were expressed towards his son. Mohammedein was probably not exactly popular among Zaghawa chiefs: his relationship with Moore was almost certainly cause for jealousy. But in the course of the protracted dispute between Mohammedein and the Awlad Deggain, other Zaghawa chiefs stood firmly alongside the *melik* and against the dangerous domino effect of further separatist movements. Indeed, they urged the administration (unsuccessfully) to use troops to put down the unrest.[595] After Mohammedein's dismissal in 1949, they publicly supported the administration's action, though privately they sent Mohammedein letters 'of condolence in which they have said they will petition the Governor to restore him'. This ambivalence was related to their mistrust of Mohammedein's son, the educated, bureaucratic Ali. The ADC of Northern Darfur suggested there was a popular perception that Mohammedein was a 'great thief but he still helped everyone… Anybody who came to him in trouble received grain, animals and money.' Mohammedein was a good patron to his clients. In contrast, Ali was 'mean and stingy… he will not support people, he does not help thieves, but rather jails them'.[596]

By 1949 all this resulted in a petition authored from the chiefs of Northern Darfur in support of Mohammedein's restoration and sent to the Darfur Province Council, which spelt out the reasons for their dislike of Ali. The authors wrote that while 'we all know [Mohammedein] is a thief and a bad character', his removal had been caused by 'the hostility of his son Ali who for many years has worked against him'. Their protest was thus principally against 'Ali being appointed as his successor. This policy affects us all (the disloyal son being backed by Government against his father).'[597] In another letter, echoing the protective strategy of the Baggara *nazirs* towards El Ghaali Taj el Din, chiefs asserted the Tuer were 'quite content' with

[595] Harir, *Numbers*, p.104.
[596] ADC NDD, Note on local views of Mohammedein, 18 Sept. 1949, NRO Darfur Kuttum A (41)2/8.
[597] File note of petition, 12 Oct. 1949, ibid.

Mohammedein, and suggested that if he was guilty of any crime, his fellow chiefs should punish him, but he should then be restored.[598] Again, chiefs were here making a claim to be effective authorities over their fellows, and to settle disputes and problems with as little involvement from the state as possible. But when the DC explained to the chiefs that Mohammedein had been dismissed not because of Ali or the agitation of the Awlad Degain, but rather because of his own peculation, the chiefs dropped their agitation.[599] Mohammedein had been increasingly dominant in the region as president of the Zaghawa Court established in 1938: with his downfall, the Zaghawa Court was also dismantled, and the other chiefs became more independent.[600] Mohammedein's dismissal may have been a dangerous precedent to some extent: but equally it liberated the Galla, Kobbe and Artag chiefs from the ultimate control of the Tuar section.

Chiefs therefore pursued a complex range of agendas in their involvement with the chieftaincy politics of neighbouring *dars*, torn between on the one hand a desire to advance their own positions at the expense of their rivals, and on the other a sense that the chiefs should also basically support one another's position against the machinations of their rivals or subjects, and limit government involvement in local politics. But this also demonstrates that chieftaincy politics was not confined to the *dar*: rather local horizontal ties between chiefs were one way in which local politics moved beyond the boundaries of the 'tribe.' The other way was by drawing higher levels of the government bureaucracy into local disputes, a pattern we will now examine.

7. Petitions to Fasher and Khartoum

The readiness of local elites to engage with government at all levels to pursue their political agendas in the course of chieftaincy disputes suggests that they were very much aware that even the most powerful of administrators, including 'Sultan' Moore, still had a place in the hierarchy of government, and even their authority was

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[598] Letter from 'Kings of Northern Darfur' to DC NDD (date unknown, c.1949), quoted in Harir, *Numbers*, p.294.
[599] Harir, *Numbers*, p. 117.
[600] NDD Annual Report, 1938, NRO Darfur (1)/25/139.

not unchecked. Moreover, the means of addressing government combined both formal written petitions and complaints, and more personal face-to-face appeals to an individual's sense of justice. Formal and informal, bureaucratic and personal styles of politics combined. Darfuris thus asserted a right to be heard by the government, even in Khartoum, and, despite the frequent fruitlessness of their efforts, in doing so they 'contracted' with colonial power.[601]

In the course of chieftaincy disputes, petitions or personal journeys (or often both) from rural Darfur to El Fasher and Khartoum by protestors were not uncommon: equally, dismissed chiefs sometimes appealed to senior government figures to beg for their reinstatement. On at least one occasion the Governor of Darfur was offered a camel as a gift before being confronted with complaints about an oppressive chief.[602] When Dupuis toured Dar Habbania as Deputy Governor in 1926 he recorded taking hospitality with the key complainants against the Habbania *nazir*. Some years later, protestors in Northern Darfur were canny enough to target protest at the Kuttum *merkaz* at the time of a visit from the Governor of Darfur and the Civil Secretary.[603] The Governor gave these protestors a personal audience, and was indeed persuaded that the *demlig* they wanted sacked 'no longer represents the people', and recommended that Moore allow them to choose a replacement.[604] MacMichael, when Civil Secretary, had also received a personal visit from *melik* Abdullahi of the Turrti section of the Meidob in Khartoum, who had persuaded him that the neighbouring Uurti section should have their own chief back and run their own affairs.[605]

So personal contact was often an important means by which protestors gained support from more remote political figures. But there was also a fairly consistent commitment to making protest in the form of written petitions. Discontented elites sometimes stayed with Sayyed Abd-el-Rahman, the Mahdist leader and politician, in Omdurman whilst they wrote out formal petitions to the Sudan Government

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[601] Peterson, 'Plays', p. 1009.
[602] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 23 June 1928, NRO CIVSEC 66/6/43.
[603] DC NDD Moore 'Note on Dar Artag' 1 July 1935, NRO Darfur 31/164/13.
[604] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to DC NDD, 4 July 1935, ibid.
[605] Civil Secretary to Governor Darfur, 5 July 1928. NRO CIVSEC 66/6/43.

protesting against their treatment. Petitions were made out to the Director of Intelligence, or 'the secretary for Native Affairs' (this ended up in the Civil Secretary's hands).[606] The masters of petitioning were perhaps the Awlad Deggain who simultaneously petitioned the North Darfur District Council, the Governor of Darfur, the Civil Secretary, and Sayyed abd-al Rahman (who actually sent an agent to Dar Zaghawa in an attempt to resolve the conflict between the Deggain and Mohammedein).[607]

Most of these petitions did not achieve their aims. The last Governor of Darfur, Henderson, observed that petitions are 'this country's chosen music of liberty'. Sending petitioners 'around the block' to different levels of government was in fact a useful way of exhausting their demands.[608] The state could thus absorb such protest in a manner that did no harm to its capacity for rule. However, petitioners were sometimes remarkably persistent in their efforts, perhaps because of the 'uncertainty which prevails as to the government's reception' of these petitions.[609] And in the instance of the Awlad Degain protest against *Melik* Mohammedein, it was actually intervention by the Civil Secretary, responding to repeated petitioning, and evidence of continued popular support for the protest, that turned the tide against the chief.[610] Ultimately, higher authorities, especially in the later years of mass politics, were aware of the wider potential for embarrassment that determined protest could cause the government. Mass arrests of protestors by Moore had simply led the leaders to state they were 'ready to fill the prisons until no Awlad Degain is left outside to be ruled by the *Melik*'.[611] Lampen, then Governor of Darfur, made the position very clear:

> It is not conceivable that the government could use force to compel a united
> section of 800-1000 men to use a court, and a bad court at that, which they
> were determined not to use. So we must bear in mind that the Awlad Degain

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[606] Alawma petition to 'HE The Secretary for Native Affairs', 31 Jan. 1928, NRO CIVSEC (1)66/12/108. Governor Kordofan to Governor Darfur 11 Nov. 1923; Director of Intelligence to Governor Darfur, 24 Nov. 1923, NRO Darfur 31/164/13.
[607] Harir, *Numbers*, pp. 100-101.
[608] Ibid., p. 144.
[609] Note on summary of Artag agitations, NRO Darfur 1/31/164/13.
[610] Harir, *Numbers*, p. 101.
[611] Ibid., p. 98.

may eventually effect separation. The Awlad Degain at present protest their loyalty to the government... respect for government is a most valuable thing and provided the essential demands of government are fulfilled nothing should be done to link our authority to unessentials.[612]

Even Moore himself, despite his staunch support for Mohammedein, recognized that administration could 'not be carried on without their [the Degain's] support'.[613] Eventually, the determination of the protestors forced the colonial government to negotiate with them over their demands: and it was the Civil Secretary himself who had conceded the necessity for this, responding to the appearance of pieces of paper continually landing on his desk, written by remote, rural pastoralists from an apparently isolated and backward area of Sudan. Chiefs, especially in the later years of colonial rule, when central government took a growing interest in the control of local affairs, could not be indefinitely supported against persistently determined opposition from their subjects.

Conclusion: protest and state formation

The Darfuri elite's political imagination was not circumscribed by *dar*, district or provincial boundaries. Their actions also demonstrate that state actors at all levels, despite their biases and remoteness, were imagined to have a determining role in the resolution of local chieftaincy disputes. This is perhaps unsurprising given the long involvement of the pre-colonial Sultanate in the chieftaincy politics of even its most remote peripheries. In demanding that officials resolve disputes, protestors were implicitly acknowledging the state's authority in this sphere. Indeed, the colonial state's authority in Darfur was very much built and sustained at its margins by involvement in chieftaincy disputes: this was one of the few areas of Darfuri life in which the state was in demand. But it was accessed not simply as a remote abstract institution, but as a hierarchy of individuals, each of whom could be won over to a particular cause. The state was therefore imagined as a system, but not a system which was simply above or detached from the dynamics and demands of local

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[612] Lampen, April 1948, quoted in Ibid., p. 107.
[613] Moore, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 3 Mar. 1947, quoted in Ibid., p. 94.

politics. Personal relationships and personal influence were key to the outcomes of local disputes.

Crucially, with the exception of occasional fights between protestors and police, protests were not directed against the state's authority. As Lampen suggested in 1948, Awlad Degain activists actively 'protested' their loyalty to government, if not to their own chief. Neither did protestors openly oppose the principle of paying taxation: the principle of payment had perhaps been a concession forced during the violent counter-rebellions of 1921 and, to a lesser extent, 1927. Rather, people protested against the authority of the individuals who were empowered to collect taxation. For instance, when people in Dar Masalit refused to pay taxation to their *firshas* in 1934, newly empowered as tax collectors by the colonial government, they said that *firshas* were 'lining their own pockets and only if they heard from the Sultan himself would they agree to pay'.[614] This was well short of rejecting payment altogether. Similarly, when the Awlad Deggain first refused to pay tax to Mohammedein, they had actively demanded that the District Commissioner come to collect it instead.[615]

More generally, it appears that following the failures of the early rebellions of colonial Darfur, protestors saw little use in challenging the authority of the state. Whilst we might allow for the existence of an 'off-stage' discourse which secretly challenged the government's authority (which archival research inevitably cannot capture), certainly the public protest examined here attempted to contract with the state's authority rather than to replace or overthrow it.[616] In the Nyala rising of 1921 rebels had attacked the district headquarters with the intent of destroying it altogether and killing state officials. The protestors described by Moore in Kuttum 'besieged' the district headquarters but never actually attacked it. The *merkaz* was recognized as a centre of authority within the district which protestors hoped to access not rebel against. And in focusing protest against chiefs at the *merkaz* on the person of the DC, the link between the authority of the state and that of the chief was also recognized and asserted by protestors.

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[614] DPMD February 1934, NRO Darfur 1/27/143.
[615] Harir, *Numbers*, p. 92.
[616] For 'off-stage' politics see Feierman, *Intellectuals*, p. 23.

In Berry's discussion of similar local disputes in colonial Africa, she quotes a Gold Coast official who stated that 'as a result of the system of indirect rule in vogue it is extremely unlikely that any riot or disturbance should be directed against Government authorities. What disturbances occur are invariably in the nature of "faction fights."'[617] A rather different interpretation was put on the persistence of these conflicts in Darfur by one of the last British DCs in Northern Darfur, who noted that in his district, 'Certain conflicts which were probably resolvable, were not supposed to be resolved. I was told not to resolve them because their resolution was not desired by the majority of the communities in which they occurred.'[618] Indeed, in nomadic societies such as the Zaghawa, internal political conflict is paradoxically a key means of creating social coherence and hierarchy, as participants in that conflict assert their social status by the fact of their participation. As Asad puts it, rivals in competition with one another do not consent so much to 'the concrete results of the competition at any given time, as the necessity for competition itself.'[619] But protest was also a useful tool in the construction of state authority. By allowing the discontented to assert their demands and to sometimes reassert the meaningfulness of marginalised group identities, it allowed the oxygen of political expression into the supposedly despotic and airless system of Native Administration. And the endless focus on chieftaincy politics created a hegemonic system of local governance: individual chiefs could be opposed by appeals to the state, but with the aim only of replacing that individual, not to fundamentally challenge the institutionalized authority of chieftaincy, nor that of the state.

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[617] Berry, 'Hegemony', p. 335.
[618] Eyre, quoted in Harir, *Numbers*, p. xxi.
[619] Asad, *Kababish*, p. 234.

Chapter 5: The Darfur-French Equatorial Africa borderland under colonial rule

Historical approaches to African state boundaries have often treated them as colonial impositions, creating new lines of division that arbitrarily separated 'culture groups' in ways entirely unfamiliar to local populations. The very artificiality of this division, in this view, also meant that on a day-to-day basis state boundaries made very little difference to border peoples' lives.[620] However, Paul Nugent recently has argued for a different perspective on colonial boundaries: colonial powers sometimes paid more attention to pre-colonial boundaries than they are often given credit for. Moreover, with particular reference to the Ghana-Togo border, Nugent shows that the local social realities of cross-border land disputes and smuggling subsequently contributed to a hardening of distinct identities on either side of the boundary. In this sense then colonial boundaries were not simply imposed: indeed they were made social facts by the initiative of local populations.

The next two chapters assess Nugent's arguments in the context of Darfur's borders, and aim to advance understanding of the role of the colonial state in these apparently 'marginal' areas. They do so by applying the insights of those anthropologists who have argued that African borderlands, far from being areas where the state is absent, are actually important sites of state formation, where states are constructed from the 'outside' in.[621] Anthropologists have also demonstrated the complexity of regulatory authority in border areas, where the boundary between the 'state' and 'non-state', the 'formal' and the 'informal', often becomes blurred.[622] These chapters will

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[620] For the classic statement of this case see A Asiwaju, 'The conceptual framework' in A. Asiwaju (ed.), *Partitioned Africans* (London, 1985), pp. 1-18 especially pp. 4-6; see also J.D. Hargreaves 'The making of the boundaries: focus on West Africa' in i*bid*, pp. 19-27, B. Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (London, 1992), S. Katzenellenborgen, 'It didn't happen at Berlin: politics, economics and ignorance in the setting of Africa's colonial boundaries' in P. Nugent and A. Asiwaju (eds.), *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* (London, 1996), pp. 21-34, I.Griffiths, 'Permeable boundaries in Africa' in *Ibid.* pp. 68-83, P. Yearwood, ' "In a casual way with a blue pencil": British policy and the partition of Kamerun, 1914-1919', *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 27 (1993) pp. 218-244.
[621] See Asiwaju, 'Partitioned' for the traditional view; then P. Nugent, *Smugglers, Secessionists and Loyal Citizens on the Ghana-Togo Frontier* (Oxford, 2002); Wilson and Donnan, 'Introduction'; Das and Poole, 'Margins' for more recent perspectives.
[622] T. Raeymaekers and L. Jourdan, 'Economic opportunities and local governance on an African froniter: the case of the Semliki Basin (Congo-Uganda)', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 3, 317-

demonstrate that Darfur's external and internal border zones were areas where, in certain contexts, state authority actually was at its *most* visible and accessible through the course of cross-border disputes and, indeed, even in the very making of boundaries themselves. These chapters will also add further support to one of the overall arguments of the thesis: that personalised, apparently informal modes of authority could themselves amount to institutionalised, formal systems of governance.

Borders are obviously areas of conflict as well as co-existence: disputes over territory, resources, and migrating subjects between neighbouring chiefs and communities were common throughout the colonial period. Whilst the capacity of the colonial state to enforce regularised, bureaucratic forms of control over its borders was limited, disputants in these cross-border conflicts often tried to pull the state in on their side of the argument, just as they did in the chieftaincy disputes discussed in the previous chapter. In particular, administrative boundaries, internal or external, were zones where the state was particularly malleable. Rather than always operating in unity across these lines of division, colonial administrators sometimes pushed against one another to protect the interests of their own chiefs. Such tensions across administrative boundaries bring into focus the strength of the patron-client relations between administrators and chiefs, and provide some of the strongest evidence to support the view of the state not as an abstract thing, but as a set of competing agencies and individuals.[623] Yet, the intervention of higher authorities in disputes across local boundaries also alerts us to the limits of the District Commissioner's autonomy, and the existence of very real bureaucratic hierarchies which could mediate and resolve such disputes. Moreover, in the case of disputes across the French Equatorial Africa (FEA)-Darfur border, and in particular the narratives that 'unauthorised' migrants used to justify their movement across borders, it appears that local peoples grasped the existence of different 'states' on either side of this border. Indeed, living in this borderland perhaps reinforced rather than weakened people's awareness of the regime they lived under. Nonetheless, it is clear that DCs could powerfully identify with what they perceived to be the interests

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332; see also J. Roitman, *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa* (Princeton, 2004).
[623] Abrams, 'State'.

of 'their' people to the extent of sometimes undermining conscious and explicit attempts at creating 'state effects', or even 'colonial effects' by the performance of unity across internal or external boundaries. Borders were thus sites where the contradictions and connections between the abstract and personalised forms of state power were perhaps most visible and manipulable.

This chapter focuses on the history of the borderland between Darfur and FEA, and examines the dynamics of authority on the British side of the border, from the early years of border delimitation and then through the rest of the colonial period.[624] While state power in Darfur was at one level visible and accessible in the course of border disputes, as suggested above, the colonial administration's capacity for enforcing regular border controls was rather limited. The chapter therefore demonstrates the opportunities that this limited bureaucratic capacity afforded to chiefs, who could gain prestige or wealth from the apparently 'informal' policing of borders or alternatively attract clients across weakly policed boundaries. State representatives were often willing to turn a blind eye to some of the 'informal' (or illegal) activities of their clients, the border chiefs, despite the fact that the illicit migration and trade with which chiefs were often involved revealed the limits of their control. Indeed the compromises which state agents made with local realities demonstrated the limited extent to which European conceptions of territorial sovereignty were imposed in Darfur. Yet the international border between Darfur and FEA did not demonstrate state absence or even simply state weakness. It was also an area where states, and indeed the boundaries between them, were imagined and manipulated in ways which asserted their reality and relevance to local political dynamics. State representatives struggled to impose themselves on local dynamics; but local dynamics often pulled local officials into making interventions in local disputes.

The records examined for this research provide particular insights into the work of the 1922-23 boundary commission. This attempted to finalise the delineation of the agreed boundary between the British and French colonial states, and these records us

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[624] The chapter mainly examines the British side of the border, in order to maintain the overall focus of the thesis on the character of the British colonial state in Darfur itself. Future research will develop the account of French colonialism's regulatory practices and relations with local elites on this border.

the most detailed available written view of colonial boundary making in Darfur. The chapter then uses further voluminous records kept by the administration in Darfur which reveal ground-level disputes and state practices across the period of colonial rule. These provide a detailed view of the interactions between state officials and local elites in the construction of regulatory order.

1. Making a boundary: local testimony and colonial rivalry

Colonial boundaries have often been labeled as arbitrary 'lines on a map' which imposed artificial divisions on local identity groups.[625] Yet in the Darfur-FEA case, colonial states did not simply impose lines of division on a blank page. Since the seventeenth century the Sultanate of Wadai had neighboured the Darfur Sultanate, in the north eastern part of what became French Tchad. The French only conquered the Wadai Sultanate in 1911, part of the final stage of expansion through Tchad which had begun in the 1890s. What became the border between Darfur and Tchad had therefore previously been a border zone between pre-colonial Darfur and Wadai. And along some part of this border, a demarcated boundary had existed before the arrival of the British. Travellers passing through Darfur during the reign of Ali Dinar (1898-1916), reported the existence of a parallel range of hills fortified with stone and *zaribas* (thorn enclosures), known locally as the *tirja*. This boundary had been demarcated among the Masalit people, settled agriculturalists, whose political affiliation was divided between Darfur and Wadai.[626] The presence of *zaribas* along the boundary suggests that this demarcation may have been the work of the Turco-Egyptian regime in Darfur. Yet Nachtigal, travelling between Wadai and Darfur before the Turco-Egyptian conquest of Darfur, reported the existence of border posts maintained by the rival sultans that carried out similar functions to those of their colonial successors: exacting some form of tribute from traders crossing the border, quarantining the sick, and maintaining border guards at key settlements.[627] And as early as 1811 al-Tunisi saw large iron spikes driven into trees to mark the boundary

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[625] See Asiwaju, 'Partitioned'.
[626] Kapteijns, *Mahdist*, p. 20.
[627] Nachtigal, *Sahara*, pp. 235-6, 241. Also see J. Spaulding, *The Heroic Age in Sennar* (East Lansing, 1985), p. 10.

between the two Sultans.[628] Elsewhere along the border, as was more usual in pre-colonial Africa, travelers reported the existence of an area of land that was one day's march wide, a no man's land over which neither state had control.[629] This area was known for its insecurity: Masalit carried out raids against caravans travelling between the two Sultanates.[630]

Despite the historic precedents suggested here, the mapping of boundaries carried out by the colonial powers did attempt a firmer delineation of the boundary along the entire Darfur-FEA border. Demarcation, however, was never systematically carried out, leaving a gap between the colonial 'lines on a map' and the very limited visibility of the border on the ground and in the eyes of local peoples. This had important implications for the extent to which colonial governments could exercise 'sovereign' control of their boundaries.

In 1899, seventeen years before the occupation of Darfur, and ten years before the occupation of Wadai, the British and the French governments had already agreed on the principles for spheres of influence in the region. These spheres should 'separate in principle the Kingdom of Wadai from what constituted in 1882 the Province of Darfur'.[631] This was an approach which acknowledged Britain's imperial predecessors in the region, the Turco-Egyptian regime, and not the boundaries of the nineteenth century Sultanate. This was not an attempt to discover pre-colonial boundaries, but rather the extent of the authority of the earlier colonial state in Darfur. Moreover, what was agreed in principle remained flexible in application: the French occupation of the western part of Dar Masalit by 1911 enabled claims to authority on the ground to trump the claims of historical precedent. Nonetheless, historical claims were at the heart of the negotiation process: each side marshalling historical evidence to support its claims to authority in the borderland.[632] And therefore before the Paris convention of 1919 which delineated the boundary between Darfur and FEA, and even more clearly when the Boundary Commission of

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[628] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 180.
[629] Kapteijns, *Mahdist*, p. 15.
[630] Ibid., pp. 21-22.
[631] Quoted in A.B. Theobald, *Ali Dinar: Last Sultan of Darfur* (Bristol, 1965), p. 64.
[632] Theobald, *Dinar,* pp. 220-225 has a useful overview of the diplomacy.

1922-23 attempted to finalise the negotiated settlement on the ground, local elites had the opportunity to mobilize their knowledge of local history to support their own, often conflicting, claims to land and authority. Much as history and 'tradition' was a resource of knowledge to be deployed in disputes over the legitimacy of chiefs, so it was crucial to disputes over land.

It is striking that even in the earliest years of contact between British officials and local elites in the border zone, before formal occupation of the area by the British or the demarcation of the boundary, local elites attempted to mobilize those officials as patrons to protect or advance their own interest. The peoples of the border zone experienced the impositions of French rule before they experienced those of the British: it was only in the aftermath of the Nyala rising in 1921 that Dar Masalit was finally occupied by the British, for example. The French in contrast had been in the border zone between Tchad and Darfur for some years before this, entering the area in 1911. Moreover, the early years of French rule in remote Wadai were particularly brutal: a massacre of over 50 *fekis* suspected of conspiracy against French rule in Abecher in 1917 was merely the most lurid act of state violence among many. In the same year the French attacked Goz Beida, the stronghold of the Sultan of Dar Sila, one of the most notable of the border Sultans, explicitly asserting their power in the border zone.[633]

Those who were discontented with the impact of French rule may well have considered the British as offering an alternative government with which to enter into tributary relations, rather as the Baggara in Darfur had often been ready to align themselves with outsider states or authorities to throw off the yoke of government demands. British officials began to tour the border sultanates from 1918: one report by MacMichael suggested that 'an impression had got abroad that we were about to occupy and administer Dars Tama, Gimr and Masalit (and even, it seems, Wadai!)' and 'intrigue' started 'as soon as we arrived in Masalit.' A chief from Wadai who was discontented with the low position he occupied in the French administration

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[633] M.Azavedo, *Roots of Violence: A History of War in Chad* (Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 65-83.

came to Masalit and 'wrote privately to [MacMichael] by name to the effect that he hoped to accompany us to Wadai and be reinstated in his original position'.[634]

From an early stage, chiefs were asserting the meaningfulness of links between territory and identity, assertions which gave some local discursive support to the colonial project of creating fixed tribal homelands. The interaction between Taaisha elites and British officials provides a particularly indicative example of this. Well before the arrival of the Boundary Commission, Taaisha chiefs in the southern portion of the Darfur-FEA border argued that the boundary between the two alien states should not divide the Taaisha homeland and therefore the Taaisha people. These claims may have reflected contested local patterns of authority. The first of these claims was made by a Taaisha *sheikh* Suleiman Angabu, who was reported as stating in 1917 that he 'wishes to be under the Sudan Government but he also wishes his *dar* which is in Dar Kara to be part of the Sudan'.[635] This was a problematic claim for the colonial powers: in 1899 it had been agreed that Dar Kara would come under French jurisdiction. Perhaps even more importantly, the French also believed that Angabu was a client of the Sultans of Dar Sila, another minor frontier sultanate on their side of the boundary.[636] Angabu may have been attempting to evade the authority of the Sila sultans as much as the authority of the French government. Still, it appears that it was the assertion of French authority in Dar Kara, and their demands for tribute, that sparked Angabu's protests. In 1917 the French had established a post one mile from Angabu's village: in 1919 Angabu refused to pay taxation to French tax collectors, stating that his village belonged to Dar Taaisha and Darfur. As a result the French sent a patrol to Angabu's village and took twenty nine goats and sheep by force.[637] It may be no coincidence that this assertion of 'effective authority' ran in parallel with the British-French negotiations in Paris on the Darfur-FEA boundary. If so, the strategy backfired.

Taaisha elites now mobilized behind Angabu's complaint by making personal appeals to senior British patrons, based on contemporary and historical precedent.

[634] MacMichael report on Dar Masalit, 1918, SAD 730/10/11.
[635] McNeill, Inspector SDD to Governor Darfur, 1 Jan. 1919, FO 141/737/2.
[636] Saville, Governor Darfur to Willis, 2 May 1919, ibid.
[637] McNeill, Inspector SDD to Governor Darfur, 1 Jan. 1919, ibid.

Ali Senussi, one of the leading Taaisha men in Darfur, and later to be *nazi*r, came personally to Saville, Governor of Darfur, to assert that there was 'constant intercourse between Dar Kara and other parts of Dar Taaisha and that Angabu's people frequently come into Dar Taaisha.' In reply to Saville's claim that the 1899 agreement between Britain and France had given Dar Kara to the French, Senussi simply said

> The Taaisha… had never been informed of this twenty year old agreement, but that they only knew the pre-Dervish boundaries of their *dar* which included Dar Kara… it did not seem just that they should lose twenty nine animals because of their ignorance of an agreement which had been made without their knowledge.[638]

Saville referred the matter to Khartoum. Senussi's intervention may have had some real impact on the negotiations in Paris: the 1919 convention finally stated specifically that the Taaisha should be contained by the international boundary as a tribe within Darfur. Ali Senussi had thus challenged the accuracy of the 1899 agreement's definition of the boundary between Darfur and Wadai: he had asserted the existence of a local understanding of history and boundaries which was not consistent with the high-level agreements made between two alien governments. He also asserted that *dars* or tribal homelands did indeed have boundaries in the pre-colonial period that local people knew and understood, whether or not they were demarcated.[639] To some extent such assertions reinforced colonial beliefs in the value of delineating ethnic homelands.

In the months leading up to the arrival of the commission in 1922, other local elites started to lay out their claims to territory to local officials. Hamilton, an official visiting Dar Gimr, noted of the Sultan's son that 'every evening Hashim used to point out the hills and *wadi* which marked it… Having heard that a commission was coming in the autumn to mark out the frontier, they were doing their best to get in the first word.' But Hamilton was unconvinced: 'from all accounts the true frontier

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[638] Saville, Governor Darfur to Willis, 2 May 1919, ibid.
[639] Cf. the similar Bedouin understanding of undemarcated borders in R. Behnke, *The Herders of Cyrenaica* (London, 1980), pp. 118, 126.

lay a good few miles to the east of the line they claimed'.[640] It is unfortunately unclear what the accounts that Hamilton referred to actually were: but this reminds us that multiple local accounts of boundaries existed for officials to draw upon (and to be confused by).

The chief British Boundary Commissioner, Pearson, and his French equivalent, Grossard, were in continual conflict over the precise course the boundary should take. Their rivalry anticipated that of later administrative officials located on either side of established boundaries. There appears to have been a broad difference in the approaches of the two men. Pearson was concerned that the boundary should not adversely affect 'tribal rights'. Grossard saw his task in more purely technical terms. One observer noted that Grossard consistently defined his job as being to 'discover on the ground the Boundary line intended by the Convention', and that 'it was no part of his duty to criticise the suitability of that line'.[641] Despite these differences, however, it is striking to what extent local elites influenced the positions that both men took in the course of demarcation. As Yearwood suggests of colonial boundary negotiations more generally, both parties negotiated on behalf of the rival claims of their subjects, principally perhaps in order to maintain or strengthen the prestige of each colonial state.[642]

Indeed, the Commission put the hearing of local testimony at the heart of the boundary-making process. This did not always consist of conflicting accounts – sometimes, especially in areas of relatively dense settlement, elites on either side of the line had a clear consensual understanding of where an administrative boundary had previously lain. For example, the Commission held a 'conference' regarding the status of Dar Fongoro in the central southern part of the border with local elites: 'after exchanging views on the past history of Dar Fongoro, so far as had been procurable from local sources, the evidence of the principal Meliks on both sides of the present administrative line, was heard'.[643] Sultan Mustapha of Dar Sila was there to assert his own views, as was the *shartay* of the Fur of Dar Fongoro. Pearson

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[640] Hamilton memoirs, SAD 490/4/119.
[641] Davies note, 20 Mar. 1923, FO 141/666/1.
[642] Yearwood, 'Partition of Kamerun', pp. 221, 227.
[643] Pearson, Chief Commissioner to Stack, 13 Apr. 1922, FO 141/664/2.

reported that as a result of the conference six cantons were recognised as having been 'for a considerable time past subject to Dar Sila.' The Commission was convinced that there was already some sort of 'administrative line' between Dar Sila and Darfur: 'the boundary as now existing was well understood and recognised,' and a *proces-verbal* was drawn up to agree on its being fixed along these lines. [644]

Elsewhere chiefs and elders continued to make associations between territory and identity, often specifically making claims about the historical attachment of their people to the land. For instance, elders in Dar Gimr voiced their opposition to losing any of the 'territory of their ancestors'.[645] The Taaisha dispute was reopened by the Commission too, due to renewed French claims to Dar Kara based on the disputed location of the Nile-Congo watershed, a core dividing line in the 1899 agreement, and backed by renewed efforts to create effective occupation in the area. Pearson was 'impressed with the warmth of local indignation, when the French commissioner erected a store hut by the Um Dafog-Kafiakargi road… it is possible that it may be considered on political grounds that we cannot renounce any of the ancient Taaisha territory.' There was concern about the political repercussions of giving away 'certain sites of historical interest, birthplaces of Taaisha celebrities, and a certain number of grazing grounds, with a considerable area of hunting ground'.[646] But despite the Taaisha's success in gaining Pearson's support, in the final settlement of the boundary (at another international conference in 1924), Dar Kara was included in FEA. The ADC of the Baggara in 1927 was struck by the degree of resentment expressed by the Taaisha over this outcome, and their claim that if Colonel Pearson had not been killed by blackwater that he would have won Dar Kara for the Taaisha.[647] The Taaisha believed in the power of their individual, local patron to defend their cause: but this time their voices were ignored by the men making decisions about their land thousands of miles away in Europe. And the Sultan of Dar Sila, whose authority was in the end reinforced in Dar Kara, had his own powerful patron in the person of Commissioner Grossard.

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[644] Ibid.
[645] Pearson, Chief Commissioner to Stack, 13 Oct. 1922, FO 141/664/2.
[646] Ibid.
[647] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/43.

As was so often the case in Darfur, local rivalries fed into and used divisions between the colonial commissioners in order to pursue their own agendas. Along the old border between Wadai and Darfur, colonial states sometimes inherited the position of the Sultans as rival patrons to local elites struggling to expand their authority. This was most obviously the case in the Zaghawa Sultanate of Dar Kobbe at the northern end of the frontier, The leading section of the Kobbe had for two generations been split by rivalry between first cousins over the sultanate of Dar Kobbe. Immediately before European colonial rule, Ali Dinar and Sultan Dud Murra of Wadai each supported one of the rival parties, who became their clients in Dar Kobbe.[648] This conflict was passed on to the British and the French, who continued to support the rival claimants to authority along the pre-colonial pattern.[649] Rather than one or the other leader keeping power, and his rival losing it, in this borderland context rival claimants to authority could carve out their own chiefdom in allegiance with a protective, dominating state.

Water resources in the border zone were a key issue of conflict between the rival Kobbe factions (unsurprisingly, given the importance of water to Zaghawa pastoralist livelihoods): a particular group of wells, the Tini wells, were contested between the two chiefs. For the Kobbe chiefs, control of the wells would be a significant mark of political power and pre-eminence over their neighbouring rival. In 1922 an emissary of Haggar Kobbe (the Kobbe Sultan in FEA) had arrived at the Tini wells in the frontier area, and said he had orders to 'deny their use to Dosa (the Kobbe Sultan in Darfur) and his followers'.[650] But it would take more than force to succeed in establishing an exclusive claim. The British and French representatives (Pearson and Grossard) assembled 'witnesses' from both sections of the Kobbe to provide evidence as to which section had the stronger claim to Tini. Here is an early example of the importance of the ability of chiefs to speak with credibility to the foreigner. Melik Bong, the local representative of Haggar Kobe 'stoutly proclaimed that he had not left Tini for a single day since 1912, it was quite impossible, and Sultan Haggar Toke here vehemently supported him' suggesting it was impossible

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[648] MacMichael to Assistant Director of Intelligence, 24 Apr. 1917, FO 141/737/2.
[649] For the varying British views on the best future for Dar Kobbe see MacMichael to ADI, 24 Apr. 1917; Saville, Governor Darfur to ADI, 21 June 1917, ibid.
[650] Pearson, Chief Commissioner to Stack, 31 May 1922, FO 141/664/2.

'for any representatives of the Sudan Government to pass in the night without his knowing it.' This was found to be 'extravagant' and 'easily refuted'; the British produced other witnesses from Dosa's people who they at least felt were more credible: local *shartays* who had been associated with the activity of the colonial state in the area, assessing taxes and 'chasing malefactors' since 1917.[651]

However, the outcome of this process also suggests the limits of the importance of local legitimacy and oral testimony in the boundary-making process. Grossard asserted, after all the evidence was given, that 'no native witnesses could be relied upon and it was impossible to arrive at the truth; he would await his receipt of papers from Abecher [the provincial capital of Wadai], before giving his opinion'.[652] Where testimony was inconvenient, it could be dismissed by the representative of the colonial state as 'native' and dishonest. Grossard did not want to give up French claims: sometimes the rivalry between French and British commissioners disrupted existing local consensus on questions of resource ownership. Further south, on the Dar Fongoro and Dar Sila boundary discussed above, witnesses from both sides had actually agreed that the lake at Tisi, an important local source of water, was under the ownership of a former *Melik* of Muterr, on the Darfur side of the agreed boundary. Even the Sultan of Dar Sila admitted that 'the local people were the best judges in the matter and advanced no claim'.[653] However, Grossard was unwilling to compromise on the ownership of the lake.

In both these cases, water resources were assigned to FEA in the final settlement of 1924 back in Paris. Yet the free use of these resources by neighbouring communities on either side of the border was also guaranteed in the terms of the agreement. In the end the British decided to give in on detailed demands for territory in order to reach a settlement that finally defined a boundary 'all along the line,' at least on the map. Yet perhaps the most striking aspect of the border negotiation that emerges from the British records was the relative ease with which Commissioner Pearson was drawn into local claims, and made into a patron for local elites, in the context of existing rivalries between British and French territorial claims. The intransigence with which

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[651] The above taken from Pearson, Chief Commissioner to Stack, 5 July 1922, ibid.
[652] Ibid.
[653] Ibid.

the commissioners pursued their rival claims, and their inability to reach a settlement on the ground (many of the details being deferred to another international conference), demonstrates the political energy of local elites as well as the rivalry between British and French colonial states Local chiefs skilfully used historical narratives to make territorial claims that often served as the basis for claims by the colonial commissioners.. Moreover, some of the detailed negotiations suggest that boundaries were not wholly alien constructs: that in fact a clear sense of territorial separation between large political entities in parts of this region had long been the norm. Colonial states had much less 'inventing' of boundaries to do here than perhaps they did elsewhere. Yet controlling this boundary was a very different thing to delimiting it. The length of the border, and the absence of thorough boundary demarcation, meant that exercising effective control over cross-border flows of people and goods would never be achieved.

2. Controlling the border? The limits of territorial sovereignty

In 1924 the *ma'mur* of Zalingei, *effendi* Abdel Radi described the scene at a *wadi* (dry river bed) on the border of Darfur and Tchad:

> many human bones about – one complete corpse lying in the *wadi* which had not been touched by vultures or hyena, several places where corpses had hurriedly been covered over but only a few bones remained in these places (chiefly skull bones) owing to the depredations of hyenas.[654]

The victims of this massacre were Salamat Arabs who had tried to cross the border from Tchad to Darfur. There had been two hundred members of the party in total: this was rather a large-scale movement. They had tried to bring four and a half thousand cattle with them. But as they reached the Rahad Kerli, on the border between Sudan and FEA, they were attacked by Sultan Bakhit of Dar Senyar, in southern Tchad, and his men. Thirty of the Salamat were killed: fifteen hundred of their cattle were taken by the Sultan. The survivors could never gain any restitution

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[654] Statement of M.A. Effendi Abdel Radi, 8 Mar. 1924, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/7.

for their losses.[655] A few months later Bakhit was observed tracing migrants near the Wadi Kaja border area, this time with the active co-operation of the French Commandant of Goz Beida and French troops.[656] The French administration defended the pursuit of migrants by their chiefs by stating this was a 'well-established custom among the natives living along the frontier'.[657]

Such violence on the Darfur-Tchad border is suggestive of a long history of the state devolving violence to its local allies in this remote border region, a strategy which has persisted to the present day.[658] This section will demonstrate the limited extent to which the British and the French exercised direct control over the boundary they had delineated by 1924, a boundary that remained largely undemarcated, with a particular emphasis on the often unregulated flow of people across the boundary. Bureaucratic procedures of control were often a veneer over uncontrolled movement.

Territorial state sovereignty, with each regime exercising control over a clearly bounded territory, was never fully achieved in this borderland. At times state agents themselves contravened the border in pursuit of criminals or raiders.[659] Chiefs, sometimes co-opted as border 'policemen' by the state, at other times facilitated 'illegal' migration which allowed them to increase the size of their individual following. British colonial officials turned a blind eye to these breaches of migration control, forced into tacit participation in the African political logic of competition for people, rather than European conceptions of sovereign, controlled territorial boundaries. Again, this demonstrates the importance of the patron-client relationships between officials and chiefs. Nonetheless, regular and predictable appeals by migrants, begging for the protection of the British state against the violence of the French state or its chiefs, demonstrated that state power, even on its margins, could still be a resource to which to appeal.

[655] Sudan Intelligence Report 354, Jan. 1924, WO 33/999; Bence-Pembroke, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 15 Dec. 1925, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/7.
[656] Pollen, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 29 Apr. 1924, NRO Darfur 3/1/5
[657] Commandant, Goz Beida to Governor Darfur 12 Dec. 1929, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/1/2.
[658] For more examples see Governor Darfur to Resident Dar Masalit, 31 Dec. 1925, NRO Darfur 3/1/5; Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 1 Apr. 1931, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.
[659] For instance, see Lewis, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 20 Jan 1950, FO 867/24.

Official figures kept by the British administration suggest a long-term trend in higher net migration eastwards from FEA to Sudan rather than westwards from Sudan to FEA. Many migrants went east to work on the Gezira cotton scheme in eastern Sudan, in order to earn cash. From 1936, with the decline in cotton prices, increasing numbers also went to work in Ethiopia, often for Italian construction firms.[660] Many of those moving across the boundary were classed as pilgrims, although they often became difficult to distinguish from economic migrants, as they took work in the areas they moved through, and sometimes settled in these areas. But as well as being pulled east by economic and religious incentives, migrants also told British administrators that they had left Tchad in order to evade the predatory demands of the French colonial state and its chiefs, for labour, cattle and women. Many migrants were Arab nomads, not simply temporarily moving across an inconvenient boundary in search of good grazing, but also complaining of their subjection to non-Arab chiefs from outside their own communities.[661] Migrants re-told similar stories to British officials time after time: as early as 1925 the Governor of Darfur referred to the 'usual grievances' which incoming Arab migrants put to British officials.[662]

These repetitive and predictable descriptions became regularized conventions of engagement with the British state by migrants, as well as deeply felt narratives of marginalization and victimhood. In particular, these narratives often draw sharp contrasts between French and British styles of rule. One man said memorably to Pollen, a British Resident in Dar Masalit in 1924 that 'in the *Dar* of the English the poor man can live and the weak are protected'.[663] British officials, rather than demonstrating solidarity with their colonial counterparts across the border, were rather easily persuaded to accept the flattery of migrants, as well as their narratives

[660] M.J. Azevedo, 'Sara Demographic Instability as a Consequence of French Colonial Policy in Chad 1890-1940', Phd thesis, (Duke University, 1975), pp. 229, 233-4.

[661] For examples see Dupuis, Deputy Governor Darfur to Governor Darfur, 18 Feb. 1925, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/7; Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 16 Oct. 1931, NRO Darfur 3/1/5; Thesiger 'Report on Camel Journey through Wadai, Ennedi, Borku and Tibesti', 1938, NRO 2.Darfur Dar Masalit 46/1/3.

[662] Dupuis, Deputy Governor Darfur to Governor Darfur, 18 Feb. 1925, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/7

[663] Quoted in Pollen, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 23 July 1924, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/1/2.

of victimhood, and often preferred to align themselves with these new potential subjects against the predatory French colonial state. Pollen asserted that NCOs in the French military were to blame for the problems leading to migrations of their subjects: they were 'men of low class', generally stationed in a particular locality longer then their superior officers, and were 'addicted to drink, women, and, I fear, there is no doubt, unnatural vices. The use of children of both sexes and all ages for such purposes is what drives the people to leave the country more than the oppression of the local Sultans.'[664] Such a lurid description of the iniquity of French rule was unique, but British officials generally believed, particularly before the late 1930s, that Tchad was the worst governed colony of French Equatorial Africa, and Wadai the worst province within it.[665] Migrants seem to have often been able to exploit the very obvious fractures between these two colonial states, and play off one state against the other, even (or especially) in the midst of great suffering.

Yet not all officials were sympathetic to such narratives: some eagerly assisted the French in repatriating 'unauthorised' migrants. 'Unauthorised' migrants were potentially uncontrolled, untaxed and unknown: at times officials felt that the continuous flow of inward migration was 'an obstacle to successful administration'.[666] This was particularly the case in the early 1930s when economic depression meant there was almost no demand for casual labour, and immigrants were seen simply as an 'embarrassment to Native Administrations'.[667] Moreover, specific requests from the French for the return of listed, named migrants were not easy to ignore.[668] In particular, Arab pastoralists from FEA were at some times seen to present specific challenges for the British administration: the Resident of Dar Masalit remarked in 1930 that

> they are continually paying off old scores by slipping back over the frontier
> to steal cattle; the Sultan cannot arrest them because they have no family
> obligations and are not known, as are the Masalit; and they bring us our

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[664] Ibid.
[665] Governor Darfur note on Pollen correspondence, 8 Sept. 1924, ibid.
[666] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Commandant Wadai, 29 June 1931, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[667] Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 20 Aug. 1931, ibid.
[668] Evans, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor, 22 Sept. 1928, ibid.

sporadic outbreaks of smallpox.[669]

Here the colonial prejudice against pastoralists as disease spreading, uncontrollable peoples is clear; equally from a pastoralist perspective an international boundary was an artificial and alien restriction on economically crucial patterns of movement. But in practice, pastoralist migration, be it temporary seasonal circulation, or more permanent resettlement, was very difficult to control. The Governor of Darfur noted that Arab movements across the border in 1930 and 1931 were

> on a very considerable scale; the refugees are exceedingly mobile, and if the same methods are employed against them as against the Dagu and Senyar, considerable armed forces are necessary to prevent their scattering to join kindred tribal organisations in other parts of Darfur.[670]

Armed force was not something the Sudan Government could afford to use as a matter of course.[671] Even when groups of migrants were rounded up successfully, they often came back across the frontier soon after their return.[672] And Broadbent noted the limits of the utility of French lists of names in assisting the return of Arabs: 'Their ingenuity in inventing names, tribes and sheikhs is amazing.'[673] The complex kin relationships that existed across the international boundary provided one means by which Arab migrants might simply melt into Darfur, and defy colonial attempts at return. Some administrators decided to work with the flow of pastoralist movement, rather than try to prevent it: Moore decided in 1944 with his French counterpart that the Zaghawa should be left to 'come and go as seasons, economics and family affairs directed'. [674]

Indeed, the most obvious cases of coercive measures carried out by British officials to return migrants are from sedentary areas of the border zone, where it was perhaps

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[669] Broadbent, Acting Resident Dar Masalit to Governor, 25 Oct. 1929, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[670] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Commandant Wadai, 29 Jun. 1931, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[671] Although there are examples of mounted infantry troops being used to repatriate migrants: see Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 1 Apr. 1931, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.
[672] Grigg, Resident Zalingei to Governor Darfur, 16 Mar. 1930, 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.
[673] Broadbent, Resident to Governor Darfur, 16 Oct. 1931, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[674] Moore, DC NDD to Governor 18 May 1944, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

more straightforward to identify and locate migrant groups. In 1929 ten villages in the Masalit dominated zone of the border were burnt by British administrators; in neighbouring Zalingei returnees were 'roped or put in *shaibas*' (forked tree trunks fixed around the neck of returnees as restraints).[675] Yet even the most rigid and ambitious DCs were ultimately defeated by the sheer length and permeability of the border.

Philip Broadbent, Resident of Dar Masalit in the early 1930s, wrote to his French counterpart that in 1933 'after three years of chasing refugees I have taken a well earned holiday.' After repeatedly trying to round up migrants, only for them to escape from the police on the way back to Tchad, or simply to later move back into Darfur, Broadbent was convinced of the futility of such efforts, directed against either sedentary or pastoralist migrants. He reminded his French colleague that Adre and Geneina, border towns on either side of the boundary, were 'economic centres for both grain and labour and sale of cattle'.[676] Therefore, large-scale continuous cross-border movement was inevitable, and its complete regulation was impossible. Dupuis, as Governor of Darfur, wrote to the Lieutenant Governor of Tchad that for large parts of the border's length 'our frontier offers no obstacle to penetration', that there were 'few and widely scattered frontier posts' and that 'the majority of immigrants obtain no permit' to enter Sudan.[677] Despite periodic and forceful coercive interventions by particular British officials, it seems clear that in general administrators were well aware of and resigned to the limits of their control of this lengthy frontier.

Historians of Africa have generally emphasised the mobility of peoples in the pre-colonial period, and the capacity of disgruntled subjects to move away from the authority of their leaders with relative ease, in comparison to a colonial system which confined and compartmentalized African societies.[678] But the relatively

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[675] Evans, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 12 June 1929, ibid.; Grigg, Resident Zalingei to Governor Darfur, 7 Jan., 1929, 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.

[676] Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Chef Dar Sila, 1 Apr. 1933, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.

[677] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Lieutenant-Governor Tchad Colony, 8 July 1928, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.

[678] See I. Kopytoff, 'The internal African frontier: the reproduction of traditional African societies' in I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African frontier: the reproduction of traditional African societies* (Bloomington, 1987), pp. 6-7; Mamdani, *Citizen*, p. 140, 166, *passim*.

uncontrolled migration from Tchad to Darfur suggests that here there was less of a rupture between the pre-colonial and colonial periods in this respect than has often been suggested. Policy set at the highest level made it clear that the British colonial state was only paying lip-service to European norms of territorial sovereignty in order to avoid diplomatic embarrassment: officials would 'honour the principle, and in practice as the occasion arose, to return parties of refugees to French territory, and so 'keep an end up' in the event of diplomatic representations being made through Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office'.[679] Beyond this, administrators saw little advantage in a thorough pursuit of 'return' – rather, it was merely important that 'we avoid any suspicions that we encourage and welcome such immigrants'.[680]

Of course, chiefs were quite obviously 'encouraging' and 'welcoming' of immigrants. British administrators observed with distinct approval Sultan Endoka's 'warm-hearted' approach to incoming migrants, even in the face of bitter French complaints about the Sultan's behaviour.[681] Successive Dar Masalit Residents dismissed any claim that Endoka's behaviour was improper, presenting French complaints in the most ludicrous manner possible:

> If a rifle is stolen from Abecher the Resident immediately receives a letter saying that it is reported from a reliable source that the rifle is in the Sultan's house and its subsequent discovery in the neighbourhood of Abecher itself does nothing to remedy the idea. If a party of Arabs are forced by exactions of which they cannot complain, to run away, the Sultan is first accused of having sent emissaries to encourage them to come over and then when the Masalit on both sides of the border gather to loot their animals, of sending an armed party to facilitate their entry into Sudan territory.[682]

Even the Governor of Darfur defended Endoka from some of the more embarrassing suggestions of the French. Some officials in Tchad believed that Endoka offered

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[679] Note on discussion between Governor General, Governor Darfur and Resident Dar Masalit, 26 Nov. 1928, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[680] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 30 Oct. 1928, ibid.
[681] Annual Report Dar Masalit, 1938, NRO Darfur 1/34/175.
[682] Annual Report on Dar Masalit 1930, ibid.

'three years immunity from taxation as an inducement to immigrants' but Dupuis suggested this 'to be a distortion of the fact that in Dar Masalit, as in nearly all districts of Darfur, the assessment of taxation is carried out triennially'.[683] This rather generous assessment of the situation, and Endoka's effective protection by his administrative patrons, was also ensured by his ability to return unauthorized migrants when specifically prompted by British officials. Even this was a partial performance: it was noted that 'the Sultan produced Shottia and Mahamid (Arabs) with consummate ease but has rather a weak memory for cases involving Masalati'.[684] One of the Residents noted of Endoka's discouragement of immigration that 'where French Masalit subjects were concerned such discouragement could scarcely be expected to be successful or whole-hearted.' Moreover, Endoka used colonial moral discourse to present creative justifications for his accumulation of subjects. When the French claimed that Endoka was 'propagandizing' among the Daju of Tchad, promoting emigration into his *dar*, he denied this to the British, saying that in fact the Daju who fled into Dar Masalit and asked him for employment were slaves fleeing their masters, behaving as any slaves did within Sudan territory in order to escape the influence of their oppressors.[685]

Endoka benefited from and partially determined the permissive aspects of British policy towards immigration from Chad: he accumulated further wealth in people throughout the colonial period. He was not alone in benefiting from the limits of state control over border movement. At the micro-level, sheikhs were also clearly expanding their followings with new migrants. Broadbent wrote in irritation in 1931 that '*sheikhs* of villages should not grant cultivation areas, and *sheikhs* of town quarters should not grant tax-free residence to French subjects who are evading their fiscal obligations'.[686] Conversely, chiefs might also benefit from their role as boundary policemen, confiscating cattle from people grazing across the boundary, even if they had paid 'customary' dues to the chief to gain access to the land.[687] And

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[683] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Commandant Wadai, 29 June 1931, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[684] Assistant Resident to Governor Darfur, 13 Sept. 1929, ibid.
[685] Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 20 Sept. 1931, ibid.
[686] Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 13 Sept 1929, ibid.
[687] DPMD, July 1944, NRO CIVSEC(1) 57/21/79.

the example at the beginning of this section demonstrated the potential for chiefs to violently accumulate cattle when pursuing migrating subjects.

2.1 Regulatory pluralism in the borderland

Control of this colonial border might therefore be regarded as dependent on all sorts of exceptions, with chiefs deciding how, when and if to police the line, depending on their own personal interests. This seems a good example of the personalized, non-rule-bound political culture that Chabal and Deloz discuss. Yet chiefs also appropriated the formal order of the state in establishing this apparently informal control.[688] For example, in 1931 the colonial states discovered that the Sultan of Dar Daju in Tchad had written to the Emir of Zalingei in Darfur across the border using the official French seal in his correspondence (without authorization), discussing questions of migration.[689] Border chiefs sometimes seized the goods of passers-by in the name of anti-smuggling restrictions.[690] The language of state sovereignty could be employed by Darfuri chiefs to gain support from British officials against the incursions of French state agents: a *melik* of Dar Masalit reportedly told a French officer pursuing refugees that he was 'in Sudan territory without right' before beating his war drums and intimidating the officer into retreat. Endoka supported his *melik*, saying to his Resident that the French had 'entered the boundary without reason'.[691]

This mimicry of state forms and discourse in conducting relations between chiefs and between chiefs and state agents reveals how state power could be claimed as a resource by individuals who operated on the border between 'formal' and 'informal' spheres of authority.[692] Chiefs also came to agreements between themselves, establishing what became 'customary' norms for border-crossing which were then

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[688] This analysis is close to von Trotha's suggestion that chiefs operate within an 'intermediary order', between 'state' and 'local' orders, but suggests rather more that the behaviour of chiefs in border zones at least, are more characterised by a conception of hybrid order, providing a stronger sense of the blurring of the boundaries between 'formal' and 'informal'. Von Trotha, 'Chieftaincy', p. 82.

[689] DC Zalingei to Governor Darfur, 31 Jan. 1931, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/1/2.

[690] Acting Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 25 Oct. 1929, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.

[691] Evans, Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 27 Aug. 1928, ibid.

[692] Cf. Das and Poole, 'Margins', p. 23.

approved by the state: the informal was recognized by the formal. In 1926 Endoka and the Sultan of Dar Daju in Tchad 'of their own accord proposed that cultivation across the border should be allowed to private individuals who behaved themselves, were not infringing local rights and were willing to pay a tithe to the local authorities'.[693] But in other cases, the state was kept at a distance from the practices of chiefs, a sphere of regulation emerging outside the view or control of the state. For instance, chiefs might set up their own parallel systems of customs dues to that of the state, payable by those bringing goods across the border, and thus blur the boundary between formal and informal trade: traders might pay dues either to state agents, or to chiefs who were closely attached to, yet still separate from the formal sphere.[694] Chiefs in Tchad also regularly gave letters of recommendation to those labelled 'smugglers' by the French colonial state, letters addressed to chiefs in Darfur, which guaranteed the trader access to the Darfuri market.[695] Attempts by the French to force these traders to obtain *laisser-passers* directly from French officials were undermined by lack of co-operation from officials in Darfur. Broadbent wrote to his French counterpart

> You must recognize that there does exist an enormous trade in cattle and mares, and it is the fault of your antiquated customs regulations that our respective Natives have to carry on their commerce by stealth. Your own Sultan Mustafa sends his cattle to Geneina for sale.[696]

British officials took a permissive approach to this 'unofficial' trade, suggesting a reluctance to undermine this profitable 'informal' economy.

The borderland order imposed by chiefs, often functioning independently of formal state control yet also drawing on the symbolism and indeed sometimes the authorization or tacit consent of state power, was perhaps partially undermined in the later years of colonial rule by the increasing bureaucratization of border control.

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[693] Arkell, Acting Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 28 June 1926, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/1/2.
[694] Acting Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 25 Oct. 1929, NRO Darfur 3/1/5.
[695] Bret, Chef Dar Sila to Resident Dar Masalit, 22 Mar. 1933, ibid.
[696] Broadbent, Resident Dar Masalit to Chef Dar Sila, 1 Apr. 1933, ibid.

By the late 1940s a separate Passport Control Office had been established in Geneina, close to which the British oversaw 'the annual incarceration of some 10,000 foreigners in a cluster of broken-down shelters at Dissa from periods from 2 to 21 days depending on the ability of staff to cope with documents'.[697] In the 1950s frontier posts, staffed with police and medical quarantine officials, were also established along the Dar Masalit-Tchad border, the course of which had been so scantily controlled previously.[698] In Northern Darfur, the liberal approach to pastoralist migration adopted by Guy Moore, was replaced by a system whereby crossing the border without a permit signed by a senior chief was made a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment.[699] Yet these changes were themselves something of a performance attempting to mask the continued ineffectiveness of the colonial state's control of its border. The 'broken down shelters' of Geneina immigration facilities were matched by the poor state of the Passport Control Office itself: 'the chair used by the passports officer is very clumsy and unless one keeps his balance he falls to the ground many times a day'. More seriously, the office itself, set away from the town, was simply ignored by many of those crossing the border. Many of those who were held in the shelters at Dissa subsequently evaded police control and 'concealed' themselves in Geneina with friends and family.[700] And the new frontier posts were not working as hoped: in 1953 'yet another case of highway robbery by a policeman on the Adre road was detected'.[701] Local agents of the state might thus be transformed into local strongmen demonstrating that the 'frontier between the legal and extralegal runs right within the offices and institutions that embody the state' as well as within so-called 'traditional' authorities.[702] The informal and formal spheres of regulation on this border existed both alongside and in reciprocal relationship with each other, even in the final years of colonial rule.

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[697] Annual Report Dar Masalit 1952-3, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/9/33; Annual Report Dar Masalit 1953-4, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/9/34.

[698] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1952-3, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/9/33.

[699] Charles, DC NDD to Chef Ennedi, 23 Feb. 1950, 24 June. 1950, and 14 Oct. 1950, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

[700] Annual Migration Report 1949, NRO Darfur 47/6/29.

[701] Dar Masalit Annual Report 1953-4, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/9/34.

[702] Das and Poole, 'Margins', p. 14.

3. Using the border: local political disputes and state officials

As well as dividing communities and the colonial states, the boundary between Darfur and FEA separated political rivals, particularly rival claimants to the chieftaincy of a particular community. There were several instances where the colonial boundary separated a rival on one side of the line, with authority over a certain section of the people he claimed the right to govern, from a rival on the other side who had authority over the rest of that people. Indeed, in recognition of such circumstances, colonial authorities sometimes split the *nahas*, copper drums signifying the authority of chiefs, between these rival claimants in order to legitimize both rulers within each territory.[703] But these rivals then attempted to enlist the support of colonial state representatives for their own agendas, rather as had been the case when the Boundary Commissioners from either side had been used as supporters in disputes over territory at the time of delimitation.

Colonial officials were well aware of these cross-border rivalries. At one level they were seen to present a continuous security risk that required management by the state. British and French officials agreed on the need to project an image of 'absolute accord' among themselves for the benefit of local rivals. Cross-border meetings between officials and rival chiefs were thought to be essential in achieving this: it was feared that failure to hold these regularly might dangerously enflame local tensions. For instance, in the southern region where rival claimants to the minor Sultanate of Dar Senyar were based on either side of the boundary, cross-border meetings were neglected in the few years before 1926. As a result, the French Commandant in Dar Senyar believed local elites had sought to exploit what they perceived to be a lack of unity between the two colonial states, intensifying their rivalries and making more extreme demands in the expectation of firmer official support. On the British side of the same section of the boundary, rumours had circulated that the British were 'going to oust the French from Wadai': local elites hoped this would signal an opportunity for the settling of scores with their rivals in Tchad. In 1926 meetings between British and French officials attempted to persuade

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[703] Arkell, Acting Resident Dar Masalit to Governor, 2 May 1926, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/1/2.

the Senyar that this was not the case.[704] Rather similarly, much further to the north, the rival Zaghawa Kobbe sultans discussed earlier were located either side of the line: when a British-French meeting fell through in 1937, rumours spread that the two governments were not on good terms, which fuelled tension across the boundary. Discussions among the Zaghawa about the instability of the 'French *hukm*' in 1940, following French collapse in the second world war, apparently had a similar effect.[705]

Like tribal gatherings, formal cross-border meetings were intended to create the impression of a real link between isolated individual figures and abstract structures of authority. But whereas tribal gatherings attempted to project a 'state effect', these cross-border meetings tried to produce an effect of colonial order that incorporated both British and French governments, and presented them as representing a single, superior order. At a key meeting in 1942 between the Zaghawa Kobbe rivals, British and French administrators, and other Zaghawa and Bedyaet chiefs (now labeled *agawid*, to associate them with a 'traditional' mediatory role), Moore and his French counterpart stated that 'both governments were in complete accord – "Aishethum Wahid" (one way of life)'. This was surely an attempt to assert cultural superiority and a political unity based on that common culture: a distinct 'colonial' effect. In the course of the meeting itself, the colonial officials did very little to resolve or settle disputes – rather the *agawid*, or other neighbouring chiefs encouraged settlement, whilst the administrators became an 'interested audience'.[706] This also suggests that by staying out of the detail of the local disputes, colonial officials could avoid being dragged into supporting one side or the other: rather, they appeared to be detached from local politics, representatives of an abstract, neutral colonial order.

Yet away from these formal performances of colonial unity, chiefs continued to play on the patron-client ties between the local administrator and themselves, as well as on the distance between British and French administrators, in order to pursue their own goals. It is worth noting that beyond the moments of performance of unity at formal meetings, officials in Fada (in northern Tchad) and Kuttum (northern Darfur)

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[704] Note of Anglo-French conference at Abcher, 20 Mar. 1931, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.
[705] Northern Darfur District Report, 1940, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/4/22.
[706] Moore, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 18 Mar. 1942, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

were 370 miles apart, and even by the 1950s a telegram from one to the other had to be 're-transmitted five times, and being in a foreign language, if it arrives at all, arrives exceedingly corrupt'. Officials noted that the decisions made at cross-border meetings were very difficult to execute because of these problems of communication: these meetings were momentary performances that did not advance regularised cross-border control.[707]

Indeed, it was much easier for chiefs and officials to talk within their district than it was for British and French officials to communicate or co-ordinate policy across borders. The Zaghawa Kobbe chief, Sultan Dosa, and DC Moore in Northern Darfur provide a useful example of this relationship. At meetings with his cross-border rival, Abdel Rahman, Dosa made promises to restrict his cultivations on the border: he even presented lunch for Abdel Rahman at one of these meetings. Yet he subsequently persisted in allowing his people to cultivate across the agreed boundary line into French territory. Abdel Rahman wanted Dosa removed altogether from the area. But Dosa knew that Moore, while reprimanding him for his actions, would also defend his fundamental rights to territory and authority, and encourage the French to take a lenient view of his provocations. Moore always emphasized that the French should not be too legalistic in their interpretation of the boundary, that the frontier must not 'become a gulf between the normal affinities of the Kobbe rank and file' and that Dosa ultimately had nowhere else to go. Indeed the area round Tini had great 'family association' for the Sultan, as it was 'the place where the tombs of his fathers and brothers lay': it was also the only reliable well centre in his tiny Dar.[708] Yet this support was not unconditional. Indeed, Moore's own liberal interpretation of Zaghawa cross-border migration meant that he did not support Dosa's demand that people that had left him to move across the border should be returned.[709] This was despite Dosa's best attempts to stir up mistrust between Moore and his French counterpart, who, in Dosa's words, 'did not want justice but only listened to the talk of his people'.[710] Dosa accused the French officer of bias, when of course he himself

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[707] Annual Report 1953-4, NRO 2.Darfur (A) 47/9/34.

[708] Moore, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 1 May 1946, and Diary of meeting at Tini, 2-5 May 1946, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9; also de Bunsen, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 28 July 1948, NRO Darfur Kuttum (A) 44/1/3.

[709] Lampen, Governor of Darfur, note, 14 Aug. 1948, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

[710] Petition of Sultan Mohammed Dosa to DC NDD, 20 Mar. 1948, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

aimed to make Moore act consistently in his favour. In cases such as this, chiefs tugged on their vertical patron-client ties with officials, while administrators attempted to find the balance between supporting their local clients, and preserving the impression of a 'colonial effect': the performance of cross-border, inter-state cultural and political detachment, superiority and unity.

But chiefs were persistent in their efforts to enlist the support of one colonial state against the other: those who suffered deposition in FEA often made their way across the border, complaining of their mistreatment, and asking for support from the British in order to reclaim their position. Usually this was limited to approaching members of the provincial administration for help: often this had at best only partial success, with chiefs being sent back to FEA more or less upon arrival. Sometimes they were given letters of support written by British officials suggesting that the French reconsider their decision.[711] On one occasion, a chief went to startling lengths to gain British support. In 1938 Mahmud Harun was deposed as Kabja Sultan in Tchad and fled to Darfur. Officials in Darfur intended to deport him, but he evaded capture and journeyed to Khartoum. He managed to obtain *nahas* after petitioning both the Legal Secretary and Civil Secretary, and went around 'informing people that he has been authorised by the Governor General to refound his dynasty among the Kabja in Sudan territory'.[712] Mahmud repeated the feat a year later, arriving in Khartoum clutching his *nahas* much to the bemusement of the Civil Secretary.[713] While Mahmud does not appear actually to have gained a position in Darfur, his success in petitioning Khartoum officials was striking. It also indicates that elites, at least, understood where the centres of power lay in the neighbouring colonial state, and had full awareness of the hierarchies of the *hakuma*. Chiefs from Tchad, rather like protesting elites from Darfur, attempted to access the authority of the state to support their position: the state was a distant abstract reality, but it was also an institution to which they could appeal, and which might bestow on a lucky few some amount of meaningful political patronage. Even across borders, states

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[711] SIR 354 January 1924, WO 33/999; Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 15 Oct. 1930, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/8.
[712] Ingleson to Civil Secretary, 9 Mar. 1938, FO 867/24.
[713] Civil Secretary to Ingleson, 25 Apr. 1939, FO 867/24.

were imagined as systems populated by accessible, manipulable patrons with authority to support local political ambitions..

Conclusion

Research into the causes of the recent conflict in Darfur has suggested that uncontrolled migration across the Chad-Darfur border has been a key driver of conflict, particularly by increasing pressure on scarce land resources.[714] In contrast, it is striking that the colonial state in Darfur was relatively untroubled by its inability to control migration, and often allowed local elites a great amount of discretion in managing flows of migrants into Darfur. Even pastoralist groups who were sometimes perceived as particularly unwelcome incomers often managed to evade colonial restrictions. Indeed colonial agents themselves sometimes gave official recognition to pastoralist movement across borders. The colonial state in Darfur was less concerned with imposing European models of territorial sovereignty, or restricting migration than has often been assumed of colonial states more generally. Rather it acquiesced, and perhaps also participated, in the tendency for local chiefs to expand their followings by welcoming unauthorized migrants under their jurisdiction. The increasingly bureaucratic approach towards border controls in the last years of colonial rule modified this approach, but could not consistently impose regularized state control over border crossing.

This chapter has also emphasised that the boundary, and the existence of different states across each side of the line, could be used as a political resource by local people wishing to evade oppressive authority, and by elites who attempted (with varying degrees of success) to play one state off against the other. It thus contributes to the current emphasis in African studies on borders as resources and opportunities for local peoples, as well as barriers and constraints.[715]

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[714] Daly, *Sorrow*, p.54; Tubiana, 'Land'.
[715] See M. Hoehne and D. Feyissa (eds.), *Borders and Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (Oxford, 2010).

Moreover, the practices of border governance add further evidence to support the view that the process of state formation in colonial Darfur was characterized by a complex interaction between formal and informal modes of authority, with local elites appropriating and manipulating state discourse and representations of authority, whilst simultaneously concealing significant aspects of borderland governance from state representatives. While, from the perspective of formal bureaucratic control of the border, state authority looks weak in this peripheral zone of the Sudanese state, it is striking that borderlanders sometimes had a very clear sense of the link between political authority and territory. One of the survivors of the 1924 massacre detailed earlier remembered that as his party of migrants crossed the *wadi* that marked the border between FEA and Darfur 'we held rejoicings as we said "now we are in English territory and no one can harm us"'.[716] Borderlanders could therefore imaginatively construct the border as a real territorial and jurisdictional dividing line, even as state and non-state actors from either side of the line themselves contravened the border, and pursued their authority over people regardless of territorial divisions. Building and contesting this boundary was then always a joint enterprise, with state and local actors exhibiting tendencies in either direction depending on circumstance and interest.[717]

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[716] Unnamed survivor quoted in statement of MA Effendi Abdel Radi, 8 Mar. 1924, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/7.
[717] Cf. Nugent, *Smugglers*., especially pp. 7-8, 113 for a very similar argument.

Chapter 6: Pastoralist boundaries: state bias and the limits of 'legibility'

The vigorous engagement between state agents and local elites that characterised the politics of the border between Darfur and FEA, can also be observed at Darfur's 'internal' boundaries. Internal borders, often neglected in African borderland research, can be important points of division between differing administrative regimes, creating similar kinds of opportunities and pressures to those existent on international borders.[718] This chapter discusses pastoralist borders in Darfur, and focuses in particular on the border between Southern Darfur and Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal, a dividing line between provinces of northern and southern Sudan, which was also imagined by state officials as a 'tribal' - and indeed racial - boundary between Rizeigat Baggara (Arabs) and Malual Dinka (non-Arabs), both pastoralist (cattle-keeping) communities.

Douglas Johnson and Gaim Kibreab have both regarded the setting of the Malual-Rizeigat boundary as revealing British bias towards the Rizeigat, and as a damaging blow to Malual rights that has persisted to the present day.[719] Yet neither account has fully engaged with the very real (if not fixed or permanent) divisions between the Darfur and Bahr-el-Ghazal administrations that existed over how to manage the relationship between the two groups. And while it may indeed be the case that the Rizeigat negotiated a better deal from the state than the Malual, it is also true that both sides often used their respective district commissioners to negotiate on behalf of their own interests. The Malual-Rizeigat case, therefore provides insights into the fragmented nature of the colonial state in Sudan: sometimes fierce division existed between rival administrators, each competing for prestige in the eyes of 'their' people. It also uncovers a narrative of engagement between local elite actors and state officials, in the processes of negotiating access to land, that is rather different from the typical narrative of colonial states imposing damaging and restrictive

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[718] For an exception to the rule see E. Allina-Pisano, 'Borderlands, boundaries, and the contours of colonial rule: African labor in Manica District, Mozambique, c.1904-1908', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 36, 1 (2003), pp. 59-82.

[719] D. Johnson, 'Decolonising the borders in Sudan' in M. Duffield and V. Hewitt (eds.), *Empire, Development and Colonialism: The Past in the Present* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 180-182; Kibreab, *State*, pp. 80-100.

boundaries on pastoralist peoples, amounting to a 'shrinking pastoralist space'.[720] This was not simply a conflict between the state and pastoralists. Rather, as argued in previous chapters, state authority was recognised and indeed constructed out of interactive processes of bargaining, processes which drew very directly on patron-client relationships between officials and chiefs. Moreover, beyond the formal sphere of state-regulated arrangements for cross-border grazing, parallel practices of grazing management functioned, dependent on the autonomous co-operation of local elites. Multiple regulatory orders thus co-existed and interacted in this border area, much as they did on the inter-state border between Darfur and FEA.

Current political developments in Sudan make it likely that the Malual-Rizeigat border will soon become an international border between northern and southern Sudan, and the relative stability of the area in the colonial period has led analysts to look to mechanisms of border management used in those years to contain inter-group tensions. Johnson has recently suggested that a revival of the cross-border meetings, held regularly in the colonial period, between neighbouring administrators and communities might be one means by which local peace might be maintained.[721] He also suggests that informal 'vernacular agreements, local accommodations' are important to the maintenance of local stability: the order maintained by autonomous co-operation between local elites.[722] Yet it is also important to understand what colonial arrangements across this provincial boundary were *not*. They were not managed by detached, disinterested, neutral state arbiters: indeed, the tensions between administrators at inter-district meetings were at times obvious to all participants, and undermined efforts to produce an impression of cross-border

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[720] J. Abbink, 'The shrinking cultural and political space of East African pastoral societies', *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 6 (1997), p. 1. See also D. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington, 2001), esp. pp. 49-55; R. Waller, 'Pastoral poverty in historical perspective', in D.M. Anderson and V. Broch-Dur (eds.) *The Poor are not Us* (Oxford, 1999), p. 40; P. Boilley, 'Administrative confinements and confinements of exile: the reclusion of nomads in the Sahara', in F. Bernault (ed.), *Prison*, pp. 224-226; D. Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The politics of ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890-1963* (Oxford, 2002). Although Anderson makes clear that 'development', including land enclosure, could be an agenda pursued from above and below, boundaries figure in his account principally as colonial impositions that restricted pastoralist movement and therefore damaged ecologies and livelihoods. Kibreab's account of the Malual-Rizeigat case also emphasises that boundary and grazing settlements were agreed by DCs and imposed on the tribes. *State*, pp. 80-100.
[721] D. Johnson, *When Boundaries Become Borders* (London, 2010), p. 112.
[722] Ibid., p. 13.

government unity, a 'state effect'.[723] This was especially true in the early 1930s after the implementation of Southern Policy, which aimed to seal off southern Sudan from northern, 'Arab' influence. Yet the bias of local administrators may itself have been a factor, somewhat paradoxically, in producing an effect of overall stability. Elites knew 'their' administrator would support their own interests; and so tensions that might otherwise have caused local conflicts were vigorously but largely peacefully played out within the divided colonial state. Local rivals at times demand supporters as well as mediators. And when local, or even provincial disagreements became intractable, the intervention of central government actors functioned to mediate disputes. Thus, surprisingly, local state actors perhaps need not be neutral arbiters to act as ultimately effective mediators.

While focusing on the Rizeigat-Malual case, this chapter begins and ends with an examination of the broader experience of pastoralist interaction with the state in colonial Darfur in the context of boundary making and disputes. It emphasises the surprisingly frequent reluctance of the state to impose fixed boundaries on peoples whose livelihoods necessitated mobility. This challenges the idea, that colonial states (in common with other modern states) were always obsessed with reducing 'complex, illegible and local social realities' to simplistic, legible representations (in this case, mapped boundaries) that 'when allied with state power, would enable… reality… to be remade'.[724] This chapter demonstrates rather that in some cases, state representatives resisted pressure from local elites to create more 'legible' boundaries between peoples. Indeed, they often recognised the need to preserve some degree of local 'illegibility' to avoid risking the overall goal of maintaining local order.. Nonetheless, in Darfur, as was so often the case in colonial Africa, there were frequent (though not entirely consistent) efforts to confine pastoralists within 'tribal homelands'.

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[723] D. Johnson, 'Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer-Dinka Relations in the Sobat and Zaraf Valleys, c. 1860-1976', *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982), pp. 183-203, uncovers similar processes of administrators being drawn into taking sides in inter-community disputes. See also Hodgson, *Warriors*, p. 60; Kibreab, *State*, p. 51.

[724] J. Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (Yale, 1994), pp. 2-4.

1. Making *dar* boundaries: officials and pastoralists in Darfur

Internal boundaries within Darfur, *dar* (ethnic homeland) boundaries, were delimited on maps by the colonial administration between the various tribes they governed, including highly mobile pastoralist or semi-pastoralist peoples as well as sedentary farmers. *Nazir* Ahmed al-Sammani al-Bashar, the current chief of the pastoralist Fellata, was clear in his view that the newly fixed boundaries were the most important legacy of British rule in Darfur:

> Previously the boundaries were not written down or in maps. The British gave each tribe a map to show them where they were.[725]

This should not however be taken to mean there were no previous conceptions of territorial division between groups. When a Rizeigat-Habbania dispute over territory flared in the late 1940s, claims about the existence of well-established pastoralist boundaries were at the forefront of elite negotiation. Ibrahim Musa insisted that the Wadi el Khadari was the recognised boundary between the two tribes even before the Mahdiyyia and that it was known to be a '*hadd khof* [boundary of the depression – referring to the *wadi*] - men of either tribe who crossed it did so at their own risk'.[726] Perhaps the Turco-Egyptian government had contributed to the fixing of *dar* boundaries. Moreover, even where there were no obvious landmarks to demonstrate the boundary between *dars*, present-day Fellata informants were insistent that people always knew what the limits of their land were and when they had left their own land in the course of grazing movements.[727] It is difficult to know how far such statements are a projection of present-day local political priorities into the pre-colonial past: disputes over territory between the Habbania and the Fellata have been numerous since the 1940s. But such assertions suggest the existence of different forms of knowledge concerning territory and boundaries to that introduced by British administrators, rather similar to those reported by Behnke among the

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[725] Interview with Fellata *nazir* Ahmed al-Sammani al-Bashar, Khartoum, 14 Nov. 2008.

[726] Sherman, DC SDD report on Habbania-Rizeigat boundary dispute, 3 Jan. 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher 54/3/14. The reported Arabic is ambiguous: *Khauf* can also mean fear.

[727] Interviews with Fellata *wakil nazir*, Mukhtar Abdel Rahman, Khartoum, and Fellata *sheikh* Mohammed Ahmed Abdalla 12 Nov. 2008.

Bedouin of Cyraenaecia, where everyone simply claims to 'know' the line without it actually being marked.[728]

Nonetheless, it seems likely that pastoralist communities which moved regularly according to seasonal grazing probably always had more flexible notions of access to land than sedentary cultivators, more concerned with protecting their land for farming. The existence of *hakura* grants in cultivable lands meant that demarcated estate boundaries were a familiar part of the social and physical landscape of certain parts of Darfur: dry stone walls marked the boundaries of some estates in Zalingei.[729] Yet in pastoralist areas such estates were of course much less common. It has recently been suggested that there might be a cognitive difference between pastoralist and cultivator perceptions of boundaries.[730] Katherine Homewood's recent overview of pastoralist studies also emphasises the 'fuzziness' involved in pastoralist borders, and how 'spatial boundaries around ... key resources expand and contract according to circumstances' instead of being defined by 'rigid perimeter boundaries'.[731] Colonial officials themselves noted the difficulties of enforcing pastoralist boundaries: the 'exact boundary cannot be made clear to graziers who can only recognise definite points and not imaginary lines drawn on the map', one wrote.[732] This anticipates current academic awareness of 'point-centred' boundaries in pastoralist zones.

Indeed, given the supposed obsession of colonial states with creating 'legible' boundaries between peoples and administrative units, it is striking that administrators were often reluctant to impose fixed lines of divisions between groups, especially between pastoralist peoples. Some argued directly that the imposition of 'arbitrary' demarcated boundaries by the government increased rather than reduced inter-group tensions, and should only be carried out as a 'last resort'

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[728] Behnke, *Bedouin*, pp. 118, 126. Nicolaisen also reported claims that the vassal tribes of the Ayr Tuareg had clearly defined territories with 'frontiers marked out by river valleys or by natural objects such as large trees' before French colonial occupation. *Tuareg*, p. 153.

[729] O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 149.

[730] D. Feyissa, 'The cultural construction of state borders: the view from Gambella', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* , 4 (2009), pp.314-330.

[731] K. Homewood, *Ecology of African Pastoral Societies* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 3-5.

[732] Moore, DC NDD to Governor 18 May 1944, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

where disputes became intractable.[733] The border between Kordofan and Darfur was an area where it was thought 'undesirable to align boundaries' in what was a 'grazing ground for Darfur and Kordofan nomadic tribes'.[734] In 1925 one official noted that the Habbania only had a fixed boundary with the Masalit, the initial delimitation of which had been a major cause of the Nyala rising of 1921. The other Habbania boundaries were thought to require no delimitation: the official noted that when the matter of setting fixed boundaries was raised, it was 'capable of raising great feeling between rival parties'.[735] Nearly twenty-five years later, a boundary dispute between Habbania and Rizeigat chiefs in 1949 was sparked by the expansion of Habbania settlements in the border zone between the two people. The two *nazirs* agreed that there had never been a complete official boundary drawn up between them. Even then, the DC at the time was reluctant to mark the boundary too clearly, stating that 'I think the days of "DCs' boundaries" are passed and do more harm than good'. Emphasising that such disputes were, in his view, driven by the rivalries between chiefs, eager to extend the reach of their capacity to collect 'customary' dues from land users, the DC went on to suggest that 'the actual boundary being of such subsidiary importance, we shall take no further notice of it and concentrate entirely on a "*sulh*" [peace] between the two *nazirs*'.[736] Border conflict could be avoided by concentrating on the personal relations between the chiefs, rather than by imposing inflexible boundaries on pastoralist peoples. This emphasises the commonly held official preference for personalized rather than bureaucratic forms and practices of authority, even late in the colonial period. But eventually agreement between the *nazirs* resulted in the demarcation of the disputed section of the boundary, revealingly carried out under the direction of the chiefs themselves rather than the state.[737] Local elites were sometimes more active in achieving the firmer delineation of ethnic homelands than state representatives.

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[733] Nightingale, DC SDD, Note on Fujagh inter-district meeting, 4 Oct. 1938, NRO Darfur 7/3/10.
[734] 'Narrative of proceedings: NDD and EDD district boundary', 1938, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/5/27.
[735] ADC Baggara to DC SDD, 11 May 1925, NRO 54/3/12.
[736] Sherman, DC SDD report on Habbania-Rizeigat boundary dispute, 3 Jan. 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher 54/3/14; de Bunsen note on Habbania-Rizeigat boundary dispute, 6 June 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher 8/1/6.
[737] Southern Darfur District Report, 1950-1, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 47/8/31.

Despite an often pragmatic approach to the retention of flexible boundaries on the edges of *dars* and districts, officials did often attempt to confine pastoralists within particular *dars*, particularly fearing the breakdown of tribal control that might result from pastoralists potentially *settling* in other *dars* or districts, and thus also evading taxation or the control of Native Courts. Moore's effort to keep the Northern Rizeigat within what he perceived as their natural territory in Northern Darfur (if not their own *dar*) is one example of such a policy. Moore opposed the settlement of these camel nomads near El Fasher where he believed they lived a 'sort of pawn-broker life between the two districts… where no one will bother them' and where they were 'seduced by appearances of easy living into the orbit of false Economic Gods': wage labour and the 'fleshpots' of the town.[738] But *temporary*, seasonal pastoralist circulation across internal (and sometimes external) borders was sometimes acceptable to administrators. Moore, despite his aversion to the settlement of the Northern Rizeigat outside *Dar* Moore, also believed that 'the necessity of driving [the Zaghawa] to one side or another of the frontier [with French Equatorial Africa] should be avoided leaving them to come and go on their lawful occasions as seasons, economics and family affairs directed'.[739] Appointed *wakils* (agents) of chiefs would collect tax from people who 'belonged' to that chief, regardless of which side of the boundary they were on at the time. Control over people in this case, it was thought, was better maintained by following rather than preventing their movement.

However, in the late colonial years, such arrangements became increasingly territorialized and bureaucratized with new obstacles being placed in the way of pastoralist livelihoods. By 1954 a system to regulate the movement of camel-herding groups from Kordofan into Northern Darfur was imposed by the Northern Darfur *merkaz*, which fined those entering Darfur who had not gained permission from 'control posts' in Northern Darfur, manned by agents appointed by the chiefs of the district. The Governor of Darfur was concerned by (but did not prevent) this increasingly rigid bureaucratic control, writing that 'the substitution of orders for

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[738] DC NDD to DC SDD 22 Aug. 1940, NRO Darfur 7/3/9; NDD Annual Report 1941, NRO Darfur 2/D.Fasher (A) 4/23.
[739] Moore, DC NDD to Governor Darfur, 18 May 1944, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 59/3/9.

agreements is anathema to Arabs'.[740] Movement to good grazing was crucial to pastoralist livelihoods: such state-backed arrangements threatened the flexibility with which local peoples managed their movements, whilst handing more coercive power to chiefs and their agents. Moreover, in other cases, seasonal migration was sometimes difficult for administrators to distinguish from more permanent resettlement. The Beni Halba, who regularly spend half the year grazing around the Wadi Azum in western Darfur, but who were administered by Southern Darfur District, were the targets of repeated efforts to confine them within their *dar*. As Beni Halba herds were gradually restocked from the losses of the late nineteenth century, from the late 1920s they increasingly chose to stay longer in well watered Western Darfur during the rains rather than return to their cultivations in Southern Darfur. In the eyes of officials this was a 'retrograde step' away from the aim of mixed farming, and facilitated non-payment of taxes: Beni Halba paid informal cattle tribute to the chiefs of western Darfur rather than official state taxation.[741] Beni Halba households increasingly had residences in western Darfur (and some crossed the external border into French Equatorial Africa): this 'illegibility', disrupting the imagined unity between territory and tribe was intolerable for officials. One DC described his 'raids' on Beni Halba *feriks* in Zalingei, where he took one-fifth of their herds and numerous female hostages, in order to give them 'a most healthy fear of Zalingei district'.[742] However, difficulties in finding and 'returning' Beni Halba from western Darfur persisted to the final years of the colonial period: in particular a lack of co-operation from the Sultans of Dar Masalit provided a certain amount of protection for Beni Halba in that territory.[743] These efforts to confine the Beni Halba failed to recognize the economic complementarity between Beni Halba and western cultivators, where the Beni Halba exchanged milk or *semn* for grain, and thus placed artificial limits on the adaptability and reliability of regional networks of exchange.

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[740] Henderson, Governor Darfur to DC Northern Darfur, 3 May 1953, NRO 2.D Fasher A 54/1/3

[741] DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 3 Aug. 1940, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2.

[742] Owen, ADC Zalingei to DC SDD 24 July 1940, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2.

[743] DC SDD to DC Zalingei and Resident Geneina, 6 Mar. 1939, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2; Resident Dar Masalit to Governor Darfur, 1939, NRO 2.D.Fasher 26/1/2.DC SDD to Resident Dar Masalit, 26 Oct. 1950; DC Zalingei to DC Nyala, 31 Mar. 1951; Balfour-Paul, Resident Dar Masalit to DC SDD 4 Mar. 1952, NRO Darfur 7/3/8.

Along the Rizeigat-Malual border, officials attempted to impose a particularly detailed form of control much earlier, as Southern Policy became an important factor in attempts to limit contact between these peoples. Officials from the Darfur side of the boundary also expressed concern about the inflexibility such control implied, yet the maintenance of local, vernacular arrangements persisted alongside state regulation, as we will see.

2. The Rizeigat-Malual boundary and the local state

2.1. Making the boundary

The border between Rizeigat and Malual was an important line of division within the colonial state: between northern and southern provincial administrations. The introduction of 'Southern Policy' in 1930 attempted to restrict contact between what was imagined to be the Arab, Islamic north of Sudan and the non-Arab, non-Islamic south, with important implications for how southern administrators perceived interactions between the communities in the north-south borderlands. Awareness of the legacy of enslavement of southern peoples by northern peoples was sometimes particularly important to the perceptions of southern officials. Equally, Darfur administrators saw some southern administrators as biased towards Dinka interests, and sided with the interests of 'their' client, Ibrahim Musa, the Rizeigat *nazir*. Contact between the two peoples, despite the strictures of southern policy, was inevitable, as the border was close to the Bahr el-Arab (or the river Kiir in Dinka) which, together with the land and waterways around it, was a crucial grazing and watering resource for both these cattle-keeping peoples. Managing the resultant overlapping patterns of land use was a key challenge for the Darfur and Bahr el Ghazal administrations, which at times vigorously clashed over the rival demands of their peoples.

However, in the early years of the Condominium administration of the border, it was clear that the Rizeigat had more contact with and therefore more support from the administration than the Malual. The Malual were remote from the centres of colonial power in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and in any case early administrators did not

speak Dinka. In contrast, the Madibbo chiefs of Dar Rizeigat were strong allies of the British from 1916 onwards, having helped them in the initial conquest of Darfur. Johnson has suggested how important this was for shaping the process of setting a boundary between the two. In 1912, the Condominium Government had defined the Rizeigat-Dinka boundary as running along the Bahr el Arab, but by 1918, two years after the Rizeigat had helped the British invade Darfur, the boundary was defined forty miles south of the river, to the advantage of the Rizeigat. Dinka discontent with this decision fed into the Arianhdit rebellion in 1921, and in 1924 the Governors of Darfur and Bahr el Ghazal met to revise the boundary, on a more level playing field.[744]

The governors attempted to solicit accounts of the boundary's history from local elites. But, as was so often the case, they were trying to find a stable historical precedent when in fact the boundary's history was characterized by fluidity, contest, and almost certainly overlapping patterns of access to grazing. At a 1924 meeting, both Dinka and Rizeigat produced 'odd individuals who were indistinguishable from the Arab or Dinka people of their adoption, who claimed to be Shatt and the only true owners of the river'. The Shatt are a sub-group of the Daju people, and it appears that the Rizeigat and Malual were each attempting to claim that they had absorbed the Shatt into their own community, and thus had rights to ownership of the river. But this was too vague a claim for colonial officials to find credible. Dinka and Rizeigat then both claimed rights of conquest, each 'up to their furthest penetration, which occurred with the Dinka when the Rizeigat were being hunted by the Khalifa, and at a later period with the Arabs, when Dinka tribal conditions were disorganised by the government post at Nyamlell and Arab slave raids'. Finally the boundary was fixed fourteen miles south of the Bahr el Arab, where it has remained to the present day.[745]

This boundary became a focus for persistent Dinka resentment: Wheatley, the Bahr el Ghazal governor of the day, was remembered as the man 'who gave away the

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[744] Johnson, 'Decolonising', pp. 180-1.
[745] Stubbs, ADC Northern Bahr el Ghazal, 'Notes on Rizeigat Arabs - Malwal Dinka dispute', c.1930, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 8/1/2.

river'.[746] But the 1924 agreement also affirmed the right of the Malual to graze on the south bank of the Bahr el Arab, and to fish in the river. This was not simply an agreement that completely abrogated Dinka rights in the area, and in fact it marked a significant reversal of the 1918 settlement which had so obviously benefited Rizeigat interests. Wheatley managed to obtain concessions for Dinka subjects from the Darfur administration. Subsequently, shared grazing in the land fourteen miles south of the Bahr el Arab meant inevitable contact between Rizeigat and Dinka, which in turn was thought to require management by officials.

2.2 Managing inter-ethnic relations

Officials along the Malual-Rizeigat border placed great emphasis on inter-tribal meetings, where local elites and state officials would meet to discuss relations and resolve disputes between the tribes. These took place on an annual basis (with some exceptions) from the 1920s right through to the end of the Condominium period, at Safaha, a key settlement area on the Bahr el Arab. Such meetings were not unusual along Darfur's boundaries: they were the preferred mechanism for managing inter-group relations, and had similar rationales wherever they took place. Officials across the Darfur-Kordofan boundary, which separated several pastoralist communities on either side, described cross-border meetings in the 1930s as a 'friendly party' hosted by the government, to 'give the tribal leaders a chance of talking about current news and problems over a friendly cup of tea'. The idea was to create informal ties of friendship (*'muhanna'*) that would last regardless of government edict.[747] Rather than implementing firm bureaucratic control of a provincial boundary, officials preferred to emphasise strong personal relations between chiefs.

There was also another important rationale to such meetings. Inter-provincial meetings in particular, like the Darfur-Kordofan example, were meant to 'indicate that the Government was one from Fasher to Khunoi and from the deserts of Dongola to Taweisha'.[748] In other words, these meetings were intended to produce 'state effects', rather like the more extravagant and large-scale tribal gatherings, but

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[746] Record of Safaha meeting, April 1939, NRO Darfur 7/2/7.
[747] DPMD October 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/1/3.
[748] DC Central and East Darfur to Governor Darfur, 21 Oct. 1935, ibid.

in this case presenting officials who might otherwise be seen as cross-border rivals, or perhaps even quasi-independent rulers, as part of one united government which transcended personal divisions. One official noted that such a meeting 'proves the absolute impossibility of playing off any one administration against the other'.[749]

In the case of the Rizeigat-Malual meetings, these were intended also to demonstrate a lack of bias from officials towards their respective subjects. The Acting Governor of Darfur argued in 1933 that both groups had to see that 'any old ideas as to the relative merits of blacks and Arabs are out of date, but that both tribes are equally subject to a Government which insists that black and Arab shall live together in unity'.[750] 'State effects' would demonstrate that the government was impartial, neutral, above supposedly local racial discourses. In reality though, officials could sometimes fall far short of this ideal. Inter-province meetings might rather reinforce the sense that officials on either side of the administrative dividing line were rivals or enemies. Meetings could be occasions when tensions and conflict were in fact very close to the surface, both among officials and chiefs: local elites thus saw the fragmented, personalized, competitive nature of this government. One DC in Southern Darfur emphasized that the two peoples should see that 'there is only one Government whose aim is law and order'.[751] But in the course of cross-border administrative conflict, local peoples perhaps saw two separate, rival governments, as Johnson has shown was also the case across administrative boundaries *within* southern Sudan.[752]

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[749] Ibid.

[750] Arkell, Acting Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 12 Aug. 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.

[751] Crawford, DC SDD, memo, 19 Apr. 1933, ibid.

[752] The Nuer suggested to local officials that Mongalla Province had its government, and Upper Nile Province had another, though 'we have never seen its Government'. Mongalla was seen as 'entirely on the side of the Dinka'. D. Johnson, 'History and prophecy among the Nuer of the southern Sudan', PhD thesis (UCLA, 1980), p. 386.

2.3 Interpretations of Southern Policy

One important factor behind the complications of the Rizeigat-Malual border was the introduction of Southern Policy from 1930.[753] The assumption that contact between southerners and northerners should be avoided as far as possible was obviously challenged by the fourteen-mile stretch of shared grazing south of the Bahr el-Arab/Kiir. So in 1930 administrators in the south started to push for a revision of the boundary settlement which would split access to the southern bank of the river in two along an east-west axis thus (theoretically) avoiding contact between the two peoples. Stubbs, the ADC of the Northern District of Bahr el Ghazal Province, argued strongly that contact between the two groups was to the detriment of the Malual, couching his thinking in racial terms. The Dinka never had disputes with the Rizeigat settled to their satisfaction: this was merely 'logical to anyone who knows the Arab's attitude towards a pagan negro, the wide variance between the customary laws of the two tribes and the stubbornness of a conservative Dinka'. Stubbs was very much a Southern Policy ideologue, asserting that 'the mixing of Pagan and Arab races always results in the former taking on some of the customs of the superior race'. This meant 'the pagan's character alters for the worse due to the ready absorption of the less enlightened customs of the Arabs at the expense of his own best qualities'. These became 'detestable people' who, crucially, 'do not readily accept their old customary laws'. For the administration this was perhaps the key point: contact between Arab and non-Arab was imagined to damage the authority of non-Arab chiefs and lead to 'detribalisation', which was thought to threaten the very basis of colonial control.[754]

In contrast, Darfur administrators commonly expressed scepticism about the value of Southern Policy's emphasis on racial separation. Indeed, in common with the approach taken by administrators along the Darfur-Kordofan boundary, they often emphasized the value to inter-group relations of encouraging informal contact

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[753] MacMichael, 'Memorandum on Southern Policy', enclosed in CS to Southern Governors, 25 Jan. 1930, appended in M. Abdel Rahim, *Imperialism and Nationalism in the Sudan: A Study in Constitutional and Political Development 1899-1956* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 244-9.
[754] All references in this paragraph drawn from Stubbs, ADC Northern Bahr el Ghazal to Governor Bahr el Ghazal, 2 Dec. 1930, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 8/1/2.

between the two groups, and some suggested that fixed boundaries were not suited to these pastoralist peoples. In responding to Stubbs' proposal for a new east-west boundary along the river, Lampen argued that 'free intercourse' was 'better security against serious fighting than hard and fast boundaries'.[755] He claimed that both sides would evolve a '*modus vivendi*' and that this was more desirable 'even at the risk of an occasional homicide, or fracas, rather than to have to police a boundary' which would require dedicated police or troops to be effective. This was a view which emphasized the capacity of elites to manage inter-group relations quite independently of the state: Southern Policy's heavy-handed interventions into these relationships ran the risk, in Lampen's view, of destabilizing these norms.[756] Another official drew on wider imperial examples to suggest that nomadic Arabs could not be held behind boundaries, writing that 'Nature determined his [the Arab's] mode of existence' and that attempts to impose a rigid boundary between the Rizeigat and Malual would lead to similar 'strife' to that caused by attempts to restrict Nejd Arabs within Iraqi territorial boundaries.[757]

2.4 Official 'bias'

Darfur officials were not free of their own prejudices, despite the hope of some senior officials that the image of an unbiased state would be projected to local peoples. Lampen first attended the Safaha meeting in 1927, and recorded his impression of the Dinka as 'abominable beggars'.[758] This principally reflected British views of racial hierarchy. But interestingly, Lampen felt that his view of the Dinka was closely linked with those of the Rizeigat elite: 'I felt from my Arab associations some of the Baggara prejudice against these people as barbarians confronting the fringe of the civilized world.'[759] He noted that 'the Arabs, though they despise [the Dinka] as being naked and savages have a great respect for their fighting qualities'.[760] To some extent, Lampen was participating in a local, as well as a colonial, racial discourse. In contrast, Stubbs suggested that there was 'no doubt

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[755] Lampen, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 6 Nov. 1930, ibid.
[756] Lampen, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 2. Feb. 1931, ibid.
[757] Note by GN Morrison, 1 Feb. 1931, ibid.
[758] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/33.
[759] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/50.
[760] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/33.

that the Arabs favour intimacy with the Dinka', which Lampen also supported, as 'they can get cheap labour and wives that breed children' – Stubbs thus implied a certain level of naivety and partiality on Lampen's part. The Darfur administrators' laissez-faire attitude to managing the interactions between these peoples was also tied up with the considerable autonomy and trust they put in the hands of Ibrahim Musa. The views of Darfur officials were no more unbiased or detached perspectives on cross-border relations than Stubbs' insistence on racial separation.

But 'bias' was a charge explicitly leveled at Stubbs by Darfur officials. Lampen's successor in southern Darfur, Crawford (revealing his own prejudice) claimed that Stubbs had mistakenly treated the Dinka as 'a civilized and disciplined race and has trusted them better than from their behaviour on the river seems wise'. Crawford claimed 'Dinka nationalism' had coincided with Stubbs' arrival: the Dinka had been made to feel 'sure of a government to champion their claims' and 'really believe that all boundaries have been washed out… their insolence is almost incredible'. The Rizeigat reported that Dinka were singing rather provocative songs: 'We water our cows in the river now, next place will be Abu Gabra [the Rizeigat headquarters].'[761] In Crawford's eyes, Stubbs' approach undermined attempts to project an image of state unity to local peoples, and encouraged Dinka provocations.

The mistrust and rivalry between officials was not even simply confined to the District Commissioners. The Governors of each province had quite different perspectives on the Malual-Rizeigat boundary, each supporting their own staff and policy priorities against the other. Dupuis, Governor of Darfur, suggested directly that the increasing tensions between Rizeigat and Malual was the fault of Stubbs' bias.[762] From the Bahr-el-Ghazal side, Stubbs was defended by his Governor, Brock, as an 'unbiased' official, who was in fact effective precisely because of his 'intimate knowledge of the Dinka, their language, customs and mentality, and the requirements of their administration'.[763] But the question remained: did 'intimate knowledge' actually threaten the apparent unity of the colonial state? Intimacy was an ambivalent tool of colonial domination: it facilitated control on the one hand, but

[761] Crawford, DC SDD, memo, 19 Apr. 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[762] Dupuis, Governor Darfur Province to Governor Bahr el Ghazal, 18 June 1932, ibid.
[763] Brock, Governor Bahr el Ghazal, to Civil Secretary, 20 July 1933, ibid.

created potentially hazardous personal sympathies on the other. Crawford reported gossip that in neighbouring Kordofan, the Homr Arabs were saying that 'the Government loves only the Dinka; it loves the Arab no longer': this was apparently also a prevalent view in Dar Rizeigat.[764] It was clear that the Darfur administration had consistently taken the side of its Rizeigat clients in the disputes brought to the annual Safaha meeting. Nonetheless, claims made by colonial subjects that DCs were not effectively representing the interests of 'their' people were not easy for administrators to ignore.

2.5 Inter-marriage cases

One of the most fraught foci for dispute between Rizeigat and Malual in the early 1930s was in the most intimate sphere of social life: marriage and divorce cases. The reality of inter-marriage among the two peoples was clear, and should have undermined official notions of fixed racial identities far more than it actually did. Yet while inter-marriage drew Rizeigat and Dinka into intimate contact, it also created the potential for conflict and dispute. Of course the history of Rizeigat enslavement of Dinka was also at the heart of these disputes, and was a significant factor in influencing Stubbs' approach to attempting to resolve these cases. Ibrahim Musa's desire to find a Dinka wife from the family of one of the Dinka chiefs, in part probably to create ties of allegiance across the ethnic divide, was seen by Stubbs as representative of the Rizeigat's view of the Dinka as providing a 'cheap' source of wives.[765] Administrators represented the views and tried to protect the interests of their own clients in these disputes.

Marriage cases were at the heart of proceedings at the 1932 Safaha meeting. Controversy centred both on the marriage of Dinka women to Rizeigat men (which brought complaints from Dinka chiefs), and on cases where Dinka women had fled their Rizeigat husbands back to the Bahr el Ghazal, especially where they had taken children of the marriage with them (which brought complaints from Rizeigat men). A mixed Rizeigat-Dinka court was established to hear cases arising from failed,

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[764] Crawford, DC SDD, memo, 19 Apr. 1933, ibid.
[765] Brock, Governor Bahr el-Ghazal, to Governor Darfur, 3 Aug. 1932, ibid; Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/50.

forced or unrecognized marriages. On the Dinka side, chiefs claimed that the Rizeigat had married women without proper payment of bridewealth or gaining familial consent. Young Dinka men frequently went to find work in Dar Rizeigat, and some took female relatives with them, marrying them to other Malual or Rizeigat, and receiving bridewealth themselves. The rights of senior men were therefore sometimes ignored, provoking Dinka chiefs repeatedly to emphasise the importance of the Rizeigat following Dinka marriage custom, and demanding the return of the women who had been married without proper bridewealth payment. All this overlapped with subsequent claims that Dinka women were still being sold as slaves in Dar Rizeigat. Stubbs, in his report of the meeting, claimed that 'Arabicised Dinkas', those 'detestable' products of inter-racial contact, were responsible for this continued trade. Stubbs reported that Ibrahim Musa had accepted that in cases where Malual women had been sold to Rizeigat men, he would ensure they were returned home, provided that on the Dinka side the 'renegade intermediary' was punished.[766]

The Darfur staff had very different views on the issue of slavery. The ADC Baggara, Madden, who had attended the 1932 meeting, could not recall any accusations of trading in women being aired at the meeting, nor Ibrahim Musa admitting to any recent sales.[767] Other Darfur staff argued that Stubbs was confusing consensual marriage with slavery: Dupuis wrote that the Rizeigat saw 'no stigma of slavery' in Malual-Rizeigat marriages, and Lampen believed there was very little kidnapping of women, rather that Dinka women were being married 'by some form of agreement with a Dinka relation or guardian'.[768] In correspondence with the Governor of Bahr-el-Ghazal, Dupuis suggested that Stubbs' accusations of trading in women and children 'might be taken as a serious reflection on the administration of Southern Darfur District'.[769]

The meeting also saw vociferous demands from Rizeigat fathers for the return of children from failed marriages with Dinka women, who had returned with their

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[766] Stubbs note on Safaha meeting, 1932, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[767] Madden, ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 11 May 1932, ibid.
[768] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Governor Bahr el Ghazal, 18 June 1932; Lampen, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 14 May 1932, ibid.
[769] Dupuis, Governor Darfur to Governor Bahr el Ghazal, 18 June 1932, ibid.

mothers to Bahr el Ghazal. The Dinka chiefs insisted that the Rizeigat would have to pay cattle in order to reclaim these children. Madden, the ADC Baggara, complained that in fact Stubbs had openly encouraged an intransigent Dinka approach over this question, by saying openly that he 'very much disliked returning children "to a sort of slavery with the Arabs"'.[770]

A rather anaemic agreement was reached, stating that all sides should discourage inter-marriage in general, and that any marriages between Rizeigat men and Dinka women should be performed before the DC of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and be officially registered. This was however a requirement that had also been set in 1928: since then not one marriage of this kind had been registered. It is difficult to imagine that this would have radically changed after 1932. But the question of the return of women or children from either side remained unresolved: the DCs were unable to broker a compromise on this in the presence of their rivalrous clients. The meeting actually broke up in the midst of considerable acrimony and tension over a continued sense of inequality between the two groups: a Dinka boy who had become part of Ibrahim Musa's retinue was hauled out of the meeting by his relatives, despite the boy's own protests. Ibrahim Musa was furious, and only later did Stubbs manage to arrange the return of the boy. Subsequently leaders on both sides stoked up the rhetoric of return: Chief Deng Wol allegedly said that 'if not for the *hakuma* we would come and take these people by force'.[771]

The points of contention were then resolved away from the heat of the inter-tribal meeting. The governors of each province agreed that the Rizeigat should have to pay for the return of their children, but that if paid for, no obstacle should be placed in the way of their return, whatever the circumstances of the marriage itself.[772] Later that year, Stubbs attended the Rizeigat tribal gathering and met with Lampen, Madden and even Dupuis to come to a resolution on Dinka women married to Rizeigat men. As Johnson notes of the 1918 border negotiations (when Rizeigat land was greatly expanded south of the Bahr el Arab), this was a very unequal negotiation: the Governor of Darfur and two district staff, met with one ADC from

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[770] Madden, ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 17 Apr. 1932, ibid.
[771] Madden, ADC Baggara to Governor Darfur, 11 May 1932, ibid.
[772] Brock, Governor Bahr el Ghazal to Governor Darfur, 3 Aug. 1932, ibid.

Bahr el Ghazal. They reached an agreement that 'where women were living married, they should be left with their husbands and the case settled by compensation' – and that 'marriage was to be accepted in the very widest sense'. In other words, the means by which Rizeigat men had gained Dinka wives should not be at issue. Moreover, the compensation that was to be paid was on Rizeigat scales of bridewealth, much lower than the Dinka scales of up to one hundred cows per marriage. This was a deal which was quite favourable to Rizeigat interests. And, rather like this final negotiation itself, decisions on whether compensation was payable and at exactly what scale were to be taken by the DCs, not by the chiefs on either side. It was supposed by administrators that following the tensions of 1932, such questions would cause too much conflict between elites.

While unsuccessful in actually resolving the issues at stake between Malual and Rizeigat, the 1932 meeting had at least averted outright conflict, by funneling inter-group tensions into the administrative framework. As DCs elsewhere commented, one of the key functions of these sorts of meetings was that the DCs could 'shoulder' bad feeling between the tribes.[773] And with the principle of compensation for improper marriages agreed, it is perhaps revealing that the next year's meeting in March 1933 saw many cases straightforwardly settled, and even some women returned to the Dinka without any prompting from government.[774] This was not the only occasion when administrators were surprised at the capacity for Malual and Rizeigat to back down from positions of apparent conflict. The administration had imposed a settlement: but the clarity this provided perhaps allowed for some relaxation of tensions.

2.6 Managing grazing rights

It was suggested by one Darfur administrator that it was in fact the improved grazing conditions in 1933 that led to a thaw in inter-tribal relations in the early months of that year.[775] The drought of the early 1930s, and the pressures this induced on

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[773] DC Central and East Darfur to Governor Darfur, 21 Oct. 1935, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/1/3.
[774] Stubbs, ADC Northern District to Governor Bahr-el-Ghazal, 13 Apr. 1933; DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 10 Apr. 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[775] DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 10 Apr. 1933, ibid.

grazing resources, was perhaps one of the factors which had heightened tensions over inter-marriage cases in the first place.[776] Clearly, the shared grazing south of the Bahr el Arab, was always a central fact in the relationship between Malual and Rizeigat. While proposals from Bahr-el-Ghazal administrators for a more clearly demarcated east-west border between the two groups in this area were initially rejected, several factors led the administrations to increase control over the interaction between the two groups in this grazing zone.

On the Darfur side, Crawford, Lampen's successor, believed that government needed to play a more active role in regulating inter-tribal affairs, partly because of basic incompatibility between the two groups: 'The Arab still regards the Dinka as an inferior being', he wrote in 1933. But he also noted that Dinka taxation lists were increasing by 4% a year, suggesting quite rapid population growth that was impacting on grazing requirements.[777] Other Darfur officials noted that by 1933 it had been eight years since the last outbreak of rinderpest among Dinka cattle: herds were consistently increasing in size.[778] The Bahr el Ghazal administration was also increasing control of Dinka grazing within Bahr el Ghazal itself, imposing a 'legible' pattern of regulation upon complex and fluid local realities. The Governor, Brock, stated that 'a Dinka without an adequate and authoritatively recognized grazing for his cattle is little better than an outlaw'.[779] Allotting definite grazing areas for individual Malual sections within the district was imagined as a means to reduce inter-sectional conflict, and bring these groups under greater state control. Clearer definition of Malual rights in the Rizeigat border zone was part of this project. Finally, the rape of several Homr women by Dinka men on the border between Kordofan and Bahr el-Ghazal in April 1933, and Homr retaliatory raids, stoked up tensions once more along the Rizeigat-Malual border.[780] These rapes were seen as a deliberate provocation to the Homr, in the context of perceived increasing Dinka grazing on the river. And by June 1933, Malual increasingly crossed the Bahr el-Arab in Rizeigat territory to use the northern bank for grazing, especially in the

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[776] See Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/8/33 for a suggestion that grazing and fishing rights underlay other complaints about inter-marriage.

[777] Crawford, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 10 Apr. 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.

[778] Arkell, Acting Governor Darfur, note, 4 Nov. 1933, ibid.

[779] Brock, Governor Bahr-el-Ghazal to Governor Darfur, 20 July 1933, ibid.

[780] DC Western Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 9 Apr. 1933, ibid.

corner of the boundary close to the rape incident. Rizeigat men in this area said that only Ibrahim Musa's restraining influence was preventing them from attacking the Malual. This particular area was perceived by administrators to be a zone where young Dinka men asserted their independence from the rule of their elders, and where chiefs were weak. [781]

Negotiations over grazing rights therefore took place in an atmosphere where officials from both administrations seemed to be moving towards a view that the Dinka specifically required greater administrative control. Despite this apparent consensus, disagreement between the DCs stubbornly persisted on the precise details of these rights for nearly two years. Agreement was finally reached at the 1935 Safaha meeting. As with the fraught issue of marriage disputes, Crawford and Stubbs handled all the negotiations without the direct involvement of rival chiefs. The south bank of the river and the zone fourteen miles south of it was split: some of it was reserved for exclusive Rizeigat access, and some was made into a common grazing area. Within that common grazing area, specific camping grounds (*wuts*) were reserved for Dinka use. The Dinka had to arrive in these grounds at least ten days after the Rizeigat in the dry season, and were forbidden to graze on the north bank of the river. The Dinka were also reminded that they must not foul Arab watering places, interfere with Arab hunting places, drive their cattle too close to Arab *ferigs* (camps), or prevent Arabs from fishing. They also had no rights to graze in the Rizeigat *dar* during the rainy season. [782]

All things considered, the agreement of 1935 seems at first to be the decisive moment when Dinka rights on the Bahr el-Arab/Kiir were clearly restricted. The 1924 agreement, seen by Johnson as a turning point in reducing Dinka rights in the border zone, still allowed the Dinka free grazing within the fourteen-mile border zone. The 1935 agreement in contrast intended to create a highly controlled, specific, *legible* system of grazing rights, which clearly spelt out for the first time the Dinka's subordinate position within the Rizeigat *dar*, the central implication of the 1924 agreement. Offences against these rules, especially contravention of reserved grazing areas (by either side) would lead to a period of exclusion from the

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[781] Crawford, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 5 June 1933, ibid.
[782] Note on Safaha meeting, 24-29 Mar. 1935, NRO Darfur 7/2/7.

river for the individual concerned, together with additional penalties (in practice imprisonment and fines were imposed when necessary).[783]

Unsurprisingly then, the Malual protested, and did so in terms which opposed the very premises of regularized control and 'legibility' upon which the administration was proceeding. They expressed dissatisfaction with 'a written agreement dividing up the grazing instead of treating the area as a common grazing area'. The formality and rigidity of the settlement, its most novel feature, was precisely that which the Malual protested against. They also complained about being excluded from grazing in the early rains. Yet at this point, Ibrahim Musa rather dramatically intervened in the process, making a direct offer to the Malual of twenty days of early rains grazing, in return for the Malual accepting the Rizeigat right to 'cream graze' on the best land when they arrived first in the dry season.[784] Crawford perceived a 'major change of atmosphere' at the meeting as a result. This made quite an impression on Crawford's idea of maintaining good inter-group relations. He subsequently suggested that ensuring more personal contact between chiefs was the key to continued peace, in effect a return to the views of his predecessor Lampen. But in Crawford's view this gesture of 'noblesse oblige' by Ibrahim Musa had been made possible by the administration 'slapping down' the ambitions of the Dinka to a greater share of south bank grazing.[785] Both the state and local elites were seen to have a role in creating consensus: the final detail of the settlement was not merely a colonial imposition. Subsequently Stubbs went out and marked the sites of Dinka *wots* in the areas agreed south of the river with the Dinka chiefs: he then explained to the Rizeigat *wakil* on the river where these five were located.[786]

The somewhat surprising consensus between the administrations finally reached in the 1935 agreement was not permanent or fixed. In 1938 the Governor of Equatoria (of which Bahr el-Ghazal had just become part) petitioned the Civil Secretary to modify the course of the boundary as enshrined in the 1924 agreement, which, he claimed, 'like the Versailles treaty [held] the seeds of future war'.[787] In contrast,

[783] Ibid.
[784] Ibid.
[785] Crawford, DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 7 Apr. 1935, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[786] DC Northern District to DC SDD, 28 May 1935, NRO Darfur 7/2/7.
[787] Parr, Governor Equatoria to Civil Secretary, 7 Nov. 1938, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/10.

Ingleson, the Governor of Darfur, emphasized an improvement in Rizeigat-Dinka relations since 1935. Rizeigat hunting in Malual territory had become possible again with the permission of the Dinka chiefs, an activity that gave the 'only real contact between the peoples'.[788] At a 1939 tea party between Dinka and Rizeigat chiefs, Ibrahim Musa had displayed his usual skill in performing his act of detached superiority for the administration, stating of the event that 'I was like a man with two children, the Dinka and the Rizeigat and neither would be neglected.'[789] Ingleson went on to argue that good relations between the tribes depended on good relations between the two administrations. He emphasized that the idea of revising the boundary had to be permanently dropped: if the idea was 'kept alive in the minds of the political staff it is certain that it will not be eradicated from public opinion.' Informal contact between the two groups was desirable in itself: there 'must of necessity be blurred edges on [the] fringes' of Southern Policy.[790]

By 1939, despite other disagreements, local officials on both sides of the boundary appear to have broadly agreed with this diagnosis. At the Safaha meeting that year DCs from both sides complained about breaches of the agreement, and the Northern District DC in particular claimed the Malual's rights were inadequate for their needs. Each side continued to squabble between themselves on behalf of their local clients. Yet a striking area of agreement between the officials was that chiefs too readily made requests and complaints to the DCs rather than to one another, and that this inhibited the working of the agreement, and indeed damaged inter-group relations.[791] Greater self-regulation was required. In 1941 this finally resulted in agreement between the administrations that they should 'slacken the strict application of the 1935 agreement, except when complaints are received which cannot be settled by the tribes without our intervention'.[792] This was a startling reversal from the ambition of detailed regulation set out in the 1935 agreement. A 1946 fight in the common grazing area which caused four deaths provoked a minor crisis in relations,

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[788] Ingleson, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 16 Dec. 1938, NRO ibid; Record of Safaha meeting, April 1939, NRO Darfur 7/2/7.
[789] Ingleson, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 24 Mar. 1939, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/10.
[790] Ingleson, Governor Darfur to Civil Secretary, 10 May 1939, ibid.
[791] Record of Safaha meeting, April 1939, NRO Darfur 7/2/7.
[792] Note on conversation between DC SDD and DC Aweil, 9 May 1941, ibid.

but the payment of a negotiated *diya* paid on Dinka scales settled the matter.[793] Demands from both Rizeigat and Dinka elites for exclusive rights in the border zone did not halt of course (indeed they were very much alive on the eve of independence), but the more relaxed attitude of the administration on either side was obvious, especially after Southern Policy was abolished in 1946. Considering retrospectively the history of this border, the ADC Baggara in 1948 stated that

> DCs have been too prone to range themselves on the side of their respective tribes, their work has too often been tinged with partiality and some of their arguments make strange reading. It has too often been forgotten that officials on both sides serve the same government.[794]

The periodic wars of words between the administrators on either side of this border were now seen as inexplicable anachronisms, but they had very much exposed the reality of fragmentation and division in the colonial state.

2.7 Beyond state management: local grazing regulation

In 1948 the report of a tour by the same ADC Baggara on the Bahr el-Arab/Kiir observed an important gap between official measures of grazing regulation and practices on the ground. He wrote that 'one gets the impression that the various agreements… made by the DCs… are disregarded, and to a great extent unknown by both Rizeigat and Dinka.' The various areas established in the 1935 agreement were clearly not being adhered to, and a Dinka *wot* had been established on a reserved Arab area for the last five years with the acceptance of the Rizeigat *wakil* on the river. In normal years

> both tribes move about and graze their cattle in the area south of the river as they have done for generations, respecting each others' well-known *ferigs* and *wots* and altering their arrangements by temporary agreements to suit the season and the flow of the river - irrespective of what may have been decided at past meetings.

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[793] Record of Safaha meeting, 1947, ibid.
[794] ADC Baggara trek report, 2-6 Mar. 1948, ibid.

This was seen to be a 'wholly desirable' state of affairs, and the ADC believed any threat to public security 'has been exaggerated in the past by DCs on both sides'.[795]

This report represented one extreme in the debate in colonial policy between the value of state regulation or self-regulation of inter-group relations. But it also demonstrated that there was in 1948 (and probably always had been, despite occasional fines on those contravening the 1935 regulations) a significant distance between official attempts to separate and regulate the interactions between peoples, and a reality of continuing interaction and negotiation on the ground. State power was limited in its capacity to regulate, or even to understand local practices and competition. One Dinka chief remarked: 'Oh DCs, no wives, no children, just come and go, we are here for ever.'[796] Moreover, the vagaries of local geography complicated any effort at consistent implementation of state regulations. Lampen had observed of the river that 'in its many windings it is difficult to say whether one has camped north or south of it'.[797] Confining the Dinka to the south bank was therefore never an easy task. State regulation probably did impose constraint on local patterns of movement, if only by creating some awareness of the risk of punishment, but it was far from fully implemented. Local accommodations remained significant.

Chiefs and their personal representatives of course played a particularly important role in maintaining local order. In 1933, Ibrahim Musa sent sheep as gifts to Dinka chiefs in a time of crisis; he also appointed his brother (and sometime rival) Yahya as his *wakil* (deputy) on the river. Yahya's personal affability with the Dinka chiefs was well known and helped to contribute to stability in the area of the river.[798] Fifteen years later, the new Rizeigat *wakil* proposed an annual trek between him and the Dinka chiefs around the border zone to agree on the division of grazing and point it out to one another and their subjects. It seems as though local elites had internalised some of the colonial logics of 'touring' and 'pointing out' territory.[799] But

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[795] ADC Baggara trek report, 2 -6 Mar. 1948, ibid.
[796] ADC Baggara, note on Rizeigat grazing on the Bahr el-Arab, 1 Apr. 1935, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[797] Lampen memoirs, SAD 734/10/136.
[798] Crawford, DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 10 Apr. 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/2/9.
[799] ADC Baggara, note on Rizeigat grazing on the Bahr el-Arab, 1 Apr. 1935, ibid.

this also demonstrated the adaptability of local order: arrangements could be regularly amended depending on local circumstance.

Moreover, officials were often wrong-footed by the way apparently intractable disputes, with the potential for violent conflict, were ultimately resolved remarkably suddenly. One might speculate that to some extent, the face that elites presented in the course of official inter-tribal meetings was a performance to see how far they could push their rivals: there was some brinkmanship being pursued. To deviate briefly from the Malual-Rizeigat case, administrators noted in the course of a Habbania-Fellata dispute in 1953 that the Fellata *nazir* Eissa Semmani 'in *meglis* sat silent and uncooperative and made no attempt to control the wilder tongues of his people, in particular of his brother and *wakil*, Sheikh Mohammed Semmani'. Yet in private, with administrators, Eissa was far more conciliatory. The Malual-Riziegat public disputes no doubt also had a performative as well as a substantive element. Moreover, at times the personal animus between rival administrators, each unwilling to risk losing 'prestige' with 'their' people, might have been greater than that between local elites on either side. One Darfur DC recalled

> There was once an occasion when the British officers had reached an impasse and were glaring at each other across the table when Mahmoud the Good [*wakil* for Ibrahim Musa in the 1940s] and the Dinka chiefs entered and said 'It's alright. You can calm down. We have settled the matter amicably outside while you have been arguing here.'[800]

Local accommodations might be seen even by officials as institutionalized practices in their own right, existing alongside the formal regulatory order. In the late 1920s Lampen had noted that when environmental conditions were normal, the Malual and Rizeigat had 'evolved a code which allows for normal intercourse'. Yet, in Lampen's view, this 'code' was not simply detached from the state's order. When environmental strain imposed pressures on inter-group relations, Lampen noted 'the tribal leaders withdraw their outlying *feriqs*, restrain the young men and send urgently to the DC to come and send a few police to picket the river'. Thus, in

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[800] Balfour file note with letters, SAD 606/6/2.

Lampen's view at least, there existed a relatively well-established interaction between state and local regulatory orders: they existed in reciprocal relationship, with a relatively predictable set of circumstances where one made way for the other.

3. The state and pastoralist border disputes in Darfur

This examination of Rizeigat-Malual relations, and the role of the state in regulating these, provides a different assessment of the relationship between the state and pastoralists to that usually presented in the literature on pastoralism. Rather than straightforward marginalization and oppression of pastoralist peoples, in the Malual and Rizeigat case there was just as much engagement with and manipulation of colonial administrators by local elites. Moreover, where colonial officials attempted to impose restrictive settlements on pastoralist movements in this area of shared grazing, the impact of these was softened by the continuing presence of a sphere of informal interaction, which can be seen as a parallel 'code' of behaviour between the Malual and Rizeigat. State representatives also had an important role in other pastoralist border disputes in Darfur, often being engaged in such cases by local initiative rather than simply by imposing themselves onto local dynamics. A division of labour between state and chiefs with regard to boundary settlement could be a profitable arrangement, particularly for chiefs who did not want to be tarred with responsibility for an unpopular or impolitic outcome to a territorial dispute. When the South Darfur District Council (dominated by the Baggara chiefs) did not wish to adjudicate on the 1940s boundary dispute between Rizeigat and Habbania, they called on the DC to make a ruling. Alienating either Ibrahim Musa or Ali El Ghaali would be a dangerous course for anyone embedded in southern Darfur politics; only the DC could navigate that dilemma.[801] The fact that state administrators were in practice often biased could also be a useful rhetorical tool for leaders faced with unsatisfactory rulings. Ali el Ghaali had himself complained of official bias towards the Rizeigat in a dispute of 1949.[802] Nor did he stop there: he also claimed the Governor of Darfur had not approved the biased '*hukm*' (ruling, in this context) of

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[801] Sherman report on Habbania-Rizeigat boundary dispute, 3 Jan. 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/3/14. Also see Lea, *Trek*, pp. 26, 31 for the demand by Kababish and Nuba leaders that the ADC should set the boundary between them, whilst refusing to send representatives themselves to do this: the Nuba sheikh expressed his desire to avoid any quarrel with Ali el Tom.

[802] *Nazir* Ali el Ghaali to Governor Darfur, 7 May 1949, NRO 2.D.Fasher 8/1/6.

the DC.[803] Bias was difficult for officials to avoid entirely: the history of close relations between the Madibbo family and the government gave weight to Ali's suggestions. In 1933, administrators on the Darfur-Kordofan boundary also acknowledged they were all 'thought necessarily prejudiced in favour of their own sides'.[804] But this bias was of course useful to particular elites: the relationship between Moore and Mohammedein meant that, as one official put it, 'Moore was the patron saint for the Zaghawa and would defend their rights against the Arabs with or without just cause.'[805]

Rigid state schemes to regulate shared pastoralist grazing might also be of value to local elites in particular circumstances. A government scheme of 1950 ordered that Fellata who wished to graze in Dar Habbania were required to obtain a permit from *nazir* Ali El Ghaali to do so, reflecting the perceived growth in Fellata herds and their tendency to graze further east into Dar Habbania: Fellata complained that the *nazir* demanded cash for such permits.[806] The Habbania-Fellata dispute over this issue was apparently resolved in 1953 by a panel of chiefs from Southern Darfur, who simply abolished the government scheme and reasserted that shared grazing would be regulated by 'local Baggara custom'.[807] The state approved of the demise of its own regulation in this instance: it had damaged local relations. Yet in the same year, *Nazir* Ali wrote to the Minister for the Interior to protest against the ruling: 'as each Sudanese knows, they [Fellata] spread in any place they like and settle on it'.[808] Rigid state-imposed schemes might, then, be actively supported by local elites who stood to profit from their workings, and who could also simultaneously be seen to protect their own tribe's grazing resources. Ali subsequently won (unspecified) concessions from the administration because of this direct high-level appeal. The pass system was not reinstated, but this outcome once more demonstrated that elites could use the support of remote officials to advance local agendas.[809]

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[803] DC SDD to Governor Darfur, 3 June 1949, ibid.
[804] Central District Monthly Diary, October 1933, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/1/3.
[805] Richardson to Udal, 15 Feb. 1995, SAD 781/8/16.
[806] Record of a meeting at Abu Salaa, 18 Dec. 1950; DCSDD to Governor, 1 Nov. 1953, NRO 2.D.Fasher (A) 54/1/2.
[807] DCSDD to Governor Darfur, 18 Feb. 1954, ibid.
[808] *Nazir* Ali el Ghaali to Minister of the Interior, 14 Mar. 1953, ibid.
[809] Henderson, Governor Darfur to Minister of the Interior, 12 May 1954, ibid.

Conclusion

It is clear that the state had a central role in setting pastoralist boundaries and regulating pastoralist mobility in Darfur, and that this role was a crucial means by which the authority of the state was both produced and locally recognized. Yet it is also clear that these state interventions were the outcome of negotiations and arguments between officials and chiefs. These negotiations were particularly vigorous where pastoralist *dar* boundaries coincided with administrative boundaries. Because of its place as a dividing line between northern and southern Sudanese administrations, the Malual-Rizeigat border was a particularly clear example of the divisions in the colonial state; more importantly it shows how officials might be co-opted into local agendas by sympathy with the elites whom they supported and were supported by. 'State effects' – in terms of projecting the idea of a unitary, abstract entity – were sometimes difficult to produce in this context. Moreover, state regulation of border relations was always limited in impact and success. Yet officials who were close to both groups remained, despite their biases and personal rivalries, an important focus for the agendas and interests of local elites. Indeed, it was perhaps their very partiality which made them so persistently useable by those elites. Perhaps in their vociferous pursuit of highly partial agendas, they neutralized some of the potential for violent conflict by absorbing it into the state apparatus itself. Even provincial governors were at times drawn into these dynamics, which were ultimately played out in personal negotiations within the state, rather than in violent conflict between Malual and Rizeigat.

If local elites wanted personally committed supporters to protect their own interests that was often what they got. The tendency observed by officials in 1939 for chiefs to approach the DCs to resolve disputes rather than deal directly with one another perhaps reflects the confidence of these elites that 'their' DC would negotiate on behalf of their own interests. Border politics thus alerts us to the limited extent to which, in particular contexts, the state was clearly detached from society, whilst at the same time demonstrating that state authority was central to the course and resolution of local disputes. Yet state regulation and rulings were only one form of order: these co-existed alongside persistent, flexible 'vernacular' accommodations

between elites. Internal, as well as external, borders could be zones of multiple regulatory orders.

Conclusion: State effects? Constructing colonial authority in Condominium Darfur

Most previous accounts of Darfur's history under British rule have emphasised the limits of the colonial state's ambitions and resources, and concentrated on the legacy of 'underdevelopment' which colonial rule bequeathed at independence.[810] Whilst accepting that the state was limited in scale and ambition in Darfur, this thesis has shown that local administrative officials exerted considerable authority in the context of settling local chieftaincy and boundary disputes, a role which is overlooked in general accounts of Darfur's colonial history.[811] Officials were in demand among local elites, and sometimes among ordinary people, to intervene in local politics: indeed they were often pulled into disputes by the force of local initiative. This demand for and recognition of the state's authority to adjudicate in these cases perhaps reflected Darfur's long experience of interactions between a relatively centralised form of authority and diverse local societies. The Darfur Sultanate had also exerted only a limited amount of power: its authority in its peripheries was far less regularised than that of its British colonial successor's. And yet, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, there is clear evidence of intervention by the Sultans in the politics of these peripheral zones: the pre-colonial state had the capacity to appoint and depose chiefs well outside of the 'core' area of its power. Local elites were perhaps always outward-facing, or 'extraverted' in Bayart's phrase, seeking external patronage and support to reinforce their own political position within their community.[812]

This thesis has suggested that this sort of interaction and even interdependence between state and local politics was, as Berry puts it, at the 'core of the colonial political process'.[813] Work by Jocelyn Alexander on the politics of land in

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[810] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 160, O'Fahey, *Sultanate*, p. 299; Prunier, *Darfur*, p. 26.

[811] Daly, *Sorrow*, briefly mentions the state's role in managing inter-tribal relations, pp. 130-132 and 153, but does not discuss chieftaincy disputes. Mamdani in *Saviors* has remarkably little to say about the actual practices of colonial administration in Darfur, especially given the centrality of the colonial period to his overall argument.

[812] Bayart, *Belly*, pp. 20-32.

[813] Berry, *Boundaries*, p. 37.

Zimbabwe has focussed on the state's 'engagement with colonial "subjects", through which institutions were built, consent gained, and power given effect. It is in local struggles over power and authority that states must take root.'[814] The chieftaincy and boundary disputes discussed here appear to have facilitated much the same process. But what sort of state was created in Darfur?

Chabal and Daloz have argued that colonial states were far from Weberian ideal types. Rather they imposed a mere veneer of rule-bound formality over the real political world of informal networks and arbitrary practices of colonial rule. Firstly, Chabal and Daloz suggest, Indirect Rule itself relied on local patrimonialism: chiefs used their recognised public role for private ends, and distributed patronage to their personal supporters. Officials turned a blind eye to these practices and colluded in the persistence of 'informal' forms of local administration, outside the bureaucratic control of the state. Secondly, officials themselves behaved in an arbitrary and independent manner: they were not consistently controlled by the state, and wielded considerable personal autonomy.[815] This was not a rule-bound, bureaucratic culture of authority. These arguments overlap with the application of the ideas of Giorgio Agamben to imperial rule. Agamben defines sovereign power 'not as the monopoly to sanction or to rule but as the right to decide when laws are suspended and when they are not'.[816] Ann Stoler has suggested that 'imperial states by definition operate as states *of* exception that vigilantly produce exceptions to their principles and exceptions to their laws'.[817] The highly personalised ways in which authority was practiced and represented, and the apparent weakness of bureaucracy and legal norms in Condominium Darfur appear to support such arguments. It might be argued that the culture of authority produced locally in Condominoum Darfur (and elsewhere in Sudan) laid the ground for the often observed neo-patrimonialism of the post-colonial Sudanese state.[818]

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[814] Alexander, *Land*, p. 5.
[815] Chabal and Deloz, *Works*, pp. 9-11.
[816] A.L. Stoler, 'On degrees of imperial sovereignty', *Public Culture* 18 (2006), p. 141. Also see Das and Poole, 'Margins' for a useful discussion of Agamben's ideas.
[817] Ibid., p 138.
[818] De Waal, *War*, p. 23; Woodward, *Unstable*.

Yet, as Erdmann and Engel have pointed out, the particular analytical value of the term neo-patrimonialism lies in its suggestion of a genuine interpenetration between patrimonial and bureaucratic modes of rule. The term does not suggest that the state is a mere facade.[819] Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis have drawn particular attention to the ways in which such interpenetration played out in the ground-level dynamics of colonial rule. They have emphasised that bureaucratic hierarchies and legal norms *did* matter to the way in which the state was locally constructed, and to the way Darfuris engaged with its authority. The colonial state was not simply a state of exception. In the course of chieftaincy and boundary disputes, local elites could appeal beyond the DC to individuals located higher up the bureaucratic hierarchy of colonial government, sometimes in attempts to overturn local rulings. And DC's were sometimes over-ruled by their superiors, occasionally in response to such demands from below: bureaucratic chains of command did matter. The nature of the state system was thus easily grasped by local elites who drew on multiple sources of state patronage to support their own agendas. Moreover, the legal discourse of the state could also be a discursive resource for local people. Those who protested against abuse at the hands of their chief, did so sometimes by using rhetoric which focused on the breach of rules and norms set by the state: chiefs could be accused of settling disputes out of court or imposing personal 'taxation'. The thesis thus provides empirical historical evidence to support the often asserted, but rarely tested view that 'the historical root of neopatrimonial rule in Africa is the colonial legacy' and that the colonial state was 'hybrid... a mixture of patrimonial and legal-rational domination'.[820]

So the state and its institutions could be manifested, imagined and used in a variety of different forms, from the highly personalised 'big man' model of authority, to the more abstract rules and norms associated with bureaucratic institutions. This pluralistic imagining of the state demonstrates the flaws of ideas which imply the capacity of power to produce a coherent, totalising projection of its own character. Mitchell's idea of the 'state effect' – which marks off the state as an 'inert structure' distinct from individuals and society – is worth applying to colonial authority in

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[819] Erdmann and Engel, *Neopatrimonialism*, p. 19.
[820] Ibid., p.19 and Bayart, *Belly*, p. 265.

Darfur: certainly the administration attempted at times to produce such effects.[821] However, as Mariane Ferme reminds us, the extent to which the state effect 'may or may not be integrated at particular times and in particular sites' varies considerably.[822] Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated that personal bias and the ties between administrators and chiefly clients might destabilise 'state effects' across administrative boundaries. Moreover, administrators sometimes pursued alternative means of projecting power, attempting to show themselves as embedded in local social and political norms. State actors were therefore pursuing contradictory agendas: to be personal supporters of their key local allies, perhaps even to appear as recognisable, personal authorities in local terms, whilst simultaneously trying to embody the essentially impersonal, external, 'containing' aspects of state power. They wanted to be simultaneously inside and outside local society and local politics. Local actors were often well aware of these tensions, and were not completely taken in by either 'state effects', nor what we might term 'sultanate' or 'chieftaincy' effects' which some officials aimed at. Rather administrators were seen correctly as men who wielded authority derived from the remote, somewhat abstract government, but who were also very much tied into local politics, and could be made into valuable patrons. Indeed their limited understanding of local realities, meant they could often be manipulated in line with local interests and agendas, particularly by chiefs who successfully formed strong personal relationships with officials.

By emphasising attempts by the administration to produce locally recognisable effects of authority, the thesis also contributes to scholarship which emphasises the limits to the colonial 'invention of tradition' in Africa, and argues that the colonial state in Darfur was manifested locally as a complex mix of the familiar and alien.[823] It demonstrates that, as Cooper suggests of the contemporary state in Africa, the colonial state in Darfur was not an 'African institution' nor a 'European imposition' but was rather the product of interaction between European and African forms of

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[821] Mitchell, 'State', p.93.
[822] M. Ferme, 'Deterritorialised citizenship and the resonances of the Sierra Leonean state' in Das and Poole, *Margins*, p. 86.
[823] Spear, 'Limits'

rule.[824] Established local practices of governance were adapted for use by colonial government, not simply reproduced. The thesis has shown this in a number of different contexts. The colonial administration often worked with existing chiefs, some of whom already wielded judicial powers derived from the state (the *shartays* of the Sultanate's core), to establish a functioning 'Native Administration'. Yet the introduction of government backed Native Courts on the old peripheries of the Sultanate had a major impact on the distribution of local authority, where there is no evidence that paramount chiefs had any existing centralised judicial role. Officials, chiefs and ordinary people enacted gatherings in which rulers and ruled recognised and made demands upon one another, drawing on the pre-colonial festival of drums in El Fasher. But these festivals had asserted the unity of Darfur under the Sultans; now they became localised 'tribal' meetings in line with the ideology of 'Native Administration.' Officials toured the old peripheries of the Sultanate, rather as had the *magdums* of the Sultans, hearing cases and supervising local chiefs; yet they never acquired land in the areas they governed, and rarely married local women. Colonial authority in Darfur needs to be understood not as a rupture with the pre-colonial past, as Mamdani would have it, but rather as a dialogic process where pre-colonial and colonial practices variously conflicted, co-existed and combined. Moreover, the notable emphasis on the spectacular (public demonstrations of machine gun fire, the exhibiting of the heads of vanquished enemies on poles, the enactment of tribal gatherings and, on a more modest scale, the entourage and flags that accompanied officials on trek) suggests a regime which partially relied on pre-modern practices of governance, but combined these with more distinctively modern techniques of 'legibility' (tribal maps, taxation lists, court records), attempting to reduce complex social realities to manageable units of administration.[825] This was, in numerous ways, a hybrid state.

At times the state, or its representatives, might even have appeared 'almost, but not quite' like the pre-colonial Sultanate. In Bhabha's theoretical writings, mimicry of

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[824] Here I tend towards supporting Bayart's view on the nature of the African state : *Belly*, p.265. See also F. Cooper, *Africa since 1940* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 160 for a similar argument about the character of the post-colonial state.
[825] For spectacle and colonialism see B. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial theory: contexts, practices, politics* (London, 1997), p. 162; for 'legibility' Scott, *Seeing*, pp. 2-3.

the coloniser by the colonised presents a psychically disturbing threat to colonial efforts to 'define and maintain' the 'otherness' of the colonised. For Cooper and Stoler, the common subversion of that otherness by the colonised presents 'the most basic tension of empire'.[826] Yet this thesis has suggested that mimicry can be a strategy of colonial rule, as well as a threat to its authority. The administration's efforts to appear recognisable in local terms, partial and often unconvincing though they might have been, were attempts to mimic pre-colonial cultures of governance. Moreover, the administration demanded chiefs who had mastery of both colonial and local discourses, and could shuttle between them in their performances of authority. Chiefs who were too obviously 'mimics' lost support from the government, as we have seen, yet the capacity of successful chiefs to perform the ways of the government partially undermined the coloniser–colonised distinction. Partial, momentary and instrumental attempts to blur the coloniser-colonised divide were thus as much part of the culture of colonial authority in Darfur as the maintenance of difference.

Moreover, the ways in which people appealed to and manipulated the state's authority also provide evidence to support Peterson's view that Africans 'contracted' with colonialism to achieve their own goals, even against the frequent (though by no means universal) indifference of colonial officials.[827] Recent accounts of the Condominium period in Sudan, examining local case studies from both northern and southern provinces, have generally emphasised the distance between state and society, and local perceptions of the colonial state as alien and often extractive.[828] This may also have been true in Darfur to a significant extent: yet government could also be perceived in other ways. Officials were mobile, manipulable local patrons in their own right, looking for ways in which they could prove their relevance in local affairs to themselves and to their 'subjects'. Darfuris understood that by playing their roles in colonial fantasies of legitimacy and (sometimes) intimacy, they implied

[826] Quotes from A. Stoler and F. Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony: rethinking a research agenda', in F. Cooper and A. Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world* (Berkeley, 1997), p. 7. See H. Bhabha, 'Signs taken for wonders: questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817', in P. J. Cain and M. Harrison (eds.), *Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, Vol. 3 (London, 2001), pp. 73-93.
[827] Peterson, 'Plays', p. 983.
[828] Willis, '*Hukm*', 'Gatherings; Leonardi, 'Violence', *Knowing*.

obligations on their rulers. And appeals to the state in the contexts of chieftaincy or border disputes, worked to create a limited, political colonial hegemony in Darfur.[829]

Historians of empire have generally engaged with debates about hegemony in fairly broad cultural terms. Ian Copland argues that the British Raj could not fulfil its hegemonic aspirations in India, emphasising the failure of colonial education to dislodge pre-existing worldviews.[830] The Comaroffs take quite a different view of the effects of the missionary enterprise among the Tswana, emphasising that despite intense local contestation of missionary cultural impositions, the forms of the European worldview were 'authoritatively inscribed on the African landscape.' Both these accounts emphasise colonialism as a cultural project. This thesis has also discussed the ways in which colonial administration was itself a cross-cultural encounter: yet it has made no attempt to define a similar 'colonisation of consciousness' in Darfur. This is because of the very limited agenda of the provincial administration: it pursued no major 'developmentalist' program in the region, rather focusing on the basics of tax collection and the maintenance of order.[831] Education was limited almost exclusively to the sons of the chiefly elite.[832] The colonial state admittedly did sometimes try to impose alien notions of bounded territoriality on pastoralist peoples, notions which some pastoralist chiefs seem to have internalised, but it is notable that local views of the flexibility of boundaries and movement appear to have also colonised the consciousness of a significant number of officials in Darfur. More generally, instead of undergoing a transformation in world view, local peoples, including, and perhaps especially, local elites, adapted their existing view of political authority to the arrival of the British colonial state. Yet, in a more narrow sense, colonial authority *does* appear to have had a hegemonic political hold in Darfur. If state and subjects remained culturally distant, they nonetheless were engaged in considerable political interaction and negotiation throughout the period of British rule, negotiations which usually proceeded, after 1921, without the consistent or direct use of force by the state. Hegemony can after all be seen as a *process* of bargaining and negotiation. Consent

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[829] cf. Berry, *Chiefs*, pp. 37-39.
[830] Copland, 'Hegemony, p. 663; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, p. 18.
[831] Daly, *Sorrow*, pp. 162-171.
[832] For the idea of the 'colonisation of consciousness' see the Comaroffs, *Revelation*, p. 4.

is extracted rather than freely given - indeed it is underpinned by the coercive potential of the state.[833] The argument here is that chieftaincy politics provided a field upon which the colonial state could engage with its subjects, a political field in which the state had, in many areas of Darfur, long been seen to have an important legitimating role.[834]

Historical perspectives on the Darfur conflict

Despite this argument for a limited colonial hegemony in Darfur, this thesis presents quite a different view of British colonial rule in Darfur to that provided by Mamdani's recent account. Mamdani portrays a state with the transformative capacity to reverse the previous direction of Darfur's history by a 'retribalisation' of society and governance, and the creation of a rigid system of ethnically defined land rights. Mamdani argues that the discriminatory nature of this system meant that it was 'only a matter of time' before large scale ethnic violence, of the type seen in recent years, would explode.[835] This implies a top-down, maximalist view of colonial power and locates the Darfur crisis within what Mamdani perceives as a broader recurrent crisis of citizenship throughout post-colonial Africa.[836]

In contrast this thesis has emphasised that colonial authority in Darfur, though surprisingly robust in certain respects, remained a field of negotiation and bargaining between state and society throughout the period of British rule. Chapter 6 in particular also demonstrates that the administration was not universally committed to the firm delineation of tribal homelands. The creation of fixed *dar* boundaries was sometimes a process urged by local elites, and only reluctantly followed by colonial officials: in pastoralist areas officials often believed that maintaining flexible boundaries would have benefits for inter-group relations. Even where colonial administrators attempted to confine pastoralists to particular territories or set up state controlled inter-tribal grazing schemes (which themselves

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[833] For hegemony as process see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Revelation*, pp. 20, 25; for consent as extracted see Copland, 'Limits', pp. 637-639.
[834] Here, I am very close to suggesting that for Darfuris, as for the Kababish interviewed by Asad in the 1960s, the *hakuma* has become seen as 'part of the natural order of things.' 'Inequality', p. 141.
[835] Mamdani, *Saviors*, p. 169.
[836] Mamdani, *Citizen*.

recognised overlapping, fluid access rights), local, informal regulatory practices continued to build flexibility into patterns of land access, and the state's capacity to enforce confinement was sporadic rather than consistent. Mamdani's assessment of the historical roots of the Darfur crisis, while usefully directing attention to local dynamics in Darfur, overstates the power of the colonial state, and makes overly deterministic claims about the connection between the structures of colonial rule and recent violence.

Moreover, the marginalisation, oppression and manipulation of Darfur by the Khartoum government, emphasised in the 'Black Book' (the manifesto of the JEM, a major Darfur rebel movement) and in many accounts of the conflict only take us so far in explaining Darfur's politics and the recent conflict in the region.[837] This thesis suggests an more interactive model of relations between the Sudanese state and Darfur than that implied by the straightforward application of a core-periphery model. Alex De Waal's turbulent state analysis is unusual among core-periphery analyses in allowing for the importance of centre-periphery political bargaining, though he also states that conservative provincial leaders remain 'marginal' to the central elite.[838] While accepting the accuracy of this with regard to the contemporary central state, the analysis of political dynamics *within* colonial Darfur presented in this thesis has emphasised the constant inter-penetration of local agendas with the practices of state power. Even in the earliest years of colonial pacification, as described in Chapter 2, state violence overlapped with local political rivalries, each feeding on the other to advance their own agendas. This interactive view of authority and violence in colonial Darfur very much reflects present-day political realities. The Sudanese state has in recent years attempted to assert its authority in Darfur by mobilising the grievances of marginalised peoples against their neighbours. But equally, local political entrepreneurs have seized on opportunities for the accumulation of wealth, or to boost their own authority within their community, exploiting the government's dependence on them to pursue their own interests. It is also notable that some local elites stood aside from direct participation in the 2003-4 state-instigated violence, judging that their best interests were not served by

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[837] See for example, Daly, Sorrow, pp. 2-3, and his description of the 'Black Book' at pp. 275-277.
[838] De Waal, 'Turbulent', pp. 20-24.

alignment with the agenda of the state.[839] And in more recent years, some senior figures in the *janjawid* militias have identified a common sense of marginalisation with those they at first viewed as enemies.[840] As ever, local actors have made their own decisions as to how far to engage with government agendas, and when to step back from them, making these judgements based on calculations of their own political interests.

The interaction between state and local agendas, between core and periphery, has a deep history in Darfur: it goes back to the days of the pre-colonial Sultanate, even if the location of the core and periphery has since shifted. To understand Darfur's contemporary politics, we need to take full account of this complex history. And we might go even further. To understand the post-colonial Sudanese state, we need to understand the character of the colonial state at its margins. The culture of authority in Condominium Khartoum was based very much on bureaucracy and institutionalisation, but the post-colonial state, even at its turbulent core, would be characterised by the neo-patrimonialism that had been constructed in the colonial peripheries. The core was, to some extent, captured by the periphery. Apparently marginal, local politics, such as those examined here, in Condominium Darfur, were integral to the creation of a state torn between bureaucratic 'modernity' and the imperatives of highly personalised, patron-client politics.

[839] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 299.
[840] A.J. Fadul and V. Tanner, 'Darfur after Abuja: a view from the ground', in De Waal *War* (Harvard, 2007), pp. 296-298.

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