REFLECTION ON THE CHARACTER
OF THE SUDANESE STATE AND
THE MAKING OF A DOMINANT
POWER BLOC

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Introduction

State formation in the Sudan may be traced to the middle of the eighth century B.C., and the rise of Nubian Kingdoms which exerted cultural as well as economic influence over the lands that now constitute the modern Sudan and many other outlying regions. Over the centuries, trade and economic interests precipitated conflicts which, at various times, led to encroachment upon Sudanese territory by the Pharaohs, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs, the Turks and the British. It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the transformation of Nubia was completed and the Islamic Funj Kingdom was established.

From 1504, the western, central and northern territories of the present Sudan Republic was dominated by the Funj and Darfur states which lasted until their conquest by the Truks in 1821 and 1874 respectively. The oppression of the Turkish colonial rule, the excessive taxation and abuses of its collectors fueled peasant support for the Mahdist revolution which liberated the country in 1885. After thirteen years of national independence, Egypt and Britain invaded the Sudan in 1898 and established a regime which ruled the country for about sixty years.

While this sketch of the rise and demise of states provides a semblance of historical continuity, it also presents particular problems for serious research. There is, on the one hand, the diverse nature of these states, with all which this entails in terms of inherited, intercalated or discontinued socioeconomic and political practices; on the other hand, there is the sheer size of the country (equals, roughly, the whole of whole of Western Europe or ten times the size of Great Britain) which often inhibited possibilities for uniform and harmonious development. Thus the nature of economic activity was influenced not only by variations in the nature of geographical characteristics but also by differences in the historical experiences which shaped prevalent ownership relations, economic associations and land holding patterns. As a consequence the level of development in the various regions of the Sudan differed significantly in their political, economic, social and technical aspects.

Notes on the Colonial State

The Sudan, like the majority of African and Asian countries experienced a great increase in the pace of economic and social
transformation as a direct result of colonial rule. This should not be construed to suggest that prior to colonial occupation the Sudanese economy was stagnant at an extremely "primitive" stage. A high level of economic activity took place in many regions and in old cities market relations were extensive. Colonial rule expanded the infrastructural base of the economy through the construction of a seaport (larger and deeper than the old one at Sunkin) which was given rail-links to crop producing areas and an expansion in irrigation schemes such as those in the Toker Delta. Gradually the Sudan was given the task of supplying British markets with cotton and some few primary products. At the same time the national market was becoming an exclusive domain for British commodities. These processes accelerated the inducement of various levels of integration in the money economy and signaled the most important phase in the penetration of the capitalist mode of production.

It was the sixty year Anglo-Egyptian condominium regime which overwhelmingly shaped the mould of the Sudan's present economy. This condominium rule, was in essence, British rule, for Egypt herself was at the time a protectorate of the British Crown. The Governor General of the Sudan, as well as to government officials in the capital and the provinces, were all appointed by Britain. It is little surprise then that the policies formulated by these colonial administrators were designed to suit the interests of their Imperial motherland rather than any other party. For it was because of the grand strategic interests of Britain that the Sudan was first occupied and this remained an important factor governing the nature of the colonial state throughout its life span of six decades.

If Britain's acquisition of colonial territories was generally motivated by economic interests such as hunger for raw materials and the securing of markets, then the case of the Sudan represents an aberration from that set pattern. The conquest of the Sudan was engineered mainly in response to the threat posed by the Mahdist state and its attempts to destabilize conditions in Egypt. This situation jeopardized Britain's hold over the Suez Canal which was vital to its trade routes with the Far East. Propelled by such motives the colonial state in the Sudan:

...had formed no definite objective regarding the ultimate political outcome and was concerned only with establishing order... (the Governor-General was an autocrat, and civil government followed a military pattern... the Heads of Departments and the Governors of Provinces representing his staff and commanders-in-field. Decisions were by a majority vote, but the Governor-General had power to over-rule the majority.
It would be erroneous to suggest that his military character of the condominium administration was created solely by the regional strategic and security imperatives which had led to the invasion of the Sudan. Of great significance in this regard was the initial threat posed by the nationalist opposition. According to P.M. Holt:

"The first priority of the Anglo-Egyptian régime... was the elimination of popular resistance... The final defeat of organized Mahdist resistance did not, as events were to show, mean the disappearance of the cult of Mahdi;... the government had to deal with a number of Mahdiists who appeared from time to time... these risings became a preoccupation of the government."

As late as 1931 Sir Harold MacMichael pointed out that:

"...motor machine-gun batteries and aeroplanes alike could achieve little in these trackless wastes of desert... Hardly a year had passed since the reoccupation without the need for a punitive expedition..."

Militarism was not the only characteristic which differentiated the Sudan's colonial administration from other British colonies which were ultimately under the authority of the Colonial Office in London. MacMichael observed:

"...the unquestioning loyalty... accorded by the whole British staff to the Governor-General. His was no temporary political appointment, and they were in the Sudan for the best part of their working lives, with no prospect of, or desire for, transfer elsewhere. No department in London controlled their destinies or actions in fact or theory; there was no parliamentary control, nor save in the highest spheres, were many questions asked in Parliament about the Sudan; and, if they were, the Foreign Office—the only department concerned—was ready enough to reply with relief that the matter was one for the decision of the Governor-General. This discouraged the inquisitive and reduced to a minimum the endless demands for returns, statistics, explanations and estimates, which burden the life of the colonial administrator. So there grew up a closely integrated corporation of willing servants of the State, unchallenged by the tyranny of the pen, concerned with little but their work... and owing a ready allegiance to the embodiment of leadership and power in the person of the head of State."

In this fashion from the early twentieth century station, or extensive state intervention in the economy, took root in the administration of the Sudan. Not only was statism entrenched during the colonial period but, together with its concomitant tendency of militarism, it continued to plague the postcolonial state in the Sudan.

However, neither an understanding of statism nor its twin evil of militarism can alone provide a clear explanation for the full range of forces which shaped state policies. Efforts to understand
understand these policies, particularly in the economic and social spheres, must also consider the class base of the decision makers. In the case of the Sudan, a study of the colonial administration indicated that:

Some of the members of the Sudan Service were sons of the country gentry, and the remainder were generally offspring of those collateral branches which, although they retained their country background, had sought professional service in Britain (in the countryside) or abroad within the empire. A third of the 400 men who joined the Sudan Political Service were the sons of clergymen—an astoundingly high proportion. Others were sons of doctors, soldiers, or civil servants; very few came from families involved in commerce or industry... None came from either the working class or even the managerial groups which inhabited the large urban industrial centres of England or from the growing suburbs with their cadres of business and professional people.

This socioeconomic background of the British officials was to a large extent responsible for the conservative social and economic policies of the condominium regime, which was further augmented by the concern with the previously mentioned fragile internal security situation. As a result the colonial state delicately nurtured traditional leaders and hereditary rule of Sudanese society. Similarly economic policies suffered from excessive conservatism. These policies were overly cautious, often slow and always suspicious. Even the colonial states most prized achievement, the massive Gaoz irrigation scheme, was not the result of an independent bold initiative by the Sudan Political Service. Rather, it was brought about by the concerted effort to several interested parties which materialized only after more than a quarter century of colonial rule.

Concern with domestic security obliged the condominium regime to adhere to the view that "Low taxation should be the keystone of the political arch; it brings tranquility in its train." This approach resulted in annual deficits which until 1913 forced the government to request yearly transfers from the Egyptian treasury. The situation changed with the outbreak of World War I, when the demand for Sudanese products rose in Egypt and the Middle East. As a result of the war period exports of camels, food products, sheep, cattle and cotton, the colonial state was able, for the first time ever, to realize a budgetary surplus. From that time onwards the colonial state became obsessed with financial
solvency which was reflected in the adoption of an agricultural policy that according to Arthur Chitsak, resulted in:

Slow but regular financial improvement derived from a variety of products — more grain, more rain-grown dura, a more hides and skins and — best contributor — more cotton. Over a period of time colonial occupational conditions which accelerated structural changes. A major catalyst in this process was the implantation of a modern-capitalist sector geared towards exclusive production of primary products for export. Thus in 1924, the establishment of the Gekira Scheme; the largest capitalist enterprise in the history of the country. Since then the State apparatus emerged as a large-capitalist entrepreneur, investing in the infrastructure and in production and hiring wage labour. Simultaneously, local production was discouraged by foreign imports and national industrial activity limited as it was, suffered. That part of agricultural production which was stimulated most was export-oriented. Even subsistence production was drawn into the money economy and small-scale agricultural and pastoral activities were connected to the export market through the mediation of an expanding fraction of the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class, the small brokers and rural traders. Colonial rule in the Sudan re-shaped, re-directed and re-oriented previously existing national processes of change and development. Admittedly these processes were not highly advanced and their evolution was slow; still, the pre-colonial development process was self-sustained and was in harmony with an parallel to the level of productive forces of its time.

The pattern of colonial development was preceded by the establishment of administrative, juridical and technological institutions to serve, protect and propagate the new order. The bureaucracy and legal code, not to mention military might, ensured the success and stability of colonial rule. Apart from its taxation weapons the colonial state, in most African countries, extracted surplus at the level of exchange by monopoly control over the marketing of primary commodities, through indirect taxation and, later, marketing boards. In the Sudan, in addition to the above mentioned steps, a direct assault was launched at the production level through control of landownership. In the first year of the condominium regime, the Lands Ordinance was passed which made all land in which private ownership was not proven the property of the colonial state. Such a decision,
adopted after the turbulent years of the Mahdist state which had
confiscated land in favour of peasant cultivators, meant that few
farmers could produce legal documents supporting their claims.
In the sense, colonial land policy relied upon de facto confiscation.
Following this, the 1905, the colonial state issued a proclamation
which forbade any Sudanese to sell, mortgage or change, or dispose of
his land without the written consent of the Governor of the province. 13
In some instances direct expropriation was exercised, as for example
in the Toker Delta of the eastern Sudan where the colonial state
decided to take over the cotton production of the local farmers whose
property was simply declared government land. 14

Such policies, together with the expansion of the economic
infrastructure, the existence of an autocratic administration
 eager to expand foreign export-import operations, a private
sector dominated by expatriots, were all important factors
for the re-orientation of national productive resources along
various channels servicing foreign trade and the requirements of
the new market, but not for a self-propelled national development.
This new patterns of production, relation and the
introduction of new equipment and agricultural techniques were
limited to selective areas of interest to the colonial state.
As a result of all of the above discussed practices the forces
responsible for economic duality were set in motion. At first
the administrative and political force of the colonial state
was used to introduce the new pattern which with time developed
economic force of its own. To a large extent, this momentum
was created by higher incomes earned in the new export production
operations. In this led to the growth of new modes of utilization
of productive resources which used modern imported equipment and inputs.
Accordingly, the traditional leaders and hereditary rulers were quick
to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the British conquest;
they made sure that their sons learned English and secured a position in
the civil or military bureaucracy and commercial firms. Traditional
merchants became underlings of the foreign export-import houses and
their trading activities with the country, collecting the exportable
materials and distributing the imported manufacturers. The
colonial agricultural policies favoured the traditional and
religious leaders and offered greater opportunities for rural
traders and grain handlers to realize profits well above normal by
imposing rack-rents on the peasants and lending money at
A main objective, then, for the colonial state was the promotion of certain agricultural exports and the expansion of the export-import activities. This policy, when applied to the agricultural sector, meant an increase in export crop cultivation, expansion in irrigation systems, ginneries, and transport networks. The mercantile and financial activities of the private sector servicing foreign trade followed the lead of the state and were attracted by the growing economic forces. The Sudan was experiencing a build-up of productive forces directly organized around the service of agricultural exports. Thus there was a growth in the volume of incomes gained from and dependent upon these exports.

Not all of the colonial policies concerning Sudanese agriculture were entirely externally motivated. One far-reaching decision that was inspired by domestic considerations dealt with the granting of licenses for private pump irrigation. Briefly stated, the official aim of this policy was to encourage large-scale production of cotton in private schemes along the Nile. The immediate significance of these schemes lies in the fact that they were used by the colonial state to create an economic base for its supporters. Later on, towards the end of colonial rule and in the early days of independence pump schemes remained at the centre of national political activity.

Up until the 1950s the colonial state ruled the country in a centralized military fashion which included the imposition of martial law for much of that period. Most of the administrators were themselves British army officers who had no desire to delegate authority or involve Sudanese in the power structure. The memory of the Mahdist Revolution was still alive in their minds. But after more than two decades in the Sudan, the British finally discovered allies in the leaders of indigenous political institutions. This traditional leadership, as was rightly perceived by the colonial regime, possessed the potential to fulfill certain tasks. Paramount among these duties were two objectives. First, this leadership was to provide a bulwark against modern nationalist ideas that would threaten the established order. Expressing this concept, the then Governor General, Sir J. Maffey, thought that traditional leaders would offer "... a shield between the agitator and the bureaucracy... protective glands against the septic germs (of nationalism)... (and would) sterilize and localize the political germs which spread from the lower Nile to Khartoum." A second objective was that native
administration would serve as a relatively inexpensive system of government.

In the words of Sir Maffey:

The appointment of natives to the public service is merely a convenience... Be prepared to grant a worthy scale of remuneration to the Chiefships we foster, ... in order to give them dignity and status ... we shall therefore be saved in the long run from costly elaborations of our own administrative machinery. 17

Thus from the 1920s onwards a series of ordinances was enacted to enhance the juridical and fiscal powers of tribal chiefs.

Following the inauguration of this system which the British labeled "Indirect Rule", they began to issue licenses for the private pump schemes on the Nile. Many tribal and religious leaders obtained the largest of these schemes. In fact, the first beneficiary of this policy was Abdel Rahman Al Mahdi, none other than the son of Al Mahdi — the archenemy of British imperial rule. According to K. Henderson, during World War I, the Sublime Porte declared a Jihad, but Sayed Abdel Rahman stressed to:

... his father's followers that the Turk was after all their traditional enemy... After the war he was given the wood contract for the Semna dam (built to irrigate the Gezira) and with the capital so acquired laid the foundations of a considerable fortune from pump-irrigated cotton grown on Aba Island. 18

In addition to virtual ownership of this 60 mile island in the White Nile, Sayed Abdel Rahman acquired more schemes which were:

...financed by the government at a cost of £28,000... Even in the Gezira, he had managed by 1931 to lay his hands on some 9,000 acres of cultivable lands. To these considerable profits from cultivation, one should add the Zakat which since 1919 had been collected annually from all the Ansar (followers of the Mahdi), and the presents brought to the Sayid by his richer adherents... Thus by 1935 Sayyid Abd-al-Rahman was... an affluent man by even the most conservative standards. 19

In the case of Sayed Abdel Rahman, state support went beyond the granting of agricultural lands or financial support. Sir James Robertson, one time Governor General, recounted earlier days:

... when Sayed Abdel Rahman was deep in politics and I was Civil Secretary, I was often accused... of having built up Sayed Abdel Rahman's power and influence by giving him so much land for cotton... He was of course enterprising and it is true that Government agriculturists and engineers had helped him with advice on the layout of his canalization, the utilization of the land and the erection of the pumps and pump stations. 20

Through such mechanisms the colonial state handed Sayed Abdel Rahman the economic base to launch a new version of Mahdism, the leadership of which he hand inherited. This "neo-Mahdism" proved its ability to command the blind following of the Ansar masses but it was totally bereft of its
original anticolonial content. S. S. Fudalla recounts the popular notion that Sayed Abdel Rahman was able to clear the woods of Aba Island and cultivate it by declaring to his followers that everyone who cut and cultivated a "Shibr" i.e., a few inches, would be rewarded with its equivalent in Heaven. 21

Sayed Abdel Rahman was the prime intercessor of the religious leaders who were granted licenses for private schemes. This list included the other two most prominent leaders, Sayed Ali Al-Mirghani and Sharif Yousif Al-Hindi, who together with Al-Mahdi were the pillars of the Sudan's religious aristocracy. Al-Mirghani commanded a wide following and his Khatuyy religious sect guaranteed him the absolute loyalty of very many Sudanese. All three sectarian leaders, Al-Mahdi, Al-Mirghani and Al-Hindi, who were knighted by the British, later on sponsored the country's largest political parties -- the Umma, the People's Democratic Party and the National Unionist Party, respectively. The decision to grant licenses to Sayed Abdel Rahman was based on political considerations explicitly spelt out in the directives of the Governor General in 1928 who specified that: "as the Sayed is behaving reasonably in the religious and political field we ought, as a measure of political expediency to bind him to us by economic fetters..."22 The same criterion was also applied to other religious leaders and tribal chiefs. In reality these private pump schemes were used as prizes to win the support of native administrators and religious shepherds to reward them and to strengthen their commanding position.

The State and the genesis of a dominant bloc

Briefly stated, the post-colonial state in the Sudan has remained the state of a dependent, marginalized and peripheral social formation. A most obvious evidence of this condition is the country's present relationship with the international capitalist system. After more than a quarter century since formal independence, the Sudan remains dependent on the production of low-profit, primary commodities (by and large cotton) and is a net importer of foodstuffs (wheat) as well as of all major finished goods (from machinery to textiles). Originally organized, imposed and maintained by colonial force to foster the production of a national economic surplus subordinated to the dictates of exchange with international capital, the state remained after independence, in essence unchanged. At the root of this problem is the nature and composition of the power bloc which dominated the state.

During the two decades preceding independence certain indigenous social groups stood out both in terms of their economic power and social prestige. Towering over the national scene were the sectarian leaders who
 wielded immense spiritual control over the majority of the people. This power and the blind following which it brought, particularly in the rural areas, allowed these leaders to extract a huge surplus from the massive agricultural operations which the colonial state had helped them to establish in the manner described above.

The expansion of capitalist economic activities also enhanced opportunities for accumulation to Sudanese landlords engaged in cotton production. At the early stages of these developments, the operations of Sudanese engaged in finance and trade were circumscribed by foreign capital and expatriate traders, but over time these groups too were eventually accommodated in the network of large scale capitalist accumulation. The rise of indigenous capitalism and its expansion required certain technical advice and services for which segments of the 'educated' Sudanese state functionaries were recruited. Briefly stated then, the religious aristocracy, indigenous capitalists engaged in agriculture, finance and commerce together with elements of the educated Sudanese composed the power bloc which 'won' independence and dominated the post-colonial state until the mid-1960s.

The colonial state's restructuring of the Sudan's economy had allowed for the creation of an economic base, mainly in agriculture, for both the traditional leaders and to a lesser extent the merchants. All of these social groups were fully incorporated into the service of the colonial state and capitalist production, for "... it was part of the colonial policy in the Sudan to stabilize the power centres as they (sic) found them and even to draw on historical tradition and cultural heritage in building new units."22 Thus, while religious leaders were reinstated and used in an attempt to eradicate Mahdist support, traditional chieftains were given judicial powers, while both groups were added to the state payroll and given access to capital accumulation through real estate/agricultural ownership or government contracts.

Economic and political power, it was argued in the above discussion, had been dominated as far back as the fourteenth century, by the merchants, religious and traditional leaders. Eclipsed during the Mahdist rule of thirteen years, these social groups were resuscitated by the colonial state which integrated them into its service in order to fulfill the mediatory functions of legitimation and subordination of the peasantry in return for opportunities for capital accumulation. This development arose as a result of an extremely complex and slow process. Radical and almost vindictive Mahdist policies towards the religious and traditional leaders, and to a lesser extent the merchants, had rendered many of them willing collaborators of the colonial state. The latter, in turn, was conscious of its own artificial nature, in that it did not
have local roots and was eager to avoid the possible but extremely expensive and often counterproductive reliance on unmediated force.

A marriage of convenience took place between the colonial state and these social groups. An early consort of the new state was the religious leadership who from the outset were accorded the recognition that Islamic laws as interpreted by their 'Council of Ulema' would be safely guarded and implemented. A second, and at time most favoured spouse of the colonial state was the traditional leadership of tribal chiefs who were given judicial as well as taxation powers. Without the active support of these two groups, the imperial contract would have failed to exert the social control necessary for its operation, or indeed, its very existence. Mindful of the Mahdist persecution and incapable of challenging the representatives of foreign capital, the merchants accepted for many years their subordinate role, restricted operations and attempted to make the most of whatever opportunities were offered by the colonial system. It was from this constellation of merchants, religious and tribal leaders, who were allowed access to capital accumulation during the colonial years, that an indigenous bourgeoisie eventually emerged.

Thus, from its early formative days the indigenous bourgeoisie has been a highly fragmented class. It was divided by internal contradictions emanating from types and sources of capital accumulation and economic activity. Those involved in agriculture were, on the whole, interested in expanding cotton production and consequently were dependent on the international bourgeoisie and their agents who controlled credit facilities, major import operations and access to foreign markets. This incipient agricultural bourgeoisie on the whole shared mutual interests with the British and were antagonistic towards Egypt. The latter, because of her thirst for Nile water to cultivate her land, was opposed to expansion of Sudanese irrigated agriculture and thereby obstructed the processes of capital accumulation by these fractions of the Sudanese bourgeoisie.

Sudanese merchants were subordinated not only to foreign capital and foreign companies, but also expatriate traders and businessmen who operated in all urban centres and most rural towns. The only group of indigenous merchants that was able to survive in an independent manner and with a great measure of success was the one engaged in border trade. Prominent in this category were the cattle merchants who traditionally sold live-stock to Egypt and Saudi Arabia and who were rarely obstructed in their activities by colonial policy.

The expanding operations of the colonial government necessitated the appointment of more technical and administrative cadres. An additional, but equally important motivation for educating Sudanese in "modern" learning institutions and for their subsequent absorption into the colonial services is to be found in the British notion that:
For the purpose of exorcising the fanatical spirit which was such a serious menace to peace and order, it seemed clear that education would prove the best weapon; and it would at the same time assist towards local recruitment for the government services.23

In this manner the employment of Sudanese served two objectives. Firstly, it reduced government expenses, since the wages of nationals were lower than those of the British or Egyptians. Secondly, this policy was thought to help pacify the population and save the British frequent contact with the colonized who would then be led to believe that their fellow countrymen were involved in the government process. Accordingly, the educational system was generally expanded and improved, the educated were allowed to participate in the local government system and special posts were created for them in the colonial state apparatus, e.g., Assistant District Commissioners.

Educational institutions in general and the Gordon College in particular continued to reflect a certain bias in their admission policies, for "... leading families of nomads, merchants and to a lesser extent the sons of religious men."24 Members of this educated group comprised the leadership of the Graduates, Congress, the grouping through which the British had hoped to limit nationalist concern to narrow cultural and educational problems. The aspirations of the graduates paralleled those of the rest of the bourgeoisie. The Congress members wanted to free Sudanese capitalism from domestic and foreign impediments in order to be able to play a leading role and to achieve entry into the ranks of the ruling class. This view is supported by the political behaviour of the Graduates' Congress towards the populace and its attempts to attain constitutional changes without allowing the masses to strengthen their capacity for independence action and organization on the political or economic levels.

This incipient bourgeoisie in the state was in favour of the capitalist growth—the colonial system, the tribal chiefs who controlled the rural power structure, and the expatriate functionaries who occupied top positions in government. Their position in society was but an outgrowth of the material changes brought by colonial rule. Their outlook was shaped by the ideological rag-and-bone shop which emerged from the fusion of capitalist, feudal, and pseudo-socialist currents of thought.25 In more than one case leaders of bourgeoisie have been unable to make distinctions among the logical bases of these ideologies, a weakness which for decades bred an incoherence in programmes and confusion and vacillation in the political practice of the leadership. This general ideological weakness coupled with the absence of any other group possessing a clear national programme allowed the more resourceful
indigenous state functionaries to take command of the nationalist movement.

The development of Sudanese dependent capitalism conditioned by the dictates of the colonial state, and confined to areas in which it was tolerated by foreign businessmen and their companies, was not such as to offer great expectations to the state functionaries. Hence, as early as the 1940s some Sudanese bureaucrats realized that they stood to gain from the expansion of national capitalism and accordingly sought closer ties with leaders of religious sects who were large landowners or were involved in the finance, ginning and marketing of cotton. Understanding the association between these groups is of crucial importance.

This relationship was not defined by a legal contract but it was based on complex mutual benefits. The religious aristocracy utilized the technical, administrative know-how and the English language proficiency of this group, some of whom were lawyers, agriculturalists, doctors and engineers. Their capabilities were put to use in the expansion and organization of the colonial state apparatus. These bureaucrats, in turn, gained social status but most importantly, economic rewards.

Economic benefits often took the form of partnerships in business operations, acquisition of agricultural land or real estate at nominal prices or, on certain occasions, direct financial support. The pattern of economic rewards set apart this particular group of bureaucrats from the other graduates of Gordon Memorial College and from government employees. Some of the latter did indeed have ties with the religious aristocracy but they were of an entirely religious and spiritual nature. Motivated as they were by existential sentiments their rewards were likewise spiritual.

The above outline explains the evolutionary dynamics by which segments of the two social categories of bureaucrats and educated were metamorphosed into the nucleus of a bourgeoisie fraction. Originally their place in the political and ideological network of social relations (as state functionaries or propagators of ideology) had principally defined their position as social categories composed of individuals from various social classes and fractions. The above described economic interests which intensified over time had eventually mediated their assimilation into the ranks of the bourgeoisie. This fraction of the bourgeoisie dominated the Graduates' Congress movement at later 'operated' the national political parties.

Clearly the pattern suggested here does not imply that every graduate of Gordon College who was absorbed into the state apparatus automatically became a member of the bourgeoisie. Although state salaries ensured a relatively high income for functionaries, this cannot in itself
be considered the basis for membership in the bourgeoisie. In the concept utilized here, ownership of property, relations to the production process and modes of appropriation of surplus are prerequisites for entry into the ranks of the indigenous bourgeoisie proper.

The graduates of Gordon College, who were encouraged by the British to form associations, later became the leaders of the Sudanese nationalist movement. These graduates, children of Sudanese traditionalism and Anglo-Saxon conservatism, together with the religious sectarian leaders, dominated the independence movement. This alliance between the graduates and religious leaders was dictated by the inability or unwillingness of the former group to mobilize the oppressed and dispossessed masses. The graduates never entertained any idea of structural transformation or radical change in Sudanese society. Such notions were out of tune with the training they acquired while serving the colonial agencies of repression, e.g., police, army local government, etc., and with their education. The College ensured that its graduates would not only be capable of performing their administrative duties, but also their ideological ones.

However, neither the bourgeoisie in the state nor any other class or fraction succeeded in retaining ascendancy over the entire power bloc indefinitely. In fact, frequent changes in the structure and distribution of power within the ruling bloc, and the unabated and unceasing quest for hegemony therein, characterized the post-colonial state and prevented the dominant social forces from achieving any enduring or stable equilibrium of class alliances. This situation, in turn, bred vacillation in state policy as a whole and in development strategy in particular. Persistent strife within the power bloc and the intensification of the unresolved contradictions which fueled it deepened the weakness of the dominant bloc and forced certain of its elements to seek new allies. The cumulative effects of these developments coincided, at certain definite points, with a growth in the strength and organization of the dominated social forces and thereby presented opportunities to restructure the ruling bloc as a whole. A case in point was the national strike leading to the downfall of the first military regime in October, 1964, which was the result of one such instance.

Ex-leaders of the defunct Congress became the architects of Sudanese political parties which were not based on any active soliciting of mass popular support through the articulation of national grievances and aspirations. Instead, these parties were conceived in and born of the womb of the religious aristocracy. The aristocracy provided not only material backing but, most importantly, by virtue of its spiritual status,
guaranteed the unquestioning, blind and fanatical following of the larger proportion of the Sudanese people. The two main parties (the Umma and NUP) formed in the mid-1940s had no specific programmes of any kind nor did they collect fixed membership dues. For their financial needs, both parties relied on the benevolence of the religious aristocracy, contributions from the commercial or agricultural factions of the indigenous bourgeoisie and periodic transfers from foreign sources.

The leading political parties of the power bloc were differentiated by narrow economic interests, style, tone and petty idiosyncrasies, rather than by any well-defined divergent ideologies. Indeed, each party was dominated by different fraction of capital, and had more in common with the other than with the mass of the people. In the words of an admirer:

The leading politicians of both parties had been at school together. Personal dislikes and jealousies, tribal and sectarian differences, naturally existed but personal recrimination was rarer in Sudan politics than in Britain, ... It was natural for the Ashigga leaders to postpone a demonstration when they learned that it would interfere with a wedding party; for the Umma delegates presenting a protest against British perfidy ... to murmur ... 'Nothing personal, of course!'

These parties were not only organized by that fraction of the bourgeoisie in the state, selected from among the ex-Graduates, but they also manned its executive committee. However, these party executives also fulfilled another role. As was previously explained, by virtue of their professional training and their proficiency in the language as well as ways and mannerisms of the colonizer, the state functionaries-cum-party executives had been entrusted earlier with top level managerial, technical and consulting needs of the economic enterprises owned by the religious aristocracy. Therefore, the early formation of these parties appears more analogous to business enterprises than to organs of popular participation and national liberation. No wonder then that the role of major political parties in the attainment of independence was little more than a conduit for decisions taken elsewhere. Indeed, independence was imposed without there being a cohesive ruling class, but rather a collection of ruling class fragments - none of which was hegemonic.

In post-colonial Sudan, certain state agencies were compelling presences, while others were weak as well as ineffective, and a few usually considered vital did not even exist. Instead of being overdeveloped, the post-colonial state apparatus in the Sudan was skewed and unevenly formed. Whatever degree of 'overdevelopment' which can be detected in the Sudanese post-colonial state structure was unequivocally in the defence and security apparatus. Concern with the apparatus of organized force,
which was, as described earlier, rooted in the militarist characteristics of the colonial state, flourished after independence. To date, defense and security still devour the greatest proportion of total state expenditures.

While the militarism, conservatism and uniformity of the colonial state were instrumental factors in the evolution of a "modern" army, the effects on the civil bureaucracy were not similar. As noted by Professor M.H. Awad:

Sudanization brought to the top of the Civil Service those who were nearest in rank and mode of thinking to the British high-ranking officials. After they were charged with the task of making their own decisions, they continued to rely on their files and records... They are searching for a precedent. 27

No attempt was made before the late 1960s to restructure state institutions or to reorient or redefine their policies so as to render them harmonious with the tasks of national sovereignty.

Left untouched, the structure of the post-colonial state institutions increasingly failed to cope with the change realities of the Sudanese national formation, or even to successfully mediate between the competing claims of the various domestic social forces and their conflicts with foreign pressures. Instead, the administrative structures which were originally created to protect, maintain and propagate the colonial relations of production and of appropriation were expected to serve equally well in an independent Sudan and to fulfill national social, economic and political aspirations. This anomalous situation was rooted in the previously examined composition of the dominant power bloc and the nature of the Sudanese transition to independence. Commenting on the initial creation of the post-colonial state institutions, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out that:

When threatened by imminent defeat, the first national government established additional ministries in order to absorb some Member of Parliament. Such ministries were in reality mere departments as in the case of Stores and Equipment or Mechanized Transport. (Also) coincidence had dictated the assignment of the Ministry of Mineral Resources to the Minister of Public Works due to the geographic proximity of the two ministries and not because of the demands of efficient productivity, proper management or general planning... 28

Conclusion

Little wonder then that in the Sudan, state policies remained virtually unchanged after independence. The economic plans of the post-colonial state maintained the same old foundation of appropriating the surplus derived from the subordination of the peasantry and their agricultural production activities. This situation has also meant the continuous inability to shake off permanently the plague of authori-
tarian statism and all that it entails in terms of an erosion of real forms of democratic participation and basic human rights. The pattern of class dominance changed only a little. Democratic forms were needed by the assertive Sudanese bourgeoisie only in the transition to independence; thereafter, democratic trappings were an inconvenience to be abandoned and the state apparatus reverted to its oppressive colonial character.

FOOTNOTES


4. MacMichael, pp. 102 -103


6. MacMichael, pp. 96 -107

7. Ibid., p. 104


22. Warberg, p. 32.


27. M.H. Awad, "adapting the Civil Servant to Meet New challenges" in Proceedings of the Seventh Conference, Institute of Public Administration, Khartoum (February 1966), p.4