Gunnar M. Sørbo

Tenants and Nomads in Eastern Sudan

A Study of Economic Adaptations
in the New Halfa Scheme

Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala

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This book has been published with support from the Norwegian Agency for International Development.

ISBN 91-7106-242-4

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Printed in Sweden by
Motala Grafiska AB,
Motala 1985

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Nomad: During day and night you are on your donkey's
 back and never at rest.
 Hauling up canal water, you look like a
 camel trapped in mud.
 The wounds of bankruptcy are so clear upon
 your face.
 Weed-cutting has made your back as sharp
 and thin as a razor blade.

Tenant: I wear good clothes and come out of my
 house quite clean.
 On the well's edge or its rope I never
 spend the night
 All night you run after donkeys.
 I swear I'll cut off my head if ever
 I saw you wearing clean clothes.

(excerpt from Shukriya poem)

PREFACE

This book is based on several fieldworks of various duration that have been carried out on and around the New Halfa Scheme in Eastern Sudan during the period 1970–77, and on brief consultancies for the Sudan Government and the World Bank during 1980–81.

I first travelled to the Sudan in June 1970, as a graduate student under the aegis of a cooperative agreement between the Department of Social Anthropology & Sociology at the University of Khartoum and the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. At the University of Khartoum, I studied Arabic and Socio-linguistics for nine months before moving to eastern Sudan and the New Halfa Scheme, where I mostly resided in one of the Nubian village communities on the Scheme, introduced to me by the Nubian anthropology student Omar Mohamed Ahmed Baba who had his family living there and came to be my interpreter, good friend and assistant during the initial part of my first fieldwork (which lasted altogether nine months).

During 1973–74, in the midst of the oil-crisis, and after having completed a thesis on the Nubian resettlement (Sørbø 1973), I was able to return to the area for three months. While trying to continue my monitoring of changes and adaptations among the Nubians, I also spent considerable time in one Shukriya community inside the Scheme (where I had lived briefly in 1971) and made short forays into the heart of the Butana grazing lands, greatly facilitated by my Shukriya contacts at New Halfa. On the basis of this follow-up, I wrote two essays dealing mainly with the Shukriya adaptations and with what I considered to be rather dangerous ecological consequences of the type of mixed economy that had developed amongst tenants on the Scheme (Sørbø 1975, 1977a).

Towards the end of 1976, I was invited to teach for one year at the University of Khartoum. While this offered me excellent opportunities for discussions and mutual sharing of research results in Khartoum, it also allowed me to spend two periods in New Halfa, including a stay lasting two months among the Basalwa in New Halfa Town (in 1977).

During 1980–81, I travelled twice to the Sudan as a consultant to the Sudan Government (Ministry of National Planning) and the World Bank. While I also hope to have contributed to directing planners to what I think should be some of their central concerns (cf. Sørbø 1980 a, b, 1981), I certainly benefited enormously myself from my contact with the above institutions. This work provided me with a lot of information on the major irrigated schemes in the Sudan, particularly pertaining to the analysis of the position of Sudanese tenants within the wider economy and society.

When this book finally appears, then, after a long period of gestation, I owe a great debt to numerous individuals and institutions which have made my work possible.

Field research was supported by grants from the Norwegian Research Council, the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, the University of Khartoum and the Economic & Social Research Centre, also in Khartoum. The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Development Cooperation and the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies have generously provided the necessary financial support for the publication of this book, and I am also very grateful to the Chr. Michelsens Institute in Bergen and its Director Just Faaland for offering me a Visiting Fellowship that has allowed me to finish a manuscript that, due to many other commitments, has been long in the waiting. I am indebted to Anne Kari Haaving for patiently typing various drafts of the manuscript before publication. All support received is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

In the Sudan, I have enjoyed the support and assistance of a great number of people. They include first and foremost Omar Mohamed Ahmed Baba who not only introduced me to the Nubian people but also assisted me in my fieldwork during the first two months; colleagues and students at the University of Khartoum and the Economic & Social Research Centre who encouraged and assisted me in my research on many occasions; particularly Gamal el Din Mohamed, Abdel Hamid Mohamed Osman and Mubarak Abdel Rahman) and a large number of people from many different institutions who gave of their time to talk to me, helped me and discussed many of the issues raised in this book.

In Bergen, colleagues and students at the Department of Social Anthropology have joined in many discussions related to my work. I am grateful to all of them, but would particularly like to extend my gratitude to Fredrik Barth, Reidar Grønhaug, Gunnar Haaland, Sherif Harir and Leif Ole Manger.

The analysis also owes much to discussions and mutual sharing of research results with numerous colleagues in other countries. They include Abdel Chaffar Mohamed Ahmed, David Brokensha, Elisabeth Colson, Hassan Mohamed Salih, Hussein Fahim, Charles Jedrej, Klaus Meyn, Jay O'Brien, Muneera Salem-Murdock, Thayer Scudder, J. Shivakumar, Aud Talle, and others. While none of these individuals is responsible for any of the views expressed here, they have all offered constructive criticism and support during various stages of my research.

In assigning credit for this book, perhaps my greatest debt is to the Nubians, Shukriya and Basalwa, who have been so generous with their time, good will and hospitality. This applies particularly to the people of village no. 12, New Reira, Sobagh and the Basalwa quarter in New Halfa Town.

My final dedication must be to my wife, Linda, and to Johan and Maria, who have had many enjoyable evenings without me, so that I might finish the book. Linda has also provided major assistance for the write-up of Chapter Six. I thank them for their patience and support, and for recognizing that time estimates must be multiplied by a factor of ten.

Bergen, September 1985.

Gunnar M. Sørbo

Map 1

Nubian Resettlement in
Egypt and the Sudan

Source: Adams 1977:660

Map 2

The Location of the New Halfa Scheme
in the Central-Eastern Sudan

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

In December 1959, Egypt and the Sudan signed the Nile Water Agreement which allowed the Egyptian Government to construct the famous High Dam at Aswan. The building of the dam caused the flooding of large areas along the Nile in both countries, and some 100,000 people, mainly Nubians, were displaced as the lake behind the dam submerged all village communities between Aswan and the Dal Cataract in Northern Sudan. The Egyptian Nubians, numbering about 50,000, were resettled on newly reclaimed lands near Kom Ombo, 45 kilometres north of the city of Aswan. On the Sudanese side of the border, an equivalent number of people, including 11,000 inhabitants of Wadi Halfa Town, were moved to Khashm el Girba, some 850 kilometres southeast of their original homes. They were settled on agricultural lands developed as a result of the same agreement which permitted the Egyptians to build the Aswan Dam.

The construction of a dam on the River Atbara, a tributary of the Nile, began at Khashm el Girba in 1961, and in 1964 the transfer of the majority of the Nubians took place. Later, a large number of nomadic and semi-nomadic inhabitants of the area were also established as resident farmers on what came to be the second largest irrigation project in the Sudan - next only to the Gezira Scheme which is still the largest irrigation scheme in the world (cf. Map 2). They all became tenant farmers on a state-run agricultural enterprise and received standard holdings on which to grow cotton, wheat and groundnuts in an annual rotation.

There were immense problems of adjustment for the Nubians as well as for the nomads. The Nubian exodus was particularly dramatic. The evacuees were displaced according to timetables dictated by the dam construction at Aswan and the rising lake, and despite a firm promise made by the Sudanese Prime Minister Abboud that he would accept the choice of resettlement site made by the Nubians themselves, the Government decided to move the population to Khashm el Girba. This was neither the first nor the second choice of the local population which had been presented with a list of six alternative sites by the government. The Girba resettlement represented almost a total break with the past: The Nile with its green banks and islands, covered with a mat of vegetation and with groves of date trees on either side, and surrounded by the vacant expanse of the Sahara with its **rainless** sands and rocky hills, was left behind and substituted with a flat belt of rainy savannah with a notable lack of trees, hills or anything else that can break the monotony of a flat horizon. Their mode of agriculture

was radically altered: With a background in subsistence agriculture and urban careers, they entered a large-scale production organization as lease-holders under a tenancy agreement, to produce crops for the world and the national markets rather than crops for their own subsistence; and, as tenants, they joined this organization along with members of many other ethnic groups. Their evacuation and the circumstances under which it took place has been compassionately and vividly portrayed by the late Hassan Dafalla, a career civil servant who was placed by his government in charge of this unique and historic operation (Dafalla 1975).

Apart from the provision of 25 planned villages, the Nubians were catered for in terms of all the basic services. The nomads, on the other hand, who had part of their grazing lands turned into agricultural fields, received little assistance in terms of planned settlement and basic services, and it can be claimed that their settlement was engineered on a purely agricultural basis. The town of New Halfa was built to be the administrative and commercial centre of the Scheme area.

By 1978, the New Halfa Agricultural Production Scheme, as it came to be called, had a population of about 290,000 people, of which c. 68,000 were Nubians originally resettled from the Wadi Halfa District (and therefore called "Halfawien"), c. 148,000 nomads or people with a primarily pastoralist background, c. 50,000 migrant labourers and 35,000 inhabitants of New Halfa Town (Agrar 1978). It covered an area of about half a million feddans¹) of which eighty percent was under irrigation, including 45,000 feddans set aside for the cultivation of sugar by a parastatal corporation. About 22,000 tenancies had been distributed, each tenancy being 15 feddans, and the major responsibility for operating the Scheme lay with the New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation (NHAPC).

In ethnic terms, the area had become highly heterogeneous: Although the Arabic-speaking Shukriya were numerically dominant amongst those with a nomadic or semi-nomadic background, there were sizable communities of other tribal categories, such as the Arabic-speaking Lahawyien, Ahamda, Kawahla, Khawalda and Rashaida as well as the Beja-speaking Hadendowa, Beni Amer, Amrar and Bisharien. Most of the migrant labourers derived their origins from Western Sudan (Fur, Zaghawa, Tama, and others), but there were also many labourers of West African origin, some from Southern Sudan and an increasing number of Eritrean refugees who had come across the Ethiopian border and lived in camps in or near the Scheme area.

Like many other Sudanese towns of a similar size, New Halfa Town offered a kaleidoscope of ethnic types, but it had also retained some of the peculiar features of its "mother town" Wadi Halfa, being inhabited by a substantial number of people who derived their origin from Egypt rather than the Sudan, such as the Basalwa, Eleigat and Kenuz . Like the village communities sur-

rounding it on the Scheme, many quarters of the town tended to be ethnically homogeneous, and contact between different groups was largely restricted to labour recruitment, market exchanges and the like.

By the late 1970s, it was also unfortunately very clear that the New Halfa Scheme, like the giant Gezira Scheme on which it was patterned, was facing a serious crisis. Yields, which had been disappointingly low since the establishment of the Scheme, showed a falling trend although they kept fluctuating violently from one year to another. In New Halfa, there was no longer sufficient water to maintain the traditional cropping intensity and management was generally unable to provide the necessary inputs on time, due to such factors as lack of machinery, lack of spare parts or fuel shortage, which in turn, was related to the overall economic malaise in the country.²⁾

As a consequence, the financial position of the tenants was precarious, and the returns from a tenancy were rarely sufficient to support a family. This was exacerbated by the fact that there were dramatic increases in production costs and an equivalent rise in the general cost of living. The situation clearly threatened the future livelihood of all partners on the Scheme - Government, management, tenants and labourers - and the loss of morale and deteriorating operating conditions seemed to be mutually reinforcing, particularly as tenants increasingly turned to off-farm work and devoted less time to their crops in order to keep themselves and their families alive.

Although the situation was clearly getting worse, the New Halfa tenants had in fact, as was suggested above, been struggling to cope with low yields and low revenues since the inception of the Scheme. By the late 1970s, a pattern of tenant responses and adaptations could be clearly discerned: In the Nubian communities, a large number of tenancies were cultivated through caretaker (wakil), sharecropping or subletting arrangements while the owner-tenants were primarily engaged in other occupations or they were aged and had retired from an active life, leaving the management of their tenancies to others. As a consequence, some tenants had been able to expand their own holdings, creating differential access to land on a public scheme based on the principle that no family should have more than one tenancy. An increasing number of tenants had come to combine agriculture with other sources of income, almost invariably according lowest priority to irrigated agriculture which provided them with such low and irregular incomes. Thus while the yield figures and their development clearly told the story of a non-viable cultivation system, the final collapse of which was likely to be imminent, mechanisms existed which made it possible for the majority of Nubian tenants to maintain their position as producers.

In the "nomadic" communities, off-scheme activities were equally prevalent, with the majority of households continuing their dependence on animal husbandry and rainfed grain cultivation. This resulted in a number of conflicts with management as animal trespass caused great losses to agriculture every year and as a number of tenants came to care more for their animals than for their fields. Social and economic differentiation seemed to be strengthened in the new communities: Tenancies were being accumulated by resourceful tenants while others lost their lands or struggled hard to supplement their incomes by other economic activities.

The picture was in fact quite similar to what had been reported from the Gezira Scheme: There was out-migration of youngsters who found agriculture unattractive and unprofitable and who had no tenancies of their own; poor tenants were often in urgent need of cash and sought employment wherever they could find it in order to secure survival on the Scheme; and well-off tenants pursued off-scheme interests because the possibilities for security and growth were perceived to be better outside irrigated agriculture. Thus, while such activities certainly kept a number of tenant households viable, and, consequently, enabled the New Halfa Scheme to continue its existence, they also came to provide the basis for increasing economic differentiation within the various communities on the Scheme.

The Analysis

My first fieldwork in the New Halfa Scheme coincided in time (1970-71) with the important research carried out in the Gezira Scheme by the British sociologist Tony Barnett. Impressed by the poverty of a large section of the tenantry and the general financial insecurity of tenants in the Gezira, Barnett challenged the Gezira model claiming that the Scheme could not be considered a successful example of development (Barnett 1975, 1977). The Gezira Scheme was created in the interests of the British cotton industry and as an appendage to Lancashire, and it continues to operate as a focus of the dependent economy of the Sudan (Barnett 1977:14f). Emphasizing the factory-like aspects of the Gezira Scheme (close supervision and scheduling of production by management), Barnett also portrayed the tenantry as a de facto agricultural proletariat earning a concealed wage, which was low so as to allow the cotton they produce to be sold at a low price (Barnett 1975, 1977). A contrary view was the official version of the Gezira model which depicted tenants as effectively "partners" and profit-sharers with state capital in the enterprise (cf. Gaitskell 1959).

Although I was attracted by dependency theory at the time, I never felt comfortable with important parts of Barnett's analysis, nor by the writings of others who adopted similar views (e.g.

Founou-Tchuigoua 1978). On the New Halfa Scheme, as in the Gezira, the pattern of economic adaptations was complex and consisted of "a whole range of productive relationships" (Barnett 1977:23) which needed to be accounted for. It seemed to me that this could not be done by exclusively focusing on the role of tenants as producers of cotton for the world market, nor by perceiving them as proletarians in disguise. One important structural feature of the Sudanese tenantry is that they, unlike proletarian wage earners, retain some control over the means of production, the production process and the crops which they produce. In good years, this feature allows tenants to produce a surplus, which, by definition, do not accrue to wage earners. In a situation of low and uncertain yields, or low producer prices, it may allow for considerable accumulation of lands on the part of some tenants; but it also allows poor tenants, or tenants who do not work their lands, to retain control over their holdings as long as they are able to secure the viability of their households through other means. The term "tenant", then, refers not to a homogeneous economic category, but to a "complex and differentiated aggregation of people sharing a common legal relation to the Scheme" (O'Brien 1984:233).

In fact, a very complex social and economic structure has come into being on the New Halfa scheme³), very much characterized by the fact that the majority of tenant households have developed livelihood strategies involving their members in different occupational activities and qualitatively different relations of production. In fact, it is only through the combining of varied forms of activity that households sustain continuity, particularly because of the low and irregular incomes that accrue to them from agriculture.

However, there are some major differences regarding the ways in which tenants belonging to various ethnic categories have adapted to, or struggled to cope with, settlement conditions. Whereas all tenant groups continue to rely on off-scheme activities, the same patterns of resource allocation are not open to all of them. Generally, it can be observed that the "nomadic" tenants maintain pastoral production whereas the Nubian tenants tend to work in New Halfa Town or in other Sudanese towns, pursuing urban-type careers that have been common among Nubians long before resettlement at New Halfa. This is of course not surprising, but it suggests the importance of seeing career patterns in the light of earlier allocations of labour and other assets that may presently restrict the range of alternatives with regard to economic investment and allocation of labour. Through this process, organizational patterns arise which, in turn, also influence people's responses to a new economic situation (cf. Rudie 1969/70).

The success story represented by the urban Basalwa, whose adaptations, along with those of the Nubians and the agro-pastoral Shukriya, will be discussed in this book, is a case in point. It

will be my thesis that, having entered particular occupations in the pre-settlement era, the Basalwa were then projected into an economic environment where there was a high demand for their skills and assets. Having taken particular occupational options, they placed themselves squarely in the urban arena (although they originally lived in Egyptian rural villages), and since they had entered occupations which render salient the very characteristics of individual responsibility and group self-help, they successfully managed to secure for themselves a rapid upward mobility on the urban employment scene in New Halfa, mainly through impressive strides within transport and construction.

Similarly, characteristic features of Nubian career patterns seem to a large extent to have been shaped by processes that have their origin in the pre-settlement period. A long history of labour migration to the towns and cities of Egypt and the Sudan had given rise to a diversified and specialized occupational pattern which had come to tie a large part of the Nubian population more closely to urban than to rural life. When they were forced to leave Nubia for resettlement at New Halfa, a large part of the population chose either to remain in the towns in which they were residing, or to leave agriculture for others while working themselves in New Halfa Town. As will be seen, such tenants have played a crucial role in determining the successes and failures of fellow tenants, not only because they have left their lands for others to cultivate, but also because they have offered financial and other support to close kin and neighbours, thereby making it possible for other households to expand their activities, or simply to persist as viable units within the New Halfa Scheme.

In the case of the Shukriya, they have continued to keep large herds of animals, both inside and outside the Scheme. This is likely to have far-reaching long-term effects on the conditions in the rangelands as pastoralism presently suffers from a dwindling land base and a general break-down as far as efforts to secure resource control are concerned. However, through mutual transfers and conversions between animal husbandry and agriculture, a large number of Shukriya households are able to continue a (more or less) settled existence on the Scheme, thus also benefiting from improved commercial, social and educational services.

Thus the various career patterns as they can be observed on the New Halfa Scheme, are not uniquely determined by the state of irrigated agriculture. Rather, it is the absence of a viable occupation in other sectors which determines the position of the poorer sections of the various communities on the Scheme. The necessary finance to meet the costs of agricultural production comes largely from off-farm activities, and poor tenants who are solely dependent upon agriculture, are generally unable to compete favourably in agricultural production. Also, if it were not for the fact that so many keep out of agriculture, the operations of those who remain as active tenants would not have been viable.

There is of course a great deal of variation among households as to their adaptive capabilities and performance in the face of changing demographic and economic circumstances. Household strategies become modified during the family life-cycle and in response to shifts in various social, economic and political opportunities and constraints. Such strategies depend much on their resource endowments which will vary considerably between households living in the different communities on the Scheme.

It follows from the above that both the economic viability of tenant households and interdependencies between people on the New Halfa Scheme, are affected and shaped by a number of constraints which are contained and reproduced within activity systems of vastly different scale. In the case of major irrigation schemes in the Sudan, which produce crops for the world market, this is not difficult to understand. A village, or, for that matter, the Scheme area, clearly do not constitute systems which contain all the constraints which it is necessary to identify in order to understand how patterns of adaptations and regularities in social life are produced. While some of the constraints may be contained in locally bounded interaction systems, others are constituted by systems of international scale. It must be our task as social scientists to analyze social life in the context of the constraints operating in several such "systems", and to show how they articulate with each other in concrete social settings (cf. Grønhaug 1978).

Now this is clearly a formidable task and the extent to which we can be successful depends on our ability not only to collect data confined to local communities but also to draw upon data and analyses derived from other disciplines. Even within the confines of a book, however, it is impossible to uncover and analyze all the major interconnections which have shaped the course of social and economic developments on the New Halfa Scheme. While some readers, therefore, no doubt will find that my treatment of some issues or dimensions is superficial or, at best, sketchy⁴, I hope that the book will serve one of its main purposes, that of trying to reach a deeper understanding of how Sudanese tenants, as families and individuals, attempt to live in worlds they largely do not create themselves.

Anthropological Research and Planning

Elsewhere, I have been much concerned with some policy and planning implications of the developments sketched out above (Sørbo 1977a, b, 1980a, b, 1981), and I will also touch upon a number of such issues in the following chapters, particularly as a major rehabilitation programme has recently been initiated in the New Halfa Scheme (Agrar op.cit.).⁵ The discussion, however, will by no means be exhaustive in terms of the various

socio-economic issues which are likely to confront planners and decision-makers on the Scheme. The purpose is rather to direct them to what I believe should be some of their central concerns. If any project or programme is to offer practical solutions to practical problems, it must be based on knowledge about the conditions under which desired results are likely to occur. Thus, any policy decision will have to be implemented in a specific socio-cultural environment which will affect the realization of its objectives and goals. Certain features of that environment seem to be of crucial importance for any organization or agency which would want to modify or change the present system of production.

First, the prevalent pursuit of off-scheme activities implies that tenants manage their holdings under a different set of constraints than if they singlemindedly devoted themselves to irrigated agriculture. Tenant units are constituted around various and characteristic assets and responsibilities which provide the key to which interests they will pursue. For many tenants the single purpose rationality so often imposed by the technical expert would represent a poor policy: Their problem is one of priorities and the simultaneous husbandry of many different kinds of assets, precluding the narrow maximization of one kind. The decisions in one sphere may be significantly constrained by considerations relating to other spheres (cf. Barth 1970).

Such differences are likely to have a number of major implications: They relate, e.g., to the possibilities and motivations that may lead tenants to apply more household labour to the work in their tenancies, or, more generally, to the room which may exist for manipulation of tenant performance through specific policy measures. Their reduced engagement in irrigated agriculture also affects developments in the labour market as it allows for large-scale immigration of agricultural workers, primarily from the western provinces or from countries to the west of the Sudan. These workers are presently a vital source of labour, and a large number of them have also come to be sharecroppers on the Scheme, particularly for the cultivation of groundnuts (cf. Heinritz 1977, 1982).

While the pursuit of off-farm activities by Halfa tenants may contribute significantly to reducing yield levels on the Scheme, such engagements may also have an impact that goes beyond the irrigated fields, and which requires the adoption of a more regional and comprehensive approach to planning than has usually been the case in the major Sudanese schemes. I am here thinking primarily about the effects of the New Halfa Scheme on conditions in the Butana rangelands which will be further discussed in Chapter Four,

The basic assumption of any development project is that certain interventions will produce changes in the production system that

will somehow enhance its efficiency or solve what is seen as problems (in this case mainly low productivity). In its very nature a rural development project like the New Halfa Scheme is dynamic and in a process of continuous change. If we are able to explain the present phenomena occurring in the system and if we are able to discover and record incipient change, trends and innovations, we should also be better able to predict some of the likely consequences of different development initiatives. Present traits and forms must be related to the conditions under which they are maintained or changed. Instead of producing a morphological description of the socio-economic system - as is often done in socio-economic reports with an applied purpose - we must look for factors and processes which produce the present forms on the Scheme.

This book, then, is not an attempt to preach ready-made solutions to the agricultural crisis in the New Halfa Scheme. Many of the present problems attending irrigated farming in the Sudan are clearly related to major economic and political problems in the larger society, and their solutions require not only the inputs of many different disciplines but also substantial policy changes in many different fields, and on many different levels. Moreover, I strongly believe that it can hardly be the task of an outside expert to decide on development policies, nor can he confidently leave this in the hands of centrally placed bureaucrats. An essential party to such decisions must be the local population directly involved. This does not imply local autonomy to countermand national policies of development and investment, but it does assume a genuine participation in evaluating and shaping its course (cf. Barth op.cit.). In the New Halfa Scheme, lack of participation by the ostensible beneficiaries has always been a weakness of activities associated with both its establishment, development and change.

Rather than to preach solutions, then, I shall try to present a perspective on development and planning which is often lacking, particularly in large projects of the kind we are dealing with here. Conventional project appraisals are often limited in scope. They are generally restricted to technical and economic/financial analysis. Present performance is measured against past performance or against targeted goals, in terms of input: output and cost-benefit ratios. They may often contain some general - largely descriptive - observations of the social characteristics of the farming community and on the organization of government services, but their central focus tends to be on the results, not on the process which has contributed to the achievement of results. In other words, they record what has happened, but provide only limited evidence as to how it happened and why it happened in that way. Such essentially retrospective evaluations are quite inadequate for planning purposes, because projects whose principal purpose is to promote rural development cannot be effectively designed without an intimate understanding of the

social and political contexts in which they are to be implemented and of the administrative and institutional measures likely to be most appropriate in those contexts (cf. Bottrall 1981).

In view of the serious problems that affect the various participants on the New Halfa Scheme, some readers may find it surprising that a substantial number of individuals and households have in fact been able to benefit from settling in the Scheme area. It could even be argued that a negative evaluation of the New Halfa Scheme is not firmly grounded granted that the Scheme is supporting a very large number of non-farm households and many different businesses (Salem-Murdock 1984:22), and granted that it has largely achieved a number of the goals associated with its establishment, such as the effectiveness of settlement as well as various political aims. As has been observed by Chambers, there are as many criteria for evaluating settlement schemes as there are types of goals they may be intended to achieve (Chambers 1969:250). In terms of agricultural development, the record is certainly not impressive, but the problems of a giant enterprise and people's own problems do not simply coincide. Part of the difficulty is the wide range of units which can be chosen for assessment, and the different spans of relevance which can be applied to the economic and other components of those units (*ibid.*:254). At the end of this book, I hope that the reader will appreciate some of the complex issues involved in the evaluation of such large-scale schemes (cf. Scudder 1981), but also, more generally, that attempts to understand life "from below" provides a necessary complement to the social surveys and aggregate statistics that still dominate the planning process in a country like the Sudan.

A Note for the Reader

Although I have tried to write each chapter as a rather self-contained essay, the basic argument running through the book is built in strata and is meant to become increasingly empirically adequate as we go along. This means particularly that Chapter Two contains some essential background for the subsequent chapters, and should therefore be read before proceeding any further. It should be possible, however, to dwell on one or two of the case-studies that follow without reading all of them. Chapter Six requires little background and readers who care more for some of the passions engendered by the Scheme rather than detailed economic analysis are advised to proceed immediately to the last chapter of the book. Hopefully, this will stimulate their curiosity for some of the preceding chapters.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. 1 feddan = 1,04 acres = 0,42 hectares.
2. By late 1978 the balance of payments situation in the Sudan reached crisis proportions, with the current account deficit reaching 12% of Gross Domestic Product, external debt rising to four times annual exports and the debt service ratio crossing the 40% mark (J. Shivakumar, personal communication).
3. Different aspects of this structure have been discussed by a number of other social scientists who have carried out research on the New Halfa Scheme. Although the bulk of it is either survey-oriented or largely descriptive (Abdel Rahman 1969, Agrar 1978, Agouba 1979, v. Blanckenburg & Hubert 1969, Fahim 1972, Heinritz 1977, 1982), I have benefited much from the writings of Abu Sin (1970, 1982), El Tayeb (1980) and Salem-Murdock (1979, 1984). Although I may depart from Salem-Murdock's position in the choice of analytical framework, her dissertation is a major contribution to our understanding of developments in New Halfa.
4. For certain important aspects, such as further details on staff-tenant relationships and on the role of the agricultural labour force, I must refer to other literature (Barnett 1977, Sorbo 1981, Heinritz 1977, 1982).
5. When I write these lines, the rehabilitation programme has begun and some of the distortions caused by the joint account system practiced for cotton production have been removed. According to World Bank sources, there has been a spectacular revival of cotton production during the last few years as a result of such measures. Thus production of seed cotton reached a level of 573,000 tons in 1982/83 for the Sudan as a whole, whereas in 1980/81 the total yields were only 306,000 tons (J. Shivakumar, personal communication).

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND DIFFERENTIATION IN SUDANESE TENANT COMMUNITIES - THE NEW HALFA CASE

Introduction

Background

The mainstay of Sudan's economy is its agricultural sector. It is the source of virtually all exports and domestic food consumption, and provides inputs for a large proportion of industrial activity. Structurally, the agricultural sector is composed of two distinct parts. The first is the irrigated areas concentrated mostly in publicly owned and administered schemes along the banks of the Nile River and its tributaries. The second is the **rainfed** areas, which for the most part are farmed by traditional methods but encompass a mechanized farm sector that is of growing importance.

The irrigated agricultural schemes comprise large consolidated areas, such as the Gezira (which alone covers more than two million feddans), New Halfa and Rahad, and a number of smaller schemes along the Blue Nile and the White Nile relying on gravity, flood and pump irrigation. Rotation requirements, the necessity to organize water distribution, and the economies associated with the consolidation of small plots under one crop into large areas have led to the establishment of central management boards that undertake the major production decisions, prescribe the cropping pattern and provide the necessary inputs. The pattern of production relations developed at Gezira, the oldest and largest scheme, has served as a model for the others. Basically, it consists of a three-way partnership between (1) the Central Government, responsible for developing and providing irrigation to the land, (2) a parastatal corporation or board, responsible for management services, and (3) tenants who are responsible for providing and managing the labour required for cultivating and tending the crops grown in the scheme. Each partner receives a share of the net cotton proceeds (cotton has been the main crop on all major schemes) in exchange for fulfilling their respective obligations in the production process. The tenant receives the full benefits of other crops grown on the holdings.

The history of colonial economic development in the Sudan is very much the history of the development of cotton production. Large-scale cotton growing began in 1925 when the completion of the Sennar Dam on the Blue Nile allowed for the establishment of the Gezira Scheme, still the world's largest irrigated scheme under one management. Whereas the record of past settlement schemes in Africa has generally been discouraging, and the number

of outright failures quite considerable (cf. Chambers op.cit.), the Gezira Scheme has, since its establishment, at regular intervals been hailed as a major success story. Its fame derives from its size (2.1 million **feddans**) as well as its unique combination of an integrated large-scale irrigation and management system with the decentralization of cotton cultivation and other crops in a network of small tenant plots (cf. Gaitskell op.cit.). Today, there are close to 100,000 tenants and another 400,000 persons engaged in production on the Scheme (as labour and staff). In recent years, of the total production in the country, 80% of the long-staple cotton, nearly 40% of the medium-staple cotton, over 70% of the wheat and over 30% of the groundnut crop have generally been grown on the Gezira Scheme. Although its scale of operations has not been imitated elsewhere, a number of post-independence settlement schemes in the Sudan have followed the same "partnership" pattern in effecting a transformation of agricultural practices. Today, more than 4 million acres are under irrigation using Nile and Atbara waters, with over a quarter of the area under cotton (cf. Map 2).

By the mid-1960s, however, at the time when the Nubians were resettled and large numbers of nomads took up a new life in the New Halfa Scheme, it was becoming clear that the Gezira Scheme was suffering from a number of problems. The World Bank was called in to suggest how to improve sagging productivity and revenues (IBRD 1966). Complaints were voiced that the tenants were lazy or suffering from a "landlord mentality", only to be answered by claims that the "partnership" model was a sham to disguise the exploitation of a semi-proletarian tenantry (cf. O'Brien 1984: 218).

By 1977, when Tony Barnett's book The Gezira Scheme: An Illusion of Development appeared, it was clear to all that the Gezira Scheme, as well as others in the Sudan modelled on it, was in severe crisis. Cotton production began to decline and reached a level about one third of that reached in the early 1970s, and the decline pertained also to the other crops grown in the Scheme. At New Halfa, tenants continued to struggle with low and erratic yields, and, in addition, had their acreages reduced because of serious shortages of water. While the country's total production of seed cotton was 659,000 tons in 1974/75, it dropped to 306,000 tons in 1980/81. The cropped area fell by 13%, the rest of the fall was due to lower yields.

Given the fact that the irrigation subsector produces well over 50 per cent by value of the nation's exports (mainly cotton and groundnuts), the decline in crop yields affected not only tenants, management and labourers on the various schemes: The weak export performance caused a steady deterioration in Sudan's balance of payments, which, in turn, dramatically increased the already heavy debt burden of the largest African country.

Two Different Views

While it was clear to all that the public schemes were in severe crisis, there was no corresponding agreement over the roots of the crisis, nor over the shape of possible solutions. One stream of analysis - embraced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund - while recognizing the great need for technical improvements (in the fields of agronomy, pest control, water management, agricultural machinery, etc.), emphasized the role of Government policies when attributing causes to the poor performance of the schemes. In the view of the Bank, which supports major rehabilitation programmes in the Gezira and New Halfa, there has been a bias created in the minds of tenants against cotton through domestic cost and price distortions; the parastatals have been poorly managed; and there has been an inappropriate division of functions and responsibilities between management and tenants (cf. World Bank 1979). The Bank has emphasized the crucial role of the tenants as household production units, has clearly stated that most of the factors behind low yields are beyond the control of tenants (unlike management and government which have always tended to include some version of the "lazy tenant" argument in their explanation of low productivity levels)¹⁾, and focused on ways and means by which it would be possible to raise the levels of household participation in agricultural labour.

A different view is held by a number of social scientists who have tried to clarify the character of the crisis of tenant-based irrigated agriculture through the analysis of the social position of tenants in the schemes and the wider economy. Generally, they have tended to challenge the partnership model and emphasized the contradictory aspects of a prosperous peasant model integrated into a rigidly hierarchical and centralized organization (e.g. Barnett 1975, 1977, Founou-Tchuigoua 1978, O'Brien 1980, 1984, Tait 1978, 1980, 1983). Rather than seeing tenants as potentially prosperous partners with capital they have considered most of them to be exploited peasants or **semiproletarians** with small and highly unstable incomes. Thus the British sociologist Tony Barnett, writing about the Gezira Scheme, argues that the Scheme is "**stagnant**, holds little hope of continually rising living standards for its inhabitants, and, as a major component of the Sudanese economy, it exposes that economy, and thus the society, to considerable potential and actual instability" (Barnett 1977:15). He also claims that the returns from a tenancy are rarely sufficient to support a family, and that a large number of tenants are only maintained through the small amounts of credit which they can obtain from fellow tenants. The continued existence of the Gezira Scheme, according to Barnett, depends in fact upon the existing credit arrangements at the village level, and this is a process by which the entire Scheme "**is maintained in being as a link in underdevelopment**" (Barnett 1975:196), since the credit allows poor tenants to live on low incomes, and therefore the cotton they produce can be sold at a low price. In the

tradition of dependency theory, **Barnett** regards Gezira tenants as an exploited category due to an underlying structure of dependence and underdevelopment that links the various categories of personell - up the chain to "the manufacturers of the cotton shirt sold in a boutique in London, New York or, for that matter, Delhi" (**Barnett 1977:21**).

Similar viewpoints have also been expressed by Founou-Tchuigoua (**op.cit.**) and Tait (1983) who both consider Gezira tenants as alienated de facto wage-earners who scarcely manage to reproduce their own labour, although Tait, like **Barnett**, clearly recognizes the existence of internal differentiation.

Analytical Approach

In fact, most authors (with the possible exception of Founou-Tchuigoua) realize that the major irrigated schemes in the Sudan consist of "a whole range of productive relationships" (**Barnett 1977:23**), and that the tenancies have come to be operated by a complex and differentiated aggregation of people. However, arising from "a discrepancy between the official image and legal forms of the partnership model, on the one hand, and the resemblance of the production system in the schemes to a factory operation, on the other hand" (cf. **O'Brien 1984:222**), there has been a tendency to conceptualize the position of tenants by means of two opposing views, both of which are partial and static (**ibid.**). It has led to a debate over whether tenants are wage-earners or profit-sharers, and both positions have obscured **fundamental** aspects of the position of Sudanese tenants, particularly as they relate to the complexity of relationship and process on the large schemes. By implication, analysts have tended to define the social position of tenants in a homogeneous way, as profit sharers, peasant proprietors or de facto proletarians. When they recognize differences, they tend to be more concerned with typologies and quantification in terms of plot size and relative incomes than process and **relationships.**²⁾

While it is clearly recognized that Sudanese tenants participate within a larger economic system, which include various economic sectors and activities, there is also a tendency (a) to regard that participation as being limited to the simple domination of tenant communities by that larger system and (b) to ignore the tremendous importance of off-farm activities for continuity as well as change on the schemes. I believe that such deficiencies are related to complex theoretical and methodological issues, particularly as they pertain to our efforts to observe and analyze social life within its macro-context. They are reflected, e.g., in **Barnett's** rather unsuccessful attempts to derive an understanding of the economic situation of Gezira tenants almost exclusively from their role as producers of cotton for the world market, but also in the narrow and **sectoral** approach generally adopted by international consultants and agencies when discussing tenant incentives and priorities.

Based on such considerations, I shall now try to analyze some of the main conditions under which a rather complex system of production is being generated on the New Halfa Scheme. On an aggregate level, this system of production is characterized by the existence of a whole range of productive relations, growing economic differentiation, the prevalence of off-farm activities and growing conflicts between tenants and management. As will also be further discussed in the following chapters, tenant absenteeism is high in "nomadic" as well as Nubian areas; there are a large number of tenants who are not themselves active cultivators, and particularly in Nubian areas, tenants tend to belong to the higher age-groups; even on tenancies run by active cultivators, family members rarely contribute the major share of manual operations; and the majority of tenants are also engaged in some off-farm economic activities. A complex social and economic structure has come into being, with a high incidence of sharecropping, subletting, subdivision of tenancies and absenteeism. It follows that New Halfa tenants manage their holdings under very different constraints which are likely also to determine their responses to management initiatives, price changes, development inputs, etc.

With some minor modifications, the picture is very similar to the one I have described elsewhere for the Gezira Scheme:

"In 1979, the following observations were made in a Gezira village, located due west of Hassaheisa Town: 27% of all tenants had been able to retire from direct involvement in their tenancies principally due to remittances from sons working in the towns. A further 13% had inherited their tenancies from their parents and had either finished their education and were away working in towns or were still in school. Another 50% of the tenants were aged and had retired from an active life, leaving the management of their tenancies to agents. In other words, a growing number of tenants had come to live on the combination of a reduced tenancy income plus remittances from educated offspring (Ahmed el Mustafa 1979).

Other studies have confirmed similar developments: The Gezira Scheme has come to be run largely by tenants belonging to the higher age groups who may not themselves be actively involved in agriculture. A sample survey made in 1976 showed that the average age of tenants was 46.5 years, and that the figures were higher for the Gezira Main (52.9 years) than for the Managil Extension (40.9 years) (Abdel Salam 1979). Another recent sample survey shows that 90% of the tenants interviewed have held their tenancies for between 35 and 40 years (university of Gezira 1979:8).

Also, quite a large proportion of Gezira tenants (c. 14,000) are women who rarely themselves work actively as farmers. Tenants generally rely heavily on hired labour, and studies show hired labour as percentage of total labour requirements to be 60-80%, varying with locality, crop and operations.

The indebtedness of a large group of tenants has also been documented by several writers. Credit arrangements seem to be crucial to the continued operation of the Gezira Scheme (for further details, cf. Sørbo 1980b:12), and tenant indebtedness to the Sudan Gezira Board (management) has also been continuously on the rise in recent years and amounts presently to millions of pounds.

The incidence of sharecropping, subletting, employment of agents (wakil), and absenteeism is high on the Gezira Scheme. Subdivision of tenancies is legally allowed down to a 5 feddan cotton tenancy, and a considerable accumulation of lands on fewer hands has probably taken place through this mechanism. In 1945, the percentage of half-tenancies was 31, in 1965 it was 57, and in 1972, 75% of all tenancies were half-tenancies (Abdel Salam op.cit.). While such subdivisions have traditionally been brought about by the scarcity of off-farm employment opportunities, the tendency for extended family arrangements to be replaced by nuclear families, and rules of inheritance, it seems that the recent high rates of subdivision can only be adequately explained with reference to a corresponding process of accumulation. It is illegal to sell or mortgage tenancies, but both practices are found on the Scheme.

It follows from above that off-scheme interests are prevalent on the Scheme. There is out-migration of youngsters who find agriculture unattractive and unprofitable and who have no tenancies of their own; poor tenants are often in urgent need of cash and seek employment wherever they can find it in order to secure survival on the scheme; and well-off tenants pursue off-farm activities because the possibilities for security and growth are perceived to be superior outside irrigation agriculture. Thus, while off-scheme interests certainly may keep a number of tenant households viable, they may also provide the basis for increasing economic differentiation." (Sørbo 1981: 7f).

As stated in the introductory chapter, there are some major differences regarding the ways in which tenants belonging to various ethnic categories have adapted to, or struggled to cope with, settlement conditions on the New Halfa Scheme. Some of the background for, and implications of such differences will be further discussed in the subsequent chapters. In this chapter, however, I shall explore a set of options and constraints that face all tenants in their capacity as crop farmers on a state-run

agricultural enterprise. As tenants, the Nubians, Shukriya and Basalwa all share a common legal relation to the Scheme. They are subject to conditions laid down by the same Tenancy Lease Agreement; they face a set of similar material incentives determined by the relative returns that accrue to them from the various crops; and as producers of cotton, wheat and groundnuts, they are all subject to a number of constraints contained and reproduced within activity systems of different scale.

While it is obvious that there will be differences regarding the ways in which constraints operating in such "systems" articulate with **each other** in concrete, local settings (cf. subsequent chapters), I shall argue that certain essential properties of irrigated farming as a system of production deliver important pre-requisites not only for the economic viability of tenant households but also for the interdependencies which exist and are produced between people on the New Halfa Scheme. In a situation of low and irregular yields deriving from crop farming, such features allow for considerable economic differentiation to take place among tenants, thus creating inequities on a public scheme which is based on the principle that no family should have more than one tenancy. In order to account for such differentiation, I have found it necessary, in this chapter, to move a bit back and forth between abstraction and progressive concretization. Only then do I propose that we move to a concrete analysis of three different communities. A more complex picture will emerge, much influenced by the involvement of tenants in other economic activities which has a profound impact on the social and economic forms that can be observed in the Scheme area.

Since I believe that the analysis is valid also for an understanding of how the Gezira Scheme "continues through time despite the various contradictions which it **encompasses**" (Barnett 1977:23), this chapter may also be regarded as a critical commentary on much of the recent literature on irrigated agriculture in the Sudan.

Production at New Halfa

The Setting

The New Halfa Scheme was established in 1964 (and expanded until 1969)³, on a large plain area of the Butana at the west side of the Atbara River, (a tributary of the Nile that rises in the Ethiopian highlands), and north of the village of Khashm el Girba. It stretches about 100 kilometres in a N-NW direction and has a width of 20 to 35 kilometres. The climate is semi-arid with rain falling from June until September - October, Rainfall, however, shows considerable monthly and annual variation, Even within the project area the southern part usually gets more rain

than the northern (up to 150 mm more). Most of the land is thinly covered with a vegetation of small annual herbs. As the herbs and the short grasses around the Scheme are grazed during and after the rain the land assumes a barren appearance. Temperatures are generally high: the mean daily temperature is c. 29°C with a mean daily maximum of c. 41°C in May. Humidity is highest in August (c. 45%) and lowest in April (c. 10%). From November until April there are strong northerly winds; during the rest of the year southerly winds prevail.

The soils of the plain are alkaline, dark coloured, cracking, heavy clays. Due to low permeability and low nitrogen and organic carbon status, none of the soils qualify technically as class I land (Ochtmann 1965). However, climate and soil conditions are suitable for year-round crop production provided water is available.

Water is brought from a dam at Khashm el Girba and travels through a main canal which extends 26 kilometres up to the first regulator. At this point the canal is divided into three northward running branch canals. Minor channels branch off from these three canals, and finally, the water is distributed through lateral field channels. Each of them serves 18 or 36 tenancies.

Organization of Production

The farming pattern is much influenced by the Gezira experience: The size of the settler's tenancy is the same as in the Managil Extension of the Gezira Scheme (15 feddans, or 6.3 hectares), and it is formally let to the settler on a yearly renewable basis. The holding is divided into three fields called hawashas of 5 feddans each. The fields must be farmed according to the crop rotation and management regime determined by the New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation (NHAPC). A three years' rotation of cotton, wheat and groundnuts is prescribed for the tenancies without any fallow-year provided for. Cotton and groundnuts are grown as summer/rainy season crops planted between June and August, while wheat is a winter/dry season crop planted in October. Recently, sorghum (dura) has been introduced in the rotation.⁴⁾ It is also a rainy season crop, planted at the onset of the rains in June-July,

Production is closely supervised and scheduled by management according to tight timetables. Tenancies are laid out mainly for the convenience of operation of the central service (which includes the spraying of agro-chemicals by airplanes) and irrigation. The Scheme is divided into five sections, and the sections into inspection areas (of which there are 19 altogether), each headed by an Inspector of Agriculture and with a number of specialists, junior staff and water guards attached. Like the Gezira, it is a rigidly hierarchical and centralized organization. Emphasis is on vertical interaction and the efficient

transmission of directives from the centre to the periphery, and the organization is rather poor at the task of transmitting information upwards from the production situation itself (for a discussion, cf. Barnett 1979, Sørbø 1981).

Sanctioned by a tenancy agreement, a system of division of responsibilities exists between management (NHAPC) and tenants, particularly with respect to cotton production. Management is responsible for the overall development and the various operations are carried out partly by the management, partly by the tenants who may employ hired labour. For the settling of costs, a joint account system has, until recently, existed.⁵⁾ In principle it was basically a share farming agreement for the production of cotton. It did, however, extend beyond this to embrace debt and cost recovery.

It is a rather complicated system: Each cropping season, five accounts are opened. Three of these deal exclusively with cotton. They are (1) The General Joint Account (GJA), (2) the Individual Joint Account (IJA) and (3) the Individual Cotton Account (ICA). Only one GJA and one IJA is kept for the entire Scheme. One ICA is kept for each tenant. For the other crops, one Individual Groundnut Account (IGA) and one Individual Wheat Account (IWA) is kept for each tenant.

The GJA is credited with all receipts derived from the sale of the cotton crop, and debited with costs associated with the collection, processing and marketing of cotton plus some, notably interest, which relate to the entire Scheme. The balance is then shared. 5% goes to fund social services. 2% goes to local taxes. 45.5% goes to NHAPC. 47.5% goes to tenants. Then, 2% of the tenant's share is retained in a Tenant's Reserve Fund. The remainder of the tenant's share is divided by the total number of qantars⁶⁾ of seed cotton delivered to NHAPC to derive the tenant's price for cotton.

The IJA accumulates all the machinery services provided by NHAPC for cotton production, plus the cash advances paid by NHAPC to tenants for organizing pickers and clearing the harvested cotton hawashas. There are no credits to this account. It is closed by transferring 50% of its charges to NHAPC and charging the remaining 50% to the ICA's of those tenants who received services and/or cash advances.

The ICA's are charged with 50% of the IJA, 100% of all production cash advances made to that tenant by NHAPC, and a canal maintenance charge. It is credited with an amount equal to the number of qantars of seed cotton that tenant delivered to NHAPC multiplied by the tenant's price for cotton. Any positive balance is then payable to the tenant. Any negative balance is payable by the tenant to NHAPC.

All NHAPC loans in cash or kind extended for the production of groundnut or wheat are debited directly to the IGA or IWA of that tenant, and can only be settled by a direct cash payment by the tenant. Unless the positive balance, if any, that appears on a tenant's ICA exceeds the total charges appearing on a tenant's IGA and IWA, that tenant has failed to achieve "break-even" cotton yield and will incur debts to NHAPC.

The holder of a tenancy then, is party to a complex system of payments which arises out of the arrangements for marketing cotton, and which moulds his entire financial situation unless he has other sources of income than the tenancy. It consists of various types of payment spread over the year and includes profits from cotton cultivation, cultivation advances, and picking advances. Most tenants find it difficult to understand the payment system, particularly how it relates to their own cotton yields. This is not only due to the complicated accounts system, but also to the considerable time lag (2-3 years) from the first land preparation for cotton to settlement of tenants' accounts, as the cotton accounts cannot be finalized until all receipts from the sale of cotton lint, cotton seed, waste cotton and used cotton sacks have been finalized.

Since, for many tenants, the actual amounts to be expected are unclear as is their precise purpose, they are often regarded as, and used for, day-to-day household expenses (ILO 1984:94). It is important to note, however, that the system of payments gives rise to stress periods (Barnett 1977:75) in the annual household budget cycle which may affect the body of tenants in different ways, depending on their resource endowments and the consequent requirements for credit.

The Role of Tenants

The Government, then, is the big land-owner, and is also the main provider of capital for the running of the New Halfa Scheme. This allows for the kind of large-scale, long-term planning which has been necessary, but it also puts various restrictions on the tenants. Their area of decision in the productive process is in fact even more tightly circumscribed than in the Gezira since there has been no choice regarding the adoption of cropping pattern; and while the subdivision of Gezira tenancies is legally allowed down to a five feddan cotton tenancy, New Halfa tenants are legally barred from mortgaging, subdividing, or increasing their lands.

Tenants, however, play a crucial role in the management of labour relations (cf. also O'Brien 1984). Most households depend on hired labour for long periods in their life cycle and more generally for specific operations that must be completed within short time periods (e.g. cotton picking). The availability of household labour will depend on a number of factors, such as the

stage of the developmental cycle, the willingness of members to work without additional wages and involvement of members in full-time education or other activities (cf. ILO op.cit.: 90). Generally, tenants can only reckon on having enough labour available to them to significantly reduce their requirements for hiring outside labour at a certain point in their family cycle. This is partly due to the emphasis put on children's education (**particularly** among Nubian tenants), and partly to various constraints on the use of women as part of the agricultural labour force (to be dealt with in later chapters). Moreover, the employment of hired labour is also necessary because there are seasonal peaks of labour requirements when large-size teams must complete their jobs within a strictly limited period.

For purposes of labour relations, then, the Scheme is broken down into some 22,000 autonomous units, each of which hires workers and independently negotiates wage rates. Moreover, the managers of these small units strive to keep expenditures for labour to a minimum, partly by doing a variable proportion of the work themselves (O'Brien 1984: 231). The high cropping intensity (no fallow) places considerable importance on the managerial functions of the tenants as well as their ability to mobilize stable cash flows.

It should also be added that no animal husbandry was originally provided for in the New Halfa Scheme, despite the fact that two-thirds of the Scheme tenants were of pastoral origin. These mostly Arab tenants were allowed to retain one animal unit per tenancy. The Nubians, on the other hand, were allowed in addition to the one animal unit on each tenancy, to keep as many animals as they saw fit on their freehold lands. As we shall see (**Chapter Four**), the Scheme never succeeded either in keeping animals off the tenancies or in making full-time farmers out of pastoral nomads.

The Economic Performance of the Scheme

Since it was established in 1964, the New Halfa Scheme has suffered from what the management once described as "various human and natural factors" that have "conspired against the achievement of the set goals" (Annual Report 1972/73). Yields have been low and also subject to considerable fluctuation. As far as cotton is concerned, Table 1 tabulates information on cultivated area and average yield since 1964-65. We notice not only the low and erratic yields (the production goal used to be 6 big qantars/feddan), but also the general decline in cultivated area since 1976/77, due to decisions concerning tenancy unsuitability or machinery and fuel shortages (Salem-Murdock 1984:80). Production reached its lowest in 1979/80 but then picked up again as from 1981/82 (cf. Note 5, Chapter One), although the cultivated areas were smaller than in the early part of the 1970s.

Map 3

The New Halfa Scheme

Source: Fahim 1972

Cotton harvesting in
the New Halfa Scheme

Table 1.

COTTON CULTIVATION IN FEDDAN AND AVERAGE PRODUCTION ,
1964/65-1983/84

<u>Season</u>	<u>Area cultivated in feddan</u>	<u>Average big qantar/feddan</u>
1964/65	15365	3.50
1965/66	32965	2.50
1966/67	53375	3.60
1967/68	70755	4.90
1968/69	91605	4.68
1969/70	102475	4.80
1970/71	107385	4.52
1971/72	108025	4.11
1972/73	109000	2.62
1973/74	109151	3.88
1974/75	108960	4.02
1975/76	81290	1.77
1976/77	109105	3.70
1977/78	99120	4.10
1978/79	85560	2.02
1979/80	63290	0.96
1980/81	53535	2.00
1981/82	57985	3.70
1982/83	80210	4.60
1983/84	90285	4.10

Sources: New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation files,
Salem-Murdock 1984, World Bank files.

The other crops in the Scheme have not fared much better. Concerning wheat and groundnut, yields have been low and erratic, production costs have been high, and there have been considerable reductions in cultivated area, as can be seen from Table 2 and Table 3. Figures 1-4 show the fluctuations in a graphic form.

Table 2.

WHEAT CULTIVATION IN FEDDAN AND AVERAGE PRODUCTION, 1964/65-1983/84

<u>Season</u>	<u>Area Cult. in Fd.</u>	<u>Av. Prod. Ton/Fd.</u>
1964/65	3250	0.45
1965/66	35500	0.40
1966/67	58871	0.50
1967/68	83771	0.39
1968/69	105061	0.48
1969/70	120121	0.35
1970/71	111280	0.52
1971/72	117588	0.41
1972/73	62608	0.60
1973/74	120158	0.28
1974/75	120608	0.60
1975/76	91340	0.28
1976/77	78435	0.26
1977/78	72240	0.32
1978/79	42222	0.19
1979/80	34225	0.30
1980/81	48865	0.24
1981/82	39445	0.45
1982/83	48670	0.58
1983/84	40000	-

Sources: New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation files,
Salem-Murdock 1984, World Bank files.

Table 3.

GROUNDNUT CULTIVATION IN FEDDAN AND AVERAGE PRODUCTION,
1964/65-1983/84

<u>Season</u>	<u>Area in Feddans</u>	<u>Qantar/feddan</u>
1964/65	700	11.11
1965/66	3000	4.44
1966/67	5700	21.33
1967/68	4455	10.22
1968/69	2315	7.55
1969/70	34545	10.22
1970/71	25450	11.33
1971/72	12905	11.55
1972/73	40000	15.55
1973/74	45335	14.88
1974/75	68000	17.77
1975/76	53800	7.11
1976/77	38315	16.66
1977/78	60340	21.11
1978/79	31310	11.33
1979/80	20417	17.67
1980/81	35005	15.06
1981/82	46200	-
1982/83	28210	-
1983/84	40080	-

Sources: New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation files,
Salem-Murdock 1984, World Bank files.

AVERAGE COTTON YIELDS

Figure 1

AVERAGE GROUNDNUT YIELDS 1964 - 1980

Figure 3

AVERAGE WHEAT YIELDS

Figure 2

COTTON, WHEAT AND GROUNDNUT CULTIVATION IN FEDDANS

Figure 4

Factors Behind Low Yields

During the first ten years of operation (1964-74), absenteeism, petty-landlordism and low family labour input were among the most repeated causes behind low yields as they were listed in the annual reports issued by management. Thus in the 1969/70 report, it was complained that:

"(the) criteria for hawasha allotment were far from perfect. More than 30% of the tenants are present in name only. Their hawashas are being cultivated by their relatives who themselves may not be good tenants."

This is repeated in most annual reports as being a problem affecting the areas of both Nubians and former nomads:

"Also some tenants did work as wakils for many hawashas, which affected production to a large extent. This was the case for hawashas belonging to both Halfawin and nomads" (1972-73).

Since the mid-1970s, however, the Corporation has changed its emphasis when attributing causes to the poor performance of the Scheme. Although tenant absenteeism is still regarded as a major problem, there has been a growing willingness to recognize that the number of absentees will not come down unless serious attempts be made to remove a number of factors presently beyond the control of tenants. First, the reservoir capacity has been rapidly reduced through siltation, causing acute shortages of water during the growing season. The Khashm el Girba Dam was designed to hold 1.3 milliard m³ of water, but its capacity was reduced to about 0.8 m³ in 1976, and despite flushing measures which were introduced in 1971, the capacity was projected to fall by about 6% per year.⁷⁾ Secondly, there has been a general lack of financial resources which has affected the Scheme very badly. It has caused the inability to provide sufficient machinery, repeated shortages of vehicles and fuel, invasion of pests and weeds, delayed arrival of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides and poor storage facilities. Thus, e.g., it was found in 1975 that, of 243 remaining tractors (owned by the corporation), 190 had outlived their operational span and had become a heavy burden on the budget, and only 103 out of 248 Landrovers were still running, due to the lack of spare parts, problems of maintenance and the fact that most of the cars date back to the first years of the Scheme (for further details, cf. Sørbo 1977b). Thus many of the problems faced by management and tenants alike were clearly related to the overall economic malaise which came to affect the Sudan very seriously as from the mid-1970s.

Situation Report 1980

By 1980 the situation was as follows: NHAPC was only able to bring a total of about 160,000 feddans into production (the Scheme covers 447,000 feddans) and permitted tenants to grow some sorghum. In addition, NHAPC allowed irrigation to continue on cotton areas that had not been sprayed because they were not worth bringing through to harvest. It also allowed some of the unutilized groundnut area to be irrigated. The volunteer plant growth (mainly weeds) so produced was being used by tenants for fodder.

A growing number of tenants found it increasingly difficult to produce "break-even" cotton yields. Their willingness to participate in cotton production fell. Many reduced their labour inputs to the minimum required to receive the more easily earned cash advances NHAPC was obliged to pay for specific cotton and/or groundnut operations under the traditional cost sharing arrangements. With declining tenant participation an increasing proportion of whatever land could be prepared by NHAPC and sown by tenants was never effectively brought through to harvest. In 1979/80 some 70,000 feddans of cotton land were prepared. In October 1979 only about 12,000 feddans were reported to be worth spraying.

Tenant willingness to grow cotton was further eroded because of the time it took NHAPC to settle the accounts of the few who were able to realize "break-even" cotton yields. Much of this delay was beyond NHAPC's control (transport and marketing problems), but the time lag from the first land preparation for cotton to settlement of tenants' accounts could not take less than 2 and has at times taken longer than 3 years to finalize (cf. above).

Few, if any, tenants would attempt to settle their loans from NHAPC for groundnut and wheat production until their cotton accounts had been finalized. Even then the only tenants who would present themselves to NHAPC to settle were those who anticipated total cotton receipts in excess of loans advanced by NHAPC for cotton, groundnut and wheat. In recent years only about one-third of all tenants growing cotton have been able to achieve cotton yields high enough to "break-even" with all NHAPC loans. NHAPC loans extended to all other tenants were invariably left to accumulate on NHAPC's books. As at December 1978 these unrecovered debts had accumulated to about LSd 5.0 million⁸) and included recent increments of about LSd 0.5 million per year. These debts were a serious drain on NHAPC's resources, yet there was little chance that they would be collected in the absence of an effective debt recovery mechanism.

Needless to say, the New Halfa tenants suffered badly from low yields and reduced acreages. In 1975-76, 81,290 feddans of cotton were cultivated for an average earning of LSd 98 per tenancy.

Thus, on the average, a tenant was already Lsd 37 short even before counting the expense of the Individual Cotton Account (Salem-Murdock 1984:79). In 1976-77, the tenant's share of earnings before deductions were made came to Lsd 144. The Individual Joint Account expenses, however, averaged Lsd 110 per tenancy. Thus, the tenant's share, before the Individual Cotton Account expenses were deducted, was Lsd 34 (ibid.). During this same period, there was a dramatic increase in the cost of cotton production - from Lsd 190 per tenancy in 1975-76 to Lsd 422 in 1980/81, not including spraying (ibid.).

As far as the groundnut crop is concerned, there were also high costs and low returns, and in the seventeen years between 1964-65 and 1980-81, the average size of the area cultivated was only 27 per cent of the proposed area (ibid.:109). In the absence of easy and sufficient credit many tenants were unable to cultivate groundnuts even when high returns were expected (cf. below).

The wheat crop was particularly affected by water shortages, scarcity of agricultural machinery and unavailability of seed. According to Salem-Murdock's calculations, it became increasingly difficult for tenants to meet the expenses of cultivating wheat because of declining yields and increasing production costs (ibid.:99 ff), despite the fact that its production is heavily subsidized by the Government.

Thus by the beginning of the 1980s, the New Halfa Scheme was in a poor shape. Production was low; absenteeism was high; there were repeated shortages of water, vehicles and fuel; pests and weeds invaded the fields and required substantial labour and financial efforts to remove them; required inputs of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides rarely arrived on time; poor storage facilities caused deterioration and losses; and tenant incomes were low and extremely irregular while production costs rose continuously. As in the Gezira Scheme (cf. Sørbo 1980b, 1981), a sense of helplessness pervaded the Scheme and the loss of morale and deteriorating operating conditions were mutually reinforcing.

Problems of Social Reproduction of the New Halfa Tenantry

In trying to account for the persistence of the Gezira tenantry despite small and irregular supplies of cash with which to meet rising demands for cash in their households and their tenancies, Tony Barnett emphasizes the importance of private credit.

He argues that tenants who subsist on low incomes are maintained through the small amounts of credit they can obtain from wealthy tenants who have sources of income in addition to their tenancies. Such credit allows poor tenants to live on low incomes, and therefore the cotton they produce can be sold for a low price. He also claims that this mechanism has deepened class

divisions which have developed in the social structure, and that the development of the Scheme has strengthened the position of the nas tayyibin, i.e. those tenants who lend but never borrow (Barnett 1977:86 f).

Credit relations undoubtedly play an important role also for many tenants in New Halfa as a strategy for dealing with the problem of small and irregular cash flows. However, if we want to reach a deeper understanding of the dynamic of social reproduction of the Halfa tenantry, a different kind of analysis seems to be required, and one which allows us to take into account the fact that tenant households participate in various activity systems or "fields" (Grønhaug op.cit.) which are of different scale and which significantly affect their life situation. As stated earlier, this may not be difficult to understand in view of the fact that New Halfa tenants produce cotton and groundnuts for international markets. A village or, for that matter, the Scheme area, clearly do not constitute systems which contain all the constraints which it is necessary to identify in order to understand how patterns of adaptations and regularities in social life are produced. While some of the constraints may be contained in locally bounded interaction systems, others are constituted by systems of international scale. Consequently, we must analyze social life in the context of the constraints operating in several such "systems" and try to show how they articulate with each other in the local context.

For the moment, I suggest that we forget about yield levels, lack of water and low incomes. Let us rather try to disaggregate the various activities that take place within irrigated farming, and let us try to explore whether tenant-based irrigated agriculture in the Sudan has some essential properties which contrast with other productive regimes, and which in various modulations affect forms and relationships emerging and developing in New Halfa.

Basic Characteristics of Irrigated Farming

As mentioned above, relations between Government, management and tenants are governed by a Tenancy Lease Agreement which specifies occupancy, land use, tenant and Corporation obligations, cost and revenue sharing, provision of credit, and cost and debt recovery. This relationship is complex, particularly with regard to the sharing of benefits. Basically, the Government, through the Corporation, controls land and water, from the dam down to the point of application to the crop, and in addition provides credit advances to the tenants and distributes the proceeds of cotton sales which are divided between the partners in the sharecropping arrangement. Tenants are required to provide labour and to oversee the cultivation and the harvesting of crops on their holdings, Groundnuts and wheat are not incorporated in the sharecropping system, and tenants are free to market those crops to private traders.

As producers of various crops, then, New Halfa tenants are clearly linked to different actors and subject to different constraints, contained and reproduced within systems of different scale. Since Barnett has claimed that cotton plays a dominant role in the lives of Gezira tenants, I propose first to consider some fundamental aspects of its cultivation and circulation. The following points seem particularly relevant:

- (1) Cotton is Sudan's most important cash crop and a major contributor to the country's foreign exchange earnings. The production of cotton is centered in irrigated areas which contribute all the country's supply of long staple and most of the medium staple cotton.
- (2) Sudan accounts for a 40% share of world's exports of long and extra-long staple cotton and commands, with Egypt, the position of a virtual duopolist in the world market for long-staple cotton (which is produced in the Gezira). However, it has only a relatively modest share (2%) of total world production (World Bank 1979).
- (3) Cotton production and utilization have experienced favourable growth over the last decades despite the rapid development of the synthetic fiber industry. The demand for cotton products is stimulated by increasing population and rising real incomes in many parts of the world. Accordingly, cotton consumption rose from nine million tons in 1955 to over 13 million tons in 1975 and has continued to grow during the 1980s (ibid.).
- (4) Cotton exports are marketed by the government-owned Cotton Public Corporation (CPC) for the account of the production boards. While the international cotton market is dominated by a handful of transnational corporation with highly sophisticated economic and trading networks (cf. Clairmonte & Cavanagh 1978), cotton emerged, in the 1970s, as the most competitive crop (within the irrigated sub-sector) in terms of the amount of export earnings per Sudanese pound of domestic resources used in cultivation (Nashashibi 1980).
- (5) While tenant households certainly remain vulnerable to commodity-price fluctuations and adverse demand trends, there has been no direct linking of tenant incomes to world cotton prices. This is because the cultivation of cotton has been heavily taxed by a discriminatory exchange rate, exports taxes and substantial customs duties imposed on its imported inputs (ibid.). In addition, cotton has borne the full burden of costs incurred by the Corporation as well as the water delivery costs. Regardless of the crop on which they were incurred, the Corporation has recovered all its costs from cotton proceeds, which, in turn, implies that the incentive

pattern has emerged from a number of domestic cost and price distortions. As a consequence, producers received only about 70 per cent of the export value of cotton, and the effective government share of the surplus, which is the sum of the taxes levied plus the Government's profit share, amounted to 31 per cent of the output value while the tenant's profit share was negligible at 1.3 per cent (ibid.:55).

- (6) Thus while cotton emerged, in the 1970s, as the most competitive crop, in terms of the amount of export earnings per Sudanese pound of domestic resources used in cultivation, the cultivation of groundnuts appeared much less profitable and the cultivation of wheat highly inefficient. However, Sudanese tenants generally derived a much higher income from wheat (in addition to the very important fact that it is also a food crop) because it was heavily subsidized by minimum delivery prices, and by not being charged with any of the water delivery or management costs. Tenants were also able to extract an indirect wheat subsidy by incurring debts, and later evading repayment by marketing their crop to private traders (ibid.). Groundnut cultivation also benefited from similar subsidies. Consequently, at domestic prices, tenants' incentives would primarily favour wheat and groundnuts, while they would have little, if any, incentives to cultivate cotton.
- (7) There were also other elements of disincentive, related to the joint account system: The more the tenants produced, the more their partners took (i.e. a fixed proportion of an increased revenue); and if gross returns did not exceed joint account costs, even good cotton producers received nothing.

Let me now briefly consider a few other aspects pertaining to the cultivation of groundnuts and wheat.

Regarding groundnuts, it is largely up to the tenant whether or not he wants to cultivate in a particular season, and it is also up to him to pay for the cost of production, and to reap the benefits - if there are any. The tenant, then, enjoys a degree of freedom which he can not achieve in cotton production (cf. Salem-Murdock 1984:199). But since the Corporation does not offer loans or advances, the tenant is left with the responsibility to generate capital to cover the cost of production.

Although a cash crop mainly for international export like cotton, groundnuts follow a different marketing route.⁹⁾ According to regulations, they can only be marketed in the New Halfa Crop Market and only at Government-set minimum prices (ibid.:200). This market is dominated by only a few traders who tend to practice collusion. Until 1981, the Sudan Oil Seeds Company had a monopoly over international export. Now, the export market is open for other entries but is dominated by a few private enterprises based in Khartoum and Omdurman.

While in theory, world market prices of groundnuts are passed on to the tenant, minus transport and marketing margins, many tenants are only able to realize a certain percentage of the crop's harvest value. This is partly due to the fact that merchants often purchase groundnuts directly from a tenant's hawasha at low farm-gate prices (which implies no transportation costs for the tenant, and which may allow him to delay paying his debts to the Agricultural Bank and avoid local taxes (ibid.)), partly due to tenant indebtedness (cf. below).

The wheat crop is also the property of the tenant and is highly valued, particularly by Nubian tenants. Much of it is consumed by the household, and the remainder is supposed to be sold to the flour mill cooperative in New Halfa Town at official prices. It is well known, however, that a lot of private wheat trading takes place in New Halfa, and that part of the crop is illegally smuggled out of the district. This follows from the fact that official wheat prices set by the Government have not been uniform throughout the Sudan (ibid.:201), but also from the high domestic demand for wheat, which tends to offer considerable profit margins in the current situation of scarce supplies.

The discussion has by no means been exhaustive in terms of the features characterizing the cultivation and circulation of the three crops. However, it should be evident that New Halfa tenants are involved in different, although inter-related role-sets as producers of various crops. The next question is: How do such options and restraints, facing tenants as participants in different activity systems, articulate with each other in the local context?

Tenant Responses

While New Halfa tenants have no control over their cropping pattern as such, since it is prescribed to them by NHAPC, they do face a set of material incentives determined by the relative returns that accrue to them from the various crops. The different crops put competing demands on labour and cash resources. This is particularly true in the case of cotton and groundnuts, as the weeding and harvesting of groundnuts take place during the cotton growing and picking season (although groundnuts are supposed to be harvested before the first cotton picking starts). Tenants tend to accord lowest priority to the cotton crop when they allocate their time and resources since the other crops are more lucrative and because of the existence of a complicated joint account system. Insofar as the cultivation of the annual cotton crop is the main condition of continued participation in the Scheme, the tenants cannot neglect that crop. However, they can choose to perform their role to a level which permit them to satisfy the demands which management makes upon them, and which they have to

fulfil in order not to be sacked (cf. also Barnett 1977:172). On the New Halfa Scheme, it is, e.g., therefore quite common that tenants with a pastoral background allow animals into their cotton hawashas before the obligatory three cotton-pickings have been completed (Sørbo 1972:22); and, like in the Gezira (Barnett 1979), a number of tenants regularly try to divert water from cotton to the other crops in a situation where demands upon existing irrigation works are very heavy. Thus while the tenants' area of decision in the productive process is tightly circumscribed because of the nature and scale of the organization within which they operate, labour input strategy is a major area of decision left to the tenant, and cotton tends to receive less attention than other crops due to the disincentives discussed above.

Tenant Indebtedness

In a situation of rising costs and low yields, however, such manoeuvres are generally not sufficient for tenants to maintain household viability. In order to remain a tenant on the Scheme, one must be able to mobilize sufficient amounts of cash and labour. As we have indicated above, tenant incomes are generally small and fluctuate greatly, leaving them with irregular supplies of money with which to meet constant and increasing demands for cash in their tenancies. The demand for cash is related to the demand for hired labour, which is generally quite high in the majority of tenant households. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

For most tenants, the only way that they can participate in cultivation is to receive agricultural loans in the form of cash advances. This applies both to cotton growing and to groundnut cultivation where the cost of production is very high (cf. Salem-Murdock 1984:135). Initially, the advances for this crop were offered by the Corporation itself, but the Sudan Agricultural Bank took over after only a few years because of tenants' frequent failure to repay the advances (ibid.). The high cost of production coupled with low returns prevented many tenants from repaying their debts also to the Bank. This has served to disqualify many of them from new agricultural loans, with the end result of preventing them from cultivating groundnuts (ibid.:136).

Therefore, a large number of tenants may have to resort to private credit, which they need not only for (a) production of crops, but also for (b) marketing of products and (c) maintenance of their households. In many cases, particularly among tenants with a pastoral background, such credit takes the form termed sheil, which is an advance of money against future crops: At the beginning of the season the farmer will request a sum of money (or sometimes consumer goods) to be repaid in a specified quantity of produce. The moneylender will normally set the amount to be lent against the future delivery substantially below the last harvest

price or the anticipated value at the forthcoming harvest, whichever is lower. Thus when the borrower surrenders the pledged quantity of produce, the lender should derive a considerable "windfall" from the operation, namely the difference between the harvest value of the commodity pledged and the sheil value set by him (cf. Adam & Apaya 1973).

The crops mostly used in such transactions are wheat and groundnuts, and most recently, also sorghum. This is mainly because those crops are disposed of independently by the tenant, while the cotton crop must be marketed through the parastatal Cotton Public Corporation. It is possible, however, for poorer tenants to pledge part of their cotton crop to richer ones, who can then market it as their own crop, but it cannot be pledged to anyone but a registered tenant.

Thus on the local level, the different crops circulate in credit relations - in ways which tend to put debtors further into a disadvantageous position. Low income tenants have a lower price ratio due to their being indebted to others: They cannot afford to sell when prices are at their highest if this requires waiting for weeks or months for this to happen. Also, they will only realize a certain percentage of the harvest value of any commodity. In the Gezira Scheme, Adam and Apaya found this to be 47% of harvest value for sorghum, 72% for wheat and 65% for the groundnut crop (op.cit.:111). In view of such "distortions", it may be difficult for such tenants to understand that the cultivation of their non-cotton crops is being subsidized.

The liquidity and capital profile of tenant households will also affect labour demand because it determines (a) the ability of tenants to demand labour in the market; (b) the terms on which the labour is demanded - the labour contract; and (c) the ability to operate the tenancy efficiently (ILO op.cit.:94). Thus a substantial proportion of the farm income of poor tenants may be absorbed by their need to borrow money at high interest rates in order to finance cultivation. They are, therefore, only able to hire in labour on the basis of credit obtained at high cost, and at the same time, they may be compelled to engage themselves as hired labourers to other farmers in order to finance their subsistence needs and to repay their debts (ibid.:96). As a result, they may not be able to perform the various tasks on time, which is of paramount importance in irrigated agriculture where timetables are tight; or, they may economize on labour costs to the extent that productivity is adversely affected,

Thus dependence on credit results primarily from the cash-flow problems of poorer tenants and generally reduces further their rates of income to expenditure,

Accumulation of Tenancies

It remains to be seen how interest-bearing capital accumulated through credit relations (or, for that matter, capital accumulated in any other sector) may enter the sphere of agricultural production. Tenant-based agriculture as a mode of production clearly allows for such entry in the Sudan. It may happen in the following ways: Although it is illegal to sell or mortgage tenancies on the New Halfa Scheme, tenant indebtedness may allow for considerable de facto accumulation of lands through subletting or sharecropping arrangements. If tenants remain long in a condition of debt, they may be expected to occupy the position of a non-wage-earning labour supply on their own tenancies. In share-cropping or partnership arrangements loans might be repaid in the form of commodities, either by the loan being a pre-sale of the commodity, i.e. the producer "sells" a specific quantity of, e.g., groundnuts before it has been harvested, accepts payment in advance and delivers the groundnuts at a later date, or by the loan being repaid at interest in the form of the commodity produced at a price to be determined on the date of delivery. In both cases, the usurer may move directly into the production by lending the amount necessary for the investment and by collecting interest on that loan, without the producer losing all control over his tenancy (cf. Roseberry 1978). Another form would be for poor, indebted tenants to make arrangements with wealthier tenants to sublet the tenancy or a portion thereof to the latter. By way of such arrangements, lands may be accumulated by wealthier tenants who rely on other sources of income, while a corresponding process of "near-proletarianization" takes place among poor tenant households.

Wealthier tenants who hold several tenancies have numerous advantages. Because they are known to have ready cash, they can generally attract more labour more easily and they can easily take advantage of the higher rates of return from the groundnut and wheat crops, the yields of which depend on the timely application of purchased inputs, such as fertilizers and machinery services. Consequently, their yields are often higher, while the majority of poor tenants cannot even afford to grow groundnuts. Also, they are able to exploit the joint account system to their own advantage if they hold several tenancies. In the New Halfa Scheme, this happens in the following way as reported by Salem-Murdock:

"A group of tenancies, although effectively belonging to one man, are nevertheless registered under different names to satisfy the one man/one tenancy principle.,., The accounts of the different tenancies are calculated and kept separately. Thus, a man who holds five tenancies in five different names can easily manipulate harvest distribution so that some tenancies produce the minimum while others produce much more. Since the Corporation cannot charge the debts of one

tenancy against another, debts continue to accumulate against some tenancies while others keep doing very well and making profits. **The** tenant who is responsible for the "successful" tenancies acquires the reputation of being a successful farmer who qualifies for limited inputs and loans since he is considered a better risk" (Salem-Murdock op.cit.:264 f).

Unlike proletarian wage-earners, then, New Halfa tenants maintain some control over the means of production as well as over the production process and their products. Such control allows them to retain a portion of any surplus product that may derive from crop farming; and while such surplus may be used for repaying last year's debt, or for increased consumption and ceremonial expenses, it may also be used to provide credit to fellow tenants in the form of interest-bearing loans. Thus differentiation is, in a sense, inherent in the production system.

Off-Scheme Interests

Given the above features of irrigated farming as a production system, and given the low and erratic yields on the Scheme, we would expect to find increasing fragmentation, subdivision and accumulation of tenancies which would then speed up the marginalization of those who have previously survived just above the poverty line. We would also expect to find the proportion of rural income derived from non-agricultural sources to be high, as the more entrepreneurial elements of the tenantry are "pulled" into non-agricultural sectors by the lure of higher returns to labour, while poor tenants, at the same time, are "pushed" into seeking income and employment outside of agriculture.

Because the Corporation recognizes the important role of tenants as supervisors and managers of the labour force rather than major labour contributors, New Halfa tenants are allowed to develop livelihood strategies involving members in other economic activities. In fact, given their low and irregular incomes, it is only through the combining of varied forms of activities that most households sustain continuity, i.e. reproduce their labour-power. Thus the necessary finance to meet the costs of agricultural production comes largely from other sectors of the economy, and it is largely the absence of a viable occupation in other sectors which determines the position of the poorer sections of the community.

Such activities allow a large number of tenant households to retain control over their holdings without having to resort to credit from others. A large-scale marginalization of households is thereby prevented. At the same time, it is evident that such activities may also provide the basis for increasing economic differentiation within tenant communities. In many cases, tenants

who pursue other occupations, or who are not even residing on the Scheme, put out their tenancies for others to cultivate through deputy arrangements (wakil), whereby a person nominates another to act on his behalf. Through this mechanism, a considerable de facto accumulation of lands takes place. Also, off-farm activities provide the basis for the existence of private credit facilities on the Scheme as well as for the accumulation of tenancies through sharecropping and subletting arrangements (cf. above).

The "cushion effect" of off-scheme activities, however, can hardly be overemphasized, particularly as they have prevented a wholesale take-over of tenancies by a minority of wealthy tenants. There is much evidence for this also in the Gezira Scheme. There, a privileged access to education was explicitly used, after 1950, by the Government to solve the problem of the social reproduction of the tenantry at an acceptably high standard, and has yielded the added bonus of a broad avenue of upward mobility for tenant offspring (O'Brien 1984:226). It began to bear fruit just as a diversification and intensification programme gained momentum in the early 1970s when cropping intensity reached 100% in the Managil Extension and 75% in the Gezira Main. This programme put additional strains and pressures on a vulnerable agricultural system based on closed adherence to strict timetables, and placed more importance on the managerial functions of the tenants and their ability to mobilize stable cash flows. But at about the same time that cash needs began to rise, increasingly large numbers of tenants began to receive significant cash remittances from their educated children who had salaried jobs in the towns. Also, a growing number of these educated offspring were inheriting their parents' tenancies but continuing to live in the towns while subletting their tenancies to agents (ibid.:232).

Therefore, many Gezira tenants have withdrawn completely even from supervisory functions, due to their receipt of remittances which have served to smooth cash flows and eliminate indebtedness, but also due to the fact that by the 1970s a very large proportion of tenants were old (ibid.; Ahmed el Mustafa op.cit.; Tait 1980). This has caused the growth of a subtenantry drawn largely from the immigrant groups from West Africa, Chad, and the western provinces of the Sudan, and who work under various types of sharecropping or subletting arrangements,

As will be seen in the following chapters, the situation at New Halfa is not much different. In the Nubian communities, a tremendous emphasis is put on education. As far as primary education is concerned, there were 12 schools for boys and 7 for girls in the Old Halfa area. Today, there are 22 primary schools in the Nubian enclave at New Halfa, all of them serving both boys and girls. As far as general and higher secondary schools are concerned, there are 15 such schools in the area, the majority of which are within easy access of the Nubian villages (Agrar

op.cit.). Long before resettlement, thousands of Nubians, unable to support themselves from the land alone, had come to seek livelihoods elsewhere, and, as will be seen in Chapter Three, the number of Nubians primarily engaged in agriculture came to be very small. The employment profile came to strongly reflect the urban orientation and city affiliations of the Nubian population, and Nubian society came to be a society characterized by high absentee rates, reliance on remittances and the pursuit of urban careers. When they arrived at New Halfa, they did not regard farming as an appropriate means to the status goals they envisioned for their children. Many of those who took up farming in the resettlement area were, therefore, older men who had returned from menial jobs in the Egyptian cities; and consequently, a large number of Nubian tenants came to live on a reduced tenancy income (because they tend to sublet their plots through crop-sharing or rental, or to hire someone on a monthly salary to manage their tenancies) plus remittances from educated offspring.

In the "nomadic" areas, the continued dependence on livestock served similar purposes, in the sense that it allowed the majority of tenants to hold on to their lands. The subsistence and cash support deriving from animals served to smooth cash flows and eliminate indebtedness and economically disadvantageous strategies (such as resorting to sheil to finance the wage bill) amongst numerous tenants - to the extent that, for many, it continued to be a much more important occupational activity than that of irrigated agriculture.

The Growth of a Subtenantry

The subcontracting of tenant functions has also caused the growth of a subtenantry in New Halfa, drawn mainly from the western provinces of the Sudan (cf. Heinritz 1982). As agricultural wage labourers subject to seasonal periods of unemployment, these people have always depended upon mobilizing household labour in order to maximize earnings in peak periods (cf. O'Brien 1984:233). As subtenants (sharecroppers or renters), they have particularly managed to take over a large part of the groundnut hawashas, and although their potential income is by definition lower than that of working tenants, they tend to minimize hiring outside labour and generally combine sharecropping with other wage work (canal maintenance, agricultural labour, etc.). In a survey made by Heinritz, it was found that almost 100 per cent of the labour camp households had sharecropping arrangements with tenants (op.cit.:73). Thus, the tenant does not simply occupy the position of employer in relation to the labourer. In many cases, the tenant is actually indebted to the labourer, and repays the debt by entering into a sharecropping arrangement (cf. also ILO op.cit.:109).

Concluding Remarks

It should now be evident that terms like "sharecropper" (mu'sharig), "tenant" (muzari) or caretaker (wakil), in relation to the New Halfa Scheme, do not refer to single, unitary economic categories, but to complex and differentiated aggregations of people, and that Halfa tenancies have come to be operated by many different types of economic units which manage their holdings under various types of constraints. Thus, e.g., a sharecropper may be what we ordinarily think of when we use that term - a person who owns no land himself but works the land of another person by a fixed contract which stipulates how each should contribute and share the produce; in other cases, sharecropping is used as a strategy of expansion by tenants who engage in large-scale agricultural operations. Such labels, therefore, are inadequate for grasping the complex pattern of adaptations emerging on the Scheme.

It should also be evident that debates over whether Sudanese tenants have been or presently are wage earners or profit sharers, or something in between, not only miss some of the most important aspects of their role in Sudanese agriculture (particularly their role as foremen, supervisors and managers of the agricultural work force), but also provide partial and static views of groups which have complex and changing relationships with the larger systems within which they participate. While none of this complexity of relationship and process should have surprised us, there is a tendency to reify categories like "tenants" or "peasants" into typologies rather than to use definitions simply as ways of talking about social relationships. Such reification may prevent us from examining how a variety of types of producers are created and emerge in concrete historical processes.

In this chapter, I have been particularly concerned with showing how certain aspects of irrigated farming in the Sudan have important dynamic implications for the tenant communities on the Scheme. The "movements" I have discussed - both those that involve members of a household in multiple enterprises, and those which allow some units to expand their holdings at the expense of other units - are made possible by certain peculiar aspects of the production system and can not only be understood in terms of the low yields and low incomes accruing to tenants from irrigated farming. First, as managers of the labour force, tenants have important supervisory functions, but are allowed to pursue other occupations without risking eviction. Secondly, they are allowed to put out their wheat and groundnut hawashas on sharecropping or other arrangements, and are also allowed to appoint a caretaker (wakil) for their entire holding. Since the non-cotton crops can be marketed through private traders, and since they appear more profitable to the tenants, private capital, in a situation where incomes are low, must be expected to move into wheat and groundnuts rather than cotton, through mortgaging and

sharecropping arrangements. The complex productive relationships that develop on the Scheme are, therefore, much related to the ways in which different constraints, applying to different crops, may articulate in a local context.

If developments within irrigated farming were allowed to run its own course, as it were, we would expect the above features to generate increasing economic differentiation within the tenant communities on the Scheme. However, such differentiation, while it certainly takes place, is considerably modified and modulated by the participation of tenants in other activity systems, of various scale, which articulate on the local level with the systems already discussed. Of particular importance are the many different kinds of off-scheme activities which allow a large number of tenant households to retain control over their holdings without having to resort to credit from others. Events and developments within other activity sectors, which are certainly not characterized by being traditional or stagnating (cf. the dual thesis), affect local level processes in a number of ways. As suggested above, their prevalence cannot be understood simply in terms of the low and irregular incomes derived from irrigated farming, but they do have important effects on Scheme agriculture. Thus while they allow a large number of tenant households to retain control over their holdings, they also provide an important basis for economic differentiation, (a) because expansion of holdings within irrigated farming is mostly based on prior accumulation in other sectors, and (b) because tenants who pursue other occupations may leave their lands for others to cultivate. On a more general level, they produce a number of tenant communities where a majority of households have seemingly little or no connection to, or interest in agriculture, which must be considered a most serious development by any managing director of such a large and important enterprise. More on this in the following chapters.

It follows, finally, that it is a rather futile exercise to attempt any classification of tenant units on the Scheme according to criteria derived solely from agriculture. New Halfa tenancies, like tenancies in the Gezira, are operated by qualitatively distinct types of units, and although the picture will be modified in the following chapters, it may be useful, before moving to the ethnography¹⁶, to distinguish between the following broad categories¹⁶:

- (i) There is a category of tenants which includes (a) large-holding tenants whose principal revenues stem from relatively large-scale agricultural operations, supplemented by profits from trade, livestock ownership or other activities; and (b) tenants for whom tenancies may be one minor investment among many, and who sustain expanding cycles of accumulation based on diverse investments. Members of this category tend to operate their tenancies

efficiently, some of them have made investments in agricultural machinery, and they all rely very heavily on hired labour.

- (ii) There is also a category made up of diverse small-holding tenants whose principal sources of income are the cultivation of their tenancies, the cultivation of additional plots on sublease from other tenants, and wages, salaries or cash payment deriving from second occupations (mainly livestock production, skilled or semiskilled labour). Cash flows and the contribution of family labour are normally sufficient to enable these tenants to avoid frequent recourse to sheil (or other forms of credit) or subletting their tenancies.
- (iii) Finally, there is a category of dependent smallholders which includes many aged tenants who supplement the cultivation of small plots with income from unskilled wage labour, either casual or steady, near the tenancy. Production frequently falls short of a modest subsistence goal, resulting in widespread, chronic dependence on private credit and subletting of tenancies. The more fortunate smallholders avoid heavy indebtedness and enjoy a more comfortable living through regular remittances from educated offspring working in skilled or white-collar jobs, mostly in the towns.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Thus in 1980, the managing director of the Sudan Gezira Board made the following statement when being interviewed by Sudanow (March 1980):

"Those who want to be good farmers can be good farmers. Only a small percentage are poor - by which I mean that they can never make a profit on any crop. And they are poor because they are bad farmers - because they don't know how to, or don't bother to, do their work properly. There is no reason why a tenant can't make a living and be solvent after his first year" (p. 40).

2. The recent writings of Jay O'Brien on the Gezira Scheme (1980, 1984) have done much to clarify my own thoughts on such issues.

3. The New Halfa Scheme was developed in five phases:

Phase I was completed in 1964, and an area of 175,000 feddans was distributed to the Nubian settlers and a limited number of nomad tenant farmers who were living in permanent villages on the west bank of the River Atbara.

Phase II was completed in 1965/66, and 100,000 feddans were distributed to nomadic tenants drawn from 15 villages located on the west bank of the River Atbara,

Phase III was completed in 1966/67, with an area of 45,000 feddans in the south-western part of the Scheme. Tenancies were allocated to nomads who had been resettled in seven villages along the main irrigation canal on the western side of the Scheme.

Phase IV was completed in 1967/68, with an area of 65,000 feddans, also distributed to nomads from the Butana.

Phase V was completed in 1968/69, in which an area of 65,000 feddans was allotted to nomads and to the last settlers from Wadi Halfa (from Ard-el-Hagar and the Dal cataract),

4. As sorghum was introduced after my field research was completed, I am not able to discuss its present role in the Scheme rotation,
5. I participated myself in a task force appointed by the Ministry of National Planning which recommended major

changes in the agricultural incentive system (Sudan Cost Recovery Committee 1980). As from 1981, the Government has replaced the Joint Account System by an Individual Account System for each crop, producer prices have been announced prior to harvest and tenants have been promptly paid for cotton delivered to management. Such actions seem to have paid rich dividends (cf. Note 4, Chapter One), but it is still too early for us to make any definite statement as to how they may affect tenant adaptations on the various schemes.

6. Qantar is a measure of weight used especially for cotton. A small qantar equals 100 lbs, while a big qantar equals 315 lbs.
7. I am indebted to Osman Idris, a former managing director of the New Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation, for much of the information contained in this section.
8. The Sudanese currency unit is Sudanese pound (LSd).
LSd 1,00 = 100 piasters = 1000 milliems
LSd 1,00 = US\$ 0.41 (July 1985).
9. During the last few years, Sudan has generally accounted for 25% of world groundnut exports. While the demand for fats and oils as a whole was projected to increase at a very modest rate of 2% per annum in 1979 (World Bank 1979), the demand for vegetable oils was expected to expand faster than the demand for other oils. Thus it was projected that by 1985 vegetable oils will account for 70% of total world supply of fats and oils as compared to about 60% in 1970.
10. This categorization was first adopted by O'Brien (1984).

Map 4

Possible Resettlement Sites and
Eventual Emigration Routes from
Wadi Halfa to Kashm el Girba

Source: Dafalla 1975:84

CHAPTER THREE

RURAL SETTLEMENT AND URBAN ORIENTATION - NUBIANS ON THE NEW HALFA SCHEME

Introduction

Background

"As for the selection of your new home, I promise to accept your choice of place wherever you want to go, in any part of the Sudan, and that none of you will be forced to go anywhere against his will."

Those were the words of Ibrahim Abboud, Commander in Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces and Prime Minister, when addressing the Nubians at Wadi Halfa on December 6, 1959, less than one month after the conclusion of the Nile Water Agreement. His pledge was not honoured, however, and the relocation of Sudanese Nubians proved to be more dramatic, more controversial, and filled with more bitterness and strife than the process of evacuation that took place across the border (cf. Abdulla 1967, 1970, Dafalla 1975, Fahim 1983).

The Halfawi Nubians were not caught unawares by the announcement of the Nile Water Agreement, but they had hoped that no agreement would ever be reached, and that they would not be sacrificed, as they saw it, for the prosperity of other groups in another country. The Sudanese authorities, on their side, had not been consulted in the early planning for the High Dam at Aswan, and thus were unable to confront the Nubians with a predetermined plan for their resettlement when the imminent destruction of their homes was announced.

The Government, however, sought to pacify opinion in advance by forming a commission to act in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Interior concerning the choice of resettlement site and other matters relating to the move. This was done in February 1960.

In early March, six sites were selected by the Commission to have their suitability for the proposed resettlement investigated. These were (1) Wadi el Khawi in the Dongola area; (2) an area north of the Gezira Scheme and not far from Khartoum; (3) el Kadaru, just north of Khartoum; (4) part of the Managil Extension of the Gezira Scheme; (5) Wad el Haddad, near Sennar; and (6) Khashm el Girba in the Kassala Province (cf. Map 4).

A local committee was formed to tour the areas, study available information and make a decision on their preferred site. On their return to Halfa, members of the Committee failed to reach an agreement, and it was decided to refer the whole question to twenty village committees. After a long and stormy meeting it was then announced that the site south of Khartoum was the Committee's final choice.

It turned out, however, that the Government already had plans to build a dam on the Atbara river, 850 kilometres southeast of Halfa, at Khashm el Girba, and from the Government's point of view this was a good chance to settle the land around the dam with experienced farmers. Therefore, on 22 October 1960, it was announced by a ministerial delegation in Wadi Halfa that the Nubians would have to be resettled at Khashm el Girba.

Tom Little has characterized some of the difficulties attending the resettlement:

"Short of offering them a site away from any river, Khashm el-Girba was a place that the Nubians were least likely to choose for themselves, for it was not only far distant from the relatives who were in the towns of the Sudan and Egypt, but was as different as it could possibly be from their homeland. The Atbara is a seasonal river, dry for part of the year and then stormy with flood water coursing down to the Nile, and the Khashm el-Girba region is assailed by violent tropical rains. They were used to storms on the Nile and strong winds, but compared with the wild emptiness of the Atbara scrubland Halfa seemed a haven. Despite these objections, the Government decided that they would settle at Khashm el-Girba." (Little 1965:134f.)

The decision for Khashm el Girba further exacerbated the Nubians' resentment against their Government. There were political disturbances in Wadi Halfa and public demonstrations in many Sudanese towns, including Khartoum. Nubian resettlement became a controversial issue, and one which ultimately contributed towards the downfall of the military regime in October 1964.

The Exodus

In 1964 the impounded Nile waters backed up for the first time into Sudanese territory, and the inevitability of resettlement could no longer be ignored. In January of that year the first resettlement train left Wadi Halfa on the long journey to Khashm el Girba, carrying as passengers the 1175 inhabitants of the frontier village of Faras (cf. Dafalla op.cit.). Throughout the next two years the trains continued to roll, sometimes as often as three times a week, until the region to the north of the Second Cataract was depopulated of all but a few "bitter-enders" who refused to leave the area. By November 23, 1965, the last batch

of settlers was cleared from the area. According to statistics, about 53,000 individuals, 21,000 animals and 330,000 miscellaneous objects were transferred (Fahim 1972:8).

Migration and Career Patterns

Before the Nubians, very much against their own wishes, were resettled at Khashm el Girba, it was decided to carry out a comprehensive social and economic survey in the Wadi Halfa District in order to help the authorities in Khartoum to plan for their new home. The survey was done in 1960 and gave some interesting results:

- (i) It turned out that 34% of the population were absentees (14,796 out of 53,227) and that 2685 out of 6275 households acknowledged the regular receipt of remittances from migrants. If we exclude the town population (11,424), we find that 52.6% of the rural population were absentees (14,431 out of 27,422), and that several communities consisted chiefly of women, children and the elderly.
- (ii) While 65.3% of the male resident labour force was concentrated in agriculture, the number of absentees engaged in this activity was negligible (0.9%). The survey showed that most of the younger men were moving toward clerical and skilled occupations and were more closely tied to urban than to rural life. There had been a shift of absentees from Egypt to the Sudan: In 1960, 60% of the absentees were living in the Sudan.
- (iii) The results of the literacy survey revealed that the area enjoyed a higher level of literacy than any other part of the Sudan. Thus, f.ex., the ratio was 75% for males and more than 40% for females in the young group (6-15), as against 28% for males and 8% for females of the same age group on the national level (Republic of the Sudan 1960).

Present Adaptations

Fourteen years after the survey was carried out, and ten years after resettlement at New Halfa, it seemed that the career patterns that had developed during the presettlement period, and associated features of Nubian society, had also decisively affected the ways in which the Nubian households and communities adapted to their new social, economic and ecological environment. Despite the fact that standard land holdings had been allotted to most families, the various Nubian communities on the Scheme contained working and non-working tenants who farmed various numbers of holdings, a few landless people, and a substantial number of nominal tenants with seemingly little or no connection to agriculture, such as teachers, traders, drivers, craftsmen, sanitation workers, etc. My own figures from 1974 show that the

247 tenancies held by the people of village no. 12 (where I carried out the bulk of my fieldwork) were largely cultivated through caretaker (**wakil**) or sharecropping arrangements. Only 52 tenants (21%) could be considered more or less active tenants, while there were 39 female tenants who did not work their lands, 112 tenants primarily engaged in other occupations, and 44 tenants who were not even living in the resettlement area. In 1977, I counted only 38 active tenants, whereas those tenants who relied primarily on other activities either had left their lands for others to cultivate or continued to be in charge of their tenancies through extensive employment of hired labour or by way of sharecropping arrangements. The amount of own and family labour varied somewhat with different operations, but generally was very low among all tenant categories.

The Analysis

In the last chapter, I tried to show how such adaptations can be understood within a particular economic context characterized by low and fluctuating crop yields. Since irrigated agriculture does not commonly provide a net revenue sufficient to cover tenant expenses, it must be expected that many households will have to rely on other sources of income, often to the extent that the fields are left for others to cultivate. Differential access to land will consequently be created on a state-run project where such inequalities are not supposed to develop.

However, it is quite clear that Nubian career patterns and tenant differentiation are not uniquely determined by the present poor state of irrigated agriculture. The prevalent pursuit of non-agricultural careers among the Nubians must also be understood in the light of such factors as the resource endowments of tenant households, the educational and career backgrounds of its members, and the location of Nubian village communities in relation to centers of income-earning possibilities.

Let me explain this briefly before I turn to the analysis. In **Nubia**, a long history of labour migration to the towns and cities of Egypt and the Sudan had created a diversified and specialized occupational pattern which had come to tie a large part of the Nubian population more closely to urban than to rural life. This, combined with the fact that most people who were married, had family and a house in Wadi Halfa were provided with tenancies, enabled some farmers to expand their holdings in the resettlement area as a substantial number of tenants chose to remain absent from the Scheme, while others preferred not to become engaged in agriculture. Such tenants play a crucial role in determining the successes and failures of fellow tenants, not only by leaving their lands for others to cultivate, but also by offering support to close kin and neighbours, thereby making it possible for other households to expand their activities, or simply to persist as viable units within the Scheme.

The transfer of lands through the wakil institution tended to favour resourceful tenants, mainly for two reasons:

- (1) Before resettlement, well-off families in Wadi Halfa had generally managed to provide their male members with higher education **and/or** to have them placed in permanent and well-paying jobs, particularly in Khartoum. Since so many of their close kin chose never to engage themselves personally in irrigated agriculture, tenants from such families tended to have a larger number of tenancies at their disposal than others.
- (2) The necessary means to meet the costs of production could not easily be provided for by poor tenants. Insufficient loans from NHAPC, increasing costs and fluctuating yields and incomes (cf. Chapter **Two**) made it necessary for small-holding tenants to be in possession of extra-agricultural resources. It was, therefore, difficult for tenants without such resources to cultivate their tenancies (very few managed to finance groundnut cultivation), and while they tried to cope with the situation by seeking credit or by trying to find other jobs, it was possible for some of their resourceful fellow tenants to expand cultivation, mainly through the use of assets derived from other activities (trade, wage work, animal husbandry, etc.).

As a consequence, the Nubian units engaged in cultivation differ considerably in terms of assets, size, composition and attitudes to farming. At one extreme of a continuum of adaptations, a few rich tenants accumulate sufficiently (to a large extent by engagement in other activities) to invest in production through the purchase of tractors, harvesters and other agricultural implements; at the other are poor, indebted smallholders whose production generally falls short of their modest goals, and who often depend on credit and the generosity of close kin and neighbours for their physical survival. A wholesale take-over of tenancies by a few capitalized enterprises, however, is prevented by the availability of urban jobs for so many Nubian tenants and their offspring, and the fact that investments tend to shift away from irrigated crop farming in response to low incentives,

The Nubian Past

The Environment

Nubia begins north of latitude 19° and extends from the First Cataract at Aswan in Egypt to the area below the Fourth Cataract in northern Sudan - where the Nile makes a bend to the north-east. It enjoys one of the most extreme climates on earth.

At Wadi Halfa, which is the part of Nubia which concerns us most in this chapter,¹⁾ the mean daily temperature from May to September is about 90 degrees; the daily high nearly always exceeds 100 degrees, and may reach above 120 degrees. Winter, from November to March, is mild with mean daily temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees and occasional cold spells when the thermometer drops nearly to freezing (Barbour 1961:49). There is virtually no rain, and dry, northerly winds blow throughout the year, the detrimental effects of which can be seen in the constant encroachment of dunes on agricultural land, particularly on the west (windward) bank of the Nile.

Nubia's harsh and exacting climate has undoubtedly been repellant to most outsiders. While it has not protected the region from frequent invasion, it may be partly responsible for the lack of permanent colonization by foreigners.²⁾ On the other hand, the Nubian climate is not very important to settlement or to productivity. It is the Nile, originating in highlands 2000 miles further south, which brings both the water and the soil necessary to life in Nubia. Nothing is demanded of the local environment except a growing season long enough to take advantage of these exotic resources. Neither Nubia nor Egypt contributes a drop of water to the Nile, nor, in fact, an acre of their own soil to its banks.

If the Nile is the central feature of the Nubian scene, it is by no means an unvarying one. The annual fluctuation in volume between the season of low water and the season of high water is enormous, amounting in fact to an increase of over 1000 per cent (Adams 1977:35). Irrigation is difficult with the simple man-or animal-powered devices traditional in the Nile valley. It is estimated that the ox-driven waterwheel (*saqia*), which was used until it was largely replaced by diesel-driven pumps in the 1930s, can irrigate four or five acres at one time during the high-water season, but not more than one third of that area at the lowest season (*ibid.*:36).

Next to the shortage of soil itself, which was an outstanding feature of Nubia, the difficulty of raising irrigation water over the high, steep riverbanks has been the principal factor inhibiting Nubia's economic development throughout history.

Under the circumstances prevailing in much of Nubia, the agricultural subsistence base was thus precarious. A drop of a few feet in the level of the Nile might make irrigation impossible over large areas and might take half or more of the arable land out of production in a given year.

While in Egypt, the Nile has been trained and subdued over thousands of years by means of dikes, diversions and reservoirs, the Nubian Nile remained untamed until the twentieth century. The first dam at Aswan was built in 1902 and subsequently heightened

in 1912 and 1932. The inundations caused by the construction and heightenings of the dam reduced parts of Nubia to a "sub-subsistence" area (Scudder 1966) with high labour migration rates and large scale permanent emigration.

Migration to the Cities

However, as early as by the seventeenth century, Nubians are described as dominating the guilds of construction workers, watchmen and slave dealers in Cairo. When Napoleon arrived at the end of the eighteenth century, his savants found Nubians in the majority among custom guards, domestic servants and carriage drivers. A pattern of regular migration, however, was not firmly established before the Ottoman era. When Nubia and Egypt were united under the regime of Mohamed Ali in the early part of the nineteenth century, the wholesale migrations of the recent past seem to have begun (cf. Adams op.cit.:613).

The alternatives open to the Nubians were few: Emigration to other rural areas did take place, but purchasable land was scarce in an overpopulated Egypt and well-nigh inaccessible in the Sudan where lands were privately held only in parts of the Nile Valley. The way Nubians found a footing in urban society is also related to developments within the Egyptian economy: (1) the transition in Egypt from a society based on slaveholding to one based on free labour; and (2) the expanding economy of Egypt during the nineteenth century (Fernea 1973:36). Untrained and dark-skinned, Nubians were considered suitable for work as servants, cooks, waiters, doormen and drivers, and by not having to compete for occupations with other groups, since they were in part replacing slaves, they managed successfully to establish themselves as part of the urban labour force (ibid.).

Although the stereotype of Nubians as cooks and servants has been maintained until now, particularly in Egypt, there was in fact, during a period of 50 years, a rapid upwardly mobile movement of their position on the urban employment scene. When Geiser did a study of Nubian society in Cairo in 1962, he found that the Nubian employment profile was almost identical with that of the population at large (Geiser 1966); and when a survey was carried out in the Wadi Halfa District during 1960, the occupational structure exhibited a large share of administrative and skilled occupations (cf. Table 4).

Table 4.

OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE - WADI HALFA DISTRICT

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Male residents</u>	<u>Male absentees</u>
	16 years and over	
Senior	0.5%	3.5%
Administrative & skilled	21.9%	44.7%
Skilled Personal Services	4.4%	28.5%
Cultivators	65.3%	0.9%
Unskilled	6.8%	14.0%
No Productive occupations	10.1%	8.4%

Source: Kleve 1964

During this century, Sudanese Nubians increasingly entered the labour market in their own country, and, while Nubians in Egypt remained a minority group of a lowly status, their Sudanese brothers, although occupying many of the same types of urban jobs, rose rapidly in the economic and status hierarchy of the Sudan. In order to account for this, the relationship of the British to Nubians from the time of the Mahdiyya until Sudan's independence in 1956 is **significant**.³⁾ The British, having come up the Nile from Egypt through Nubia, forming garrisons and temporary settlements. came into intimate contact with the non-Mahdist Nubians. They hired many Nubians in various service positions and, later, for minor messenger or clerical jobs. These positions necessitated a degree of education, and people from Wadi **Halfa** like to boast that the first secondary school in the Sudan was in Wadi Halfa. Working for the British in these jobs also involved a more extensive contact with the English language. As the British moved up the Nile, they brought with them to Khartoum many **Nubians**, usually in **service occupations** such as household servants, waiters and doorkeepers. These patron-client relationships bolstered the position of the small Nubian minority (Hale 1979).

In the late 1950s, there was a marked shift of absentees from Egypt to the Sudan, following President **Nasser's** nationalization of foreign-owned companies (which employed a great number of Sudanese **Nubians**) as well as restrictions imposed upon the entry of foreign workers into Egypt. Thus in 1960, 60% of the absentees were living in the Sudan.

The Nubian Economy

The kind of economy that developed among the Halfawien was characterized by dependence on the outside world for sale of dates (fringes and groves of date palms bordered the river almost all over **Nubia**)⁴⁾ and for employment in the labour market, whereas

cultivation was mainly for **subsistence**.⁵⁾ As most of the adult male population migrated to work in the towns, they transferred their rights to land to those of their close kin who were staying behind, or, when leaving alone, left their plots to wives and children. Although it was customary for one member of the family to act as the representative for several owners, shares in land and date palms came to be **infinitesimal**. This caused T.A. Leach, a British official stationed in Wadi Halfa, to call Nubians the most uncompromising and perverse people of the country, by this referring to their hairsplitting arguments concerning their tiny shares of date trees and other property (Leach 1919).

Nubian women played an important role in a great number of economic activities. Census figures from Wadi Halfa show that the area had more women engaged in agriculture than men (Dafalla **op.cit.:**54). In recent years, however, it was quite customary to bring wives and children to the urban scene. Geiser found that a significant majority of the urban Nubian population lived in nuclear family arrangements in which both spouses were present (Geiser **op.cit.**), and his findings were also confirmed by the Sudanese census made in 1960.

It has been noted by several writers that migration was not simply a result of land fragmentation and the building of the Aswan Dam (e.g. Geiser 1973). In fact, a considerable portion of the lands lay untilled by reason of the absence of an adult labour force in quite a few Nubian communities, and in a period when thousands of Nubians left their homes for the towns of Egypt and the Sudan, Sa'idi farmers from Upper Egypt entered the area as sharecroppers or wage earners on Nubian lands. Even among the resident population, ownership of land was not necessarily paralleled by an equal engagement in farming activities. Before the turn of this century, slaves constituted a very important part of the agricultural labour force, and when sharecroppers were incorporated in the system, they continued to enable Nubian landowners both to cultivate more land than could be worked by family labour, and to pursue non-agricultural careers themselves, in, e.g., commerce or the civil service, without severing their ties with their home communities. Particularly in the vicinity of Wadi Halfa Town, Nubians were able to combine employment in town with produce and money deriving from sharecropping arrangements as well as the cheaper life of the village (cf. Kronenberg & Kronenberg 1970). Thus, in a situation of extreme land scarcity, Nubian landlords emerged along with non-Nubian sharecroppers and daily paid workers. In communities like Argin, Dighaim and Angash, there were almost no Nubian farmers left on the lands.

Some Elements of Social Organization

Many aspects of social and economic organization were related to, and affected by, the rural-urban circulation that developed among the Halfawi Nubians. Thus, kin-based obligations, including

transference of rights to land, were not attached to specific statuses in the kinship system. Although Nubian households are affiliated within lineages - rather small groups of shallow depth, reckoning common agnatic descent from a grandfather or a great-grandfather of the senior living generation - such lineages seem not to have emerged as corporate groups. They owned nothing in common, they had no common ritual symbols, and they were neither endogamous nor exogamous. Their existence did not rely on the part they played as units within a larger system, but mainly on the recognition and the fulfilling of rights and duties of agnates to each other. Since lands were registered, and therefore held privately, and since migration took so many people out of the Nubian communities, there was no real basis for activities organized by patrilineal descent (cf. Barth 1973b). Utilization of lands depended to a large extent on flexible ad hoc arrangements, and sometimes on small-scale sharecropping arrangements between kinsmen and, occasionally, non-kinsmen (cf. Fernea 1966). Absentee landowners transferred rights to those who remained behind to cultivate, and if and when they returned, they would reclaim their rights as well as their shares in palm trees. Without such recognized rights to land and trees, the individual migrant's tie to the village had little substance.

Nubians refer to all units of family membership as nog(s), and a man's first nog is his household, the group of people for whom he is economically and socially responsible. The second nog is composed of those relatives with whom one used to divide the products of land and trees, no matter how small the shares might have become. Therefore, most men have two, largely overlapping nogs: the nog of one's father, wherein most of the household property used to be shared, and the nog of one's mother. The matrilineal nog is often very close in composition to the patrilineal nog, since, by preference, many marriages are between men and women who share patrilineal ancestors. Yet, a mother is likely to have received some shares of property from a relative who did not provide property for her husband, and the children will be involved with both sets of people. In many cases it was reported to me that migrants transferred their land rights to matrilineal or affinal kinsmen rather than to patrilineal relatives. I believe this to be quite common in Middle Eastern societies where, as a result of marriages, paternal and maternal ascendants merge and numerous affinal relations obtain between fellow agnates. Where land tenure is not the affairs of patrilineal descent groups, the only possible agreement that is possible in such a system is to regard kinsmen of all kinds as essentially similar (Barth 1973b). Added to this is the fact that so many children grew up in homes where their fathers were absent and where their mothers were not only responsible for cultivation, but also tended to have closer relations with their own kin than their husband's relatives (as is generally also the case today).

Economic Differentiation

Although Nubian society was not notably class-structured along occupational lines, it was not an egalitarian society. First, there was a certain degree of ethnic stratification: At the top was a small elite of Arab merchants and civil servants (based in Wadi Halfa Town); at the bottom were the descendants of former slaves, mostly of southern Sudanese origin (cf. Adams op.cit.:64). Also, among the rural Nubian population there were marked differences regarding access to land and other resources. Unequal access to land had largely been determined by political and economic processes that started after 1517 when a foreign elite, the Kashifs (originally Turkish and **Bosnian soldiers**)⁶⁾, imposed themselves on the native population and became wealthy landowners and rulers. The Kashifs intermarried with the Nubians, and today, several Nubian "tribes" (gabila, plur. gabail) reckon their descent from these occupants.⁷⁾ From one of them, Doudab, came most of the government-appointed leaders in the Native Administration during colonial rule (until its partial abolishment in 1969), and over the last centuries, some of the Doudab had been able to accumulate lands at the expense of members of other "tribes".

Another process of differentiation seems to have been based on expansion through trade. Some farmers were able to acquire resources to buy up dates produced by fellow farmers and would then be able to buy goods from middlemen to sell to other farmers. A characteristic feature of the rather small Nubian trading community was its economic interests in the agricultural sector, as traders, but also as landowners and moneylenders. Investment in land seems to have been common occurrence after the introduction of mechanical pumps in the area (c. 1920-30). Pumps made it possible to bring under cultivation land too high or too far from the river to be irrigated by the traditional water-wheel (saqiya), and in one area, Debeira-Ashkeit, this was done through an organized scheme initiated by the colonial government in 1933. As moneylenders, merchants forwarded grain, seeds, tea, sugar and other necessities to destitute farmers who mortgaged the next date crop under such conditions that they were often forced to repay the lenders in the form of dates after harvest.

In the Nubian enclave communities, particularly in Khartoum and other Sudanese towns, a similar process of differentiation took place as a new generation started to move into white-collar jobs. Because they had been a part of the stable labour force for decades, Nubians moved into higher positions with more ease than some other groups. They had learned the patron-client system from their British overlords and themselves applied it effectively in continuing their influence (through ascriptive hiring practices) in the more traditional occupations, at the same time as they were moving into even more economically powerful positions. Being among the first to receive a western education, Nubians were

equipped to move into many middle and higher range positions in education and government. Thus in 1960, it was found that c. 48% of the absentees were senior officials, administrators and skilled workers while 28.5% were found in skilled personal services, only 14% in unskilled jobs and less than one per cent as cultivators (Republic of the Sudan op.cit.). According to Hale, Nubians came to dominate certain professions, establishments and spheres, such as transport and communications, catering, civil service, banks, Central Electricity and Water Administration, the University of Khartoum, legal positions and certain companies such as Shell, Imperial Chemicals Industries (I.C.I.), and General and Sudanese Insurance companies (op.cit.:354).

Ferneau writes that this development threatened the unity of the Nubian migrant communities in the forties and fifties (op.cit.:41), but at the same time, the process of differentiation helped secure the upward mobility of a large number of young Nubians: Patron-client relationships developed between the successful urban elites and new lower class migrants in need of accommodation and jobs (Hale op.cit.:378), and the Nubian neighbourhoods and their exclusive ethnic associations came to be dominated by what Hale has called Nubian Big Men, as modal points in maintaining Nubian exclusiveness and monopoly of certain economic pursuits (ibid.:463). Thus a system and network of patron-client relations was developed which came to involve the overlapping worlds of Old Halfa, the towns, and, later, also New Halfa (ibid. :462).

Such developments also accentuated differences at home as resourceful migrants sent home more money than others, practiced conspicuous consumption, or initiated economic activities in their home communities. My own material from village no. 12 suggests a clear connection between prosperity at home and successful careers in Cairo or Khartoum. During the last 30-40 years, an increasing number of migrants, mostly sons of well-off farmers and traders, left Nubia for purposes of education, and a large portion of them subsequently moved into high status city jobs. Many Nubian men thus profited from their parents' ambitions for their education, and their career patterns came decisively to influence Nubian adaptations after resettlement.

The Nubian Resettlement Site

The new Nubian settlement consists of a flat piece of land. It has the shape of a rectangle of some 35 kilometres in length (cf. Map 4) on which the government has constructed 25 villages which are numbered instead of named and which contain 175-300 houses each. They are planners' villages composed of symmetrical blocks of prefabricated houses which contain none of the elaborate house decorations which were typical in the Wadi Halfa region (cf. M. Wenzel 1972). Except for the building of verandahs and small

sheds for sheep, goats and poultry, people have made few changes or additions. Some fruit and palm trees have been planted without apparent success, and the rather ugly rust-coloured doors are being substituted with new and more colourful iron doors. However, the prevailing impression is one of sterility. The landscape is barren, except during the rainy season, and, as stated earlier, there is a notable lack of trees, hills or anything else that could break the monotony of the flatness.

Before resettlement, the Sudanese authorities adopted a policy guaranteeing the Nubians a fair compensation for the loss of immovable property submerged by Lake Nasser (or Lake Nubia as it is called in the Sudan). Nubians were consulted on the preferable type of compensation and it was reported that they wished to be compensated in kind as far as houses and lands were concerned, i.e. a new house for an old house and new land for old land. In addition, they were compensated in cash for their water-wheels, fruit trees, and other real property. Compensation for date palms alone amounted to LSd 3 millions.

The original housing plan indicated that the settlers were to pay the difference between the estimated cost of their old and new houses and that the difference was to be collected on the basis of long-term payments. Due to the high cost of the new houses, however, the Government decided that the difference would be exempted and offered, at option, to grant a house in the new site against each old house, irrespective of the cost. Thus every owner of a house in the affected area who did not claim money compensation for his house, and who desired to live at the resettlement area could be granted a built house for his living at the new site. It must also be noted that there was an attempt to keep village populations together by placing them in the same settlement at the new site.

Land-Allocation

The allocation of lands to the Nubian resettlers included freehold land (milk) and tenancies (hawashas).

Nubians who owned land prior to resettlement were entitled, according to the compensation by-laws, to own two feddans in the new area for every one feddan. There were several problems attending the allocation of milk lands: First, the Nubians demanded to have their freehold land within the boundaries of their villages and to have it distributed in such a way as to combine the varying shares of each family member into one plot. In the case of the absence of any owner, the land could then be easily cared for by the rest of the family. It took the land clerks years of hard work to reset the great jigsaw puzzle from Wadi Halfa and have the picture complete. Secondly, it was suggested that freehold land be allocated for horticultural production and particularly for growing onions for the onion

dehydrating factory at Kassala. This suggestion, however, was not put into effect because of the low price offered by the factory and the high rate charged by the management for irrigation water. Moreover, when the lands were finally registered, there was not sufficient water for irrigation all the year round. This was partly because the elevation of these lands are rather high and cannot easily be accommodated by the present canals, partly because the pumps erected at the dam site were just powerful enough to ensure summer irrigation for the sugar cane (cf. Chapter One) and a supply of drinking water for the town and the Scheme villages.

Lack of water meant that horticultural crops could not safely be grown. It also meant that a number of Nubians, at a time when they had financial resources to make their investments, refrained from doing so. When the situation improved, after 6-8 years, only a few people were able to exploit the opportunity.

Regarding leasehold land, tenancies were to be distributed according to a priority system based on (1) ability to cultivate, (2) reliance on agriculture as a means of support, (3) dependent family, (4) residence in the scheme and (5) extent of freehold land already held. As it turned out, however, most people who were married, had family and a house in Wadi Halfa were provided with tenancies. Teachers, clerks, cooks and drivers received lands along with those who used to be active cultivators. Any attempt on part of the authorities to exclude non-cultivators from tenancy allocation would have been politically impossible at the time.

The policy of distribution was somewhat loose in other respects as well. When the people settled in their new villages, it turned out that many villages had more tenancies than houses, while in others the land fell short of the needs. In the entire **Nubian** area, about 40 family heads were granted between three and six tenancies each, and quite a few had tenancies registered in the names of unmarried sons according to the availability of lands in the respective villages.

As a consequence, access to land was differential, although the policy of distribution did less to establish such inequalities than did other mechanisms. Despite the fact that the Tenancy Agreement prohibited against renting the land or any part of it, or sharing it with anybody (**para. 6**), and stipulated that tenants should be resident and active cultivators during the whole of the agricultural season (**para. 7**), a large number of tenants came to be represented by a caretaker or deputy (**wakil**) who was entrusted with attending to the tenant's interest and responsible for the cultivation of the leased land.

Absenteeism thus enabled a substantial number of **Nubian** tenants to cultivate more than one tenancy through caretaker arrangements, and such initial accumulation of lands bore little relationship to

the economic performance of the Scheme as such. Later, as agricultural incomes proved to be low and irregular, and as the majority of Nubian tenants came to regard agriculture as only a subsidiary source of income, a wider range of productive relations appeared on the Scheme: Tenants entered various types of renting and sharecropping arrangements, and while such arrangements were mainly concluded with fellow tenants who lived in the same community, it also enabled a number of labourers, mainly from Western Sudan, to enter careers as subtenants or sharecroppers.

Tenant Adaptations

When I first entered the resettlement area in September 1970, Nubians had already made the fundamental adaptations to their initial problems and had lived with them for a number of years. In addition to the many problems attending irrigated agriculture,⁸⁾ many settlers had suffered losses as they tried to invest their compensation money in enterprises where competition was strong and where the Nubians had little experience. The development of the Scheme had brought experienced Jellaba traders to New Halfa, who were operating from a provisional market (suk el zink) before the settlers arrived.⁹⁾ The management's reliance on the services of private contractors for the use of agricultural machinery had also attracted a number of outsiders, including people who were operating on the rainfed mechanized schemes in the nearby Gedaref area (cf. Map 2). The inexperienced Nubians were "like fish among crocodiles", as they prefer themselves to describe events during this period. Many of their traders were unable to hold their positions in the New Halfa market, and when some of them turned to other ventures, such as investments in lorries, buses or agricultural machinery, they were soon ousted by competitors who knew both the area and the business much better than the Nubians; and when Nubian tenants invested their money in sheep and goats, they either had them stolen by nomads in the area or they died of diseases unknown to their owners.¹⁰⁾ There are many stories about unwise investments and poor management, and in most Nubian communities on the Scheme wrecked lorries and rusty, old tractors are visible "landmarks" of such adventures.

Despite such losses, however, and despite the problems attending both freeholding and tenancy cultivation (cf. Chapter Two), the Nubian village communities had not been reduced to a group of women and children dependent on remittances. A survey made in ten villages showed absentee rates to be down to 20-30%, and the sex ratio no longer reflected the great imbalance typical of Nubia. Thus in village no. 12, where I resided during fieldwork, the registered absentee rate was 21% (compared to 39% before resettlement), and although there was still an imbalance in the 20-30 age group (cf. Table 5), females exceeded males by only 17.

Table 5.

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION, VILLAGE NO. 12, NEW HALFA

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
0-10	139	115
10-20	83	67
20-30	21	48
30-40	47	49
40-50	23	34
50-60	22	32
60-	23	30
Total numbers	<u>358</u>	<u>375</u>

Source: Sorbo 1973: 54.

However, such changes were not matched by a parallel increase in the number of active cultivators. Before resettlement, 65.3% of the male residents were farmers in the Wadi Halfa District (cf. Table 4). In 1974, only 52 tenants had irrigated farming as their principal occupation in village no. 12. While they constituted 40% of the resident working male population (cf. Table 6), they represented only 21% of the village tenantry. In 1977, the number of people who had tenancy cultivation as their principal occupation had declined to 38, and still, there were other Nubian villages with both a higher absentee rate and a lower share of active farmers: In some communities in the vicinity of New Halfa Town, there were in fact so few active tenants that those who remained had to establish co-operative societies in order to undertake all works related to land farming, crop marketing and the settling of accounts, while the tenants themselves pursued non-agricultural careers.

Table 6.

EMPLOYMENT OF WORKING MALES OVER 16 AND NOT IN SCHOOL, VILLAGE NO. 12, NEW HALFA (1974)

<u>Occupations</u>	<u>Residents</u>	<u>Absentees</u>
Professional and semiprofessional	16	43
Clerical and sales	7	1
Skilled labour	12	18
Unskilled labour	27	37
Service	5	14
Farming	52	-
	<u>129</u>	<u>113</u>

There were also some other interesting features of the Nubian tenantry at New Halfa:

- (i) A large proportion of people in the tenant category were rather old. I found the average age of tenants to be 51 years in village no. 12 - with a substantial number of tenants in their sixties - while the average age for non-tenant categories was 33 years. This pattern was confirmed by the census carried out by Agrar in 1978: The average age of Nubian tenants was found to be 49 years, while tenants with a nomadic background averaged 39.5 years (op.cit.:19).
- (ii) Although only a minority of tenant households had no other sources of income than agriculture (cf. Table 7), the crop farming units differed greatly in terms of their scale of operations, ¹¹⁾ ~~their~~ attitudes to farming and their apparent efficiency. While absenteeism and the pursuit of traditional Nubian careers allowed for large-holding tenants to emerge through caretaker arrangements, subletting and sharecropping, it seemed not very useful to categorize tenants according to plot size alone. Among large-holding tenants, some were operating their holdings efficiently while others were highly inefficient - to the extent that eviction was being considered by the Corporation; and while some tenants considered their tenancies as only one minor investment among several and sustained expanding cycles of accumulation based on diverse investments, others derived their principal revenues from their agricultural operations. Among small-holders, there were similar differences: For some of them, their principal sources of income were wages and salaries from well-paying occupations, mainly in professional and skilled labour, and the regular cash flows stemming from such occupations also allowed them to operate efficiently in irrigated crop farming; for others, the situation was characterized by increasing dependence on credit and assistance, and they found it difficult to mobilize cash and labour for their crop farming activities.

Table 7.

NUMBER OF NON-AGRICULTURAL INCOMES PER RESIDENT HOUSEHOLDS IN
VILLAGE NO. 12 (1977)

<u>Residents</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Total	187	100
Not inhabited	33	
Inhabited	154	100
Households with no extra-agricultural incomes	35	22
- with one extra-agricultural income	78	51
- with 2 extra-agricultural incomes	26	17
- with 3 extra-agricultural incomes	11	7
- with more than 3 extra-agricultural incomes	4	3

Source: Heinritz 1977.

Nubian Suburbs

In Chapter Two, I argued that the returns from a tenancy are rarely sufficient for a family, and that there must be other mechanisms that enable the labour upon which the Scheme is predicated, to continue to exist. Among the Nubian tenantry, the problem of the social reproduction is solved primarily by the ability of tenants and their offspring to pursue off-farm careers. This is much facilitated by a continued privileged access to education, the existence of job opportunities in the Scheme area and the continued presence of sizable Nubian communities in all the larger Sudanese towns.

The location of the Nubian village communities in relation to the numerous income-earning possibilities in New Halfa Town is of particular importance in this connection.

Because a village the size and structure of no. 12 cannot adequately accomodate the occupational pattern outlined in Table 6, a large number of resident men are employed outside the village proper, occupying various positions in New Halfa Town.

The town was estimated to have 35,000 inhabitants in 1978 (Agrar op.cit.:16) and is within easy access of most of the Nubian village communities. As stated earlier, it renders administrative, commercial, social, and economic services to the Scheme area and its surroundings. It contains the headquarters of the New Halfa Agricultural Corporation, the regional offices of all the government units operating in the area, the higher order marketing and shopping facilities, the recreational services, plus the other subsidiary activities that have developed as a result of

the rise of the above functions. Being the main seat of economic and social activities in the area, it has developed into a major transportation and communication centre within the Scheme, connecting the Scheme with major towns such as Khartoum, Kassala and Gedaref.

Employment by the Government is connected mainly with New Halfa Agricultural Corporation, the Irrigation Department, the Local Government councils, the education services, the health services, the courts, the Post Office, and other minor services. The Agricultural Corporation is the main employer with a total staff of about 3100 from different categories including technical agricultural staff, administrators, and workers. Employees in the other government services mentioned above number about 2000, distributed among the various departments within the town (ibid.).

Industrial activities are mainly connected with the agricultural sector. They include a ginning factory, flour mills, a sugar factory, oil factories and some light industries and workshops. Although some of the enterprises employ seasonal labour, nearly 6000 people receive their employment within the industrial sector (ibid.).

Most of the area's general and higher secondary education is also concentrated in New Halfa Town, as more than half of the existing schools are there (9 out of 15 schools). The majority of students enrolled in those schools are sons and daughters of Nubian tenants, and in addition, there are two general secondary schools in the rural area (village 2 and village 15). This is due to the continued Nubian emphasis on education for their children and the fact that while the 7 000 Nubian tenant households have 22 primary schools in their area, the 16 000 tenants of nomadic origin have only 25 schools, some of which are only a few years old.

Thus New Halfa Town, compared to the town of Wadi Halfa (which had c. 11,000 inhabitants), is much larger, it is more accessible for daily commuters, it gives employment to many more people in a larger number of fields, and, as a commercial, educational and administrative centre, it is only rivalled by Port Sudan and Kassala in the eastern part of the country.

The presence of such opportunities affects the Nubian communities in a number of ways. First, many Nubian men, still at the productive stages of their lives, have been able to find good jobs in the area. They have thereby reduced some of the usual rural-to-urban movement and chosen voluntarily to settle in the rural area for both economic and social reasons. Among them are a large group of teachers, many clerks and accountants, some engineers, agronomists and a few merchants. Because of the low cost of living, a family of any size can be maintained with less financial strain than in cities like Khartoum or Port Sudan, in addition to the fact that competition for salaried positions is

less intense than in the larger cities. On the other hand, the town provides few employment opportunities for people who would want to pursue the traditional Nubian service occupations.

In fact, most of the Nubian village **communities** are like suburbs of New Halfa Town. During daytime, they appear to be quite empty of people: Buses, cars and lorries take people to work in town early in the morning, and when the dust has settled and the children have gone to school, the young anthropologist doing his first fieldwork in a Muslim village where access to homes is severely restricted (in the absence of a senior male), tries desperately to find people to talk to. After a while, old, retired men become good company, and we talk about the court of King Farouk in Cairo, about **Clark Gable** in "Gone with the Wind", about San Francisco and Switzerland - topics that relate to their background as palace cooks and cinema ticketeers, as ship's stewards and embassy guards.

Secondly, the high number of schools and the corresponding high enrollment of Nubian pupils and students creates a broad avenue of upward mobility for tenant offspring. While there were 12 primary schools for boys and 7 primary schools for girls in the Wadi Halfa District, there are now 22 primary schools in the rural area alone, and a much larger number of general secondary schools. In the Sudan, an education, particularly a full secondary education, is not only the prerequisite to a high-paying job with security, it is a virtual guarantee of a good income as well (for similar considerations in the Gezira Scheme. cf. O'Brien 1984:226). In fact, a surprisingly large number of students proceed to the university level. Hale reports that there are over 200 university graduates from village no. 21 (**op.cit.:359**), and in village no. 12, I counted seventeen people doing graduate and post-graduate studies in Khartoum and abroad during the time of fieldwork!

While the opportunities for pursuing non-agricultural careers while residing in the villages have enabled a number of tenants to derive their principal incomes from other sources, the expansion of schooling for tenant children helps assure that a growing number of tenants' offspring will find salaried employment in towns. As they graduate and move into urban-type jobs, they become part of a non-resident shadow population which is socially a real part of the village because its members not only visit frequently but have claims to property, form part of the pool within which village marriages are arranged, and are obligated in the reciprocity system of familial relationships (for similar observations in Egyptian Nubia, cf. Kennedy 1977). They also send cash remittances to parents on the Scheme. Their presence in the major Sudanese cities helps maintain rural-urban circulation in the Nubian communities. Mobility and higher careers become feasible, not only because of the existence of good educational facilities in the New Halfa region, but also because there are networks and organizations built up around migration and

outward-going careers and which significantly contribute to making people's life chances and career possibilities better than for those who have no access to similar networks and organizations.

Labour Strategies

Such developments, however, have led to a reduction in the use of household labour in irrigated farming. The availability of household labour among Nubian tenants is generally limited by the following factors:

- (i) Only at a certain point in his family cycle can the tenant reckon to have enough labour available to him from his family to reduce his requirements for hiring outside labour (for the Gezira, cf. Barnett 1977:34). By generous estimate, effective and free labour is only available for seven years of a child's life (age 12-19); but Nubian tenants send all their children to school, which effectively prohibits their extensive use as agricultural labour. Thus, in village 12, out of 25 pupils finishing primary school in 1973, 20 proceeded to intermediate schools while the remaining 5 were resitting examinations the following year in order to do the same. Few tenants encourage their children to assist in agricultural operations as farming is not regarded as an appropriate means to the status goals they envision for their children.
- (ii) Nubian women constitute no longer an important part of the agricultural labour force, although their role is quite important in a few communities originating from the southernmost part of the Wadi Halfa District. First, tenancies are not within easy reach of the farmer's house. They are located so as to facilitate the flow of water and the efficient use of agricultural machinery, as well as to allow for easy spraying of agro-chemicals from airplanes. In practical terms, this means that most fields are accessible only by the use of donkeys or bicycles, neither of which are ever mounted by Nubian women. Since women are responsible for domestic tasks that require them to be present in their houses for much of the day (particularly when they have small children), the distance between tenancy and village effectively precludes any extensive use of adult female labour. Another factor often quoted by Nubian men is the presence of people belonging to other ethnic categories, particularly the sword-carrying Beja who are still feared by Nubians, and who are considered an obstacle against letting women leave their villages for the outlying fields.

(iii) Because of (a) the development of Nubian career patterns, (b) existing opportunities for other work within the Scheme area, and (c) low and irregular cash incomes deriving from crop farming (cf. Chapter Two), a large proportion of the tenants are men who have retired from urban service jobs in Egypt, or they are people for whom tenancy cultivation is a secondary occupation. Both categories will have to rely heavily on hired labour, the old cooks and servants because their households have generally reached an advanced stage of fission and there is simply no family labour available, the teachers, mechanics and drivers because of factors (i) and (ii), and because they reckon that the marginal contribution of their own labour is likely to be less than the income they can receive outside their tenancies.

Practically all Nubian tenants, then, have come to rely heavily on hired labour, a practice which has been reinforced by the wide-spread existence of caretaker (*wakil*) arrangements which have put a large number of tenants into the role of foremen or supervisors with no possibilities (nor, for that matter, any desire) to work their large holdings on their own.

Unlike among the Shukriya, or in the Gezira Scheme, resident labour from the villages is generally not available among Nubians, except in a few villages where teams of women are recruited, mainly for cotton picking. For a man, the act of hiring oneself out as an agricultural labourer, particularly among people in his own communities, carries a stigma. Nubian tenants, therefore, must rely on paid labour living outside the villages in labour camps or settlement. Their labour strategies, however, reflect the different economic circumstances of tenant households. The wealthier tenants tend to employ labour for quite lengthy periods, in particular for the whole three or four months of the weeding season, and when irrigation is most necessary, during the establishment and growth of the crops. Tenants with little cash or assets, on the other hand, tend to employ non-village labour only for specific operations, and since they are likely to have cash flow or liquidity problems, they are likely to find some difficulty in recruiting labourers from the camps except through sharecropping arrangements.

Nubian Careers and Irrigated Farming

The reliance on different sources of income keeps a large number of tenant households viable (cf. Table 7), but they also give some tenants the added advantage of being able to farm more than one tenancy. By 1977, there were 13 tenant units cultivating 5 or more tenancies in village no. 12. The distribution was as follows:

1 unit cultivated	25 tenancies;
1 unit cultivated	16 tenancies;
1 unit cultivated	12 tenancies;
1 unit cultivated	11 tenancies;
3 units cultivated each	6 tenancies;
6 units cultivated each	5 tenancies;
<u>13 units cultivated</u>	<u>75 tenancies</u>

Given a total number of 247 tenancies for the village, we can see that only c. 20% of village lands are farmed by "large-holders". However, any attempt to classify or categorize them merely on the basis of plot size would miss some of their important aspects. Thus the second largest enterprise is run very inefficiently by the old imam of the village, with little interest in agriculture. He is simply being a caretaker for a number of close relatives who live in Khartoum and Port Sudan. Among the tenants who cultivate 5 tenancies, there are also people who are old **and/or** take little interest in cultivation, and whose households would not have been viable without the support of sons in salaried jobs. On the other hand, we find a number of entrepreneurial tenants among those who cultivate only a few tenancies but who base their incomes, as well as their farming (which may include sharecropping of peanut lots) on multiple activities.

Given the fact that most families had tenancies allotted to them, one might perhaps think that the ability of some tenants to farm many holdings depended on sheer demographic luck, in the sense that those tenants who had many absentees among their close kin would automatically be in a stronger position than others regarding access to land. However, this is only partly true, as will be seen from the following two case-studies. The first study shows how a potential accumulation of lands was not realized, and the other briefly describes how one of the larger agricultural enterprises came into existence in village no. 12.

Case A: The Hojar Family

Taha and Salim Hojar were brothers who had c. 2.5 feddan of land and c. 300 date palm trees registered in their names at Wadi Halfa. Both of them were farmers, but their lands were not sufficient for the next generation. Taha had three sons, while Salim had four sons and a daughter. With the exception of Mohamed Taha and Hussein Salim, who took over responsibility for cultivation as their parents grew old, the remaining sons, with one exception, left Egypt and became engaged in various occupations:

- (1) Ahmed Taha worked in the Italian embassy in Cairo and managed to have his eldest son Mohamed sent to the Italian School there. Mohamed was later trained as an engineer and is today Chief Engineer at the Water & Electricity Works at Shendi (on the Nile, north of Khartoum). The youngest son, Ibrahim, was trained as a medical assistant and works presently in the resettlement area. Ahmed Taha died in Cairo some ten years before resettlement, but both sons have tenancies registered in their names. Mohamed's tenancy is cultivated by his brother-in-law Salim Baba, whereas Ibrahim has entrusted his tenancy to a close matrilineal relative (his mother's mother's sister's son). Ibrahim joined me on a tour of the fields in 1971 and then saw his tenancy for the first time since resettlement. Mohamed has never seen the tenancy which is registered in his name.
- (2) Mohamed Taha came to New Halfa as a rather old man and has never been able to cultivate his tenancy. He has put it out on a share-cropping contract with a Westerner (Fur), but he and his family of five (he married late and has young children) are forced to subsist on the generosity of close kin and neighbours.
- (3) Abdou Taha is in his 40's and had not worked in Egypt. He presently works for Sudan Railways, is based in the nearby town of Kassala and returns home every weekend. His tenancy is cultivated by his wife's uncle, who is identical with the person responsible for Ibrahim Ahmed Taha's tenancy.
- (4) Mohamed Salim died a long time ago. He worked all his adult life as a domestic servant in Egypt and left two sons, Hassan and Mohieddin, who work for the Shell Company (Khartoum) and Sudan Railways (Kosti) respectively. Only Hassan received a tenancy at New Halfa. It is presently being cultivated by his father-in-law.
- (5) Salih Salim worked as a domestic servant in Alexandria for more than 25 years, and most of his children were born and went to school there. The two oldest sons, Mohamed and Suleyman, were adults at the time of resettlement and had tenancies allocated to them. Mohamed belongs to the sanitation personell of village no. 12 while Suleyman works

in the health centre in the town of **Sinja** on the Blue Nile. A younger son, Abdel Rahman, is responsible for cultivation of the three tenancies.

- (6) Khalil Salim has worked all his life in coffee-shops in Egypt as well as in the Sudan. Today, he runs his own small restaurant in New Halfa Town, and his tenancy is cultivated by a Westerner (**Fur**) by way of a share-cropping arrangement.
- (7) Hussein Salim, the only experienced farmer aside from Mohamed Taha, is also growing old. However, he has been responsible for his own tenancy and that of his son Mahmoud (a teacher) and employs hired labour for all operations.

The descendants of Taha and Salim **Hojar** had eleven tenancies allocated to them at New Halfa. Only two members of the family were experienced cultivators, but they were both at the point of retirement at the time of resettlement. Of the sons of Taha and Salim, only Khalil Salim and Abdou Taha were young enough to have taken up cultivation, but both were firmly established in other occupations, as were all grown-up male grandchildren of the two **Hojar** brothers. Scarcity of land at Wadi Halfa had led to non-agricultural career patterns in the **Hojar** family, and we might have expected that one or two members of the family would be able to accumulate tenancies at New Halfa by way of wakil arrangements. Yet we have observed that six out of eleven tenancies are cultivated by **non-Hojars**. There are two main reasons for this:

- (a) The surviving sons of Taha and Salim returned from menial jobs in Egypt - almost on the point of retirement and without assets of their own to support them for the rest of their life, let alone make investments in the resettlement area. This fact effectively prohibited any large-scale accumulation of tenancies by any particular member of the family. The only members who could be spoken of as well off preferred not to settle down at New Halfa, and those who came back from Egypt were in need of their tenancies in order to secure viability in combination with other activities (cf. the cases of Hussein Salim and **Salih** Salim).
- (b) Those who hold permanent jobs with secure incomes care mainly for their fields to the extent that they can obtain some free wheat for themselves or close relatives. Conflicts within the **Hojar** family that date back to the pre-settlement period have led them to entrust their fields to affinal or matrilineal kin, or to members of other ethnic groups, rather than to patrilineal relatives.

Thus we see that out of six resident households, two live entirely from non-agricultural incomes, while three households combine, to various extent, tenancy cultivation with other sources of income. One household can only exist through assistance from relatives and neighbours.

Case B: Ibrahim

Ibrahim is a man of about 50 years old and has behind himself a career as a small trader in Khartoum during 1942-59, and in Wadi Halfa during 1950-64. After his arrival in the resettlement area, he opened a shop in New Halfa Town but sold out after only six months and turned to farming. When I first met him in 1970, he was responsible for the cultivation of five tenancies belonging to himself, his two widowed sisters, his mother's brother (who lived in Egypt) and his sisters's son, Abdou, also his junior partner. In 1977, Ibrahim and Abdou were cultivating twelve tenancies. In addition to the five tenancies already referred to, they had received tenancies from three absent members of the small ex-slave community in the village (all of whom were working as cooks in Khartoum) and from various affinal relatives of both tenants. Ibrahim's was then the third largest agricultural enterprise in village no. 12.

The following factors seem to be important in accounting for Ibrahim's ability to accumulate tenancies:

- (a) From the start, there were tenancies available that belonged to members of his close family and which nobody else was competing for.
- (b) Ibrahim was able to divert resources from commercial business into agriculture and thereby firmly establish himself as a farmer. This was important because the necessary finance to meet the costs of production could not easily be provided for by poor tenants (cf. above). Those who had no extra-agricultural resources would generally be unable to cultivate groundnuts (a sometimes profitable crop, but expensive to grow) and would therefore not be able to derive any profit from agriculture and thus also be unable to expand cultivation through caretaker arrangements or by other means.
- (c) Ibrahim's partnership with his sister's son allowed him to become involved in the role of an agricultural supervisor, mediating between the tenants of the village and the Inspectorate to which the village belongs. He soon gained a reputation as being one of the best farmers in the village, not so much for high yields as for his knowledge and expertise, a position that benefitted him when entering share-cropping contracts with other tenants,
- (d) During the 1970s, Ibrahim and Abdou mainly expanded through such contracts. They were willing to offer others a comparatively good deal, such as sharing equally costs and profits from cotton and offering 1/5 of the wheat crop to the owner-tenant while others normally gave only 1/6 of the crop to the owner,

Thus, in the case of Ibrahim, the partnership with his sister's son is important not only for the daily running of the enterprise (including Ibrahim's role as a supervisor), but also for the number of tenancies it initially brought under one management. The Hojars, on the other hand, present a picture where no such teams have emerged, and are unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.

While Ibrahim has not yet invested in agricultural machinery, the largest agricultural enterprise in the village has its own tractor with necessary implements. It is run by a group of five brothers, under the undisputed leadership of one of them, Khalil. The latter was a wealthy wholesale trader in Wadi Halfa and one of the few influential supporters of the Government's decision to resettle the Nubians at New Halfa. His four brothers all have a background as cooks, waiters and servants in Egypt as well as in the Sudan. They are presently responsible for the running of 25 tenancies, all of which are registered in the names of rather close kinsmen who have generally tended to enter high administrative jobs in Khartoum (ministries, banks, Sudan Airways, etc.). In addition, one of the brothers received six tenancies at the time of resettlement, registered in the names of young, unmarried sons.

Crucial to the success of this unit is (a) their ability to co-ordinate efforts and share responsibilities, (b) their access to lands, and (c) their ownership of a tractor which not only permits a more rational land use but also allows them to carry out agricultural operations in time while others may have to wait their turn which often causes a number of problems when machinery is scarce and timetables tight. Khalil presently also derives major revenues from real estate investments made in New Halfa Town and in Khartoum, and the initial finance for the tractor, which is also frequently employed outside the village, came from such sources.

It must also be noted that some of the tenancies presently run by this unit belong to people who have become dependent on Khalil for credit¹²⁾ and assistance. They are people who have retired from an active life, who have not been able to finance tenancy cultivation on their own, and who do not enjoy a comfortable living standard through regular remittances from educated offspring working in skilled or white-collar jobs in the towns,

While the majority of smallholders are tenants who have retired from urban service jobs, who do not manage their tenancies very actively, and who live on remittances from their employed offspring, there are also a few smallholders who are able to operate their tenancies quite efficiently. They are generally people who prefer not to be labelled as tenants because (a) they do not work on their lands themselves or rely almost completely on

hired labour, and because (b) they rely principally on other sources of income. Among them are some teachers, a lorry-driver and such people as the head cashier of the New Halfa Town Council. In all cases, they regard tenancies as only a minor investment among several, and on a small scale, they have become involved in activities like livestock production and local transportation. Thus the cashier takes people to town every morning in a Landrover and he also plans to buy a lorry and have it converted into a small bus. He also belongs to a category of tenants who have become involved in livestock raising, herded inside and outside the Scheme by shepherds recruited from the nomads (particularly Beja). In 1973, I counted 70 heads of cattle belonging to people of village 12, while in 1980, their numbers had grown to 342. In addition there were 500 sheep and 540 goats (Salem-Murdock 1984:190). In one case, freehold lands are being used as a basis for agro-pastoral expansion.13)

Case C: Ahmed Baba

Ahmed Baba is a retired civil servant, about 65 years old and presently a very active Nubian tenant in village no. 12, New Halfa. His father was a very distinguished wholesale trader at Wadi Halfa as well as a big landowner in Ashkeit, and in the Debeira scheme which was established by the colonial government in 1933. Ahmed, as the elder of two sons, left Ashkeit in 1932. Until his retirement in 1968, he served with various ministries and government departments, mostly in Khartoum, but also in Wadi Halfa Town (1939-46) and Juba (1965-67). While working as a civil servant, he also managed to operate in Khartoum as a contractor, supplying pipes, electric poles, cables etc. to the Public Works Department where he also worked during most of his career. In Khartoum, he had two big houses built in new residential areas which he rents out to upper-class Sudanese and foreigners. He also invested some money in a small plot of land in the Debeira Scheme.

Ahmed was among the staunch supporters of the Government's decision to resettle the Nubians at Khashm el Girba. In the process of tenancy distribution, he managed to secure tenancies for 5 of 6 sons (he has also 4 daughters) although none of them were married at that time and the youngest was only 12 years old. In 1967-69, Ahmed worked in the headquarters of the N.H.A.P.C. at New Halfa, and then retired to take up work as a tenant in the scheme. Until 1973, the tenancies were run by his brother Salim who had returned from West Germany where he had lived for 10 years as a student and construction worker, and who also ran 4 tenancies belonging to himself, his father, his sister's mother-in-law and his brother-in-law. During this period, Ahmed focused his attention on the family's freehold land which amounted to 10.7 feddans, and which had been neglected by the Babas and most of the other Nubians due to water problems and lack of financial

resources to develop them. Ahmed's plan was to plant fruit trees on 5 feddans and keep the rest for fodder production. He engaged a Fur worker and a Hadendowa herder (the latter with a salary of 6 LSd/month), invested c. LSd 1800, and then started to expand on other people's lands. He succeeded in this by overbidding possible competitors through contracts whereby the owner received LSd 2/feddan/year. In 1976, he raised the rent to LSd 4/feddan/year, he cultivated 30 feddans of lands belonging to others, chose to cultivate wheat and groundnuts on these lands, and built up a herd of cattle - 19 in number, owned mainly by himself but also by his father and brother. After a series of conflicts with his old father, he also took over the cultivation of his 6 tenancies and employs for this purpose the Fur labourer referred to above as a caretaker. His latest plan has been to build a poultry farm on his freehold land, in order to supply an expanding urban market in New Halfa. His sons, with only one exception, all work or study in other Arab countries (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Morocco). Their education has been financed by their father.

Career Patterns and Domestic Organization

Village no. 12, then, like many other of Nubian villages on the New Halfa Scheme, includes a few successful tenants who run a substantial number of tenancies, own (in a few cases) tractors and other agricultural machinery and generally also derive revenues from other activities; a substantial number of people who prefer not to be labelled as tenants because (a) they do not work on their lands themselves or rely almost completely on hired labour, and because (b) they have other steady jobs which represent their main sources of income; a sizable portion of people (the majority in many communities) who have left their tenancies for others to cultivate; and poor tenants who generally struggle hard to make a living and who depend on remittances, credit or the generosity of neighbours and close kin for their physical survival.

Nubian involvement in irrigated farming is bolstered and supported by the prevalence of off-farm activities. If it were not for the fact that so many keep out of agriculture, the operations of those who remain as active tenants would not have been viable; on the other hand, lacking a viable occupation in other sectors, tenant households with one or two tenancies are unable to persist as viable units on the Scheme. Even among the majority of large-holders, agricultural operations in their tenancies are supplemented by profits from other activities (commerce, real estate, livestock), and for some, maintaining their investment in their tenancies may have little direct economic significance (cf. case C). However, for those tenants who have invested in agricultural machinery, maintaining their positions as tenants remains crucial in sustaining cycles of accumulation based on their association with the Scheme: for access to service

contracts; influencing management policy, etc. (cf. O'Brien 1984:234).

It seems, however, that the Nubian pattern of domestic establishment and organization provides a major constraint on the range of economic alternatives most households are able to exploit. As mentioned above, a number of households are presently stimulated to invest in cattle. Cattle produce value in the form of milk and calves; they can be consumed directly, and they can be exchanged for money or other goods in the market place. The profitability of this investment is, however, restricted by ecological conditions. Although Nubian tenants are allowed to keep animals on their freehold lands, these lands are rather small and can not sustain large animal populations, whereas animals are only allowed onto tenancy land for two or three months after the harvest of wheat. The problem is presently solved by leaving cattle in the care of nomadic herders, who take the herd to more favourable locations during parts of the year. Nubian tenants, however, regard such contracts as rather risky. Cattle are lost, reportedly because of disease, but it is difficult for the owner to get information about the causes of the death of a cow: The shepherd may just as well have sold it or consumed it. The more cows a tenant has, the greater his concern for their welfare, and the more will the risky contract worry him. The alternative way to solve this problem would be for members of the Nubian tenant households to migrate with the cattle themselves, but unlike among the sedentary Fur (Haaland 1972), Nubians regard such behaviour as inconceivable and in stark conflict with culturally defined goals and premises. However, as long as they depend entirely on non-Nubian paid labour in this field, further growth is likely to be restricted.

Such constraints, however, relate not only to value premises and a sedentary ideology. In any society, the division of labour, and the demand for categories for labour are factors of prime importance to the composition of households (cf. Rudie op.cit.:189). These factors decide how many children are to stay home, and for how long, whether sons or daughters are most likely to leave their natal homes, and what the prospects are for marrying and setting up new independent homes. Like Rudie, I believe that decisions made during critical phases of the histories of nuclear families bind individuals in specific commitments and are likely to restrict their range of alternatives with regard to economic investment and allocation of labour, and, consequently, that organizational patterns arising through this process influence people's responses to a new economic and ecological situation (ibid.:185).

In Nubia, households were generally characterized by early fission, because the labour needed for utilizing scarce land resources was very limited and, at the same time, these resources were not sufficient to maintain a household's personnel. In

agriculture, small labour teams existed, but a few persons were able to cultivate the lands belonging to many families. Thus the limited need for labour coordination coupled with the alternative chances on an external labour market and most parents' insistence that their children " schooling was of prior importance, provided for early fission to proceed in sibling groups. The majority of young men left for the cities in Egypt and the Sudan. Most of them became wage-earners, they sent back remittances to their wives and children if they did not bring them to the towns, and, in limited amounts, to their parents as well, Many children grew up in Alexandria, Cairo or Khartoum, received their schooling in the cities and, like their fathers, took up various kinds of wage work there. There was, therefore, little need for labour coordination beyond domestic efforts of the kind that must be coordinated in any household,

The situation has not changed significantly. There is still a preponderance of wage-earners among the Nubian tenantry; although the lands are much larger, no provision is made for heirs (subdivision of tenancies is not allowed), so the majority of tenant offspring must seek other work; their access to education solves the problem of the social reproduction of the tenantry at an acceptably high standard and yields the added bonus of a broad avenue of upward mobility for tenant offspring. The tendency is for boys to leave their natal home before they are twenty and those who leave home are not later recruited to any productive units of their families. This leads to a further reduction in household labour in agriculture, while, at the same time, most women no longer participate in agricultural labour operations. The result is less labour coordination and increased reliance on hired labour.

Among the Shukriya and the Basalwa, however, there is a wide-spread use of the extended family as a social base from which teams of economic cooperation are composed. In many cases, such teams are able to sustain cycles of accumulation based on multiple economic activities. With a few exceptions - all of them with an experienced trader as a core member - Nubians have not been able to coordinate their efforts in this manner, nor have they generally been able to pool resources for any joint economic ventures, This difficulty seems partly due to the lack of an acceptable basis for relations of command and subordination within such a group, partly to the lack of decisions made earlier to bind such individuals in specific commitments.

Thus Nubian domestic development patterns are closely related to their wage work careers. While forms of employment tend to generate their own sets of attitudes (cf. Chapter Five), they may also favour the development of domestic arrangements that restrict the range of alternatives that can be exploited in a new economic situation.

Concluding Remarks

The Nubian economy before resettlement was based on subsistence agriculture and exports of the date crop while thousands of Nubians unable to support themselves from the land alone had to seek livelihoods elsewhere. As most of the migrants left for the towns and cities of Egypt and the Sudan, Nubian communities came to encompass both rural village and urban Egyptian and Sudanese worlds. The degree of urban involvement was reflected in the diversified and specialized occupational pattern that developed among Nubians as well as in their general educational level. Forms of social organization were built up around migration and urban careers, and facilitated considerable upward mobility on the urban employment scene during this century. During the time of fieldwork, only very few men over thirty years of age had not had long experience in cities while only a small minority of, mostly older, men had any significant experience in farming. The population which was brought from Wadi Halfa to Khashm el Girba had come no longer to regard farming as an appropriate means to the status goals they envisioned for their children - an attitude which was reinforced by their continued privileged access to higher education, their continued strong position on the urban labour market, and the grave problems attending irrigated farming on the New Halfa Scheme.

The continued participation of Nubians in non-agricultural and largely urban careers have affected the ways in which households have adapted to post-settlement conditions. Since a substantial number of tenants chose to remain absent from the Scheme, while others who arrived on the Scheme, preferred to pursue non-agricultural occupations, large areas of land were left for fellow tenants to cultivate and off-farm activities came to play an important role in securing the viability of tenant households. Thus if it were not for the fact that so many keep out of agriculture, the operations of those who remain as active tenants would not have been viable; and on the other hand, lacking a viable occupation in other sectors, poor tenants are unable to compete favourably in agricultural production.

While the considerable variation in the opportunity situation of Nubian tenants have numerous and important implications for their agricultural performance, for their responses to external inputs and possible production incentives as well as for the role of non-tenant categories as a vital source of labour (cf. Chapter Two), it also affects the social relationships developing between individuals and households in the new Nubian communities. Let me end this chapter by quoting a few examples.

Whereas date-production at Wadi Halfa tended to bring rather stable cash incomes, with a minimum of effort and supported by subsistence agriculture, an increasing number of people who were

active labour contributors within traditional agriculture have come to depend entirely on others for their subsistence. This is particularly true for older men and widows. It is also true for tenant families which, lacking a viable occupation in other sectors, are unable to secure a sufficient and steady income from tenancy cultivation. Such families will grow increasingly dependent on others for financial help or credit or may be forced to leave for work elsewhere.

While the number of individuals and households in need of assistance was clearly on the increase during the 1970s, the basis for patronage functions was being eroded in the Nubian communities. Traditionally, local merchants provided such patronage. They would forward grain, seeds, tea, sugar and other necessities to farmers who often mortgaged their next date crop under such conditions that they were often forced to repay the lenders in the form of dates after harvest. Their position was often so strong that remittances were sent directly to the merchant rather than the family. In return, however, destitute individuals and households were kept viable through private credit, in addition to grants and allowances from close kin and neighbours. My information indicates that many people considered the role of merchants primarily as the patron's protection from external agents and sanctions rather than as usury and exploitation.

In New Halfa, however, most of the merchants have been unable to hold on to their positions and those who remain have been unable, or unwilling, to offer credit based on the new crops which they consider risky as elements in credit transactions and which are not always cultivated by poor tenants (e.g. groundnuts). As a result, there is a tendency for tenants in the latter category to enter formalized sharecropping or subletting arrangements with other tenants or with men from the labour camps, while they come to rely considerably on neighbours and kinsmen for food, grants and allowances.

Elsewhere, I have also discussed a number of problems associated with the running of a Nubian co-operative society (Sorbo 1973). Such societies have been established in most Nubian communities, to undertake works related to cultivation, marketing (wheat) and management. Member tenants hold shares and elect a committee which oversees the activities of each society. There is no joint agricultural work performed by the members, such as weeding or watering, but a number of managerial activities have been taken over by the committees, primarily related to the use of tractors and harvesters which are owned by each cooperative.

The co-operatives tend to become a focus for the formation of political alliances in the Nubian communities. Some large-holding tenants who have reached a stage where they can profit from irrigated crops by taking advantage of the economies of scale,

feel much constrained by their dependence on agricultural machinery owned by the co-operative society. Although there may be many different factors behind low yields (cf. Chapter Two), they know that adherence to strict time schedules is a necessary condition for making money from crop farming, and in their own views, they often lose by having to wait their turn for mechanized services. By leaving the cooperative, however, they would ruin it financially and they would also work against an institution which has the strong official backing of the Government. The strategy, therefore, has not been to openly attempt to fight the cooperative as such since external sanctions might have been applied to preclude actions that might otherwise have been feasible within the different communities - but rather to fight for positions on the committees and to try to influence decision processes. The result has been that many Nubian cooperatives have been rendered largely ineffective by such conflicts. While many poor shareholders have benefited from the low service rates charged by most cooperatives, the strife associated with their establishment has been related to the participation of member tenants in different social fields (*ibid.*:74), and serious internal divisions have emerged in a number of Nubian villages.

Many Nubians claim that their resettlement is endangered, and that a growing number of people will leave New Halfa until only a few are left. Another mass exodus, however, is unlikely to take place. Despite the problem attending irrigated farming, and despite their dislike for the Khashm el Girba environment generally, a large number of Nubian households have found a living in the Scheme area based on many different sources of income. According to Agrar (*op.cit.*), there were 68,000 people living in the Nubian enclave in 1978 although the extent to which emigrants are included in that figure is unclear.

On the other hand, New Halfa is unlikely to be conceived of as the ancestral home to which all Nubians retire after a long life of work in other parts of the country. In fact, there are many examples of persons who, after arriving at New Halfa upon retirement, have opted to leave the area after only a short period among friends and kin. Unlike in Cairo and Alexandria, Nubian families now have property rights to their own houses in Khartoum as well as in other towns with sizeable Nubian communities. There seems also to be less contact between the resettlement area and those communities than was the case before resettlement, and this is reflected both in the changing role of the Nubian clubs in the cities (where they play cards and watch television rather than engage in any activities on behalf of the people in New Halfa) and in the considerable reduction in the political influence of the Nubian elite in Khartoum on New Halfa affairs. So while another mass exodus is unlikely, there is likely to be more permanent emigration of Nubians away from their enclave communities in the New Halfa Scheme.

Nubian village,
New Halfa Scheme

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Nubians have been classified into different groupings as authors have based ethnic labels on different criteria. The Nubians themselves refer to four main groups:
 - a) Kenuz, who used to live in the area from Aswan southwards along the Nile for a distance of 150 kilometres and who consider themselves descendants of the Arabic Beni Kenz:
 - b) Fediya, who lived along 130 kilometres at the southern extremity of Egyptian Nubia and who also include the Halfawien in the Sudan:
 - c) Mahas, who live south of the present lake, in an area that stretches a few kilometres south of the Third Cataract; and
 - d) Danagla, who extend roughly from the Third Cataract to Debba.

No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered for the anomalous distribution of modern Nubian dialects; that is, the close relationship of Kenzi and Dongolawi and their much greater distance from the intervening Fediya - Mahasi dialects (cf. Adams 1977:559ff).

2. For a fascinating account of the history of Nubia, cf. Adams (op.cit.).

The Mahdiyya takes its name from its leader, Mohamed Ahmed ibn Abdallah, a man of Dongolawi origin who in 1881 despatched letters from the island of Aba in the White Nile, informing the notables of the Sudan that he was the Expected Mahdi, the divine leader chosen by God at the end of time to fill the earth with justice and equity (cf. Holt and Daly 1979). He led a revolt against the Turco-Egyptian administration in the Sudan and ruled until his death in 1885. Khalifa Abdullahi took over and ruled the Sudan until 1898 when General Kitchener led his troops up the Nile and won the battle of Omdurman which inaugurated the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956).

4. Abdel Rahman Ayoub (1968:233f) reports a statement made by a Nubian merchant:

"In our country the palm tree is the giver of life, Without it I do not know how we should manage. As well as supplying us with food it is used in everything we do. The water-wheel with which we irrigate the cornfields is made of it, the beds on which we sit and sleep, the mats, the brooms with which we sweep, the ropes with which we tether our cattle, the sheds we make for them, the baskets in which we carry our food, the bins by which we take the manure to the farm, our firewood and in a word, we do nothing in which the palm tree does not play its part, even the thorns".

It must be added that animal husbandry was important in the Nubian economy. Thus the 1963 livestock census of Sudanese Nubia listed 2831 cattle, 19,335 sheep, 34,146 goats, 86 horses, 3415 donkeys, 608 camels, 34,583 chickens, 27,520 pigeons, and 1564 ducks in an area which had just over 50,000 human inhabitants.

A curious incident took place in 1970 when the Hungarian President visited the Sudan. In Khartoum, he was met by a Nubian delegation representing a particular group called the Megarab who wanted to establish a special friendship relation with Hungary based on their descent from Hungarian soldiers.

The Arabic term gabila in a Fedija context refers to the largest nog, which includes a large number of smaller nogs spread over a number of villages and is defined as those men (and their household nogs) who bear the same family name. While members presumably share a common paternal ancestor, the largest nog does not usually carry the name of that ancestor. Rather, the name of the nog often refers to some quality or outstanding event in the experience of the group. such nogs never appear as corporate groups (cf. Fernea 1973:21).

In fact, the Nubian tenants refused to take over their lands upon arrival at New Halfa because the Government tried to impose water charges for wheat cultivation and very strict interpretations of the Tenancy Agreement. At the end, the Government had to make a number of concessions to the settlers, but not before 1,400 tenancies, originally assigned to Nubian tenants, had been handed over to local nomads.

9. Jellaba refers to traders from the Nile Valley, mainly of Ja'aliyyin, Shaigiya and Danagla origins (Manger 1984:14).
10. Animals brought from Wadi Halfa were mostly lost as they did not adapt well to the new climate and vegetation.
11. "Efficiency" does not imply that some tenants have been able to overcome the serious problems discussed in Chapter Two, It only implies that they generally have the financial resources and manpower to carry out cultivation according to recommendations and timetables proposed by the management, and that their yields, therefore, are likely to be higher than for other tenants,
12. Nubians rarely (if ever) enter into sheil relationships (cf. also Salem-Murdock 1984:235).
13. Developments of freehold lands have been slow. In 1974, only 136 out of 351 feddans (38%) were cultivated in village no. 12. Of these, 41 feddans were cultivated by one person only (case C), 55 feddans by non-Nubian sharecroppers and 44 feddans by owners, mostly through the employment of hired labour. Since then, only minor changes in this pattern have taken place.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOMADIC TENANTS AND THE BUTANA RANGELANDS - A STUDY OF LAND USE PATTERNS AND THE ROLE OF LIVESTOCK AMONG THE SHUKRIYA

Introduction

According to a study made by Agrar-und Hydrotechnik GMB, consultants to the Sudan Government for the rehabilitation of the New Halfa Scheme, tenants with a pastoral background constituted almost 14,000 or 63% of the New Halfa tenants in 1978. In total, there were almost 300,000 people inhabiting the Scheme area, and in the rural areas almost 150,000 were "from the nomads" and belonging to the following ethnic categories:

<u>Ethnic Category</u>	<u>No. of Tenants</u>	<u>No. of People</u>
Shukriya	6915	67412
Lahawyin	2358	22990
Beja	2398	23380
Ahanda	1061	10344
Rashaida	631	6152
Kawahla	615	5696
	<u>13978</u>	<u>148619</u>

Source: Agrar op.cit.:13ff.

Although this chapter deals exclusively with the Shukriya, the numerically and politically dominant group, it discusses a number of issues which generally apply to all tenants who arrived on the New Halfa Scheme with a nomadic or semi-nomadic background, Although the process of sedentarization has come quite far, and despite the fact that the amenities of civilization and the possibilities to earn some money have made the New Halfa Scheme attractive (there have been far more applicants for irrigated plots of land than could be settled), the "nomadic" tenants have not abandoned their livestock but keep large herds of animals and also cultivate sorghum in their traditional fields outside the Scheme. In every annual report since 1965 it has been claimed by the management of the project that the participation of tenants in this kind of multi-resource economy adversely affects production of cotton, wheat and groundnuts on the Scheme, not only because far too many tenants come to their tenancies with the intention of spending the shortest time possible at them, but also because of animal trespass which causes great losses to agriculture every year.

In earlier papers dealing with the Shukriya (1975, 1977a), I have been much concerned with the factors that seem most prominently to constrain and determine their adaptations to a mixed economy as well as what I have regarded to be quite serious ecological implications of such adaptations.

The argument has been based on the following considerations:

- (i) Before the establishment of the New Halfa Scheme, which turned part of the Butana pastures into irrigated fields for cash crops, Shukriya subsistence was primarily based on animal husbandry and rainfed sorghum cultivation. Since Shukriya households tended to keep several species of animals (camels, cattle, sheep and goats) with different management or keeping requirements, a coordination of activities was required that could only be properly secured by economic units of a certain size and organizational capacity. Generally, the different demands of production were addressed through the extended family, or, a group of families, in most cases a man and his married sons, that cooperated together in livestock raising and sorghum cultivation.
- (ii) The new source of income (irrigated crops) proved insufficient to satisfy the needs of most tenants. Since livestock production was still perceived to offer security as well as profit, and since it was possible to remain a tenant while pursuing other economic activities, the most rational strategy, for those who could afford it, was to combine work on the Scheme with livestock herding and sorghum cultivation. The organizational devices developed by the Shukriya in their traditional economy seemed uniquely adaptive in such a situation. Using the extended family as a social base from which teams of co-operation were composed, a large number of Shukriya households managed to secure their viability by mutual transfers and conversions between the two activities: They sold animals in the market to pay for hired labour in the fields, and for general expenditure, and if they earned any money on their field crops, they would buy up animals to increase their flocks.
- (iii) While allowing households to persist as viable units, however, such adaptations were not only likely to adversely affect irrigated agriculture in the ways which have been suggested above, but also to cause deterioration of the conditions in the Butana rangelands. Since the low and fluctuating yields within irrigated agriculture encouraged households to maintain livestock production, and since the latter activity would have to take place in a context characterized by a dwindling land base (as modern agriculture continued to expand) as well as by the absence of properly defined and sanctioned pasture

rights and regulations, it seemed obvious to me that nomadic competition for resources would increase dramatically in the Butana region, and that ecological pressures would mount to a level which would cause considerable suffering to humans and animals alike.

In this chapter, I shall attempt to further clarify my analysis but also to draw a more complex picture of Shukriya adaptations on and around the New Halfa Scheme. As has been correctly observed by Salem-Murdock, my earlier portrayal of the Shukriya tends to present them "as if they are a homogeneous group all of whom have been affected by the Scheme in a similar fashion" (1984:16). In fact, some Shukriya own large numbers of animals while others have very few or none at all. And while most Shukriya households on the Scheme are one-tenancy holders, some are **landless** and others control a large number of tenancies. Salem-Murdock argues that income levels of elite Shukriya families, particularly those belonging to lineages associated with the traditional rulers, seem generally to have risen considerably with the involvement on the Scheme, whereas households without sufficient labour are clearly at a great disadvantage and, in several cases, have even lost control over tenancies that had been allocated to them by the Government. Thus a substantial number of Shukriya households have become part of an agrarian proletariat, providing cheap labour for well-off tenants in irrigated agriculture as well as in the livestock sector (cf. Salem-Murdock 1979, 1984).

Concerning the possible ecological implications of the ways in which "nomadic" tenants have adapted to conditions on the New Halfa Scheme, I have been pleased to see that others have largely accepted and also added on to my own analysis (cf. particularly El Tayeb 1980, Theis 1982, Abu Sin 1982). We have all much less reason to be pleased with developments presently taking place on the Butana and in the Eastern rangelands more generally. When I write these lines, it is being reported that for the Eastern Region as a whole, the average mortality for different types of stock, due to the deterioration of grazing resources, was 23% for cattle, 12% for sheep, 7% for camels and 5% for goats during 1984 (Sudanow, July 1985, p. 17). We also know that conditions are distinctly worse in 1985, and it is estimated that 1,200,000 people are in need of drought emergency assistance in the Eastern Region, in addition to the 400,000 Ethiopian refugees who receive refugee assistance. 25% of the region's total population are estimated to be nomads or semi-nomads (ibid.). On the Butana, traditionally one of the best grazing areas in the Sudan, the situation is so bad that the closure of all water points is being discussed as a last resort in order to arrest further deterioration of the vegetation in the area (ibid.).

Since the following pages contain an analysis of processes of change in the Butana rangelands as well as on the New Halfa Scheme, it will be necessary first to give a brief account of some

important aspects of traditional Shukriya society and economy. Also, by examining the conditions under which the area was exploited prior to the Scheme, the basic information will be provided for an understanding of the economic and ecological implications of present adaptations.

The Butana Rangelands

Geographically, the term "Butana" refers to an area roughly bounded by the main Nile, the Atbara River, the Blue Nile and the present railway line from Sennar to Khashm el Girba (cf. Map 2). It is a flat clay plain (only broken by a few inselbergs rising 200-300 metres above the **plain**) where land-use patterns and population distribution to a large extent have been determined by the combined effects of erratic rainfall and a geological structure which largely contains no water-bearing rocks.

Rainfall shows a remarkable variation in incidence, amount, time of fall and annual as well as area distribution. Rains are concentrated during a three-month period from approximately mid-June to mid-September (khareef), but in the northern part, mean and annual rainfall variability is 45 per cent, and further south about 20 per cent. Rain total varies from 75 mm in the north to about 600 mm along the railway line in the south (Abu Sin 1970: 7-15).

The compact nature of the clay soils covering most of the Butana accelerates run-off, which in turn makes for fast erosion and a high ratio of annual plants as compared to perennials. Most of the Butana is completely open without bush or tree. In the northern part, the sparse vegetation consists of semi-desert grasses and Acacia shrubs, the latter generally limited to the soils around the few inselbergs (jebels) and to narrow belts along seasonal watercourses. Moving southwards, the vegetation gradually changes into Acacia trees, bushes and savanna type grasses. In the wet season, the Butana becomes green and covered with a growth of different grasses and herbs (cf. Harrison 1955).

The Basement Complex which forms about 2/3 of the underlying solid geology of the area, bears no water except in joints. In the northern part, water-bearing rocks exist (the Nubian Formation), but their extension northward into the desert has limited their value as a main source of permanent settlements. The only permanent natural sources of water are provided by the large rivers bordering on the Butana.

Human adaptations are naturally much constrained by the availability of water. In the north, due to sandy soil and low rainfall, nomadism is the main form of land use, and camels are the dominant livestock. In the central Butana, permanent settlements have been established, based on a combination of

animal husbandry and rainfed sorghum cultivation. Camels, cattle, sheep and goats are all kept in this area. Wells have been dug by hand in many places, particularly where there are cracks in the underground foundation or at small local catchments of the inselbergs referred to above. Although some of them are quite shallow and thus dry up before the end of the dry season (April/May), most of them are quite deep (more than 200 feet) and allow for animals to graze around them for a long period in the year. The semi-nomadic adaptation which has characterized the central part of the Butana, is based on its dependence on such wells as well as other sources of water which exist because of the light, non-cracking clay soils in the area. This allows water to be stored in natural depressions (maiat) and in the numerous deltas being formed by seasonal watercourses (khôr, plur. kheiran). A considerable number of reservoirs (hafîr, plur. hafair) have also been dug by machines, particularly during the 1950s. In the Butana, all permanent settlements have either been established around the wells or near the rivers,

Any adaptation, however, involves peoples not only in a relationship with the natural environment, but also in relations of competition, cooperation and symbiosis with each other, which may profoundly influence the structure and distribution of groups. Almost twenty different groups, the majority of whom are pastoralists, presently inhabit the Butana during the whole or part of the year. All pastoralist groups, except the Beja-speaking Bisharien and Hadendowa, are Arabic-speaking: They include the Shukriya, the Batahin, the Messelamia, the Fadniyya, the Kawahla, the Lahawyin, the Rashaida, the Khawalda, the Rikabiyin, the Rufa'a el Sharg and the Kenana Arabs,

Historical Background

Access to resources on the Butana has traditionally been regulated by (a) military strength and sanctions, (b) customary law and (c) external interventions,

The Shukriya, who may presently number somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 people, belong to a group of Arab tribes which seems to have drifted into the Sudan between the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Their historical memory goes back to Sha'ed-Din bin Tuwaym, reported to have lived in the early seventeenth century (Crawford 1951:86). They do not appear to have played a very important role on the Butana until during the eighteenth century when they, following a series of battles against the Batahin, the Hamaj, the Rikabiyin and the Hadendowa, managed to acquire mastery of the Butana under the leadership of Abu Ali, the grandson of Sha'ed-Din and, later, under the leadership of Abu Ali's grandson Awad el Karim Abu Sin,

The battles took place within a political macro-context dominated by the Funj Kingdom at Sennar. After their victories, the Shukriya, through marriage alliances with the Funj king, had allotted to them a considerable part of the Butana. Abu Sin encouraged his people to spread all over the Butana by giving grants of land, by offering protection against other tribes and by providing an assured water supply. During this period, rainfed sorghum cultivation was encouraged and trade increased because of the use of the camel in transport.

At the time of the Turkish rule in the Sudan (1821-85), the Turks found it necessary to obtain the support of the Shukriya. Ahmed Awad al-Karim Abu Sin became one of the most trusted sheikhs of the regime and was rewarded with the title of Bey and the office of Khartoum Governor. As a result, wide privileges were granted to the Shukriya, and they consolidated their position as the lords of the Butana. They dominated the existing water points and established new ones. During this period, the Turks further encouraged crop cultivation and permanent settlement.

During the Mahdiya (1881-98), the Shukriya tried to keep their distance from the regime. Sheikh Awad el-Karim Ahmed Abu Sin remained loyal to the old rulers and was put in prison where he died in 1886. The Shukriya were largely deprived of their camels and horses, which were the foundation of their wealth, and the disaster culminated in the great famine that ravaged the Sudan in 1888 (Salem-Murdock 1979:16).

During the Mahdiya, many of the Shukriya were displaced to the south towards the eastern boundaries, and new tribal categories entered the Butana: the Lahawyin, the Kawahla, the Khawalda and others. Also, the area around Gedaref and along the River Rahad received a mixture of people from Western Sudan, West Africa and other groups who settled as sorghum (dura) cultivators (El Tayeb op.cit.:79).

During the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956), the Shukriya reasserted their former dominance on the Butana. In 1904, following a number of conflicts between the Western Shukriya and the Kawahla and Rufa'a al Sherig, a grazing agreement was signed which defined a general grazing area which could be used by all ethnic groups visiting the Butana during the rainy season (cf. Harrison op.cit.). This area has no permanent sources of water but contains some reservoirs (hafirs) which last only for a few months after the rains. When these dry up, the visiting tribes had to return to their own territories. All the remaining area was reserved for the Shukriya (and the Lahawyin) and was called the Butana Special. The Butana east of the general grazing area was reserved for the eastern Shukriya and Lahawyin, the former being subdivided into two major administrative subdivisions (khuts) - the Butana Khut and the Atbara Khut - and several small ones. Grazing and cultivable land, water points, etc. were agreed

to be used only by people of the specified khut except in years of rain failure.

Because grazing near the Atbara River tended to be soon eaten out, members of the Atbara Khut (as well as the Lahawyin) tended to keep more camels, due to their longer grazing radius, while members of the Butana Khut enjoyed the sole use of the scanty permanent water supplies in the central Butana and so could keep numerous cattle with their camels, sheep and goats.

The dominance of the Shukriya over the Butana was further enhanced by the execution of the hafir programme in 1949-55 (El Tayeb op.cit.:97). During this period, 18 large basins were excavated. They acted as additional water points, delaying the movement of animals to the native wells which were the proper damering (home area) centres. Moreover, although other tribes had the right to graze their animals on the Butana, only the Shukriya were allowed to dig wells. They thereby largely monopolized access to water until after World War II when other ethnic categories were also granted water rights.

Politically, the Anglo-Egyptian period was one of peace and stability on the Butana. Sheikh Mohamed Awad el-Karim Abu Sin was appointed Nazir of the Shukriya and remained in office until 1902 when he was succeeded by his brother Abdulla (Salem-Murdock 1979:16). Under the nazir there were four sheikh khuts; under them came the omdas, and under the omdas came the smaller sheikhs. Each administrative unit was responsible for tax collection and general security in the area (ibid.) The Sinnab sublineage, descendants of Sha ed-Din, continued to hold the leadership of the Shukriya, allied with the Nurab, also belonging to the Sha ed-Dinab section, and the Aishab, one of the largest Shukriya sections on the Butana. After World War II, following conflicts in the Abu Sin family, the Nazirate was divided into two: the Rufa'a Nazirate and the Gedaref Nazirate,

Rights and Inequalities

Shukriya territorial rights are over (a) pastures, (b) water points and (c) agricultural lands (cf. El Tayeb op.cit.:105). These rights have formally been organized and allotted according to the tribal structure which is based upon a patrilineal segmentary system. At the upper level of segmentation, from the six sons of Shukir - Mehaid, Rutaim, Afis, Fitas, Hassan al Naim and Hamed al Nizaz - six tribal sections have emerged. Zeidan was the seventh son of Shukir, and from him descend the majority of the other sections and lineages. These sections are subdivided into lineages which, in turn, are split into sub-lineages (ibid.:82 ff). These, again, are subdivided further into what El Tayeb calls "maximal households". The term refers to a group of extended families descending from one man after whom the group

takes its name, and such a group normally carries the word Awlad (sons) in front of the name of the founder. It is also the smallest kinship unit in the Shukriya segmentary system which occupies a particular territory. Its members hold collective rights over grazing and water resources in their area. They tend to live in one community, and in one camp if and when they migrate. Where favourable conditions exist, they may split into a number of mobile groups moving close to each other (ibid.:89).

Whereas grazing is said to be communal for all the members of the tribe (although rights are claimed in certain territories by different subdivisions of the tribe), wells are considered private, or are generally in the hands of maximal households. Thus grazing is only communal, in the dry season, for those who have access to water (ibid.:105 f).

The digging of wells is an arduous and costly process given the unfavourable geological conditions. But wealthy households were able to command enough labour (partly by using slaves) to overcome such problems and dig a number of wells in different parts of the Butana. This has generally occurred at the level of maximal households and is reflected today in the composition of local communities around the permanent wells (damering centres). Thus El Tayeb, after having made a survey of settlements at 13 well centres, found that the dominant Nurab, Sinnab or Aishab were represented in ten of them whereas a number of other lineages were only represented in one settlement each (ibid.:103). El Tayeb also studied land distribution in 15 wadis that are important for rainfed sorghum (dura) cultivation and found a similar pattern: The Sinnab were represented in nine wadis and the Nurab in five, whereas other lineages were mostly confined to one wadi (ibid.:1 . This is consistent with my own observations from Sobagh, in the heart of the Butana, where I found that members of smaller and less influential lineage clusters were residing more or less as clients to members of Sinnab, Aishab and Nurab sections

Thus the evolution of the political structure seems to have been the outcome of (a) internal processes of differentiation related to important features of the production system and (b) the political support given to the Shukriya elite families by the state, largely through the system of Native Administration.¹) Whereas powerful external state agencies have controlled the means of coercion, they have also to a large extent handed over control over non-pastoral means of production to the Shukriya elite, particularly through land grants. The leading Shukriya families also benefited far more than their followers by virtue of their greater involvement in commercial and educational networks (cf. Agouba 1979:102). As a result, political ties tend to be strong between rich and poor tribesmen, based largely on patron-client relationships, while being weak between the poorer tribesmen.

Seasonal Movements

Seasonal movements and residence patterns have been guided by several factors, such as the presence of grasses, wells and reservoirs, and rights of access to them, the grazing agreement referred to above, the composition and size of the flocks, the availability of labour and the number of people who have to subsist on the herd. There has been considerable regional variation: Thus, e.g., the limited seasonal migration of the Butana Khut Shukriya used to be a northward or northeastward movement during the rains, followed by a movement back south, first to the hafirs, then to the wells. The Atbara Khut Shukriya who have kept more camels, have had to trek longer, particularly during the dry season. In the western and southern part of the Butana there are villages of completely settled Shukriya. These villages have existed over a long period of time and their chief source of livelihood has been dura cultivation and the selling of milk and meat to the urban markets on the fringes of the Butana. A widely practised way of life has been to let one or two members of a household move with the animals during the rains, while the other members stay behind in permanent villages.

In general, nomadism in its pure form has been on the decline in the Butana rangelands for a long time and is characterized by short-distance annual migrations. The mechanization of grain cultivation (mainly sorghum) in the Gedaref area during the 1950s accelerated this process.

Rainfed Agriculture

The diet consumed in Shukriya tents and huts (qatāti) is composed of both agricultural and pastoral products. Thus a porridge (lugma) as well as a thin leaven bread (raheefa) is made out of dura and the stalks serve as food for their animals. Dura cultivation starts normally in mid-July when the rains have begun and takes mostly place in the larger wadis where waterlogging tends to retard the growth of weeds and create good conditions for the grain. A common practice is also to construct small earth banks (tiris, plur. tirus) to hold storm-waters and give them time to sink in the ground, but this is not always necessary. Sorghum is stored in pits, and since there is a great variability in annual amount and distribution of rainfall, very little of the produce enters the market even in good years. Also, because of the permanent uncertainty whether crops may be sown or not, proper land rotation cannot be planned and some fields suffer from over-cultivation.

The size of holdings ranges very much, and all lands are unregistered and belong therefore to the Government. Ownership is claimed, however, in certain lands by lineages or sublineages, and

rights are inherited collectively by members of such units. Within such areas, lands are subdivided between households which claim rights to their plots after having cultivated regularly for a period of ten years. Such claims, however, ultimately depend on local recognition. In some cases, land may also be rented out to others or given as grants by large landowners, but such grants are seasonable and renewable and may involve payment of dues to the owner (El Tayeb op.cit.). Except during harvesting, the demands on labour are not very heavy, but in many cases members of one household have their plots of land in more than one wadi (cf. above), so there is a lot of travelling from place to place. Such movements are rarely done by whole camps, but only by single male members to whom are assigned the tasks of preparing cultivation and harvesting the dura fields.

Elements of Social Organization

Given that the four major animal types in the region (camels, cattle, sheep and goats) have different keeping requirements, and given the fact that both large and small ruminants are milked, households which rely on a combination of different animal types rather than on a single species, stand a better chance of surviving during years of drought and epidemic than households who concentrate their efforts on only one species (cf. Abu Sin 1982). A multi-species economy, however, in its combination with dura cultivation, is particularly demanding in terms of labour and skills and requires also a proper co-ordination of activities that can be secured only by economic units with a sufficient and proper mix of labour resources (for further details, cf. Sørbo 1977a:138f).

Abu Sin argues that Shukriya households, because of scarce resources, communal land tenure, and low technological advancement, generally tended to concentrate on breeding one single type of animals (ibid.). Amongst numerous families, however, particularly those belonging to the leading lineages, it was possible to command sufficient labour to engage in multi-species pastoralism. Through land grants received by the Government, they became surplus producers of sorghum, and by their access to wells in different parts of the Butana, they were able to consolidate and expand their position while many "commoner" households came to be their clients in a well-developed system of patronage.

Generally, I found the social base from which teams of co-operation are composed almost invariably to be that of a father and all or some of his married sons. According to the Shukriya, the ideal is for a man never to separate from his father (although they often do so) because they are "one house". Neither should the herd be divided.

The extended family must therefore be regarded as the basic social and economic unit within Shukriya society, and this is also reflected by female co-ordination of food preparation and assistance across the boundaries of residence units. Such units can persist by having a full complement of personnel to make them viable as fully independent units, but they must be able to split into various labour teams during certain times of the year and, in many cases, particularly during the rains, contribute part of their labour force to teams formed out of members of many units belonging to their own patrilineage (a group of brothers and their married sons). This larger grouping, the personnel of which normally made up the camps during the rainy season, co-ordinate their activities and co-operate in herding movements and other tasks. Unity is maintained by a series of transactions only part of which may be considered strictly economical, but again, a number of other considerations tie them together, such as the value placed upon close kin, the practice of FaBrDa marriage, the need for consulting with others on a number of different matters, etc.

Basic to my argument, then, is the need for the personnel of domestic groups to form a number of labour teams during the annual cycles of their economic life, and to be able to divide and then reunite because tasks are multiple and not localized in one place. In the case of the Shukriya there is a specialization of personnel in the households: Some boys at an early age are taught to accept the duties of going with elder brothers or their father to cultivate sorghum, others are given the responsibility of tending animals. By such processes of specialization and co-ordination, households may be said to develop organizational devices for the specific purpose of maintaining and managing a mixed economy (cf. Rudie op.cit.).

Settlement on the New Halfa Scheme

The Nubians were resettled during 1964-65, and as from 1965 until 1969, four more phases of the Scheme were developed and completed, almost exclusively devoted to the accomodation of nomads. It must be noted that there was a considerable difference in the standard of settlements and methods of allocating tenancies between the nomads and the Nubians, both in terms of location, planning and building materials for the houses and in terms of the location and entitlement for the tenancy. No planned villages were provided for. Instead the nomads were provided with local building materials, bamboo poles and straw. Although it was originally intended to accomodate all the nomads in 22 villages at predetermined locations, people proceeded to make their settlements in a haphazard way all over the Scheme area. As a result, 57 new communities emerged, in addition to the 15 villages which were founded before the establishment of the Scheme and a number of seasonal settlements or camps. Many tenants came to live quite far away from their tenancies.

Regarding tenancy distribution, there were no surveys of potential beneficiaries, and a system of registration of applicants was adopted instead. This meant that tribal leaders came to be strongly involved in allocating tenancies. As they were each given a quota of tenancies for their followers, they were able to proceed more or less on their own with the final distribution. As a consequence, some tenants belonging to the Shukriya elite families managed to obtain large areas of land for themselves and for their close, relatives, friends and clients. Some of the main difficulties later to be experienced by a large number of Shukriya households, can, at least partly, be attributed to the policy adopted regarding tenancy distribution.

Since the management did not allow for herds of animals to be kept on the Scheme, the Shukriya were initially reluctant to join the scheme. Their reluctance contributed also in large measure to the unequal distribution of tenancies amongst those who arrived as the first phase was developed. El Tayeb has classified them as follows:

- (a) sheikhs, their extended families and their relatives, with a large number of tenancies (up to eighteen and more);
- (b) Shukriya without animals and some poor nomads from other tribal groups, mostly with one tenancy; and
- (c) a few animal owners, mostly with a limited number of tenancies (El Tayeb op.cit.:188 f).

Later, due to rather successful crop production achieved on the ~~New~~ Halfa Scheme during the first seasons, as well as the awareness of the grazing opportunities available inside the Scheme, competition over tenancies became very great. The new arrivals tended to be typical Shukriya animal owners, directly involved in animal husbandry, and they selected their village sites outside the Scheme and along the Sabir canal which constitutes the western boundary of the Scheme, directly facing the Butana plain. By this choice, those tenants came to hold a strategic position by having access to water and grazing opportunities inside and outside the Scheme, as do those on the River Atbara who refused to transfer their traditional villages for similar reasons.

Impact on Herding Activities

As the situation on the ~~New~~ Halfa Scheme started to deteriorate (cf. Chapter Two), it became clear to Shukriya tenants that they would have to combine, in their labour strategy, the exploitation of different economic activities. Thus the ~~New~~ Halfa Scheme came

to supplement rather than replace the pre-existing economy based on pastoral herding and rainfed cereals cultivation.²⁾ However, this caused a number of changes, also within the livestock sector. It also caused a number of problems with management as animals in great numbers began to trespass onto tenancy lands despite the fact that the management employed the help of the army during the cotton picking season to keep them off.

As suggested earlier, residence patterns and patterns of pastoral movements among some of the Shukriya underwent important changes as a result of the establishment of mechanized farming operations in the Gedaref area as from the 1950s. Some of the most fertile agricultural and grazing lands were lost through a land-grabbing process whereby the Government issued licences to private enterprises for undertaking sorghum and sesame cultivation on a large scale. The establishment of the New Halfa Scheme in the 1960s and the Rahad Scheme during the middle and late 1970s (cf. Map 2) has further encroached upon and largely served to replace important dry season pastures traditionally used not only by the Shukriya but also by other ethnic categories on the Butana.

By 1970, it was also decided by the Sudan Government that security and guarantees for rights to production resources be maintained by the administrative apparatus of the Government rather than by particular local groups. The decision was accompanied by the partial abolishment of the Native Administration and the subsequent collapse of the General Grazing Agreement of 1904. This resulted in wider access to land formerly retained by Shukriya pastoralists for their own exclusive use during the dry season, and other ethnic categories (Rashaida, Beja, Kawahla, etc.) have started to move into the Butana heartlands, encouraged by the Government's decision to create a landuse system based on common tenure.

These events occurred during a relatively short time-span (1969-72) and had serious implications on land use patterns and grazing resources, particularly as they were accompanied by a number of years with insufficient rains (1969-73). New Halfa Town received 526 mm of rain in 1966, but rains fell to a low of 191 mm in 1969 and 170 mm in 1973. The years in between gave more rain but during periods intermitted by long, dry spells. Sorghum cultivation could not be carried out during most of those years,

The Shukriya loss of exclusive use of dry season pastures also coincided in time with their attempts to settle as tenant farmers on the New Halfa Scheme. Attracted by amenities of civilization (schools, health services, etc.) as well as the availability of water and grazing (more than the agricultural opportunities), they arrived on the Scheme in large numbers. Partly due to the low and irregular yields in irrigated agriculture, partly to the opportunities that were still perceived to exist in the pastoral sector, the majority of Shukriya households came to continue their

dependence on livestock holding. However, the conditions for pursuing their traditional occupation were changing rather dramatically, both because of the increasing competition for water and grazing resources in the Butana rangelands and because their own new role as tenant farmers came to significantly structure the co-ordination of personnel in Shukriya tenant households. Among the impacts of the Scheme on herding activities, the following seem to be most important:

- (1) For tenant farmers, the establishment of the Scheme has caused a new type of transhumance, whereby animals spend the wet season and part of the dry (darat) season on the Butana, and are driven back to the Scheme to depend on crop remains (mainly groundnut hay) and other grazing from December until the official opening of the Scheme for grazing in late March or April. Thus the New Halfa Scheme presently serves as an extra damer centre of great importance to the Shukriya.
- (2) This alternative use of natural pastures and the Scheme area, combined with the fact that the Scheme places considerable importance on the managerial functions of tenant households, has also affected the composition of many Shukriya herds (cf. Abu Sin 1982). First, management has come to accept sheep, goats and cattle in small numbers to be held by the tenancy holders all the time and in any number after harvesting (April-June), whereas camels are not accepted at any time. It is also rather inconvenient to keep camels inside the Scheme since they are mainly tree browsers and graze on thorn bushes while sheep and cattle prefer grasses in green pastures and also need to be watered more frequently. Camels, therefore, tend to be kept by the Shukriya outside the Scheme, and an increasing number of tenant households keep sheep, goats and cattle in different combinations. In 1980, Abu Sin found that the Shukriya opted for combinations that minimize dry year losses rather than those which maximize wet-year gains but are difficult to fit in the changing Butana eco-system (ibid.:98). There was also a clear tendency, confirmed by myself and other authors (Sørbo 1977a, El Tayeb op.cit., Salem-Murdock 1984) for tenants to engage in more selective selling and investment in livestock. Thus the popularity of sheep, goats and cattle in different combinations is due to (a) their growing markets, (b) the importance of milk in Shukriya diets, (c) the relative similarity in pasture and water requirements, and (d) their high response to supplementary feeding (cf. Abu Sin op.cit.:98f).
- (3) The alternative use of range pastures and Scheme grazing has not only made herd diversification a paying practice for a growing number of households, but it has also generally increased the replacement rate of small animals (sheep, goats and cattle), reducing losses and improving the general health

conditions of animals and their disease viability. Although reliable figures do not exist, it seems clear that the Scheme has contributed to an increase in animal numbers on the Butana. It presently serves as a damering centre during the severe conditions at the end of the dry season - for animals which have to be kept and herded outside the Scheme during the cultivation season (June - April). Tenant households are also likely to be less sensitive to ecological pressure, in the sense that marginal households can maintain their consumption level by incomes deriving from agriculture (including cultivation advances) rather than by slaughtering and consuming their herds (cf. Sørbo 1977a:145), while any attempts to reduce the number of livestock seems impossible in the absence of any institutional mechanisms that can control the exploitation of pastures. In Table 8 which has been compiled from different sources, a rather dramatic development is suggested for sheep and goats.

Table 8.

ESTIMATES OF ANIMAL POPULATION IN THE BUTANA 1955-1980

Type of Animal	Harrison 1955	Abu Sin 1968	Abu Sin 1978	El Tayeb 1980
Sheep	287,000	525,000	798,000	1,010,000
Cattle	75,300	300,000	396,000	366,000
Camels	186,500	282,000	313,000	179,000
Goats	-	368,000	559,000	827,000

- (4) For the Shukriya who have not joined the New Halfa Scheme, the direction of their movements and the periods of stay have also been greatly affected by the new conditions in the Scheme. Because of the deterioration of the hafirs, mainly due to the break-down of the grazing settlement, they are forced to move very early to the permanent wells. Such early movements increase the pressure on the wells and decrease their efficiency accordingly. Therefore, severe water shortage tends to force many Shukriya either to move towards the Scheme or to make short, southward movements to el Adeid, el Suki and el Fao where the wells are more reliable, but where they encroach upon areas traditionally claimed by other groups. Those who stay near the wells, join their fellow tribesmen at New Halfa after the opening of the Scheme, until late June when they normally start their wet season (nushog) movements again (El Tayeb op.cit.:207).

While tenants increasingly breed cattle, sheep and goats in different combinations, camels have become concentrated in the hands of the Shukriya outside the Scheme. While such development might be expected to relieve the pressure on

grazing and water resources on the Butana, the increase in total numbers of livestock and the influx of other ethnic categories serve to exert pressures on the grazing areas, particularly as most of the hafirs are no longer looked after and have become of little use. As a consequence, Shukriya are forced to move very early to their native wells, which increases the pressure on them and accordingly decrease their efficiency (ibid.:207). Thus the direction of development has been toward increasing density of livestock in central Butana, and the most serious damage to the vegetation seems not to occur at the end of the dry season when so many animals are in the Scheme, but during the wet or growing season during seed formation. As one result, the vulnerable Blepharis (siha), a highly nutritious grass which has afforded much of the best dry-season grazing on the Butana (Harrison op.cit.), has almost completely disappeared.

A Mixed Economy

I have argued elsewhere that the Shukriya make mutual transfers and conversions between irrigated agriculture and the livestock sector, in the sense that money earned by selling animals in the market is frequently spent on hired labour in the fields, while money earned in agriculture is used for building up the flock. I have also argued that their success in doing so depends on their ability to structure personell and co-ordinate efforts in such a way that they are able to sustain a mixed economy (Sørbo 1977a). For those who have read Chapter Two it may be difficult to understand how any surplus can be gained in irrigated crop farming, and how, therefore, agricultural incomes can benefit the livestock sector. This happens in the following way: Returns in cash or in kind from agriculture are mainly directed towards necessities, and hence, save some money which would otherwise have had to be earned by selling more animals. In this way, returns from Scheme agriculture may be said to contribute towards Shukriya investments in both the agricultural and livestock sectors although such investments mainly depend on surpluses accumulated from the sale of animals (cf. also El Tayeb op.cit.:197). In addition, the Scheme and its crops provide forage for the animals, not only through crop remains and post-harvest grazing but also through the illegal use of standing crops as animal fodder. Thus most of the Shukriya will only undertake one cotton picking and leave the rest to be grazed by their animals,

Economic Differentiation

However, as Salem-Murdock convincingly has argued, the benefits emerging from such linkages are only bestowed upon those households which are able to successfully manage a mixed economy of this kind, i.e. those tenants who control the proper mix of

labour resources as well as the necessary finance. Where affluent tenant farmers have managed to pursue this strategy so as to increase their holdings and **optimize** their economic opportunities, others struggle to survive mainly by combining tenancy cultivation with some smallstock and employment as hired labour on holdings belonging to fellow tenants (Salem-Murdock 1979).

There is little doubt that the traditional elite families have benefited disproportionately from the establishment of the New Halfa Scheme. As mentioned above, they had initial access to more land than their clients. This was largely facilitated by the reluctance and suspicion with which the Scheme was viewed by many pastoralists. Their control over numerous tenancies served to further strengthen their position because (a) it gave them large areas for post-harvest browse as animals were allowed onto tenancy land during April-June, which is at the end of the dry season (*ibid.*:42), and (b) because tenants who hold several tenancies have a number of advantages over smallholders: The costs of operation are too great to be met by exploitation of a single tenancy. Effective utilization of the irrigated lands requires the ability to provide costly inputs in a timely way, to hire additional labour at critical times, to maintain a favourable credit balance, and to continue to exploit the traditional pasture and wadi lands. This combination of requirements is out of reach for the average man (*cf.* Chapter Two).

There have been many interesting developments among those who have been able to take advantage of the new conditions within the Scheme area. Many tenants pursue a much more commercially oriented livestock production than they used to do before, e.g. by close monitoring of price developments in the different animal markets in the region, and they have also made a number of investments in trade and transportation. Salem-Murdock reports from Khamsa 'Arab, a Shukriya village with over 3 000 inhabitants, that the village supports fifteen shops, four butchers, a flour mill, a baker, three coffee houses, a clinic, an elementary school, a literacy class for women, a kindergarten, several tailors, a shoe repairman, several vendors and about thirty sabbahah - men who engage in the buying and selling of animals (*ibid.*:253). On a smaller scale, this is true also for a number of other Shukriya communities, and while most of the traders operating in the permanent settlements in the Butana were Jellabas from the Nile Valley, a growing number of Shukriya tenants now turn to trade, lorries and investments in tractors and other agricultural machinery.

El Tayeb also reports that there has been an increasing use of tractors in the rainfed dura fields, following both from investments made by wealthy tenants and from the necessity to use sorghum as supplementary feeding due to the serious deterioration in pastures (*op.cit.*:213). He even states that "all the animal owners now give dura to their animals to the extent that the

quantities given exceed that consumed by humans" (*ibid.*). The tractor with seed driller is now widely used by the Shukriya in land preparation for dura. Both the size of the fields and the yields have increased. Previously sowing was carried out in bare or unploughed fields and weed infestation was very high, resulting in low productivity. Now sowing is done on well prepared land while spacing and seed rate are mechanically controlled. This has greatly reduced the number of weeds, improved sowing efficiency and consequently increased yields. More lands are also put under the plough and hence more dura is produced (*ibid.*:214).

The combination of irrigated farming, herding and rainfed dura cultivation has given rise to new economic activities for the Shukriya households on the New Halfa Scheme. New agricultural activities have now emerged and they compete with old ones for tenant labour and attention.

Of the Scheme activities, land preparation for groundnuts begin in May-June, and weeding and other activities associated with this crop continue until harvesting, which usually starts during November. It is very labour-intensive, including pulling, heaping, threshing and winnowing, and continues for more than a month. When it is delayed, as is often the case, it competes with cotton picking for labour. Cotton sowing starts during August, and watering, resowing, thinning and weeding proceed till harvesting, which begins in January and continues through February. Wheat is mostly cultivated mechanically and its labour requirements are not very high.

On the Butana, the Shukriya begin their rainy season (nushog) movements in July and continue moving until October-November when they move towards the hafirs. In December, they move to the permanent wells and also harvest their dura. As from January until the rains, a lot of labour goes into animal watering and the search for grazing,

Since all these activities are beyond the abilities of most households to perform by the use of their own labour, they have to make choices with regard to the allocation of labour. The majority of tenants regard herding and dura cultivation as the major activities since they are directly related to their diets and other subsistence needs. Cotton cultivation, however, is compulsory and must be performed, while groundnuts which require much labour over a long period of time, may be neglected without causing eviction.

The labour strategies adopted by various tenant categories among the Shukriya reflect their organizational capacity as well as their resource endowments more generally. Thus the organizational devices developed by the Shukriya in their traditional economy seem uniquely adaptive in the new situation. Tenancies have been assigned either to nuclear families or to extended families such

as described above, but the latter is still the social base from which many teams of co-operation are composed. Members of this unit will still split up temporarily during the annual cycles of pastoralism, traditional and modern agriculture, and this flexibility makes possible the management of a mixed economy as new labour teams are created in a similar fashion as done before. If tenancies have been allotted to several members of this unit, one of them may act as their representative (wakil) supervising the cultivation of more than one tenancy. In some cases hired labour is used to meet the shortage in any particular activity.

It should be noted that it is mostly entire nuclear families which have become specialized in certain activities. One family may be settled inside the Scheme and is responsible for the tenancies, while one or two families live in the Butana, taking care of herding and rainfed cultivation.

When hired labour is needed, however, it is increasingly being provided by fellow tenants who arrived on the Scheme without or with only a few animals, and who have lost control over tenancies that were allocated to them by the Government due to low yields and heavy indebtedness, through sheil (cf. Chapter Two). Unlike in the case of the Nubian settlers, there were also many Shukriya households who did not receive tenancies. In New Halfa, most of them have joined the agrarian proletariat along with the labourers entering the Scheme from Western Sudan. Some of them also hire out as shepherds, caring for flocks belonging to elite families. According to Salem-Murdock, their large numbers "today preclude their obtaining a reasonable wage for their work, and therefore make it almost impossible for them to rise to the ranks of the tenants and independent herders" (1979:44).

It should also be noted that tenancies amongst poor tenants are mostly cultivated on a nuclear family basis. For a man to build and maintain a position of prosperity, it is not sufficient simply to have a large number of sons. He must manage the unit's production, distribution and consumption, and the relations among its members, in such a way as to maintain the cohesion of the unit and keep his sons work together in one unit. The father has no means of forcing married sons to stay with him, so he can only hold them by making it worth their while to stay with him. Poor families lack the ability to provide for their sons' needs, and this inability may lead to the disintegration of the extended family for productive purposes, while, among well-to-do families, the extended family is more prevalent, often accompanied by a strong paternal control that regulates the division of labour between its members. Therefore, amongst poor tenants, smallstock, for those who have any, are sent to the Butana during the wet season with those who possess big herds for a small payment; and during summer, a group of these families usually employ a hired herder to graze the animals inside the Scheme. 37

Among the majority of "ordinary" households the situation is complex and several different responses have emerged. Some households allocate a wakil who is usually a relative, to supervise the cultivation of the household's tenancies against other activities done for him inside the Butana or according to any other transactions agreed upon. Other households send one member from its labour force during the peak season to supervise any particular operation. Others adopt the system of sharecropping, mostly for the groundnut crop. In this system the sharecropper, who is usually a Westerner, works as a wage-labourer in the household's cotton tenancies or acts as an agent to bring wage labourers to these tenancies. In both cases the household does not need to send a member to supervise cultivation. In this system the sharecropper also shares the groundnut hay with the tenant, but usually the tenant takes all the hay after making some payment for it (El Tayeb op.cit.:222). Other households adopt the dongodi system, whereby the groundnut tenancy is rented for a certain sum of money (30-50 Lsd). Through such methods, the majority of Shukriya tenants manage to combine traditional activities with their new life on the Scheme.

For the majority of Shukriya household, then, livestock provide them with a security not yet offered by irrigated farming alone, and are of great importance for subsistence, as a storage of wealth and as a reserve for making conversions into commercial agriculture.

Concluding Remarks

The above argument may appear like wrongful economic reductionism. It is obvious, for example, that Shukriya pastoralism is associated with differences of evaluation between nomads and settled people, and that nomads lay considerable emphasis on their animals which may give them status and prestige, are sometimes used for paying bridewealth, compensation, etc. Shukriya culture is of course still very much a pastoral culture: Their vocabulary concerning animals is astoundingly rich and to a large extent inaccessible to Sudanese urbanites and villagers; their poems deal most frequently with their animals and the Butana, praising the pastoral way of living; and it becomes very clear when living in one of their villages inside the Scheme, that they prefer to talk about and care more for their flock than for their fields.

On the other hand, livestock are presently rare as objects of transaction outside the modern market context. Shukriya monitor market prices for livestock very carefully, and animal off-take has been estimated to be 8-10% for cattle and 20% for sheep (Agrar op.cit.). Participation in irrigated farming, attempts made by NHAPC, assisted by the police⁴), to discourage pastoralism, and the necessity of making trans-resource conversions between crops

and livestock - all this has made the Shukriya tenants more conscious of the economic value of things, including their livestock. This does not imply, however, that the Shukriya have a purely mercenary attitude to their livestock. This is as wrong as saying the opposite, that they keep their animals because they always have kept them, which is a mere tautology.

However, any social and economic unit can only persist if its assets are maintained or at least not critically reduced, and such maintenance requires some kind of husbandry of the assets in question (Barth 1970). One of our main tasks must be to discover what factors may constrain such husbandry functions. By focusing on the conditions presently prevailing for main types of economic activity, it may be said that each activity is characterized by its own pushes and pulls - incentives and constraints - which make it necessary for each economic unit to strike a balance somewhere that will enable it to persist. The "pulls" of agriculture are especially that of the attraction of sedentary life (permanent water supplies, access to schools and health centres, etc.), the provision of grazing as well as the perceived security associated with a mixed economy. The "pushes" are primarily the factors that lead to a depression of yields and unstable income. The "pulls" of pastoralism are especially that of an economic growth potential non-existent in agriculture, its perceived security as well as the part animals and their products play in Shukriya diet. The "pushes" are the macro-ecological implications referred to above, the productivity of the pastures being reduced within the larger region. The importance of these factors will vary with the different circumstances in which units find themselves. Thus some households are able to combine the exploitation of different economic activities in ways which make it possible for them to continue a (more or less) settled existence as tenants, while others, without sufficient labour and other assets, must join the agricultural labour force on the Scheme, or try hard to move back into pastoral activities.

M.W. Harrison, who was appointed Pasture Research Officer in 1947, was deeply concerned over the advanced state of overgrazing and overstocking on the Butana (Harrison op.cit.). He regarded an optimum stock carrying capacity to be 7 1/2 animal units per square mile whereas he estimated that there were 11 units per square mile at the time of his investigations in 1955. Since then there have been major increases in the number of livestock: While Harrison reported the total animal population to be 548,800, El Tayeb estimated it to be approximately 2,380,000 in 1980 (cf. Table 8).

Like myself before him, El Tayeb, who is a trained Pasture Officer, argues that the deterioration of pastures on the Butana seems inevitable in the absence of any effective means to regulate access to water and grazing resources, and that the present competition for such resources will make it much more difficult to find solutions to the imminent crisis (op.cit.:236).

Based on such considerations, El Tayeb recommends that the following measures be implemented in the Butana rangelands:

- (a) reinforcement of the 1904 grazing settlement;
- (b) improvement of grazing resources and water supply by reseeding overgrazed pastures; and
- (c) allocation of exclusive grazing rights to the Shukriya maximal households, because they are the main corporate bodies in the tribal system and will have both the desire and ability to control and preserve grazing resources (ibid.:237f).

Based on similar considerations, although on the different assumption that the alternative use of natural pastures and the agricultural schemes provides a better system of use of all available resources, Abu Sin makes a tentative model of division of Butana into "integrated sub-divisions" (1982:102) that may ensure an economic and complementary use of all natural and man-made resources. He argues that for planning purposes, the present change in favour of small animals is a step forward to make future integration of animals into agriculture possible for the nomads in the Butana, and that a mixed farming system should be developed on the New Halfa Scheme for the purpose of fattening and the making of dairy products. The major part of the Butana should be set aside for ranching although he does not specify how this should be organized (ibid.:101).

The idea of livestock integration in the Scheme is not new and it has also been strongly recommended by the New Halfa Rehabilitation Project (Agrar op.cit.). Since the Scheme, under the current situation of a continuous reduction in irrigation water supplies, will soon be unable to support the current crops, Agrar recommends the future elimination of wheat from the rotation and the reduction of groundnuts and cotton acreage by 40 percent (Salem-Murdock 1984:159). It also recommends that the areas made available after such changes be used for fodder production and proposes five producer models which "are far removed from the realities of livestock raising in the area" (ibid.), because they imply the use of enclosures, the participation of a limited number of tenants and the use of supplementary feeding (e.g. by buying industrial ready-mix concentrates),

The design and management of new development cannot be viewed in isolation from those aspects of pastoral life which already exist (cf. Sandford 1983:5). While there is an urgent need for measures in order to arrest further deterioration of the Butana rangelands and to prevent the suffering of animals and people alike, planners are faced with a number of problems which, at least partly, relate to our inadequate knowledge about some important developments in the rangelands. For the sake of brevity, I shall discuss only a few issues.

El Tayeb recommends that the collapsed hafirs should be reconstructed and that additional hafirs should be excavated, and he also suggests that water may be piped from the Scheme further into the Butana, "which would also serve the purpose of opening additional grazing areas and decreasing animal trespass on the Scheme" (El Tayeb op.cit.:238).

The development of water supplies, however, involves not only physical changes in the number, location, output, and type of supplies but also changes in the way in which existing supplies are used and controlled (cf. Sandford op.cit.:61ff). The development of pastoral water supplies is, therefore, very closely connected with range management. What is needed on the Butana before proceeding with further water programme activities, is an assessment of the effect of water development on the total production of the whole pastoral system within which new water points and their surrounding areas are situated. This requires a consideration of possible vegetation changes, rules of access, types of soil, composition and numbers of herds in the area, the length of the dry season, etc.

Thus as long as we have insufficient evidence on the fragility or resilience of the environment (soil and vegetation) in the various parts of the Butana, we will risk a repeat of the mistakes done in the 1950s when the water programme seems to have caused a serious imbalance between availability of water and grass in the central part of the Butana (Harrison op.cit.).

It seems to me that the concept of carrying capacity has only limited utility for planning purposes - not only because of the well-nigh absence of data as discussed above, but also because of its limitations in a temporal dimension (Hjort 1981:175f). In the Butana, there are drastic seasonal and annual fluctuations in vegetation, with constant intermittent periods of abundance or scarcity. Hence, the actual carrying capacity will vary from season to season, and unless such variations are conceptualized in the model, and unless such factors as the different feeding habits of different animals and livestock density vs, livestock numbers are accounted for, we must proceed with utmost caution in our use of estimates such as those made by Harrison and El Tayeb,

Improvements in pastoral resources (water supplies, grazing, browse, crop residues) should be considered only within the framework of a comprehensive area plan that would have to include the different land use systems on the Butana (rainfed farming, irrigated farming, pastoralism). While we need detailed information about livestock populations and their production parameters as well as seasonal occupancy, migratory movements, water supplies and range conditions, it is unlikely, however, that any technical interventions will succeed in the absence of any controls regarding access of grazing animals. As a first step in

Shukriya tenant,
New Halfa Scheme

establishing such control, El Tayeb recommends a return to the situation in which boundaries between groups can be crossed only after agreement,

Since the annulment of the grazing agreement, however, new and large contingents of people have arrived whose "homelands" (dars) are outside the Butana. Their migrations are largely due to deterioration of the rangelands in their own area, and to the considerable competition for grazing and water, which is largely a result of the expansion of crop farming in many areas of central and eastern Sudan (cf. Ahmed 1973). The Butana, therefore, is less than ever before a closed system, which implies that any developments or interventions must give due considerations to problems of scale. Thus while we know that there is an influx of non-Shukriya onto the Butana, we know much less about the degree and kind of culturally prescribed contacts and socially sanctioned patterns of behaviour that are developing between neighbouring groups when resources are scarce; nor do we know much about the likely effects of restricted land allocation on grazing areas outside the Butana if such control measures were only carried out inside the Butana and not all over eastern Sudan. Planning, therefore, requires the adoption of a wide, regional perspective, based on those aspects of pastoral life which already exist in the eastern part of the country where nomads are estimated to make up 25 per cent of the region's total population.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. It is often suggested that pastoral nomadic societies tend to be more egalitarian and economically homogeneous than sedentary societies. A well-known thesis is that of Harold Schneider who argues (a) that cattle are a volatile and mobile resource which it is hard to monopolize and centralize, and (b) that their inherent reproducibility provides the basis for a widespread opportunity to obtain wealth because the supply is high relative to the demand (Schneider 1979). It has also been argued, in the same vein, that the spatial mobility of nomads makes them relatively immune to being exploited (in Asad 1979:423). Among the Shukriya, however, control of non-pastoral means of production and effective state encapsulation have been important sources of inequality (cf. Salzman 1979, Balikci 1981). Combined with certain features of pastoral production (its labour-intensive character and the restricted access to permanent wells) such factors have promoted the emergence of a pastoral society characterized by considerable economic differentiation.
2. It might also more generally be argued that the maintenance of pastoral production among the Shukriya is related to the greater opportunity for investment of surplus income under pastoralism (than in agriculture) as well as its greater security in times of adversity (cf. Barth 1973a, McCown et.al. 1979).

For women, the transfer to the Scheme has brought about major changes. Salem-Murdock argues that they have suffered a great loss regarding their authority over production. Besides the important tasks that women performed they had rights over important resources such as milk, animals and land. They also had full rights to cash obtained from sale of surplus milk. In the Scheme, tenancies have been allocated to men rather than women, and being largely deprived of their animals, women have few opportunities to make money and little control over their own animals since they are physically removed from them (Salem-Murdock 1979:54).

4. Police and army personell have been regularly brought in during the cotton picking season in order to prevent animal trespass.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE JIDDAH CONNECTION: ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BASALWA IN NEW HALFA TOWN

Introduction

Although the Nubian population, both in Egypt and the Sudan, were the main victims of the Nile Water Agreement which **permitted** the Egyptian Government to build the High Dam at Aswan, the town of Wadi Halfa - the only town community to be swallowed by the rising waters - housed an ethnically heterogeneous population of which less than 20 per cent were considered to be Nubians. When a census was carried out during 1960, the town population was found to be 11,059. Of these people, 3029 (27.6%) were in fact Egyptian citizens, and another 1086 (9.8%) were Sudanese only by grant. 62 per cent of all residents in Halfa Town were Sudanese by birth, and of these, only 18 per cent were Nubians from the Wadi Halfa District (Republic of the Sudan op.cit.).

The Basalwa quarter was among the largest lodging areas in Wadi Halfa Town. It consisted of inhabitants originally from 14 small village communities located **wihin** the district of Idfu in Upper Egypt (cf. Map 1). They began to settle in Wadi Halfa in the 1920s, attracted mainly by employment opportunities in the harbour (as porters), and had slowly managed to move into a limited number of other occupations, such as house-building, petty trade and horse-cart transport. By 1960, the Basalwa community consisted of 2152 persons.

As the large majority of the Basalwa became Sudanese citizens, and as land scarcity and unemployment prospects effectively prevented them from making their return to Egypt, they were resettled at New Halfa along with the rest of the population. In fact, they were much more favourably disposed towards the Girba move than the Nubians. There, in a remarkably short time, they successfully managed to change their position in the occupational structure of the new town. They created a thriving community, exploited a number of available career opportunities in the Sudan as well as outside the Sudan and rapidly managed to improve their standard of living as well as to augment their relative prestige within the area.

My central concern in this chapter is to seek the appropriate means to analyze the striking capacity of the Basalwa to adapt to the new environment imposed by the resettlement project. I believe that some of the explanations encountered in the field (from Basalwa as well as from other groups) can be dismissed as of secondary importance. I would not accept, for instance, that

there is something peculiar about the "Basalwa mentality" that lends itself to their success. They are industrious, frugal and competitive - but in this respect not much different from other ethnic groups that have not registered triumphs of the same magnitude. Nor is the argument of extraordinary group solidarity convincing, for the same reasons; other groups displaying roughly the same mix of conflict and group cohesion have submitted to a different fate. Finally, it seems also insufficient and unsatisfactory to explain the recent career patterns of the Basalwa in terms of a series of encounters with ethnic rivals (for a similar argument, cf. Waterbury 1972).

The phenomenon I shall describe is perhaps best understood in other terms. One of the most important factors would seem to be rather fortuitous, that is the initial choice of particular occupations as *a* vehicle for maintaining viability outside the home area. Having entered particular occupations in the pre-settlement era, the Basalwa were projected into the very heart of a growing market economy at New Halfa, and into a type of environment where there was a high demand for their skills and assets. Thus having taken particular occupational options, they placed themselves squarely in the urban arena where major economic transformations took place. And, since they had entered occupations which render salient the very characteristics of individual responsibility and group self-help that may be muted or unexpressed among groups that have taken up wage work (*ibid.*:256), they successfully managed to secure for themselves a rapid upward mobility.

Wadi Halfa Town¹⁾

Wadi Halfa was not an old town. It arose at the outset of the railway works, some time towards the end of the governor-generalship of Ismail Pasha Ayub (1873-77) or during the time of Gordon (1877-79). In all probability it emerged as a labour camp with railway workshops, and a line of mud huts inhabited by the workers, and continued as such until 1885 when it was converted into a military garrison. After the fall of Khartoum and the Mahdi take-over, Wadi Halfa was created as a frontier base towards the new regime in the Sudan, as it was situated at the terminus of the navigation route from Aswan and at the northern end of a formidable cataract which blocked the river to the south against navigation of any sort. In 1896, Wadi Halfa was used by Kitchener and his troops as a springboard for the reconquest of the Sudan.

During this period, the concentration of military forces attracted a number of traders to settle in the town. The sense of insecurity felt by the inhabitants of the villages around Halfa compelled them to quit their homes in the rural area and seek safety in town. Along with this rush came a considerable number of former soldiers.

Services now had to be provided for a growing military and civil administration. A hospital was built. A port and telegraph office was created to provide the important contact with Cairo and with the outposts around Halfa. River transport became regular and efficient, and military and commercial supplies poured into the growing town.

The continuous arrival and dispatch of tons of materials, the building of sheds, workshops, and storehouses also encouraged Egyptian families to settle in Wadi Halfa and take up work there. Most of the pioneer settlers were general traders, dealing mainly in household equipment and utensils. Along with Greeks and Syrians, they introduced modern trade to the area, and, later, to the Sudan in general.

The Basalwa in Wadi Halfa

The Basalwa were not among the first settlers in Wadi Halfa. They seem to have drifted into the town from the 1920s and most of them were recruited as porters by Abdel Ghani Ali Musa who was in charge of recruiting labour to the harbour and the railway station. Since the Halfawi Nubians were not considered prime candidates for menial jobs of this type, an economic niche was then created for the Basalwa to enter and largely monopolize.

According to their own traditions, the Basalwa emigrated from 14 village communities near the city of Idfu in Upper Egypt. They came to settle in a separate quarter of Wadi Halfa Town, and at the time of resettlement it was the biggest lodging area in the whole town with the exception of Tibits, a slum-like quarter inhabited mainly by various non-Nubian Sudanese workers. It straggled for a distance of two miles, and it was almost exclusively inhabited by the Basalwa themselves. In his book on the Nubian exodus, Hassan Dafalla writes:

"... because its inhabitants outnumbered the rest of the town population they were nicknamed El Rus, "the Russians"; perhaps "the Chinese" might have been more appropriate.. .. They were a hard working class, and so the majority of them had tough manual jobs in the market and government departments. Some were petty traders, and a very few were substantial merchants. As they had come to Halfa during the last forty years they still cherished the traditional way of life of the Egyptian fellah. Their houses were narrow and mostly they slept on the sandy roads in summer, and only used the limited accomodation of their rooms in winter. The background of their abodes was typical Saidi,²⁾ with their chickens, geese, ducks, goats and pigeons all bred in the house. Their womenfolk mostly engaged in baking bread. Passing along any road in the Basalwa quarter one couldn't

fail to notice the smell of fowls blended with that of hot bread, all coming out in one whiff.although the Basalwa were rejected by the Nubians, yet I found them decent, realistic and hard-working" (Dafalla op.cit.:17 f).

Besides the Basalwa quarter (pop. 2152) and Tibits (pop. 2880), the town consisted of the following divisions:

- (1) Dabarosa (pop. 2003), which was the original quarter of Halfa Town, and had existed before the town came into being. It was the only quarter in the whole town inhabited exclusively by Nubians;
- (2) El Gabal (pop. 947), which was the poorest quarter in the town, most of the houses having a slum-like character, "packed and narrow as pigeon holes" (ibid.:1 9 Its inhabitants were basically remnants of the Sudanese battalions which camped at Halfa during the years of preparation for the reconquest of the Sudan, and according to Dafalla, most of them were originally from the Nuba mountains in the Kordofan Province (ibid.);
- (3) Arkaweit (pop. 1532), which was mainly inhabited by Eleigat, Kenuz and families of Egyptian origin; and
- (4) El Medina (pop. 1542), which was the market area. The market was the nucleus of all activity in the town and was dominated by non-Nubian traders, mainly Syrians, Greeks and Egyptians (ibid.).

Wadi Halfa, then, was not really a Nubian town. Of the Sudanese by birth, only 18% were Nubians, while as much as 37% were either Egyptian citizens or Sudanese by grant only. According to the census carried out during 1960, Sudanese by birth were in the town heavily represented in the Government sector, while town residents of foreign origin tended to engage themselves in agriculture, transport and other unskilled occupations (Republic of the Sudan op.cit.).

Post-settlement Achievements

At the time of resettlement, the majority of Basalwa were found within four occupational sectors: (i) trade, (ii) transport, (iii) agriculture and (iv) construction. In all sectors, they tended to belong to the lower echelons: As traders, most of them were peddlers or engaged in petty trade (e.g. fuel trade), and only very few had come to be substantial merchants; in the transport sector, they dominated as porters (atali) and horse-cart drivers (arbaji), but not as drivers or owners of taxis or lorries; in agriculture, they were exclusively sharecroppers or agricultural workers, engaged in cultivating the fields of Nubians who resided in the village communities close to town; and in the building sector, they were brick-layers, carpenters, and unskilled

help-mates, although a few Basalwa had attained positions as resourceful and enterprising contractors. As suggested above, a large portion of their women were also engaged in bread-baking for sale (by their children).

During a remarkably short time, from 1965 until 1975, the Basalwa successfully managed to change their position in the occupational structure of the new town community at Khashm el Girba (**New Halfa**). Table 9, based on a statistical survey carried out among most of the Basalwa households during June 1977, reveals their occupational distribution.

Table 9.

EMPLOYMENT OF BASALWA MALES ABOVE 16 YEARS OF AGE, 1977

merchants	47	-	8.8%
porters	16	=	3.0%
horse-cart operators	18	=	3.3%
contractors	8	=	1.4%
officials	54	=	10.0%
cultivators	62	-	11.5%
workers	99	-	18.4%
brick-layers, help-mates	87	-	16.1%
students	59	=	11.0%
blacksmiths	9	=	1.6%
drivers	28	=	5.2%
carpenters	12	=	2.3%
guards	13	=	2.5%
self-employed	<u>26</u>	-	<u>4.9%</u>
total	<u>538</u>		<u>100%</u>

By 1977, it was clear that not only had the Basalwa entered new careers (we managed, e.g., to trace only one Basalwa official in Wadi Halfa Town), but they had also made impressive strides within activity sectors that they had come to occupy before being resettled: particularly as merchants, contractors, brick-layers, farmers and owners of means of transportation. As bricklayers, they outnumbered any other group in the area, and most of their 175 labour migrants were bricklayers or hod-carriers in construction work, mostly in Jiddah where the Basalwa ran a hostel for new arrivals; amongst 16 contractors in New Halfa, 15 were Basalwa, and other Basalwa were big contractors in the Khartoum area; out of a total of 39 registered taxis in New Halfa Town, 26 were registered to Basalwa owners; most of the pick-up cars or vans used for local transportation of people were also owned by Basalwa; and several Basalwa merchants had expanded their activities considerably, moving into new types of business (agricultural machinery, agricultural crop trading, industrial production) and establishing some joint ventures, such as building

and running the largest cinema in town. In 1977, one of the Basalwa merchants was also a powerful chairman of the Town Council.

The Basalwa had also managed to change their position within the agricultural sector. 140 tenancies had been allotted to members of their community, and they were, in most cases, cultivated by those household units which had lands allocated to them.

At the same time, the Basalwa maintained dominance in their traditional occupations: They continued to bake and sell the best bread in town and engage in other sorts of petty trade; they owned most of the horse-carts (one of them had five horses) although they were facing some competition from new Shukriya and **Fellata**³⁾ entries; and even those few who could be categorized as porters in New Halfa were all Basalwa.

Thus the Basalwa, during a period of 10-12 years, had risen from being an almost stigmatized category (particularly in the eyes of the Halfawi Nubians) to achieving the position of a successful and enterprising group, moving into important and good positions on the urban employment scene.

The Basalwa Quarter

For an outsider making a brief visit to the Basalwa quarter, it is not easy to discover signs of such progress. There is a distinct lack of any ostentatious display of wealth within the private compounds. A few houses have been expanded by the building of new verandahs or the addition of a room or two, but generally the impression is one of modesty, lack of resources and rather crowded quarters: We found nine houses to have more than twenty members living within the walls of their compounds, and compared to the Nubian communities, there is real overcrowding: We registered a population of **2442,4)** consisting of 436 nuclear families living in 241 houses. In terms of educational background, the scores were low: 1223 persons had no education.

However, one is immediately struck by the entrepreneurial and co-operative spirit that seems to prevail in the Basalwa community. There is considerable pride in the achievements of individual members of the community as well as in what is regarded as achievements of the community as such:

- (a) The cinema is looked upon as a community enterprise although it is built and owned by nine individuals. It employs a number of Basalwas as administrators, guards, etc. on rather low salaries, in return for which profits from running the cinema are partly used for assisting other institutions in the community (club, mosque). On Fridays, there is a special film show for Basalwa women.

- (b) A co-operative society has been established in the Basalwa quarter for the sale of meat and vegetables. Prices are fixed and not affected by short-term market fluctuations. Poor people do not have to buy shares in the society. When there is a scarcity of vegetables in the New Halfa area, they are brought from nearby Kassala on Basalwa lorries.
- (c) One primary school for girls and two classrooms for the boys' primary school have been built with the financial assistance from well-off Basalwa (largely merchants and migrants) and with the employment of free labour within the community.
- (d) A mosque has been built in the same way, at a cost of L\$8000, all provided by one Basalwa merchant.
- (e) There is a funeral society where each house makes monthly payments for tea and breakfast and where lunch and supper are prepared in the various houses and brought to the mosque where all funerals are held. In the mosque, there are chairs and tables, mattresses, sheets and mats, as well as a reserve of lamps and kerosene in case of possible electricity cuts.
- (f) There is a very active club (Nadi el Nil, or The Nile Club), and its budget comes largely from membership dues paid by people who are well off and who pay in accordance with their financial means (Saudi migrants, who often appear in Saudi dress, were expected to pay L\$70-80), while ordinary people pay only a nominal due. Football players are recruited to the club's team from various parts of the region, are given money and additional incentives when winning matches and live in a separate house set aside for this purpose. For such reasons, the club is often referred to as Nadi el Kuwait.

Construction

While a large proportion of Basalwa men were engaged in the transportation sector before resettlement, the seed capital for most of their ventures in New Halfa has been assembled through construction and commerce,

As builders, the Basalwa had managed to secure a position for themselves in Wadi Halfa, primarily within the town where houses were mainly of brick and imitated Western European architecture (Wenzel op.cit.). In the rural areas of Nubia, however, houses were made of mud (jalus) construction, in which horizontal courses

of lumpy mud mixed with small stones and dung were covered with a smooth surface layer of mud. Most of the jalus builders were Nubian (often Mahas) and Shaiqiya (ibid.).

Used as they were to hard manual work, the Basalwa began first as hod-carriers and assistants to skilled brick-layers, mainly recruited as labour by people who received building contracts from the Public Works Department. Since the necessary skills could be gained through apprenticeship, and since tools were inexpensive and high levels of education not required, they soon took over a major part of the building activities themselves - even to the extent that two of them became building contractors. My information indicates that there were approximately 70 Basalwa working as brick-layers and hod-carriers in Wadi Halfa before resettlement.

There was a boom period in the building sector during the years following resettlement. The market expanded and new shops, store-rooms and residential quarters were established. In addition, the NHAC was in continuous need of brick-layers, carpenters and help-mates: In 1977, some 60 skilled brick-layers and carpenters as well as a substantial number of hod-carriers were employed by the NHAC alone. It should also be noted that concrete houses were built both in the rural areas and in the town, and as the experienced jalus-builders could no longer apply their skills in the Scheme area, their Basalwa colleagues faced little competition and soon acquired a dominant position within this field of activity.

Commerce

As traders, most of the Basalwa ran small businesses or did some peddling in Wadi Halfa Town. However, there were 6-8 big merchants in their ranks who, together with other traders of Egyptian origin, were some of the best merchants in El Medina (Dafalla op.cit.).

Dafalla, visiting New Halfa in 1966, reported that "all the shops were full of goods and local produce, and their arcades swarmed with Nubian customers and local buyers (ibid.:292). However, many established Wadi Halfa merchants chose to settle in Khartoum or in other places, or to withdraw from trade altogether:

"The market had lost many good merchants. Mohamed Ali Ibrahim, the leading Nubian merchant, together with Ali Hasaballa Lashin of the Eleigat, and the late Nasr Shibben, the best Syrian merchant, had preferred to settle in Khartoum. Of the Egyptian merchants, Yahya Abdel Ghafur Abu Zeid and Khueilid had left the Sudan and settled in Aswan. Other Nubians - Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Awad, Abdel Rahim Mahmoud and Abu Ras Ayoub - preferred to stay in old Wadi

Halfa. The large and well-known family of Sherif Daud had also settled in Khartoum" (ibid.:295).

The flourishing market, in a town which was much larger than Wadi Halfa Town, and with a large rural population within easy access of the Suq el Medina led many Basalwa into commerce on a larger scale than previously, and their ventures were greatly facilitated by the Government granting ownership rights to shop sites even to those who used to operate from rented premises in Wadi Halfa.

Requirements for Entry

It might perhaps be argued that trade, like building and contracting, is characterized by its relative ease of entry. The seed capital for opening a shop can be assembled through peddling, manual labour, or working for another retailer. Skills can be gained through apprenticeship rather than by education, and a fairly small capital outlay may be needed to buy initial stock (cf. Lloyd 1982:63). As far as building contracting is concerned, it is an activity where the average ratio of working and fixed capital requirements to turnover is comparatively small, which is also why many under-capitalized businessmen are often led into the activity.

While the relative ease of entry probably was a main factor behind the original move of the Basalwa into trade and construction, other factors must be adduced in order to account for their continued progress, particularly because both activities are highly competitive in the Sudan and involve substantial risks. Thus builders often head the list of bankruptcies and liquidations. A private client may default, a large consignment of materials may have to be financed or erratic estimating may have led to inadequate recovery of expenses, resulting in a sudden steep rise in working capital requirements. If capital markets, like in the Sudan, are almost inaccessible, risks are multiplied.

The same applies to trade. At one extreme there are established enterprises enjoying a good reputation among a regular clientele; at the other are countless workers who may be employed for only a fraction of the working day and willing to charge the lowest price compatible with their subsistence needs. For the latter, who aspire to emulate the success of the former, entry may be easy in the sense that only a limited capital outlay is needed to buy initial stock, but the opportunities for accumulation in markets that tend to be saturated are often meagre indeed. Successful establishment, therefore, is normally conditioned by

- (1) the presence of fellow traders who are willing to help out newcomers by providing them with credit and/or stock (cf. Manger 1984), or
- (2) accumulation of capital, through the pursuit of other activities, that can be invested in trade.

Migration to Jiddah

The latter avenue has been most common among the Basalwa, not only in the commercial sector but also in the transport business which they totally dominate today. The story behind it is interesting. As the expansion of the Scheme came to a halt in 1969 and as the market (suq) began to feel the impact of low yields and low tenant incomes, the future prospects began to look somewhat **bleaker** for the Basalwa, particularly for those who had come to base their living on continued growth in the construction sector. Because of such developments, a few Basalwa contractors transferred their activities to Khartoum and were quite successful there; others left for Saudi-Arabia, and within a very short period of time, two Basalwa migrants had managed to establish themselves as major building contractors in Jiddah. Through their achievements and patronage, a growing number of Basalwa men were able to enter the Saudi-Arabian labour market before the wholesale migrations began from the Sudan and other countries in the mid-1970s.

During the time of fieldwork (19771, there were reportedly 175 Basalwa men from the New Halfa community in Jiddah, almost all of them associated with construction activities, although in different capacities - as brick-layers, hod-carriers, carpenters, engineers and drivers. At home, there was also a growing number of men with a migrant background, and their careers had a tremendous impact on the local Basalwa economy. With salaries averaging about LSd 400 per month (for brick-layers in 19771, migrants started not only to buy expensive items for their households (there were nearly 80 TV-sets in the Basalwa community, at a time when the necessary facilities for watching television had not been extended to New Halfa), but they also began to make investments, mainly in transportation, trade and real estate. At the same time, the spill-over effects in the Sudan of the boom in the Arab oil-exporting countries, made it possible for the Basalwa at home to continue their activities in the construction sector which was being invigorated by the fact that a growing number of labour migrants began to spend their high wages on house-building.

Organizational Patterns

While it is evident that such achievements were facilitated by developments which created a high demand for Basalwa skills, we still need to explain how they so successfully managed to exploit the opportunities that arose both at home and abroad.

As in the case of the Shukriya, there is a tendency for the Basalwa to use the extended family as a social base from which teams of economic co-operation are composed. It is also common that such units diversify their activities, in such a way that the different activities appear as mutually supportive. It is

interesting to note that this applies not only to large-scale enterprises but also to activities carried out in households of rather modest means.

Abu Hadida is a head clerk at the New Halfa Town Council. He is married, has a number of small children and shares a house with his mother, an older brother who works in the ginning factory and who is also married with children, and a younger, unmarried brother who works as a brick-layer with the Public Works Department. There is yet another young brother who goes to Secondary School. The elder brother is responsible for the cultivation of two tenancies. The wheat crop, turned into flour, is used by the women who bake bread sold by children in the market, and the groundnut shells are used as fuel for their out-door baking ovens. The elder brother also makes different kinds of pastry which he sells to a pastry-shop run by a fellow Basalwa. The brothers have joined in buying a motor-bike in order to make it easier to move back and forth between the house and the hawashas. The brothers do the weeding themselves and engage only hired labour for a few operations. They also pool their resources in such a way that the two senior brothers buy food and other necessities while the unmarried brick-layer pays for regular expenses such as electricity bills, school books, etc..

Akasha is a horse-cart driver and father of four sons and one daughter. They all live in one house and Akasha works two tenancies which are registered in his own name and in the name of his oldest son. The latter, after having worked with horse-carts himself, worked as a brick-layer in Jiddah for almost ten years and now owns two taxis in New Halfa, one of which he drives himself, the other is driven by his younger brother. Akasha's daughter also lives in the same house. Her husband works in Jeddah and now owns a small bus used for local transportation in the town area.

It might be argued that the diversification of activities and the pooling of resources among the Basalwa were largely born of necessity, and that the continued viability of many households in Wadi Halfa was predicated upon the involvement of individual family members in different income-earning activities. Alternatively, I would argue more generally that each form of employment will tend to generate its own set of attitudes (cf. Lloyd op.cit.:68) and make its own organizational demands,

From the days of their arrival in the Sudan the Basalwa have had the suq as their main working place. In their different **capacities** as porters, peddlers, traders and horse-cart drivers most of them had no masters, drew no salaries and had to learn the intricacies of market fluctuations, credit mobilization and protection of fellow Basalwa in a highly competitive situation. Involvement in such activities will favour the development of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes (Haaland 1984:277), and it

will favour organizational solutions that allow for diversification and expansion. This is a well known feature of many informal sector enterprises in the Third World. As Lloyd writes,

"The informal sector worker owns his tools, decides his strategy (within the constraints of the overall economy) and arranges the timing of his activities; he is in this sense his own master. Expansion of his business may take a variety of forms, the breadth of choice available often depending on the nature of the activity. He may involve his family in his work, paying them no direct remuneration. Whilst he goes to the central market to buy produce, a child runs the shop and his wife hawks through the streets; he sells, from an evening stall, food cooked by his wife during the day. Alternatively, he may insist that his children's schooling is of prior importance, hoping for a better career for them. Or he may see in the variety of occupations of household members a form of security against the unemployment or failure of any one person" (Lloyd op.cit.:63).

In fact, the Basalwa themselves refer to their background as "free labourers" (omaal hurr) when trying to explain their achievements. With the exception of those who continued to work in the Wadi Halfa harbour or in the railway station on fixed salaries, the majority of Basalwa were self-employed in the suq. There, most of them worked hard to make ends meet, and in their own opinion, their present willingness to do work of marginal profitability and have the patience to persevere stems from their Wadi Halfa past. This includes their bread-selling which is not very profitable, but also such activities as the following:

Hassan bought two horses in Khartoum at a price of LSd 180. He kept them for a few months, then sold them in ~~New~~ Wadi Halfa for LSd 240. His own net profit was LSd 30,

Ali bought a calf at a price of LSd 30 before the onset of the rainy season. He sold it after three months for LSd 60, after having spent LSd 15 on keeping it in the house.

There are numerous stories of a similar kind among the Basalwa, which show their willingness to exploit opportunities where not only profit margins are small, but where the drudgery involved is often considerable,

Being originally foreigners, the need for security also forced members into ever-increasing dependence upon their kinsmen and others from the Basalwa community. The community was very close-knit, and I was told that they did not allow outsiders to enter. They solved their own problems and considered it shameful to bring any complaints to the attention of the courts of the police. I believe this to have been mainly a function of their

need for security in an alien setting. As no other social group would admit them, and as the state itself provided little or no aid, nobody could afford to alienate himself from kinsmen and others from his natal community.

In the present setting, such features seem instrumental in promoting Basalwa careers. Of particular interest is the organization built up around migration to Jiddah. As mentioned earlier, migration is largely made possible by the presence in Jiddah of two Basalwa building contractors who recruit fellow Basalwa to high-salary jobs. Migration is organized mainly through these two men who are considered patrons of the whole community. In addition, there is a lot of assistance from established migrants who tend to become work-mates for new arrivals, and a hostel is run by the Basalwa community in Jiddah in order to ease the transition and facilitate the move to a new country. Back home, there is considerable pressure put on migrants to make financial contributions to the community (club, mosque, etc.).

The presence of Basalwa employers has other advantages as well. A visa is issued to Saudi-Arabia only to persons who have a promise of employment before they depart from the Sudan. For the Basalwa, this poses no particular problem, because of the network of contacts that exists between the Basalwa in Jiddah and potential employers. Such contacts have made possible a particular type of short-term migration which is very unusual in the Sudan. Thus some men are almost like commuters between New Halfa and Jiddah. They may spend a few months at a time in employment for a Basalwa contractor, then move back to Halfa to take care of business there. In this way, it becomes possible for many men to be actively involved in local enterprises, yet at the same time earn large sums of money in Saudi-Arabia which can be used for investments back home.

Mohamed Nur has been able to "shuttle" between New Halfa and Jeddah during the last few years. With savings from Saudi-Arabia and with the help of resourceful brothers in Khartoum, he established himself as a contractor in New Halfa and became the local agent of the Pepsi Cola Company. He also owns two lorries and two scooters, cultivates a tenancy and employs one of his brothers as deputy (*wakil*) whenever he is away. The latter owns two taxis, while another brother runs a pastry shop.

The Role of Agriculture

As mentioned earlier, the Basalwa had 140 tenancies allocated to members of their community upon arrival in New Halfa. Because of their organizational capacity they rely much less on hired labour than the Nubian tenants for their cultivation, and for many households, crop farming plays an important role for their

economy, This is particularly the case for many of those who have not been able to enter the new career routes of the Basalwa. There are still many arbaji (horse-cart drivers) left in the community. They face increasing competition from new entries (particularly some Shukriya), and for many, tenancy cultivation, particularly by way of sharecropping arrangements, is an important avenue for securing household viability. For others, like Abu Hadida (cf. case above), the wheat is processed into flour and bread and sold on the market while groundnuts are sold and their shells used as fuel for breadbaking. In this way, returns from irrigated farming contributes both subsistence and cash to many Basalwa households. Among those with farming as their principal occupation (cf. Table 9), there are also many who have contracts with Nubians in nearby communities, and who cultivate vegetables on Nubian freehold lands. There are no large-holders among the Basalwa tenants.

Among Basalwa merchants, an additional opportunity for accumulation has been created through investment in agricultural machinery. The NHAPC relies heavily on the services of private contractors, and at the time of fieldwork, ten harvesters and a considerable number of tractors had Basalwa owners. Thus while for many tenants, maintaining their investment in their tenancies may have little direct significance, maintaining their position as tenants remains important in sustaining cycles of accumulation based on their association with the Scheme. It is also an unwritten rule among the Basalwa that tenants should only employ machinery owned by fellow Basalwa on their holdings.

Finally, it should be mentioned that a few Basalwa traders have also entered agricultural crop trade on a large scale, dealing mainly in wheat and sorghum within the larger region.

Education and New Careers

The Basalwa themselves claim that their long association with the Halfawi Nubians has taught them the value of education for their future progress. Practically all children now go to primary school and many proceed to higher education (cf. Table 9). As is the case among Nubians, education is strongly encouraged, and the Basalwa community has already produced a high number of teachers, engineers and officials working within the Town Council, the NHAPC and other institutions. Such developments have come to affect the role of children as labour contributors within their families, Although they still participate much more than Nubian children in income-earning activities as well as household chores, a growing number of households regard their schooling as of prior importance and use child labour less extensively than previously.

Summary

In trying to summarize my argument concerning the main factors behind Basalwa achievements in New Halfa Town, I would like to emphasize the following points:

- (1) The Basalwa arrived in Wadi Halfa Town from rural Egyptian communities as from the 1920s and entered jobs as porters in the harbour and the railway station. Later, they managed to move into a limited number of other occupations, such as house building, petty trade and horse-cart transport.
- (2) Having entered such occupations, they had to learn the intricacies of market fluctuations, credit mobilization and the protection of fellow Basalwa in a highly competitive situation. Their work rendered salient the very characteristics of individual responsibility and group self-help that may be muted or unexpressed among wage-earners (like the **Nubians**) where success depends upon employers who may demand hard work rather than ingenuity.
- (3) Through resettlement, the Basalwa were projected into an environment where there was a high demand for their skills and assets, and due to their abilities to exploit such demands, they managed to secure for themselves a rapid upward mobility on the urban employment scene.
- (4) Crucial for their success, however, has been their ability to exploit emerging opportunities for employment in Saudi-Arabia. Through migration, a large number of Basalwa households have been able to sustain cycles of accumulation based on diverse activities, and their dominance within the local transportation sector stems primarily from their Saudi successes, combined with the fact that their domestic arrangements have allowed them to exploit a range of alternatives with regard to economic investment and allocation of labour.

I must emphasize that there are still Basalwa families who are poor and who have not benefited much from moving to the New Halfa Scheme. They include particularly people who have been unable to move away from some of the traditional unskilled Basalwa occupations, such as porters, peddlers and horse-cart drivers. The latter compare their own situation with that of the Palestinians: After having arrived in New Halfa, business was brisk and they monopolized the market. Then other people entered the same trade, and the Basalwa feel that they are now about to be pushed out by the new entries. Some of them also feel very strongly that they have not themselves benefited from the considerable progress made by fellow Basalwa. "The rich are rich for themselves", is a saying much heard among them; and they never go to the club which they regard as a place where successful

Bread-baking among the Basalwa,
New Halfa Town

people meet each other, The most serious threat against their position may in fact come from their own people, Before I left them, complaining about their misfortunes and their Shukriya competitors, it became known that a Basalwa tenant, supported by his brother in Jiddah, had invested in five horse-carts in an attempt to take over a large share of the business himself.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. I am largely indebted to the late Hassan Dafalla for this historical account (Dafalla 1975).
2. Saidi = people from Upper Egypt.
3. Fellata is a term used in the Sudan for categorizing West African immigrants.
4. I am unable to fully account for this figure which is unexpectedly low compared to that of the 1960 census, but as far as I know, the 1960 census included a number of non-Basalwa who had taken up residence in the Basalwa quarter. In addition, some of the Basalwa living in Wadi Halfa were not resettled in New Halfa but moved to Khartoum and to Wad Medani on the Blue Nile,

CHAPTER SIX

NUBIAN SONGS AND SHUKRIYA POEMS: PROTEST AND RENAISSANCE~)

Farewell, land of Nubians,
Peace be with you.
We have lived here a long time,
as kinsmen and lovers.
We were farmers working together,
listening to the music of the water wheel,
and drinking midday-tea.

How are we going to forget these things?
They were like the blood in our veins.
How can we forget?
Our children will weep with us.
Because we know your value, Halfa.

I swear to you, we will never sleep.
We did not choose to leave.
It was the choice of our enemy and your enemy,
Oh, dear Halfa.
Peace be with you.
Peace be with you, Abu Simbel.
Peace be with you, land of Nubians.
We all say farewell to you.
We all say farewell.

Abdel Fattah Mohamed Salih.

Introduction

Any picture of social and economic change will remain incomplete without an understanding of the passions and **imaginings** that provoke and inform it. This is of course particularly true in the case of far-reaching and dramatic events such as the resettlement of Nubians and the attempts to settle large nomadic populations on the New Halfa Scheme.

In fact, responses to compulsory movement among the **Halfawi** Nubians took on a number of different forms, as did those of the Shukriya who felt that their homeland was being usurped by other ethnic groups and that their traditional way of life was seriously threatened.

In the case of the Nubians, a high incidence of illness was reported during the years following resettlement, and the

psychological depression that most of them experienced was held responsible for this high ratio (Fahim 1972:18). The death rate also rose, and in a study of settler attitudes, Abdel Rahman concludes that 77 percent of the Nubian tenants were moderately or poorly adjusted to their new environment at the time of study - three years after resettlement (Abdel Rahman 1969). This is hardly surprising given the tremendous stress that accompanies relocation and the feelings and sentiments of the population being resettled.

However, the period of resettlement was also a period of political activism and cultural revival. In Wadi Halfa, the opposition against the Government's decision to resettle them at a place which the majority of the people had rejected, took many forms, from active resistance through the clandestine "Wadi Halfa Peoples' Union for Resistance" to persistent, passive refusal to co-operate with the local authorities for over six months during 1960-61 (Abdalla 1970:69f). In the cities, where there were large Nubian communities, there was a growing ethnic awareness which became manifested in various ways: There was a growth of neighbourhood units; there were attempts to enforce endogamy; urban sub-groups were coalesced into political pressure groups; there was a resurgence of ascriptive hiring and occupational exclusiveness; there was greater cohesiveness in the Halfawi social network; urban associations became locations from which emanated the revival of Nubian language, dress, songs, poems, life-cycle customs, and, even, in Khartoum, a movement to build a replica of a traditional Nubian village in the capital. The immediate catalyst of such events and processes was the perceived threat to group solidarity as a result of displacement (Hale, op.cit.).

Songs among Nubians, and oral poetry among the Shukriya, came to play a major role both in voicing protest, in venting feelings, frustrations and anxieties and in redefining and reinforcing ethnic identity. During a period when freedom of expression was only tolerated to a very limited extent and in a situation where the populations were dispersed over large areas, and in many localities, songs came to serve as channels for releasing the multiple social, political and psychological tensions experienced by the Nubians. Oral poetry came to play a similar role among the Shukriya (Hurreiz 1975, 1978).

Music and Songs in Nubian Culture and Society

Nubia existed in a modern literate culture (Islam), and the rate of literacy (proficiency in Arabic) has risen steadily after World War II. In 1960, about 75 per cent of the boys and 42 per cent of the girls between the ages of 6 and 15 were considered literate, and for the resident male population past 30 years of age the percentage of literacy was 33 (Kleve 1964). However, their native

language is the **Halfawi** dialect of Nubian, belonging to the Eastern Sudanic family, and none of the Nubian dialects have been put into writing. Nubians must therefore learn much of their own history through oral means. Folktales and songs tend to replace written history, although nothing like the Shukriya celebrations of historical traditions can be found among Nubians.

Usually the Nubians celebrate only the wedding ceremony on a large scale with music and dance, while other ceremonies in the life cycle are modestly accompanied by only a few relevant songs (cf. Simon 1980). In the wedding festivities, which last up to seven days, and in the related songs and dances, one can differentiate between two spheres: strictly ceremonial acts and evening dances, taking place partly parallel to, and partly supplementary to, the ceremonies. These dances serve as entertainment for guests and villagers. Disregarding such modern appearances as youth clubs or school events, weddings offer the only opportunity for villagers to publicly amuse themselves and dance. Talented poets and musicians in Nubia make new songs for such occasions. The few professional musicians are engaged mainly for these festivities. It follows that the large majority of Nubian songs for dance and entertainment are about love and beautiful girls:

"I shall not be happy until I see you, my love.
How can I describe you when my mind and
spirit are occupied with your beauty and
your delightful sweet voice?
However, a day will come when I will be
able to enjoy myself with all this.
Oh, your parents cannot take this beauty
away from you".

(excerpt from a poem by Salih Musa).

Today, however, an increasing number of young people play the lyre (which, together with the frame drum **taar** and the singleheaded clay drum **daluka** are the only musical instruments traditionally used in **Nubia**) or meet for dancing and music undisturbed in local clubs. The new occasions have led to an expansion of some themes: New songs are performed which do not only deal with love for a girl, but include as well, e.g., reflections about the village or home country, memories of old times, recent political events, etc. (Simon op.cit.). Very often, as we shall see below, the different themes are combined in one song: Separation and farewell of the beloved, yearning, and pangs of love, which constitute a large, richly garnished portion in most songs and are very popular among listeners, may be connected with impressions describing village environment and nature as well as the dramatic circumstances surrounding the resettlement.

Songs, Protest and Suffering

The songs created by Nubian poets (most of whom are also singers) in response to resettlement (1959–65) are mostly songs of protest, songs of mourning and songs that articulate the fears engendered by removal to a wholly new environment.

The early songs are rather indirect in their protest against the Government's decision to relocate the Halfawi Nubians in Khashm el Girba. Salih Musa, one of the most renowned poets and singers, explains why in a song he reputedly wrote in a Nubian graveyard;

We pray to God and complain,
that we do not care for the waters of Atbara,
nor the life of the desert.
If we declare our protest publicly,
handcuffs will be our reward.
And if we keep silent, then Halfa will be lost.
We have nothing to do but be patient.

When the military Government of Abboud was deposed in 1964, Salih Musa composed a quite different song:

They expelled us from our land,
and now they are deposed themselves.
Even Sakiena has been sent away.
Insignificant though he has been,
Abboud sold our land, with bribery and drink
and what a cheap price it was.
They sold the people of the Nile,
the people of the date palms and mango.
Without their consent.
They must be punished - imprisoned or hanged.

For the awful deed of sending us away from Halfa.
Hassan Beshir, that one famous for toughness and
cruelty,
has now been thrown away by the people.
As for Magboul, we hear he is in bed to many
bars and hotels.
No wonder, he can drink 20 barrels of beer and
still ask for more.
They wasted all the public money.
The resettlement swallowed it all.
Abboud ran many times to get loans from outside.
Why do you think Shastri²⁾ died of a heart attack
the day Abboud visited him?

Long live the University.
Long live the students who faced the bullets
unarmed, with only stones.
Ghorashi is now in our memory³⁾
May God rest his soul.
He is the symbol of the cruelty of the military regime.
They ran away when the people rebelled.

The violators of Nubia are clearly and individually identified -
Prime Minister Abboud and his wife Sakiena, Hassan Beshir and
Magboul, both ministers in Abboud's cabinet.

Active resistance against the junta began in the University of
Khartoum. It was there that the student Ghorashi was killed. The
replacement of the military junta with a democratic government,
however, did not alter the course of events in Wadi Halfa. The
removal of 50,000 Nubians from the Nile valley to the desert
continued unabated.

The songs occasioned by the relocation are also eloquent eulogies
for their homeland and the way of life the Nubians were leaving
behind them. Mohammed el Hassan's lament is typical:

I cried from the depth of my heart.. ..
for the land I loved,
where I wished to die
when death arrives.

The features of the landscape the poets recall are not so much the
river itself, as the surrounding hills and fields and the
date-palms along its banks. The Nile provided the water necessary
for the Nubian way of life. It also provided entertainment, as
Ali Salih Dawud recalls:

In the twilight we stood at the banks
looking over the river Nile.
We saw many ships travelling,
moving over the water,
the waves were sometimes high, sometimes low.

But it is "Halfa, bride of the Nile" which Ali Salih mourns:

Oh Halfa, bride of the Nile,
how can I forget you
how can I forget the date-palms
planted on your land?

How can I forget a love in your land
that I cared for
and guarded

in the morning and twilight?
How many times we ran seeking
pleasure in the open air
climbing the hills with bare feet.
When we were on the water wheels
sleepy, drinking the sweet water
in a way that resembled kissing.

A recurrent theme is the harmony achieved between the Nubians and the land they inhabited. Even the houses they lived in were part of the landscape:

And how could I forget those houses
on the sandy hills that have a long history.
The houses that were built from your earth
resemble the colour of the Nile like
everything original.

The Halfa the songs celebrate is a peaceful valley. Ali Salih Dawoud writes,

Send your eyes anywhere.
Everywhere you will see peace,
There are no storms, no clouds to disturb our
playing in the twilight.
There were no wild animals,
nor wild bears nor insects to disturb our peace
and destroy our farms.

One of the poets, Suleyman Haj Khalil, compares the removal to Khashm el Girba to an eviction from paradise.

The generosity of the Nile valley, in turn, made the Nubians themselves generous. Mohammed el Hassan's farewell song recalls the harmony of Nubian social life:

And I remembered how I lived in peace with
little ill fortune.
How I loved my friends and how quarrels never
lasted.
How we lived and how the sun provided us with
morning in the sleepy fields.
How we loved it and drank the wine of eternity.
Our work in the fields is hard and honest work,
We walk to the farms when morning attacks our
dark night with its arrows.
We come home at night with peace and friendship,
A man may come here with little speech, but soon
he will sing.
We stay in the streets in groups before supper.
We were not used to eat behind closed doors, only
in the open air.

Generosity we lived on, what pity that we shall
desert such generous people.

We sat in groups, conferring with each other.
Women has their own place, and so did men,
And the young men played cards with shouts.

When there was a wedding, we rejoiced.
And you see young people in groups like rushing
waves.
We dance to a drum that beats deep in our hearts
And the maidens walk in dances with the whole
body clothed.
I have never seen anything like your dances,
Halfa, in their glory is my whole life.
When it is time for harvesting, we are scattered
over the fields of our grandfathers and uncles.
We harvest what we have planted and then walk
home or ride our donkeys.
We carry the harvest, grain or precious dates.
We were brothers in the old days, in sadness and
happiness.
We are used to you, Halfa land, why should they
ask us to move?
Is it true that we shall have to leave you,
oh God, that is the worst of our dreams
Is it true that we shall have to bury in you our
spendid memories, oh, that is sad.
Is it true that we are going to leave your
beloved ones in graves before it is time to force
us to move?

Not only were the Halfawi Nubians leaving a familiar landscape and
a cherished way of life, they were also leaving the homeland of
their ancestors and the site of thousands of years of Nubian
history. Suyleyman Haj Khalil pays tribute:

O Ashkeit,⁴⁾ land of civilizations,
Mother of the famous Nubians,
Mother of Nubians since ancient times.
Mother of Nubians who refused to trade you
with any other place,

They are descendants of Ham.⁵⁾
Their hearts are trees planted upon you,
Their heads are the moon shining over you.
Their monuments are among the greatest creations
in the world,

O Ashkeit, what is wrong with you?
What have you done that they should sentence you
to death?
And under the great lake go your pearls that
cannot be rescued,

Ashkeit, home of my childhood.
 That suckled us ~~til~~ manhood.
 Who can return to us our Nile, its banks,
 the grasses and the trees?
 Who can return to us our palm trees and their
 precious dates?

The fear generated by their relocation to an unfamiliar part of the Sudan is almost as great as the Nubian's sorrow in leaving Halfa. Yet, it is not so much the place itself as the threat removal posed to Nubian ethnic identity and the Nubian way of life, which the poets feared. The most poignant expression of their fear is found in a song by Salih Musa. The first part of the song describes the feelings of a man after the departure of his wife. The images are of death and destruction - pigeons without water, a broken ~~waterpot~~ and a handkerchief trampled into the dust:

Unbearable is the departure of my love
 Whom I saw off at the railwaystation
 I said goodbye to them all
 My hand I put into hers, and tears were falling
 down our cheeks
 But I preferred to go back to her village before
 the departure of the train
 I stood amazed in front of her deserted house
 And I found magnified sadness in the courtyard.
 Pigeons found no water, and some of them were
 about to die.
 The ~~waterpot~~ was broken
 It was too painful for me.
 On the ground I saw her handkerchief covered
 with dust.
 It might have fallen from her hand while she was
 hurrying to catch the train.
 I gazed at it and saw her.....,

Next, he imagines her on the train several hours later, Her suffering is as acute as his, she can neither attend to the present nor to the future, She cannot eat the food prepared for the journey and she neglects the baby:

Sitting in the compartment, and the train
 has gone as far as Shendi,
 Her baby was playing carelessly and she paid him
 no attention.
 The food was still wrapped, uneaten.

The source of their suffering is as much the evacuation from their homeland as 'it is their relocation in the land of the nomadic Shukriya:

Behind her she had left the Nile,
 the palms and the unguarded fields
 where birds are now playing and eating the seeds,
 and the pigeons are dying.
 She chooses to go to Shukriya land.
 Do you know, love, that the land you are going to
 is a land of "Arabs"?6)
 The land of Shukriya which is called Girba.
 I wonder, are you going to trade in camels and
 live in huts?
 How can you remain there?
 How can you live with the Shukriya?
 The cause of all these mishaps was Abboud, Talaat
 and Nasser.
 Oh, we have suffered much from the deeds of
 Abboud, Talaat and Nasser.
 We have suffered by those who accepted this
 situation
 And we are still suffering, suffering, suffering.

The third part of the song resembles a nightmare. He, too, has
 now come to New Halfa and has been searching for his family among
 the several villages without names, and where all the houses look
 alike:

Where are you?
 I am still searching for you since I arrived here
 in New Halfa.
 In what village do you live, what is its number
 and in what block?
 They are all similar to me.
 Now we are searching for each other hopelessly
 in this wide land.
 While there I could have met you in a moment's time.
 Where is all our tenderness that we have
 exchanged so many times?
 Nevertheless we have to be optimistic,
 We have to be optimistic.

While such songs clearly served to articulate and mobilize public
 opinion (cf. Hale op.cit.), they also helped redefine and
 reinforce Nubian ethnic identity. By many, the greatest threat
 posed by resettlement consisted of the dispersion of the Halfawi
 people and the disintegration of their characteristically Nubian
 identity. Salih Musa asks the emigrants: "are you going to trade
 in camels and live in huts?"

By emphasizing selected aspects of Nubian ethnic traditions, the
 poets attempt to counteract the threat of disintegration. The
 repeated reference to time-honoured customs, to ethnic rituals and
 to the long history of Nubia all serve to remind the Halfawi

Nubians that they belong together. Hence, the drinking of tea at noon, which Nubians consider to be a custom unique to themselves, is mentioned in a number of songs. Likewise, the tradition of implanting saucers and dinner plates into both interior and exterior walls becomes important to remember as being a distinctive form of house decoration (Wenzel op.cit.). Reference to wedding rituals may serve not only as a demarcation of Nubian ethnicity, but also as an implicit reminder of the importance of endogamy. The appeal to the history of Nubia provides additional support for the poets' plea for solidarity.

Hussein Mohamed Ibrahim argues that the values Nubians associate with their traditional homeland transcend its geographical location:

As long as we have faith in true greatness,
In antiquities that resist to sink.
In voices that rise for truth,
Halfa will not perish.
Halfa will exist.

The waters of the Nile will continue to flow,
And the palms will tower along the banks,
And the hopes of my people will persist.

That is why my son is named **Taharqa**.⁷⁾

While the songs spread among Nubians in Wadi Halfa, the Nubian clubs became symbols of the growth of ethnic awareness in the towns. In Khartoum, the Wadi Halfa Sons Club had its membership increased and the age range expanded, and the club became a nexus of cultural revival - the location from which emanated the revival of Nubian language (rotana), dress, songs, poems and life-cycle customs (cf. Hale op.cit.:473). Hale reports that there was an upsurge in the teaching of rotana, and that new lyrics were written and added to old musical styles, with traditional instruments (ibid.). She also writes that in the 1960s, it was not unusual "**to see** an educated, urbanized Halfawiyya (Nubian girl) from Khartoum married in a modified Nubian wedding - with costume, **jewelry**, dance, and ritual accoutrements - something which would have been very unusual in the 1950s" (ibid. :474). Thus Nubian attempts to achieve distinctiveness took on a number of different forms, only one of which was the making and singing of songs that hold up the unique and specific about being a Halfawi Nubian, praise Halfa and attack political leaders responsible for the outrageous resettlement decision. When the move was accomplished despite their protest, Salih Musa, however, was able to stand up to the challenge and encourage a disheartened people:

It is time now to live in the vast land.
We ought not to pity or be sorry for our lost palms.
We did not plant them,
They are only the traces of our ancestors.
We did not suffer in their planting.
We should not be sorry for we have eaten our share.
And that ends our contact with the date palms,
Like one who died and cannot return.

People of Halfa, stick together all of you.
Everybody carry a hoe.
We should work very hard to till this soil.
We should show the whole Sudan our potential power in production.
And our ability to support the national economy.

People of Halfa, you must plant trees over the whole area.
When these trees grow, we will enjoy their shade and fruit.

We have come to this vast land to produce.

The Butana Poetry

Among the Skukriya, there was a bitter sense of defeat and also a considerable apprehension about the influx of Nubians and other ethnic groups as well as what they saw as the imminent disruption of their traditional way of life. This was expressed in a new folklore genre - "a new kind of social and political protest poetry dedicated to "el Butana" and charged with the sentiments, protest and frustration of the tribe" (Hurreiz 1975:126).

Among the Shukriya, their poets are regarded as the main stewards of historical traditions and hold an enormously important role in the society. For the transmission of these traditions, the Shukriya tend to follow the Islamic method of Isnad. Certain men are known as reliable human sources of history and whoever wants to know about the history of the tribe should take from them or from someone who took from those sources (al-Hardallo 1975:140). Most of it is handed over to new generations in the form of oral poetry, and since many regard the poetic traditions as sacred texts which provide the Shukriya with a common heritage, and which teach certain morals as part of a binding culture for all, the major Shukriya poets have come to fill roles both as educators and entertainers. They pass on the history and social values to the living generations, reinforce pride in local groups and traditions, yet they also make poems about camels and women, the two favourite themes in Shukriya folk poetry (Hurreiz 1978:78):

Oh, the plant which is inaccessible.
 Her smile is the lightning in the quiet, rainy night.
 Her beauty excels that of Shamah, Zubaida and Asia.
 The lanterns of the darkest darkness are her cheeks.

(excerpt from a poem by Ahmed Awad el Karim Hassab Rabbu.)

During this century, a number of changes have taken place in and around the Butana, and the Shukriya poets have made a running commentary on events and developments. Traditional imagery has given way to new concepts and images brought about by the influence of modernization, technical and economic changes. Thus such stock images as the swiftness of the camel being compared to the wild animals frightened by war drums or the clouds driven by heavy winds, were replaced by the train, the truck and the sewing machine (ibid.:79).

The establishment of the New Halfa Scheme and the resettlement of Nubians was a "terrible blow" (Hurreiz 1975:126) to the Shukriya who considered the Butana as their undisputed traditional land which they had gained and secured by arms. Their sense of defeat and bitterness was expressed in a new folklore genre - the Butana poetry (ghuna al Butaana) - to which all the famous poets of the tribe contributed, and in which they expressed their protest against the **political** and social injustices which had afflicted the Shukriya tribe. In this genre, the Shukriya land "el Butana" is personified and addressed by the poet, and she answers the poet and speaks out its complaint, protest and rejection of the new way of life. The general theme is social protest, and among the main issues which were continuously presented are the following:

- (a) the bitterness caused by the usurpation of land and the influx of different tribes into the Butana;
- (b) human imposition on nature and the disruption of the traditional way of social life which is caused by the impact of urbanization; and
- (c) the attempt to mobilize the masses and stir them against this new way of life by invoking tribal ancestors and reminding the people of the famous tribal warriors who have fought courageously to keep the Butana an undisputedly Shukriya land (ibid.).

This poetry which has been extensively quoted and analyzed by Hurreiz embodies the responses of the Shukriya toward the New Halfa Scheme and what they saw as problems associated with the Scheme (influx of other ethnic groups, mechanized agriculture, restrictions on nomadism, loss of grazing lands). The Butana becomes a symbol for the glorious past, tradition and integrity of the tribe, and as a channel through which sentiments were expressed. By addressing complaints and protest to the Butana,

the homeland of the Shukriya serves as a mediatory body between the aggressors (mainly the Government) and the aggrieved (Hurreiz 1975:126).

After the completion of the Scheme, the Shukriya poets continued to express their concerns on the settlement of alien groups, and they continued to express the various anxieties, frustrations and dilemmas experienced by all those who struggled to cope with a new life within modern irrigated agriculture. A leading poet was El Sadig who made a number of poems in which the various crops on the Scheme were personified and entered dialogues between themselves and discussions with tenants and nomads. I shall end this book by quoting some examples of this poetry. They are well known among all the Shukriya, and, in their own opinion, they articulate fundamental dilemmas ("pushes and pulls") in their lives on the Scheme. The first tells the story of a tenant who goes to the Butana in order to borrow money from a nomad friend. The latter refuses and they start mocking each other.

Tenant: The heat of your grazing land has bowed your legs.
 And here you are, bundled in a heavy robe,
 with nothing above your head but the Judgement Day,
 pulling buckets from the well and working in
 mud with your bare hands.
 In the evening, how small your eyes look.

Nomad: It seems that the weeds have grown thick on
 your tenancy.
 Your stomach is filled with wheat
 and now you have to carry your big belly,
 Empty are your pockets, tired is your soul.
 And the cold breeze blows from the canal
 making your tears fall.

Tenant: The money from cotton I received before the
 wheat and the groundnuts.
 Why are you blaming me, you friend of snakes?
 Your old skin bag has nothing inside it.
 You were thinking that your wealth would last
 forever,

Nomad: I return to my ewe that gave birth to single
 and twin lambs,
 I separate the bigger sheep which I drive to
 the grazing land,
 and then take a long nap myself,
 As for you, continue waiting for your money
 which is always delayed.
 The cotton labourers will continue to run after
 you demanding their money.

Tenant: Fasting the whole day and pulling the tiring weeds.
Just for ounces of dura during the whole long rainy season.
Your animal-skin bag is empty except for a few things that make big sounds.
One day my friend, a snake will bite you and you will die.

Nomad: You work your land with a spade and your spirit is low.
Standing on your feet all day while your wheat is drowning.
You called the workers to come to your hawasha and you are happy.
But when they come for payment, the slaves make you sweat.

Tenant: While searching for good grazing land your feet become dry and cracked
We know very well that you collect money when you sell animals.
But you devil, where is the zakat?⁸⁾

Nomad: During day and night you are on your donkey's back and never at rest.
Hauling up canal water, you look like a camel trapped in mud.
The wounds of bankruptcy are so clear upon your face.
Weed-cutting has made your back as sharp and thin as a razor blade.

Tenant: I wear good clothes and come out of my house quite clean.
On the well's edge or its rope I never spend the night
All night you run after donkeys.
I swear I'll cut off my head if ever I saw you wearing clean clothes.

Nomad: For twelve months you're imprisoned inside your hawasha
The canal's water has made three bellies for you
Bankruptcy left you a madman
I fear that you will die from cotton debts.

Now the nomad turns to speak to the cotton crop which is cultivated by the tenant:

Oh, hawasha cotton, what can I do about you?
Let the sword be between us,
You deprived me of my people and now I am a guest
in my own land.
You deprived me of those who help me to water my
sheep. 9)

Cotton: If you come to me again
I swear I'll finish you with my sword
Don't you know that I have inspectors and
managers at my command?
Don't you know that I have a guard for the
zariba?

Nomad: You have been cultivated for one year and not
more.
From the heat of bankruptcy your people were irritated
and have gone mad.
Waiting outside offices for the impossible to
occur.
From now, my friend, your condition has become
very bad.

Cotton: Don't you know how rich I have been
He who was driven out from Ethiopia
have I kept within my land.
I clothed the poor man and built a big hut
for him.
I fought bankruptcy and have beaten it.

Now the situation is changing. The rains started and the nomad is
upset because he cannot control his animals.

Tenant: The grass went very bad while the animals
were waiting
How lost is their herder who can not find them
Their male sheep looking hopelessly from side to
side
His big mothers were also in great astonishment,

Nomad: Oh God, may the next good year come quickly
With rains that shower day and night
And upon el Gemeli hills "Ab Shawshia"¹⁰⁾ grows
There my sheep will play "el Sagriya".¹¹⁾

Tenant: Your soul for goodness never moves.
God's Zakat you never paid
I hope your sheep die in an empty land
And the songs of your flute be the compensation.

Nomad: The burden of bankruptcy is always upon
your soul, and
all the world's debts upon your back
Why are you bending - has an owl called upon
you?
Or is it from the debts of your divided¹⁾
tenancy?

The second poem is a dialogue between the wheat and the
groundnuts. It adds substantially to the rather simplified
picture drawn by myself in Chapter Two.

Wheat: You are not the one whose ton brings
60 pounds.
The Bank and the merchants both wanted to buy
me.
The people of a thousand pounds do not pay even
a milliem¹³⁾ for you.

Groundnut: I washed and came to you but never afraid
of you
How miserable is your master when you are
riddled by diseases
I know, my friend, your roots are not deep in
the earth
The day of my picking is a miserable day
for you.

Wheat: Can't you see how the salt of the East brightened
my colour.¹⁴⁾
The owners of neighbouring hawashas saw it before
the villagers did.
With the Bank or merchants I was never in debts.
In the big market the mills wanted me most.

Groundnut: Don't you see how high is my price?
These are the merchants' camels waiting for me!
Behind me, I leave the wheat swimming in
his weeds
And with my axe I smite bankruptcy!

Wheat: Don't win my hatred through showing me your
badness
Let cotton be between you and me.
In the market I could observe how red were your
eyes
Be patient, until your debts are paid.

Groundnut: I am very surprised that you called upon cotton
How useless is cotton after its weeds become
heavy.
Oh El Sadig, don't praise him
And remember how he scandalized you last year.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

I am grateful to the following persons, all of them Sudanese, who have helped me in translating the songs and poems cited in this paper: Fikri Abdouni, Hassan Beshir, Gamal El Din Mohamed, Mustafa Mahmoud and Hassan Mohamed Salih.

2. Shastri was India's Prime Minister.
3. The students' union of the University of Khartoum was a centre of opposition to the Abboud regime. On 22 October 1964, students defied an order which banned public meetings. In the course of police attempts to disperse the meeting the student Ghorashi was shot and fatally wounded. On the next day a funeral procession of some 30,000 people quickly spawned demonstrations and riots which brought about the demise of Abboud's Supreme Council and the resignation of the cabinet on 26 October. Today, Ghorashi is considered a political martyr in the Sudan.
4. Ashkeit was a Nubian village in the Wadi Halfa District, the home of Suleyman Haj Khalil.
5. The reference to Ham is based on the common assumption that the Nubians are of Hamitic origins (for a discussion, cf. Hale 1971).

Arabs = nomads.

Taharqa was a famous Nubian king who ruled Egypt and Nubia during the Napatan period (cf. Adams 1977).

Zakat refers to animal tax determined by Islamic rules, i.e. the children have gone to the Scheme for their schooling.
10. Ab Shawshia is a type of grass growing on the Butana.
11. El Sagriya is a Shukriya game played with swords.
12. This refers to the process of fragmentation due to debts.
13. Milliem is the smallest Sudanese currency denomination.
14. This imagery refers to the good soils in the Scheme.

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Published by:

Scandinavian Institute of African Studies
P.O. Box 1703, S-75147 Uppsala, Sweden

Distributed by:

Almqvist & Wiksell International
P.O. Box 62, S-101 20 Stockholm, Sweden

ISBN 91-7106-242-4