

DIVERSITY REGIONALISM AND NATIONAL UNITY

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Mohamed Omer Beshir

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Dr. Mohamed Omer Beshir is professor at the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum. The first part of this report is a revised version of his paper "Cultural Diversity and National Unity" presented to the Symposium on Afro-Arab relations held in Khartoum January 1976. The second part was presented under the title of "Diversity, Regionalism and National Unity in the Sudan" to the International Conference, 'The Central Bilad al-Sudan: Tradition and Adaptation', Khartoum, November 1977.

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1. Introduction

The first part of this research report will be concerned with the interrelation between cultural diversity and continental and national unity. It is to be noted however that the study of Africa and national cultures until recently has been limited to the Europeans. With a few exceptions these studies reflected what might be termed the "colonial ethos".¹ This is not surprising, since scholars from the colonial powers nearly monopolised the field, and since many of them were directly or indirectly participants in the colonial system as administrators, missionaries, technical advisors and the like.² Much of the scholarship treated African societies as if they were static.

With the emergence of the new African independent nations, a new outlook has emerged. The colonial scholar, be he anthropologist or political scientist is no longer regarded as the only bearer of the standard of knowledge. The new look coincided with the emergence of Pan-Arabism and, more recently, Afro-Arab cooperation, and a new attitude towards international relations. The emergence of the new African states after the Second World War and the near liquidation of colonialism is, however, the most important factor in this new development. Scholars are busy rediscovering the history of Africa, its trade routes, its cultural relations within Africa and outside it, its internal migrations, etc. African scholars and others, are for the first time rediscovering that there is an African culture, which, like others cultures, has diversity as well as unity. They are now aware that, in spite of the long period of European colonisation, African cultures have resisted European attempts to annihilate it. Unlike America, which has become a cultural province of Europe, African cultures have retained their basic characteristics.

Indeed, the study and investigation into this area, in the words of a Ghanaian Professor, deserves a more important place in the list of research priorities than it has hereto been accorded.³

2. A definition of culture

But before we deal with the issues of diversity and unity, let us attempt to define culture. First of all, it is difficult to define the word culture so as to convey a true spirit of what it is and what it embraces. A UNESCO conference for specialists in the social and human sciences held in December 1967 to discuss Cultural policies, after lengthy discussions gave up and "decided unanimously against embarking on an attempt to define culture".⁴

Notwithstanding this, an attempt to define culture, however dangerous and full of pitfalls, cannot be avoided. One of the earliest definitions of culture was that made by E.B. Tylor in 1871. He defined culture as all those "capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".⁵

Frans Fanon in the first Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Paris, September 1956) made a similar definition. He defined culture as the total motor and cerebral behaviour generated by man's encounter with his nature. It includes everything done by individuals or sets of individuals within the group to enhance its nature.

A more precise definition was made by the Kenya Professor James N'gugi, namely that in the widest sense, culture is a way of life fashioned by a people in its collective effort to live and to come to terms with its environment as a whole, that it consists of the sum total of that people's art, its science and all its social institutions, including its system of belief and its rites.⁶ President Léopold Sédar Senghor is even more precise and to the point. He defines culture as "the sum of theoretical and practical knowledge which enables us to know ourselves and others and also to know our environment".⁷ The conference of Ministers of Culture in Africa held in Accra, Ghana, from 27.10.1975 to 6.11.1975 defined culture as consisting of "all the material, moral and spiritual assets, knowledge, language, art, know-how, ways of thought, forms of behaviour and store of experience accumulated over the centuries".⁸

The central points emphasised by these definitions is that culture refers to "the way of life of a people, to their traditional behaviour, in a broad sense including their ideas, acts and artefacts".⁹ It is in all senses a complex which includes belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. In other words it is the set of ideas, concepts or ideals shared by a group of people, races, nations or states. These concepts include both the rational and irrational elements. They include material and non material elements.

Culture defined in this way is an attribute of man and is learnt. It varies from one group to another, and from one point of time to another. There is no uniformity of culture, even within the same cultural group. There is always an upper, middle and lower layer. The culture of each layer will be different from the others to a certain degree. It is not a static situation. The culture of a people is dynamic and responds to the changes in societies, and to the degree of contact with other cultures.

On the other hand, culture, defined in this way, cannot be equated, as it often is, with traditional societies, music and dances.¹⁰ It is not the folklore of a society, nor a leisure time activity. It is more than this. It also does not mean that it is a static affair. The culture of a people is dynamic, changing and responsive to the changes in society and to the degree of contact with other cultures.

Cultural authenticity, which we are used to reading about these days so often, does not mean throwing away European names, titles and dress and adopting African ones, through at the same time behaving and thinking in an European way. There is more to cultural authenticity than this.

3. African culture

The definition of what culture is and what it is not, implies that every people or group of people have a culture of their own. Hence we speak of an European culture, an American culture, an Arab culture and an African culture. It is not

necessary that these cultures are exclusive of each other. American culture, although distinct from the European culture, is close to it - indeed, it is an offshoot of the European culture. Arab culture and African culture are also related to each other. Both cultures have borrowed from each other and have been influenced by each other. Seventy percent of those who belong to the Arab culture live in Africa. Arabic is spoken by large communities in Africa. Swahili and Hausa have borrowed extensively from the Arabic language.

Islam, which is widespread in Africa, represents another source of sharing. Besides north Africa, the Sudanic Belt and Somalia, where Islam is the religion of the great majority. Muslim communities large and small are to be found all along the coast of East Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zaire, Central African Republic, South Africa, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Guinea Coast.

It is hard to get statistics on the number of Muslims in Africa, but it is estimated that one in every three Africans is a Muslim. In some countries, such as Zaire and Tanzania, the number of Muslims has been underestimated. The same is true of Ethiopia, where it is estimated that at least half the population is Muslim.

The Islamic Brotherhoods - Tariqas - of the Arab world have their counterparts in Africa e.g., the Qadiyya and the Ahmadiya. Certain Islamic movements in the Arab world had their counterparts also in Africa - the Mahdiya for example. Mahdiism has appeared in the Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia, and inspired anticolonial uprisings and movements. It is true that Islam in Africa has its own features and has been shaped by the local geography, local values, the political circumstances and the ethnic divisions. It is true also that it is not homogeneous. But, nevertheless it represents one of those shared elements between Africa and the Arab world. Another common element shared with the Arab world is Christianity. Christianity is as old in Africa as it is in the Arab world. It was brought to the Sudan already in the first century A.D. (ACTS chapter 8). The Coptic church in both Ethiopia and Egypt is as old as the other brands of Christianity in the

Arab world. It was only with the advance of Colonialism and European missionary activities that African Christianity looked towards Europe rather than to the Arab countries.

In addition to this, both the Arab world and Africa share the common experience of being colonised at one time by the European powers.

African culture, too, has not been isolated from European culture, as we shall see later in more detail. It has been influenced by the European culture. Its contribution to American culture is much more than is usually admitted.

We can therefore legitimately speak of an African culture distinct but not isolated from other cultures. This African culture has two main characteristics: diversity and unity. Both attributes are, however, not peculiar to Africa alone. Europe, Asia, and America are likewise characterised by a diversity of cultures. No continent, including Africa, has been free from the conflicts that arise from cultural diversity.

4. Cultural diversity in Africa

The description of Africa as a continent of diverse cultures, as a mosaic of nations is not new. This diversity cannot, however, be summed up by pointing to the differences between the past and the present, the pre-colonial and colonial periods, or the levels of economic development. Nor can it be explained by listing the number of tribes inhabiting the continent.

The term "tribe" is in itself ambiguous. "Far from being a scientific description of an actual state of affairs, tribe, tribal and tribalism are ideological terms tending consciously or unconsciously to discredit the peoples and the nations of Africa in the eyes of foreigners, or even, through the operation of an all too familiar process of alienation, in the eyes of certain Africans".¹¹ It is therefore a word which carries with it a certain connotation.

P.H. Gulliver, in his introduction to "Tradition and Transition in East Africa", says that the list of tribes established by the colonialists were in many ways arbitrary. He also says that the word has been used by various people at different times for certain definite purposes. First it was used by the people themselves in the pre-colonial times to describe the units cooperating culturally and regionally, then by the colonialists and minorities to further their own policies, later by nationalists to obtain a local base of political power, and finally by the post-independence leaders as something to fight against to force the unity and identity which is required by a modern state.¹²

The British in the Sudan set out from the beginning, and especially after the First World War, to resurrect the old vanished tribal institutions in a policy of native administration. Their objective was to undo what the Mahdiist Revolution attempted to do thirty years before - forge a nation out of the different people in the Sudan. British policy set out to create small divided entities which would oppose each other and also oppose the rising tide of nationalism.

On the other hand, it is ridiculous, for example, to speak of tribal warfare in Nigeria, when the groups involved comprise several millions of people. The Dinka of the Sudan whose number is nearly one and a half million cannot be looked at as a tribe when they are in actual fact a people of the same culture consisting of large and small units. The same applies to the use of the word race. Scientists have long found that popular assumptions of inherent social differences cannot be used to explain cultural differences. Racial factors do not explain the distribution of cultures in Africa.¹³

We will therefore discard the use of the words "tribe" and "race" and base our criteria for diversity on people or cultural groups. In Africa, (probably the cradle of man), as elsewhere, the traditional societies comprised man and woman who shared a whole set of technological, linguistic and other cultural features which distinguished them from other groups. George P. Murdoch lists and describes almost 850 traditional African societies, which means 850 different cultures.¹⁴

The listing is, however, unsatisfactory, since it does not take into consideration the uniformity in certain areas, stability over a time and the persistence in mixing.¹⁵

The cultures of Africa have therefore been gathered together into a few large groups. Different criteria have been used.

One of the first attempts to do this was made by Herskovitz in 1924.¹⁶ He drew a map of cultural areas which was later redrawn.¹⁷

Rather than attempting a precise definition of culture, but simply referring to it as "the way of life of a people" Herskovitz divides Africa into the following ten cultural areas:

1. The Northernmost coast area culture.
2. The Desert area culture.
3. The Western Sudan area culture.
4. The Eastern Sudan area culture.
5. Egypt area culture.
6. The East Horn area culture.
7. The East African Cattle area culture.
8. The Congo Area culture.
9. The Guinea coast area culture.
10. The Khoisan area culture.

Each of these cultural areas has its own way and style of life to make it distinct from the other areas. The northern west coast area of Africa was not however designated as one of the cultures of Africa.

The most significant feature of this grouping, besides the diversity on the continental level and the uniformity within each area, is that the cultural boundaries do not coincide with the political boundaries. This is of course not surprising, since the present political boundaries of African states were not drawn according to the actual areas inhabited by people of the same culture. The interests of the European powers during their scramble for Africa, later legitimised by the Berlin Conference of 1884, were the only consideration

in the drawing of these political boundaries. Hence the result is what we find today: political boundaries often cutting across cultural boundaries, and the existence of people or communities of the same culture in different states.

A similar attempt at mapping the culture of Africa was made by Alan P. Meriam.¹⁸ The emphasis and the basis of regrouping African culture here is music. The justification for this is that music is more pronounced and more integrated in illiterate societies than in the literate ones. Music in the latter is mainly entertainment, while in the former it is in the whole life of the group.

According to this criterion, Africa was divided into seven music areas:

1. The Bushman-Hottentot area.
2. The East Africa area.
3. The East Horn area.
4. The Central Africa area.
5. The West coast area.
6. The Sudan Desert area.
7. The North Coast area.

These music areas coincide more or less with the cultural areas delineated by Herskovitz.

Language too has been used as a criterion for the mapping of cultural areas in Africa.

Africa has been described with reference to language as one of the most complex areas. It has been suggested that there are not less than 800 languages in Africa, and this, according to J.H. Greenberg, is an underestimate.¹⁹ There have been a number of attempts to classify languages in Africa by Lepsius, Mueller, Meinhoff, Westerman and Greenberg, to mention a few. According to the last author, the languages in Africa can be grouped with five major distinct families. These five groups or families cover 98 % of the area and population of Africa. In addition to these five groups, there are seven groups of language families or individual languages which cover relatively small areas.

In addition to these twelve families, there is the Malgasy language spoken in Madagascar and the Meroitic language which is the extinct language in Meroë - a culture of the present day Sudan in ancient times, and which has not yet been deciphered.

G.P. Murdock, on the basis of Greenberg's work, produced a provisional classification of linguistic stocks and subfamilies in Africa:²⁰

1. Furian (= the language of the Darfur area in the Sudan)
2. Hamitic (called Afro-Asiatic by Greenberg)
 - a. Berber
 - b. Chadic
 - c. Cushitic
 - c. Egypt
 - e. Semitic
3. Kanuric (the language of the Central Sahara in Greenberg)
4. Khosian
 - a. Bushman
 - b. Kunginga
 - c. Sandawe
5. Koma
6. Kordofanian
 - a. Katla
 - b. Koalib
 - c. Tagali
 - c. Talodi
 - e. Tuntum
7. Maban
8. Malayo-Polynesian
9. Nigritie (= Niger Congo in Greenberg)
 - a. Atlantic

It is to be noted that this map of African languages resembles that of the cultural areas of Herskovitz and the music areas map of Meriam. In addition to this, it is to be noted that the greatest diversity of languages is obtained in the Sudan. It includes Furian, Hamitic, Kanuric, Koman and Kordofanian major families and subfamilies. This is a matter of major significance in the classification and mapping of the culture of the Sudan.

One of the conclusions of Greenberg on African languages and their diversity, is the following:

"The languages of Africa, in their sharing of fundamental features underlying a complexity of origin and in their area differentiation, agree in general fashion with other aspects of African culture. So, too, the long continued and persistent Moslem influences, which have to a high degree shaped the life patterns of Negro peoples in the entire Sudan and much of East Africa and even further south, find their reflection in the numerous loan words of ultimate Arabic origin, even among non-Moslem peoples."²¹

For most of the continent European influences on African languages, compared to Arabic is perhaps minimal.

Another classification of African languages made by David Dalby²² yielded upwards of ninety units - all of which, except for a dozen, are located into a single belt extending across the continent from the coast of Senegal in the west to Ethiopian and east African Highlands in the east. He called it the Sub Saharan Fragmentation belt, and uses it to divide Africa into three language belts: North - Sub Saharan - and South, i.e. three language zones.

The diversity of culture is again attributed to the diversity of beliefs in Africa: traditional religions, Christianity and Islam. "Traditional religions" is used here in preference to the terms "animism" and "fetishism", since these, like the term "tribe", are highly ambiguous, reflect a certain attitude of mind. Both Christianity and Islam are African religions in the sense that they have long existed in Africa. A map of the religions in Africa will show that Muslims are concentrated in North Africa and the Sudanic Belt, the Christians are scattered all over Africa but are concentrated in Southern, Central and East Africa. The number of Christians and Muslims in Africa were estimated in 1968 to be 83 million and 68 million respectively. The rest, or 130 million, were reckoned to be holding to the traditional religions.

Religions, languages, music and arts are some of the sources for cultural diversity in Africa.

This diversity, irrespective of the criteria used or the approach is therefore a fact of the continent.

however, be interpreted so as to suggest exclusiveness or isolationism. Whatever the cultural areas we divide Africa into, or the divisions we make, these divisions and areas overlap and run into and across each other. The list of differences between one area and another, or between one people and another can be extended indefinitely, but the similarities are no less striking than the differences. This has been well expressed by James Maquet when he wrote as follows:

"From Conakry to Mogadishu, from Khartoum to Durban, one may perceive a certain common quality".²³ The cultural unity of Africa may be vaguely experienced, but none the less it is there. "It is not based on total, intuitive impressions only ... (It) is confirmed by careful evaluation of specific cultural phenomena. Thus African sculpture, which evolved in a broad zone extending from Senegal to the Nile and from Lake Chad to Angola, comprises many styles (one specialist has distinguished two hundred), each has its own characteristics. Yet in a Museum of "primitive art" it is easy to perceive a certain relationship between African works, a common quality that distinguishes them from works of different origin".²⁴

This unity is, however, seen by some as only relevant and applicable to Africa south of the Sahara. The advocates of the existence of this unity in culture, not withstanding the diversity within, exclude the northern parts of Africa. They consider North Africa countries as having a culture different from that of Black Africa. They have coined the phrase "Arabo-Berber" culture to differentiate it from Black Negro culture.

They argue that the societies north and south of the Sahara, although they had more cultural contacts a few years ago, yet those contacts were not "sufficiently intense or numerous to create a cultural unity"²⁵ between the two regions. The validity of this concept has been challenged on two levels. First, on the grounds that it reintroduces the issue of race which is not relevant to culture. Secondly, it ignores the suggestion that significant features of many African civilizations and cultures originated from Egypt and that the latter itself is originally a black African civilization.

The debate goes on. What is important in the existence of diversity of cultures on the continental level does not preclude unity between the countries of Africa on the cultural or other levels.

5. Colonialism and African culture

Colonialism and the common experience of Africa during the colonial period and after, have contributed to the development of a cultural unity between Africa's diverse cultures. Colonialism imposed its economic, political and social systems over the whole of Africa. Although the impact and degree of imposition differed from one country to another and from one type of colonial rule to another, yet the basic elements were there. The differences between the different colonial systems, as far as Africa is concerned, should not be exaggerated. British, French, German, Italian, Belgian, Spanish and Portuguese colonialism are basically the same - they derive from the same culture. The final outcome was the imposition of a uniform culture. The experience of African societies although not identical, was similar everywhere.²⁶

This similarity is manifested in the fact that the impact of European cultures on Africa was mostly confined to a small part of the population in any given country. Only a small group, the elite, came to identify with the cultural values of the colonial regimes. The rural masses, which constituted 80 % of the population of Africa were hardly touched by the European values. This is not to suggest that these were not affected by colonialism and its values, or that the degree of identifications and assimilation of the elites all over Africa was the same.

The main vehicles used for the imposition of European cultural values were the colonial economic system, the legal and educational systems. The economy of the African countries was structured in such ways as to ensure and maximize the profits of the Europeans. Competition and profit making replaced the traditional economies based on cooperation and satisfaction of the local needs in the first place.

European legal concepts and codes replaced the customary laws. The African traditional system of education which combined both learning and participation in the daily activities of societies was replaced by a new system which took the children away from their environments, put them in walled schools and instructed them in foreign language. The main task of the schools was to turn out petty clerks and administrators who would work the machinery of the government.

Language being an important component of culture, was an important instrument in the imparting of European culture and values. The elite which came to master the foreign languages absorbed also the attitudes and values of the alien culture. In the area of religion, another important component of the European culture, European Christianity, was promoted by the European missionaries, sometimes hostile to each other, competed for the soul of the African.

It is true that it is those conditions created by colonialism and the elite brought up in the European values, which finally led to the rise of the anti-colonial movements in Africa. The movements for national independence were in essence manifestations for the desire to assert the national culture and the national identity. Political emancipation meant at the same time cultural emancipation. The latter has yet to be achieved. Independence, like colonialism, represented another common experience which promoted unity between the diverse cultural groups in Africa. The basis for this unity was the common enemy and the common objectives. African nationalist leaders soon came to realize that in spite of the diverse cultures, their aspirations and fate were the same.

The similarities of the political systems and organizations which arose after independence emphasized more than anything else the similarities between the diverse cultures. The Presidential system, the one party system, the centralized and controlled economy and the adoption of a socialist type of economy, are now prevalent in Africa. These are indications of a common cultural heritage, experience and aspiration. Cultural diversities have not prevented the emergence of similar political institutions. The main explanation for the

similarity of political and economic institutions developed after independence, is the proper existence of a common culture binding the whole of Africa.

Besides this, there was the Pan Africanist movement. Although inspired from outside the continent, by intellectuals of African origin in America and the West Indies, Pan Africanism was the rallying point and organization for unity. Pan Africanism in its political programme and activities transcended the arbitrary boundaries created by colonialism and the cultural diversities. Kenyans, Ghanaians, Egyptians, Sierra Leonians, Sudanese and other worked together for the same ideals.

The final manifestation for this unity was the establishment of an organ whose main objective is not to ignore the diverse cultures and promote conflict between them, but to harness these diversities with a view to make them active in the same direction. Then ten years of the O.A.U. existence have proved beyond any doubt that the unity with diversity is not only possible but a pre-requisite for economic and cultural liberation.

The paradox of the situation is that it is the elite which has been alienated from its own society and from the alien society, but which advocates and is taking on itself to achieve this historical role. The question which arises is: can it do this?

Colonialism, independence, Pan Africanism and common economic political and cultural aspirations, have all contributed to the promotion of a common basis for action, notwithstanding the diversities on the continental level.

6. National cultural diversities

The majority of African countries, like the continent, have been described as countries with diverse cultures within their boundaries. In the first place this phenomenon is not peculiar to individual countries in Africa. Very few countries in the world are free from this diversity. Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, India, Pakistan, China, Malaysia,

Iraq and Lebanon are a few examples of countries outside Africa which have cultural diversities. The basis and degree of diversity may differ from one country to another, and likewise the manifestation or expression of this diversity, depending on the historical, including the colonial, experience, the level of economic development, and the system of government. But the issues and implications are basically the same. In some of these countries, the manifestation of diversity expresses itself in militant or violent action. In others it confines itself to non violent political and cultural methods. The Basques and Catalonians of Spain, the Corsicans of France, the Scots and Welsh of Britain, the Walloons of Belgium, the Jurossians of Switzerland and the Catholics of Northern Ireland are examples of groups with a different culture within developed states which have persisted over the years in their demands for recognition as cultural groups with their own characteristics and hence deserving a special political set-up - regionalism, autonomy or separation. The cultural conflict and the desire for cultural identity and assertion is so strong among the Basques of Spain and the Catholics of Northern Ireland, that they cannot be ignored by the central governments. The violence they have resorted to in order to achieve their objectives manifests itself in the day to day life of those countries.

Many countries in Africa, similarly have cultural diversities. We have already shown that the political boundaries of African states do not coincide with the cultural boundaries. Hence every state in Africa (except Somalia) consists of more than one ethnic group, with a diversity that arises from language, religion or level of economic development. Examples of countries in Africa with marked diversity are: Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Chad and Sudan. Senegal with about 3-5 million people has seven ethnic groups, but only two of them, the Wolof and Serer, the two largest, form the nucleus of the Senegalese nation.²⁷ On the other hand 90 % of the Senegalese are Muslims, although 75 % of the population speak or understand Wolof or French, which is the official language. Religion and language have acted as cohesive forces in Senegal. The Tuklur in the North, the Manalugo in the East and South-east, and the Ocola in the South-west.

Ghana has several ethnic groups in its population of 8,600,000 people. Each of these has its own customs, institutions and a distinct language. In spite of this diversity, the country can in fact be divided into two main cultural areas: the northern area and the Guinea coast area. None of these cultural areas is entirely homogeneous, but cultures within each area tend to have more in common or share similar approaches and usages. ²⁹

While the North and the South of Ghana are culturally different, it is equally true that both areas have much in common, and this is the basis on which national integration is being promoted.

Senegal and Ghana represent countries in Africa where diversity did not lead to conflict, as has happened in other countries.

Nigeria, with the largest population in Africa - about 80 millions according to the last census, - has its Hausa, Fulani, Ibo, Yoruba and several other groups, and none of the three religions - Islam, Christianity and Traditional religions - can claim the majority of the people. Similarly there is a linguistic pluralism. Ethnolinguistic pluralism has been at the basis of Nigerian political life before and after independence. The colonial policy of indirect rule "encapsulated this pluralism within administrative boundaries which, with the use of modern policies and the achievement of independence demarcated the internal political units of a federal and regional structure."³⁰ The difficulties encountered in the integration of the diverse groups into a national unity was partly responsible for the civil war.

Ethiopia has been described as a museum of peoples. The ethnic diversity of the country, which contrasts with the ethnic homogeneity of Somalia, can largely be explained by historical events. The Amhara, the Galla, the Sidmo, the Agaw, the Tigre, the Tigrinya and the Nilotes each exhibit a distinct way of life. The Ingassana, the Anuak, the Beja, the Udhuk - all in Sudan - spread over to Ethiopia. Christianity and Islam and traditional religions are to exist side

by side. There are also the Falasha - an old established community of Jews. As in Nigeria, this diversity in Ethiopia has been the basic of the conflict that has characterised Ethiopian history and especially the Eritrean province.

7. Cultural diversity in the Sudan

The Sudan has been described as a microcosm of Africa, meaning that there are as many diversities in the Sudan as in Africa. This description is essentially true, but it should not be exaggerated. Being the largest country in Africa (nearly one million square miles) with about 17 million people, situated in the middle of the continent and spreading to the Red Sea coast on the east, the desert to the north and west, the savanna in the centre and west and the tropical forest to the south, it contains within its boundaries diverse and varied cultures - meaning ways of life. The Sudan enjoys a spectrum of climates and vegetation: deserts, rivers, grasslands, and equatorial forests. The Nile has since ancient times, attracted people from other parts of the continent and from across the Red Sea to settle. Migrations into and outside the Sudan have taken place over a long period, and still are. The intermixing of people is so obvious in the physical features of the population that it can hardly be said that there is one type of Sudanese. Five of Herskovitz's cultural areas and four of Merriam's cultural areas are represented in the country. The Hamitic, Central and Eastern Sudanic, Koman, Kanuric, Furian and Maban families of languages exist side by side.

While the distribution of the various peoples that make up the population of the Sudan has been largely determined by historical factors, their ways of life have been largely affected by the physical environment. In both historical and political literature, the Sudan has been reduced to two cultural areas. The North and the South. This has been done on the grounds of religion, and language of communication. It assumes that the Arabic language and Islam have created a homogeneous group and a homogeneous culture irrespective of the ethnic factors. Such an assumption cannot however, be validated. Not all the groups in the Northern Sudan (north

to 10%) have been affected by Islam or Arabised to the same degree. Within the Northern Sudan exist groups and people such as the Beja, the Nubians, the Nuba Mountain people and the Fur, who look upon themselves as different from the other groups in the Northern Sudan.

The same applies to the Southern Sudan, where the Nilotics' ways of life and culture are different from that of the non-Nilotics. It is to be noted that some of these groups spill over the borders of the Sudan and form more cohesive groups than with their neighbours living within the boundaries of the country. The Nubians of the Northern Province and of Egypt, the Beni Amir of Eritrea and Kassala Province, the Massalit of Darfur and Chad, the Zande of Equatoria and the Zaire, and Central African Republic, the Asholi of Equatoria and Uganda, and the Nuer and Shilluk of Upper Nile and Ethiopia.

The drawing of a cultural map of the Sudan needs to take into consideration the physical features, history, economic systems of production and distribution, the language spoken, the religious beliefs, the practices in dance, music and art, and all other factors that contribute to culture.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the Sudan can be divided into the following major cultural areas:

1. The culture of the Nile dwellers of north and central Sudan.
2. The culture of Savana dwellers of central Sudan.
3. The Beja culture of eastern Sudan.
4. The Fur culture of western Sudan.
5. The Nilotic culture of southern Sudan.
6. The Nuba Mountains culture of western Sudan.
7. The Zande Sudanic culture of southern Sudan.
8. The Mabam Ingassana culture of south east Sudan.

Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, have more similarities than differences between them. Each of the other four can be separately identified. Yet underlying this diversity are various unifying factors which made the country what it is today. Racial mixture and cultural fusion has reached an advanced stage. In

spite of the preponderance of a Muslim-Arab culture in the Northern two-thirds of the country, the negro-African element has also its impact to the extent that the Sudan cannot be described simply as an Arab or an African country, but as a lively Afro-Arab cultural entity. In other words the two main components of the culture of Africa are to be found here. The process of cultural fusion is continually taking place. Arabic, which is the national language and spoken by the great majority of people in the North is, at the same time, the lingua franca in the South, where a form of pidgin Arabic has arisen. The Beja, the Nubians and the Fur, who are Muslims, still retain and speak their own languages. In the Nuba Mountains, the population retain their own languages.

The same applies to Islam. It has acted as a unifying force. This has not, however, precluded the existence of Christianity and traditional beliefs. The last two have, on the other hand, left their impact on Islamic practices of the communities. It can be suggested that the process of fusion is taking place all the time and a national Sudanese culture, given the right policies and attitudes, will eventually emerge.

8. Colonial policy and national integration in the Sudan

The Sudan experienced in its modern history two colonial periods. The first was between 1820-1883, known as the Turco Egyptian regime. The policy adopted towards the different groups living within the boundaries of the Sudan (which were not significantly different from today's boundaries) was characterised by direct economic exploitation, including the unofficial, and sometimes official accomodation of the slave trade. The institution of slavery and slave trading has influenced the interrelations of the different ethnic groups.

The colonial situation, with all its oppressive operations and activities, did however create a common cause which transcended the differences between the Sudan's ethnic groups. The Mahdist revolt was successful because of the support received from the different groups of people in the different parts of the country. The Mahdi himself came from a different cultural group than his Khalifa 'Abdallah, his second in

command and most militant supporter. The people of the western Sudan and Eastern Sudan provided the main fighting force. Support also came from the groups in the Southern Sudan. The Jihadia were not exclusively black troops from the South, but also included other groups from other parts of the Sudan. His army leaders came from the different parts of the country and did not belong to one ethnic group. Osman Digna was a Beja. Hamad Abu Anja came from the Nuba Mountains. Muhammed Al Khair was from Berber. It is in this sense that we can speak of Mahdiyyism as a national and unifying movement. At the time when the Mahdiyya was overthrown, a large measure of ethnic group relations, harmony and fusion was created. The nucleus of a Sudanese nation was created.

The British policy set out from the beginning to diffuse and frustrate this achievement. In the first place the policies adopted treated the country not as one, but as two Sudans: an north Sudan which was Muslim and of Arab stock, and a southern Sudan which was "pagan" and of negro stock. The existence of variations within these broad divisions was ignored or at least not recognized in the day to day policies.

Secondly, in spite of this division, the policies adopted were based on the assumption that the Sudan was part of the Arab world, and belonged more to the Middle East than to Africa. The Sudan was important from the strategic point of view, being on the Red sea coast and connected with East and Central Africa through the River Nile.

Thirdly, the contradictions in policies were further accentuated with the introduction of the policies of indirect rule and native administration. The carrying out of this policy necessitated the resurrection of even those vanished "tribes" which Mahdiyyism had succeeded in integrating with larger units.

Fourthly, two educational policies and practices were employed. The one in the North which borrowed extensively from the systems applied in Egypt and sometimes India, both British colonies, which was government controlled and financed. The other in the South was missionary controlled and partly financed by the government.

Fifthly, while Arabic was the medium of instruction in the primary schools in the North, English and some of the local languages were used in the South. English on the other hand, was the medium of instruction in the Gordon College - the only secondary school in the country until 1946 - and of government correspondence and day to day administration.

Sixthly, in the legal field a mixed system was introduced. In criminal law they enacted a penal code which was an adaptation of the Indian Code (in turn based on English law). With respect to civil law, the fundamental law of the country was based on English law, to be applied by the civil courts. For personal matters, it was the Sharia which applied to the Muslims. Local courts were, however, established to administer law, according to the custom, covering the Southern groups and nomadic communities of the North.³¹

Seventhly, contacts between the North and the South in the economic and trade fields were discouraged. Greek and Syrian traders were preferred to traders from the North. The latter were often prevented from having trade facilities.

In pursuance of this policy a Closed Districts Order was promulgated in 1922. According to this order the whole of the provinces of Darfur, Equatoria, Upper Nile and parts of the Southern Kordofan were declared closed districts. Similarly the Permits to Trade Order (1925) prevented any person - other than a "native" to carry out trade in the South without permission. "Native" here refers to the Southern Sudanese. These regulations were intended to exclude Northern Sudanese, Egyptians, Muslims and others who might undermine the policies followed in the South.³² These policies crystallised the already existing differences, and discouraged the emergence and development of a greater cultural contact.

This did not only apply to the North-South relations alone, but also within the North and the South. The system of native administration tended to create walls between the different cultural groups, and further isolate them from each other. Only where cotton schemes were developed and railway lines

extended, was cultural contact developed. The Gezira, Khartoum, Atbara, Port Sudan, Kassala, and El Obeid, became centres which attracted people from the different parts of the country.

It is not be expected that Colonialism would encourage those forces and elements which could promote unity and integration. Nonetheless it is possible to suggest that a large degree of homogeneity had been created by the end of the colonial period. Nationalism, political parties and educational development were largely responsible for this.

The Sudan at the time of independence therefore contained forces and elements which would, if not objectively and scientifically handled, promote division and disintegration. At the same level, there were forces and elements which would promote integration.

9. Diversity and national unity in the Sudan

The issue, at the time of the independence in the Sudan, on January 1956, was how to promote national unity. The colonial policies had sown the seeds of conflict and already in August 1955 - five months before independence - the Equatoria Corps mutiny took place. Although this was an indication of the potential dangers ahead, the successive governments failed to address themselves enough to the issues involved. The policies adopted regarded the diversities as if they did not exist. In addition to this, the general attitude was that the promotion of the culture of the majority would ultimately lead to integration and the establishment of national integration. Assimilation, rather than the recognition of diversity and equality of cultures was seen as the way to national unity. The result of these policies and attitudes was the war which continued for 17 years - from 1955 to 1972 - and the emergence of groups and organizations with regionalist and separatist tendencies. It is true that the causes behind these organizations were not the same as those which led to the rise of regionalist and separatist movements in other countries.

The first attempt to seriously discuss what came to be called the Southern problem, was in March 1965 in the Round Table Conference. The discussion of the conference revealed that while Southern political leaders were much concerned and did emphasise the differences - i.e. what makes the South different from the North - The Northern political leaders emphasised the need for national unity. Although the latter did not dismiss the differences, they pointed to the common elements and the role of colonialism in the creation of disparities. The burning issue was whether diversity and unity were compatible. The conclusion reached was in the affirmative. The disagreement was on what type of institutional and administrative arrangements would guarantee this. Regionalism, autonomy and decentralisation were presented as the possible solutions.

This attempt failed at the time to diffuse the conflict and the war continued. It could be suggested that one of the reasons that led to the failure in arresting the conflict was the lack of realisation that there were other aspects of the conflict besides the political arrangements. The cultural aspects were not given the attention they deserved.

In addition, the attitudes towards other cultures were not very much different from those promoted by the colonial education. It was not uncommon to hear or read about the primitive tribal cultures. The persistence of distorted and wrong attitudes towards other cultures did not provide a sound basis for the promotion of national unity.

This is not to suggest that such attitudes were confined to any one group. On the other hand it is not suggesting that there was no outside influence in the conflict. Colonialists, missionaries, racists and Zionists, in one way or another, exploited the issue of diversity to promote their own interests.³³ Israel's involvement in the Southern Sudan, like its involvement in Biafra, is now a known and established fact.

It was only in 1969 that the way was paved for a real departure in policies and attitudes. In June 1969, the May

Revolution Government, in a historical policy statement, declared that "It recognizes the historical and cultural differences between the North and the South and that the unity of (the Sudan) must be built upon these objective realities".³⁴

It further declared that "The Southern people have the right to develop their respective cultures and traditions within a united socialist Sudan".³⁵

The public recognition of diversity and that it was not incompatible with national unity, was the starting point for the negotiation of peace in the Sudan. The Addis Ababa Agreement which signalled the establishment of peace provided the political and institutional instruments through which the cultural diversity between the North and the South would be channelled in the direction of unity. In addition to the establishment of a Regional Government in the Southern region (defined as the provinces of Bahr al-Ghasal, Equatoria and Upper Nile) the agreement contained the following provisions which are of relevance to the area of culture:

1. Article 3 (iii) recognized the existence of a Southern complex, which consists of the three provinces and "any other areas that are culturally and geographically part of the Southern Sudan".³⁶
2. Article 6 recognized Arabic as the official language of the Sudan, and English as a principal language for the Southern Region without prejudicing the use of any other language or languages" which may seem a practical necessity. It is to be noted that neither Arabic, which is spoken or understood by the great majority of the Sudanese, nor the local languages were singled out as "national languages". At the same time English, spoken by a small elite in the North and the South, was accorded a principal place in the culture of the Southern region.

Article II (vi) specified as one of the main functions and duties of the Regional Government the promotion of local languages and culture. In addition to this article (4) of Appendix A of the Agreement provided for the "freedom

of minorities to use their languages and guaranteed for them the development of their culture".³⁷

3. Article II (ii) while providing for a national law, also provides for national legislation on traditional law and custom.³⁸

4. Article 4 of Appendix I of the Agreement guaranteed freedom of religious opinion and of conscience and the right to profess them publicly and privately and to establish religious institutions. Equality of opportunity for education, employment, commerce and practice of any profession is guaranteed according to Article 33 irrespective of race, tribal origin, place of birth or sex.³⁹

The principles and provisions contained in the Addis Ababa Agreement were later incorporated in the Sudan's National Constitution adopted in April 1973.⁴⁰ While certain articles of the Constitution emphasised the diversity of the country, others emphasised its unity.

Articles that emphasised the diversity directly or indirectly are:

1. Article 1 which referred to the Sudan as part of the Afro-Arab world.
2. Article 6 which referred to the system of decentralization.
3. Article 16 which recognized Islam, Christianity and traditional religious beliefs as religions of the people of the Sudan. Article 9 which recognizes Islam and custom as sources for legislation.
4. Article 25 which recognized the existence of national cultures and advised that they should be promoted.

Articles which emphasised the national unity are:

1. Article 1 which referred to the Sudan as a united country.
2. Article 10 which referred to Arabic as the national language of the country.
3. Article 11, 12 and 13 which refer to one Nationality,

one Flag, Anthem and emblem, and one capital for the whole country.

4. Article 14 which refers to national unity as the principle on which Sudanese society is based.

One cannot fail to see that since the rise of Regional Government and the adoption of the constitution, new attitudes and policies relevant to cultural diversity and unity have emerged. The first question which arises today is not whether cultural diversity is or is not incompatible with national unity, but rather "how to retain the dynamism which is inherent in the diversity of our African society and yet at the same time strive for a national character and a national consensus".⁴¹ It is no longer believed that "National unity and national integration cannot and should not be conceived of as a matter of cultural imposition or assimilation, but rather as an umbrella protecting the creative and peaceful interaction of cultural patterns".⁴²

The recognition of diversity, should not, however, be confined to areas of folklore, dances, music. Nor should it be interpreted as preserving the cultural heritage in museums. Culture, cultural assertion and authenticity, as we have defined them, embrace a wider area and require action on a wider front including education, since culture and education are two aspects of society which cannot be separated. Action in one area will affect the other area. The Sudanisation of the educational system is the key to national unity and integration.

10. Conclusion

From both the continental and national points of view the recognition of diversity is not incompatible with African unity or with nation building and national unity. The fusion, interaction of diverse cultures and national homogeneity should be seen as a long term strategic target. Recognition of diversity does not however mean the promotion of fragmentation or separation. The suggestion that local cultures and traditions should be encouraged to develop and flourish

is to be understood as having the objective of promoting the vitality and creativity of the common national heritage. After all, diversity is not as pronounced as we are sometimes made to believe. Culture fusion, as a result of contact, education and economic development is taking place all the time.

The preparation of development programmes and plans, according to a UNESCO document, "requires that the cultural components proper to each society be taken into consideration. Knowledge of their specific nature is a fundamental condition for the success of any reform. Possession of all the necessary material and technical means is not enough to guarantee the success of an undertaking that is essentially social in its intention and its aims.⁴³ The document adds: "Whatever the practical options in economic development, the role of socio cultural structures is much more decisive than has been admitted during the past decade. Unless we are aware of the human factors and take them into consideration we cannot reduce the tensions and imbalances which accompany all social change and avoid misapprehensions which often have serious consequences".⁴⁴

On the other hand the goals of liberation and development can not be won except by recognition of diversity. New concepts of national unity, to replace the old and out of date concepts, based on religious, linguistic and ethnic ideas, need to be formulated and promoted. Similarly a new concept which would replace the out of date attitude towards diversity as a dissipation of energies rather than a means of enrichment, needs to be promoted. Cultural diversity, given the right policies can be a factor of equilibrium serving the cause of national integration, economic development and liberation. This is true on the national, regional and continental levels.

I

The purpose of the second part of this report is to discuss the issue of diversity and its relation to regionalism and national unity. It examines the rise and development of political organizations dedicated to regionalism in the Sudan. Two types of such organizations have arisen during the post-independence period: the first type within the North Sudan and the second in the context of North-South relations. It also examines the policies adopted by the various regimes and to what extent these policies have contributed to the drawing of the different ethnic groups together in order to foster national unity.

Until recently, most writers on the issues of diversity and ethnicity in the Sudan have concentrated their attention on the North-South issue. The present writer is one of these. This is understandable and justified since these relations have gone through a long period of crisis, conflict, violence and war. The Sudan, immediately before independence and in the seventeen years that followed, was on the threshold of disintegration and dismemberment. With the exception of Nigeria, Chad and Ethiopia, no other country had experienced a similar situation. The forces involved in the conflict between the North and the South were not only internal, but also external. The motivations of the external forces were different.⁴⁵ The ending of the conflict in 1972 created a new set of relations based on a regional system of administration.

The concentration of attention on this aspect of Sudan's political development is therefore legitimate and understandable, especially if it is seen in an additional context. It has implications on regionalism in other parts of the country and in other countries of Africa with similar, though not necessarily, identical problems.

Very little, if any, research and examination of the issue of diversity, regionalism and national unity, in the context of the North itself, has been done. The reasons for this

are of course understandable. The relations between the different cultural groups in the North did not generate the same level of crisis and conflict. It is suggested here that the process of modernization will inevitably regenerate regionalism which is not necessarily incompatible with the process of national unity or nation building. With this in view, the paper will examine four political organizations or associations inspired by ethnicity and with a regional programme, i.e. having as their programme a regional relation with the centre. These are:

- (a) The Darfur Development Front
- (b) The Beja Congress
- (c) The Nuba Mountains Union
- (d) The Southern Sudan Liberation Movement.

II

But before we do that it is perhaps necessary to make two points. The first is about definitions: our use of the words 'ethnic', 'diversity' and 'national unity'. The word 'ethnicity' is used throughout to mean a loyalty to a group which shares a common sense of origin, real or unreal. 'It is associated with a number of cultural correlates, the most common of which are language, specific accent, politics, social structure and shared values.'⁴⁶ Ethnic feeling originates from a feeling of identity.

In this sense it has come to replace 'tribalism' because of the latter's ambiguity, perjorative connotations, especially when used by the colonial administrator and anthropologist. Ethnic groups are not static and hence they do not necessarily require political independence, sovereignty or territoriality.⁴⁷ Three of the four organizations we are concerned with did not require independence or separation from the state. The fourth became, because of the nature of ethnicity and of the conflict, an aspirer at one time for this.

Nationalism, refers to the loyalty to a larger group - the nation. A nation is 'a people who regard themselves as

as sharing common values and goals, as sharing a common history and a common future and as being somehow distinguishable in various ways from other peoples.⁴⁸ It implies the existence of a single national identity. In this sense nationalism does not preclude certain types of sub-national loyalties. It is normal for a person to have multiple loyalties derived from different needs, each of which is relevant to a certain need or situation. National unity implies a reduction in ethnic identity and exclusive regional loyalty, and the replacement of both with identification and association with a larger group.

Regionalism refers to a situation and a status within the national state. The region is the basis of group loyalty and identification. It implies a homogeneity within a defined area. The groups we are examining here are within this definition.

The term is preferred to Federalism since the latter in both the Sudan political vocabulary and in other countries has, like tribalism, acquired certain connotations, e.g. disunity, diffusion of the power for decision making, and a weak centre.

The second point is about the relevance of the issues being examined. These are neither new or peculiar to the Sudan. Similar situations have arisen in other countries, inside and outside Africa. With the exception of a few states in Africa, diversity originating from the existence within the boundaries of different ethnic groups or otherwise, has always existed. The degrees of loyalties and conflicts are not the same within each state, depending on the degree of ethnicity, diversity, and the appropriateness of the economic political systems evolved. But within this diversity there is a large degree or measure of homogeneity which has resulted from the process of colonization and modernization. The suggestion that ethnic and cultural diversity in Africa and within the new states 'is an insoluble problem'⁴⁹ cannot be accepted. The on-going experience of the Sudan is a case in point. Provided that certain conditions are fulfilled, diversity

and regionalism can contribute to the process of nation building and national unity. The latter, in the final analysis, means the solution of difficulties and not their total disappearance. National unity implies 'an agreement which permits the maintenance of social order, the functioning of public and private institutions for the prosecution of and distribution of services regarded as essential, recognition of minimal rights of all groups in the population, enforcement of those obligations necessary to maintain the system and permit its normal growth and change.'⁵⁰ The fact that the Sudan is a case in point should not, however, be interpreted as an invitation to use it as a blue print. The Sudan is a unique country and the issues under discussion have been shaped and conditioned by this uniqueness.

III

The uniqueness of the Sudan arise from the fact that, compared with other countries of Africa, it has more diversity than any other. It is because of this diversity and the complexities that arise out of it that it has been given different descriptions, e.g.

- (a) a microcosm of Africa
- (b) a crossroads of Africa
- (c) a gateway of Africa
- (d) a bridge of the Arab World
- (e) an intermediary country
- (f) a marginal country
- (g) an Afro-Arab country

The Sudan extends into North Africa, into West, East and Central Africa. It shares not only boundaries with the eight countries adjacent to it but also population. It is part of the Nile valley complex, the horn of Africa and the Sudanic Belt. Nakrumah's three major African civilizations - traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Christian Africa - all exist there.⁵¹

In one sense it has a unique history: a Condominium administration, the first of the African countries to be

independent in 1956 (before Ghana) and the first to experience a military take over in 1958.

A common history especially during the last one hundred and fifty years, has created a common experience and provided factors of homogeneity. For a hundred and fifty years, and for a thousand years before that, Egypt and the Egyptians figure as the most significant factor in Sudan's history and development. The ancient Sudan too was a factor in Egyptian history.

The common experience cuts across the diversity and provides the continuity relevant to unity.

Thus both diversity and the unifying factors exist side by side.

The first census⁵² in the Sudan carried out in 1956 listed fifty six separate ethnic groups subdivided into 597 sub groups. This framework can be reduced to two major cores and sub cores within each.

(1) The Northern Core

sub-cores

Arabs, Beja, Nuba
Nubians, Darfurians
West Africans

(2) The Southern Core

sub-cores

Nilotics, Asande
Bari, Moro, Lotuko
Toposa, Equatorians

The total population today is about 17 millions, of whom about 3 to 4 millions live in the South. Each of the cores above represent a group with a close identity and consists of more than a million persons. Next to the Arab core, the largest is the Nilotics. While some of these groups can be well defined and identified in terms of areas and history (e.g. the Beja, the Nuba, the Nubians, the Dinka, etc) others are scattered over different areas, c.g. the Arabs, the Darfurians, the West Africans etc. The degree of admixture between the various groups varies from both high to low and very low depending on the modernization process including migrations, urbanization and education.

The diversity is also indicated by the language situation. According to the same census there were 115 different languages. These can, however, be reduced to the following widely spoken ones:

Arabic	Dinka
Beja (Kushitic)	Zande
Nuba (Kordufania)	Nuer
Nubian	Luo
Darfurian	Lango
	Ndogo-Sere
	Moro-Madi
	Bari-Bak

It is to be noted, however, that the census is not consistent in its use of the terms Arab and Arabic. Sometimes it refers to ethnic origins, sometimes to linguistic differences and sometimes to cultural traits. In the common use of the word today, it means different things to different people in different areas. The Sudan Constitution has defined the country as Afro-Arab, implying that in addition to being Sudanese they are Afro-Arabs. When the new language map of the Sudan, derived from the last census and recent research, is produced, it is expected to bring up new information, but not to change the basic picture. One basic area of new information will be in the spread and use of spoken Arabic, especially in areas that were looked upon as 'closed' or completely non-Arabic speaking. One can speak today about Tuba Arabic, Wan Arabic and Malakal Arabic.

In addition to these two aspects of diversity, there is also that professed and practised in the regions. Islam, Christianity, and indigenous religions exist in various forms. According to unofficial estimates in 1968, 66 % of the local population was Muslim, 4 % Christians, and the rest, or 30 %, subscribing to traditional African religions and systems.

Within each religious group, there is however variations. Among the Muslims various religious orders, or Turuq, exist: the Qadiriya, Sammaniya, Khatmiya, Idrisiya, Ahmadiya,

Tigania, Shadhaliya, Burhamiya, 'Ijiamiya, Mahdiya, etc. Some of these, e.g. the Khatniya and the Mahdiya are widely spread, others, such as the Barhamiya, Tiqaniya and Ijaimiya, are confined to certain areas and groups. This variety does not mean that groups are isolated from each other. The common bond is, after all, Islam, which permeates all aspects of life.

Christianity, unlike in many parts of Africa, was not an European introduction. Christian Kingdoms existed before the first colonial administration of 1820. Nubians were Christianized as far back as the sixth century. Like Islam later, Christianity was largely influenced by the indigenous Meroitic concepts and practices. Though Christianity in its early form had disappeared by the fifteenth century, yet it has left its mark on the life of the people. It spread as far as Darfur.

Christianity was reactivated in the middle of the nineteenth century and again at the beginning of the twentieth century in the hands of European missionaries. It was promoted in of the South and the Nuba Mountains. Each of the missionary societies was allocated a specific area or sphere which did not necessarily coincide with the ethnic divisions or boundaries. In the North Sudan too, Christianity was active among the Greek, Armenian, Ethiopian and Egyptian Coptic communities.

While Christianity was the religion of the administration, the foreign communities dominant in trade and the Southern elites, Islam was dominant among the urban and rural population and of the elites of the north. Indigenous African religions continued to be dominant among the rural population of the South.

This religious complexity and the important role religion had and still has in the political and social life of the Sudanese is best illustrated in article 16 of the Constitution where Islam, Christianity and traditional religions and systems of belief are recognized and given equal status.

Ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity are the basis of the Sudan's uniqueness. It is relevant, however, to point out that the modernization process has diluted this diversity and promoted larger areas of unity. Economic development, better communications systems, the growth of towns and the urbanization process, the population movements in different directions and areas, have blurred the distinctions which travellers, explorers and others have often emphasized. The unevenness of the process has however created enclaves which are relatively more advanced than others. The rural hinterland generally was less developed during the colonial and the post independence periods.

IV

The emergence of the four organizations referred to has its origin in this diversity in colonial policies and experience, in the post independence policies, and in the inequalities resulting from these policies and practices. Where the degree of inequality and non-participation in decision making was greater as in the case of the Southern Region, the differences were sharpened, and resulted in confrontation and war. Where the degree of inequality and non-participation was less glaring, as in the case of Darfur, the situation did not lead to the same level of confrontation.

Since the degree of ethnicity and diversity was greater between the Northern and the Southern cores, it was instrumental in the emergence of organizations dedicated to regionalism there first. Concepts and policies relevant to regionalism were provided by the colonial system from the beginning of the century. The Juba Conference of 1947 and the outbreak of the army mutiny in August 1955 were but exercises in the search for a regional relation between the North and the South.

Regionalism within the North core appeared only in 1964 and it is to this that we should direct our attention.

1. The Darfur Development Front (D.D.F.)

The DDF originated from 'the general disappointment generated by the traditional parties among the people of Darfur and their obvious inability to face the difficulties and the problems of the country.'⁵³ Its aim was 'to create a multi-racial movement to channel the political, economic, social and religious aspirations in their right direction in the Sudan and Darfur province in particular.'⁵⁴ Its charter included the following objectives:

'I - to develop Darfur Province and realize the aspirations which the people were longing for since the achievement of independence.

'II - To have a unanimously united positive stand up to fulfil the hopes of Darfurians.

'III - to consider the public interests of the Darfur people before their personal and partisan interests.'⁵⁵

As such the DDF was a movement dedicated to the replacement of the traditional national parties in the area by new loyalties and new allegiances based on the region. Membership was confined to those whose origin was in the province. Individuals or groups whose original home was outside the province were not eligible for membership.

Although it can be said that the DDF gave priority in its activities to Darfurian interests as compared to national interests, it did not seek a separate entity for the province.

But there was opposition to the DDF. Foremost from the non-Darfurian local groups, especially traders and civil servants who viewed its activities as hostile to themselves. Secondly, from the traditional parties, which saw its activities as hostile to their policies. They feared pressure groups and the transfer of loyalties away from themselves.

Since the DDF operated through members of parliament elected from the province, its impact in the province was rather limited. It was dissolved, with other similar organizations and political parties, in 1969.

The DDF in the first five years of its activities had contributed to the concept of regionalism through making local people conscious of and concerned with their problems. Although it did not shake the traditional political parties, it provided alternatives to those parties and to their leadership.

2. The Beja Congress (B.C.)

The Beja Congress, like the DDF, had its origin in dissatisfaction and disappointment with the traditional parties. There is an area which had hardly been touched by modernization. M.D. Ismail, a leading Beja, wrote in 1953 that 'In Eastern Sudan there were tribes, no less primitive than those of the South, however, they did not and will not ask for separation, but it is probable that they may call for something which looks like separation.' He was critical of colonial policy but particularly so of the British company controlling the Gash Agricultural Scheme, the Gold Mines Company, the Sudanese political parties and the Khatmiya. The latter were particularly worried by the rise and development of the BC since it set out to erode its influence among the Beja, the majority of whom were loyal to the Khatmiya.

Unlike the DDF, when the BC was formed in October 1964, its aim was to establish a political party. Later it nominated candidates for parliament in its name.

Like the DDF its membership was open to the Beja only. Other groups, however long they had lived in the province, were not eligible. Its membership therefore was always small and its impact on local and national policies was very limited.

The Beja Congress did not publish a comprehensive programme, but, rather, different policy statements made by its leadership represented by Dr Bellia, one of the first educated Beja. These policy statements emphasized decentralization and a regional pattern of relation with the central government.

The area of its limitation was limited to the Eastern Sudan since very few of its potential membership lived outside the area. From the national point of view, the Eastern Sudan has an important strategic position by virtue of lying on the Red Sea.

3. Nuba Mountains Union (N.M.U.)

Like the DDF and BC, the NMU emerged in October 1964, and had its origin in disaffection and discontent with the policies of the traditional political parties. Its formation was first advocated by students and it operated through the members of parliament elected on party tickets.

Unlike the DDF and BC it drew its membership from two groups, Muslims and non-Muslims, living in the area. This was later the reason for the split in its leadership. Philip Abbas, a priest brought up and educated in the Christian missionary schools, adopted an anti-Arab and anti-Islam stand, and broke away from the organization to form his own group, which was later banned. Operating from outside the Sudan Philip Abbas in his policy statements and activities emphasized anti-Arabism and anti-Islamism, but not separation.

The first political activity of the NMU was in 1965 when they presented a petition to the government asking for the abolition of Poll Tax in the area and the promotion of economic and social development. The NMU programme advocated the creation of nine regions in the Sudan as follows⁵⁶:

- (1) Kassala town and the Red Sea Province
- (2) Gedaref and the Southern Funj area
- (3) The three Southern Provinces
- (4) Southern Kordofan (including Nuba Mountains)
- (5) South and Western Darfur Province
- (6) East and Northern Darfur Province
- (7) Western and Northern Kordofan Province
- (8) Northern part of the Blue Nile and Khartoum Province
- (9) The Northern Province

The proposal to create the nine regions is interesting in the light of the recent laws where the Sudan has been

redivided into 16 provinces, instead of the previous nine. It is also interesting in the light of the proposal to divide the Sudan - for the purposes of economic planning - into six regions only⁵⁷:

- (1) A Northern Region (comprising the North and Nile Provinces)
- (2) An Eastern region (comprising Red Sea and Kassala Provinces)
- (3) A Central Region (comprising Al-Gezira, White Nile and Blue Nile Provinces)
- (4) A Western region (comprising North and South Kordofan, North and South Darfur Provinces)
- (5) A Southern Region (comprising Upper Nile, Jonglei, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Bahr al-Ghazal and Lake Provinces)
- (6) A Khartoum Region (comprising Khartoum Province)

The regionalism advocated by the NMU implied autonomy for each region and a National government responsible for the whole country.

It can be seen that none of the three organizations advocated separate states or units. Their programmes emphasised regionalism of different degrees as a system and pattern for administration, participation in decision making at both the regional and national levels.

It is relevant here to point out that no such organization has emerged among a major sub-core in the North, i.e. the Nubians of Northern Province. The Nubians who comprised a large percentage among the elites by virtue of their education and are closely knit together emphasised in their activities, their identity in cultural terms. Their pride in their culture did not however lead to the emergence of a political organization. It expressed itself in the emergence of organizations dedicated to the preservation of their culture in their areas of concentration.

4. The Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (S.S.L.M.)

Regionalism in the context of North-South relations had a different history, path and outcome.

Regionalism in the Southern Sudan originated from the belief and conviction among the elite in the Southern Sudan that the South had a historical and cultural heritage which distinguish it from the rest of the people in the other parts of the Sudan. This conviction and belief required recognition and the establishment of institutions appropriate to this recognition.

It is not proposed to discuss in this paper how this belief and conviction developed, nor is it proposed to discuss the policies which have provoked this belief during the colonial period and in the post independence period. The details of these have been discussed elsewhere.⁵⁸

It is sufficient to say here that the Southern Sudan represents a core with distinct groups which are themselves distinct from the North in both ethnic and cultural terms. Although there are sub-cores within the South, and diversity, there is also a feeling of being a Southerner, i.e. a sub-nationalism.

On the other hand, and despite the conflict between the North and the South, factors promoting integration have existed for a long time, e.g. migration from the South to the North and vice versa. These migrants on both sides are engaged in economic activities. Arabic, or variations of Arabic, is the lingua-franca in the Southern Region. The modernization process, especially transport, however limited, have diluted some of the differences, and will continue to do so. Together with a regionalism a sense of being Sudanese - i.e. nationalism - has likewise emerged.

The first demonstration of this regional nationalism was in the Juba Conference of 1947 when it was made clear by the Southern participants that while accepting the administrative Unity of the Sudan, the distinction between the North and the South - irrespective of its origin - needed to be recognized.

The second demonstration of this aspiration came in 1952 in the form of the establishment of political parties, with an exclusive Southern membership and their advocacy of a federal system of government for the country.

The third demonstration came in December 1955, i.e. on the eve of independence when it was decided by Parliament that 'the demand of the South for a federal relationship with the North should be given full consideration.'

The failure to recognize this diversity, to establish the appropriate institutions for this purpose, and the attempt to impose one centralized system of government had largely contributed to the confrontation and ultimately to the emergence of political organizations dedicated to the fulfilment of these goals.

It was only when the South was recognized as being different from the North, and, as a consequence, needing a new form and pattern of relationship, that it became possible to end the seventeen years' war.

The Round Table Conference of 1965, following the overthrow of the military regime in October 1964, rejected the status quo and recognized the special status of the South within the United Sudan. The issue then was between regionalism and federalism. The Regional system proposed, however, did not go far in the recognition of these differences. It did not recognize that the regionalism proposed for the South had to be different from that proposed by other groups active in the North after 1964. The South was viewed as a region equal and on the same footing as the other regions.

The twelve man committee which was appointed to dwell on the issue further promoted the concept to include other regions of the country. The failure to pursue the issues involved in a constructive manner led to the further escalation of the conflict and the emergence of the SSLM as the main body pursuing the original goals.

Regionalism both as a concept and a policy was again asserted and reactivated by the declaration of the 10th June 1969 by the new government. The diversity of the country and the recognition of the distinct entity of the South was recognized. Autonomy for the Southern Region was accepted as a system not necessary incompatible with national unity. For three years following this declaration the matter was actively pursued by both sides. In 1972 the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed and a regional government and regional institutions were created. Only then was the war ended and peace established.

A detailed examination of the development of the SSLM will show that, although it had origins in conditions similar to those which provided the other three organizations in the North with regional orientations, the situations are not identical and hence the different paths and outcomes. In the South it had resulted in the formulation of a regional government and parliament with large and wide responsibilities and regional affairs and at the same time participation in National affairs.

The other three movements, on the other hand, did not achieve their programmes beyond keeping the issue alive in the minds of decision makers. There is a demand for participation in decision making, for decentralization in administrative decisions and in a fair distribution of services between the centre and the rural areas.

VI

The desire for regionalism within the Sudan had arisen from ethnicity, the colonial experience, unequal economic development, and the weakness of the national centre. These same factors have generated regionalism in other countries. It had and is still magnified and manifested here because of the nature of Sudan's society and the multiple diversities which existed within its borders. The harmonization of these diversities can only be achieved through their recognition and the development of appropriate economic and political

institutions. This is the only way to avoid fragmentation.

Hans Kohn has commented that nationalism is a state of mind that has become more and more common to mankind, and although this state of mind involves the individual in a variety of conflicting allegiances to different groups, there is generally one to which he gives supreme loyalty.⁵⁹ The degree of transferring loyalties from the particular group to the national level had not been the same all over the Sudan. Where this degree was weak it led to political dissent and confrontation.

A prerequisite for the promotion of national unity, through regional institutions, is for the larger group or core to respect the differences in values and in cultures and to exclude religious and ideological crusades, uniformity and regimentation. At least, this is the experience of the Sudan.

Finally, the issues of diversity, regionalism and national unity in the Sudan cannot be isolated from the issues of regional cooperation (or integration), Afro-Arab cooperation, African Unity and Arab Unity. The Sudan is involved, in different degrees, and because of, and as a result of, its uniqueness, with these four levels of integration and cooperation. It is a member of both the OAU and the Arab League. It has taken on itself to play the major role in the promotion of Afro-Arab relations. It has accepted and set out to formulate new institutes for cooperation with Egypt. The recognition of diversity as a source of richness, which is not incompatible with national unity, and the promotion of this in both policies and practices will provide, in my view, a better chance and a pre-requisite for the successful attainment of the goals for integration at the regional and continental levels.

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