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Famine, Slavery, and Power
in Sudan, 1883-1956

Steven Serels



Starvation and the State

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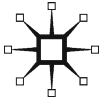
Starvation and the State: Famine, Slavery, and Power in Sudan, 1883–1956

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Note on Transliteration

In transliterating Arabic words, I have generally followed the transliteration system used by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. For simplicity, I have indicated plurals by adding an “s” to the end of the transliterated singular nouns. English names are used for well-known places, such as Khartoum, Cairo, and Mecca. Less well-known cities, towns, regions, and other localities are transliterated from the Arabic without diacritic marks. Since Turko-Egyptian and Anglo-Egyptian provinces have different boundaries, I distinguish between the two by using the transliterated Arabic name, without diacritic marks, when referring to the Turko-Egyptian province and the English name to refer to the Anglo-Egyptian province. Offices, departments, agencies, named development projects, etc. of the Anglo-Egyptian state are referred to with English terminology.

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Glossary of Foreign Terms

Arabic

<i>Amīr</i>	Commander
<i>Ardabb</i>	A unit of measure; its precise size varied—in Khartoum in the early twentieth century, 1 <i>ardabb</i> = 144 kg
<i>Dhura</i>	Sorghum
<i>Faddān</i>	A unit of measurement; 1 <i>faddān</i> = 1.038 acres
<i>Majā'a</i>	Famine
<i>Mudīr</i>	Governor
<i>Nāzir</i>	Head <i>shaykh</i>
<i>Qinṭār</i>	A unit of measure; 1 <i>qinṭār</i> ginned cotton = 44.93 kg; 1 <i>qinṭār</i> unginned cotton = 141.53 kg
<i>Sāqiya</i>	Water wheel used in irrigation
<i>Shaykh</i>	Religious leader or secular notable
<i>Sirdār</i>	Commander in chief of the Egyptian Army
<i>Ṣūfī tarīqa</i>	Sufi religious order
<i>'Umda</i>	Village headman
<i>Wakīl</i>	Agent
<i>Zarība</i>	A protected campsite

Tu-Bedawi

<i>Adat</i>	Tribe
<i>Dīwāb</i>	Small, family confederation

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Abbreviations

ADM	Admiralty (Britain)
BCGA	British Cotton Growing Association
CIVSEC	Civil Secretary (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan)
FO	Foreign Office (Britain)
MESC	Middle East Supply Centre
NA	The National Archive (Britain)
NRO	National Records Office (the Republic of Sudan)
KCC	Kassala Cotton Corporation
RFACS	Reports on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of the Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan)
SAD	Sudan Archive Durham (Durham University)
SPS	Sudan Plantations Syndicate
STC	Sudan Trading Company
WO	War Office (British)
WYL	The Wylde Family Papers (Durham University)

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Preface

The 1984–1985 famine that devastated Western and Eastern Sudan drew worldwide attention as it played out in real time on international television. The tragic images broadcast on the nightly news called out for explanation and the years that followed saw a steady stream of publications on the causes of that deadly food crisis. Most scholars, with a few notable exceptions, blamed conditions during the preceding decade, asserting that the famine was caused by such factors as a decline in real wages in the early 1980s or the policies imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in the 1970s.¹ These scholars either ignored or underplayed long-term, intergenerational factors that determine patterns of access to food in Sudan. Though the 1984–1985 famine has receded from the global discussion, food insecurity in Sudan has again become a subject of international attention. As global food prices spiked in 2007–2008 and 2011, protests broke out in a number of countries, including Sudan. Western governments, UN agencies, and NGOs began warning of the potential for food riots to destabilize the developing world. Again, experts explained food insecurity in terms of short-term factors, such as the speculative practices of Western commodities traders and the increased purchasing power of oil-rich Gulf states. When long-term factors were addressed they were on a global scale, such as climate change.² Yet again local, intergenerational factors that affect food security were ignored. The focus on short-term causes over intergenerational factors fuels and is fueled by a belief that famine and food insecurity in Sudan are technical problems that can be solved by better governance. This belief has created a type of lament for the end of British rule, which a number of scholars claim ushered in a period of prolonged food security.³ However, Sudanese communities suffered through a number of devastating famines under British rule, including ones that occurred in 1896–1900, 1914, 1918–1919, 1925–1927, and 1942–1943. These famines are of

continued cultural importance in Sudan. Sudanese communities, as is common elsewhere in Africa, remember historically important famines by naming them.⁴ For these communities, the living memories of these named famines are important touchstones used to help understand contemporary food crises.⁵

This book demonstrates that, beyond their continued cultural resonance, the legacy of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century famines continues to impact social, economic, and political conditions in Sudan. In fact, famine and food insecurity played crucial roles in the creation of the modern Sudanese state. The discussed food crises did not have simple, natural causations. They were the result of intergenerational exploitative processes that transferred resources from victim communities to the state and to a small group of nonstate elites. These processes fundamentally transformed Sudanese society in ways that prevented many from securing necessary sustenance. Food crises facilitated the British-led conquest of Sudan at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently allowed British imperial agents, acting through the Anglo-Egyptian government, to seize control of many of Sudan's natural resources. Repeated famines and persistent food insecurity curtailed indigenous resistance to the emerging state because they eroded the social fabric and economic foundations of many segments of Sudanese society. Nonetheless, a limited number of Sudanese elites were able to position themselves during periods of crisis to further augment their prestige and economic wealth. At independence, these elites were handed control of the state and, in the years that followed, they continued many of the policies that had impoverished their countrymen.

In addition to providing the first serious examination of the long-term consequences of famine and food insecurity in early twentieth-century Sudan, this study differs from previous studies of modern Sudanese history in three key respects. First, this book offers a new periodization of Sudanese history. Conventional histories of British intervention in Sudan begin with the conquest of Umm Durman, the capital of the Sudanese Mahdist state, on September 2, 1898. However, this study recognizes that British rule in Sudan was first established in the late 1880s on the Egyptian-Sudanese frontier and on the Sudanese Red Sea coast. From the outset, British power was exercised through an Anglo-Egyptian government in which British officials were always the senior partners who assigned their Egyptian subordinates to low ranking positions, excluded them from the decision-making process and, at times, removed them en masse from their posts. Anglo-Egyptian

rule was first established as part of an effort to contain the Mahdist Rebellion (1883–1898), which began when Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allah, a Sudanese religious leader who had proclaimed himself to be *al-Mahdi* (i.e., the prophesied Islamic eschatological leader who would herald the end of days), announced a jihad against the Turko-Egyptian rulers of Sudan. In response to a series of early Mahdist victories, British officials, who were helping rule Egypt in the wake of the failed Egyptian ‘Urabi Revolt (1881–1882), ordered the withdrawal of Sudan’s Turko-Egyptian government and the creation of new British-controlled frontier governments.

Second, this book offers a new understanding of internal Sudanese divisions that breaks from conventional accounts of the “Arab” North and “African” South. By focusing on the role of the state in the production and distribution of food resources, this book highlights the divide between those who came within the reach of the state and those who were left outside. Under Anglo-Egyptian rule, the relationship between local communities and the state came to be mediated by the grain economy. During the formative years of Anglo-Egyptian rule, Sudan was plagued by a series of famines that officials feared would imperil their hold over the country. To shore up their political control, Anglo-Egyptian officials worked with a number of nonstate actors, including, at times, Indian grain merchants, Sudanese slave traders, local elites, indigenous landowners, and British capitalists, to develop a unified Sudanese grain market that included Northern Nilotic Sudan, the Jazira plain, parts of the Ethiopian and Eritrean frontiers, northern Kurdufan, and the Red Sea littoral. The unified market replaced other patterns of grain production and trade, including ones that linked Eastern Sudan to India via the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Populations living in the regions incorporated into the unified grain market, as a result of the human need to eat in order to survive, had no choice but to develop often-fraught working relationships with the state. Communities in South Sudan, southern Kurdufan, the Nuba mountains, Darfur, and the desert regions of Northern and Eastern Sudan were not integrated into this market and therefore developed different patterns of interaction with the modern Sudanese state.

Third, this book challenges conventional histories of slavery and abolition in twentieth-century Sudan. Other studies assert that Anglo-Egyptian officials were committed to ending the slave trade from the outset but only began to make a concerted effort to abolish slavery in the late 1920s. However, this book reveals that as part of their effort to combat the Mahdist Rebellion, Anglo-Egyptian officials developed

strategic working relationships with known slave traders. Following the successful 1896–1898 British-led campaign to conquer Mahdist Sudan, Anglo-Egyptian officials were complicit in both the maintenance of slavery and the slave trade. Between 1897 and 1913, procedures and protocols established by senior Anglo-Egyptian officials allowed Sudanese cultivators to increase the size of the male agricultural slave population in Northern Nilotic Sudan by an estimated 80,000 men. Though conventional accounts link the decline of slavery in Sudan to abolitionist policies adopted by the Anglo-Egyptian government in the late 1920s, this book demonstrates that food insecurity played a crucial role in ending the widespread use of agricultural slaves in Northern Nilotic Sudan. During devastating famines in 1914 and 1918–1919 slave owners were unable to feed their slaves and thousands of slaves self-manumitted by fleeing to the south. The loss of this labor prevented Sudanese cultivators from recovering after the famines had abated. In the years that followed, poor cultivators remained unable to provide for their slaves and, as a result, the slave exodus continued. By the time Anglo-Egyptian officials turned their attention to ending Sudanese slavery in the late 1920s, Northern Nilotic Sudan had ceased to be a major supplier of grain to Sudanese markets and slave labor had ceased to be a factor in agricultural production in the region.

This book comprises eight chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. The introductory chapter lays out the main themes and connects this book to current methodological trends in the study of famine causation. This book argues that famines are often the result of intergenerational processes that begin long before the onset of widespread starvation. These processes progressively transfer the resources of victim communities to a limited number of beneficiaries. Famines are usually a manifestation, not the terminus, of these exploitative processes and exploitation often continues during periods of recovery. As a result, victim communities are frequently forced into cycles of famine and food insecurity that unfold over decades. These exploitative processes, which are frequently situated within protracted military struggles, fundamentally transform victim communities in ways that further limit their ability to resist their continued victimization.

The body of the book, for the most part, proceeds chronologically from the start of the Mahdist Rebellion in the early 1880s to the period following Sudanese independence on January 1, 1956. Chapter 2 locates the initial development of the cycle of famine and food insecurity in the 1885 British-ordered withdrawal of Sudan's Turko-Egyptian colonial government. In the chaos and confusion that

followed, tens of thousands of Sudanese land owners fled with their slaves from Northern Nilotic Sudan into Egypt. The resulting labor shortage on the Sudanese side of the frontier led to a reduction in the extent of cultivation and to decreased crop yields. Raiding and counter-raiding by Mahdist and British-led forces caused regional food insecurity to further intensify, ultimately resulting in the devastating 1889–1891 famine. The continuation of these militarist policies after the famine subsided prolonged the period of food insecurity, impoverished the refugees who fled from Mahdist-held territory, eroded the economic base of the communities that remained behind and weakened the Mahdist state, as the British ultimately wanted.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine British-led efforts to combat the Mahdist Rebellion in Eastern Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s. These chapters demonstrate that British officials were aware of the potential benefits of food insecurity. Chapter 3 analyzes the food economy of Eastern Sudan before the Mahdist Rebellion and shows that the widespread availability of Indian grain in Eastern Sudanese markets structured British military strategies in the region in the 1880s. Following their takeover of Egypt's Sudanese Red Sea littoral in 1884, British officials stationed at Sawakin, including the renowned British military officer Herbert Kitchener, attempted to induce a regional food crisis by, in part, preventing the importation of Indian grain. These officers hoped that doing so would starve the rebels into submission. However, this plan was only partially implemented because these officials were unable to gain the support of other interested British parties, including, most significantly, captains in the British Navy. Rather than support this plan, British Navy officers sought to assert their autonomy in the Red Sea by exposing the Anglo-Egyptian government's complicity in the ongoing regional slave trade. Nonetheless, as demonstrated in chapter 4, Anglo-Egyptian officials stationed on the Red Sea coast benefited from famine. As a result of the prolonged conflict in Eastern Sudan between Anglo-Egyptian and Mahdist forces, pastoralist communities indigenous to the region were forced to limit their previously diverse economic strategies. By the late 1880s, these communities had become almost exclusively dependent on selling their animals to purchase imported Indian grain. Unfortunately, when *rinderpest*, a cattle disease with a typical mortality rate of 90 percent in virgin populations, spread to Eastern Sudan for the first time in 1889, herds were decimated and these communities stopped being able to secure their sustenance. Anglo-Egyptian officials capitalized on the devastation caused by this food crisis by conquering the fertile Tawkar Delta.

Though pastoralist communities recovered sufficiently to avoid another famine in the 1890s, as chapter 5 demonstrates agricultural communities in Northern Nilotic Sudan were unable to escape from the cycle of famine and food insecurity. Another famine devastated Northern Nilotic Sudan from 1896 to 1900, contributed to the collapse of the Mahdist state and facilitated the British-led Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Sudan. During the decade and a half that followed, Anglo-Egyptian officials feared that persistent food insecurity would destabilize their new government. As a result, these officials worked closely with indigenous communities to develop and expand a unified grain market that linked fertile regions in Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan. Sudanese cultivators used their crucial position within this market to gain a high level of autonomy and to force officials to develop policies on land tenure and slavery that reflected their needs. Between 1898 and 1913, cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan, with the knowledge and support of government officials, imported over 80,000 male slaves to the region in order to increase the extent and intensity of cultivation.

The benefits accrued to these Sudanese communities were, unfortunately, short-lived. Chapter 6 shows that famines in 1914 and 1918–1919, caused by patterns of Sudanese investment in the grain market and by government mismanagement of surplus grain, led to widespread impoverishment. These food crises, as well as another that affected pastoralists in Eastern Sudan from 1925 to 1927, allowed Anglo-Egyptian officials to progressively increase their control over agricultural production. Officials used their increased power to hand over key fertile regions to British capitalists interested in expanding the production of raw cotton for English mills. Growing cotton on large, foreign-financed plantations initially proved unremunerative for the Sudanese tenants, who quickly fell into debt and continued to suffer from food insecurity. Chapter 7 shows that while the majority of Sudanese cultivators were losing ground economically during the 1920s and 1930s, British imperial agents promoted the financial interests of a select group of Sudanese elites. Following the Second World War, these elites successfully pressured British imperial agents to open the resources acquired by the state during previous famines to elite investment. The final chapter concludes the book by connecting the major themes and demonstrating that the numerous late nineteenth- and twentieth-century famines that effected Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan were manifestations of an intergenerational exploitative process that fundamentally altered Sudanese society in that they

transferred locally managed resources to the state and to a small number of state-connected elites.

This book is based, in large part, on a close reading of primary documents authored or archived by British officials in the Anglo-Egyptian administration. These documents include official and personal correspondence, as well as military intelligence estimates, departmental reports, maps, land surveys, scientific papers, memoirs, summaries of meetings, official histories, etc. They are housed primarily at the National Archive in London, the Sudan Archive at Durham University, and the National Records Office in Khartoum. The archive in Khartoum also houses documents generated by the Mahdist state. These documents were preserved because British officials in the Intelligence Department of the Egyptian Army at the end of the nineteenth century believed that they were of strategic military value. Some of these documents were collected on the battlefield following the battle of Tushki in 1889 and the capture of Afafit in 1891. Other documents were similarly collected after the conquests of Dunqula in 1896 and Umm Durman in 1898. British officials brought these documents to Cairo, where they were studied and archived by the Intelligence Department. In 1951, the Egyptian government had these documents repatriated to Sudan.⁶ Unfortunately, the Mahdist documents archived in Khartoum are fragile and were not made available while the author was conducting research in Sudan. Information on the structure and function of the Mahdist state is, as a result, mainly derived from secondary sources.

Though this book draws primarily from documents created or compiled by British officials, one of this book's objectives is to recover the experiences of the various Sudanese communities that suffered from food insecurity during the period of Anglo-Egyptian rule. This book seeks to answer a fundamental and often overlooked question: what choices and compromises did these communities have to make in order to securing enough to eat so as to physically sustain themselves? In part, this book answers this question by assembling and analyzing statistical data pertaining to the food economy, including data on indigenous cultivation practices, the economics of pastoralism and fluctuations in the grain market. Unfortunately, quantitative data was only haphazardly collected and archived prior to the 1930s. As a result, assembling this data, especially for the nineteenth century, has at times required painstakingly parsing official and unofficial correspondence and reports for passing references to market prices, wages, herd sizes, cultivated acreage, etc. This quantitative data is used to

frame the fragmentary picture of Sudanese life contained in the colonial archive. Over the past two decades, a number of scholars have shown that the colonial archive, though compiled and maintained by the colonizers, always contains echoes of the voices of the colonized.⁷ Sometimes these voices are recorded in texts by indigenous authors, including petitions, letters, and memoirs. Frequently, they exist only as secondhand descriptions and hearsay included in official documents. Though this book does not focus on reconstructing the lives of individual Sudanese men and women, it does read the quantitative data alongside recorded qualitative information in order to reconstruct the lived experiences of Sudanese communities as the modern Sudanese state developed.

Introduction

The years leading up to the 1898 British-led conquest of Umm Durman, the capital of the Sudanese Mahdist state, were marked by food insecurity and famine. Starting in 1896, fear of a looming British-led advance drove Mahdist officials and urban elites to stockpile grain, which, in turn, caused grain prices in Umm Durman to rise sharply. As the British-led joint Anglo-Egyptian force slowly made its way from Upper Egypt to Umm Durman, the crisis deepened. Between the end of 1896 and the beginning of 1898, the price of *dhura* (sorghum), the staple grain, rose nearly 3,500 percent as demand vastly outstripped supply. Many townspeople could not afford to purchase the limited stocks left in the market and, therefore, either subsisted on charity or starved.¹ However, the Anglo-Egyptian force slowly advancing south from the Egyptian frontier was well supplied. Colonel Herbert Kitchener, who commanded the conquest, had ordered a railroad to be built from the Egyptian frontier so as to ensure that the advancing Anglo-Egyptian force could draw supplies from Egypt and, if necessary, overseas.

On September 2, 1898, the Anglo-Egyptian force and the Mahdist forces met in battle at Karari, just north of Umm Durman. Mahdist officials sought to defeat the Anglo-Egyptian force by overwhelming it with sheer numbers. Tens of thousands of undernourished and malnourished Sudanese men were forced to join the regular Mahdist forces on the battlefield and participate in the defense of Umm Durman. Though many of the starving townsmen fought against the British and died, some abandoned the battlefield, returned to Umm Durman and waited. By the time fighting at Karari had ended in the early afternoon, over ten thousand Sudanese men had been killed and even more had been injured. Despite the carnage on the battlefield,

‘Abd Allahi Muhammad Turshain, who had ruled Mahdist Sudan as the *Khalifat al-Mahdī* since 1885 and who continues to be remembered in Sudan as al-Khalifa, had managed to escape to Umm Durman during the fighting. British military officers, sure that the battle had not really ended, ordered an advance on the city. Officials feared that they would be met in Umm Durman by untold numbers of armed and hostile townspeople and that they would be forced to continue the fight in the city’s maze of narrow streets and blind alleys.² However, the starving townspeople had other plans. Before the Anglo-Egyptian force made its way from the battlefield to the outskirts of the city, the townspeople sent word that they wanted to surrender.³ As the British officers and their men entered the city, they were met by large crowds clambering over each other to publicly submit.⁴ The attention of the townspeople soon shifted. Word spread that shelling from gunboats had cut holes through the walls of the state’s granary. At first, only a few starving slaves were willing to collect the grain that had spilled into the street. However, other starving townspeople soon joined in. As Barnett Burliegh, the war correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, described:

Within half an hour all the women and children in the town apparently, to the number of several thousands, were running pell-mell to loot the granary. Men also joined in plundering the Khalifa’s storehouse. They ran against our horses, tripped over each other and fell in their crazy haste to fill sacks, skins and nondescript vessels of all sorts—metal, wood and clay—with grain. It became a saturnalia and jubilee for the long, half-starved slaves, men and women.⁵

As they made their way through the city, two things became apparent to Kitchener and the other senior officers. First, al-Khalifa had already fled the city with his diehard supporters. Second, the townspeople were suffering from the ongoing famine and were desperately in need of food. Shortly after securing the city, Kitchener officially sanctioned the looting of the granary by proclaiming it open to all the inhabitants of Umm Durman.⁶

The fighting on the battlefield of Karari was not repeated later that day in the winding streets of Umm Durman because the townspeople decided to stop fighting. The townsmen who had fled from Karari into Umm Durman took their weapons with them. They could have reengaged the Anglo-Egyptian force. Instead, armed townsmen listened to the Anglo-Egyptian officers when they ordered to turn over their

weapons and, as the Anglo-Egyptian force passed through the city, large piles of spears, daggers, and rifles quickly formed in the streets.⁷ At that moment, the townspeople were more concerned with making peace, tending to the injured and dead, and finding food. G. W. Steevens, the war correspondent for the *Daily Mail* who was with the Anglo-Egyptian force as it entered Umm Durman, observed that if the fighting had continued in Umm Durman “that would have spelt days of fighting and thousands dead.”⁸ Steevens, like some later observers, believed that the Anglo-Egyptian force was better armed and led than the Mahdist force and was, therefore, destined to ultimately triumph.⁹ However, had fighting continued, the nature of the victory at Karari, and as a result the Anglo-Egyptian force’s command of Umm Durman in the days, months, and years that followed, would have been fundamentally different.

The townspeople’s response to the Anglo-Egyptian force cannot be disentwined from their response to the ongoing famine. Along with a new political, legal, and economic system, the new rulers of Sudan brought with them access to new sources of grain. In the hours following the Battle of Karari, the townspeople took grain from the previously off-limits government granary but this source was quickly exhausted. The townspeople soon became dependent on grain imported from Egypt on the Anglo-Egyptian force’s rail and steamer network. Continued resistance would have meant continued starvation.

The Anglo-Egyptian military engagement with the Mahdist state redefined the nature of state power in Sudan in terms of both access to food stocks and command of agricultural resources. Previously, state power had been defined in terms of the ability to extract surpluses through taxation and raiding, as it had been under the pre-Mahdist, Turko-Egyptian state, or in terms of military might and restricted access to foreign goods, as it had been under the even earlier Funj and Fur sultanates.¹⁰ State power was redefined at the end of the nineteenth century because the military engagement between the Anglo-Egyptian and Mahdist forces pushed many Sudanese communities into an inter-generational cycle of famine and food insecurity.¹¹ The Anglo-Egyptian state emerged alongside and, in no small part, as a result of persistent and prolonged food crises. The establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian state is conventionally dated to the Battle of Karari and the occupation of Umm Durman on September 2, 1898.¹² However, Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan really began nearly 15 years earlier on the Nile and Red Sea frontiers of the Mahdist state. During their protracted military engagement with the Mahdist state, the Anglo-Egyptian officials

who governed the frontiers enacted a set of policies and procedures that eroded the food security of communities in Northern and Eastern Sudan. The Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Sudan did not bring about a respite from food crises. As the cycle of famine and food insecurity persisted over the next six decades, Anglo-Egyptian officials extended their reach by repeatedly seizing key productive resources, often in the name of famine relief. The loss of these resources further impoverished many indigenous communities and, as a result, the expansion of the state's role in agricultural production perpetuated, rather than stopped, the cycle of famine and food insecurity.

The fact that Anglo-Egyptian officials benefited from food crises cannot be taken as evidence that they intentionally induced every food crisis that occurred under their watch. Though at the end of the nineteenth century officials saw the strategic value of food shortages, following the collapse of the Mahdist state officials came to believe that food crises had the potential to weaken their hold on the country. As a result, during the first half of the twentieth century, Anglo-Egyptian officials worked to increase the food security of Sudan. Despite these efforts, famine relief and agricultural development programs often facilitated the transfer of resources away from local management and, as a result, further propelled the cycle of famine and food insecurity. Economic, political, and social gains accrued by the Anglo-Egyptian state during food crises were by no means secure. One of the greatest challenges to Anglo-Egyptian rule came from a small group of Sudanese elites, including 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and 'Ali al-Mirghani, who also positioned themselves to reap the "spoils" of famine and food insecurity. These elites were able to use their position as intermediaries between the state and the Sudanese population in ways that increased their economic wealth, even as many of their followers sank into poverty. As the Anglo-Egyptian state consolidated its rule, these elites increased their demands on the state. When the future political status of Sudan was debated after the Second World War, these elites demanded the right to profit from the resources seized by the Anglo-Egyptian state. On January 1, 1956, these elites were handed the reins of power and, in the years that followed, they continued many of the policies that drove the cycle of famine and food insecurity.

Famine and Power

Since at least the end of the nineteenth century, there has been no necessary correlation between natural disasters, reduced crop yields,

and famine in Sudan. Sudanese communities have passed through numerous environmental catastrophes without suffering widespread starvation, and famines have occurred when there was no reduction in the overall supply of food. As a result, these famines need to be considered as social, political, and economic phenomena and not simply as tragic ecological or natural events. These empirical findings further undermine what Amartya Sen has termed the “food availability decline” theory of famine causation. This by now mainly discredited theory assumes that famines are, except in highly unusual cases, the result of adverse ecological conditions that disrupt the normal cultivation cycle and produce less-than-normal crop yields.¹³ Sen, in his groundbreaking *Poverty and Famines*, directed the scholars’ attention away from the natural and, occasionally, man-made hazards that reduce crop yields to the structures that determine the distribution of food resources. Sen proposed “the entitlement approach to starvation and famines,” which he states “concentrates on the ability of people to command food through the legal means available in the society.”¹⁴ According to Sen:

A person’s ability to command food—indeed to command any commodity he wishes to acquire or retain—depends on the entitlement relations that govern possession and use in that society. It depends on what he owns, what exchange possibilities are offered to him, what is given to him free, and what is taken away from him.¹⁵

According to Sen, entitlements are able to account for access to food during both normal conditions and periods of famine. Under normal conditions, members of a given population mobilize a number of entitlements in order to secure sufficient sustenance.¹⁶ When an individual’s entitlements are insufficient to secure necessary sustenance, the individual starves. As a result, Sen asserts that famines occur when changes in local conditions render the normal, legal entitlements available to at least one segment of the population insufficient to prevent starvation. Unable to secure their sustenance, members of this segment experience increased mortality. Sen argues that entitlements also determine why one segment of the population and not another experiences starvation and increased mortality during these food crises, as entitlements are economically defined and unequally distributed.

There are two fundamental problems in applying Sen’s theory to the study of the causes, trajectory, and outcome of famines in Sudan. First, the entitlement theory, in that it assumes a fixed legal framework in

which entitlements are allocated, cannot adequately address the causes of famines in regions, such as in frontier zones or in many colonial states, where legal systems are weak, overlapping, or ill defined. Since the 1880s, most Sudanese famines have either occurred in contested border regions, such as those between the Anglo-Egyptian frontier administrations and the Mahdist state in the 1880s and 1890s, or in parts of Sudan in which local elites and state agents were competing for power. Second, Sen's theory does not recognize that exchange relations and commodity transfers are frequently determined by force and not by legal right during severe food crises.¹⁷ Until 1956, Anglo-Egyptian officials seized on famines as opportunities to conquer territory, to appropriate locally managed resources, and to abrogate long-standing Sudanese rights. Since independence, state officials have used famines as opportunities to violently extend the reach of the state.¹⁸ Famines, therefore, are transformative events that are neither socially, politically, nor economically neutral and cannot be considered simply as temporary disruptions in the course of normal life.¹⁹

Amrita Rangasami offers a necessary corrective to Sen's theory by stressing that famines produce both victims and beneficiaries. According to Rangasami, since famines unfold over extended periods, both victims and beneficiaries have opportunities to adjust their strategies in the face of changing conditions. Victims seek to minimize their own vulnerability and lessen the negative impacts of the deprivation. Rangasami demonstrates that famines have three distinct phases for victim communities—dearth, famishment, and morbidity. During the “dearth” phase, the victim community retains its cultural values despite increased need. The “famishment” phase is marked by a “rising desperation” as “the community perceives the growing decline of its ability to labour.” As a result, victim communities begin to adopt strategies of self-preservation, including “the acceptance of slavery, conversion to other religions, permanent migration as indentured labour.” However, these new strategies are also focused on continued communal cohesion, and, as a result, “a large number of families resort to one identical stratagem.” If these strategies of communal maintenance breakdown, the famine moves to the third phase, “morbidity,” in which “the community is spatially, socially and economically dismembered. They are cut adrift, wandering aimlessly, to forage in dustbins or beg by the wayside. Visually they are emaciated and diseases begin to overwhelm them.” It is during this phase that there is increased mortality from starvation.

Beneficiaries, like victim communities, modify their actions in response to changing conditions during famine. However, Rangasami asserts that “adaptations, maneuvers and strategies” employed by beneficiaries during the famine only serve to improve the beneficiaries’ position by further extracting resources from victim communities. Beneficiaries can include merchants who hoard rather than sell grain stocks, government officials who manipulate food assistance for political gain, and landowners who capitalize on a decline in wages. As a result, Rangasami defines famines as “a process during which pressure or force (economic, military, political, social, psychological) is exerted upon the victim community, gradually increasing in intensity until the stricken are deprived of all assets including the ability to labour.”²⁰ Famines are rarely singular events and victims are frequently pushed into cycles of famine and food insecurity because beneficiaries continuously jockey to maintain position at the expense of victims. As a result, Rangasami asserts:

The study of famines should focus upon not only the famine, but the intervals between famines. Such an approach will enable consideration of the factors which engineer these crises and render famine a recurring condition.²¹

Rangasami’s analysis reveals that famines are fundamentally embedded in processes of exploitation that begin during times of food security and continue after periods of acute starvation have passed. The unequal power relations that drive exploitation develop during periods of food security. Food insecurity, mass starvation, social breakdown, and, on occasion, increased mortality are part of, and not the terminus of, these exploitative processes. As such, famines are not unique, discrete phenomena; rather they are periods of acute crisis during which communal strategies of self-preservation break down, a condition that often precedes increased mortality from starvation. Periods of food insecurity are food crises during which strategies pursued by victim communities are insufficient to secure adequate sustenance but are sufficiently robust to prevent communal breakdown.²² The passing of distressing periods does not signal the end of exploitation. These processes continue during periods of recovery, thereby ensuring that food crises are repeating phenomena. Exploitation takes place over generations and fundamentally alters the social, political, and economic conditions in affected communities.

The process of exploitation that has driven the cycle of famine and food insecurity in Sudan since the late nineteenth century has also produced the modern Sudanese state. As a result, it is only through the politics of famine that resistance and collaboration can be understood. Collaboration and resistance imply freedom of action and the ability to choose. However, famines, certainly in the “morbidity” stage if not earlier, constrain the ability of the most vulnerable to act because the options become reduced to submission or starvation. Famines have, as a result, played a crucial role in the expansion and consolidation of state power. The choice between supporting the state and securing sustenance or resisting state intervention and risking perishing has been most acute during the deadly famines of 1888–1891, 1896–1900, 1914, 1918–1919, 1925–1927, 1942–1943, and 1984–1985. Nonetheless, Sudanese communities were also forced to make similar choices during other, less acute periods of privation. The modern Sudanese state has been able to further minimize resistance by progressively increasing its role in the production and distribution of food resources. Under Anglo-Egyptian rule, Sudanese communities in Central, Northern, and Eastern Sudan became linked through the development of a unified grain market. This new market replaced regional trading patterns, including the long-standing trade link between Eastern Sudan and India. Anglo-Egyptian and, subsequently, postindependence officials exercised their control over this market to enforce collaboration with state projects. As state officials increasingly came to dominate Sudan’s food resources and agricultural productivity, interactions with the state became increasingly colored by the politics of famine. Even during times of relative abundance, Sudanese communities were forced to decide between collaborating with the state and physically suffering from the effects of chronic malnutrition or prolonged starvation.

Food and Social Divisions

State power was not uniform and, therefore, not all segments of Sudanese society were left with the same stark choice. There were, and still are, distinct regional variations in the reach of the Sudanese state. The center of power of the modern Sudanese state has been the unified grain market, which under Anglo-Egyptian rule came to encompass the Red Sea littoral, the Nile north of Khartoum, the fertile Jazira plain, parts of the Ethiopian and Eritrean frontiers, and the rainlands of Kurdufan. This region may seem at first, to be coterminous with what, since the Republic of South Sudan declared independence

on July 9, 2011, is commonly referred to as North Sudan, or simply Sudan. However, there are large areas of Northern, Central, Western, and Eastern Sudan that were not included in the unified grain market, including Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, certain grazing lands in Eastern Sudan, the southern portion of the Jazira and the deserts to the west and east of the main Nile. In the first half of the twentieth century, Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that these excluded regions were locally self-sufficient and, at the same time, incapable of supplying this market and, therefore, officials only partially integrated them into the state.

The development of the unified grain market radically altered patterns of long-distance trade in Sudan, which, until the twentieth century, focused primarily on high value, low bulk goods, such as ivory and gum, and on slaves. For the most part, grain was not normally transported over long distances and Sudanese communities, generally, ate local yields. Pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills were the first to participate in a regional grain market. In the nineteenth century, Egypt and India began exporting large quantities of surplus grain to Red Sea ports. Eastern Sudanese pastoralist communities responded to the flood of cheap imported grain by reducing the intensity of their cultivation. Communities in the Sudanese interior, however, began to participate in a regular, long-distance grain trade in response to the late nineteenth-century famines that ushered in the collapse of the Mahdist state. Innovations introduced by the Anglo-Egyptian state, including the railroad, intensified and expanded this emerging long-distance trade and facilitated the creation of the unified grain market.

The development of the unified grain market also created new social divisions within Sudanese society. Conventionally, Sudan is said to be divided along “ethnic,” “racial,” “religious” and/or “tribal” lines. Earlier historiographic tropes foregrounded essentialist understandings of Sudanese social divisions by assuming that “tribal” identities are primordial and unproblematic.²³ Since the 1980s, scholars of African history have questioned essentialist understandings of “tribal” and “ethnic” identities by showing that these identities, and the social structures that they support, evolve over time.²⁴ Recently, scholars have used these new insights to understand state-sponsored military violence in Darfur²⁵ and South Sudan.²⁶ However, these debates continue to focus on the meaning of the Northern/Arab/Muslim versus Southern/African/Christian divide. The intensive scholarly focus on identity politics in Sudan has obscured the effects of other salient

divisions within Sudanese society. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, Sudanese society became divided into those dependent on the unified grain market, and with it the state, for their sustenance and those that were not. Those outside the unified grain market developed different relationships with the modern Sudanese state than those within. The segment of Sudanese society dependent on the unified grain market has also been internally divided. One central division has stemmed from the uneven distribution of the resources necessary for agricultural production. The unified grain market emerged as the ongoing cycle of famine and food insecurity transferred resources away from local management to the state and to a select group of nonstate elites. Communities within the unified grain market became internally divided into those who monopolized productive resources and those who were dependent on them for access to the means to secure food. During the first half of the twentieth century, production systems based on socially embedded rights and responsibilities in which forms of collective action were necessary to make communal or family land productive were replaced with a system in which contracts and wages allowed the few with legal claims to productive resources to secure the necessary labor from the many with insufficient resources to independently ensure their food security.

Older systems of production were not socially homogeneous. Among the many social divisions that underpinned these systems was the division between the free and the enslaved. This division was also transformed by the cycle of famine and food insecurity that allowed for the emergence of the modern Sudanese state. Scholars studying other parts of Africa and the Indian Ocean world have shown that famine was frequently crucial to the enslavement process in that free men and women, as a self-preservation strategy, often pawned themselves or their dependents during food crisis.²⁷ Little attention has previously been paid to the experience of those already enslaved. Slaves, like their free counterparts, also suffered through food crises. However, slaves did not have access to the same social, political, and economic resources as free men and women and, therefore, had different experiences of famine and food insecurity. For the free, food crises were frequently understood as communal problems in which social bonds were tried and, accept during the most extreme famines, action focused on strategies of communal self-maintenance. One of these strategies was, at times, to divert limited food resources to the “core” members of the community. As a result, “peripheral” community members, such as slaves and other foreign dependents, may have had little or no access

to food even as the “core” community members continued to subsist. In addition, slaves frequently had ambivalent relationships with their masters and may have been uninterested in ensuring the conservation of social structures during periods of stress. As a result, the onset of a food crisis often broke or fundamentally altered the bonds between masters and slaves.

The establishment of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan did not immediately abolish slavery even though both the British and Egyptian governments had previously committed themselves to ending this practice. Anglo-Egyptian officials continued to recognize the legal status of slaves as slaves well into the twentieth century. These officials were not unique in this respect. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, colonial administrators throughout Britain’s African Empire recognized the *de facto*, though not the *de jure*, status of slaves even while pursuing police actions against the slave trade. Concerted official efforts to affect emancipation did not begin in British Africa until the second quarter of the twentieth century.²⁸ A number of scholars have asserted that the history of abolition in Sudan mirrors that elsewhere in British Africa.²⁹ In addition to ignoring the impact of repeated food crises on the slave system in Sudan, these scholars assume that slaves provided the bulk of agricultural labor in Northern Sudan at the onset of Anglo-Egyptian rule. This was not the case. At the end of the nineteenth century, slaves were not a crucial factor in agricultural production in Northern Sudan. As part of their effort to address persistent food insecurity and to secure provisions for the army, Anglo-Egyptian officials actively worked with indigenous cultivators to recreate the system of agricultural slavery that had been dismantled during the Mahdist Rebellion. As a result, tens of thousands of freemen were kidnapped into slavery under Anglo-Egyptian rule at the beginning of the twentieth century. The expanding slave system was not sufficient protection from food insecurity and subsequent food crises served as opportunities for many slaves to self-manumit by running away from their starving owners. The loss of this slave labor further impoverished free cultivators and played a key role in perpetuating the cycle of famine and food insecurity.

The transformation of Sudanese society that underpinned the creation of the modern Sudanese state and the development of the unified grain market unfolded over decades. Various segments of Sudanese society recognized that the emerging political and economic order harmed their interests and constrained their range of action. In the face of this threat, they pushed back. At the beginning of the twentieth

century, local merchants, religious elites, land owners, slave masters, and small-scale cultivators used their position within the food supply and distribution chain to limit the new state's power, to win a level of autonomy within the new political order and to retain control over some productive resources. Unfortunately, these limited victories could not reverse or even halt the ongoing exploitative processes that drove the cycle of famine and food insecurity. These gains were lost during subsequent food crises as these communities were stripped of the very resources that had initially given them limited political power. Unable to offer meaningful resistance, many segments of Sudanese society were forced to submit to exploitative processes that turned them into the dependents of the state or of a small group of nonstate elites.

Famine and the Making of Sudan's Northern Frontier, 1883–1896

On June 18, 1885, Sir Redvers Buller supervised the withdrawal of the last remaining Egyptian Army garrison in the Sudanese Province of Dunqula. As the troops pulled out of al-‘Urdu, the province’s former capital and chief market town, they left behind a harrowing scene. In the weeks prior, thousands of Sudanese had fled to seek refuge in Egypt. In the process, they abandoned their homes and anything that they could not carry with them. Animals unfit for the long overland journey were left to starve. As the last troops left the city, the few remaining residents congregated in the market where the merchants who stayed behind to profit from the chaos were selling the contaminated sugar, putrid meat, and sick pack-animals that British military officers had ordered the commissariat to abandon.¹

The mass exodus from Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut, collectively comprising the region between the second and fourth Nile cataracts, began in late May 1885,² and, by the end of June, over 12,000 Sudanese had made their way to Egypt.³ Over the next ten years, tens of thousands of additional Sudanese from the region resettled in Egypt and many others migrated south to Umm Durman, the Mahdist capital. By the time British-led troops drove the Mahdist force from Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut in 1896, the region had become severely depopulated, wells had caved in and drifting sand had covered large tracts of previously cultivated land.⁴ In 1897, a number of British officials noted that many villages had been abandoned, that the population had declined sharply and was overwhelmingly female and that the few remaining males were either old men or young boys.⁵

The exact extent of this demographic collapse is unclear from official statistics as there is no reliable census data from the Turko-Egyptian period (1820–1885). At the beginning of the twentieth century, British administrators claimed that 355,000 people had lived in Dunqula prior to the Mahdist Rebellion and that over 230,000 had died during the rebellion as the result of disease or warfare.⁶ Unfortunately, these figures are based on little more than conjecture and are therefore unreliable. However, one way of estimating the extent of the population decline during the Mahdist period is to calculate changes in the number of *sāqiya*s used in cultivation. A *sāqiya* is a large wooden water wheel with earthenware pots that was used to draw water from the Nile to irrigate fields. Until the twentieth century, agricultural production in this arid region was entirely dependent on the Nile flood and *sāqiya*s. Dunqula lies in Sudan's northernmost ecological zone, which is roughly bound by the Red Sea Hills in the east, by the Libyan Desert in the west and, in the south, by a longitudinal line passing just south of Khartoum. This ecological zone is a tropical continental desert, in which rainfall is insufficient to support cultivation. Rain falls only from July to September and the average annual rainfall increases southward, from effectively zero at Wadi Halfa to approximately 200 mm at Khartoum. With few oases, the Nile is the only significant source of permanent surface water and, as a result, cultivation has historically been limited to islands in the river and to the riverbanks, which cover only two percent of this ecological zone's surface area. In addition to supplying the water necessary for irrigation, the Nile deposits fertile silt brought down during the annual river flood, which lasts approximately from mid-July to mid-September. This silt is crucial to cultivation because soils that evolved in situ lack the necessary nutrients to support food crops.⁷ As a result, the number of *sāqiya*s directly corresponded to the extent of cultivation. In addition, the number of *sāqiya*s was limited by the availability of labor. *Sāqiya*-based cultivation was extremely labor-intensive and a single *sāqiya* required as many as eight laborers and eight cattle to turn the water wheel, lift the water, and ensure the steady flow of water to the fields.⁸ Therefore, changes in the number of *sāqiya*s can be used to estimate population changes. In the early twentieth century, it was estimated that a *sāqiya* working at capacity could support five to eight families, each comprised of a man, his wife, and their dependents. In 1885, according to the Turko-Egyptian government's tax ledger, there were 6,451 *sāqiya*s working in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut.⁹ A British military census taken after the 1896 re-conquest counted 1,545 *sāqiya*s,¹⁰

implying that the population had declined by approximately 75 percent. In 1897, the Anglo-Egyptian census recorded a total population of 57,726. Extrapolating backwards, the population of this region was at least 162,000 people in 1885.

This chapter examines the causes of this population collapse and its effects on food security on both sides of the Egyptian-Sudanese frontier. The decline in population can be tied directly to the British decision to withdraw the Turko-Egyptian government of Sudan. Unlike elsewhere in Sudan, the indigenous population of this region did not initially support the Mahdist Rebellion. Rather, many local men remained loyal to the Turko-Egyptian government and volunteered to fight against invading Mahdist forces. As a result, when the government was withdrawn, the local population feared Mahdist reprisals. Consequently, many choose to resettle north of the second Nile cataract under Egyptian military protection. The subsequent reduction in population along the Nile led to a decline in agricultural output and ushered in a period of food insecurity that forced more cultivators to migrate either north to Egypt or south to Sudanese market towns. The ensuing spiral of declining agricultural productivity culminated in a deadly famine of 1887–1891 that, in part, inspired the Mahdist *amīr* (i.e., commander) ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Nujumi’s disastrous invasion of Egypt in 1889. Raiding and counter-raiding across the frontier in the years that followed this Mahdist defeat prevented resettlement and economic recovery, which only began after the 1896 British-led reconquest of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut.

Political and military instability radically altered social structures and economic patterns along the Egyptian-Sudanese frontier. British treatment of refugees led to a decline in the use of agricultural slave labor north of the frontier. In the late 1880s, slave owners fleeing the region moved thousands of their slaves from the Dunqula plantations to Egypt. Once in Egypt, most slaves successfully petitioned British officers for their freedom and were incorporated into the Egyptian Army. The presence of large numbers of ex-slaves in towns and garrisons north of the second Nile cataract inspired large numbers of slaves on plantations in the region to self-manumit. South of the frontier, instability led to an alteration of traditional gender roles as the use of male slave labor in cultivation declined. Slaves of owners who stayed in Sudan routinely claimed their freedom by fleeing to Egypt or by joining the Mahdist army. The women who remained in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut were frequently widowed during conflict or abandoned by their husbands in times of food insecurity and, as a result,

were forced to continue cultivation without the aid of male relatives and slaves.

The Egyptian-Sudanese Border Prior to the Mahdist Rebellion

Until the nineteenth century, the first Nile cataract marked Egypt's southern frontier. The region between the first and third Nile cataracts was conventionally called Nubia, although the area between the second and third cataract was also known as Mahas and Sukkut. Nubia was first incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566). In 1550, the Sultan authorized Özdemir Pasha, the Governor General of Yemen, to recruit troops in Egypt for an expedition against Ethiopia. En route to Ethiopia, Özdemir intervened in a local political struggle south of the first Nile cataract and installed garrisons of Bosniak troops at Aswan, Say, and Ibrim. Over the next three centuries, the descendants of these troops developed into a ruling caste and the administration of Nubia was vested in the hereditary office of the *Kāshif*. Though most male members of the ruling caste generally drew wives from the local population, the lineage of the *Kāshif* either practiced endogamy or married Circassian slaves and, as late as the nineteenth century, European travelers noted their fair complexions.¹¹ The *Kāshif* resided at Darr and his chief administrative function was the collection of revenue.¹² In Mahas and Sukkut, the *Kāshif's* authority remained nominal, limited largely to exacting tribute from local indigenous rulers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, John Lewis Burckhardt, the famed traveler, noted that the *Malaks* (i.e., the traditional rulers of Mahas and Sukkut) were required to annually provide the *Kāshif* with five camels, five cows, two slaves, and 40 sheep.¹³

Officially, the region south of the third cataract was, until the nineteenth century, part of the Funj Sultanate of Sinnar, which covered much of Nilotic and Eastern Sudan and Kurdufan. The Sultanate's power peaked in the seventeenth century and, by the eighteenth century, Shayqiyya and Danaqla elites based along the Nile between the third and fourth Nile cataracts acted independently. These elites regularly raided each other's territories in a bid to gain political and economic control over the region. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a confederation of Shayqiyya rulers had become dominant¹⁴ and the Danaqla had become a subject people. The Shayqiyya

confederacy ruled the Danaqla by coopting a number of traditional Danaqla hereditary ruling elites, including the Zibir family,¹⁵ who they used to extract large tribute payments. Danaqla elites were required to pay 8 bushels of *dhura*, two or three sheep, and a linen gown for each *sāqiya* in their territory.¹⁶

Local rule in the region between the first and the fourth cataracts ended in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1811, Muhammad 'Ali, the *Wāli* of Ottoman Egypt, broke the *Mamlūks*' hold on the Egyptian government. Rather than submit, some recalcitrant *Mamlūks* fled south of the third cataract in the hopes of regrouping, recruiting troops, and retaking Egypt. The fleeing *Mamlūks* were initially welcomed in Dunqula by the Shayqiyya *shaykh* Mahmud al-Adalnab because they had announced that their intentions were to settle further south in Sinnar. However, within a month, the *Mamlūks* had murdered al-Adalnab, seized the Shayqiyya treasury in Arqu, and plundered the town.¹⁷ They subsequently built a walled garrison town at al-'Urdu, from which, with the aid of the Zibir family, they challenged the Shayqiyya confederacy's control of the region.¹⁸

In July 1820, Muhammad 'Ali sent a force of 400 men under Isma'il Kamal Pasha, his third son, to conquer the region and defeat this last bastion of *Mamlūk* strength.¹⁹ As his force made its way upstream, Isma'il demanded that local rulers publicly submit to Muhammad 'Ali's rule. Those who submitted were confirmed in office and were required to pay tribute; however, those who did not submit faced military reprisals and were, ultimately, replaced. So, upon reaching Darr, Isma'il installed the sitting *Kāshif's* brother as the ruler of Nubia because the *Kāshif* had fled. A few months later, when Isma'il's army reached al-'Urdu, the Danaqla elites and most of the *Mamlūks* submitted. However, some *Mamlūks* fled upstream and sought refuge under the protection of al-Makk Nimr, the ruler of Shandi. Isma'il's force pushed further up the Nile in pursuit of the fleeing *Mamlūks* and their local allies. After the battle of Kurti on November 4, 1820, key Shayqiyya elites submitted²⁰ and, by February 1821, so had al-Makk Nasr al-Din, the ruler of Barbar. Isma'il then negotiated the submission of al-Makk Nimr and the fugitive *Mamlūks*, thereby extending Muhammad 'Ali's territory to the sixth Nile cataract.²¹ Muhammad 'Ali subsequently solidified his control by reorganizing political boundaries in the conquered territories. The region between the first and third Nile cataracts was incorporated into the Egyptian Province of Isna and the region between the third and fourth Nile cataract became the Province of Dunqula.

The creation of a new Turko-Egyptian government in the region radically transformed the local economy as it reorganized long-distance trade links and reconfigured agricultural production. Prior to the introduction of Turko-Egyptian rule, regional trade was limited to overland routes that hugged the Nile. The specific geological formation of the second cataract, known as the *Batn al-Hajar* (literally, the belly of stone), rendered it unnavigable even during high Nile. Goods traveling between Egypt and Upper Nubia had to be offloaded at the second cataract, carried overland past the cataract, and reloaded onto waiting boats. Therefore, this cataract limited the Nile's value as a shipping lane. Shipping was also limited because only undecked, frameless boats with crude square sails plied the Sudanese Nile. These boats were only useful in local haulage and short ferrying trips.²² In addition, until the first half of the nineteenth century, overland routes through the desert that bypassed the Sudanese bend in the Nile were destabilized by hostility between the riverain *Danaqla* and *Shayqiyya* and the nomadic communities that lived in the desert to the east and west of Nubia. As a result, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, goods imported into the region between the first and fourth cataracts were extremely expensive. For example, Burckhardt observed that imported grain was sold at Darr for double the market price north of Aswan.²³

The Turko-Egyptian conquest opened up new trade routes. In 1820, Isma'il's advancing army used explosives to create a navigable channel through the second Nile cataract.²⁴ The subsequent submission of riverain and nomadic elites led to the opening of the shorter desert caravan route from *Kurusku*, which is downstream of the second Nile cataract, to *Abu Hamid*, which is upstream of the fourth Nile cataract. In order to reward them for their service during the conquest, Isma'il granted the nomadic *'Ababda* the exclusive right to lead caravans through the eastern desert and allowed them to collect a 10 percent tithe on all Sudanese exports moving along this route in exchange for ensuring the safety of the route, providing camels to merchants and protecting the caravans as they passed through the desert. To increase trade along the river route, the new Turko-Egyptian rulers introduced large cargo ships, established shipyards to build and maintain the fleet, and built port facilities at important trading centers on the Nile. In addition, Turko-Egyptian officials organized navigation teams, consisting of a number of locals acting under a government appointed supervisor, at each of the Nile cataracts to guide ships through the treacherous waters.²⁵ These initiatives allowed for

an increase in the flow of men and goods between the Sudanese Nile and Upper Egypt.²⁶

Turko-Egyptian rule also led to a radical reconfiguration of agricultural production in Dunqula as it both required the intensification of cultivation and provided new opportunities for investing in commercial agriculture. Throughout the Turko-Egyptian period, cultivators between the first and fourth Nile cataracts continued to use *sāqiya* to irrigate their land. *Sāqiya* irrigation had been introduced into this region by the ancient Roman rulers of Egypt and remained the primary means of artificial irrigation until the middle of the twentieth century. Cultivation with the use of *sāqiyas* was extremely labor-intensive.²⁷ Beyond the ordinary work of sowing, weeding, and harvesting, agricultural laborers in the region had to ensure that the river beneath the *sāqiya* (from which water was drawn up) and the narrow irrigation channels leading from the *sāqiya* to the basins did not silt up, that the channels and water conduits were free of weeds and grass and that birds and other pests did not eat the crops. An overseer, called a *ṣamad*, managed the agricultural labor, ensured the proper functioning of the *sāqiya*, divided the land into small basins for irrigation purposes and supervised the sowing of seeds. When the *sāqiya* was in 24-hour use, ordinary laborers assumed the *ṣamad*'s tasks at night. As a result, a *sāqiya* required the labor of eight to ten men working in continuous shifts.²⁸ Since a single *sāqiya* would take 18 hours to water half a *faddān*²⁹ it would, if worked 24 hours a day, properly irrigate between 10 and 12 *faddāns* each growing season.³⁰

Nineteenth-century Turko-Egyptian innovations in Sudanese systems of land holding, tax collection, and slave ownership caused the *sāqiya* system in Dunqula to shift from using family labor to slave labor. Prior to Isma'il's conquest, slave holding among the Danaqla and the Shayqiyya was the exclusive privilege of hereditary elites for whom slaves were objects of conspicuous consumption.³¹ Overall, most slaves were females acquired through purchase, although for a short time at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Shayqiyya elites enslaved some conquered communities. The descendants of these conquered peoples continued to be recognized by some Shayqiyya as ex-slaves as late as the 1960s.³² By contrast, in Danaqla society, which historically tended to assimilate foreigners, the recognition of slave as a heritable marker and the designation of slaves as a distinct, unassimilated group seems to have emerged only as a result of reforms implemented by the Turko-Egyptian government.³³

The generalized use of slaves in agriculture only began with the Turko-Egyptian government's redefinition of rights in land. Prior to Isma'il's conquest, *sāqiya* land was considered the common property of those who held a share in the fruits of cultivation. Those with shares in the land offered either their own labor or the labor of their dependents to work the *sāqiya* and the land. Following the conquest, Turko-Egyptian officials applied *shari'a* law to land ownership in Sudan and, in so doing, converted rights to the fruits of the soil into shares in land. *Shari'a* laws of inheritance led to the rapid fractionalization of land ownership, which in turn reduced the return from land as it passed down through the generations. Further, before these reforms, usufruct rights could only be transferred through inheritance, and therefore there was no market in land. In contrast, *shari'a* law recognized that shares in land could be inherited, as well as bought, sold, and mortgaged and, as a result, provided the legal framework for a market in land to emerge. In addition, Turko-Egyptian taxation policy created incentives for selling and purchasing land. Prior to the Turko-Egyptian conquest, taxes were paid in grain, which elites stored for times of food scarcity. However, Turko-Egyptian officials required taxes to be paid in money, which forced land owners to sell their produce.³⁴ Further, progressive increases in the tax rate forced land owners to increase the intensity with which they worked the land. Those who could not produce sufficient for their own needs and to pay taxes were forced to sell their shares in land, thereby creating a robust land market. The many northern Nilotic cultivators forced to sell their land traveled south and became merchants, trading, among other things, slaves to Northern Sudan and to Egypt. Turko-Egyptian policies in Southern Sudan flooded the internal Sudanese market with slaves. During the first decades of Turko-Egyptian rule, officials encouraged the export of slaves from Sudan to Egypt and, as a result, between 10,000 and 12,000 slaves were annually brought north from Southern Sudan. These slaves were typically either captured by the Egyptian Army during raids along the constantly shifting southern frontier (map 2.1) or received by the Turko-Egyptian government as tribute payments from subject peoples in the south. In the 1840s, traders from Northern Nilotic Sudan began to invest in slave raiding by developing private slave-raiding militias and creating a network of *zarības* (i.e., fortified camps) to the south of Turko-Egyptian territory. The increased supply of slaves led prices in Cairo to precipitously drop. Turko-Egyptian officials responded in the 1850s and 1860s by enacting policies designed to diminish the flow of slaves into Egypt, including levying a new duty



Map 2.1 Egypt's Empire, 1880.

Source: The borders of Egypt are derived from the map John Barthalemeuw, *Africa* (1885).

on slaves imported from Sudan. Subsequently, the slaves that could no longer be economically exported were sold in Northern Sudan.³⁵ The increased supply of slaves in northern markets led to a reduction in the price of slaves and allowed landowners, for the first time, to employ male slaves in agricultural production on a large scale. Cultivators in Dunqula who were able to generate profits from the sale of their produce could expand their holdings by purchasing the land of those

unable to pay their taxes and/or purchasing additional slaves to more intensively work their land. This led to the consolidation of land ownership, the expansion of slave-holding and the intensification of agricultural production in the region.³⁶

The Nubian regions of Isna did not experience the same agricultural investment boom under Turko-Egyptian rule. Though cultivators in the region traditionally grew some grains and legumes, the Nile in this region was, until the construction of the High Aswan Dam, confined within deep chasms and the land it watered formed very narrow strips between granite mountains. As a result, local cultivators focused on trading dates for imported grain. Local communities were so dependent on trade for their sustenance that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, small measures of grain were the standard currency in Nubian markets.³⁷ However, date cultivation did not produce sufficient returns to meet local needs and, since at least the seventeenth century, young Nubian men supplemented their family's income by contracting to work as domestic servants in large cities in Lower Egypt.³⁸ The Turko-Egyptian government of Nubian Isna enacted the same land tenure reforms and *sāqiya* tax as was introduced in Dunqula, though with differing effects. Whereas in Dunqula these reforms encouraged the intensification of agricultural production, in Nubian Isna, where there was precious little fertile soil, they encouraged further labor migration. Between 1820 and 1850 the Turko-Egyptian government raised the tax on each *sāqiya* from 90 to 300 piasters.³⁹ As a result, many cultivators left the land and migrated with their families to regional markets that served the long-distance trade or to Lower Egypt. Also, parents increasingly sent young boys to join their older male relatives working as servants in Cairo.⁴⁰ In addition, some adult men began to work for the expanding Nile shipping trade or on the caravans traveling between Kurusku and Abu Hamid.⁴¹

Local Resistance to the Mahdist Rebellion

The gains in agricultural productivity in Dunqula were reversed as a result of the Mahdist Rebellion that brought an end to over 60 years of Turko-Egyptian rule in Nilotic Sudan. Though this rebellion was initially led by a native son of Dunqula, communities residing downstream from the fourth Nile cataract did not rebel against the Turko-Egyptian government. In large part, the establishment of Mahdist rule in the region was the result of the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian government and not local support for Mahdism. During its early

stages, the Mahdist Rebellion was led by Muhammad Ahmad ibn ‘Abd Allah, who had been born at Darar near Arqu in Dunqula in 1844. Though his early education was at Qur’anic schools in Karari and Khartoum, he subsequently studied Islamic jurisprudence in the Jazira and in Barbar. In 1861, Muhammad Ahmad began to study the Sammāniyya *ṣūfī tariqa* under Muhammad Sharif Nur al-Da’im, the grandson of Ahmad al-Tayyib al-Bashir, the order’s founder.⁴² After seven years study, al-Da’im granted Muhammad Ahmad a license to travel as a representative of the Sammāniyya order and to accept students of his own.⁴³ In 1870, Muhammad Ahmad settled at Aba Island in the White Nile, where he built a Qur’anic school and a mosque. As his reputation for piety continued to grow, his asceticism and critiques of some *ṣūfī* practices led to growing tension between Muhammad Ahmad and al-Da’im. In 1878, al-Da’im broke off relations with his former student and expelled him from the Sammāniyya order.⁴⁴ However, by that point, Muhammad Ahmad had already developed a strong and devoted personal following. In June 1881, he proclaimed himself *al-Mahdī*, that is, the prophesied Islamic eschatological leader who would herald the end of days.⁴⁵

Al-Mahdi’s religious movement rapidly turned into an armed rebellion against the Turko-Egyptian government.⁴⁶ Alarmed by al-Mahdi’s growing popularity and public criticism of the government, Turko-Egyptian officials sent three expeditions in 1881 and 1882 to re-exert government control over Aba Island. Though al-Mahdi’s followers were, primarily, armed with spears and the Egyptian Army was armed with guns, al-Mahdi’s followers succeeded at repelling all three government attacks. In May 1882, after besting the third expedition, al-Mahdi announced a jihad against the government. Over the next year and a half, al-Mahdi won a number of decisive offensive battles, forcing the capitulation of Egyptian Army garrisons in Western and Southern Sudan, thwarting an expeditionary force led by William Hicks at Shaykan and, ultimately, leading to the rapid collapse of Turko-Egyptian rule in Kurdufan, Dar Fur, and Bahr al-Ghazal.⁴⁷

Al-Mahdi’s military campaigns elsewhere in Sudan met with more qualified success. In 1883, al-Mahdi appointed ‘Uthman Abu Bakr Diqna as his *amīr* over Bija pastoralists in Eastern Sudan. Though Diqna was able to capture a number of key Turko-Egyptian administrative centers in the region, Sawakin, the major Red Sea port, remained outside of Mahdist control throughout the rebellion (see chapter 3). Similarly, al-Mahdi’s followers could not eliminate the Turko-Egyptian military presence on the Sudanese Nile. In 1884

and 1885, Mahdist forces rapidly conquered the region south of the fourth Nile cataract and al-Mahdi moved his camp from al-Ubayyid in Kurdufan to Umm Durman, on the left bank of the Nile just north of Khartoum.⁴⁸ However, al-Mahdi's followers were unable to repeat these successes further downstream. In May 1884, government troops led by Mustafa Yawar, the *Mudīr* (i.e., governor) of Dúnqula, defeated a Mahdist force of 13,000 men under Ahmad Hadaji at al-Dabbah.⁴⁹ Following this victory, Yawar raised a considerable militia of volunteers from Dúnqula,⁵⁰ which, in September 1884, he used to defeat another invading Mahdist force.⁵¹

The initial failure of the Mahdist movement in Dúnqula was not simply the result of Yawar's successes on the battlefield. The indigenous population of the region was willing to volunteer for Yawar's militia because they were, for the most part, followers of the Khatmiyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, which opposed the Mahdist Rebellion.⁵² In addition, Yawar was able to keep key local notables aligned with the Turko-Egyptian government, including Tanbal Hamad Tanbal, the *malik* of the ruling house of Arqu.⁵³ Though the Turko-Egyptian government was ordered, in January 1884, to begin its withdrawal from the region, troops did not begin to evacuate until May 1885. In the interim, local elites in Dúnqula and Nubia fought to maintain the Turko-Egyptian government. Their continued alliance was, in no small part, the result of confusion caused by an ongoing struggle for control of the Egyptian state between British political advisers in Cairo and senior Egyptian government officials. This struggle resulted in the rapid abandonment of a number of partially implemented withdrawal strategies, each of which seemed to promise the elites in Dúnqula and Nubia that continued alliance to the Turko-Egyptian government would be rewarded with either the maintenance or the augmentation of their privilege.

At the onset of the Mahdist Rebellion, British influence in the region was initially very limited and confined, primarily, to certain parts of the Egypt's domestic government. Over the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, Muhammad 'Ali and his descendents progressively won autonomy from the Ottoman Sultan. This autonomy was shortlived and financial mismanagement of the Egyptian state opened the way for direct British intervention in domestic Egyptian political affairs. In 1876, bankruptcy forced Isma'il, Muhammad 'Ali's grandson who ruled Egypt with the title of Khedive, to accept both the creation of a *Caisse de la Dette* and the employment of British and French financial controllers. British authority in Egypt increased in the 1880s after the British military intervened to end the 'Urabi Revolt. The revolt began in

September 1881, when Ahmad 'Urabi, an Egyptian Army officer, led a demonstration in front of the Khedive's palace and ended nearly a year later, when the British military conquered Egypt to restore the power of the Khedive. Despite the presence of British troops, British influence remained circumscribed. After military operations had ended, British officials sought to rapidly stabilize the restored power of the Khedive by strengthening traditional institutions.⁵⁴ When Evelyn Baring was appointed Consul-General of Egypt in May 1883, he believed that despite the British conquest, the Khedive's government had not abdicated its right to govern Egypt and that, unless they subsequently proved themselves incapable, the Khedive and his ministers should be left to craft and implement reforms.⁵⁵ In his first few years in office, Baring maintained that full administrative control could be returned to the Khedive's government within five years.⁵⁶ However, the timetable for withdrawal soon lengthened and, in 1886, Baring began to argue that it would be imprudent to fix a withdrawal schedule.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, British officials continued to allow many Turko-Egyptian government officials to retain their administrative positions and did not interfere in the *Caisse de la Dette*, the Mixed Tribunals, and the Ottoman Capitulations.⁵⁸

Though the British military had brought them back to power, senior Egyptian officials subsequently resisted British intervention in Egyptian political affairs. In the years following their return to power, these officials successfully employed a number of tactics to limit British reforms. For example, when successive Egyptian Ministers of the Interior resigned rather than transfer power from provincial and local administrations to British officials, Baring was forced to cede full control of this ministry to the Egyptian government.⁵⁹ Though British officials took control of the Ministries of War and Public Works,⁶⁰ Baring maintained a hands-off approach to the Ministries of Justice and the Interior until 1890 when he started to push for further reforms on the grounds that inefficiencies in these portfolios were jeopardizing gains made in other areas of government.⁶¹

Egyptian Cabinet Ministers also tried to limit British interference in the administration of Sudan. From the outset, British political officers believed Sudan to be an unnecessary drain on the Egyptian Treasury. British policy for Sudan was first outlined by Lieutenant-Colonel John Donald Hamill Stewart, who, in November 1882, was sent to Khartoum to report on local conditions.⁶² His report, submitted in early 1883, advocated for the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian government from regions that Stewart considered incapable of paying

for their own administration. He pressed for returning Dar Fur to the descendants of its traditional ruling family, devolving power in Southern Kurdufan and Nilotic and Eastern Sudan to local elites and replacing the government with a skeletal administration whose main function would be tax collection. In addition, he argued for the maintenance of a small garrison along the Sobat River to police the slave trade and for European commercial agents to govern the Bahr al-Ghazal and Equatorial Provinces. Stewart's recommendation to withdraw the government was not a reaction to the rising threat of al-Mahdi and his followers, who had made only limited gains in Kurdufan at the time. In fact, Stewart believed that al-Mahdi could potentially collaborate with the reformed Sudanese administration.⁶³

In late 1883, as the Mahdist Rebellion gained strength, a number of other British officials in Egypt and Sudan concluded that withdrawal was the only means available for avoiding the political and economic consequences of a protracted military engagement. In late 1883, Baring asserted that the financial repercussions of increased military expenditures in Sudan were imperiling the stability of the Egyptian government.⁶⁴ At the same time, Henry Watts Russell De Coëtlogon, the commander of the Egyptian Army garrison at Khartoum who had been seconded to the Egyptian Army after the 'Urabi Revolt, claimed that a partial withdrawal from Sudan was the only means of fortifying the remaining military positions.⁶⁵ However, the British officials in Egypt lacked the mandate from London to order the Khedive to withdraw his government from Sudan.⁶⁶

As a British consensus on withdrawal coalesced, senior Egyptian officials adopted a number of strategies to curtail British involvement in Sudanese affairs. For example, to limit the impact of Stewart's report, the Egyptian Cabinet created the Sudan Bureau, headed by Ibrahim Bey, who was charged with reforming the Sudanese administration. Ibrahim subsequently ignored Stewart's recommendations.⁶⁷ Similarly, in response to the mounting British support for withdrawal, Ali Sharif, the Khedive's Prime Minister, submitted a memorandum to Baring on December 22, 1883 that stated that the August 7, 1879 Ottoman *firman* (imperial decree) forbade the Khedive from ceding territory and therefore prohibited the withdrawal of Sudan's Turko-Egyptian government. In addition Sharif argued that, far from containing the Mahdist threat, withdrawing would cede territory to the Mahdists, who would subsequently be in a better position to invade Egypt. Therefore, Sharif asked the British government for the temporary assistance of 10,000 soldiers to hold Sudan until an Egyptian Army force was able to take

it over.⁶⁸ This petition was denied. Instead, on January 4, 1884, the British Foreign Office granted Baring permission to order the complete abandonment of Sudan. When Baring issued the order, a number of Egyptian ministers, including Sharif, promptly resigned.⁶⁹ However, this protest had little effect and British officials began planning the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian government of Sudan.

The withdrawal order further confused, rather than clarified, the official position on the future of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut because it did not address a number of key issues, including the pace of the withdrawal, the location of the southern border of Egypt, and the structure of post-withdrawal successor states. Over the next year, the British Foreign Office tapped a number of officials, in rapid succession, to flesh out the details of the withdrawal order. In January 1884, the Foreign Office selected General Charles Gordon, who had already served as Governor General of Sudan for nearly three years in the late 1870s, to supervise the dismantling of the Turko-Egyptian government. Baring instructed Gordon to evacuate Turko-Egyptian personnel and to devolve administrative power to the "petty sultans who existed at the time of Mohammed Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist."⁷⁰ In keeping with his instruction, Gordon, upon arriving in Khartoum in February 1884, sent invitations to all Sudanese notables to come to Khartoum and form a new, independent government to be structured as a confederacy of indigenous elites.⁷¹ Gordon continued to pursue this goal even after Mahdist forces established a foothold on the Nile downstream from Khartoum in the summer of 1884. However, the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Sudan made British officials in Cairo and London rethink their options.

The attention of senior British officials in London and Cairo subsequently shifted from creating a successor state to rule over all of the abandoned Sudanese territory to creating proxy states that could rule the frontier between Egypt and the developing Mahdist state. In August 1884, Lord Granville, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, deputized British officers in the Egyptian Army to determine Egypt's "natural boundary" in the south and to select indigenous elites from allied nomadic populations in neighboring territory to act "as independent Rulers of the country, such men receiving annual payments from Egypt on condition of their being friendly and encouraging trade."⁷² Herbert Kitchener, who had been seconded to the Egyptian Army in 1883, immediately opened negotiations with Salih Husain Khalifa, the *shaykh* of the 'Ababda of Kurusku, with the aim of installing him as ruler of Northern Sudan.⁷³

When Mahdist forces laid siege to Khartoum, official attention shifted to rescuing Gordon and, in September 1884, the Foreign Office handed control over Sudan policy to the British Army of Occupation in Egypt. Adjutant-General Garnet Joseph Wolseley, who was tapped to lead an expeditionary force to Khartoum, immediately assumed the prerogative of determining the withdrawal policy. In October 1884, Wolseley proposed that Mustafa Yawar, the *Mudīr* of Dunqula, be given an annual subvention of £100,000 from the Egyptian treasury, as well as steamers, arms, and ammunition to re-conquer Nilotic Sudan and to install himself as an independent ruler under Egyptian suzerainty.⁷⁴ Though Baring⁷⁵ and the British Cabinet⁷⁶ subsequently approved this plan, Wolseley discarded it upon meeting Yawar, who he characterized as someone that “dislikes the English and wishes to retard the operations.”⁷⁷ Wolseley then began to seek out other potential rulers for a new Sudanese state. In February 1885, a month after Mahdist forces captured Khartoum and killed Gordon, Wolseley proposed that Sudan be ruled by Prince Hassan, the brother of the Egyptian Khedive.⁷⁸ When this subsequently proved unfeasible, Wolseley declared his intention to personally re-conquer Sudan, install himself as Governor General and hold the country until a suitable successor government could be formed.⁷⁹

Despite orders from London, Egyptian officials in Cairo and Turko-Egyptian officials in Sudan continued to resist implementing the rapidly shifting British withdrawal plan. Newly appointed Egyptian Cabinet Ministers refused to cede control of the withdrawal and sought to influence key decisions. For example, in the summer of 1884, Nubar Pasha Boghos, who had succeeded Sharif as Prime Minister, as well as a number of Egyptian Ministers, demanded that Egypt retain the region up to the fourth Nile cataract.⁸⁰ In addition, Yawar refused to cede control of Dunqula to Wolseley and, throughout 1884, continued to use the Egyptian Army under his command, supplemented by his independently raised, local militia, to hold back the Mahdist advance.⁸¹ The population of Dunqula continued to support Yawar’s efforts to retain the region and, in July 1884, a number of local notables sent a petition to Cairo in which they proclaimed their allegiance to the Turko-Egyptian government and offered to pay for the military measures necessary to defend against an invading Mahdist force.⁸²

In the months before the withdrawal of the Egyptian Army garrison from Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut, officers in the British Army of Occupation did not capitalize on Yawar’s local support. Instead they focused on implementing yet another plan to establish a proxy

state on Egypt's new southern frontier. In May 1885, Redvers Buller, who had played a key role in Wolseley's failed expedition to relieve Gordon, proposed turning over control of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut to Muhammad Khashm al-Mus, the distinguished Shayqiyya military officer, who would rule each of these three districts through a traditional local leader.⁸³ Despite objections from a number of key British officials in Egypt and Turko-Egyptian officials in Sudan, including Yawar⁸⁴ and Wolseley,⁸⁵ the British Foreign Office authorized Buller to enter into negotiations with al-Mus.⁸⁶ These negotiations quickly broke down and Buller subsequently offered Idris al-Mahjub, the *Kāshif* of al-Dabba, and Tanbal Hamad Tanbal, the *malik* of Arqu, troops, arms, ammunition, and a salary to take over rule of their respective regions.⁸⁷ Key British and Egyptian officials in Cairo, including Baring, Nubar, Wolseley, and the Khedive, believed that al-Mahjub and Tanbal would be unable to defend their respective territory against the advancing Mahdist force and, therefore, refused to supply them with the arms and ammunition that Buller had promised.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, in May 1885, Buller appointed al-Mahjub ruler over Mahas and Sukkut and Tanbal over Dunqula. The population of Dunqula, who had stayed loyal to the Turko-Egyptian government of Sudan, did not have any confidence in these newly independent rulers and began to clamor to flee with the withdrawing troops. In late May, Buller opened a registrar of those wishing to be evacuated to Egypt and within days over 2,400 people had registered.⁸⁹ Refugees soon started migrating north in large numbers. By the end of June 1885, 12,825 people had fled Dunqula for Upper Egypt⁹⁰ many of them on handmade rafts fashioned from the wood from their *sāqiyas*.⁹¹

The new, independent states in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut began to collapse immediately after the withdrawal of the last Egyptian Army garrison. At the end of June 1885, al-Mus refused both to withdraw to Egypt and to recognize the sovereignty of the new rulers. Instead, he raised his own militia with the intention of establishing himself as the new ruler of Dunqula. In July 1885, Tanbal petitioned the Egyptian government for assistance in expelling al-Mus, but the petition was denied and al-Mus continued his preparations.⁹² However, without sufficient arms and with little local support, neither Tanbal, al-Mus, nor Idris were able to hold the Mahdist military forces at bay. In early July 1885, Mahdist forces began amassing at Kurti⁹³ and, in the weeks that followed, they rapidly took Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut. As the Mahdist forces advanced, local elites were forced to choose between continuing to resist, fleeing to Egypt or professing loyalty to al-Mahdi.

Tanbal fled to Akashah, 80 miles north of the Egyptian garrison at Wadi Halfa. Idris, who refused to flee, was arrested by the Mahdist force and sent as a prisoner to Umm Durman, where he subsequently died in jail.⁹⁴ Those elites who chose to come to terms with the Mahdist forces were often reconfirmed in their position. For example, Muhammad ‘Abd Allah Ya‘qub, one of Tanbal’s close relatives, was appointed a deputy of the Mahdist state and was rewarded with gifts and slaves. Similarly, the *‘umda* of Suarda, who had been appointed by the Turko-Egyptian government, submitted and was subsequently appointed the Mahdist *amīr* of Sukkut.⁹⁵

Food Insecurity and the Making of the Frontier

The withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian government from Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut was followed by a period of food insecurity that culminated in a deadly famine first reported during the 1887–1888 growing season.⁹⁶ Unfavorable environmental factors are insufficient to explain the course of this famine as prevailing ecological conditions in the region at its outset were conducive to high yields. Famine was not reported on the Egyptian side of the frontier, which shares many of the natural characteristics of the region to its south and where agriculture was similarly dependent on the Nile waters. Furthermore, the 1887 Nile flood was 25 percent higher than the mean flood as measured at Aswan between 1869 and 1902.⁹⁷ Rather, this famine was caused by the sharp reduction in available labor upstream of the second Nile cataract and the militarization of the frontier. These two factors decreased the supply of available grain, by reducing local crop yields and disrupting regional trade networks, and increased demand, as expanding garrisons required additional provisions. Regional food insecurity sharply curtailed the strength of the Mahdist force on the frontier because this force could only access Sudanese sources of provisions and these sources proved insufficient to meet all of the demands of the new Mahdist state. However, British officials were able to tap both Egyptian and international sources of capital and grain, which allowed them to establish and defend a new Anglo-Egyptian administration on the north side of the frontier.

The out-migration of thousands of refugees from Dunqula during the Turko-Egyptian withdrawal led to a sharp decline in the extent of cultivation in this crucial grain producing region. British military officers stationed near the second Nile cataract recorded 12,500 refugees arriving from Dunqula in the summer of 1885. Many of these

escaping refugees were male agricultural slaves who had previously been employed in *sāqiya* cultivation.⁹⁸ However, the above number grossly underestimates the reduction of the agricultural work force of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut in the immediate wake of the Turko-Egyptian withdrawal. The above figure does not include those refugees who chose not to register themselves or their slaves with the Egyptian Army. In addition, it does not include the number of people who died in battle during the Mahdist conquest of the region, for which there are no known statistics. Further, there are no statistics to indicate the number of slaves who absconded from their masters and joined the Mahdist *Jihādiyya*, that is, the Mahdist ruler's personal slave army. Nonetheless, since cultivation in the region was highly labor-intensive, the loss of as few as 10,000 slaves in Dunqula would have thrown one-third of this region's arable land out of production. Cultivators who remained in Dunqula could not replace the lost labor. Though the internal Sudanese trade in female slaves continued throughout the Mahdist period, Mahdist state policy recognized all newly generated male slaves as government property that were destined for the *Jihādiyya* and, therefore, outlawed the trade in male slaves.⁹⁹ Since the Mahdist state did not appropriate land abandoned by fleeing refugees and did not encourage outsiders to settle on this land, the loss of this slave labor caused large tracts to fall out of cultivation.¹⁰⁰

While agricultural output decreased in the region, tensions within the Mahdist-state-led 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nujumi, who al-Mahdi had appointed *amīr* over Dunqula with both civil and military authority, to increase the size of the force under his command. On June 22, 1885, al-Mahdi died of either typhus or smallpox and, subsequently, 'Abd Allahi Muhammad Turshain was appointed the new head of the Mahdist state with the title of *Khalīfat al-Mahdī*. In the months that followed, al-Khalifa, as the new leader was commonly known, feared that al-Mahdi's *amīrs* would challenge his authority and, therefore, moved to limit their regional power. To check al-Nujumi's influence, al-Khalifa refused to send sufficient supplies to support his troops. Consequently, al-Nujumi was forced to secure provisions for his men locally. Al-Nujumi subsequently demanded contributions of money, grain, and animals, from those local communities suspected of having previously supported the Turko-Egyptian government.¹⁰¹ In late 1886, to further strengthen his regional influence, al-Nujumi moved his main camp from Barbar to al-'Urdu, the former provincial capital of Dunqula. He then spent the next few years expanding the military

force under his command. The size of his force reached its peak in August 1889, at 5,000 soldiers and 8,000 camp followers.¹⁰²

Al-Nujumi used his expanded force to launch offensive military expeditions into Egypt, which destabilized the frontier. At first, these offensives were limited to small-scale attacks on Egyptian Army patrols near the second Nile cataract. The first of these maneuvers occurred in October 1885 and consisted of little more than al-Nujumi's men firing at a distance on passing patrols.¹⁰³ However, in early November 1886, al-Nujumi established an advanced post of 1,300 men at Saras, which he used to launch raids deeper into Egyptian territory.¹⁰⁴ On November 12, 1886 the first of these raids occurred, during which a Mahdist raiding party of 200 men attacked a village on the Nile approximately 25 kilometers north of the Egyptian garrison at Wadi Halfa. General R. S. de Montmercy, the officer commanding the Wadi Halfa force, responded by sending a retaliatory force to attack a military encampment in Mahdist-held territory.¹⁰⁵ This began a regular pattern of cross-frontier fighting that culminated in al-Nujumi's failed invasion of Egypt in August 1889.

In October 1885, British officials in Cairo responded to al-Najumi's offensive military strategy by closing trade across the Nile frontier. This new policy intensified food insecurity south of the second Nile cataract because it cut off communities in Mahas and Sukkut from their traditional source of imported grain at a time when the limited grain yields produced in Dunqula were being appropriated by al-Nujumi's men. The decision to close trade represented a shift in British strategy. Cutting trade links across Egypt's Nile frontier was initially proposed by Egyptian Cabinet Ministers in July 1885 as a means of, as a British official subsequently recounted, "starving the rebellion."¹⁰⁶ However, British military officers favored keeping trade open because they believed that useful intelligence would travel north with goods imported from Sudan.¹⁰⁷ As a result, in August 1885, Baring had Nubar Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister, order the sub-governors of the Province of Isna to permit anyone wishing to cross the border for purposes of trade to do so freely.¹⁰⁸ However, when al-Nujumi began attacking Egyptian Army patrols in October 1885, British officers concluded that the Mahdist force was drawing provisions from Egypt and, therefore, these officers ordered an end to cross-border trade.¹⁰⁹

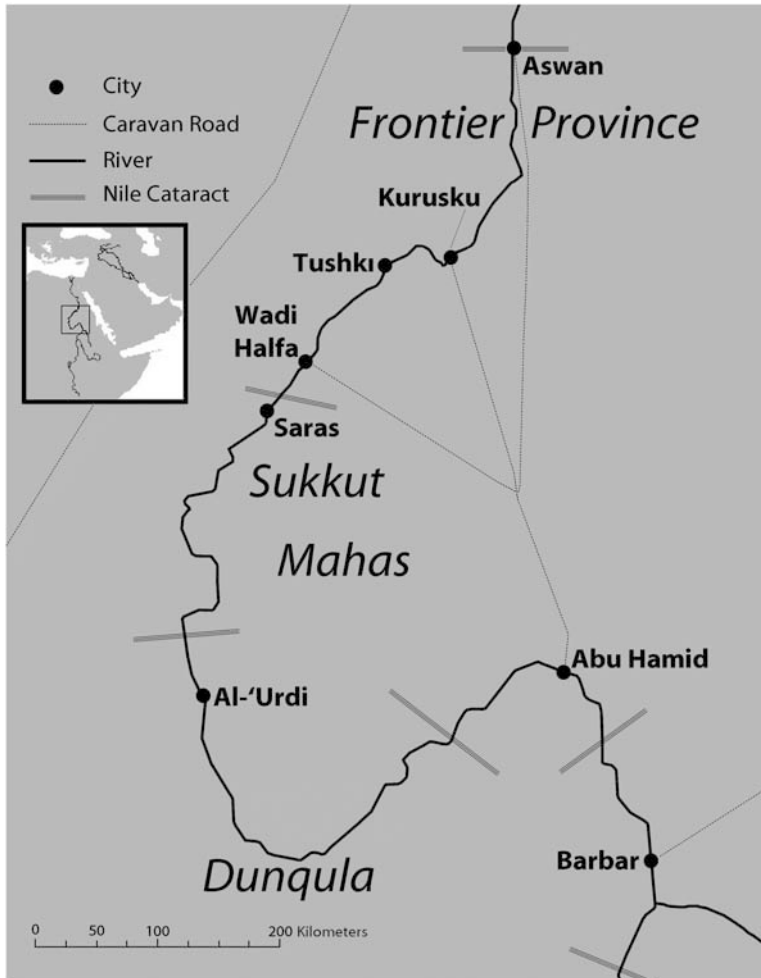
The worsening food crisis only served to deepen the commitment of al-Nujumi's followers to the Mahdist cause. Babikr Badri, who was a Mahdist soldier stationed at the frontier in the late 1880s, recounted in his memoir that, in the beginning of 1888, al-Nujumi's men came to

understand hunger as a necessary component of true faith. Badri also recorded that, during the same period, al-Nujumi began to be credited by his followers with supernatural powers. For example, some followers claimed that the meat of camels provided by al-Nujumi to the Mahdist forward base at Saras during *Ramadan* of the Muslim year 1305 (May–June 1888) glowed at night, illuminating the camp as if it had been daylight. The soldiers and camp followers, as Badri recalled, “were sure it was a sign of grace from Heaven.” Other miracles reported at the time included the emanation of light from the spears of the Mahdist soldiers and the spontaneous combustion on the battlefield of the corpses of Mahdist enemies.¹¹⁰

While hostilities on the frontier intensified, British officials in Cairo and London sought out ways to peacefully resolve the ongoing conflict. In November 1885, the British Cabinet, acting on the suggestion of Henry Drummond-Wolff, the High Commissioner in Egypt, authorized officials in Cairo to enter into negotiations with the Mahdist state.¹¹¹ Though Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, gave his final ascent to this proposal on January 7, 1886,¹¹² no immediate efforts were made along these lines. However, in November 1886, Baring sent ‘Uthman Taj al-Sirr al-Mirghani, the grandson of the founder of the Mirghaniyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, to open back channel negotiations between the British government and the Mahdists.¹¹³ These negotiations ultimately proved unsuccessful and British officials in Cairo and London resigned themselves to the protracted militarization of Egypt’s southern frontier.¹¹⁴

British officials subsequently focused on increasing their role in the frontier administration. In the years immediately following the withdrawal, local British influence was exercised through the British and Egyptian militaries and was focused on defending the frontier against Mahdist attacks. British military officers garrisoned 1,700 British soldiers south of Aswan to assist the 1,500 Egyptian Army men holding the frontier.¹¹⁵ As a result of these large garrisons, the local population was ruled through the joint command of the *Mudīr* of Isna and the Egyptian Army Officer Commanding the Frontier.¹¹⁶ In May 1888, British military officers in the Egyptian Army decided that they needed greater control over the civil administration of the frontier because the dual command led to confusion. Consequently, they divided Isna, the southernmost Egyptian province, into two. The northern part retained the name Isna and continued to be ruled by the *Mudīr*, who was answerable to the Egyptian-controlled Ministry of the Interior. The southern part, which ran from Jabal al-Silsila (65 km north of Aswan) to Saras

(50 km south of Wadi Halfa), and which was subsequently called Frontier Province, was placed under the sole command of Josceline Heneage Wodehouse, a British General in the Egyptian Army who was, at the time, the Officer Commanding the Frontier (map 2.2).



Map 2.2 The Nile Frontier, 1888–1896.

Source: Location of towns are based on the map ‘The Nile Frontier’ in Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). Trade routes are based on “Map Showing Extent of Mahdist Influence in 1895,” in Rudolph von Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879–1895*, translated by Reginald Wingate (London: Edward Arnold, 1896).

Wodehouse immediately set about reforming the local government. Over the next few months, Wodehouse replaced many senior Turko-Egyptian officials with British military officers in the Egyptian Army¹¹⁷ and formed a new police force staffed by Egyptian Army soldiers under his command.¹¹⁸ In so doing, Wodehouse created a new Anglo-Egyptian administration that was controlled by senior British army officers but was formally outside of the British imperial governing structure because it was a part of the formally independent Egyptian government. Wodehouse, as an officer in the Egyptian Army, was answerable to the British-controlled Egyptian War Office, though not officially to either the British Foreign or War Offices.¹¹⁹ Nonetheless, Wodehouse routinely discussed frontier matters with British officials in both Cairo and London.

The expansion of British influence on the frontier coincided with a period of reduced crop yields in Frontier Province. The arrival of thousands of refugees from Mahdist-held territory in 1885 and the subsequent expansion of British and Egyptian garrisons increased local demand for grain. At the same time, many of the slaves brought by the refugees discovered that, according to the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Anti-Slavery Treaty of 1877, they could successfully petition British military officers for their freedom by claiming that they had been brought to Egypt to be sold.¹²⁰ The large population of recently emancipated slaves on the frontier inspired slaves owned by Egyptians to self-manumit by running away to join the Egyptian Army. Since farms in Frontier Province, like those in Dunqula, were irrigated by *sāqiyyas*, the loss of this labor led to a progressive decline in the extent of cultivation. The low Nile flood in 1888 further reduced cultivation and, during the subsequent season, half of all arable land remained fallow. Economic conditions were sufficiently troubling that, in May 1889, a deputation of *shaykhs* from Frontier Province offered to pay additional taxes if the government would provide an alternative means of irrigation.¹²¹ Despite the reduced yields, Frontier Province did not experience a famine because the Egyptian Army had already made a commitment to provide for the local population. In early 1886, British military officers in the Egyptian Army brought the grain supply along the frontier under state management in order to ensure that Mahdist forces would not import provisions from Egyptian territory. These officers ordered that the harvest from farms near the frontier be collected and placed under government guard on islands in the Nile. The Egyptian Army then assumed responsibility for feeding the local population,¹²² a policy that they continued in subsequent years.

The *Sanat Sitta* Famine and Its Aftermath

Throughout the late 1880s, communities on the Sudanese side of the frontier suffered from the effects of food insecurity. Conditions south of the second Nile cataract continued to deteriorate, finally culminating in a deadly famine that is still collectively remembered as the “*sanat sitta*” famine. In the late 1880s, famine affected a region that stretched across much of Northeast Africa from Dar Fur in the west to the Red Sea in the east and that included both Mahdist Sudan and Ethiopia. However, scholars have convincingly argued that this tragedy was, in fact, a set of separate disasters with distinct, regionally specific causes. Alex de Waal has shown that the famine in Dar Fur was caused by tactics adopted by the Mahdist governor of the region, who, while combating a local counter-rebellion, both adopted a scorched earth policy to punish the local population and requisitioned grain reserves to provision the forces under his command.¹²³ Richard Pankhurst and Douglas Johnson have similarly demonstrated that the famine in Kurdufan and the region around Umm Durman, the Mahdist capital, were related to each other, though they were unrelated to a simultaneous famine in Ethiopia. The famine in Ethiopia was the result of a rinderpest epizootic causing the death of 90 percent of all cattle in a region agriculturally dependent on cattle-drawn ploughs. On the other hand, the famine in Sudan resulted, in large part, from an order issued by al-Khalifa in 1888 that tens of thousands of Ta‘isha Baqqara pastoralists migrate from their normal rangelands in Western Kurdufan to Umm Durman. Al-Khalifa was, himself, a member of the Ta‘isha Baqqara and, as a result, he allowed these migrants to eat off the land as they made their way west, exhausting food supplies. This famine spread to Umm Durman with the arrival of these migrants because grain stocks on the Nile could not meet the increased local demand.¹²⁴

Pankhurst and Johnson do not address two other related factors that contributed to the famine in Nilotic Sudan, the declining agricultural productivity of Dunqula, and the migration of impoverished cultivators from downstream of the fourth Nile cataract to Umm Durman. Under Turko-Egyptian rule, Dunqula was a source of grain for markets near Khartoum. However, by 1888, the region had ceased to produce sufficient yields to meet local needs, leading much of the population to starve. The developing famine in Dunqula forced many inhabitants to travel to the Mahdist capital in search of food. The migration from Dunqula coincided with the arrival of the Ta‘isha

in Umm Durman and these two simultaneous immigrations rapidly increased local demand for grain. The Ta'isha migrants, as a result of their kinship ties to al-Khalifa, were able to draw on government reserves during the famine.¹²⁵ Migrants from Dunqula, on the other hand, either had to purchase their own grain or depend on charity. When market prices in Umm Durman rose in 1888 and 1889, many of these impoverished migrants starved to death in the streets.¹²⁶

Al-Nujumi responded to the worsening food crisis in Sudan by launching an invasion of Egypt. In May 1889, al-Nujumi's force of approximately 5,000 soldiers and 10,000 camp followers began to march along the Nile from al-'Urdu to the Egyptian frontier. When they reached Matuqa, a few kilometers south of the Egyptian garrison at Wadi Halfa, on June 28, 1889, al-Nujumi ordered his camp to travel through the desert with the aim of advancing on Binban, nearly 40 kilometers north of Aswan. The expedition made slow progress through the desert and many people died during the arduous trek. The starving and thirsty force finally engaged the Egyptian Army at Tushki on August 3, 1889. The well-provisioned Egyptian Army easily trounced al-Najumi's men.¹²⁷ Anglo-Egyptian military intelligence officers estimated that of the approximately 15,000 men, women, and children in al-Nujumi's camp, 6,500 died during the advance, 2,500 escaped the battlefield and retreated back to Dunqula, and 6,000 were taken by the Egyptian Army as prisoners of war.¹²⁸

This crushing Mahdist defeat was as much a result of the ongoing famine in Sudan as of battlefield tactics. Al-Nujumi began his advance into Egypt without provisions for his men because he had hoped that sympathetic cultivators in Egypt would supply his expedition with food and water during the long march through the desert.¹²⁹ However, this aid was not forthcoming. In May 1889, Anglo-Egyptian military officers discovered that two merchants at Wadi Halfa, 'Abd al-Jabar Amwad and Ibrahim Muhammad, were selling supplies to al-Nujumi's expedition. After a subsequent court martial found them guilty and ordered that these merchants be executed,¹³⁰ Anglo-Egyptian officers extended their control over grain stocks from just those harvested near the frontier to all grain grown between the frontier and the first Nile cataract. In July 1889, Wodehouse ordered that the west bank of the Nile from Abu Simbal to Tushki be cleared of crops and inhabitants, that the administration's responsibility for feeding this internally displaced population,¹³¹ and that grain distribution centers be established.¹³² These measures prevented al-Nujumi from drawing on Egyptian sources of provisions. In addition, after receiving intelligence

of the advance, Anglo-Egyptian officers increased the number of gunboat patrols on the Nile in order to deny al-Nujumi's camp access to water.¹³³ As a result, in the two weeks before the Battle of Tushki, hundreds of starving and thirsty deserters streamed into Egyptian Army camps,¹³⁴ while hundreds more died in the desert.¹³⁵ Many of those who remained with al-Nujumi and met the Egyptian Army on the battlefield were, at the time, suffering from the negative health effects of insufficient food and water and therefore could not launch an effective stand.

Rather than alleviate the food crisis in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut, al-Nujumi's defeat intensified the regional famine because retreating Mahdist soldiers looted the villages in Northern Nilotic Sudan. Thousands of villagers escaped the devastation by seeking refuge in Egypt.¹³⁶ Though this second mass exodus from the region had, in fact, begun in May 1889 as al-Nujumi's force advanced downstream, the number of refugees coming into Egypt per day increased dramatically in the wake of al-Nujumi's defeat. In May 1889, approximately ten refugees come across the frontier each day.¹³⁷ However, in the months following the defeat, Egyptian Army intelligence reports recorded the regular arrival of groups of between 50 and 550 refugees.¹³⁸ From May 1889 until the migration ended in April 1891, intelligence officers recorded over 7,000 refugees from Mahas and Sukkut crossing into Egypt.¹³⁹ However, this number may under-represent the total number of refugees. In January 1890, an Egyptian Army officer noted that over 13,000 refugees had arrived in Egypt in 1889 alone.¹⁴⁰ This too may be a low estimate as many refugees may have chosen not to declare themselves to military officers on the frontier.

Though the stream of refugees continued until April 1891, the character of the migration changed after January 1890. Initially, refugees came exclusively from Mahas and Sukkut and they migrated with other members of their village under the leadership of a *shaykh*. For example, on September 1, 1889, 395 refugees from Mugarka came in with *shaykh* Sa'd 'Awad and two days later, 389 more refugees came in under *shaykhs* Jabar Khair, Ahmad Fadl, Muhammad Sharif, Muhammad 'Ali, and Badr Al-Din Amin.¹⁴¹ In early 1890, the flow of refugees from Mahas and Sukkut slowed and refugees began to arrive from Dunqula and Barbar. These refugees migrated in small bands drawn from a variety of villages and unaccompanied by a *shaykh*. For example, between February 9 and February 15, 1890, a total of 24 refugees, originating from Arqu, Zuwara, Marawi, and al-Khandaq, crossed into Egypt unaccompanied by a *shaykh*.¹⁴²

Official reports of refugees arriving during this period rarely mention slaves. Nonetheless, Egyptian Army intelligence reports suggests that a number of slaves self-manumitted by fleeing from Mahdist-held territory to Egypt without their masters. A report from May 1890, explicitly noted the arrival of two Sudanese “slaves” belonging to the Mahdist *amīrs* Mirghani Muhammad Suwar al-Dhahab and ‘Uthman Azraq.¹⁴³ Though this is the only reference to slave refugees in intelligence reports from this time period, there are a number of refugees who are listed in these reports as members of Southern Sudanese ethno-linguistic groups. For example, in early June 1890, two Dinka men crossed into Egypt. Despite the fact that the Dinka are indigenous to the traditional slave-raiding grounds in Bahr al-Ghazal, the intelligence report lists these refugees as coming from al-‘Urdu in Dunqula.¹⁴⁴ In addition, though these intelligence reports list refugees by “tribe” and by village, some refugees are simply listed as “Sudani,” a term that British military officers routinely used to refer to slaves (see chapter 5). For example, at the beginning of October 1890, 119 refugees are recorded as arriving in Egypt; over a hundred of these refugees are listed as “Berbera from Khandak,” a few are listed as Danaqla, two are listed as Dinka, and one as “Sudani.”¹⁴⁵ The distinction between Dinka and “Sudani” in these reports may indicate a difference in the life history of these refugees. Those listed as Dinka may have been slaves who had been enslaved at a sufficiently old age to remember their place of birth, whereas the man listed simply as “Sudani” could have been born into slavery or enslaved at too young an age to remember his origin. Policies implemented by the Anglo-Egyptian administration of Frontier Province ensured the continued impoverishment of this second wave of refugees after their arrival in Egypt. Refugees arriving in the months before the Battle of Tushki were held at the Egyptian Army prison camp at Shallal and processed with prisoners of war and Mahdist deserters. Though the Shallal prison was designed to detain a maximum of 300 inmates, by the end of July 1889 it held over 1,000 people.¹⁴⁶ To make room for fresh prisoners, in late July, the Egyptian Army released 600 women and children from detention and allowed them to settle in Frontier Province. Anglo-Egyptian officers on the frontier subsequently decided that all refugees and prisoners of war deemed “non-dangerous” by Military Intelligence officers would be handed over to the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior for resettlement in Lower Egypt.¹⁴⁷ However, the Ministry of the Interior was unable to make arrangements to resettle refugees elsewhere and, beginning in September 1889, Anglo-Egyptian officials

started to resettle refugees locally.¹⁴⁸ These officials planned to create agricultural colonies in Frontier Province for the new refugees and to supply them with both the land and the capital necessary to commence cultivation.¹⁴⁹ As a preliminary step, these officials set aside 500 *faddāns* of government land approximately 30 kilometers north of Wadi Halfa for the resettlement of 600 refugees.¹⁵⁰ Since no other land was available to them, refugees were drawn to this settlement in large numbers and, by the end of September 1889, over 2,500 refugees were residing there.¹⁵¹ With less than a square meter per person, refugees were unable to cultivate the land and male refugees were forced to migrate from the settlement in search of work in Lower Egypt, leaving the women, children, and the elderly behind.¹⁵² Those who remained in the camp were often destitute, without access to any means of support and forced to subsist on government food aid.¹⁵³ Conditions were sufficiently bad that, at the end of September 1890, refugees living at the frontier petitioned the Anglo-Egyptian administration for permission to return to Sudan. These refugees claimed that there was no way for them to support themselves locally.¹⁵⁴ Unable to adequately provide for them, Anglo-Egyptian officials granted the request and a few refugees, including Babikr Badri, returned. Most refugees, however, refused to return and remained in Egypt living off government assistance until the British-led re-conquest of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut in 1896.¹⁵⁵

The Delayed Recovery and the Transformation of Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut

The communities that remained in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut during the tragic events of the late 1880s did not immediately recover from the *sanat sitta* famine. The Mahdist defeat at Tushki did not bring about an end to cross-border raids. In the early 1890s, the northernmost Mahdist garrison was located about 240 kilometers south of Saras, the southernmost Egyptian Army position.¹⁵⁶ Until the British-led re-conquest of Dunqula in 1896, Mahdist and Egyptian forces used these forward positions to launch expeditions into each other's territory. Egyptian Army intelligence reports from this time document regular Mahdist raids on Egyptian frontier towns and on oases and wells in Egypt's western desert.¹⁵⁷ These reports also indicate that rumors repeatedly spread through Upper Egypt of an impending Mahdist invasion. For example, after Mahdist military patrols raided

Ambaku and Atir in October 1891, Anglo-Egyptian officials reported that rumors were locally circulating that the Mahdist force in Dunqula was stockpiling supplies for a future advance.¹⁵⁸

British officials in Egypt responded to the threat of another Mahdist invasion by continuing to limit trade with Mahdist-held territory. A commission set up in September 1889 to examine conditions on the frontier, consisting of Herbert Kitchener, the Acting *Sirdār*, E. A. Johnson, the Police Inspector of Upper Egypt, and Edward Elias, an official in the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior, concluded that local merchants were willing to provision the Mahdist force and that the government must continue to forbid trade along the Nile route.¹⁵⁹ On the basis of the committee's report, Baring ordered that trade between Wadi Halfa and Mahas and Sukkut remain closed. However, Baring preferred that the government interfere as little as possible in commerce and, therefore, reopened trade along the caravan route through the eastern desert that linked Aswan and Kurusku to Abu Hamid. Nonetheless, Baring continued to prohibit the export of grain to Sudan, regardless of the route, in order to prevent Mahdist forces from drawing provisions from Egypt.¹⁶⁰

While trade restrictions prevented communities in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut from importing Egyptian grain, a labor shortage caused by outmigration, war, and famine prevented these communities from resuming extensive cultivation. Exact statistics charting changes in the land use in the region during the Mahdist Rebellion, unfortunately, do not exist. However, the magnitude of the collapse in agricultural productivity under Mahdist rule can be best estimated through a comparison between a census completed by the Egyptian Army after the 1896 British-led conquest of the region and the 1885 Turko-Egyptian tax ledger. Both the 1897 census and the 1885 tax ledger counted the number of *sāqiyas* and these figures can be used to determine the approximate extent of cultivation. The tax ledger recorded the number of *sāqiyas* because Turko-Egyptian officials assessed the land tax based on the number of *sāqiyas* working on the land and not on the extent of cultivation or of land ownership. The 1897 census, on the other hand, counted the number of *sāqiyas* because Anglo-Egyptian officials were interested in rapidly expanding agricultural productivity in the region. The greatest reduction in the number of *sāqiyas* occurred in Mahas and Sukkut. Between 1885 and 1897, the number of *sāqiyas* in Mahas reduced from 680 to 39 and in Sukkut from 528 to 56. Over the same time period, the number of *sāqiyas* in Dunqula shrunk from 5,243 to 1,450.¹⁶¹ Since cultivation in the region was dependent on *sāqiyas*

for irrigation, the 75 percent reduction in the number of *sāqiyas* must have led to a corresponding decrease in the extent of cultivation.

During the Mahdist Rebellion, the cultivators that remained in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut abandoned the use of male slave labor. As was mentioned earlier, on the eve of the rebellion, cultivators in the region used male slaves to work their *sāqiyas*.¹⁶² If each *sāqiya* in operation at the end of the Turko-Egyptian period was worked by eight to ten male slaves (the amount necessary for proper functioning¹⁶³), then there were from 51,600 to 64,500 male slaves in the region in 1885. The 1897 census counted 1,545 *sāqiyas* between the second and fourth Nile cataracts, which, if they were worked under the slave system prevailing in 1885, would have required the labor of 12,360 to 15,450 male slaves.¹⁶⁴ However, the 1897 census recorded far fewer slaves. The census report did not include the category “slave.” However, it did categorize the population as either “Native,” “Arab,” or “Sudanese.” After the British-led conquest of the Mahdist state, officials in the Anglo-Egyptian administration were forbidden from using the term “slave” in most official documents and frequently used the label “Sudanese” as a convenient substitute. The 1897 census counted only 5,860 “Sudanese” against 51,866 “Arabs” and “Natives.” Of the 5,860 “Sudanese,” 1,992 were men, 2,957 were women, and 1,233 were children. These 1,992 men, working by themselves, could only properly work between 200 and 250 *sāqiyas*. Even if all the counted “Sudanese” men, women, and children worked in the fields, there would not have been sufficient labor to run all 1,545 *sāqiyas*. This suggests that either the *sāqiyas* were not intensively worked or that the free population had taken over much of the *sāqiya* work. At the same time, the 1897 census counted 18,023 “Native” men in Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut against 22,367 women and census takers noted that the men were mainly old or infirm.¹⁶⁵ These men were probably ill-suited to work in the fields, suggesting that free women must have provided the majority of the labor necessary for *sāqiya* cultivation during the final years of the nineteenth century.

The prolonged period of food insecurity and famine set off by the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian government from Dunqula, Mahas, and Sukkut radically transformed social structures and economic patterns in the region. The slave plantation economy built up by local cultivators under Turko-Egyptian rule was dismantled in the 1880s as tens of thousands of people sought refuge in Egypt. Agricultural yields dropped and surpluses ended. The garrisoning of a large Mahdist force in the region exhausted already reduced grain supplies, thereby

weakening the military capability of the Mahdist government. On the other hand, British officials governing the Egyptian frontier benefited from food insecurity by establishing a new Anglo-Egyptian administration that assumed command of local grain yields. Anglo-Egyptian officials governing the Nile frontier understood the strategic defensive importance of the grain economy as persistent food insecurity could limit an adversary's military capabilities. At the same time, British officials on the Red Sea frontier recognized that famine could be used as an offensive weapon capable of starving a resisting population into submission.

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The Red Sea Grain Market and British Strategy in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, 1883–1888

In early October 1884, Commander Molyneux of the H.M.S. *Sphinx* traveled down the Sudanese Red Sea coast to inspect the remaining Turko-Egyptian government posts and to meet with allied *shaykhs*. The Mahdist Rebellion had spread to the region over a year earlier and rebellious local *shaykhs*, under the leadership of the Mahdist *amīr* Uthman Abu Bakr Diqna, had already won a number of decisive victories against the Egyptian Army. During this trip, Molyneux met with ‘Ali Birkit, the *nāzīr* of the Bani Amar, many of whose followers were, at the time, inside the rebel-besieged Egyptian Army garrison at Kassala. ‘Ali Birkit told Molyneux that the only way to end the rebellion in the arid Eastern Sudan and Red Sea Hills was for the Egyptian Army to take and hold the fertile inland deltas of Tawkar and Qash and for the British Navy to blockade the coast. Doing so would deny the rebels access to both local and foreign sources of grain, without which, as Molyneux subsequently wrote, they “could not live.”¹ Molyneux relayed this suggestion to Lord John Hay, the Commander-in-Chief of the British fleet in the Mediterranean and Red Seas, who rejected this tactic as “a very questionable policy.” Hay believed that this strategy would increase British liabilities because, as he subsequently told the Secretary of the Admiralty: “Should any of the tribes, through starvation, cease hostilities with us, we shall, I presume, have to feed them.”² Despite the British Navy’s objections, British officials in London, Cairo, and Sawakin, the major Sudanese port, agreed to starve the rebellion into submission.

British efforts to induce food scarcity in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills lasted from 1885 until 1888 and produced no real effect. The failure of this plan reflected the relative weakness of the emerging Anglo-Egyptian administration. In the early stages of the Mahdist Rebellion, British officials replaced the Turko-Egyptian government of Sawakin with an Anglo-Egyptian administration in which British military officers in the Egyptian Army held most senior positions. Like their counterparts on the Nile frontier, Anglo-Egyptian officials in Sawakin were charged with crafting and implementing a strategy for containing the Mahdist state. Though officers on the Nile focused on defending Egypt from a Mahdist invasion, Anglo-Egyptian officials in Sawakin believed that holding their positions required an offensive strategy that would drive the rebels into the interior. Constrained by limitations on expenditures and rules of engagement imposed by British officials in Cairo and London, Anglo-Egyptian officials stationed at Sawakin were dependent on their indigenous allies, each of whom had their own reasons for collaborating with the administration. These Anglo-Egyptian officials were also dependent on the British Navy to prevent grain imports from being landed on the coast and, ultimately, reaching rebel camps. However, British Navy officers refused to go along with this plan. In addition to believing that this was a bad military strategy, these naval officers were patrolling the Red Sea as part of a mission to end the slave trade. Though the Anglo-Egyptian administration of Sawakin was, at the most senior levels, a purely British government, the British Navy officers in the Red Sea recognized that the Anglo-Egyptian administration had formed strategic alliances with known slave traders. These naval officers, therefore, refused to work with their counterparts in Sawakin.

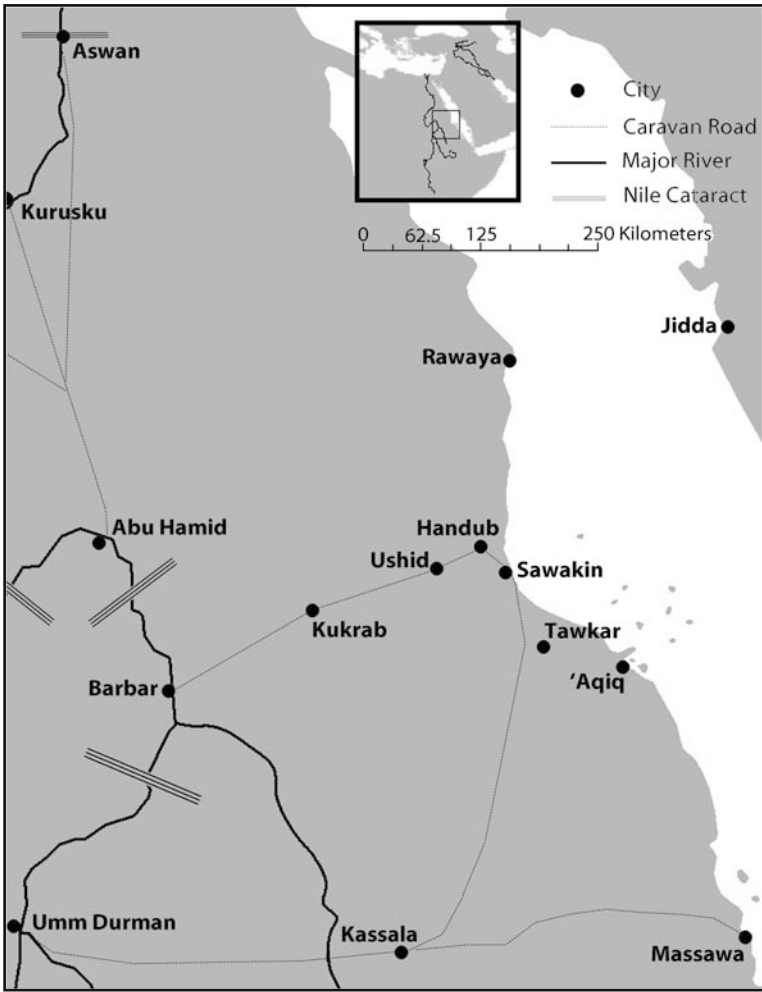
Though the Anglo-Egyptian administration's strategy of manipulating the movement and production of grain failed to starve the rebellion, the Red Sea maritime trade in Indian grain structured the Mahdist Rebellion in Eastern Sudan and the Sudanese Red Sea Hills. Until the emergence of an international grain trade in the Red Sea in the middle of the nineteenth century, Bija pastoralist communities indigenous to the region routinely produced grain surpluses, which were sold in Arabian markets. However, in the decades preceding the rebellion, these communities progressively decreased the intensity of local cultivation in order to focus on other economic pursuits. As a result, maintaining trade links with international suppliers of grain became crucial to the food security of many Bija communities. In the late 1880s, developing relationships with the British rulers of Sawakin

was one strategy for maintaining these links. Participating in the rebellion was another. However, the rebellion fundamentally weakened Bija society by eroding the resource base of many pastoral communities and, as a result, increased these communities' vulnerability to food crises.

The Bija are a Muslim, pastoralist ethno-linguistic group that speaks Tu-Badawi, a Cushtic language related to languages spoken in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. There are three main Bija subgroups – that is, the Amar'ar, Hadandawa, and Bisharin. These three subgroups are subdivided into a number of *adats*, the Tu-Badawi word that is conventionally translated as “tribe,” and these *adats* are in turn subdivided into *diwābs*, or small, family confederations. These groups reside primarily in the desert and semidesert zones of Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, where rainfall is, in some parts less than 200 mm per annum. The only significant sources of surface water in the region are the Baraka and Qash Rivers, both of which begin in the Eritrean plateau. Though they are dry for most of the year, the Baraka and Qash Rivers flood following the summer rains in the Eritrean plateau and spill out into the Tawkar and Qash deltas, respectively. These inland deltas, are the only major agricultural region in this arid climatological zone, and, in times of drought, form crucial reserve pastures.³ As a result, fixed access to land has historically been crucial to Bija economic strategies. In fact, anthropologists studying Bija pastoralists in the 1980s and 1990s noted that *adats* and *diwābs* are organized around customary rights to land.⁴ However, in the late 1880s, the recognition of stable, fixed rights to land broke down as Anglo-Egyptian officials sought to use an Amar'ar militia to appropriate Hadandawa resources and induce widespread food scarcity.

Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hill under Turko-Egyptian Rule

Bija society underwent a number of transformations in the nineteenth century as the Turko-Egyptian state expanded into Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills (see map 3.1). The Bija had previously been successful at resisting incorporation into expanding neighboring states. Though Sawakin was annexed to the Ottoman Empire in 1520, Bija communities in the surrounding territory remained independent of the Ottoman Sultan for over three centuries. Similarly, these communities successfully defended themselves from numerous expeditions sent by



Map 3.1 The Eastern Frontier, 1885–1898.

Source: Location of towns and trade routes based on “Map Showing Extent of Mahdist Influence in 1895,” in Rudolph von Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879–1895*, translated by Reginald Wingate (London: Edward Arnold, 1896).

the Funj Sultans of Sinnar.⁵ The Turko-Egyptian conquest of Sinnar in the early 1820s did not immediately change the political situation in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills and Turko-Egyptian officials were initially content to let the Bija remain independent. However,

the situation began to change in the 1830s when Turko-Egyptian officials started to see Bija communities as potential sources of tax revenue. The first tax-collecting expedition was sent in 1833 but failed as a result of organized Bija resistance. Similar expeditions over the next few years also failed because Bija communities either migrated to avoid them or, occasionally, attacked them. In 1840, Ahmad Abu Widan, the Governor General of Sudan, set about formally bringing recalcitrant Bija communities under regular Turko-Egyptian rule. As part of this effort, Widan established a permanent garrison at Kassala and imprisoned a number of Bija *shaykhs*, including Muhammad al-Din, the head *shaykh* of the Hadandawa.⁶ A subsequent Bija revolt was suppressed by a multiyear, violent Turko-Egyptian military campaign, which involved filling in wells, massacring herds, mass-murdering Bija men, and kidnapping Bija women.⁷ After the revolt was finally suppressed in 1844, the Turko-Egyptian government of Eastern Sudan remained skeletal, comprised of little more than a group of tax collectors supported by garrisons at Kassala, Tawkar, Sawakin, Irkuwit, Sinkat, and a number of islands and small harbors in the Red Sea.⁸

The incorporation of Eastern Sudan into Egypt's expanding African Empire coincided with a radical change in the food economy of the region. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Bija communities engaged in both pastoralism and commercial agriculture, routinely producing grain surpluses for export to Arabian markets. In 1812, for example, John Ludwig Burckhardt observed, while traveling through the region, that Sawakin-based merchants routinely purchased *dhura* grown in the Qash Delta to sell at Jidda. According to Burckhardt, *dhura* was a key component of trans-Red Sea trade and it was carried by every boat that disembarked from the Sudanese coast.⁹ Though the grain trade was a crucial Bija economic activity at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bija communities progressively abandoned cultivation over the next few decades and the extent of grain cultivation in Eastern Sudan declined. By the 1860s, Guillaume Lejean noted that only one-fourth of the cultivable area of the Qash Delta was routinely worked.¹⁰ Pastoral communities elsewhere along Africa's Red Sea littoral similarly reduced the extent of grain cultivation in the nineteenth century. For example, in the early nineteenth century, grain grown by pastoralists in torrential rivers in coastal Eritrea was prized in local markets, but, by the last third of the nineteenth century, these coastal groups no longer produced surpluses and instead purchased grain imported via Massawa.¹¹

Pastoralist communities on Africa's Red Sea littoral abandoned the commercial production of grain in response to changes in Red Sea trade. In the nineteenth century, as the result of Egyptian state policy, a number of regional grain trading networks were consolidated into a unified Red Sea grain market with Egypt as the main supplier. Egyptian involvement in this market grew out of traditional subventions given by Muslim rulers to local Hijaz elites. These subventions, which were intended as a sign of a ruler's pious respect for the caretakers of Muslim holy sites, were begun by the Abbasid Khalifa al-Muqtadir in the tenth century.¹² Though al-Muqtadir's subventions were exclusively of money, Ottoman Sultans subsequently added a regular annual gift of 7,000 *ardabbs* of grain.¹³ After Muhammad 'Ali, the *Wāli* of Egypt, successfully suppressed an early nineteenth-century revolt in the Hijaz, he assumed responsibility for the annual subvention. In an act intended to extend his regional influence, Muhammad 'Ali then increased the payment in grain to 180,000 *ardabbs*, so as to allow Hijaz elites to pay nomadic tribes for the safe passage of pilgrims en route to Mecca.¹⁴

Unlike previous rulers who had sent their subventions overland, Muhammad 'Ali shipped his subventions via al-Qusair, the Red Sea port closest to the bend in the Egyptian Nile. To ensure the safety of the grain caravans traveling between the Nile at Qina and al-Qusair, the Egyptian government signed treaties with local *shaykhs* along the route. In order to carry the grain and protect the cargo, the Egyptian government developed a new Red Sea fleet, with 7 three-masted European-built ships and 11 one-masted Arabian built ships that regularly traveled between al-Qusair and the Hijaz. The new stability on the caravan road in Egypt's eastern desert and the expanded trading facilities at al-Qusair allowed for the development of a broader, privately financed trade in grain between Egypt and Red Sea markets.¹⁵

In the years that followed, Bija pastoralists could not compete with Egyptian subsidized grain and, therefore, turned their attention to new economic opportunities brought about by the expansion of the caravan trade between coastal ports and the interior. Amar'ar and Hadandawa pastoralists provided camels and guides for merchants on both the Sawakin-Barbar and Sawakin-Kassala roads. At the beginning of the 1880s, caravans of between 500 and 1000 camels left Sawakin for the interior every few months¹⁶ and camel owners received as much as seven Maria Theresa silver dollars per camel per trip.¹⁷ The *shaykhs* along these roads further profited from the increased trade by charging merchants for access to wells in their territory.¹⁸

Cattle, sheep, and goat herds were another source of wealth that Bija pastoralists often bartered or sold. Pastoralists in the Hijaz were unable to raise sufficient cattle to meet local demand for meat and milk products, which was kept high by the annual influx of Muslim pilgrims. As a result, skins, hides, and domestic animals were considerably more expensive in Arabia than on the Sudanese coast; for example, Burckhardt noted that a waterskin sold at Jeddah for the equivalent price of a whole sheep sold at Sawakin.¹⁹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, the expansion of steam travel increased the pilgrim traffic to Mecca, further augmenting the demand for pastoral products in Arabia. In addition, the expansion of trade at Suez following the opening of the canal created a new market for Bija animals and, by the early 1880s, hundreds of sheep and cattle were exported each year from Sawakin to that port.²⁰

In the nineteenth century, pastoralist communities elsewhere on Africa's Red Sea littoral similarly shifted their energy from producing surplus grain to rearing animals for trade. At the end of the nineteenth century, Saho- and Tigre-speaking pastoralists in Eritrea, for example, routinely sold meat, butter, and hides at regional markets or to Massawa and purchased imported tobacco, cloth, and grain.²¹ At the same time, Somali pastoralists bartered animal (including meat, skins, and butter) and unprocessed raw (e.g., gum and ivory) products for grain and cloth at coastal markets and, more significantly, to the expanding trading community and British administration in Aden.²²

As local cultivation decreased, trade links between Red Sea markets and other grain-producing regions intensified. Between the 1840s and 1880s, the number of large ships annually anchoring at Jidda increased from 20 galleys to 300 steamers, many of them carrying grain from India and the Persian Gulf.²³ At the same time, a famine in Egypt in 1864 led Khedive Isma'il to reduce the Egyptian grain subventions to less than 24,000 *ardabbs* per year. Grain prices in Egypt remained high throughout the late nineteenth century and, with the high cost of overland transport from Qina to al-Qusair, Egyptian grain ceased to be competitive against the increasing quantities of Indian and Iraqi grain imported into Red Sea markets.²⁴

On the eve of the Mahdist Rebellion, Bija communities were dependent on grain imports to meet even their basic subsistence needs. Since late nineteenth century statistical data is sparse and, often, nonexistent, the extent of this dependence can only be inferred from the extant historical record. In the 1890s, British officials in Sawakin estimated that an *ardabb* of *dhura* typically fed 360 people for one

day or approximately one person for a year.²⁵ In 1903 British officials estimated the population of Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills at approximately 140,000.²⁶ That same year, British officials claimed that the population of the region prior to the Mahdist Rebellion was approximately 800,000 people.²⁷ While this figure has been challenged by a number of scholars, these official statistics indicate that the region experienced a sharp population decline in the 1880s and 1890s. The extent of the population decline in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills is likely less than that experienced in Dunqula, where an estimated 75 percent of the population fled or died during the Mahdist Rebellion. Even assuming that the population of Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills declined by only one-third during the rebellion, local grain yields in the early 1880s would have been insufficient to meet local needs. If the population of this region was approximately 210,000 people on the eve of the Mahdist Rebellion, the local demand for grain would have been approximately 210,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* per year, a total that could not have been produced locally.

As earlier statistics are incomplete or nonexistent, Anglo-Egyptian government statistics compiled before the implementation of large-scale agricultural development schemes in the twentieth century can be used to estimate local grain yields in the nineteenth century. Rainfall in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills is, generally, insufficient to support cultivation, which, as a result, has historically been confined to the Tawkar and Qash Deltas and to a number of small, scattered valleys near Jabal Udi and Sinkat. The Qash Delta, which is over 400 km west of Sawakin, was estimated, before the digging of major training and canalization works, to have an area of approximately 70,000 *faddāns*. However, Anglo-Egyptian officials in the beginning of the twentieth century noted that only between 10,000 and 20,000 *faddāns* were cultivated annually; the remaining watered area was covered in dense forest, suggesting that the extent of cultivation had remained stable over the previous generation.²⁸ At the beginning of the twentieth century, officials estimated the annual *dhura* yield from the delta and from cultivated land on the shores of its source river at between 15,000 and 35,000 *ardabbs*.²⁹ The Tawkar Delta, the northern edge of which is less than 90 km southwest of Sawakin, has a highly variable flood and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Anglo-Egyptian officials estimated that, on average, between 25,000 and 40,000 *faddāns* in the delta were sufficiently watered each year to support cultivation.³⁰ In the early twentieth century, officials estimated the average *dhura* yield in Sudan to be 2 to 2.5 *ardabbs* per *faddān*.³¹ Therefore the yield in

the Tawkar Delta can be estimated to have been between 50,000 and 100,000 *ardabbs*. Similarly, the scattered valleys in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills were estimated to yield between 7,000 and 22,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* per year.³² These estimates suggest that the total possible yield in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills in the late nineteenth century was between 72,000 and 157,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* per year or between one-third and two-thirds of local needs. The remaining local demand for grain had to be met by imports from the unified Red Sea grain market.

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, regional grain yields were likely less than the above estimate because Bija pastoralists were prevented from cultivating *dhura* in the Tawkar Delta. In 1865, the Ottoman Sultan ceded control over Sawakin, as well as Massawa, to Khedive Isma‘il, the grandson of Muhammad ‘Ali. Over the following decade and a half, Isma‘il sought to use his economically vibrant Red Sea ports as the base for developing Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills into a significant exporter of cotton. Turko-Egyptian officials subsequently introduced cotton cultivation to the Tawkar and Qash Deltas and erected a ginning factory at Sawakin.³³ Bija communities with rights in these fertile regions resisted government interference in local cultivation practices. In response, Turko-Egyptian officials prohibited *dhura* cultivation in the Tawkar Delta and used troops to ensure compliance with new agricultural regulations.³⁴ Nonetheless, the forced repurposing of land traditionally used to grow *dhura* did not lead to a food crisis in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Rather, these policies intensified an already profound local dependence on imported grain and this dependence subsequently influenced the course of the Mahdist Rebellion.

The Rebellion Spreads East

In 1883, ‘Uthman Abu Bakr Diqna brought al-Mahdi’s jihad to Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills.³⁵ Diqna was born around 1840 to a Sawakini merchant family; his father was the descendant of Kurdish soldiers garrisoned in Sawakin, the major Red Sea port, in the late sixteenth century and his mother was from the Bishariyyab Hadandawa. Diqna’s resentment of the Turko-Egyptian government preceded his interest in al-Mahdi’s teachings. In 1877, the Turko-Egyptian *Mudīr* of Sawakin briefly imprisoned Diqna after the British Navy captured him on a ship running slaves across the Red Sea to Jidda. Diqna was financially ruined by his incarceration and

he blamed the government for his poverty. When the 'Urabi Revolt broke out in Egypt, he tried to incite an allied revolt in Eastern Sudan. However, few joined his movements and other Sawakini merchants forced Diqna into exile. Diqna eventually made his way to Aba Island, where he became an early follower of al-Mahdi. He subsequently participated in the 1882 Mahdist siege of al-Ubayyid, after which al-Mahdi appointed him *amīr* of the Bija and sent him to spread the rebellion to Eastern Sudan.³⁶

Diqna's call to arms was well received by some segments of Bija society, most notably among Hadandawa pastoralists. Early widespread support for al-Mahdi's message in Eastern Sudan stemmed from specific, local conditions. Hadandawa pastoralist had long resented the Turko-Egyptian government for its campaign to suppress their rebellion in the 1840s. This resentment continued to deepen over the following decades because Turko-Egyptian officials, in addition to levying taxes, frequently required pastoralists to provide free transport for government cargoes. Though this practice was ended in the 1880s, officials continued to economically exploit the pastoralist population. For example, just before Diqna's 1883 return to Eastern Sudan, officials, who had contracted with Hadandawa *shaykhs* to transport provisions for the Egyptian Army for 7 Maria Theresa thalers per camel, paid these *shaykhs* the equivalent of 1 thaler per camel.³⁷

Local resentment was channeled into support for al-Mahdi's jihad when al-Tahir al-Tayyib al-Majdhub, the spiritual leader of the Majdhūbiyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, proclaimed his support for al-Mahdi. Al-Majdhub had long resented the Turko-Egyptian government's preference for the al-Mirghani family, who led the Khatmiyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*.³⁸ Following al-Majdhub's embrace of al-Mahdi's message in early 1883, a number of Hadandawa *shaykhs* publicly swore oaths of support for al-Mahdi and Diqna, his *amīr*. These *shaykhs* then used their position on the Barbar-Sawakin caravan route to block communications between the Red Sea littoral and the Nile.³⁹ Over the next two years, Diqna and his Bija supporters won many decisive victories, overtaking a number of Turko-Egyptian garrisons. By the summer of 1885, the only remaining Egyptian Army garrisons were stationed at the Red Sea ports of Sawakin and 'Aqiq.⁴⁰

British political advisors and military officers in Cairo responded to the spread of the Mahdist Rebellion to Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills by increasing their control over the local government. Initially, these British officials sought to assist the Turko-Egyptian government in its campaign against Diqna and his supporters. However, Turko-

Egyptian officials in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, like their counterparts on the Nile frontier, reacted by attempting to minimize British interference in local affairs. Conflicts between British and Turko-Egyptian officials stationed on the Red Sea littoral led British officials to replace the local Turko-Egyptian government with first a British and then an Anglo-Egyptian administration. In November 1883, the Royal Navy, fulfilling a request from Baring, ordered Rear Admiral William Hewett, the Senior Naval Officer in the Red Sea, to station a steamer in Sawakin's harbor⁴¹ because rebels had begun cattle raiding in the vicinity.⁴² Sulaiman Niyazi, the commanding officer of the Egyptian Army in Eastern Sudan, subsequently claimed supreme authority over all British military and naval personnel in territory under his command.⁴³ In response to the ensuing British protest, the Khedive recalled Niyazi in early 1884. This episode led British officials in Cairo and Sawakin to conclude that the local Turko-Egyptian government was both incapable of defending Sawakin from rebel attacks on its own and an unreliable ally. Therefore, on February 8, 1884, the British Foreign Office, responding to another request from Baring, authorized the transfer of full military and civil authority at Sawakin to British officials.⁴⁴ However, the new British administration of the port was to be temporary. British officials stationed at Sawakin were instructed not to annex the port to Britain. Rather, they were ordered to hold the city for the Khedive. On February 9, 1884, Rear-Admiral W. Hewett, captain of H.M.S. *Ranger*, landed at Sawakin, declared martial law, dismissed the Turko-Egyptian governor and his staff, took over the treasury and, over the next few days, appointed British consular officials and Naval officers to key posts, including Sub-Governor, chief of police, health inspector, harbor master, and superintendent of machinery.⁴⁵

To strengthen Hewett's new government, General Frederick Stephenson, the Officer Commanding the British Army of Occupation in Egypt, sent three British battalions under Major-General Gerald Graham to relieve besieged Egyptian Army garrisons in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Graham's mission was at best a qualified success. Victories against the Hadandawa rebels at Tawkar, Tamai, and Sinkat in early March forced Diqna and his followers to retreat from the Red Sea Hills and led some wavering *shaykhs* to come into Sawakin and profess loyalty to the government.⁴⁶ However, Diqna's followers continued to hold the Barbar-Sawakin road and to besiege Kassala. Further, Graham's instructions precluded him from garrisoning his men in the interior and therefore did not prevent Diqna and his

supporters from establishing new camps or reoccupying old camps as soon as Graham and his men retired.

While Hewett and Graham created and defended the new British administration of Sawakin, British officials in Cairo and London debated the future of the port. Some wanted to formally annex the port to the British Empire,⁴⁷ others wanted to return it to the Khedive,⁴⁸ and still others wanted to turn it over to the Ottoman Sultan.⁴⁹ Similarly, there was little consensus as to the political future of Eastern Sudan, with some wanting to force the Khedive to abandon the region and others wanting to maintain the local Turko-Egyptian government.⁵⁰ Without resolving this debate, British officials in Cairo transferred control over Sawakin to Herbert Chermiside, a British General who had been seconded to the Egyptian Army after the 'Urabi Revolt. Chermiside, who was officially appointed Governor General of the Red Sea Littoral by the Khedive in March 1884, replaced Hewett's British government of Sawakin with a new Anglo-Egyptian administration, similar to the one subsequently built by Wodehouse in Frontier Province in 1888. Chermiside then appointed British officers in the Egyptian Army to all significant senior posts in the new Anglo-Egyptian administration at Sawakin.

Policies imposed by British politicians in London on the Anglo-Egyptian administration over the next few years transformed the Mahdist Rebellion from a struggle between the indigenous population and a colonial government into a civil war between segments of indigenous society. On March 21, 1884, Lord Granville, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, instructed Anglo-Egyptian officials in Sawakin to "spend some money among sheikhs for purpose of inducing others to come in" and to "impress on them that aim [*sic*] is to open Berber road for trade and protect travelers. Road might be divided into sections, and each sheikh subsidized for keeping one open."⁵¹ Granville explicitly instructed these officials to include Mahmud 'Ali, the *shaykh* of the Fadlab *adat* of the Amar'ar, in all future military strategies. Mahmud 'Ali had previously served as the *wakīl* (lit. agent) of *shaykh* Hamad Mahmud, who was the *nāzīr* of the Amar'ar and had been recognized by the former Turko-Egyptian government as the head *shaykh* of the Barbar-Sawakin road. As *wakīl*, Mahmud 'Ali had arranged the camels for the caravans and collected tolls for using the road. Therefore, both his income and personal wealth were tied directly to the regime in Sawakin and to international trade.⁵²

Chermiside opposed this policy because he thought that employing allied *shaykhs* would prevent the government from reconciling with

rebellious ones.⁵³ Nonetheless, in late March 1884, Chermside induced Mahmud 'Ali and a number of allied *shaykhs* to form a defensive league to protect against rebel attack.⁵⁴ Mahmud 'Ali immediately maneuvered to increase his strategic value to the new Anglo-Egyptian administration by expanding his local influence at the expense of the league. In early April 1884, Mahmud 'Ali raised a 300-man militia and, without Chermside's permission or instructions, raided cattle from Diqna's followers at Tawkar.⁵⁵ When he found out, Chermside ordered the militia to return the cattle and pressed London and Cairo for permission to disband Mahmud 'Ali's militia.⁵⁶ Granville refused Chermside's request and, believing that the Amar'ar militia could assist in rescuing Gordon from the Mahdist siege of Khartoum, ordered Chermside to continue to support Mahmud 'Ali.⁵⁷ The following year, the British Foreign Office appointed Major-General Arthur Freemantle as Political Officer at Sawakin with orders to support Amar'ar offensive movements against Diqna and his followers. Freemantle was instructed to give military assistance, provisions, and cash subsidies to any Amar'ar *shaykh* willing to conquer and rule Eastern Sudan.⁵⁸ Mahmud 'Ali immediately responded to Freemantle's offer by, again, proposing to raid on behalf of the government and, on April 12, 1885, his militia launched the first of a number of Foreign Office supported raids.⁵⁹

For Mahmud 'Ali and his followers maintaining a relationship with the administration was crucial to maintaining access to imported grain. The outbreak of the Mahdist Rebellion led to the collapse of the caravan trade between Sawakin and the Sudanese Nile. In 1884, the value of goods exported from Sudan via Sawakin dropped from a previous annual average of £130,000 to approximately £10,000. The following year, trade between Sawakin and the interior ceased completely.⁶⁰ Unable to profit from trade, Mahmud 'Ali and his followers profited from war. Acting on specific orders from the British Foreign Office, the Anglo-Egyptian administration paid Mahmud 'Ali to maintain his militia and attack rebel camps. The administration subsidized Mahmud 'Ali's militia by providing his men with arms, ammunition, and provisions, which included imported grain. Between September 1884 and April 1886, the Anglo-Egyptian administration paid Mahmud 'Ali a total of £5,000 as his salary and as subsidies to support his followers.⁶¹ This militia further profited by keeping the booty raided from rebel camps.⁶² For example, following the April 12, 1885 raid, Mahmud 'Ali's handed over a few sheep, a camel, and all of the captured prisoners to the Anglo-Egyptian administration, but kept the remaining loot, including a number of kidnapped women.⁶³

The rebels also continued to be dependent on imported grain. However, they were able to create trade links that bypassed Anglo-Egyptian controlled territory. Though direct trade between Sawakin and the Sudanese interior ended in 1884, rebel camps continued to import Indian grain via the numerous natural harbors along the Sudanese Red Sea littoral. In the summer of 1885, British officials realized that the rebels routinely traded Sudanese slaves for grain, when the H.M.S. *Grappler* arrested Sayyid Bahia, the *wakīl* of a Jidda-based merchant, offloading grain near a rebel camp at Shinab. Under interrogation, Bahia confessed that he had been sent to Shinab to sell 317 sacks of *dhura* to the rebels and that he had previously sold them 142 sacks.⁶⁴ An inspection of Shinab revealed multiple heaps of grain and many sets of weights and measures, leading the captain of the *Grappler* to conclude that Shinab had become a major grain market.⁶⁵ Though Anglo-Egyptian officials subsequently closed this market and drove the rebels from the region, Onur, the rebel *amīr* in charge of purchasing provisions in the region, continued to trade on the nearby coast.⁶⁶

Starving the Rebellion

Following the revelation that rebel forces routinely imported grain directly from Jidda, Anglo-Egyptian officials adopted a military strategy that focused on inducing food scarcity in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills and on making the market at Sawakin the only source of grain in the region. These officials believed that this strategy would break the alliance between rebellious communities and the Mahdist state. Without access to provisions, Mahdist forces from the Sudanese interior would be forced to retreat to the Qash Delta, over 400 kilometers west of Sawakin. However, communities local to the region would be left with the choice of either coming to terms with the Anglo-Egyptian administration and purchasing from government-controlled grain stocks or starving to death. However, this strategy contravened orders issued by senior British officials in London. Limitations on the administration's actions were explicitly laid out in a letter that Baring sent to Herbert Kitchener shortly after the latter's appointment as Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral in 1886. Baring instructed Kitchener not to reconquer lost territory in Eastern Sudan, to "ensure peace and tranquility on the immediate frontiers of [the Egyptian government's] *de facto* possessions," to encourage legitimate trade while combating the slave trade and to keep government expenditures to

a minimum.⁶⁷ While attempting to induce a food shortage, Anglo-Egyptian officials disobeyed orders and discouraged trade, formed alliances with known slave dealers and, at times, escalated hostilities during periods of relative peace. Rather than be punished for insubordination, Anglo-Egyptian officials were frequently rewarded for their actions. For example, when Kitchener was wounded, in 1888, while leading an offensive against a rebel camp in the Eastern Sudanese interior, he was appointed an Aide-de-Camp by Queen Victoria and promoted to Brevet Colonel.⁶⁸

British politicians did not rebuke Anglo-Egyptian officials because, for political reasons, Lord Salisbury's government publicly denied playing a role in managing Sudanese affairs. Following the Conservative Parliamentary victories in 1885 and 1886, senior British Cabinet Ministers asserted that the Anglo-Egyptian administration based in Sawakin was part of the Khedive's government and therefore answerable exclusively to the Khedive and to the Egyptian Cabinet. In response to a series of questions from the opposition in the House of Commons, on December 15, 1888, James Ferguson, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated that the Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral was the agent of the Khedive and that the British Cabinet was not in direct communication with British officials within the Egyptian Government, including those in the Egyptian Army and the Anglo-Egyptian administration.⁶⁹ Orders from the British Cabinet had to be conveyed to the Anglo-Egyptian administration through Baring and could only be, as Baring described them, "demi-official."⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the senior British Cabinet Ministers continued to shape Anglo-Egyptian policy.⁷¹

Following the discovery of the large rebel grain market at Shinab, Anglo-Egyptian officials successfully petitioned the British Government to order the British Navy to establish a grain blockade from 'Aqiq to Shinab. The new British Navy orders regarding the grain embargo were issued in early October 1885.⁷² These orders augmented standing orders for British vessels in the Red Sea instituted after Britain and Egypt signed a convention to suppress the slave trade in 1877. Article 6 of this convention gave the British Navy the right to board, search, and seize Egyptian ships suspected of engaging in the slave trade in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and along the east coast of Africa.⁷³ The 1885 order to block the import of grain, like the long-standing order to police the slave trade, only applied at sea. British naval officers were prohibited from landing in Sudanese territory, though they were allowed to board ships anchored in harbors.

To increase the effectiveness of the naval blockade, Anglo-Egyptian officials sent Mahmud 'Ali and his militia on a number of expeditions designed to limit the ability of the rebels to trade for grain. Some of these expeditions were raids in which Mahmud 'Ali's men reduced the wealth of Hadandawa camps by stealing large numbers of cattle, camels, and slaves. Other expeditions focused on disrupting the grain trade between rebel Hadandawa camps and Jidda. For example, in May 1886, Charles Watson, who had just been appointed Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral and who would only serve in this capacity for a few months, sent Mahmud 'Ali's militia to capture Onur, the rebel *amīr* in charge of purchasing provisions on the northern coast.⁷⁴ When the militia captured Onur on May 22, 1886, Mahmud 'Ali turned him over to the government and kept the large quantity of grain and arms found in his camp.⁷⁵

Following his appointment as Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral in July 1886, Kitchener was convinced that a more robust forward policy was necessary to secure Sawakin and, therefore, sought to install Mahmud 'Ali as the ruler of the Red Sea Hills.⁷⁶ As a preliminary step, Kitchener supplied Mahmud 'Ali's men with arms, ammunitions, and provisions and sent them to capture a large rebel camp at Tamai. On October 7, 1886, a force led by Ahmad Mahmud, Mahmud 'Ali's son, captured the camp⁷⁷ and, as a reward for their service, Kitchener gave Ahmad Mahmud the deeds to rebel-owned property in Sawakin,⁷⁸ awarded Mahmud 'Ali a gift of £2000,⁷⁹ and allowed the militia to keep the 170 slaves seized in battle.⁸⁰ After the battle, a number of rebellious Hadandawa *shaykhs* came into Sawakin and submitted to the administration. Kitchener induced these *shaykhs* to form a league of *shaykhs* with the allied Amar'ar *shaykhs*, to recognize Mahmud 'Ali as the *shaykh* of *shaykhs* and to commit to taking and holding Tawkar.⁸¹ However, this plan went nowhere. Though the league made initial preparations for an advance on Tawkar, rumors soon spread through Sawakin that thousands of Mahdist soldiers were being sent from the Nile to reinforce Tawkar. As a result, the league refused to launch their promised expedition and Kitchener's plan stalled.⁸²

Efforts to prevent rebels from importing grain from the Red Sea met with similar failure because the British Navy proved both unable and unwilling to combat the grain trade. Steamers proved to hinder, rather than aid, naval policing activities in Sudanese waters. As early as 1881, naval officers combating the Red Sea slave trade off the Sudanese coast complained to their superiors that their steamers were unsuited to the task because the barrier islands and reefs near the shore line and the

pattern of winds at sea ensured that dhows consistently outran British steamers.⁸³ Dhows continued to outrun British steamers throughout the 1880s. In 1885 and 1886, though seven ships were patrolling the Sudanese Red Sea,⁸⁴ British Navy officers reported capturing just two dhows.⁸⁵ These officers repeatedly asked that the Red Sea fleet be augmented with a fleet of dhows that could keep up with the contraband runners.⁸⁶ However, this request went unfulfilled.

Though orders to combat the grain trade stood until April 1887,⁸⁷ a dispute between the British Navy and the Egyptian Cabinet in 1886 led British Navy officers to stop enforcing the grain embargo. In the early stages of the blockade, the Khedive and his cabinet claimed that, since Britain had not declared an official blockade and the Egyptian Army had not classified grain as contraband of war, policing the Red Sea grain trade could not be considered part of a military operation. However, landing grain at Sudanese harbors other than Sawakin was a violation of Egyptian customs regulations. Therefore, they claimed that the British Navy was policing the grain trade on behalf of the Egyptian Customs Department. This interpretation of the grain embargo meant that the Egyptian Treasury was entitled to half of the proceeds from the sale of dhows captured running grain.⁸⁸ British Navy officers stationed in the Red Sea, on the other hand, believed that they were supporting a military operation and, therefore, had the right to all of the proceeds from these sales.⁸⁹ Anglo-Egyptian officials sided with the Egyptian Cabinet against the British Navy for pragmatic reasons; all customs receipts from Sawakin, including those generated by the sale of impounded contraband, were credited to the administration's tight budget.⁹⁰ Officials in the British War Office and Foreign Office refused to side with the British Navy. Though these officials recognized that formally declaring a blockade would clarify the issue, they refused to do so out of fear of serious international implications. The Sudanese coast was still, *de jure*, Egyptian territory and Egypt had signed preferential trade agreements with a number of European nations.⁹¹ In April 1886, the Admiralty, acting under pressure from the British Foreign and War Offices, issued new instructions that acknowledged that policing the grain trade was a service provided to the Egyptian Customs Department and, as a result, British Navy officers were forced to comply with these custom regulations.⁹²

Following the issue of these new instructions, British Navy officers stopped policing the grain trade. Though there are no records that British Navy officers seized dhows attempting to land grain after April 1886, there are records of naval officers seizing dhows engaged in the

slave trade following that date.⁹³ The different rates of success reflect the priorities of British Navy captains, which were, in part, influenced by pecuniary concerns; British ships were allowed to keep all of the proceeds from impounding a dhow engaged in the slave trade and only half the proceeds from one engaged in the grain trade. However, naval officers were not simply driven by money; they were also driven by a desire to embarrass the Anglo-Egyptian administration. Following the dispute about the sale of impounded dhows, British Navy officers became interested in implicating senior Anglo-Egyptian officials, including Kitchener, and their indigenous allies in the Red Sea slave trade. These naval officers first attempted to expose the administration in the weeks following the victory at Tamai, when rumors circulated in Sawakin that Mahmud 'Ali planned on exporting the 170 captured slaves that Kitchener had allowed him to keep as the spoils of battle.⁹⁴ Though Kitchener told these captains that the rumors were baseless,⁹⁵ Captain Lindesay of the H.M.S. *Cygnets* and Captain Lambton of the H.M.S. *Dolphin* focused their efforts, over the next few months, on patrolling for dhows carrying Mahmud 'Ali's captured slaves.⁹⁶ Though such dhows were never intercepted, British Navy officers continued their efforts to expose the Anglo-Egyptian administration's complicity in the slave trade and, toward this end, began collaborating with a new, abolitionist-backed British trading company.

Exposing the Anglo-Egyptian Administration's Complicity in the Slave Trade

The Sudan Trading Company (STC) was founded in 1885 by Francis William Fox and Captain Verney Cameron, both of whom firmly believed that commerce intrinsically led to peace because the prospect of material improvement naturally provides warring factions a reason to work in concert. For Fox, this idea grew from a deep commitment to his Quaker faith. Fox was born in 1841 to prominent members of the Quaker community in Kingsbridge in Devon. He was a prominent member of a number of humanitarian organizations, including the Aborigines Protection Society, and advocated for various causes, including abolition, European disarmament, and missionizing China.⁹⁷ Fox was an engineer by trade and he co-founded the Atlas Engineering Works, which produced locomotives and steam engines for rail lines in Nova Scotia, Java, Argentina, France, and Italy.⁹⁸ Fox's personal interest in Sudan began in 1884, when a trip to Cairo to fulfill an

engineering contract coincided with the Mahdist siege of Khartoum. Fox spent much of his time in Cairo petitioning Egyptian officials to find a peaceful resolution to the Mahdist Rebellion and, following his return to Britain, Fox continued to advocate for a peaceful end to the conflict.⁹⁹

Cameron's interest in Sudan grew out of his relationship with Fox. In the 1880s, Cameron was a retired British Navy captain, noted adventurer and vocal advocate for free trade in Africa. Fox and Cameron met in 1885, after Cameron contacted the Aborigines Protection Society, hoping to drum up support for Emin Pasha's Equatorial campaign. In the weeks following their initial meeting, Fox and Cameron crafted an elaborate plan to end the African slave trade by promoting legitimate commerce through the development of a network of railways and steamship lines that would link the Atlantic and Indian Oceans via the Red Sea, the African Great Lakes and the Congo, Nile and Zambezi Rivers. Deciding that it was too much to expect one country to undertake such a vast colonization project, Fox and Cameron split the project into two parts. They subsequently approached William Henry Harrison, President of the United States, about developing the southern part of this network and founded the STC to develop the Nile to Red Sea section.¹⁰⁰

The STC received considerable early interest and support in Britain. A number of peers and Liberal politicians were quick to invest, including William Edward Forester (the Liberal politician and industrialist), the Earl of Northbrook (the First Lord of the Admiralty), the Marquis of Lorne (the former Governor General of Canada), and Villers Stuart (a Member of Parliament who had famously reported on conditions in Egypt after the suppression of the 'Urabi Revolt).¹⁰¹ Later investors included the Duke of Westminster, Lord Ribblesdale, and the Earl of Milltown.¹⁰² In addition, public advocacy organizations representing the interests of both investors and humanitarians, including the London Chamber of Commerce and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, lobbied Parliament, and Whitehall on behalf of the company.¹⁰³

The STC's initial business plan was laid out in a series of letters sent by Fox and Cameron to the Foreign Office in December 1885 and January 1886. The STC was initially proposed as a Chartered Company that would administer all of Egypt's former Sudanese possessions—including Dar Fur, Kurdufan, Bahr al-Ghazal, Dunqula, Khartoum, Sinnar, Barbar, Fashoda, the Equatorial Provinces, Kassala, and the Red Sea ports of Sawakin, Massawa, Barbara, and Zayla'a.¹⁰⁴

In recognition of the Khedive's status as an autonomous ruler within the Ottoman Empire, Fox and Cameron proposed that the STC's charter be granted by the Egyptian government under the 1841 Ottoman *firman*, which clarified Egyptian autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty. Though they requested that the STC be granted complete sovereignty within the borders of Sudan, Fox and Cameron promised that the company would commit itself "to recognizing the sovereignty of His Majesty the Sultan of Turkey so far as recognized by Her Majesty's Government."¹⁰⁵ The STC also would commit itself "to the development of the Soudan and of its future Government,"¹⁰⁶ to the establishment of peace and just government, and to the suppression of the slave trade. In addition, Fox and Cameron asserted that the STC would pay interest to creditors and dividends to shareholders, including the British Government, and to pay the Ottoman Sultan 50 percent of the remaining net profit.¹⁰⁷

Fox and Cameron planned to finance the company from a combination of private and public sources. They told the Foreign Office that they would raise £8 million from privately floated bonds and they asked for a £2 million loan from the British government. In addition, Fox and Cameron requested that the British Treasury provide the STC with an annual subvention that would start off at £240,000 in the first year and that would diminish by £40,000 each of the subsequent five years. Fox and Cameron stated that the STC would use its capital to expand commercial cotton cultivation, as well as to develop communications by constructing a railroad linking Barbar to Sawakin and by increasing the size of the Nile fleet to 50 steamers. Fox and Cameron also asked that the Egyptian and British governments give the company title to all forts, buildings, ships, and other government property abandoned during the withdrawal. Though they also asked these governments to hand over all arms, ammunitions, and stores in Anglo-Egyptian-administered Sudanese territory on the Nile frontier and the Red Sea coast, Fox and Cameron planned to pacify Sudan by entering into treaties with local *shaykhs* and by opening direct negotiations with the Mahdist state. They believed that strengthening commercial links between Sudanese cultivators and foreign markets in Egypt, Arabia, and Europe would gradually win the allegiance of all the Sudanese, who, regardless of their commitment to al-Mahdi's teachings, would be able to see themselves as the direct beneficiaries of company rule.¹⁰⁸

The Foreign Office took this proposal seriously and, in early 1886, passed it along to a number of officials for comment. These officials

were divided as to the viability of the proposal. The British Consul at Sawakin thought that the STC's policy of promoting trade was more likely to succeed at pacifying the region than the current, strictly militaristic policy.¹⁰⁹ The British Consul at Constantinople believed that the Ottoman Sultan would not agree to the proposal.¹¹⁰ Major-General Brackenberry, the Director of Military Intelligence in the British War Office who had experienced combat in Sudan in 1884, characterized Cameron and Fox as "naïve," described their proposal as full of "vague and obscure promises", and noted that the Egyptian Army had already implemented key features of their proposals, including subsidizing *shaykhs*.¹¹¹

Despite Brackenberry's criticism, Fox and Cameron's proposal tapped into a set of established or emerging attitudes shared by British officials in London and Cairo on the future of Sudanese–Egyptian relations. Both Granville, as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Baring had, in 1885, proposed ending hostilities by opening treaty negotiations with *shaykhs* in the Sudanese interior and with the Mahdist state itself.¹¹² In addition, British officials in London and Cairo saw no reason to wait for the cessation of hostilities to open trade.¹¹³ Further, British legal advisors in Cairo believed that turning Sudan over to a chartered company would not violate existing treaties and *firman*s, and therefore would not require the Ottoman Sultan's approval.¹¹⁴ However, under Salisbury's government, the Foreign Office committed itself to allowing military officers in the Anglo-Egyptian administration to determine British strategy on the frontiers of the Mahdist state and, in March 1886, Salisbury rejected Fox and Cameron's plan.¹¹⁵

Fox did not abandon his dream of pacifying Sudan through commerce. In November 1886, Fox re-approached the Foreign Office on behalf of the STC, with a new proposal. Under the new business plan, the STC would limit its activities to increasing transport facilities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Though Fox was no longer asking for financial assistance nor for a charter, he asked permission for the STC to enter into trade agreements with local *shaykhs*.¹¹⁶ As it was now predisposed to rule against the STC, the Foreign Office rejected this proposal in early December 1886 without sending it out for comment.¹¹⁷ Undeterred, Fox traveled to Cairo and Sawakin in early 1887 to lobby local British officials on behalf of the STC.¹¹⁸ While in Sawakin, Fox hired A. B. Wylde as the company's local agent. Wylde was the son of William Henry Wylde, the former head of the Commercial, Consular, and Slave Trade Departments in the Foreign Office. The younger Wylde had previously been a merchant based

in Jidda, where he had also served as British Vice-Consul.¹¹⁹ Wylde had moved to Sawakin in November 1885 because he feared that the Mahdist Rebellion had made Arabia unsafe for European merchants. Unfortunately, he met with little commercial success on the Sudanese coast. Fox and Wylde crafted a new business plan for the STC that focused on capturing a large percentage of the import/export trade, cultivating cotton in Tawkar, working the saltpans at Rawaya, running a regular steamer service between the “native ports” and Sawakin and operating the proposed Barbar-Sawakin railroad.¹²⁰ However, this new proposal did not win the support of the British government. In early 1887, British officials in London and Cairo decided to designate Kitchener, who was then Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral, as the point person for all future dealings with the STC.¹²¹ In February 1887, Kitchener telegraphed Fox stating that “under the circumstances, I do not consider the project feasible.”¹²² Kitchener subsequently asked British officials in London and Cairo not to support the STC because, he claimed, doing so would interfere with ongoing military operations.¹²³

Wylde responded to Kitchener’s efforts to block the company by collaborating with the British Navy to publicly expose the Anglo-Egyptian administration’s complicity in the slave trade. In March 1887, Wylde passed intelligence to British Navy officers regarding the movements of the *Tir al-Nil* and the *S’adun*, two dhows known to be engaged in the slave trade. These slaving dhows were connected to prominent Sudanese allies of the Anglo-Egyptian administration. The H.M.S. *Dolphin* caught the *Tir al-Nil* on March 23, 1887 at Marsa ‘Ata’ with 80 slaves on board. The dhow had left Sawakin with sailing papers for Jidda guaranteed by Sayyam, Mahmud Shinawi’s son-in-law. Shinawi was the wealthiest merchant in Sawakin and a member of the Sawakin Tribunal of Commerce.¹²⁴ At the beginning of March 1887, Kitchener awarded Shinawi a concession to work the salt works at Rawaya despite persistent rumors that Shinawi was planning to use the harbor at these remote works to ship slaves to Jidda.¹²⁵ On the same day that the H.M.S. *Dolphin* intercepted the *Tir al-Nil*, the H.M.S. *Albacore* caught the *S’adun* at Shaykh Barqhut with 33 slaves on board. Many of these slaves had been slaves in Sawakin and at least one was taken by Mahmud ‘Ali during the capture of Tamai. The *S’adun*’s sailing papers had been guaranteed by the *nakīb* (commercial and political agent) of the Ashraf Bija, who was a government ally.¹²⁶

British naval command at Sawakin subsequently arrested both the *nakīb* and Sayyam for engaging in the slave trade.¹²⁷ Though the *nakīb*

and Sayyam were not the owners of the dhows, British Navy officers asserted that as the guarantors of the dhows they were equally culpable for the dhows' illicit activities. At the time, all boats leaving Sawakin were required to have their sailing papers guaranteed by a principle merchant or recognized elite residing in Sawakin.¹²⁸ The standard letter of guarantee stated:

This is a guarantee for both money fines and punishment, *viz*: If the sambouk proceeds to another destination and loads contraband, I am personally responsible and shall be condemned to a fine of from £1 to £50 as the Governor-General may assess; without any prejudice to my being further tried before a court assembled by the orders of the Governor General. Should the sambouk escape after the offence, I am bound to deliver up the offenders to the government within a time that the government may think sufficient, and subject otherwise to whatever judgment there might be awarded against the sambouk by a Court assembled above.¹²⁹

Kitchener tried to limit the culpability of his allies and, in a letter to Baring, he asserted that these letters of guarantee were simply routine, only required the guarantor to produce the owner of the dhow and were not sufficient evidence to implicate the guarantor in the slave trade. In addition, Kitchener asserted that if these letters were treated as proof of complicity, it would be impossible for any dhow, including those engaged in legitimate commerce, to secure a guarantor.¹³⁰ Baring agreed with Kitchener's interpretation and the captains were pressured to withdraw the charges against the *nakib* and Sayyam.¹³¹ Nonetheless, courts-martial found the slave brokers, chief boatmen, and the owners of the dhows guilty of engaging in the slave trade and they each received 50 lashes and 5 years in jail.¹³²

In May 1890, Wylde and the British Navy again collaborated to expose the Anglo-Egyptian administration's complicity in the slave trade. Acting on intelligence provided by Wylde, Commander Carey Breton of the H.M.S. *Fearless* captured two dhows, the Muzika and the Hadra, embarking slaves at Mahmud Qhul, a small port under Anglo-Egyptian rule north of Sawakin. During the subsequent courts-martial, Breton and other senior British Navy officers presented three types of evidence implicating the dhows. First, Breton asserted that the dhows were outfitted with supplies typically carried by slaving dhows, including water in excess of the needs of the crew and sets of manacles typically used on slaves. Second, Breton had some slaves captured with the dhows testify as to where and when they had been forced into

bondage. Third, Breton presented evidence that slaves were run from Mahmud Qhul with the knowledge of the local Anglo-Egyptian government. A crew member from one of the dhows testified that the Sub-Governor of the port had signed the dhows' papers. W. B. Rork, the chief engineer of the H.M.S. *Fearless*, testified that a tour of Mahmud Qhul revealed that there was a large local population but no known legitimate commerce at the harbor, which led him to conclude that the port must have been a well-known slave depot. A local guide testified that it was well known at Mahmud Qhul that the Sub-Governor received a set fee for every slave that embarked from the harbor.

Despite the evidence presented during the courts-martial, the captains of the dhows were acquitted.¹³³ Unfortunately, the only extant documentary record of these courts-martial is a summary of evidence that had been provided to A. B. Wylde, which does not mention the reasoning behind the judgment. This document simply ends by noting that the reason for the verdict was not made public. British Foreign Office and Admiralty records make no mention of the trial. However, the composition of the court favored the Anglo-Egyptian administration. Though Breton served as the prosecutor, the court, in keeping with the 1877 convention on the slave trade, was presided over by officers from the Egyptian Army.¹³⁴ These officers were not inclined to publicly implicate their superiors in the Anglo-Egyptian administration in the ongoing Red Sea slave trade.

The End of the War on Grain

Though they had previously tacitly supported the Anglo-Egyptian administration's military operations in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, British officials in London and Cairo, in 1887, came to see the strategy of combating the rebellion through the manipulation of the regional grain supply as a failure. These officials recognized that the rebellion had not ended; rebel camps continued to control the Tawkar Delta and grain continued to be freely imported from Arabia. In addition, they feared that trade restrictions were simply diverting trade to Italian-controlled Massawa.¹³⁵ Further, these officials were ideologically opposed to closing trade between Sawakin and the interior. They felt that, as Baring wrote to Salisbury in May 1887, "the less the Government interferes with trade the better."¹³⁶ Nonetheless, these officials were reluctant to obstruct active military operations and, therefore, waited until Anglo-Egyptian officials lifted some trade restrictions to order the complete liberalization of trade. In

April 1887, Kitchener granted permission to merchants to use Amar'ar guides to travel from Sawakin to markets north of the Barbar-Sawakin road. This special provision was intended as a reward to Mahmud 'Ali and a number of other allied Amar'ar *shaykhs* for their service.¹³⁷ Three days after Kitchener issued this new regulation, Salisbury had the Admiralty rescind the order requiring British Navy officers in the Red Sea to enforce Egyptian customs regulations, thereby officially ending the grain embargo.¹³⁸ Baring then ordered Kitchener to remove all remaining restrictions on trade, except the prohibition on selling arms and ammunition to the rebels.¹³⁹ However, Kitchener ignored Baring's order, which would have allowed Sawakin merchants to sell grain directly to rebel camps. In late September 1887, Salisbury repeated Baring's order to repeal remaining trade restrictions because he claimed that "it seems clear that no real advantage can now be anticipated from their continuance."¹⁴⁰ Though Kitchener again tried to avoid complying with the order, he eventually opened trade on October 11, 1887.¹⁴¹

Kitchener was reluctant to abandon his strategy of starving the rebels into submission. So he immediately escalated hostilities in a bid to effectively prevent the normalization of trade. Within days of opening trade, Kitchener sent 100 of Mahmud 'Ali's men to camp on the coast near Tawkar. The provisions and arms for these men were supplied by the Anglo-Egyptian administration. Under the protection provided by an Egyptian government steamer anchored in the harbor, this force repeatedly raided nearby rebel camp.¹⁴² A few weeks later, Kitchener sent another force of Mahmud 'Ali's men to attack the recently reformed rebel camp at Tamai.¹⁴³ Rebels responded to these offensives by raiding allied Amar'ar camps in the vicinity of Sawakin.¹⁴⁴ The increased instability led Kitchener to request, on December 19, that the British Navy again assist in the defense of the city by docking an armed steamer in the harbor.¹⁴⁵ Though Kitchener received this defensive support, hostilities escalated further. Mahmud 'Ali's militia continued to attack rebel camps, stealing slaves, sheep, and camels¹⁴⁶ and, in at least one instance, massacring many women.¹⁴⁷ Rebels retaliated by attacking Sawakin's defenses, including, in early January 1888, firing on the H.M.S. *Falcon*, which was anchored nearby.¹⁴⁸

Raiding and counter-raiding in the vicinity of Sawakin continued nearly uninterrupted over the next year despite a change in leadership in Sawakin. On January 17, 1888, Kitchener was shot in the face while leading Mahmud 'Ali's militia on an expedition.¹⁴⁹ Though Kitchener's injuries were not life-threatening, he was sent to Egypt to recover.

Charles Holled Smith, who replaced Kitchener as Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral, continued many of Kitchener's policies, including sending Mahmud 'Ali's militia to attack rebel camps. The only real lull in raiding occurred in the summer of 1888 after rumors spread through Sawakin that 5,000 Mahdist soldiers were being sent from the Nile to reinforce Diqna's camp. The British Navy used this break as an opportunity to again withdraw its ships from Sawakin harbor, claiming that British vessels patrolled the Red Sea to combat the slave trade and not to assist the Egyptian government with the defense of one of its ports, a task that naval officers claimed was best suited to the Egyptian Army.¹⁵⁰ Hostilities recommenced in September 1888, when Diqna's men dug trenches near Sawakin's outer defenses and used them to lay siege on the city.¹⁵¹ Repeated attempts to use Mahmud 'Ali's militia¹⁵² and Egyptian soldiers to clear the rebel positions were unsuccessful.¹⁵³ At the behest of Francis Grenfell, the *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army, the British Cabinet authorized the use of British troops to drive the rebels out of the trenches.¹⁵⁴ On December 20, 1888, a joint British and Egyptian force under Grenfell's command successfully stormed and overtook the rebel force in the trenches in what became known locally as the Battle of al-Jummayza.¹⁵⁵

The Battle of al-Jummayza led Anglo-Egyptian officials to, for the first time, publicly relinquish Egypt's claim of sovereignty over Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. The day after the battle, Baring instructed Grenfell to issue a proclamation stating "in very clear terms, that the Egyptian Government has no intention whatever of reasserting its authority over the interior, but that they will continue to hold Suakin" and "that, whilst fully determined to repel any attacks, the sole object of both [the Egyptian and British] Governments is to live at peace with the inhabitants of the Soudan, and to encourage legitimate trade."¹⁵⁶ The proclamation, issued on December 30, 1888, announced that the Anglo-Egyptian administration would no longer "interfere with the freedom of the tribes" living in the Red Sea Hills and that the Anglo-Egyptian administration in Sawakin would, from then on, focus exclusively on defending the ports of Sawakin, Rawaya, and 'Aqiq from rebel attack.¹⁵⁷

To ensure that Anglo-Egyptian officials focus on promoting trade, British officials in Cairo authorized the restructuring of the Anglo-Egyptian administration of Sawakin. Previous to the battle, the Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral was both the head of the civilian government and the commander of the troops. Following his victory, Grenfell divided these two functions. Kitchener, who had

returned to Sawakin to assist in clearing the trenches, resumed command of the Egyptian Army garrison on strict orders to confine military operations to within approximately three kilometers of the forts that protected Sawakin's water supply.¹⁵⁸ Holled Smith was confirmed in his appointment as Governor-General and he was made the exclusive point-person for all government negotiations with local *shaykhs*. Though his instructions remained to form and support a coalition of *shaykhs* willing to conquer and rule Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills,¹⁵⁹ Holled Smith subsequently ended the government's political and military dependence on Mahmud 'Ali's Amar'ar militia.

The restrictions imposed on the Anglo-Egyptian administration after the battle opened new economic possibilities for Bija communities. Though Mahdist state policy prevented merchants from trading between Sawakin and the Nile,¹⁶⁰ local trade between Anglo-Egyptian ports and Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills resumed at the beginning of 1889. Grain, again, became a major trade commodity. Much of the legal grain trade was in the hands of Indian merchant houses with longstanding presences in Jidda, Aden, and Bombay. In the 1880s, these houses opened agencies in Sawakin and 'Aqiq to supply the Anglo-Egyptian administration.¹⁶¹ In 1889 and early 1890, these firms imported more than 5,000 *ardabbs*, or approximately 360,000 kg, of grain into Sawakin each month.¹⁶² Though some of this grain was consumed by townspeople, much of it was re-exported to the Sudanese interior. For example, between December 12, 1889 and February 12, 1890 alone, 6,000 *ardabbs*, or approximately 864,000 kg, of grain were shipped from Sawakin to other Sudanese markets.¹⁶³ Bija communities earned the income necessary to purchase imported grain by providing camels and guides to local traders or by selling pastoral products, including butter and hides, as well as the animals themselves, in Sawakin for either local consumption or re-export to Jidda and Suez.¹⁶⁴

Bija communities also profited from the thriving black-market trade in grain and slaves. Untold numbers of dhows continued to avoid the Egyptian Customs Houses at Sawakin, Rawaya, and 'Aqiq, and unloaded their cargos at the numerous natural harbors on the Sudanese Red Sea littoral. Merchants who were engaged in the smuggling trade between the Sudanese coast and Jidda were motivated by a number of factors. First, they wanted to avoid paying the 8 percent import tariff collected at the Anglo-Egyptian controlled ports. Second, they frequently accepted slaves as payment for the grain cargos. Since the slave trade was officially illegal in Anglo-Egyptian-controlled

territory, the open sale or barter of slaves was prohibited in Sawakin. In addition, there was little risk of these dhows being caught because there were, at the time, only two Egyptian vessels enforcing Egyptian customs regulations and one British gun-boat combating the slave trade sailing along the Sudanese coast, a fleet that British Navy officers recognized as insufficient to prevent the landing of contraband.¹⁶⁵

The Battle of al-Jummayza marked the end of the Anglo-Egyptian administration's attempt to starve the rebels into submission. Nonetheless, this strategy had already proven itself a failure. In the late 1880s, Anglo-Egyptian officials stationed at Sawakin were politically too weak to induce regional food scarcity. As a result, they had to recruit a number of allies, including the British Navy and indigenous *shaykhs*, with a number of competing interests. Indigenous *shaykhs*, who were profiting financially from perpetual war, failed repeatedly to take and hold Tawkar, which, had they succeeded, would have denied rebels access to locally produced grain yields. The British Navy was unwilling to enforce a grain embargo that would have cut rebels off from the international grain trade. Instead, British Navy officers turned on the administration and, with the help of the STC, exposed the administration's complicity in the Red Sea slave trade. Meanwhile, rebels continued to draw provisions from Tawkar and Jidda. Policy changes imposed on the administration in late 1888, including the liberalization of trade and the end of raiding, opened Sawakin to direct trade with the rebels and allowed Sawakin-based merchants to legally sell provisions to rebel camps. Unfortunately, the revival of trade was insufficient to allow Bija communities to regain sufficient resources to stave off an unplanned food crisis and, at the end of 1889, the *sanat sitta* famine spread to the region.

The Sanat Sitta Famine in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills and the Decline of Bija Autonomy, 1889–1904

Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills were not spared from the deadly *sanat sitta* famine that ravaged much of Dar Fur, Kurdufan, Dunqula, Mahas, Sukkut, Nilotic Sudan, and Ethiopia. Rumors of an impending food crisis in the interior reached Sawakin in the summer of 1889.¹ Over the next few months, large groups of Bija pastoralists migrated to Sawakin in search of food. For example, 1,200 Hadandawa pastoralists arrived in Sawakin between December 11 and 23, 1889,² and 560 more on December 25, 1889.³ Whole *diwábs* migrated under the leadership of their *shaykhs*. A number of formerly rebellious *shaykhs*, including ‘Abd al-Qadir and Hamid Mahmud, both of the Hamdab *adat* of the Hadandawa,⁴ and ‘Ali Walad Sulaiman, the grandson of the former *nāzir* of the Hadandawa, settled near Sawakin under Anglo-Egyptian protection.⁵ These refugees formed an encampment north of the town’s outer defenses and subsisted, primarily, on the charity of townspeople. Initially, this migration, as Henry Barnham, the British Consul at Sawakin reported, did not “excite attention in Suakin” and Anglo-Egyptian officials did not offer food aid. In January 1890, Barnham reported that “wasted frames of mere skin and bone began to swell the number of ordinary mendicants in the streets.” Nonetheless, officials were still unwilling to offer assistance. As a result, numbers of refugees, many of them children, died from starvation each day in Sawakin. By the time the administration set up a relief program in early March, Barnham observed that famine refugees had been reduced to searching through the city’s garbage for food, picking through animal feces for undigested grain, and eating wild cats.⁶

Conditions were equally horrific in the Red Sea Hills. A. B. Wylde, the agent of the STC witnessed the devastation first hand. Wylde had interpreted the Egyptian Army's December 1888 proclamation as a formal relinquishment of all Egyptian claims in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills⁷ and, therefore, he had begun to travel extensively throughout the region, to enter into trade agreements with local *shaykhs*⁸ and to contract with cultivators in the Tawkar Delta to grow cotton.⁹ In May 1890, *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* published a letter from Wylde in which he outlined the devastation in the Tawkar Delta. Wylde wrote that only the wealthy in the delta had access to grain and that the rest of the population had been reduced to destitute "living skeletons." Wylde claimed that the worst off were the widows and children of the men who had died since the start of the rebellion. He also asserted that between 50 and 100 people in the Red Sea Hills died each day from starvation.¹⁰

The *sanat sitta* famine set the ground for the expansion of Anglo-Egyptian influence in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Anglo-Egyptian officials capitalized on the economic and social dislocation caused by this food crisis by conquering the Tawkar Delta and, thereby, severely curtailing the Mahdist state's influence in the Red Sea Hills. Nonetheless, the famine was not the result of Anglo-Egyptian military strategy. Rather, the famine was caused by rinderpest spreading north from Eritrea. This epizootic decimated the herds on which Bija pastoralists economically depended. After the famine subsided, food insecurity continued to structure the relationship between Bija pastoralist communities and the Anglo-Egyptian administration. In the 1890s, a series of natural disasters severely reduced local grain yields and, as a result, Bija communities continued to depend on grain imports controlled by Sawakin. As a result, these communities had to collaborate with the Anglo-Egyptian administration in order to earn the money necessary to purchase their sustenance. Though these communities initially benefited economically from their new relationships with the Anglo-Egyptian administration, subsequently implemented administration policies eroded the region's economic base, rendering it more difficult for these communities to purchase their sustenance.

The *Sanat Sitta* Famine in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills

The *sanat sitta* famine in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, which occurred during the 1889–1890 cultivation year, was not caused by a

reduction in the available grain supply. Though, in November 1889, a swarm of locust partially damaged the Tawkar Delta crop,¹¹ the destruction wrought by the locust swarm had only a minor impact on the overall quantity of available grain because locally grown grain comprised a small part of Bija diets. The bulk of locally consumed grain was imported, and imported grain continued to flow freely into regional markets during the famine. During the height of the famine, approximately 3,000 *ardabbs*, or 432,000 kg, of imported grain were carried out of Sawakin each month and sold at local markets.¹² Indian and Iraqi grain was also reexported into the Red Sea Hills from the Anglo-Egyptian controlled ports of Rawaya and 'Aqiq.¹³ In addition to the legal grain trade, smugglers, many of whom accepted slaves as payment, avoided paying the 8 percent import tariff collected at the Anglo-Egyptian controlled ports by landing grain at other natural harbors on the Sudanese Red Sea coast.¹⁴ Since local grain markets were well stocked, the price of grain remained stable nearly throughout the entire course of the famine. Grain prices spiked briefly during the second half of December 1889. However, this increase was caused by raiding and counter-raiding between Hadandawa camps near Sawakin and rebel camps near Tawkar effectively closing trade between Sawakin and the interior.¹⁵ When the raiding stopped in early January, the price of *dhura* in Eastern Sudanese markets quickly returned to normal levels of 4 Maria Theresa silver thalers per 4.5 kg sack and this price remained relatively constant from January through July 1890.¹⁶ This price was just slightly higher than the average price recorded at Sawakin at the same time, where grain was freely imported,¹⁷ and equal to the average price recorded in November 1888, when there was no food crisis.¹⁸ Nonetheless, in February 1890, James F. M. Prinsep, the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General in the Egyptian Army stationed at Sawakin, noted that in Tawkar "food is scarce owing to the inability of the Arabs to pay for it."¹⁹ Though grain was selling at its normal price, pastoralist communities could no longer afford to make their normal grain purchases.

Bija pastoralists, who had come to depend primarily on their animal wealth, were no longer able to purchase necessary grain because their herds had been decimated by rinderpest. John Rowe and Kjell Hødnebo argue that the rinderpest epizootic that killed up to 90 percent of cattle in Eritrea and Ethiopia between 1887 and 1889 must have simultaneously infected herds in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills.²⁰ Rowe and Hødnebo note that there was a robust trade linking Massawa to Umm Durman via Kassala throughout the late 1880s and that rinderpest entered Africa through Massawa in 1887.

Other scholars have shown that the epizootic quickly spread from the Eritrean coast via overland trade routes to Northern Ethiopia in July through September 1888 and then it spread along the Pibor and Sobat rivers²¹ and into South Sudan.²² Rowe and Hødnebo assert that rinderpest could have similarly been brought from infected zones in Eritrea and northern Ethiopia into Eastern Sudan during the course of normal trade.²³ However, Rowe and Hødnebo recognize that there is little documentary evidence of this epizootic in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Hødnebo did not uncover any references to an epizootic in Eastern Sudan in the Mahdist state records held at the National Records Office in Khartoum.²⁴ A similar search of British and Anglo-Egyptian documents at the Sudan Archive at Durham University, the National Archive in London, and the National Records Office in Khartoum unearthed only one reference to a late 1880s outbreak of cattle disease in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. In a report from 1899, Veterinary Surgeon-Lieutenant L. Rogers mentioned that there had been an outbreak of rinderpest near Sawakin a decade earlier, which he, however, attributed to infected cattle imported from Jidda.²⁵ Further, the typical mortality rate of rinderpest in virgin populations is 90 percent, but the mortality rate during the 1899 Red Sea Hills epizootic was just 60 percent. Cattle that recover from a rinderpest infection are immune from further infection and this immunity can be partially transmitted to their offspring. This confirms that there must have been an outbreak in the region in the decade prior to the well-documented 1899 outbreak.

British and Anglo-Egyptian officials may have failed to note the 1889 epizootic for a number of reasons. First, they may have failed to recognize its significance and therefore did not report it. British officials stationed in the Red Sea failed to report at least one other epizootic. A. B. Wylde, who was then residing in Jidda, noted in a personal letter from November 1879, that horses in Mecca and Jidda were, at that time, dying at the rate of 50 per day from "horse plague."²⁶ However, there are no mentions of this outbreak in official correspondence generated by British Consuls or British Navy officers stationed in the region at that time. In addition, officials may not have noticed that animals were dying because rinderpest causes only subclinical infections in camels²⁷ and the outbreak would not have disrupted communication near Sawakin. As a result, these officials may have only experienced the outbreak as a decline in the supply of meat in Sawakin's market. In fact, in September 1889, Anglo-Egyptian officials noted that there was a decline in the number of pastoralists

selling their animals in Sawakin, but they attributed this to pastoralists driving their animals toward the good rains in Eastern Sudan.²⁸ Further, even if officials noticed that animals were dying, the epizootic may have been obscured by the famine that it set off.

A close examination of the progress of the famine suggests a timeline for the rinderpest epizootic in Eastern Sudan. The large groups of Hadandawa pastoralists who started settling near Sawakin in November 1889 may have been responding to the spread of rinderpest from Eritrea into their traditional grazing lands. As cattle became infected and started to die in large numbers, pastoralist communities may have become desperate to maintain their herds, which would explain the intensification of cattle raiding around Sawakin in December 1889. By the beginning of 1890, 90 percent of the cattle in the region would have succumbed to the disease. Since herds were a crucial form of wealth that pastoralist communities used to purchase grain, the loss of these herds would have led to mass starvation. Unable to secure food, famine refugees migrated to Sawakin in early 1890, arriving destitute and emaciated.

The outbreak of rinderpest and the ensuing famine further undermined the Mahdist presence in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Discontent in rebel Hadandawa camps had been growing since 1887, when al-Khalifa, who had succeeded al-Mahdi as the head of the Mahdist state less than two years earlier, sent Baqqara soldiers from Kurdufan to reinforce 'Uthman Abu Bakr Diqna, the Mahdist *amīr* of Eastern Sudan. After the Battle of al-Jummayza, al-Khalifa again intervened in the local management of the rebellion by interceding in a political quarrel between Diqna and other regional rebel leaders. Many Hadandawa *shaykhs* responded to this meddling by defecting from Diqna's camp in the first half of 1889.²⁹ As conditions in the interior deteriorated, many of these *shaykhs* came into Sawakin and submitted to the Anglo-Egyptian administration. In June 1889, one of these *shaykhs*, 'Abd al-Qadir of the Hamdab *adat* of the Hadandawa, offered to raise a militia and drive Diqna from his camp at Tawkar.³⁰ Anglo-Egyptian officials recognized that this was a unique opportunity to, for the first time, develop a military alliance spearheaded by a Hadandawa *shaykh*. Consequently, these officials, with the permission of Francis Grenfell, the *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army,³¹ provided arms and provisions to al-Qadir and his men.³² This new strategy met with early successes. On August 16, 1889, acting on direct orders from the Anglo-Egyptian administration,³³ al-Qadir's militia attacked and captured the rebel camp at Sinkat. This victory increased al-Qadir's local

prestige and, over the next few weeks, a number of other Hadandawa and Amar'ar *shaykhs* joined al-Qadir's camp.³⁴ However, al-Qadir did not make his promised advance on Tawkar and, on September 15, 1889, Grenfell ordered the Anglo-Egyptian administration to stop supporting al-Qadir and his militia.³⁵ Though Anglo-Egyptian officials ended their support for al-Qadir's militia, they subsequently agreed to provide subsidies to al-Qadir, as well as other allied Amar'ar and Hadandawa *shaykhs*, in exchange for guarantees of safe passage for merchants traveling the Barbar–Sawakin road.³⁶ This financial support proved crucial during the subsequent famine.

Though they were subsidizing some key allied *shaykhs*, Anglo-Egyptian officials initially made no effort to assist the thousands of starving pastoralists settling in camps near Sawakin. However, in late February 1890 officials began to offer limited aid. On February 26, 1890, the Egyptian Treasury allotted approximately £E500 to the administration for famine relief³⁷ and Anglo-Egyptian officials immediately set up a committee to determine how to allocate the funds.³⁸ The committee ordered the construction of two *zarības* (fortified camps) near Sawakin's outer defenses to serve as a hospital and a distribution point for food aid.³⁹ The *zarība* hospital provided medical attention to approximately 100 inpatients, supplying them with a daily ration of porridge made from milk and *dhura*. An additional 2,500 people received a daily ration of *dhura* bread at the other *zarība*. In keeping with Baring's instructions, the committee authorized direct aid only to widows, orphans, and those men who were too ill to work.⁴⁰ All men capable of working were expected to either find employment in town or to be employed on government relief works.⁴¹ Married women and girls were expected to receive aid indirectly, through the wages of their husbands and fathers. By the end of March 1890, the government had hired approximately 200 men and boys to complete light road work in and around Sawakin, paying them double rations.⁴²

The STC, through Wylde, its agent at Sawakin, also offered famine assistance. However, Wylde and his backers used this aid to expand their access to the fertile agricultural regions in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. During the famine, Wylde offered money and food aid in exchange for options for 21-year leases on land in the Tawkar Delta and along its tributary, the Baraka River. Wylde began signing these contracts before the administration set up its famine relief program and by the beginning of March 1890 he had already signed more than 2,000 agreements.⁴³ The STC was an attractive source of assistance because, unlike the administration, it did not require those seeking aid

to work. Wylde continued to sign these agreements throughout 1890 and, in 1891, he claimed that he had 10,000 contracts for options to lease fertile land in Eastern Sudan.⁴⁴

Callisto Legani, the Italian Consular Agent at Sawakin, similarly recognized the famine as an opportunity to expand Italian influence north of Massawa. At the beginning of 1890, Legani, like Wylde, offered food aid in exchange for leases on land in the Tawkar Delta.⁴⁵ He also offered to subsidize those *shaykhs* residing in Sawakin or in nearby camps who were willing to raise a militia and serve under Italian command at Massawa. Legani made this offer to ‘Abd al-Qadir and Hamid Mahmud, both of whom had previously entered into agreements with the Anglo-Egyptian administration to guard the Barbar–Sawakin road.⁴⁶ In addition, Legani made a similar offer to *shaykh* ‘Ali Walad Sulaiman, the grandson of the former *nāzīr* of the Hadandawa and whom Anglo-Egyptian officials believed held a legitimate claim to his grandfather’s title. Walad Sulaiman and his followers had migrated to Sawakin in November 1889 in search of grain subsidies. When Anglo-Egyptian officials refused to provide the requested aid, Wylde approached Walad Sulaiman offering to provide him and his followers with grain in exchange for leases in the Tawkar Delta. However, Walad Sulaiman rejected Wylde’s offer. Legani subsequently offered Walad Sulaiman a salary of 200 Maria Theresa thalers per month to raise a militia on behalf of the Italian administration at Massawa. In addition, he offered to provide each man in Walad Sulaiman’s militia with 16 thalers, a ration of butter, and a sack of *dhura* per month. When Walad Sulaiman accepted Legani’s offer, Wylde feared the consequences of this expansion of Italian influence and brokered a more lucrative deal for Walad Sulaiman, paid for by both the Anglo-Egyptian administration and the STC, so as to ensure his continued loyalty.⁴⁷

While the famine helped bind formerly rebellious Hadandawa *shaykhs* to the Anglo-Egyptian administration and to other British interests, this food crisis helped convert the Fadlab Amar’ar, one of the Anglo-Egyptian administration’s oldest allies, into agents of the Mahdist state.⁴⁸ On December 22, 1889, Mahmud ‘Ali, the *shaykh* of the Fadlab Amar’ar died.⁴⁹ In the weeks that followed his father’s death, Ahmad Mahmud, who had led his father’s militia to victory against Diqna’s camp at Tamai in 1886, traveled to Umm Durman, where al-Khalifa, who had long searched for ways to limit Diqna’s influence,⁵⁰ appointed him *amīr* of the Barbar–Sawakin road.⁵¹ Holved Smith responded to this defection by selecting Hamad Darib

Karti, Ahmad Mahmud's brother, to succeed his father as *shaykh* of the Fadlab and *nāẓir* of the Amar'ar.⁵² However, Ahmad Mahmud's influence soon eclipsed that of Darib Karti. In January 1890, Ahmad Mahmud returned to Handub and announced that merchants entering or leaving Sawakin were required to pay a 10-percent tax on their merchandise.⁵³ By the middle of March 1890, Ahmad Mahmud was reported to have collected over 2,000 thalers,⁵⁴ much of it from the nearly 5,000 *ardabbs* of grain exported from Sawakin to the interior each month.⁵⁵ Handub quickly became both a large grain market and an alternate place for famine refugees to settle. As a result, in the first few months of 1890, the population of the camp rapidly increased.⁵⁶ In June 1890, Ahmad Mahmud forbade merchants from Umm Durman and Barbar from proceeding to Sawakin and began requiring them to sell their goods exclusively at Handub.⁵⁷ As a result, Handub's importance as a major grain market increased further. By July 1890, the market at Handub was importing between 60 and 80 sacks of grain per day from Sawakin. The rise of Handub posed a serious military threat to the Anglo-Egyptian administration because Ahmad Mahmud used some of his wealth and prestige to encourage Egyptian Army soldiers to come into Handub and submit. By the middle of July, these soldiers had begun defecting to the rebels.⁵⁸

Containing the Rebel Camp at Handub

Initially, Anglo-Egyptian officials sought to establish a peaceful relationship with the rebel camp at Handub. The first formal contact between the two parties occurred on February 10, 1890, when Anglo-Egyptian officials chose to negotiate with, rather than fire on, a tax-collecting patrol from Handub that approached Sawakin's outer defenses. These negotiations established an agreed-upon limit beyond which rebel patrols would not cross.⁵⁹ However, this agreement came apart in May 1890, after a patrol sent by Ahmad Mahmud to inform northern *shaykhs* of the well-stocked grain market at Handub attacked the crew of a dhow near Jazirat 'Abd Allah, killed one man and stole a cargo of *dhura*.⁶⁰ Holled Smith responded to this attack by prohibiting the export of grain from Sawakin to Handub.⁶¹ Though Ahmad Mahmud arrested the members of the raiding party, Holled Smith refused to lift the restrictions, demanding the return of the stolen *dhura* and the payment of blood money for the murdered man. When Ahmad Mahmud responded with a defiant letter threatening to attack Sawakin unless the grain trade was resumed,⁶² Darib Karti,

Ahmad Mahmud's brother, brokered a deal to ease the escalating tension. Darib Karti agreed to pay the blood money in exchange for permission to levy a toll of a quarter of a Maria Theresa thaler on every bag of merchandize exported from Sawakin to Handub.⁶³ On May 29, 1890, Holled Smith reopened the grain trade.⁶⁴

Tensions between the Anglo-Egyptian administration and the rebel camp at Handub escalated again in July 1890, when Ahmad Mahmud enticed Darib Karti and the other Amar'ar *shaykhs* residing in Sawakin to move to his camp.⁶⁵ British officials in London and Cairo, as well as Anglo-Egyptian officials in Sawakin, were divided as to how to respond to Darib Karti's defection. Darib Karti was, at the time, receiving a salary from the Anglo-Egyptian administration. Some officials, including Henry Barnham, the British Consul at Sawakin, considered Darib Karti to be an unimportant leader who should be allowed to defect.⁶⁶ Others believed that Darib Karti should be forced to return to Sawakin, though they differed as to the measures to be taken to effect this end. For example, George Hackett Pain, who, at the time, was the Acting Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral while Holled Smith was on summer leave, wanted to use diplomatic means to persuade Darib Karti. However, Kitchener wanted to issue an ultimatum to Darib Karti that he either return or the administration would cut off his salary, close all trade between Sawakin and the interior, including the trade in grain, and forbid any Amar'ar from residing in or entering Sawakin.⁶⁷

Though Holled Smith was, under Grenfell's 1889 instructions, the liaison between the Anglo-Egyptian administration and the indigenous *shaykhs*, Kitchener ultimately determined the Anglo-Egyptian administration's response to Darib Karti's defection. On August 12, 1890, Holled Smith asked the British Foreign Office to prevent the administration from taking any definitive action on this matter until he returned from leave.⁶⁸ However, a few days prior, Hackett Pain had requested that Kitchener take over all communications with Darib Karti.⁶⁹ Despite Holled Smith's protestations, the Foreign Office allowed Kitchener to manage this portfolio in his absence. However, London imposed one condition, that is, that Kitchener not manipulate the grain trade to achieve political objectives.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Kitchener ignored the restrictions and, on August 17, 1890, just days after he took over negotiations, he prohibited the export of grain from Sawakin to the Eastern Sudanese interior.⁷¹

Kitchener justified his actions to British officials in London and Cairo as a public health measure taken to prevent the cholera epidemic

then affecting Mecca from spreading to Sawakin.⁷² However, the suspension of the grain trade could not have been effective anticholera prophylaxis because, until the end of August, other goods, as well as people, could freely enter and leave the port. On August 31, 1890, in response to complaints from Indian grain merchants who believed the restriction improperly targeted their trade, Kitchener closed all trade between Sawakin and the interior.⁷³ Nonetheless, Anglo-Egyptian officials continued to permit anyone not engaged in trade to pass through the town gates.⁷⁴ Further, Kitchener, in a confidential Egyptian Army circular written in September 1890, admitted that the true purpose of these restrictions was to provoke the “breaking up [of] the camp at Handoub” and to make “the Handoub tribe to see the necessity of sticking on good terms with the Government.”⁷⁵

In addition to imposing restrictions on grain exports during a food crisis, Kitchener also orchestrated the murder of the tens of thousands of former rebels who had sought refuge from the *sanat sitta* famine in camps near Sawakin’s outer defenses. In the summer of 1890, a second wave of migration swelled the ranks of indigent refugees in these camps because Diqna’s garrison at Kassala, which could no longer draw supplies from famine-stricken Central and Northern Sudan, became unable to provide sufficient provisions for both his soldiers and camp followers. As a result, thousands of camp followers, mainly women and children, were forced to migrate from Kassala in search of food.⁷⁶ These starving refugees first made their way to Tawkar, where they were unable to secure access to grain, and then to Sawakin, where they began arriving in July 1890.⁷⁷

The measures implemented by Kitchener in September 1890 did not distinguish between recent arrivals and other refugees who had made their way to Sawakin in the first months of the famine. On September 18, Kitchener had four days’ *dhura* ration distributed to the 6,000 refugees receiving food aid in the *zaribas* near Sawakin’s outer defenses. Then Kitchener sent the cavalry to drive all the refugees in the camp into the interior, after which he established a police cordon to prevent the refugees from returning.⁷⁸ Refugees who were too ill to be chased out were either sent by dhow to Egyptian Army garrisons at ‘Aqiq, Rawaya, or Jazirat ‘Abd Allah or allowed to remain in the hospital *zariba*.⁷⁹ The expelled refugees were not given advanced warning of their evictions and were forced to abandon all of their possessions, which the population of Sawakin subsequently looted.⁸⁰ Though some expelled refugees made it to the hills south of Tawkar, most were attacked just a few kilometers outside the Sawakin forts by

rebel soldiers, who robbed them of their *dhura* ration.⁸¹ Many were reported to have died of starvation over the next few days.⁸²

Rebel soldiers from Handub robbed the fleeing refugees because they too were feeling the effects of the food crisis. The suspension of trade in August 1890 led to grain shortages in the Red Sea Hills and to a rapid increase in the price of *dhura*. Between August and October 1890, the price of a 4.5-kg bag of *dhura* rose from 4 to 30 Maria Theresa thalers at Handub and 50 thalers at Tawkar. However, over the same time period, the price of *dhura* at Sawakin remained between 3 and 4 Maria Theresa thalers per 4.5-kg bag.⁸³ The black market was unable to make up for the lost supply from Sawakin because the Indian merchant firms that dominated the grain trade were temporarily hobbled by the restrictions imposed by Kitchener. In the weeks before Kitchener suspended the grain, Indian merchants exported so much grain from Sawakin that Anglo-Egyptian officials feared that grain stocks in the town were insufficient to meet the needs of the town's civilian and military population.⁸⁴ At the administration's request, Indian merchant firms, in early August 1890, ordered large quantities of grain from Bombay and, when the grain trade was suspended, these firms had a total of 40,000 4.5-kg bags of grain on steamers en route from India.⁸⁵ Most of this cargo, which arrived after the restrictions had been imposed, subsequently sat rotting in warehouses in Sawakin's harbor. The Indian merchant firms that controlled the grain trade were unable to free up the capital that they had invested in their sequestered grain in order to engage in other commercial ventures, including redeveloping a contraband grain trade, and, as a result, local grain markets in the Red Sea Hills became insufficiently stocked.⁸⁶ Further, Red Sea trade was severely limited by measures designed to prevent the spread of cholera from the Hijaz. However, in November, Jidda was declared free of cholera and Kitchener was forced to withdraw the restrictions on trade.⁸⁷ Large quantities of grain from Sawakin were immediately exported to inland markets in the days that followed and the price of *dhura* quickly returned to normal.⁸⁸

The suspension of the grain trade did not lead to the dissolution of the Handub camp. Though Darib Karti returned to Sawakin in September 1890, the other Fadlab Amar'ar *shaykhs* did not follow him. A number of other Amar'ar *shaykhs* subsequently severed their ties with the Handub camp but this had little to do with Kitchener's policy. On November 28, 1890, Ahmad Mahmud died, setting off a power struggle at Handub. When al-Khalifa recognized Nafir ibn Mahmud, the brother of Ahmad Mahmud and Darib Karti, as the

new *amīr* of the Handub camp, some Amar'ar *shaykhs* reacted by leaving Handub. Two of these *shaykhs* temporarily collaborated with the Anglo-Egyptian administration. On December 25, 'Ali Hamad, *shaykh* of the Kurbab Amar'ar, and Husain Jibril, *shaykh* of the Aliab Amar'ar, captured a convoy of 59 slaves making its way from Handub to the coast. The *shaykhs* handed the convoy over to the government post at Rawaya⁸⁹ and Anglo-Egyptian officials liberated the slaves.⁹⁰ When Nafir ibn Mahmud subsequently sent a patrol north to investigate, 'Ali Hamad and Husain Jibril publicly professed loyalty to Nafir ibn Mahmud, thereby ending their support for the administration.⁹¹

The Anglo-Egyptian administration responded to the political instability in the Handub camp by sending an expedition to force Nafir ibn Mahmud from the Red Sea Hills. On January 26, 1891, a patrol from Handub raided cattle near Sawakin.⁹² The following day, in violation of the administration's long-standing order not to engage in military operations beyond Sawakin's outer defenses, Holled Smith led an expedition to clear Handub. During the ensuing battle, Nafir ibn Mahmud retreated and the Anglo-Egyptian force easily took the camp. When the fighting ended, Holled Smith informed British officials in Cairo and London of the expedition. Rather than punish Holled Smith for contravening orders, the Foreign Office granted him permission to permanently garrison Handub. However, Holled Smith was ordered not to launch another advance further into the interior without prior Foreign Office approval.⁹³

The easy victory against Nafir ibn Mahmud altered the Foreign Office's position on the Tawkar Delta. Anglo-Egyptian officials had, since 1885, believed that control of this fertile region was necessary for securing their hold on the Red Sea littoral. Until the *sanat sitta* famine, these officials had only sent indigenous militias on expeditions against rebel camps in the delta. However, during the famine, Anglo-Egyptian officials began to petition British officials in London and Cairo for permission to use the Egyptian Army to clear and hold Tawkar. Though the Foreign Office had previously refused these requests, on February 7, 1891, Salisbury authorized an advance on Tawkar.⁹⁴ In the days that followed, the Egyptian Army overpowered rebel camps in the region, all of which had suffered deprivation as a result of the famine, and easily took the delta. Though many of Diqna's principle *amīrs* and 700 of his followers were killed in battle,⁹⁵ Diqna and the remnants of his force fled the battle field and, subsequently, resettled at Adarama, on the Atbara River.⁹⁶

The Benefits of Anglo-Egyptian Rule

Following the conquest of Handub and Tawkar, the caravan trade between the Nile and the coast, which had been moribund since the start of the Mahdist Rebellion, revived. After the Anglo-Egyptian victory at Tawkar, *shaykhs* from as close as the Red Sea Hills and as far away as the Nile and Qash Delta made their way into Sawakin to meet with Grenfell, the *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army, who pardoned them in exchange for public oaths of allegiance.⁹⁷ Anglo-Egyptian officials subsequently concluded a new agreement with a different set of *shaykhs* to secure the Barbar–Sawakin road in exchange for monthly subsidies.⁹⁸ Merchants from Barbar soon started to come to Sawakin to trade. The first party of merchants arrived on March 23, 1891⁹⁹ and Egyptian Army intelligence reports indicate that at least 34 merchants from Barbar arrived in Sawakin within the first two months of the conquest of Tawkar.¹⁰⁰ Between the end of March and the end of December 1891, Egyptian Army intelligence reports record that at least 170 merchants arrived in Sawakin from the Sudanese interior.¹⁰¹ These reports often, though not always, list the merchant's "tribe," the value of his merchandise, and the amount of money that he brought with him. For example, the report covering the period from October 15 to 31, 1891 indicates that on October 29 three Ja'aliyyin merchants arrived with 73 camel loads of gum and 1,000 Maria Theresa thalers.¹⁰² Generally, merchants arrived with silver, gold, and some gum which they traded for imported goods. As a result, the quantity of exports from Sawakin to the Sudanese interior far outpaced the quantity of goods brought in from the interior. For example, between March 23 and May 23, 1891, merchants took 814 camel loads from Sawakin to the interior but brought in only 75 camel loads of merchandise to the port.¹⁰³

Pastoralists from Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills, who wanted to profit from servicing the reemerging caravan trade, migrated to Sawakin and established new encampments near Sawakin's outer defenses. Though Kitchener had violently cleared similar encampments of famine refugees in September 1890, in November 1891 Barnham, the British Consul at Sawakin, estimated the population of the new camps to be 6,000 people.¹⁰⁴ Some pastoralists residing in these camps rented out their camels for transport. In the first half of 1891, camels were in high demand by both merchants engaging in the expanding caravan trade and by Anglo-Egyptian officials moving government stores to Tawkar. To ensure that their own needs were met, officials required camels hired to transport goods to Barbar to

first make one trip to Tawkar on the government account at half the rate.¹⁰⁵ Government requisitioning created a shortage of camels, which drove up prices. Whereas prior to the Mahdist Rebellion camels traveling from Sawakin to Barbar could be hired for 7 Maria Theresa thalers,¹⁰⁶ in 1891 the rate was 14 thalers per trip.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, for each camel hired to carry goods on the Barbar–Sawakin road, the camel owner made 21 dollars, that is 14 dollars from the merchant for carrying goods to Barbar and 7 dollars from the administration for carrying goods to Tawkar.

Camel owners also profited by servicing the brisk contraband trade that bypassed Sawakin. The extent of this contraband trade is unclear from the historical record because it was not factored into official trade statistics and because it was fueled, in part, by the slave trade. However, Anglo-Egyptian officials were aware that the conquest of Handub and Tawkar had not end the trans-Red Sea slave trade. On April 26, 1891, an Egyptian government dhow caught two of seven dhows loading contraband cargo near Hala'ib. The arrested crew members subsequently confessed that there was an extensive slave trade between Sudan and the Hijaz via natural harbors in the region.¹⁰⁸

The opening of trade along the Barbar–Sawakin road had direct financial benefits for both the Mahdist state and the Anglo-Egyptian administration. Some of the merchants that arrived in Sawakin from the Nile brought with them cargos of gum to export. Gum was harvested west of the Nile as a Mahdist state monopoly and sold by the *Bayt al-Māl* (treasury) to merchants trading with Sawakin. Trade returns for 1891 indicate that merchants exported approximately 80,000 Maria Theresa thalers worth of gum via Sawakin.¹⁰⁹ Further, gum brought into Sawakin was subject to the 8 percent duty charged by the Anglo-Egyptian administration and, in 1891, this trade netted the administration's treasury approximately 6,400 thalers.

Nafir ibn Mahmud and his Fadlab Amar'ar followers also tried to profit by taxing trade. During the Egyptian Army conquest of Handub, Nafir ibn Mahmud and his followers fled further up the Barbar–Sawakin road and, in May 1891, they established a camp near the wells at Kukrab, approximately 200 kilometers inland from Sawakin.¹¹⁰ Nafir ibn Mahmud used this camp to levy a 10-percent tax on merchandise passing along the road.¹¹¹ Though the Anglo-Egyptian administration was subsidizing a number of *shaykhs* to ensure the safe passage of merchandise between Barbar and Sawakin, these *shaykhs* were unwilling to clear the camp at Kukrab because Muhammad Qiyur, one of the subsidized *shaykhs*, was married to Nafir ibn Mahmud's sister.¹¹²

While many segments of indigenous society benefited from Anglo-Egyptian policies, British investors in the STC lost financially in the wake of the conquest of Handub and Tawkar. In fact, Anglo-Egyptian officials intentionally undermined the STC's efforts after the conquest because the STC had established rights to land in the Tawkar Delta. Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that the Tawkar Delta was a key resource that the administration could use to generate revenue to offset the cost of governing the conquered territory.¹¹³ In July 1891, before the onset of the annual flood that marked the start of the cultivation year, Holled Smith issued a proclamation declaring all land in the Tawkar Delta to be government land. In so doing, he abrogated all other rights in the delta, including those recently purchased by the STC during the *sanat sitta* famine. Though Holled Smith announced that the administration would lease land back to the indigenous population at a rate of 40 piasters per *faddān*, he made no provisions for leasing land to foreigners, such as the STC.¹¹⁴

The STC initially responded by pressuring British officials in London and Cairo to rescind Holled Smith's proclamation. In letters to Baring and Salisbury, the STC's Board of Directors claimed that the contracts that established the STC's rights in the delta were entered into in good faith and that the STC had expended considerable sums in the form of food aid to secure these contracts. Board members argued that any cancelation of the contracts would cause a considerable financial loss to the company. In addition, the Board of Directors claimed that, by appropriating indigenous land rights, Holled Smith's 1891 proclamation violated Grenfell's December 1888 proclamation, in which the Anglo-Egyptian administration promised to do nothing but encourage trade.¹¹⁵ When these letters of complaint were forwarded to Sawakin, Holled Smith responded that, by failing to clear the rebels from Tawkar, the indigenous population had both abandoned their rights to land in the delta and nullified the 1888 proclamation.¹¹⁶ Anglo-Egyptian officials, backed by British officials in Cairo, subsequently raised doubts as to the validity of the STC's leasing contracts. As Arthur Hardinge, the Acting British Proconsul in Egypt, related to Salisbury in July 1891, these officials

profess doubts as to whether, in many cases, the natives with whom the Company says it entered into contracts are really capable of contracting, or whether its agents know where the properties mentioned in them are. It is certain that, but for the very re-establishment of Egyptian authority of which the Company seems to complain as contrary to

the Proclamation, it would not have been able to enforce its contracts against the natives, or to test, as it can now do if it wishes, their validity in a Court of Law.¹¹⁷

When Salisbury declined to intervene on the company's behalf, the STC's Board of Directors instructed Wylde to ignore Holled Smith's recent proclamation and begin cultivating as if the contracts were still valid. In early August 1891, Wylde arranged to have plots in the Tawkar Delta cleared and planted with cotton.¹¹⁸ Hardinge responded by ordering the STC to stop all operations in the delta.¹¹⁹ As a compromise, Hardinge subsequently offered to lease the STC land in the delta at a rate of 45 piasters per *faddān*, which was 5 piasters per *faddān* higher than the rate offered to the indigenous population.¹²⁰ Unwilling to renounce its claims to land in the region, the board refused Hardinge's offer¹²¹ and instructed Wylde to continue working. On August 31, Wylde posted a notice written by the STC's Board of Directors in the market at Tawkar stating that "the land of Tokar belongs to the tribes, and not to the Government." The notice further claimed that the administration had no right to interfere with the STC's business in the delta and implied that the British government would intervene against the administration on the company's behalf. Anglo-Egyptian officials responded by removing the notice and evicting the STC's agents from the delta.¹²² Soon thereafter, Wylde ended his relationship with the STC and the STC quietly ceased its operations.

The End of the Rebellion in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills

The expansion of trade between the Anglo-Egyptian administration and the Mahdist state did not end military operations in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that the rebel tax collectors on the Barbar–Sawakin road were a continued threat to trade and stability. Beginning in October 1891, these officials repeatedly asked British officials in London and Cairo for permission to clear Nafir ibn Mahmud's camp.¹²³ In June 1892, the British Foreign Office, after denying earlier requests, authorized the expedition. However, British officials in London explicitly prohibited the establishment of a new permanent Egyptian Army garrison further along the Barbar–Sawakin road because they wanted to limit the Anglo-Egyptian administration's territorial ambitions.¹²⁴ A few

days after receiving the authorization, an Egyptian Army detachment marched on Kukrab. After a small skirmish, during which Nafir ibn Mahmud was able to escape, the detachment captured the camp. Despite explicit orders to the contrary, Archibald Hunter, the Acting Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral, created a police post and market at Ushid, 80 kilometers inland along the Barbar–Sawakin road, and met with prominent local *shaykhs* to assure them that the administration would protect them from any future Mahdist advance.¹²⁵ Hunter subsequently attempted to negotiate the submission of Nafir ibn Mahmud,¹²⁶ which he saw as a first step toward installing ‘Abd al-Qadir of the Hamdab Hadandawa as the new head *shaykh* of the road, with headquarters at Kukrab.¹²⁷

Hunter was forced to abandon his plan in October 1892, when Diqna, who had been at Adarama since the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Tawkar, moved his camp to Irkuwit, in the Red Sea Hills. From his new camp, Diqna raided cattle from pastoralist encampments near Sawakin and prevented commercial traffic from leaving that town.¹²⁸ In November 1892, Diqna sent a force to raid on the fringes of the Tawkar Delta.¹²⁹ Baring, who had been raised to the peerage as Lord Cromer in early 1892, required the Egyptian Army to focus on defending Sawakin and the Tawkar Delta, which would require the abandonment of all other Anglo-Egyptian-held territory.¹³⁰ Kitchener, who had been promoted to *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army on Grenfell’s retirement, instructed Hunter to withdraw all other garrisons.¹³¹ However, Hunter resisted implementing these orders and, instead, tried to weaken Diqna’s military capabilities by preventing him from securing provisions locally. Unlike the earlier Anglo-Egyptian strategy of monopolizing the grain trade (see chapter 3), Hunter’s plan focused exclusively on preventing the cultivation of *dhura* in the Tawkar Delta. When a locust swarm destroyed nearly all the cultivation in the delta in November 1892, Hunter responded by prohibiting the export of seed grain from Sawakin. Hunter acknowledged that this restriction would “bring a hardship on a class least able to stand it; relief must be extended to them if the period of hunger sets in.” Nonetheless, he believed this to be a necessary sacrifice in order to prevent Diqna from drawing supplies from the Tawkar Delta.¹³²

Hunter’s measures did not curtail Diqna’s aggression and, over the next few months, Diqna and his men attacked a number of the administration’s indigenous allies. In January 1893, Diqna raided an allied *shaykh*’s camp near Handub, killing nine men and two women.¹³³ Then he sent a party to burn down a small cotton plantation in the

vicinity that Wylde had set up on his own account after leaving the STC in 1891. Following the attack, Wylde informed Wingate that he no longer felt comfortable residing in the region and, a few months later, Wylde left Sudan.¹³⁴ In March, Diqna's force attacked a Hamdab Hadandawa camp, taking the *shaykh* prisoner. Duqna then raided both the Qarib Hadandawa and the Qammalab.¹³⁵ The following month, he raided Artaiga and Hadandawa camps in the vicinity of Irkuwit. Then he moved his camp to the outskirts of Tawkar and began to raid in the delta.¹³⁶

Diqna's offensive ended abruptly in May 1893. Merchants arriving in Sawakin from Barbar attributed this cooling of tensions to internal struggles within the Mahdist state. Zaki 'Uthman, the Mahdist *amīr* of Barbar, preferred encouraging trade with the Anglo-Egyptian administration. However, Diqna preferred applying military pressure on the indigenous population of the Red Sea Hills in order to isolate the administration. Merchants reported that al-Khalifa had finally sided with Zaki 'Uthman and, in the middle of 1893, ordered Diqna to withdraw from Eastern Sudan and to refrain from interfering with trade.¹³⁷

The subsequent normalization of trade helped protect pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills from the consequences of the series of natural hazards that subsequently affected the region.¹³⁸ Over the next few years, poor rains, bad Tawkar Delta floods and locust plagues reduced crop yields. The 1893 Tawkar Delta flood failed, watering only 50 *faddāns*,¹³⁹ considerably less than the normal flood, which ranged from 25,000 to 40,000 *faddāns*.¹⁴⁰ The rains that were expected to begin in December of that year did not arrive. Consequently, there was a complete failure of the winter crop in the Red Sea Hills.¹⁴¹ Though heavy gushes in July 1894 promised an exceptionally good Tawkar flood,¹⁴² by the end of the flood only 6,000 *faddāns* had been watered sufficient to support cultivation.¹⁴³ The following year, a locust plague damaged crops in the delta and only approximately 5,000 *faddāns* yielded produce.¹⁴⁴

Despite reduced yields in the Red Sea Hills during five consecutive cultivation years, there was no reported starvation, under nutrition, or food scarcity. Grain prices did not spike because large quantities of grain continued to be imported from India. For example, in February 1894, though the winter crop had just failed, grain was reported to be available in local markets at its normal price of 4 Maria Theresa thalers per half *ardabb* sack.¹⁴⁵ Pastoralists continued to be able to raise sufficient cash to purchase their sustenance by servicing the caravan

trade and by selling pastoral products. During the second half of 1892, according to trade returns compiled by the Anglo-Egyptian administration, goods valuing £24,805 were brought into Sawakin from the interior and £44,572 of goods were carried out from Sawakin. These trade returns do not distinguish between government stores carried to administration posts and trade goods carried for merchants on private account. Diqna's presence in the Red Sea Hills at the beginning of 1893 slowed, but did not stop, the flow of goods into and out of Sawakin. Between February and April 1893 inclusive, goods valued at £7,625 were carried out of and at £11,209 were brought into Sawakin. When Diqna withdrew to the Atbara River, trade intensified. In 1893, imports from the interior to Sawakin totaled £86,099 and exports from Sawakin to the interior totaled £44,153. In 1894, trade shrunk slightly and, for that year, British officials valued imports at £48,507 and exports at £28,375. The following year, trade returned to 1893 levels and British officials recorded imports at £89,762 and exports at £35,973.¹⁴⁶

Pastoralists also profited by selling their animals. Those who still owned cattle were able to sell beef to the military and civilian population in the Red Sea Hills. Between 1888 and 1894, the price of beef in regional markets nearly doubled from 5 piasters¹⁴⁷ to 10 piasters per *okka*, or approximately 1.3 kilograms.¹⁴⁸ In addition, throughout the early 1890s, merchants coming into Sawakin repeatedly reported that there was a severe camel shortage in Barbar. In March 1891, merchants reported that a camel could be sold at Barbar for as much as £20¹⁴⁹ and, in November 1892, merchants reported similar prices.¹⁵⁰

Trade between the Mahdist-controlled Nile and the Anglo-Egyptian Red Sea Littoral continued, virtually unimpeded until the beginning of 1895. Though Nafir ibn Mahmud reestablished the tax-collecting post at Kukrab in 1894,¹⁵¹ merchants who paid the tax passed unimpeded along the Barbar–Sawakin road. However, the situation on this frontier deteriorated at the beginning of 1896, when Diqna returned to the Red Sea Hills. In January 1896, Diqna sent a small force to camp near Sinkat in order to punish a number of *shaykhs* who had refused to pay him tribute. A few days after arriving in the region, this force robbed a caravan on the Barbar–Sawakin road of its camels.¹⁵² The Mahdist state then suspended all trade with Anglo-Egyptian territory,¹⁵³ as Diqna prepared for another expedition against the Anglo-Egyptian administration.¹⁵⁴ On April 7, 1896, Diqna attacked the government post at Irkuwit¹⁵⁵ and was defeated by a mixed force of Egyptian Army regulars and indigenous pastoralist irregulars.¹⁵⁶ Though Diqna was

able to flee the battlefield and again withdraw to the Atbara River,¹⁵⁷ this defeat led many of his remaining followers to defect and publicly proclaim their loyalty for the Anglo-Egyptian administration.¹⁵⁸

Diqna's retreat temporarily ended hostilities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. In June 1896, the Egyptian Army force under Kitchener sent to conquer Dunqula began to make its way south along the Nile. As the Mahdist state on the Nile collapsed, instability east of the Nile intensified. Raiding in the region recommenced on November 16, 1896, when Diqna's men stole cattle near Tawkar.¹⁵⁹ However, hostilities in Eastern Sudan abruptly ended after the Anglo-Egyptian capture of Barbar in August 1897 and al-Khalifa, responding to the growing threat to Umm Durman, ordered Diqna to assist in the defense of the Nile.¹⁶⁰ In the weeks that followed, several rebel *shaykhs* residing in Eastern Sudan came into Barbar and publicly submitted to the Anglo-Egyptian force in exchange for a full pardon.¹⁶¹ In the middle of October 1897, the Anglo-Egyptian force at Barbar declared the road to Sawakin safe after a courier sent along the road without a military escort arrived on the coast unmolested.¹⁶² In late December 1897, the Anglo-Egyptian force assumed command of Kassala from the Italians, who had, in an effort to expand their Eritrean colony, conquered the town in 1894 and, over the next few months, Anglo-Egyptian troops cleared the remaining rebel camps in Eastern Sudan.¹⁶³

The Costs of Anglo-Egyptian Rule

The end of the rebellion in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills seemed likely to usher in a new era of prosperity for local pastoralist communities. The new Anglo-Egyptian garrisons along the Nile were potential markets for Eastern Sudanese cattle. In early October, Kitchener met with a number of *shaykhs* to encourage them to drive their cattle into Barbar and sell meat to the army.¹⁶⁴ By 1897 it seemed likely that the caravan trade along the Barbar–Sawakin road would resume and potentially expand. The first caravan following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Barbar left for Sawakin in October 1897.¹⁶⁵ A few days later, Kitchener entered into a new agreement with yet another set of *shaykhs* regarding the security of goods passing along the road. The agreement divided the road into three sections. *Shaykhs* Hamad Bakash and Ahmad Musa of the Shaboidinab Hadandawa were responsible for the section of road between Barbar to Bi'ir Matar. *Shaykhs* 'Abd al-Qadir, 'Umar Ibrahim and Ya'qub of the Hamdab Hadandawa were responsible for the section between

Bi'ir Matar and Disibil. Darib Karti and Ahmad Badri were responsible for the final section, which ran from Disibil to Sawakin. The government promised to collect 11 piasters per camel from merchants leaving Barbar or Sawakin, of which the government would keep 5 piasters and distribute the remaining 6 piasters among the *shaykhs*.¹⁶⁶

Despite these arrangements and the renewed security in the region, the caravan trade did not return to the Barbar–Sawakin road. In 1897, the Anglo-Egyptian administration closed trade between Sawakin and India because plague had broken out at the latter port. Since Indian merchant firms were the largest factor in trade at Sudanese Red Sea ports, this led to an overall reduction in the intensity of trade on the coast.¹⁶⁷ In the first half of 1898, trade continued to be sluggish and the customs house at Sawakin recorded that, between January 1 and May 23, 1898, goods valuing only £E17,383 were imported into Sudan via Sawakin and £E12,040 were exported from Sudan via Sawakin. The import trade increased in the second half of the year, with the total value of imports recorded at £E70,163. However, only £E3,412 worth of goods was exported during the same period.¹⁶⁸ The intensity of trade decreased over the next few years. The railway between Wadi Halfa and Abu Hamad, which was constructed by the Egyptian Army to supply the troops during the conquest of the Mahdist state, siphoned trade away from the Red Sea. Following the collapse of the Mahdist state, the Anglo-Egyptian government opened the railroad to commercial traffic. Officials subsequently set subsidized rates for select goods, which diverted commercial traffic away from the Barbar–Sawakin road. By 1901, the loss of trade was beginning to have a noticeable effect on the economy of Sawakin and, in that year, 20 Indian merchant houses moved their regional headquarters from Sawakin to other Red Sea ports, such as Jidda or Massawa.¹⁶⁹ The following year, N. F. Playfair, the Governor of the newly established Suakin Province, which encompassed the Sudanese Red Sea littoral, reported that the diversion of trade had impoverished the population of Sawakin. He noted that the weak economy had forced many in the town who had previously serviced this trade to seek wage labor, which had driven down the prevailing wage to a record low.¹⁷⁰

Following the collapse of the Mahdist state, pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills also experienced economic decline. An outbreak of rinderpest at the beginning of 1898 limited the ability of these communities to use their herds to generate income.

Between January 4 and March 6, 1898, 702 cattle died in the region south of Sawakin. As a result, the Egyptian Quarantine Board ordered the suspension of exports of live cattle from Sawakin, thereby preventing pastoralists from continuing to supply the lucrative markets in Jidda and Suez.¹⁷¹ This restriction was left in place until 1903, when the Veterinary Officer at Tawkar declared that rinderpest was no longer present in the region.¹⁷²

Policies implemented by the Anglo-Egyptian administration in the wake of the conquest of Tawkar in 1891 continued to prevent some Bija pastoralists from profiting from commercial agriculture. Bani Amar and Hadandawa *adats* with rights in the Tawkar Delta refused to cultivate under the arrangements imposed by the government.¹⁷³ These *adats* were unwilling to work the land on a system of annually renewed tenancies.¹⁷⁴ Officials further limited the pool of potential tenants by deciding to allot land only in large blocks and only to important *shaykhs*.¹⁷⁵ These officials believed that wealthy *shaykhs* uniquely had access to sufficient capital to finance cultivation. In addition, officials felt that recipients of large allotments would have a greater incentive to work the land because they would want to ensure receiving the same allotment the following year.¹⁷⁶ As a result of these policies, Anglo-Egyptian officials were unable to find sufficient numbers of tenants and, in the 1890s, some watered land in the delta remained fallow.

The new allotment regime allowed for a few *shaykhs* from the Artaiga and the Ashraf, as well as from those Hadandawa *adats* that were willing to submit to the administration's allotment regulations, to rise to political prominence.¹⁷⁷ Allotments were made to these *shaykhs* in the early years of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Tawkar. When local interest in tenancies subsequently grew, Anglo-Egyptian officials proved unwilling to reduce the size of already allotted plots so as to increase their number. Instead, officials continued to reallocate the same-size plots to the same *shaykhs* every year. *Shaykhs* with large tenancies, on the other hand, recognized that the increased demand for cultivatable land was itself an economic opportunity and, as a result, subdivided their allotment into small plots, which they sublet at a rate equal to half the yield.¹⁷⁸ Instead of curtailing this practice, Anglo-Egyptian officials increased the importance of these *shaykhs* by inviting them to sit on the allotment board. These *shaykhs* then used their position on that board to ensure that the sizes of allotments were not reduced and that, upon the death of an allottee, the allotment was distributed exclusively among his heirs.¹⁷⁹

The rise in influence of the Tawkar *shaykhs* demonstrates that some segments of indigenous society were able to politically and economically benefit from the expansion of Anglo-Egyptian rule. However, these benefits came at the expense of other segments of Sudanese society. The Mahdist Rebellion had accelerated a process that limited the economic opportunities of pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills. In the decades prior to the rebellion, these communities responded to market incentives by abandoning commercial cultivation so as to concentrate on servicing the caravan trade and on developing their pastoral wealth. Fighting in the early stages of the rebellion, hindered trade and increased the financial dependence of these communities on their herds. The loss of animal wealth in the late 1880s caused the deadly *sanat sitta* famine and left these communities with little option but to collaborate with the expanding Anglo-Egyptian administration. Many pastoralists were able to benefit from the trade revival ushered in by the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Tawkar. However, most of these benefits proved temporary. Innovations introduced into the Sudanese economy after the collapse of the Mahdist state further impoverished many segments of indigenous society and, ultimately, caused the cycle of famine and food insecurity to continue.

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Slavery, Anglo-Egyptian Rule, and the Development of the Unified Sudanese Grain Market, 1896–1913

The Mahdist state, like the Anglo-Egyptian administrations of the Nile frontier and the Red Sea littoral, benefited from the food crisis that plagued the region at the end of the 1880s. In the chaos and social dislocation of the *sanat sitta* famine, the Mahdist state enacted a number of policies that placed key fertile regions in the Jazira (the region between the Blue and White Niles south of Khartoum) and near Qadarif and Qallabat (on the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers) under state control. During the famine, Mahdist officials forcibly appropriated grain yields in these regions in order to supply Umm Durman, the capital,¹ and to provision military forces loyal to al-Khalifa.² When these policies caused the famine to spread to the Abyssinian frontier, al-Khalifa authorized an expedition against the Shilluk and Dinka in Southern Sudan. However, the Shilluk and Dinka successfully defended themselves and remained outside of Mahdist control.³ After the acute food crisis subsided, the Mahdist state expropriated large tracts of land in grain-producing regions to the south and southeast of the capital in order to reward key allies and punish rebellious communities. When the continued requirement to provide the state with large amounts of grain led cultivators in the Jazira, in November 1891, to revolt against the government,⁴ al-Khalifa responded by turning land belonging to the rebels over to the *Jihādiyya*, his personal slave army.⁵ The *Jihādiyya* were also granted permission to levy a tax of as much as two-thirds of the grain yield on neighboring, privately held land.⁶ Cultivators near Qadarif and Qallabat were similarly required to turn over the

majority of their yields as a grain tax paid to al-Khalifa's Ta'isha Baqqara supporters.⁷

Allies of the state benefited from these policies, even as they harmed many segments of Sudanese society. The privation caused by the appropriation of grain-producing land contributed to the decline in both the size of the population and the extent of cultivation along the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers and in the Jazira. When Anglo-Egyptian officials retook these regions in 1898 and 1899, officers noted that many villages had long been deserted and that Acacia forests were growing on abandoned farmland.⁸ Nonetheless, in the early 1890s, the *Jihādiyya* and Ta'isha Baqqara used their rights to the produce of these fertile regions to become important grain merchants. Unlike other merchants, who had to purchase produce from cultivators, these groups received their grain stocks as tax payments and, therefore, could charge lower prices. As a result, they were able to drive private grain merchants out of Nilotic markets and establish an effective monopoly on the grain trade.⁹

Though the *sanat sitta* famine allowed the Mahdist state to increase its control over both the production and marketing of grain, Mahdist officials were unable to prevent famine from recurring. Another food crisis in Nilotic Sudan began in 1896, when instability caused by the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of Dunqula prevented grain supplies from reaching Mahdist administrative centers and garrison towns. The failure of the grain market precipitated a famine in the Mahdist capital, weakened the Mahdist state, allowed the advancing Anglo-Egyptian force to rapidly conquer territory and reduced indigenous resistance to the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian state.

Anglo-Egyptian officials were not the only beneficiaries of this famine; rather, some Sudanese cultivators were able to position themselves economically during the famine in ways that limited the reach of the new state. Following the capture of Umm Durman in September 1898, Anglo-Egyptian officials recognized that they were unable to ensure a steady supply of grain to the capital without the active support of indigenous cultivators. However, officials and cultivators held differing visions for the state and its key projects, including the stabilization and expansion of the grain market. Anglo-Egyptian officials wanted to encourage indigenous investment in cultivation by creating a new legal framework for land tenure. On the other hand, indigenous cultivators, who sought to limit the state's interference in local systems of landownership, believed that the major impediment to expanding grain production was an inadequate supply of labor. These cultivators

preferred to invest in cultivation by purchasing male slaves. When indigenous cultivators refused to comply with land registration procedures, Anglo-Egyptian officials changed course and worked with indigenous cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan to recreate the slave system that had allowed for the commercial cultivation of grain surpluses under Turko-Egyptian rule.

Famine and the Collapse of the Mahdist State

In the years following al-Najumi's failed 1889 expedition, Anglo-Egyptian officials administering the Nile frontier believed that they were unable to prevent another invasion of Egypt and, as a result, senior British military officers in the Egyptian Army began to pressure the British Foreign Office for permission to conquer the Mahdist state. Following a Mahdist raid, in July 1893, of an oasis in Egypt's western desert north of Aswan, these military officers realized, as Reginald Wingate, the Director of Military Intelligence in the Egyptian Army, wrote, that "the large amount of water which recent investigation has shown to exist in this western desert renders a complete septum of defense a matter of considerable difficulty."¹⁰ Though the Egyptian Army responded to this raid by increasing its rapid response force garrisoned on the Nile frontier,¹¹ a Mahdist expedition of approximately 300 men was able, in January 1895, to conquer an Egyptian Army post at the oasis of al-Shabb, approximately 160 km west of Wadi Halfa.¹² Senior military officers responded to this defeat by requesting permission to launch a large-scale invasion of the Mahdist state, which they believed would cause it to rapidly collapse.¹³

These military officers joined a growing chorus of British officials in the Egyptian government, including, most significantly, those working for the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works, who were also calling for the conquest of Sudan. In the early 1890s, Public Works officials came to see the Mahdist state as an impediment to Egypt's economic development. Terje Tvedt has argued that these officials were seeking to expand cotton cultivation in Egypt by replacing flood with perennial irrigation, a change that required the construction of water control works along the Nile south of Wadi Halfa. Tvedt has shown that, in 1894, these officials began planning a system of dams and water control mechanisms on the Nile in Mahdist-held territory south of the second Nile cataract. These officials subsequently convinced other senior British officials in Egypt of the need to bring the waters of the Nile and its tributaries under Egyptian management, which would

require the reconquest of the Nile up to its sources deep in the African interior.¹⁴

British officials in Cairo did not allow the Khedive and his cabinet to meaningfully participate in the debate over conquering Sudan because, by 1895, they had already wrested the remaining vestiges of Egyptian sovereignty from the Khedive's government. In 1890, Cromer successfully maneuvered to have Khedive Tawfiq replace those Cabinet Ministers who continued to resist his administrative reforms.¹⁵ Though Cromer's hold over the Egyptian Government was temporarily weakened when 'Abbas II succeeded Tawfiq upon the latter's death in 1892,¹⁶ 'Abbas's political influence ended in 1894 after he publicly criticized the British-controlled Egyptian Army. Cromer used the ensuing diplomatic incident to severely curtail 'Abbas's power.¹⁷ Subsequently, British officials in Cairo and London did not feel the need to consult with their junior partner while drafting major policies.

British officials in London were initially unconvinced by the arguments for invasion coming out of Cairo. However, shifting geo-political considerations, led them to authorize a limited offensive military expedition into Mahdist territory. In mid-July 1894, Italian forces in Eritrea conquered Kassala in order to stop Mahdist forces from using the town as a base for raiding in the vicinity of Agordat.¹⁸ Unfortunately for the Italians, the annexation of Sudanese territory did not render their position any more secure. In fact, the northern extension of the Eritrean frontier into Sudan weakened the Italian military position at a time of increased hostility between the Italians in Eritrea and the Abyssinian forces in Tigray. In January 1895, Italian officials asked the British Foreign Office to undertake a military operation in Northern Sudan in order to both prevent the Mahdists from advancing on Kassala and show the Abyssinians that Italy and Britain had a strategic security arrangement.¹⁹ British military officers in the Egyptian Army used this request as an opportunity to push for a full-scale invasion of Sudan.²⁰ However, Salisbury, acting as British Prime Minister, rejected both the petitions originating in Asmara and Cairo. He ruled out the possibility of conquering Sudan and decided that the only time a demonstration on the northern frontier would be warranted would be if the Mahdists actually attack Kassala.²¹ This attack came in February 1896, but Salisbury continued to refuse to approve a military operation. Salisbury's position changed following the disastrous Italian defeat at the hands of the Abyssinians on March 1, 1896 at the Battle of Adwa. In the days that followed this major loss, Italian

officials called on their British counterparts to make a demonstration of force in Northern Sudan and Salisbury agreed.²² However, Salisbury did not order the reconquest of Sudan, as British military officials in Cairo wanted. Instead, he granted permission to extend Egypt's Nile frontier as far south as al-'Urdu in Dunqula.²³

Once they were granted permission to launch an invasion of Mahdist territory, senior British officers in the Egyptian Army used their position on the frontlines of battle to determine the pace of the military advance. After receiving his new orders, Kitchener, the *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army, ordered the Anglo-Egyptian force under his command to conquer Mahas and Sukkut and, by early June, the force had captured up to the third Nile cataract.²⁴ Before advancing into Dunqula, Kitchener wrote to Cromer that Salisbury's order not to advance past al-'Urdu would prevent Kitchener from determining a defensible southern frontier. Kitchener claimed that adhering to it would endanger the troops and lead to further instability. Cromer responded by allowing Kitchener, if warranted by conditions in the field, to extend the frontier as far upstream as al-Dabba.²⁵ Kitchener then asked for permission to conquer up to the fourth Nile cataract, which would bring Dunqula completely under Anglo-Egyptian control.²⁶ A few days later, Wingate wrote on Kitchener's behalf to Salisbury and Cromer asking for permission to take up to the fifth Nile cataract. While Salisbury denied Wingate's request, he authorized Kitchener to conquer all of Dunqula.²⁷ In late August 1896, the invading Anglo-Egyptian force crossed into Dunqula. The force had bivouacked the previous month in Mahas and Sukkut to wait for the construction of a railroad from Wadi Halfa to south of the third Nile cataract, which Kitchener had ordered so as to ensure the rapid provisioning of his advancing men.²⁸ Over the next few months, the Anglo-Egyptian force took Dunqula without a single major battle. The Mahdist officials and soldiers stationed in the region either surrendered to the advancing force, as was the case at al-'Urdu,²⁹ or retreated, abandoning garrisons at Karma and al-Hafir before the arrival of the Anglo-Egyptian force.³⁰ The Anglo-Egyptian force rapidly occupied the abandoned Mahdist positions and, on October 2, 1896, Kitchener announced that the Anglo-Egyptian force had completely conquered Dunqula.³¹

The British-led advance and the subsequent concentration of Mahdist defensive measures in Barbar, the region between the fourth and sixth Nile cataracts, led Ja'aliyyin communities in the region to revolt, setting off a food crisis that ultimately precipitated the collapse

of the Mahdist state. In June 1897, al-Khalifa appointed Mahmud Ahmad, who had previously commanded the Mahdist force in Dar Fur, as *amīr* of Barbar. Mahmud Ahmad decided to headquarter his force at al-Matamma, the traditional capital of the Ja‘aliyyin. When al-Khalifa, who was already suspicious of the Ja‘aliyyin, ordered the residents of al-Matamma to evacuate the town and camp on the east bank of the Nile, ‘Abd Allah Sa‘d Farah, the head *shaykh* of the Ja‘aliyyin, instructed his men to revolt.³² Mahmud Ahmad violently cracked down on the rebels and, in July 1897, Ja‘aliyyin refugees fleeing toward Anglo-Egyptian territory reported that the rebellion had already ended.³³ Though the number of Ja‘aliyyin killed during the uprising is unknown, the uprising led to the rapid depopulation of Barbar. When the revolt was suppressed, Mahdist officials forced at least 35,000 Ja‘aliyyin to move to Umm Durman, where they remained until the arrival of the Anglo-Egyptian force.³⁴ Cultivation in Barbar was, primarily, dependent on *sāqiyas* and, therefore, very labor intensive. The decrease in population led to a corresponding decline in the number of *sāqiyas* working in Barbar and, by April 1898, there were only 70 in operation in the region, down from 3,000 in 1885.³⁵ As a result, the cultivators that remained in Barbar after the Ja‘aliyyin rebellion had been suppressed were unable to produce enough grain to sustain themselves and the estimated 16,000 Mahdist soldiers in local garrisons.³⁶

As Mahmud Ahmad was suppressing the revolt in Barbar, Kitchener was preparing another advance. Kitchener was not satisfied that his position in Dunqula was truly defensible and in February 1897 asked for, and was granted, permission to conquer the rest of the Mahdist state.³⁷ Though the possibility of a French advance into Sudan, which ultimately led to the Fashoda Incident, played a role in determining the pace of asserting Anglo-Egyptian claims to the White Nile and to Southern Sudan, they did not play a role in the decision to authorize the advance on the Mahdist state. British officials did not learn of the presence of another “white” army on the Mahdist state’s southern frontier until January 1898, nearly a year after Kitchener was given orders to advance further upstream.³⁸ The order to advance was given based on Kitchener’s assertion of military conditions on the frontlines. Even after receiving the new orders, Kitchener continued to control the pace of the conquest. Kitchener did not immediately order his men to advance upstream. Rather, he delayed launching the invasion of Barbar until the 1897 Nile flood, at which time Egyptian Army steamers would be able to pass through the fourth cataract.

The advanced force under the command of Archibald Hunter finally crossed the fourth Nile cataract in August 1897 and then quickly took Abu Hamad.³⁹ The British-led invasion of Barbar further exacerbated the emerging provisioning crisis in the Mahdist camp because Egyptian Army patrols rapidly captured a number of key Mahdist army grain stores. In early September, Hunter, after receiving intelligence that Mahdist soldiers were deserting the town of Barbar in large numbers,⁴⁰ attacked and occupied the town and, in the process, seized a large grain store.⁴¹ The following month, a patrol passing along the Barbar–Sawakin road uncovered and seized ‘Uthman Diqna’s grain store near Kukrab.⁴² Anglo-Egyptian officials distributed captured Mahdist grain to the growing communities in Dunqula of refugees from Mahdist-held territory.⁴³ As a result, the garrison at al-Matamma quickly exhausted its remaining supplies of grain and, in October 1897, inadequately provisioned Mahdist soldiers began deserting in large numbers.⁴⁴

Food scarcity in Barbar turned into famine at the end of 1897 when the Mahdist force stopped being able to draw supplies from elsewhere in Sudan. In November 1897, a disagreement between Mahmud Ahmad and al-Khalifa delayed the shipment of much-needed supplies. Mahmud Ahmad wanted al-Khalifa to send grain so that he could provision his force while defending Barbar. However, al-Khalifa refused this request because he wanted Mahmud Ahmad to withdraw his men to the sixth cataract in order to assist with the defense of Umm Durman.⁴⁵ Mahmud Ahmad ignored his order to withdraw and, instead, sent foraging parties to expropriate grain from the remaining local population. The confiscation of their grain led many cultivators to flee downstream to Anglo-Egyptian-held territory or to defend themselves from the foraging parties by congregating on islands in the Nile.⁴⁶ By the end of November, refugees were reporting widespread famine in the vicinity of al-Matamma.⁴⁷ Al-Khalifa soon relented and agreed to assist Mahmud Ahmad with the defense of Barbar. However, Egyptian Army steamers, which were now patrolling up to the sixth Nile cataract, prevented Mahdist ships from sailing north. As a result, provisions could not reach Mahmud Ahmad’s men.⁴⁸ Despite the deepening food crisis, al-Khalifa then ordered Diqna and his men to reinforce al-Matamma. The arrival of Diqna’s men on the Nile further exacerbated the famine by increasing the demand on the dwindling food supply. The acute food crisis led hundreds of Mahdist soldiers to desert their camps,⁴⁹ and many of these deserters arrived in Anglo-Egyptian territory starving and emaciated.⁵⁰

Umm Durman also experienced a food crisis brought about by the Anglo-Egyptian advance. In September 1896, as Dunqula fell, the wealthy residents of the Mahdist capital, fearing an impending Anglo-Egyptian siege, began amassing large grain stores. The sudden spike in demand drove up market prices. Until this run on the market, the Ta'isha Baqqara and the *Jihādiyya*, both of which controlled the grain market, kept the price of *dhura* artificially low at PT25 per *ardabb*. By February 1897, the price of an *ardabb* of *dhura* had increased to approximately PT120. The price soon reached PT240. The increased demand outstripped supply and, at the beginning of 1898, grain was no longer available in the Umm Durman market and the little *dhura* that was still available on the black market was being sold for approximately PT720 per *ardabb*.⁵¹

Anglo-Egyptian camps in Barbar and Dunqula did not experience similar food crises because their food supply came from Egypt. In May 1897, Kitchener ordered the construction of a railway from Wadi Halfa to Abu Hamad to allow his advancing army to draw provisions from Upper Egypt.⁵² By November 1897, the railhead had crossed the desert and reached the Nile downstream of the fourth Nile cataract.⁵³ The Wadi Halfa-Abu Hamad line supplemented the Wadi Halfa-Karma line that was completed in early 1897. Starting in November 1897, Anglo-Egyptian officers were able to import grain in excess of the needs of their men. In February 1898, these officers authorized the sale of surplus grain to the local population. The steady stream of grain imports prevented prices from rising in Dunqula and Barbar even as tens of thousands of famine refugees arrived from Mahdist-held territory.⁵⁴

Over the next few months, the Anglo-Egyptian force overtook the remaining Mahdist garrisons on the Nile. In April 1898, the well-provisioned Anglo-Egyptian force easily defeated Mahmud Ahmad's starving force at the Battle of Atbara, killing over 3,000 of Mahmud Ahmad's men and injuring another 4,000 in battle.⁵⁵ Thousands more died after fleeing the battlefield, either from lack of food and water or because they were murdered in the dessert by the Ja'aliyyin irregular soldiers aiding the Anglo-Egyptian force.⁵⁶ This battle was a turning point for Anglo-Egyptian military strategy because it was the first time an Anglo-Egyptian force met a larger Mahdist force on the battlefield and won.⁵⁷ This Anglo-Egyptian victory was directly tied to the ongoing famine. The Mahdist camp was well fortified and well armed with plenty of rifles and ammunition, swords and spears. However, it was severely under-provisioned with food, and there had been a

high mortality from disease and starvation in the camp in the weeks prior to the battle.⁵⁸ Mahmud Ahmad responded to the widespread desertion prompted by the lack of food by literally chaining many of his soldiers to their positions in the trenches. This prevented the men from effectively responding to the Anglo-Egyptian attack. The chains also prevented the men from properly defending themselves from incoming rounds and 2,000 of the dead were killed inside the Mahdist encampment.⁵⁹

The Mahdist defeat at the Battle of Atbara effectively cleared the region north of the sixth Nile cataract of Mahdist forces. However, Kitchener did not launch an immediate advance on Umm Durman. Rather, he ordered his men to hold their positions until the Nile flood was high enough to allow steamers laden with men and provisions to easily pass through the sixth cataract.⁶⁰ At the end of August 1898, the Anglo-Egyptian force crossed the cataract and marched toward Umm Durman and, on September 2, the Anglo-Egyptian and Mahdist forces engaged on the plain of Karari, approximately ten kilometers north of the Mahdist capital. Al-Khalifa's force was supplemented by thousands of irregulars drawn from the population of the Mahdist capital. Many of these men were suffering from the effects of severe hunger and starvation. During the battle, the Anglo-Egyptian force killed approximately 11,000 men, wounded another 16,000,⁶¹ and took over 38,000 prisoners.⁶² By the end of the day, the Anglo-Egyptian force had taken Umm Durman and al-Khalifa had fled with the remnants of his loyal followers.⁶³

Following the victory at Karari, Kitchener installed himself in the abandoned Mahdist palace and the new Anglo-Egyptian rulers of Umm Durman immediately set about addressing the ongoing food crisis. Hours after his men occupied the city, Kitchener announced to the starving inhabitants of Umm Durman that they were welcome to take grain from al-Khalifa's store. That evening, nearly the whole population of the city lined up for grain. Babikr Badri, the famed Sudanese memoirist who was in Umm Durman at the time, recalled that

some whom I knew well were lucky enough to be living against the grain-stores so that all they had to do was break through the wall of the room they lived in and push and shove the grain into it until the room was full, and they became quite rich from selling it.⁶⁴

Over the next few days, grain from al-Khalifa's store flooded the Umm Durman market, leading the price of *dhura* to drop to PT120 per

ardabb.⁶⁵ However, this supply was quickly exhausted and the price of *dhura* returned to PT400 per *ardabb*.⁶⁶

The price of *dhura* in Umm Durman remained high and, in November 1898, Anglo-Egyptian officials reported that the former Mahdist capital continued to suffer from famine despite a larger than average 1898 Nile flood.⁶⁷ Fresh grain supplies were not reaching the city. The sudden collapse of the Mahdist state broke up the grain monopoly held by al-Khalifa's supporters. However, private merchants did not immediately step into the void. In addition, Anglo-Egyptian policy prevented cultivation on key agricultural land that had previously supplied the Mahdist capital. Until the end of Mahdist rule, grain produced on the ruins of Khartoum, which was destroyed when Mahdist forces conquered the city in January 1885, was sold in Umm Durman by state officials and profits were credited to the Mahdist Department of War.⁶⁸ However, following the conquest of Umm Durman, Kitchener ordered that Khartoum be rebuilt as the new Anglo-Egyptian capital, turning productive farms into building plots, roads, the Governor's Palace, Gordon Memorial College, and houses of worship.

Despite their role in precipitating and perpetuating the famine, Anglo-Egyptian officials were determined to address the ongoing food crisis because they had to feed the tens of thousands of men, women, and children in Umm Durman. Officials were responsible for provisioning the troops that had advanced from Egypt, as well as the thousands of former Mahdist soldiers that joined the Sudanese battalions of the Egyptian Army at the end of 1898 as part of an amnesty program announced by Kitchener before the capture of the Mahdist capital.⁶⁹ Officials also had to feed the approximately 38,000 men taken as prisoners of war during the Battle of Karari and to provide for their wives and children. In addition, officials assumed responsibility for the families of the 11,000 rebels killed in battle and the 4,000 rebels that fled with al-Khalifa.⁷⁰ However, Anglo-Egyptian officials were unwilling to provide free grain subsidies to the large dependent civilian population and, beginning in December 1898, starving war captives and their families were put to work, clearing the rubble and laying out new streets in Khartoum, as well as making the bricks that were subsequently used to build Gordon Memorial College, the Governor-General's Palace, the Army Barracks, and the houses of senior Anglo-Egyptian officials in the new Anglo-Egyptian capital.⁷¹

Grain imported from Egypt on the new Sudanese railway helped to temporarily alleviate the distress in Umm Durman. The construction of the railroad continued for sixteen months after the Battle of

Karari. Until the railroad reached its planned terminus at Halfaya, across the Blue Nile from Khartoum, on December 31, 1899, grain cargos were transhipped onto steamers at the railhead and sent on to Umm Durman.⁷² However, Anglo-Egyptian officials were unable to import enough grain to stabilize market prices. The price of *dhura* in Umm Durman temporarily dropped, in February 1899, to PT160 per *ardabb*.⁷³ However, it rose to PT240 per *ardabb* in May 1899.⁷⁴ During this period, grain in other Sudanese markets was considerably cheaper than in the former Mahdist capital. For example, in February 1899, the price of an *ardabb* of *dhura* at Qadarif was PT22 and at Kassala was PT48.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, Umm Durman was unable to draw supplies from these sources of grain because the camels that usually brought grain to market had been requisitioned to help in the construction of Khartoum.⁷⁶

Anglo-Egyptian officials tried to ease the pressure on local grain supplies by encouraging the mass migration from Umm Durman. In January 1899, large numbers of Ta'isha Baqqara started returning to their traditional homelands in Kurdufan.⁷⁷ Other groups similarly migrated and resettled near well-stocked grain markets in Kassala⁷⁸ and Qadarif.⁷⁹ In February 1899, officials tried to assist this migration by pressing landless persons in Umm Durman to take up unoccupied land in the Jazira.⁸⁰ A few months later, these officials offered free transport to Qadarif, Barbar, or Sinnar, where grain was cheaper.⁸¹ However, few people took up this offer. Instead, migrants moved to places of their own choosing. As a result, the migration toward the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers continued throughout 1899, and by the end of the year many new villages had sprung up along the Blue Nile and the Dinder River.⁸²

The end of Mahdist rule and the high price of *dhura* encouraged many cultivators to return to their farms in the newly established Provinces of Berber and Dongola and engage in the commercial cultivation of grain. In 1899, many Ja'aliyyin cultivators, who had been forcibly moved from by the Mahdist state, returned to their homes and rebuilt their *sāqiyas*. As a result, Anglo-Egyptian officials estimated that the extent of cultivation in Berber Province increased tenfold between 1898 and 1899.⁸³ Officials reported a less dramatic increase in Dongola Province, where cultivators, with a combined £E1,000 of loans from the provincial treasury and from Colonel Hickman, the provincial governor, built 60 new *sāqiyas*, purchased 57 *sāqiya* cattle, and brought approximately 400 additional *faddāns* under cultivation. On top of that, some refugees returning to Dongola Province used

their own capital to construct an additional 300 *sāqiyas*. Excess yield from Berber and Dongola Provinces was sold in Umm Durman, which helped offset the negative effects of the partial failure of the 1899 Nile flood.⁸⁴ Though Anglo-Egyptian officials feared that this failure would cause grain prices to remain high for another year,⁸⁵ the price of *dhura* in Umm Durman dropped in early 1900 to PT90 per *ardabb*.⁸⁶ The price fell even farther the next year, reaching a low of PT34 per *ardabb*.⁸⁷

Resistance and the Definition of Indigenous Landownership

Following the collapse of the Mahdist state, Anglo-Egyptian officials were only loosely supervised by their counterparts in the British and Egyptian governments. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement, signed in January 1899, circumscribed Egyptian oversight. The Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan did not report to the Khedive or his ministers regarding civilian policy. The Governor-General was required to notify the Egyptian Minister of War about army expenditures in Sudan because that post had been combined with that of *Sirdār* of the Egyptian Army. However, the Governor-General was not required to obtain prior approval for these expenditures.⁸⁸ Oversight from London was equally limited. Officials in the Anglo-Egyptian government were only required to get prior approval from the British government to demarcate the border, launch large military operations and enter into treaties with foreign states.⁸⁹ Similarly, British political advisers in Cairo had a limited role in influencing policy in Sudan. Anglo-Egyptian officials were required to submit the annual budget to the British Consul in Cairo for approval because budget shortfalls were, in the years immediately following the collapse of the Mahdist state, met by subventions from the Egyptian Treasury. However, Anglo-Egyptian officials were allowed to subsequently adjust the budget without notice on condition that the changes not increase Egypt's financial liability.⁹⁰

The Anglo-Egyptian government was, from the outset, very thin on the ground. As a result, officials were dependent on the collaboration of the indigenous communities over which they claimed to rule. The creation of a permanent civilian government and the gradual phasing out of Egyptian Army officers from civilian administrative positions began in 1901, under the direction of Reginald Wingate, the second

Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.⁹¹ The new civilian government was characterized by a distinct division of labor, with senior positions exclusively staffed by British officials and junior positions staffed by Egyptian officials. As a result, the British component of the Anglo-Egyptian government was very small. For example, in early 1914, there were only approximately 300 British officials in the Anglo-Egyptian government.⁹² Though Egyptian junior officials were not authorized to craft policy, these Egyptian officials were instrumental in transforming elite, urban Sudanese culture because they brought with them contemporary ideas about Arab culture, art, and nationalism.⁹³ However, rural indigenous communities were, in the first few decades of Anglo-Egyptian rule only irregularly frequented by any Anglo-Egyptian officials. As a result, these communities independently developed their own strategies for engaging with the new state's policies.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Anglo-Egyptian policy continued to be shaped by the famine that precipitated the collapse of the Mahdist state. Food insecurity forced senior Anglo-Egyptian officials to rethink major elements of their postconquest strategy. Before the conquest, senior officials planned to use land tenure reform as the centerpiece of reconstruction, which, they hoped, would focus on reestablishing the pre-Mahdist social order. During the conquest, these officials were confronted with the acute food crisis on the Nile and, as a result, were forced to replan land tenure reform so that it would encourage indigenous cultivators to intensify commercial grain cultivation. However, over the next decade and a half, indigenous landowners successfully staved off interference in local systems of landownership and forced senior officials to recognize the right of local communities to define land tenure.

British officers in the Egyptian Army's Intelligence Department began planning the government's postconquest land policy in late August 1896, just days after Kitchener's troops advanced into Mahdist-held territory.⁹⁴ Concerned by the nature of these preliminary plans, Clinton Dawkins, the Under Secretary of State for Finance in Egypt, wrote, in early September 1896, to Reginald Wingate, then the Director of Military Intelligence in the Egyptian Army, suggesting that land policy in reconquered territory should: (1) prevent the creation of a large landless class by prohibiting indigenous landowners from alienating their land; and (2) facilitate the rapid return of refugees from Egypt.⁹⁵ At the time, there were nearly 10,000 registered Sudanese refugees living in Cairo,⁹⁶ thousands more in the refugee

camp near Wadi Halfa,⁹⁷ and untold numbers living in Upper Egypt. Dawkins, who had been charged with reducing the Egyptian government's expenditures, wanted to encourage the return of the refugees because many of them received government subsidies.⁹⁸

Dawkins recommended that the new Anglo-Egyptian government work to reconstruct landownership in Mahas, Sukkut, and Dunqula as it had existed prior to the 1885 withdrawal. Toward this end, he recommended that the government create a land registry based, primarily, on the 1885 Egyptian tax ledger and the certificates of landownership issued by the Egyptian Army during the withdrawal. Dawkins recognized that there were two main problems in using these documents to establish rights to land as they were in 1885. First, the Turko-Egyptian government taxed *sāqiyas*, and not land, and, as a result, the tax registry listed only the name of the owners of the *sāqiyas* and the subdistricts in which the *sāqiyas* were located, but not the specific geographic position of plots. Second, many refugees, for a number of reasons, did not receive these certificates of landownership and, therefore, the certificates represented a limited picture of some, but not all, rights to abandoned land. Nonetheless, Dawkins asked that the new government recognize the registry and the certificates as prima facie evidence of ownership, which would only be superseded by documentary proof of land transfer through sale or inheritance. In addition, he advised that those found to be cultivating the land at the time of the Anglo-Egyptian conquest not be recognized as the owners of the land unless they could provide prima facie evidence of ownership. Dawkins suggested that cultivators without this evidence be awarded a provisional title to the land that could be revoked if someone with prima facie evidence of ownership stepped forward.⁹⁹

Though they initially accepted Dawkin's proposal to favor refugees over cultivators when registering landownership,¹⁰⁰ Anglo-Egyptian officials recognized, at the beginning of 1899, that cultivators on the Nile north of Umm Durman were crucial suppliers of grain in Nilotic markets and that securing their land rights was necessary to ensuring the food security of Khartoum. This new recognition informed *The Title of Lands Ordinance, 1899*, one of the first acts promulgated by the new Anglo-Egyptian government. The ordinance authorized Provincial Governors to establish Land Commissions to determine whether land was privately held or government land, to adjudicate land claims and to create and maintain registrars of landownership. The ordinance required that these commissions be comprised of three Egyptian Army officers and two respected notables indigenous to the province. The commissions were instructed to recognize continuous cultivation over

the five years previous to the establishment of the commission as an “absolute claim” to ownership. If such a claim could not be established, then the committee could consider claims based on proof of ownership prior to the Mahdist Rebellion. The commission could only recognize and register individual free hold rights to land, which officials believed was the nature of ownership of riverain land along the Nile and of some rainland in the Jazira and Kurdufan. The commission could not recognize any other right to land, such as usufruct rights or communal rights.¹⁰¹ All local landowners were required to submit their claims of ownership to their provincial commission, if one had been established. Once the registrar had been completed, indigenous landowners were required to notify the provincial government of all transfers of land so that the registrar could be accurately maintained.¹⁰²

In 1899, Provincial Governors established Land Commissions in Khartoum, Berber, Kassala,¹⁰³ and Sennar Provinces.¹⁰⁴ However, officials found the Land Commission system unworkable and, as a result, over the next few years, Governors routinely dissolved and then reestablished the commissions with new personnel. Officials identified two fundamental flaws in this system. First, indigenous landowners refused to submit both to the rules and to the rulings of the Land Commissions. Some indigenous cultivators were reluctant to bring claims before the commissions because, as Herbert St. Peacock, who was both a Judge in the Sudan Civil Courts and a Land Settlement Officer, reported, a rumor had circulated that the registration of land was a prelude to either the levying of higher taxes or the confiscation of the land.¹⁰⁵ Other landowners intentionally subverted the registration process, by either failing to demarcate their land or by conspiring with their neighbors to register several contiguous small plots as a single owner’s large plot.¹⁰⁶ Yet others viewed land registration as the opportunity to augment their holdings by putting forth claims to land that they did not own and for which they did not have the capital to cultivate.¹⁰⁷ Even those landowners who complied with the registration process were reported to routinely ignore the commission’s rulings.¹⁰⁸

The second deficiency in the land registration procedure was that the definition of landownership established by *The Title of Lands Ordinance* did not match indigenous conceptions of land tenure. Though commissions were charged with defining individual, alienable landownership, indigenous landowners brought forth evidence of other types of land tenure. For example, the members of the Kassala Land Commission reported in 1900 that they had received evidence that land in the vicinity of Qadarif was held collectively and that the local population did not recognize individual landownership.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, in

1903, Edgar Bonham Carter, the Anglo-Egyptian Legal Secretary, wrote that, though communities living along the Nile north of Khartoum recognized individual ownership of annually cultivated land, they also recognized that land watered irregularly, either by abnormally heavy rains or an unusually high Nile, was held collectively under a system of customary usufruct rights. As a result, Bonham Carter suggested that the government create a legal mechanism for recognizing both these types of ownership.¹¹⁰ Similarly, a commission established the following year to define the terms under which the government could sell land also concluded that irregularly flooded land north of Khartoum was more likely to be “vested in the village or tribe than they are vested in individuals by right of decent and...it is most probable that such rights are essentially incapable of alienation.”¹¹¹

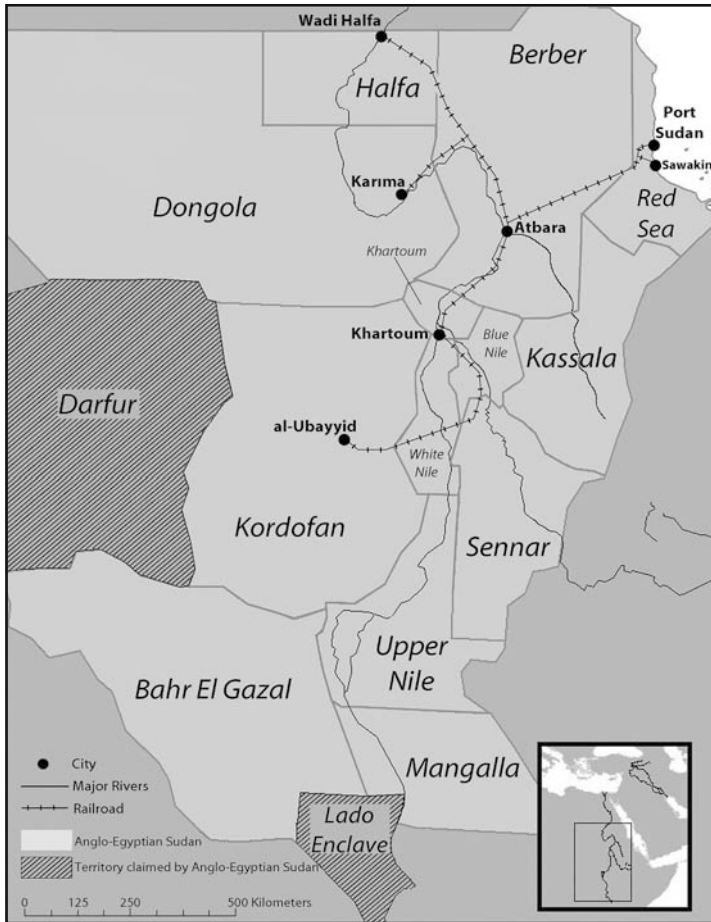
Officials also worried that the recognition of alienable individual land rights would allow foreigners to speculate in land by purchasing plots from indigenous landowners. They feared that land speculation would both create a large landless class and throw land out of cultivation. To prevent such speculation, on April 1, 1900, the government issued a proclamation, which required that all land sales be submitted in advance to the Provincial Governor, who was authorized to void the sale or alter its terms.¹¹² In 1905, officials realized that indigenous landowners were ignoring this proclamation and, as a result, large parcels of arable land were falling into the hand of foreign speculators, who, for example, were purchasing land in the Jazira for as little as PT8 per *faddān*.¹¹³ At the same time, land settlement officers in Berber Province discovered that some indigenous cultivators were putting in false claims to the Land Commission so as to secure land to sell to foreigners.¹¹⁴ To stop this speculation, in July 1905, the government issued another proclamation, declaring:

No native of the Sudan may sell, mortgage, charge or otherwise dispose of nor agree to sell, mortgage, charge or dispose of any land or any right or interest in or over the same unless with written consent of the Governor of the Province within which such land is situated.

The proclamation also voided all sales made without a Provincial Governor’s expressed approval and rendered unrecoverable money paid for voided sales.¹¹⁵

Though land registration had already begun under *The Title of Lands Ordinance* in Dongola, Berber, Khartoum, Kassala, Kordofan, Sennar, and Suakin Provinces (see map 5.1),¹¹⁶ Anglo-Egyptian

officials abandoned this procedure in August 1905 and created a new system for registering indigenous land tenure. The new system, as outlined in *The Lands Settlement Ordinance*, allowed land claims to be evaluated by a Settlement Officer, rather than by a Land Commission.



Map 5.1 The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1910.

Source: Political boundaries are based on the map "Egypt under British Protection and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," published in Adolphus William Ward, G. W. Prothero, Stanley Mordaunt Leathes, and E. A. Benians (eds), *The Cambridge Modern History Atlas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1912). The extent of the railroad is based on the map "Sudan Railway and River Services," in Richard Hill, *Sudan Transport* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). Following King Leopold's death in June 1910, the Lado Enclave was transferred from the Congo Free State to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Settlement officers were authorized to recognize four types of ownership: (1) full individual ownership; (2) rights to land short of ownership, that is rights to cultivate, to pasture, and to harvest forest produce; (3) rights to travel through the land, either on foot or by using a watercourse; (4) government ownership free of indigenous rights.¹¹⁷ In keeping with this ordinance, Anglo-Egyptian officials adopted a six-step procedure for creating a new land registry in a district. First, a Settlement Officer traveled through a district explaining the purpose and procedure of land settlement. Second, the Provincial Governor ordered landowners in that district to demarcate their land. Third, a Demarcation Officer traveled through the district, compiling a list of land disputes. Fourth, the Settlement Officer settled these disputes and determined the nature of ownership of all plots. Fifth, the Department of Surveys created a map of all properties in the district. Finally, a Registration Officer entered each plot, its location, and the nature of ownership in a registry.¹¹⁸ Once a registry was completed, landowners were required to notify the government of all subsequent transfers of land so that the registry could be amended.¹¹⁹

The new system proved as unworkable as the previous one because the indigenous population refused to comply with the registration procedures. Landowners routinely both lied to settlement officers about the extent of their holdings and refused to demarcate their land.¹²⁰ Once the registries were complete, landowners refused to inform the provincial authorities of subsequent land transfers. As a result, the registries quickly became outdated and officials soon recognized that they were inaccurate. For example, in November 1909, Bonham Carter declared that the Khartoum Province land registry was no longer a reliable record of landownership because indigenous landowners had not registered land sales.¹²¹ Failure to register land transfers was so widespread that, in the 1920s, Anglo-Egyptian officials feared that enforcing this requirement would lead to widespread social unrest. Doing so would have required the government to invalidate a large number of unregistered land sales. As a result, the courts stopped enforcing many of the government ordinances that pertained to land registration and land tenure.¹²²

Collaboration and the Reconstruction of the Slave System

Though indigenous communities resisted land registration, they did not resist all government programs. Rather, they selectively collaborated with

the government on schemes that responded to their interests and that they conceptualized as beneficial, including those designed to address persistent food insecurity by increasing grain yields. One way in which indigenous communities collaborated with Anglo-Egyptian officials to stabilize the grain market was by working with them to reconstruct the slave system of agricultural production in Northern Nilotic Sudan that had been dismantled during the Mahdist Rebellion. Following the collapse of the Mahdist state, Anglo-Egyptian officials, in consultation with indigenous cultivators, established both a legal system for ensuring the rights of slave owners and a set of procedures to bind male slaves to their masters. With the support of the government, these cultivators, in turn, reinvested profits generated from selling their produce back into expanding cultivation and imported as many as 80,000 male slaves into the region from elsewhere in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

The history of slave ownership in Northern Nilotic Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian period can only be indirectly inferred from the colonial archive because officials purposefully created a misleading record in order to hide their complicity in the internal Sudanese slave trade. Junior officials were explicitly instructed by their superiors not to use the term “slave” in any official correspondence. In 1912, when a junior Anglo-Egyptian official explicitly referred to a slave as a “slave” in a report, Rudolph von Slatin, the Senior Inspector, told him, as Slatin subsequently recounted to Governor-General Wingate, “that if in an official document I find again that he called Sudanese servants ‘slaves,’ a finger from his right hand will be cut off [*sic*].”¹²³ To avoid using the term “slave,” administrators referred to “slaves” as “servants” or, more frequently, simply “Sudanese” and referred to their masters in Northern Sudan as “Natives” or “Arabs.” However, Anglo-Egyptian officials privately recognized that there were, in fact, slaves in Sudan and that calling them “servants” was an intentional obfuscation of their status. For example, in a personal letter to his parents, Reginald Davies, who was then an Inspector in Kordofan Province, wrote:

This morning I have an elaborate slave case to try. A Sudanese is claimed as a slave by two people and I have just read through reams of mendacious evidence from various parts of the province... Of course, officially, there is no such thing as slavery in the Sudan, so please don't show this to Keir Hardie – in correspondence we call them “Sudanese Cases” and speak of “servants.”¹²⁴

In addition to managing the way their subordinates discussed slavery, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials tried to police the language used by

officials outside the Anglo-Egyptian government to describe Sudanese slavery. Anglo-Egyptian officials were particularly worried that Lord Cromer would accidentally bring unwanted attention to the persistence of slavery and the slave trade in Sudan. For example, in July 1909, Wingate and Slatin discussed ways to influence the manner in which Cromer was to describe Sudanese slavery in his soon-to-be-completed monograph, *Modern Egypt*. Through their correspondence, Slatin and Wingate constructed a suitable, fictitious narrative of the end of slavery that they wished Cromer to include in his book. This narrative falsely claimed that Anglo-Egyptian officials abolished the legal status of slavery in 1898 and that many emancipated slaves freely choose to continue to work for their former masters.¹²⁵ Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials again conspired to influence Cromer in 1913, when, in the course of writing an article on slavery in Lusophone Africa for *The Spectator* newspaper, Cromer asked Wingate for information on Anglo-Egyptian efforts to combat slavery.¹²⁶ Upon receiving this request, Wingate privately wrote to Slatin that he wanted to tell Cromer to:

leave the Soudan [*sic*] out of it when he is dealing with questions of Portuguese slavery. However, I cannot well say that to him, so the next best thing is to keep him on sound lines and prevent him from running off the rails.¹²⁷

Wingate instructed Slatin to have a number of senior officials write short memorandums to guide Cromer in the writing of his article.¹²⁸ Wingate subsequently had Bonham Carter, who was in London at the time, meet with Cromer and persuade him not to mention Sudan in his article.¹²⁹ When Bonham Carter reported that he had succeeded in his task, Wingate responded that he believed that the “less said the better” regarding the Anglo-Egyptian government’s slavery policy.¹³⁰

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials had good reason to hide their activities because, under their watch, tens of thousands of slaves were imported into Northern Nilotic Sudan each year. Though Anglo-Egyptian documents from this time period purposefully obscure the intensity of the slave trade in Sudan, the number of *sāqiyas* at a given time can give a rough estimate of the slave population. A properly functioning *sāqiya* required the full-time employment of eight to ten laborers.¹³¹ During the first few decades of Anglo-Egyptian rule, officials routinely asserted that this labor was supplied by male slaves. For example, in 1908, Ernest Bonus, the Director of Agriculture, reported

that there was a slight decrease in the number of *sāqiyas* as a result of “the want of labour due to the desertion of slaves.”¹³² Over the next few years, the Governors of the Provinces of Dongola,¹³³ Khartoum,¹³⁴ and Berber made similar claims.¹³⁵ In 1922, the Governor of Dongola Province reported that slaves provided all of the labor for *sāqiya* cultivation in the province.¹³⁶ Indigenous cultivators also admitted that slaves worked their *sāqiyas*. For example, in 1924, the residents of Darmali in Berber Province complained that their *sāqiyas* were idle because the district officer had issued freedom papers to some of their slaves.¹³⁷ As a result, increases in the number of functioning *sāqiyas* can be used to approximate the extent of the trade in male agricultural slaves.

The number of *sāqiyas* and, with it, the size of the slave population rose dramatically in the first decade and a half of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan. Between 1897 and 1912, the number of *sāqiyas* in Dongola Province increased from approximately 1,450¹³⁸ to 4,953.¹³⁹ Over the same time period, the number in Berber and Khartoum provinces increased from approximately 70¹⁴⁰ to 3,307.¹⁴¹ By 1912, there were nearly 10,000 *sāqiyas* being worked by slaves in Dongola, Berber, Khartoum, and Halfa Provinces, representing an increase of approximately 8,000 from the time of the conquest.¹⁴² If each *sāqiya* required the labor of up to ten male slaves, then by 1912 there were as many as 100,000 male slaves engaged in agricultural production in the region. The most dramatic increase in the slave population took place in Dongola Province. The 1897 census revealed that in a total population of over 50,000 people there were less than 2,000 male “Sudanese,” that is, slaves. In 1912, the 4,953 *sāqiyas* in the province were worked by up to 50,000 male slaves. A house-by-house census of the riverain population carried out the following year counted 141,621 people.¹⁴³ This would imply that, before the First World War, male slaves made up roughly one-third of the total population of the province.

The slaves brought into Dongola Province following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest were not brought by returning refugees. Refugees who fled to Egypt in 1885 had their slaves emancipated by British officers in the early stages of the Mahdist Rebellion. In addition, there is no mention in the archival record of refugees returning with their slaves from Egypt or from elsewhere in Sudan after the collapse of the Mahdist state. Nearly all of the approximately 50,000 male slaves working the *sāqiyas* in Dongola Province in 1912 had to have been purchased from slave dealers. Similarly, the return of refugees to Halfa Province, which included Mahas and Sukkut, cannot explain the

sudden availability of slave labor to work the approximately 1,500 *sāqiyas* erected in the province in the decade following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest because these refugees also had their slaves emancipated following the Turko-Egyptian withdrawal.¹⁴⁴

Cultivators in Berber and Khartoum Provinces similarly had to purchase male slaves in order to supply the labor required to work their newly erected *sāqiyas*. Robert Collins has shown that, during the Mahdist period, few male slaves worked the land. Though, in the 1890s, slaves comprised up to half of the population of Umm Durman, most were enlisted in either the *Jihādiyya* (the slave army) or in the *Mulāzimiyya* (al-Khalifa's private bodyguard). Some of these slave soldiers had run away from their owners to join the Mahdist forces, while others were enslaved during raids in the south or purchased from slave dealers. During the Mahdist period, cultivators could not replace runaway slaves because the state held a monopoly on the purchase of male slaves.¹⁴⁵ The collapse of the Mahdist state led to a further decline in the slave population because many Mahdist slave-soldiers were incorporated into the Egyptian Army. In April 1898, while marching toward Umm Durman, Kitchener announced a general amnesty for all Mahdist slave-soldiers willing to join his force¹⁴⁶ and, over the months that followed, thousands of deserters joined the Sudanese battalions of the Egyptian Army. In the days following the capture of Umm Durman, Sudanese soldiers in the Egyptian army went door to door, taking slaves from their masters. These soldiers frequently married the female slaves and forced the male slaves to enlist.¹⁴⁷

The number of slaves in Northern Nilotic Sudan was further reduced in the early years of Anglo-Egyptian rule because rumor spread through the slave population that Anglo-Egyptian officials did not recognize slave status. As a result, Governor-General Wingate reported, in 1900, widespread self-manumission. Some of these former slaves enlisted in the Egyptian Army, while others tried to establish themselves as freemen in Umm Durman and other Nilotic towns.¹⁴⁸ Yet other self-manumitted slaves made their way to the depopulated rain lands along the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers¹⁴⁹ or migrated to market towns on the Blue Nile.¹⁵⁰

As soon as these large communities of freed slaves emerged, pastoralists began raiding them and selling the reenslaved in Northern Sudanese slave markets. For example, in 1899, the Governor of Dongola reported: "There is a certain amount of kidnapping going on by the Kabbabish Arabs, who pick up boys and women in [Umm Durman] and bring them to sell mostly at Old Dongola and

Khandak.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, the Governor of Kassala reported, in 1904, that Hadandawa raiders routinely kidnapped freed slaves from in and around the town of Kassala.¹⁵² That same year, the Repression of the Slave Trade Department arrested Ibrahim wad Mahmud, the leader of a kidnapping cartel in Eastern Sudan that regularly sold kidnapped slaves to both Dongola Province and Jidda.¹⁵³ Despite that arrested, the Governor of Kassala Province reported continued slave raiding over the next few years.¹⁵⁴ In addition, during the first decade and a half of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Sudan, slave raiding continued in the traditional slaving grounds in Dar Fur,¹⁵⁵ Bahr al-Ghazal,¹⁵⁶ and Southern Kurdufan,¹⁵⁷ and on the Abyssinian frontier.¹⁵⁸

Anglo-Egyptian officials did not rigorously combat the internal Sudanese slave trade because indigenous cultivators had convinced them that commercial grain cultivation could not be expanded without male slave labor. During the Mahdist Rebellion, the encounter between Anglo-Egyptian officials and slave-owning refugees on the Nile frontier led many officials to recognize, as Milo George Talbot, a British officer in the Egyptian Army, wrote, that landowners in Northern Nilotic Sudan “are not cultivators and never have been.”¹⁵⁹ These officials believed that indigenous landowners were entirely dependent on the labor of their slaves. This belief was confirmed by the elite population of Umm Durman following the collapse of the Mahdist state. In October 1898, 68 notables of the city signed a petition that was presented to Kitchener complaining that many of their male slaves had joined the Egyptian Army. These notables claimed that, as a result, they were unable to operate their *sāqiyas*, produce their subsistence and participate in the reconstruction of the economy.¹⁶⁰ Kitchener immediately responded to this petition by instructing Anglo-Egyptian officials not to interfere in the relationships between masters and slaves except in cases where slaves were subject to “cruel treatment.”¹⁶¹

Anglo-Egyptian officials subsequently blocked efforts to interfere in the internal Sudanese slave trade. Combating the slave trade was the portfolio of the Egyptian Department for the Repression of the Slave Trade. This department had been created by the Khedive in order to comply with the 1877 Anglo-Egyptian Slave Trade Treaty, which required Egypt to combat the slave trade within its Sudanese territories. During the Mahdist Rebellion, the Department focused on providing assistance to freed slaves in Egypt and on assisting the Egyptian Army in its efforts to police the Nile frontier. Though the Department resumed its operations in Sudan after the collapse of the Mahdist state, it remained a part of the Egyptian government and its staff was

responsible to the Egyptian Cabinet and not to the Anglo-Egyptian government. In the first years of the twentieth century, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials successfully limited the power of this department. Initially, officials focused on pressuring A. M. McMurdo, the Director of the Department, to limit the policing activities of his subordinates or to dedicate his staff to other activities. For example, in 1905, Governor-General Wingate convinced McMurdo to order the Department's Khartoum police post to assist in combating cattle plague.¹⁶² In 1908, when the Department attempted to expand its portfolio from combating the slave trade to ending slavery in Sudan,¹⁶³ Slatin met with McMurdo and successfully persuaded him to issue an order preventing department personnel from interfering in relations between slaves and their masters.¹⁶⁴ Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials then conspired to close the department. In 1910, Governor-General Wingate convinced the Egyptian government to place the department directly under his command.¹⁶⁵ Immediately, Wingate reduced the department's budget by almost half and dismissed a quarter of the staff.¹⁶⁶ Three years later, Wingate closed the department, assimilating the remaining staff into the provincial police forces.¹⁶⁷

Anglo-Egyptian officials, however, took steps to prevent the export of Sudanese slaves to Egypt and Arabia. When the Governor of Dongola reported, in 1902, that Bija pastoralists frequently kidnapped slaves from the riverain population and sold them on the Red Sea coast to Jidda-based merchants,¹⁶⁸ senior officials responded by ordering the registration of all slaves in Northern Nilotic Sudan.¹⁶⁹ These officials hoped that the provincial slave registers would deter kidnapping from farms because they would allow for the return of stolen slaves to their masters. To ensure that the registers did not impede the importation of new agricultural slaves to the region, Governors kept the slave registries open and allowed for the registration of newly purchased slaves.¹⁷⁰ In addition, senior officials also hoped to block the export of slaves to Arabia by policing the Red Sea coast. When the Egyptian government handed Sawakin to the new Anglo-Egyptian administration in 1899, the Egyptian Navy withdrew its dhows from Sudanese waters and the Sudanese Red Sea coast was left without a proper coastguard. In 1904, the Governor of Red Sea Province admitted that the local police force was unable to prevent the export of slaves to Arabia,¹⁷¹ and, as a result, Wingate authorized the creation of a new Sudanese coastguard.¹⁷²

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials also worked with indigenous cultivators to develop a legal system that protected the interests of slave

owners. Male and female slaves were officially subject to two different legal regimes because Anglo-Egyptian officials established a bifurcated justice system. Anglo-Egyptian officials officiated over the civil legal system, which was guided by both English Common Law and ethnically defined Customary Law. The Mohamedean Law Courts, which were staffed by Egyptian jurists, administered Islamic Law exclusively to Muslims in matters of personal status, including marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Though most of the Muslim population of Sudan followed the Mālikī school of Islamic jurisprudence, these *shari'a* courts followed the Ḥanafī school. At the beginning of the twentieth century, owners of female slaves convinced the Anglo-Egyptian government that female slavery was a special case of marriage and, therefore, cases involving female slaves should be settled, for the most part, by the *shari'a* courts.¹⁷³

Cases involving male slaves, however, were handled by Anglo-Egyptian officials and these officials developed a set of legal procedures and administrative protocols designed to keep male slaves working the land. In January 1902, senior officials drafted "*Confidential*" *Circular Memorandum No. 10*, which guided junior officials in adjudicating matters pertaining to male slaves. The memorandum instructed junior officials to take the measures they deemed necessary to prevent runaway male slaves from resettling in market centers and towns and to make every effort to return these self-manumitted slaves to their masters.¹⁷⁴ In addition, senior officials also withheld assistance from ex-slaves so as to further discourage self-manumission. In December 1906, the Egyptian Treasury offered the Anglo-Egyptian government an annual subvention of £E300 to provide services to freed slaves in Sudan.¹⁷⁵ Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials believed, as Wingate later described, that it was imprudent "to create a Government institution as a refuge for the escaped slaves," and therefore rejected the offer.¹⁷⁶ Instead, the following month, senior officials drafted "*Confidential*" *Circular Memorandum No. 22*, which superseded the earlier memorandum of 1902. The new memorandum required junior officials to treat self-manumitted slaves living in towns and market centers with no means of support as "idle persons" under *The Vagabonds Ordinance, 1905*, and to inform these runaway slaves that if they do not find employment or return to their masters, they would be imprisoned for up to a year. Junior officials were also instructed to tell those slaves who petition for their freedom that if they could find employment as freemen they would be similarly imprisoned.¹⁷⁷

To further police the activities of self-manumitted slaves, senior officials, in 1909, established the Labour Bureau. At the time of its creation, senior officials publicly claimed that the bureau was established to ensure a sufficient supply of cheap labor to meet government needs.¹⁷⁸ However officials privately recognized, as a 1918 internal report noted, that the bureau was started “(i) to discourage Sudanese slaves from leaving their masters without good reason and (ii) to obtain a record of the work performed by the individual with a view to discriminating between those who were willing to work, and capable, and those who were not.”¹⁷⁹

Officials were even reluctant to treat ex-slaves with regular employment as freemen. For example, in 1911, two slave boys walked from their village in the Jazira to Wad Madani, on the Blue Nile, and took the train to Khartoum, where they enlisted in the Egyptian Army. When they found out what their slaves had done, the boys’ masters came to Khartoum to claim them as their slaves. Rather than recognize the boys as freemen and deny the masters’ claims, Anglo-Egyptian officials brokered a deal between the boys and their masters whereby the boys were required to indefinitely remit to their masters PT50 per month.¹⁸⁰

The legal framework that Anglo-Egyptian officials established to protect the rights of slave owners provided indigenous cultivators with the security necessary to invest heavily in *sāqiya* cultivation. In the decade and a half that followed the collapse of the Mahdist state, indigenous cultivators in Halfa, Dongola, Berber, and Khartoum Provinces erected approximately 8,000 *sāqiyas*, purchased as many as 80,000 slaves and began cultivating up to an additional 80,000 *faddāns*. The expansion of *sāqiya* cultivation represented a considerable capital investment, the size of which can only be estimated from the documentary record. In 1897, Clinton Dawkins, in his report on the economy of Mahas, Sukkut, and Dunqula, estimated the cost of constructing a *sāqiya* at £E11.¹⁸¹ Assuming that this price remained constant until 1913, the construction of these *sāqiyas* represented a capital investment of £E88,000. The investment in slaves similarly can only be estimated because the archival record does not document the fluctuating price of slaves in the internal Sudanese slave trade. In fact, the official record of this time period contains only one mention of the price of a male slave. In a 1903 report, Governor-General Wingate noted that “a strong boy” could be purchased on the Abyssinian frontier for £E12.¹⁸² Working from this price, the total cost of purchasing 80,000 male slaves would have been £E960,000. The total cost of

erecting the *sāqiya*s and purchasing the slaves to work them would have been approximately £E1,048,000.

Increasing *sāqiya* cultivation also required indigenous cultivators to rapidly expand their herds. Each *sāqiya* was worked by up to ten head of cattle¹⁸³ and, as a result, the 8,000 new *sāqiya*s erected at the beginning of the twentieth century required up to 80,000 head of cattle. Estimating the cost of this capital investment is difficult from the historical record. There are no known statistics relating to cattle markets in Halfa, Dongola, Berber, and Khartoum Provinces before the First World War. However, in 1913 Nilotic Sudanese cattle markets drew some of their supply from the market at al-Ubayyid in Kordofan Province, where the average price was £E2.958 per head.¹⁸⁴ Working from this price, the approximate cost of the 80,000 head of cattle was £E240,000. However, this figure represents just some of the total investment in animal labor that was necessary to expand *sāqiya* cultivation in the region. In 1900, rinderpest spread from the Abyssinian frontier up the Blue Nile to Khartoum and then to Berber Province,¹⁸⁵ killing two-thirds of all infected cattle.¹⁸⁶ Over the next decade and a half, rinderpest returned repeatedly to Nilotic Sudan, though the mortality rate was lower in subsequent outbreaks as surviving cattle developed an immunity. In 1911 and 1913, the mortality rate was only one-quarter of all infected cases.¹⁸⁷ Outbreaks were reported in Berber Province in 1905,¹⁸⁸ 1907,¹⁸⁹ 1911,¹⁹⁰ and 1913,¹⁹¹ as well as in the provinces of Dongola¹⁹² and Khartoum in 1912.¹⁹³

When factoring the cost of replacing lost cattle, the total capital outlay expended to erect the *sāqiya*s, to purchase the slaves, and to maintain adequate herds can be estimated at approximately £E1,500,000. While this figure may appear to be an impossibly large sum for cultivators in a recently war-torn and famine-ravaged region to invest, the sum was spread out over a number of years and across a large pool of investors. The most complete statistics regarding the pace of investment are available for Dongola Province, where, between 1897 and 1913, indigenous cultivators erected 3,644 *sāqiya*s, or nearly half of all new *sāqiya*s. The approximate total fixed capital cost to erect the *sāqiya*s and purchase the roughly 34,000 slaves and the at least 34,000 cattle needed to work them was £E550,000, or an average of £E37,000 per year. However, between 1897 and 1904, when the region was beginning to recover from the Anglo-Egyptian conquest, only 450 *sāqiya*s were constructed, which, when factoring the price of purchasing slaves and cattle, represented a capital investment of approximately £E70,000 or only £E8,750 per year. Between 1905

and 1908, approximately 2,500 *sāqiya*s were built representing a total investment of approximately £E400,000 or £E100,000 per year. Between 1909 and 1913 only 500 *sāqiya*s were built representing a total investment of approximately £E80,000 or £E16,000 per year.

Cultivators did not necessarily have to erect the *sāqiya* and purchase the slaves and cattle at the same time. The investment in a single *sāqiya* could have been spread over a long period, as a cultivator slowly purchased necessary cattle and slaves, and during that time the *sāqiya* would be used less intensively. In addition, this capital outlay could have been spread over multiple investors. In the beginning of the twentieth century, land was worked on a yield-sharing basis with the owners of the land, of the slaves, of the cattle, and of the *sāqiya* each claiming a share of the produce. Typically, the owner of the land received 1/6th and the owner of the *sāqiya* received 1/5th of the gross yield. Taxes and marketing costs were then subtracted and the remainder was divided between the owners of the human and animal labor.¹⁹⁴ This yield-sharing system allowed for anyone with at least approximately £E3, that is the approximate price of a head of cattle, to invest in the expansion of agriculture in the region.

Some of the capital necessary to restock herds, build *sāqiya*s, and expand cultivation came directly from the government. In 1899, Anglo-Egyptian officials issued loans to indigenous cultivators in Dongola and Khartoum Provinces to purchase cattle and construct *sāqiya*s.¹⁹⁵ A few years later, Anglo-Egyptian officials established an Agricultural Bank to issue loans to cultivators in order to assist them in expanding their holdings¹⁹⁶ and, by 1906, the government had over £E10,000 in outstanding loans to indigenous cultivators.¹⁹⁷

Indigenous cultivators pursued a number of independent strategies to secure the remainder of the capital needed to invest in expanding agricultural production. Cultivators in Dongola Province accumulated capital by selling wheat to the Egyptian Army. Prior to the twentieth century, wheat was not a staple crop in Sudan and most communities preferred to eat *dhura*. However, soldiers in the Egyptian Army were provided with wheat bread every other day as part of their rations.¹⁹⁸ Following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest, cultivators in Dongola Province specialized in wheat cultivation to meet the demand from the army. Though Anglo-Egyptian officials noted that Dongola Province had no significant external trade in 1897,¹⁹⁹ the Egyptian Army's persistent demand for grain allowed for the creation of trade links between the province and garrisoned market centers in Upper

Egypt and Nilotic Sudan. The conquest of Umm Durman in 1898 was followed by a prolonged period of food scarcity in the former Mahdist capital. Unable to purchase adequate provisions locally, the Egyptian Army began to import large amounts of grain to the capital and, in the immediate postconquest period, the army's sole source of wheat in Sudan was Dongola Province.²⁰⁰ For example, in 1903 the Army purchased 12,000 *ardabbs* of wheat in that province²⁰¹ and in 1904 the army purchased another 11,000 *ardabbs*.²⁰² The limited local supply led to high prices for wheat in Sudanese markets. In 1901, the price of wheat in Umm Durman peaked at approximately £E2 per *ardabb*,²⁰³ though the average price in Dongola markets over the course of that year was approximately £E1.²⁰⁴ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the average yield for wheat grown on *sāqiya* land was 4 to 4.5 *ardabbs* per *faddān*,²⁰⁵ and a *sāqiya* plot exclusively cultivating wheat could produce a gross return of £E80 per cultivation season.

Demand for wheat grown in Dongola rapidly increased as private enterprise began to piggyback on the trade links forged by the Egyptian Army. Dongola Province soon became a major supplier of wheat to the growing European community in Khartoum. Wheat was by far the largest export by volume from the province and, between 1907 and 1911, the total volume of goods exported from the province to markets in Sudan and Egypt more than doubled from approximately 26,000 *ardabbs* to approximately 54,000 *ardabbs*.²⁰⁶ At the same time, the increasing demand for Dongola wheat caused the price to rise. In 1905, the average annual price of an *ardabb* of wheat in Dongola markets was £E1.²⁰⁷ By 1908, £E1 had become the price of grain during the harvest, when prices were at their lowest,²⁰⁸ and, within a few years, the average annual price had become nearly £E2.²⁰⁹

Unlike their counterparts in Dongola Province, who focused almost exclusively on producing wheat for export, indigenous cultivators in Berber Province pursued a diverse array of economic strategies. In addition to supplying some wheat to the Egyptian Army,²¹⁰ cultivators in Berber Province engaged in some manufacturing, including weaving cloth from locally grown cotton.²¹¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a high demand for cotton cloth manufactured in Berber Province. Though cotton cloth was also manufactured in Dongola Province in small quantities for local consumption and in Kassala Province for export to Eritrea,²¹² Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that cloth produced in Berber Province was of a higher quality and officials in the Department of Steamers and Boats purchased

large quantities of this cloth to produce sails for government boats. At the same time, wearing suits made from Berber cotton cloth became fashionable among Europeans living in Khartoum²¹³ and, in 1906, British merchants began exporting small quantities of this cloth to England.²¹⁴ Indigenous cultivators in Berber Province also manufactured mats and baskets, which were sold in markets along the Blue Nile and in Eastern Sudan.²¹⁵ They also raised sheep and goats for export to Egypt. In 1907, Berber Province exported up to 800 sheep a month to Egypt, where they were sold for as much as PT80 per sheep.²¹⁶ In addition, young men from Berber Province routinely worked for the Anglo-Egyptian government and sent their wages back home for relatives to invest in *sāqiya* cultivation.²¹⁷

In the first decade of Anglo-Egyptian rule, indigenous cultivators in Khartoum Province similarly expanded *sāqiya* cultivation by pursuing a number of economic strategies, including producing grain for market,²¹⁸ manufacturing native products, selling animals, and working for the government.²¹⁹ However, starting in 1906, the local population stopped investing in *sāqiya* cultivation. In 1906, the number of *sāqiyas* in the province peaked at 589.²²⁰ Over the next few years, the number of *sāqiyas* working in the province declined. By 1912, there were only 527 *sāqiyas* in operation.²²¹

Communities in Halfa Province did not generate the capital to finance the expansion of *sāqiya* cultivation from selling their produce. Rather, the investment was generated by remittances sent home from relatives who had left the province to work as domestic servants. Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials preferred to hire men from Sukkut as their personal servants and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, all of the Governor-General's domestic staff were from Sukkut, including the head waiters and kitchen staff in the Palace in Khartoum, the Governor-General's personal valley and laundryman and, during Wingate's tenure as Governor-General, Lady Wingate's personal umbrella carrier.²²² Men from elsewhere in Halfa Province continued to work as domestic servants in Egypt, a practice that dates back to at least the eighteenth century.²²³ Remittances sent home by men and boys working abroad were normally invested in *sāqiya*-irrigated date cultivation in the province, which unfortunately proved unremunerative.²²⁴ As a result, senior officials noted that, despite continued investment in expanding cultivation, some communities in the province were, in 1910, "living in a state of poverty" and that the material condition of the province in 1911 "compares unfavourably with the neighbouring Province of Dongola."²²⁵

Cultivators in Dongola Province, however, became wealthy as a result of wheat cultivation and actively collaborated with Anglo-Egyptian officials to further increase the supply of wheat in Northern Nilotic Sudanese markets. In 1908, the members of the Central Economic Board, an agency of the Anglo-Egyptian government charged with promoting the expansion of the Sudanese economy, recommended that Anglo-Egyptian officials work to make Sudan self-sufficient in terms of wheat by developing a government irrigation scheme in Dongola Province, where the cultivators were already familiar with wheat cultivation.²²⁶ Following the board's advice, J. H. Grieve, an engineer in the Sudan Irrigation Service, proposed that the government substitute mechanical pumps for *sāqiyas* in Dongola Province so as to rapidly increase the extent of cultivation. Since pumps required considerably less labor than *sāqiyas*, more land could be brought under cultivation without necessitating a rapid increase in the amount of available labor.²²⁷ However, restrictions on the use of Nile waters set by the Egyptian government limited the number of *faddāns* that could be watered with mechanical pumps. Though the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement did not establish an absolute Egyptian right to control Nile water usage, in 1901 the British-controlled Egyptian Ministry of Public Works declared that cultivators in Sudan could only use modern artificial irrigation techniques (i.e., engine-driven pumps) to water a maximum of 10,000 *faddāns* during the low Nile. However, the Ministry did not place any restrictions on the use of customary techniques, such as small canals and *sāqiyas*.²²⁸ As a result, in 1903, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials prohibited the use of engine-driven pump in Sudan without the prior consent of both the Anglo-Egyptian government and the Egyptian Public Works Department.²²⁹

Though senior officials rejected Grieve's original proposal, they implemented his subsequent suggestion to use gravity irrigation to water Government-owned wasteland in Dongola Province. Grieve believed that a network of canals and basins could water up to 150,000 *faddāns* of the plains near Karma and produce yields of, on average, five *ardabbs* of wheat per *faddān*.²³⁰ Work on what came to be known as the Kerma Basin Scheme began in early 1909, and, before that year's Nile flood a 4700-m canal was cut and a number of banks were erected.²³¹ During the 1909 flood, 20,000 *faddāns* were watered, though only 3,000 *faddāns* received sufficient water to raise crops and were, therefore, let to local cultivators.²³² Land was allotted exclusively to local cultivators in units of between 10 and 15 *faddāns*

at a rate of PT30 per *faddān*. Before allotments were made, officials assured allottees that, should the crops fail in part or in full, the rent would be remitted.²³³ During the 1909–1910 cultivation year, tenants primarily used their allotted land to grow wheat and the yield surpassed official expectations. The resulting increased supply of wheat in Dongola Province and prevented the price of wheat in the province from rising above PT72 per *ardabb*. By contrast, during the previous cultivation year, the price of an *ardabb* of wheat in Dongola Province peaked at PT132.²³⁴ Over the next few years, the supply of land in the scheme could not keep up with the increased demand from indigenous cultivators. During the 1910 flood, indigenous cultivators applied for over 24,000 *faddāns*, but, by the end of the flood, only 4,500 *faddāns* had been sufficiently watered to grow crops. Nonetheless, the total yield in the Karma Basins for the 1910–1911 cultivation year was approximately 30,000 *ardabbs* of grain.²³⁵ During the following flood, indigenous cultivators applied for 60,000 *faddāns*.²³⁶ However, only 4,500 *faddāns* received sufficient water to grow crops, yielding 40,000 *ardabbs* of wheat.²³⁷

Tenants in the Kerma Basin Scheme collaborated with Anglo-Egyptian officials to develop best cultivation practices. Initially, tenants used the same cultivation techniques in the scheme as they had been using on their *sāqiya* land. Cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan did not plow *sāqiya* land; rather, after the land was watered, they used a long stick to drill small holes in the soil. They then dropped seeds into the holes, which they left uncovered. Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that cultivators working basin land in Upper Egypt had a more efficient technique. In Upper Egypt, cultivators plowed their plots as soon as they were dry enough to allow cattle to pass. Then, cultivators broadcasted their seed and lightly cross-plowed to ensure that the seeds were covered. To encourage tenants to adopt these techniques, officials purchased, before the 1910 flood, a number of light plows used in Upper Egypt and lent them to a few cultivators.²³⁸ Following the 1911 flood, officials purchased an additional 200 plows and hired 6 Egyptian cultivators to supervise the plowing of the fields and the sowing of the seed.²³⁹ Tenants quickly took to plowing their land. During the 1912–1913 cultivation year, tenants purchased additional plows, which they used to plow the entire flooded zone.²⁴⁰ Since there were insufficient cattle to plow all of the land in the scheme, tenants made arrangements to rent camels to pull the plows.²⁴¹

The Development of the Unified Sudanese Grain Market

Profits resulting from high grain prices in Northern Nilotic Sudan financed the expansion of a long-distance trade in grain. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jazira resumed its place as a supplier of *dhura* to Northern Nilotic markets. Despite the rapid expansion of cultivation in Halfa, Dongola, Berber, and Khartoum Provinces in the years that followed the collapse of the Mahdist state, indigenous cultivators were unable to produce sufficient quantities of *dhura* to meet their own needs as well as the needs of urban and pastoralist populations in the region.²⁴² In Halfa Province, indigenous cultivators invested almost exclusively in expanding date cultivation and, as a result, imported nearly all of the *dhura* that they consumed.²⁴³ Similarly, indigenous cultivators in the Provinces of Dongola and Berber invested heavily in cultivating wheat, a grain that they did not eat. At the same time, cultivators in the rainlands to the south and southeast of Khartoum were producing large surpluses of *dhura*. The regional specialization of grain consumption and production allowed merchants to profit from the development of a long-distance trade in wheat and *dhura*. For example, according to government statistics from 1908, grain merchants could purchase an *ardabb* of wheat in Dongola Province for PT100, ship it to Khartoum for PT25 and sell it there for PT150, netting a profit of PT25 per *ardabb*. These grain merchants could then purchase an *ardabb* of *dhura* that had been grown in the Jazira in the Umm Durman market for PT40, ship it to Dongola Province for PT25, and sell it there for PT80, netting an additional profit of PT15 per *ardabb*.²⁴⁴ Similar prices ranged in Berber Province's grain markets,²⁴⁵ though profits were potentially larger because the cost of transport from Khartoum to Berber Province was less than half of what it was to Dongola Province.²⁴⁶

While grain merchants, as well as some indigenous cultivators in the Jazira and along the Nile, profited from the development of this unified grain market, the high cost of transport ensured that *dhura* grown in the fertile rainlands around Kassala, Qadarif, and Qallabat could not, under normal conditions, compete in Nilotic markets. Until the extension of the railroad in 1910, grain grown along this part of the Abyssinian frontier had to either be taken over land by camel or shipped along the Blue Nile. Indigenous boats were unable to withstand the current of the Blue Nile in full flood and, as a result, grain

cargos could only be shipped during the low Nile. However, sandbanks and shallows form in the Blue Nile as it ebbs. Therefore, when an indigenous boat approached a sandbank or shallow, the crew had to offload some cargo to lighten the load, progress downstream, offload the remaining cargo, return upstream, reload the first cargo, return to reload the second, and then continue downriver until the boat reached another sandbank or shallow. As a result, shipping by indigenous boat was both slow and expensive.²⁴⁷ Unfortunately, government steamers, which had a smaller draft, could not be extensively used in commercial traffic because they were, generally, engaged moving government stores and had only limited space to carry goods on private account.²⁴⁸

During the first few years of Anglo-Egyptian rule, surplus *dhura* grown around Kassala, Qadarif, and Qallabat was generally exported to Eritrea with one illustrative exception.²⁴⁹ In 1905, a group of Khartoum-based merchants attempted to corner the *dhura* market and, toward this end, purchased grain futures from cultivators both in the Jazira and along parts of the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers,²⁵⁰ often for as low as half of the normal price in local markets during the harvest.²⁵¹ As a result of this conspiracy, though there was an ample crop, the price of *dhura* in Wad Madani, on the Blue Nile, climbed to PT115 per *ardabb*²⁵² and the price at Umm Durman peaked at PT130.²⁵³ For a comparison, in 1903, the price at Umm Durman did not rise above PT60 per *ardabb*.²⁵⁴ The Governor of Khartoum Province responded to this sharp price increase by selling *dhura* from the government reserves at the “normal” price of PT65 per *ardabb* and, about a week later, the price dropped to PT50 per *ardabb*.²⁵⁵

Anglo-Egyptian officials subsequently encouraged the creation of an internal Sudanese grain market that encompassed both riverain land north of Khartoum and rainlands in the Jazira and along parts of the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers. Many officials believed that the development of this unified grain market would produce grain surpluses large enough to ensure lasting food security, drive down the price in Sudanese markets and allow Sudanese grain to compete in Egypt, Arabia, and Europe. Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials recognized that the high cost of transport in Sudan was the major impediment to developing an export trade in grain and, in the first decade of the twentieth century, they expanded the government-owned railroad to link grain-producing regions with key markets. In 1905, officials opened a branch line that connected the main Nile line to the Red Sea. Though officials decided to close the Wadi Halfa to Karma line in 1904, two years later officials inaugurated a new line that connected Dongola

Province directly to the main Nile railroad north of Abu Hamad. In addition, that year, officials reduced the freight charge for grain on the government-owned railroad to 25 percent below the lowest rate.²⁵⁶ Starting in 1908, grain could be shipped from Khartoum to the Red Sea at a rate of PT12 per *ardabb* and to the Egyptian frontier at PT14 per *ardabb* and from Dongola Province to Khartoum for PT12 per *ardabb*.²⁵⁷

Officials then turned their attention to pushing the main line south into the Jazira and then west to Kordofan Province. By April 1909, the railhead had reached Wad Madani on the Blue Nile. By December that year, the construction crews had laid tracks that crossed the Jazira from the Blue Nile to the White Nile. Within a year, the railhead had reached al-Ubayyid, the capital of Kordofan Province (map 5.1).²⁵⁸ The extension of the railroad allowed other regions to be incorporated into the unified grain market. In 1910, as a result of the railroad, grain grown in Qadarif began to be shipped to Northern Sudanese markets.²⁵⁹ In 1913, grain from Kordofan Province, which had previously been unable to compete in other markets,²⁶⁰ was shipped by rail and sold in Umm Durman.²⁶¹

The extension of the railway led to an increase in the quantity of grain exported from Sudan. Before the railway extension, Sudan only exported small amounts of grain to Egypt during exceptional harvests. For example, in 1904, less than 4,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* were exported to Egypt, via Wadi Halfa.²⁶² In 1910, however, the Sudanese railway carried approximately 320,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura*, of which approximately 150,000 *ardabbs* were carried between internal Sudanese markets²⁶³ and the remainder was exported to Egypt and the Red Sea. Customs records for 1910 list the total value of *dhura* exports for that year at £E91,950.²⁶⁴ Much of this exported *dhura* was harvested in the Jazira and, that year, approximately 140,000 *ardabbs* of grain were shipped from the Jazira by rail.²⁶⁵ The following year, poor rains near Qadarif and Qallabat increased the price of *dhura* in some markets in the rainlands south of Khartoum to PT84 per *ardabb*.²⁶⁶ As a result, Sudanese *dhura* could not compete in Red Sea markets with Indian *dhura*, which was sold at Jidda for less than PT85 per *ardabb*,²⁶⁷ and the export of Sudanese grain to Arabia proved unremunerative.²⁶⁸ Nonetheless, in 1911, nearly 70,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* were shipped from the Jazira²⁶⁹ and government statistics list the value of grain exports to Egypt at £E69,933.²⁷⁰

The development of the unified grain market in the decade and a half that followed the collapse of the Mahdist state afforded indigenous

cultivators a high degree of autonomy. They retained control over their cultivation techniques, over the marketing of their harvests, and over their slaves. In addition, indigenous communities retained the right to define landownership and other rights to land. However, the autonomy exercised by these communities came on the backs of the tens of thousands of slaves who worked the fields and produced the grain that sustained the free population. The slave system that underpinned the food economy proved extremely fragile. Cultivators' record profits occluded the emergence of structural problems in the unified grain market. The innovations in the Sudanese economy that facilitated the grain trade ultimately propagated the cycle of famine and food insecurity and allowed Anglo-Egyptian officials to curtail local autonomy and expropriate key, indigenous-owned resources.

Cotton and Grain as the Drivers of Economic Development, 1913–1940

The unified grain market that encompassed parts of Northern Nilotic Sudan, the Jazira, Kurdufan, and the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers proved to be insufficient insurance against recurring food crises. The trading facilities that underpinned this market, in that they were able to rapidly and cheaply move grain to distant consumers, had the potential to turn local food shortages into regional food crises and, in extreme cases, widespread famine. The first, albeit minor, crisis occurred during the 1912–1913 cultivation year, when the failure of the summer rains in Sennar Province led to price spikes in Kassala Province and in Northern Nilotic Sudan. The 1912–1913 harvest was insufficient to meet demand in Sennar¹ and, as a result, merchants in the province imported large quantities of *dhura* from the market in Kassala, driving up the price there. Merchants from Umm Durman and Eritrea also purchased grain from Kassala and, as a result, the price of *dhura* in Kassala rose to PT190 per *ardabb* in July 1913.² This price increase led to price increases in Northern Nilotic Sudan, where in Berber Province, for example, the price of *dhura* peaked at PT215 per *ardabb*.³

Most senior Anglo-Egyptian officials refused to admit that the unified grain market, which had developed over the previous 15 years with the assistance of the indigenous population, could produce anything but surpluses. Therefore, the government did not develop plans and procedures for addressing future famines as they arose. Nonetheless, there were a few officials who, in 1913, tried to warn of a looming food crisis. Joseph Asser, a Member of the Governor-General's Council, told Governor-General Wingate, in August 1913, that the

Nile flood was abnormally low and that, as a result, the price of *dhura* in Umm Durman would continue to climb, which would lead to widespread hardship and starvation among the poor.⁴ Similarly, Vincent Woodland, the Acting Governor of White Nile Province, in September 1913, informed senior officials that the failure of the summer rains near al-Qutayna had led to a local famine⁵ and asked for permission to distribute 1,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* among the famine victims.⁶ While Wingate's response to Asser's 1913 warning is lost, the official response to Woodland's report exists. Senior officials, including Asser, believed that Woodland was, at best, mistaken and, at worse, being tricked by the local population. Asser wrote to Woodland that, as he later recounted to Wingate, cultivators in the region "were evidently getting at him" because they must have stored large quantities of grain during the abundant 1912–1913 harvest. Asser, therefore, instructed Woodland to make a personal tour of all private grain stores in the region.⁷ Similarly, P. R. Phipps, the Civil Secretary, a few days after receiving Woodland's report, issued a memorandum to the Provincial Governors instructing them not to report suspected famines before personally making a thorough tour of the affected area.⁸ Woodland responded to these senior officials by relaying that the District Officer had already completed a tour of the region, during which he had witnessed first-hand the effects of the famine.⁹ Nonetheless, senior officials refused to believe that there was an ongoing food crisis.¹⁰ In fact, Phipps wrote to Wingate on this issue stating: "I do not believe in famine—the natives are as cute as monkeys."¹¹

Though these officials did not "believe in famine," they benefited from the cycle of famine and food insecurity that continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In 1914, a devastating famine allowed senior officials to curtail the autonomy that indigenous communities had maintained in the early years of Anglo-Egyptian rule and to assume control of the unified grain market during the First World War. Local communities were unable to resist this extension of the state because the famine weakened the slave system that underpinned cultivation in Northern Nilotic Sudan and, ultimately, led to the decline of the rural economy of that region. State management of the unified grain market further perpetuated the cycle of famine and food insecurity. The export of large quantities of grain during the war precipitated a famine in 1918–1919 that allowed the Anglo-Egyptian government to increase its control over fertile lands in the Jazira and to advance an agricultural policy in that region that focused on foreign-financed cotton cultivation schemes. This policy rapidly proved

unremunerative for the indigenous population. Persistent food insecurity in the years that followed allowed Anglo-Egyptian officials to assume command of other key natural resources, including the fertile Qash Delta in Kassala Province. Unfortunately, most indigenous cultivators did not materially benefit from increased government management of these resources and many continued to suffer the effects of food insecurity.

The Causes and Consequence of the 1914 Famine

Though the development of the unified grain market had, in 1909 and 1910, allowed for the export of large grain surpluses to Egypt and Arabia, the market was unable to prevent another catastrophic famine. At the end of 1913, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials reluctantly admitted that, as Wingate termed it, there was “almost a famine”¹² and “semi-famine conditions” in Northern Nilotic Sudan.¹³ By the beginning of 1914, conditions in the region had deteriorated to such an extent that, as Wingate noted, the food crisis was causing the “entire collapse of agriculture in the Dongola Province.”¹⁴ During the famine, tens of thousands of starving refugees wandered the country searching for food. Some made their way to Kordofan Province, hoping to find employment there as grain pickers.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the rains failed in much of that province and there was little local demand for wage labor.¹⁶ Others sought employment in the rainlands of Kassala Province and the Jazira.¹⁷ Many men migrated without their families, leaving behind starving women and children, whom Louis West, a gentleman adventurer who traveled in Sudan during the famine, described as having been reduced to “shrunken, shriveled forms.”¹⁸

The 1914 famine corresponded with an exceptionally poor harvest. In 1913, the Nile flood failed and poor rains led to reduced yields in Kordofan,¹⁹ Blue Nile, and Kassala Provinces.²⁰ In Halfa Province, the extremely low Nile forced cultivators to use multiple *sāqiyas* to irrigate their fields. As a result, previously cultivated land was left fallow and the yield in the province during the 1913–1914 cultivation year was approximately one-eighth the normal.²¹ Dongola and Berber Provinces similarly experienced a reduction in the extent of cultivation as the negative effects of the low Nile were compounded by an outbreak of rinderpest, during which an estimated 2,300 cattle died in Dongola Province alone.²² The loss of animal labor further reduced irrigation facilities and threw plots out of cultivation.²³ Some of the crops that were sufficiently watered to grow were destroyed before

they could be harvested by dust storms in White Nile Province,²⁴ birds and locust in Kassala Province,²⁵ and aphids in Dongola Province.²⁶

Though environmental hazards explain the poor crop yields, they do not explain the outbreak of famine because, despite the bad harvest, the overall supply of grain in the unified grain market in 1913–1914 was similar to that of the previous cultivation year. Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials estimated the 1912–1913 harvest in the major *dhura*-producing rainland regions of Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, and Kassala Provinces at approximately 810,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura*.²⁷ Though this yield was less than the above average yield of 1911–1912, which was estimated at approximately 1,000,000 *ardabbs*,²⁸ there was still sufficient surplus in 1912–1913 to allow for approximately 13,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* to be exported to Egypt without causing widespread hardship in Sudan.²⁹ In 1913–1914, the major *dhura*-producing rainland regions yielded approximately 710,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura*.³⁰ The shortfall over the previous year was made up for by the over 100,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* imported from Egypt and India on private account.³¹ In addition, during 1913–1914, the Nuba Mountains, where there was an above-average yield, supplied *dhura* to the unified grain market for the first time.³²

The overall supply was even further augmented by the 70,000 *ardabbs* that the government imported from India to distribute as food aid.³³ In January 1914, senior officials allocated £E5,000 for famine relief works in Dongola Province,³⁴ which was subsequently used to employ nearly 3,000 people, most of whom were women and children,³⁵ in constructing new canals and irrigation works.³⁶ In addition, senior officials attempted to assist inhabitants of other affected provinces by selling *dhura* imported on government account for PT170 per *ardabb*.³⁷ Initially, the sale of government grain either stabilized or reduced the price of *dhura*. However, these gains were only temporary. For example, in February 1914, the price of *dhura* in Berber Province reduced by PT10 per *ardabb* when officials began selling *dhura* at discounted prices.³⁸ However, within a few days, the price began to rise again.³⁹ Similarly, though senior officials reported, in April 1914, that the sale of government grain had prevented the price of *dhura* in Umm Durman from rising above PT168 per *ardabb*,⁴⁰ the following month the price rose to PT201 per *ardabb*. The price in Umm Durman continued increasing until it peaked, in August 1914, at PT277 per *ardabb*.⁴¹ On the other hand, the sale of government grain had no effect in Kassala, where the price of *dhura* climbed steadily from PT171 in March until it peaked, in August 1914, at PT349 per *ardabb*.⁴²

The famine, and the attendant spike in the price of *dhura*, was caused, in large part, by the division of labor that underpinned the unified grain market, whereby indigenous cultivators in the Jazira and along parts of the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers produced *dhura* for indigenous cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan, who, in turn, produced wheat for the army, the government, and the European community. The famine began in Northern Nilotic Sudan when the population stopped being able to purchase *dhura* from the unified grain market and spread southward as thousands migrated to the major *dhura*-producing regions in the Provinces of Sennar, Kassala, and Blue Nile. Had there not been a major migration, it is unlikely that these *dhura*-producing regions would have suffered from famine. The 1913–1914 harvest in Sennar Province was reported to be “average” and sufficient to meet local needs. However, it was insufficient to meet the sudden increase in demand for *dhura* caused by the influx of thousands of refugees from the north.⁴³ Famine refugees also settled in Kassala Province, where they increased the demand for the already below-average yield. The province’s population further increased during the famine because pastoralists from the Jazira drove their cattle eastward in search of grazing.⁴⁴ The increased demand led prices to spike.⁴⁵ At the same time, the influx of refugees drove down prevailing wages. Though the historical record does not contain statistics on wages in Sennar Province, the day wage in Kassala Province declined, during the famine, from PT10 to PT2.5.⁴⁶ With an *ardabb* of *dhura* selling for as much as PT350 in Kassala, a male laborer, who would normally eat at least one *ardabb* of *dhura* per year, could barely secure sufficient grain to meet his own needs, let alone the needs of his dependent relatives. As a result, many could not afford to purchase sufficient food and officials were forced to begin offering direct food aid.⁴⁷

Similar conditions prevailed in Blue Nile Province, despite a high local demand for wage labor. In 1914, the Sudan Plantation Syndicate (SPS), a British company that invested in commercial agriculture in Sudan, hired over 5,000 men on their plantations at Barakat and Tayyiba to clear land, dig irrigation canals, and prepare the land for the 1914 flood.⁴⁸ As refugees migrated into the province, the supply of labor quickly outpaced demand and the prevailing wage declined to PT1.5 per day.⁴⁹ At the same time, the price of *dhura* peaked in the province August 1914 at PT191 per *ardabb*.⁵⁰ Though laborers may have been able to purchase their sustenance at these rates, they would not have been able to earn enough to adequately provide for dependent family members.

Most of the famine refugees who arrived in Sennar, Kassala, and Blue Nile Provinces migrated from Dongola Province. Communities in Dongola Province were uniquely susceptible to famine because they were thoroughly dependent on the unified grain market for their sustenance. Indigenous cultivators in the province specialized in cultivating wheat, which they did not eat and which they sold to purchase *dhura* imported from the rainlands south of Khartoum. Communities elsewhere in Northern Nilotic Sudan were not similarly dependent on the unified grain market. For example, communities in Berber Province practiced a number of economic strategies in addition to commercially cultivating wheat, including selling cotton cloth, exporting sheep to Egypt, and working as wage laborers for the Anglo-Egyptian government. Though the 1913–1914 harvest in Berber Province was abnormally small, many cultivators were able to find alternate employment during the famine with the government railroad, the SPS's Zeidab Plantation, the Um Nabardi gold mines or Henry Wellcome's excavations at Merowe. Others were able to supplement their income by harvesting Dom nuts, which were prized in Europe as a substitute for ivory, or by manufacturing baskets and mats. As a result, the Governor of Berber Province reported that the famine did not affect the local population.⁵¹

Similarly, the 1914 famine did not spread to Halfa Province, which was equally dependent on the Nile for irrigation, because local indigenous communities had nonagricultural sources of income. Throughout 1913–1914, these communities, as had become customary, purchased *dhura* with money remitted home by men who had left the province to work as domestic servants elsewhere in Sudan or in Egypt.⁵² These communities were further buffered from the effects of spikes in the price of *dhura* in other parts of the unified grain market because of their geographic proximity to Egypt, which was protected from the low Nile by the Aswan Dam. Egyptian grain imports in the first half of 1914 kept the price of *dhura* in Halfa Province relatively low, and, in fact, these prices actually declined during the famine from PT208 per *ardabb* in September 1913 to PT150 in August 1914.⁵³

Though indigenous communities in Halfa and Berber Provinces were relatively unaffected by the famine, the Governors of these two provinces, nonetheless, authorized the distribution of grain as aid in early 1914. However, this aid was considerably less than that offered in Dongola Province and was not directed at local communities directly affected by famine. In Halfa Province, senior officials recognized that

the low Nile was further impoverishing an already poor province,⁵⁴ and, to ease the burden, they authorized the distribution of 500 *ard-abbs* of seed grain in Mahas and Sukkut in the months before the 1914 Nile flood.⁵⁵ By comparison, senior officials distributed 4,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* as food aid in Dongola Province, where they also employed thousands on relief works and opened temporary hospitals and poor-houses for, as Wingate subsequently reported, the “treatment and relief of destitute wanderers.”⁵⁶ Though officials distributed 3,400 *ardabbs* in Berber Province as food aid,⁵⁷ this assistance was not intended for local communities. Rather, aid was targeted exclusively at the thousands of impoverished refugees who migrated into the province from Dongola.⁵⁸

The famine was severe in Dongola Province because indigenous cultivators had, since 1897, exclusively invested in commercial cultivation and, therefore, did not have nonagricultural sources of income. Indigenous communities in the province did not develop other industries or economic strategies. Between 1897 and 1913, these communities invested an estimated £E550,000 in erecting 3,644 *sāqiyas*, which they dedicated, primarily to wheat cultivation (see chapter 5). Unfortunately, wheat, unlike *dhura*, is not drought resistant. At the beginning of the twentieth century, wheat grown in Sudan took at least 150 days to mature. On the other hand, some varieties of *dhura* could mature in approximately 70 days.⁵⁹ The failure of the Nile flood severely decreased wheat yields, thereby reducing the incomes of indigenous cultivators. The situation was exacerbated by an outbreak of rinderpest that killed thousands of *sāqiya* cattle, which forced hundreds of *sāqiyas* to stay idle and prevented thousands of *faddāns* from being properly irrigated.⁶⁰

Though the poor harvest led the market price of wheat to rise, cultivators were unable to offset their losses with higher returns from the sale of their decreased yields. The market price for an *ardabb* of wheat steadily climbed throughout the 1913–1914 cultivation year from PT164 in May 1913 to a peak price of PT301 in August 1914.⁶¹ However, many cultivators could not capitalize on these prices because they had sold their crop in advance of the harvest in order to purchase sugar. Following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Mahdist state, drinking heavily sugared tea became widely practiced throughout Northern Nilotic Sudan. Prior to the Mahdist Rebellion, sugar was expensive because it was imported into the region from India via the Sawakin–Barbar road and the supply was limited. In 1881, only 140,000 kg of sugar were imported into Sudan.⁶² At the beginning of

the twentieth century, the opening of the Sudanese railway reduced the price of transport and led to the rapid increase in sugar imports. In 1903, approximately 2,000,000 kg of sugar were imported into Sudan.⁶³ By 1909, the amount had increased to approximately 10,000,000 kg and the total value of imported sugar was estimated at £E151,571. Sugar imports continued to increase over the next few years and, despite the looming famine, approximately 13,000,000 kg of sugar were imported in 1913. The following year nearly the same quantity of sugar was imported, even though there was widespread suffering from starvation.⁶⁴

Cultivators in Dongola continued to drink sugary tea throughout the famine. Over 530,000 kg of sugar, valued at £E12,700, was imported into the province on private account during the first three months of 1914, where it was sold for approximately PT7 per kilogram. Provincial officials were alarmed at the continued demand for sugar during the food crisis. In May 1914, Herbert Jackson, the Governor of Dongola Province, wrote to the Civil Secretary:

The habit of “tea-drinking” has increased yearly to an alarming extent and has now got such a hold of the people that they cannot give it up, they are simply slaves to it...They are absolutely penniless but in order to obtain sugar are selling their crops wholesale in advance.⁶⁵

Jackson claimed that merchants made profits of 250 percent by selling sugar in exchange for wheat futures, a practice that impoverished cultivators.⁶⁶ To help cultivators, Jackson asked Governor-General Wingate to restrict the sale of crop futures.⁶⁷ Though the Legal Secretary ruled that banning futures would be an “unnecessary interference in trade,” senior officials agreed to place a cap on the possible profit from purchasing futures⁶⁸ and on August 1, 1914, the Governor-General issued a proclamation fixing this cap at 25 percent.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, this measure was not enforced and the practice continued unchecked.⁷⁰

Another factor that accounts for the severity of the food crisis in Dongola Province is the presence of a large population of male agricultural slaves. During the decade and a half that preceded the famine, cultivators in the province imported an estimated 34,000 male slaves to work on their farms. When the low Nile flood and the outbreak of rinderpest reduced the extent of cultivation, many male slaves were left idle. Elsewhere, slave owners could find alternate, nonagricultural employment for their slaves. Though the documentary record on

slavery in Sudan is incomplete (see chapter 5), there is evidence that slaves in Berber Province, for example, who could not be used for work in the fields were rented out by their owners. In 1924, the Governor of Berber Province admitted that many slaves in the province were hired out to employees of the government railway, whose base of operations was at Atbara,⁷¹ and J. P. Creed, a District Commissioner in Berber Province, reported that, in his district, owners were paid between PT30 and PT60 per month for their let slaves.⁷² However, cultivation was the only significant economic pursuit in Dongola Province and, in 1913–1914, the low Nile flood and rinderpest outbreak led the extent of cultivation to decline sharply. Nonetheless, slave-owners, who were struggling to purchase their own sustenance, were still obligated to provide their slaves with food. During the famine, slave-owners must have been unable to secure sufficient grain to meet these needs and, as a result, many slaves must have suffered from malnutrition and starvation.

Though the documentary record is silent about the impact of the 1914 famine on the large slave population in Dongola Province, the pattern of migration during the 1914 famine suggests that many slaves self-manumitted by absconding from their masters in Dongola Province during this food crisis.⁷³ Famine refugees tended to make their way toward the Abyssinian frontier near Qadarif and Qallabat. Prior to the Mahdist Rebellion, this region was heavily populated with non-Muslim villages.⁷⁴ However, smallpox and famine decimated much of the population during the first years of the Mahdist period. The remaining population was subsequently forced to cultivate grain for the Mahdist *amīr* Ahmad Fadil Muhammad and his men.⁷⁵ Following the Anglo-Egyptian conquest, officials seized the land from the Mahdist lords. However, they did not return the land to those that worked it. Rather, Anglo-Egyptian officials subdivided the region into a number of village groups and distributed the land among them. Officials appointed a Muslim and a non-Muslim *'umda* over each village group and vested ownership of the land in the office of the *'umda*. Officials considered a resident of a village-group, including any recent arrivals, to be the usufruct tenant of either the Muslim or non-Muslim *'umda*, depending on the resident's religion.⁷⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Anglo-Egyptian officials administering these districts did not give political weight to divisions based on "tribe" or ethnicity and did not recognize claims to private property in this region. The low barrier to land access and political recognition would have drawn absconding slaves to the region.

In addition, some of the *'umdas* in Qadarif and Qallabat at the time of the famine were ex-slaves. In the early years of the Anglo-Egyptian government, officials settled hundreds of retired ex-slave soldiers in the region.⁷⁷ The first settlements were established in 1900, with 136 men in Kassala Province and 489 in Sennar Province.⁷⁸ Though some of these colonists abandoned their new villages and returned to their ancestral homes in Southern Sudan, many others stayed⁷⁹ and, in 1914, there were a number of villages on the Abyssinian frontier comprised entirely of former slaves. The presence of these ex-slave colonies, in addition to the ability of new settlers to access land and the role of non-Muslim *'umdas* in local government, made the region of the Abyssinian frontier near Qadarif and Qallabat an attractive place for absconding slaves to resettle.

The mass migration of absconding slaves is further suggested by official descriptions of this part of the Abyssinian frontier after the famine. There is no mention in the historical record of a return of migrants from market towns in the Provinces of Kassala and Sennar to Northern Nilotic Sudan once the famine abated. Nonetheless, Anglo-Egyptian officials do not mention the presence of large communities in these provinces of the main Northern Nilotic ethno-linguistic groups, that is the Danaqla, Shayqiyya, or Ja'aliyyin. However, officials noted the presence of large ex-slave communities in the region. In 1931, the Governor of Kassala Province noted that three-quarters of the population of Qadarif and Qallabat were "black," a euphemism frequently used by Anglo-Egyptian officials to refer to "slaves" and "ex-slaves."⁸⁰ The following year, the Governor of what had been Sennar Province, and was then called Fung Province, reported that the most of the people residing along the Abyssinian frontier were ex-slaves.⁸¹

The exact numbers of slaves who self-manumitted during the famine is unknown but indigenous cultivators in Dongola Province, most of whom did not regain the wealth that they lost in the famine, subsequently linked their poverty to the loss of their slaves. In 1930, cultivators from Arqu Island and al-'Urdu, in a petition asking for financial assistance, claimed that they could not secure sufficient labor to properly cultivate their land because "the slaves have taken their freedom and the boys have left the Province."⁸² Unfortunately, these cultivators failed to indicate when their slaves began deserting. In the years following the famine, Anglo-Egyptian officials noted that indigenous cultivators in Dongola Province, as the Governor wrote in 1915, were living "in a state of abject poverty."⁸³ In 1918, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials reported that the population suffered from persistent food

insecurity,⁸⁴ and, in 1923, the Governor reported that this once prosperous province had become “a poor one.”⁸⁵ All of which suggests that many cultivators in Dongola Province lost their slaves, and therefore their ability to intensively exploit the land, during the famine.

Famine and the Development of the Gezira Scheme

The 1914 famine played a crucial role in developing Sudan as a major supplier of raw cotton to global markets. Prior to the famine, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials invited the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) and its subsidiary corporation, the SPS to develop a large-scale commercial agriculture project in the Jazira. The BCGA was established in 1902 as a partnership between mill owners, merchants, and workers’ unions in England in order to ensure that a continuous supply of cheap, high-quality raw cotton reached British mills at a time when the global demand for cotton outstripped the supply. That year, for the first time, cotton mills in Britain had to suspend their operations because they could not secure sufficient supplies from the United States.⁸⁶ Initially, the BCGA focused on improving indigenous agricultural techniques and improving the quality of cotton seed in regions of Britain’s Tropical Empire where indigenous populations already cultivated cotton, such as Nigeria, India, and Sudan.⁸⁷ Anglo-Egyptian officials were initially interested in working with the BCGA to develop the Jazira, in part, because they believed doing so would assist in the development of the unified grain market in two ways. First, the SPS agreed to help the Anglo-Egyptian government raise the capital to extend the railroad into key *dhura*-producing rainlands. Second, the BCGA and the SPS promised to commercially cultivate both cotton and wheat on their concession. However, during the 1914 famine, the SPS’s agents pressured senior Anglo-Egyptian officials to remove wheat from the crop rotation and, in the years that followed, the commercial development of the Jazira focused exclusively on expanding cotton cultivation.

Before the BCGA became interested in Sudan, Sudanese cultivators grew cotton both for local consumption and for export. During the 1901–1902 cultivation year, Anglo-Egyptian officials estimated that cotton was grown on approximately 1,100 *faddāns* of rainland near Qadarif and Qallabat and 3,900 *faddāns* of *sāqiya* land along the Nile.⁸⁸ Locally grown cotton was used by weavers in Northern Nilotic

Sudan and exported raw to Abyssinia and Eritrea. In 1902, all of the cotton grown near Qadarif and Qallabat, totaling nearly 36,000 kg, was sold to Abyssinian export merchants.⁸⁹ However, Sudan did not export raw cotton to any other markets.⁹⁰

The relationship between the BCGA and the Anglo-Egyptian government began in 1903, nearly a decade before serious efforts were made to establish a large-scale cotton cultivation scheme in the Jazira. In 1903, the BCGA approached the Anglo-Egyptian government with an offer to jointly develop Sudan into a major supplier of raw cotton to British mills.⁹¹ With the consent of the Anglo-Egyptian government, the BCGA hired Messrs. Carver and Co., an Alexandria-based trading firm, to coordinate its operations in the region. During the 1903 cotton harvest, Messrs. Carver and Co. sent an agent to test the market value of Sudanese cotton by purchasing cotton in Berber Province and ginning, grading, and selling it in Egypt.⁹² Over the next few cultivation years, the BCGA increased the scope of its operations and Messrs. Carver and Co. distributed Egyptian seed to willing cultivators, opened ginning factories in the towns of Kassala and Khartoum, circulated information about best cultivation and harvesting techniques and sent agents to purchase cotton.⁹³ However, indigenous cultivators refused to participate in this initiative because the price offered by the BCGA was, as the Governor of Gezira Province noted, “not high enough to convince the natives to change their practices.”⁹⁴ These cultivators understood that commercially cultivating grain produced a better return on their investment. The Governors of the Provinces of Berber,⁹⁵ Khartoum,⁹⁶ and Dongola,⁹⁷ as well as the Director of the Agriculture Department, soon similarly recognized that, at prevailing market prices, cotton cultivation was less profitable than wheat cultivation.⁹⁸ As a result, after four years, Anglo-Egyptian officials were forced to declare that the scheme was, as the Governor of Berber Province bluntly stated, “a failure.”⁹⁹

The BCGA’s interest in Sudan’s cotton growing potential revived in 1910 as a result of the sudden commercial success of Tawkar cotton. In the years that followed the 1891 Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Tawkar Delta, cotton was not widely grown in the delta. Cotton was less profitable than *dhura* for Tawkar cultivators because they had to take out high-interest loans from Sawakin-based merchants to finance the sowing, weeding, and picking of the cotton crop.¹⁰⁰ *Dhura*, which matured considerably faster than cotton, did not require the same financial investment as cotton. As a result, cultivators did not dedicate much land to cotton cultivation. During the 1902–1903 cultivation

year, which Anglo-Egyptian officials characterized as having had the “the best flood in years,”¹⁰¹ only 2,867 *faddāns* were sown with cotton.¹⁰² In 1907, cultivators began dedicating more land to cotton because the National Bank of Egypt had agreed to finance the Tawkar crop at a low interest rate and to sell the harvest on behalf of cultivators in more lucrative Egyptian markets.¹⁰³ In the 1907–1908 cultivation year approximately 32,000 *faddāns* were watered, over 16,000 *faddāns* were sown with cotton and the harvest was sold for PT80 per *qinṭār* of unginned cotton.¹⁰⁴ Over the next few years, cultivators worked with Anglo-Egyptian officials to improve seed varieties¹⁰⁵ and establish best cultivation practices. These initiatives paid off and the quality and market price of Tawkar cotton improved. The 1909–1910 crop was sold for an average price of PT148 per unginned *qinṭār*.¹⁰⁶ The following year’s crop was sold in Alexandria for the equivalent price of Egyptian cotton graded at “fairly good fair.”¹⁰⁷

Anglo-Egyptian officials did not immediately attempt to replicate the success of Tawkar elsewhere and, instead, continued to focus on developing the unified grain market. These officials believed that, if the cost of transport was reduced, Sudan would become a leading exporter of grain to Europe and the Red Sea. As a result, they planned a number of possible railroad extensions. In 1906 Wingate and Cromer discussed extending the railroad from Khartoum to the Jazira.¹⁰⁸ The following year, James Currie, Director of Education, proposed extending the railroad to Qallabat, which he claimed would allow for the development of commercial wheat cultivation on the Abyssinian frontier.¹⁰⁹ The Anglo-Egyptian government, however, could not finance these railroad extensions on its own because it routinely ran budgetary deficits that were only covered as a result of subventions from the Egyptian Treasury.¹¹⁰ Therefore, officials had to look for alternative sources of funding. Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials initially sought a loan from the British government. In the summer of 1908, Governor-General Wingate and a number of key Anglo-Egyptian officials met with their counterparts in the British government to request financial assistance to extend the railroad south from Khartoum and to construct new branch lines toward rainlands southeast and southwest of the capital. During their meetings, these Anglo-Egyptian officials framed the railroad extension in terms of imperial security and, as Wingate subsequently recounted, claimed that Sudan was “a link in the chain of communication with India should the Suez Canal be blocked.”¹¹¹ Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials asserted that, despite Sudan’s strategic importance, British rule rested on a shaky foundation because the

Anglo-Egyptian government lacked the military personnel to police such a vast country. Anglo-Egyptian officials presented their British counterparts with two options for strengthening the Anglo-Egyptian government: either expand the railway to allow the army to move more quickly or increase the size of the garrison.¹¹² Though Anglo-Egyptian officials believed that the British government would refuse to expand the military and, therefore, pay for the railroad extension, the British War Office authorized the garrison increase.¹¹³

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials subsequently asked the Egyptian Government for the railroad loan. Though British officials in Cairo recognized that the growing nationalist sentiment in Egypt made such a grant problematic,¹¹⁴ the Egyptian Government, in 1909, allocated £E354,000 to extend the railroad south from Khartoum through the Jazira and into Kordofan Province.¹¹⁵ Though they knew that this sum was less than a third of the money needed to complete this extension, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials authorized the commencement of construction in April 1909.¹¹⁶ These officials then scrambled to secure the rest of the necessary funds. By the beginning of 1910, they had realized that neither the British nor the Egyptian government was willing to loan the remaining capital. On March 6, 1910, Wingate wrote to Gilbert Clayton, his private secretary,

the attitude of the Home Government is also “hands off” in regard to their Sudan responsibilities and I am confident that any effort to obtain money from the British Government for Sudan development at the present time is certain to meet with an absolute refusal. As Egypt has no money whatever to spare for the Sudan and still less now that there is every possibility that the new Suez Canal Convention will be thrown out, we should be very soon on our beam ends financially and therefore it is a matter of most vital importance to do all we possibly can to induce British Capital and thus the British Capitalist to have a vested interest in the country. This can only be done by getting powerful men onto our side.¹¹⁷

Over the following months, senior officials considered and rejected a number of private financing proposals that they believed were insufficiently developed or excessively speculative.¹¹⁸ In the meantime, construction on the railroad extension continued and the Egyptian grant was rapidly expended. Only days before the grant was to have been exhausted, Anglo-Egyptian officials secured a loan of £E800,000 at three percent interest from the National Bank of Egypt, which allowed for the completion of the rail line to Kordofan Province.¹¹⁹

Senior officials continued to seek out private financing for two more railroad extensions, that is, branch lines to connect Sennar Province to the main rail line and to connect the main line to the Red Sea branch line via Wad Madani, Qallabat, Kassala, and Tawkar.¹²⁰ Though the BCGA both expressed an interest in the economic development of Sudan and had the resources to finance the new lines, senior officials were not initially interested in a new venture that would require the expansion of cotton cultivation. In August 1909, the possibility of the BCGA investing heavily in Sudan was brought to the attention of senior Anglo-Egyptian officials by William Mather, a former Liberal MP with a personal philanthropic interest in Sudan. In a letter to Governor-General Wingate, Mather stated that some members of the BCGA were interested in pursuing a new cotton cultivation program in Sudan and that they had asked Mather to deliver a lecture on the issue. Mather told Wingate that he would deliver this lecture only if Wingate had a specific proposal for him to champion.¹²¹ When Wingate, subsequently, asked Ernest Bonus, the Director of Agriculture and Forests, to devise an appropriate scheme,¹²² Bonus responded by counseling against the commercial development of cotton because “the unpopularity of [cotton] among cultivators, the expense of transport to market, the want of skill in cultivation, the economic objection that it provides no fodder for beasts of draught, and the narrow market all tell against it.”¹²³

Still unable to secure alternate sources of funding, senior officials, in 1910, took up Mather’s offer and, on October 13, 1910, Mather delivered a speech at the Manchester Town Hall to members of the BCGA on the prospects for cotton cultivation in Sudan. Mather informed his audience that the commercial success of the Zeidab Plantation in Berber Province had definitively proven that cotton could be profitably cultivated in Sudan on a tenancy system with a four-crop rotation that also included wheat, *dhura*, and a leguminous crop.¹²⁴ The Zeidab Plantation was owned and operated by the SPS, a company started, in 1905, by Leigh Hunt, an American industrialist, and Wernher, Beit & Co., a company with extensive South African interests.¹²⁵ The SPS had a special license from the Anglo-Egyptian government, to keep 10,000 *faddāns* of its 30,000 *faddān* concession under perennial irrigation.¹²⁶ In the years after its founding, the SPS tried to work the land with hired wage laborers. However, this proved commercially unsuccessful. In 1908, the plantation switched to a tenancy system, whereby the SPS supplied water, seed, and loans to indigenous tenants who played a flat fee to cultivate plots of between 40 and 70 *faddāns*.¹²⁷ In his 1910

speech, Mather urged the BCGA's members to develop the economy of Sudan by establishing plantations on the Zeidab-system along the Nile and in the Jazira with both wheat and cotton as cash crops.¹²⁸ The BCGA's board responded favorably to Mather's lecture, which it subsequently had printed and distributed.¹²⁹ The board, in an effort to establish a new foothold in Sudan, then authorized the purchase of 5,000 shares of the SPS and had J. Arthur Hutton, the Vice-President of the BCGA, placed on the SPS's Board of Directors.¹³⁰

To further stoke the BCGA's interest, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials invited the SPS to finance and operate a new government-owned experimental plantation at Tayyiba, approximately 10 km south of Wad Madani in the Jazira. Though officials and the SPS started negotiations, they could not come to an agreement on the issue of compensation.¹³¹ Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials decided to establish and run the plantation at Tayyiba without the assistance of either the SPS or the BCGA. In early 1911, these officials erected irrigation pumps, cleared land, and allotted tenancies.¹³² The planation began operations with the 1911 flood on 490 *faddāns*. Tenancies were let in 30 *faddān* blocks and tenants were required to grow ten *faddāns* cotton, ten *faddāns* wheat and, on the remaining ten *faddāns*, *dhura* in the summer and a leguminous crop in the winter.¹³³

Tenancies at Tayyiba proved highly remunerative for the tenants that worked them. The average tenant received £E170 from the sale of their cotton and £E52 from the sale of the wheat. After deducting rent payments and other costs associated with cultivation, the average tenancy generated a net profit of approximately £E62.¹³⁴ The following year, the plantation was extended to include 1,740 *faddāns*,¹³⁵ and local cultivators, many of whom had turned down tenancies in 1911,¹³⁶ enthusiastically applied for land.¹³⁷ High grain prices during the 1912–1913 cultivation year made tenancies more profitable and tenants made, on average, a net profit of approximately £E150.¹³⁸

In 1913, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials resumed negotiations with the SPS. Over the following months, in addition to the management of the plantation at Tayyiba, the two parties discussed the possibility of developing a 100,000 *faddān* planation in the Jazira to be run as a joint partnership. While negotiations were under way, the BCGA successfully lobbied the British government to guarantee the interest on a £3,000,000 loan to the Anglo-Egyptian government. This loan was to be used to finance the railroad extension, as well as the economic development of the Jazira and the Tawkar and Qash Deltas.¹³⁹ In early July 1913, the Anglo-Egyptian government and the SPS came

to an agreement. The SPS agreed to take over the management of the Tayyiba Plantation and to help the government raise £500,000 of the guaranteed loan. In exchange, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials agreed to allow the SPS to manage the planned economic development project in the Jazira, which came to be known as the Gezira Scheme. Officials also agreed to modify the tenancy agreements then in force at Tayyiba, which had been modeled on the Zeidab Plantation's system of fixed rents. Under the new agreements, the Tayyiba plantation, as well as the future Gezira Scheme, was to be worked on a profit-sharing system, whereby tenants received 40 percent, the government 35 percent, and the syndicate 25 percent of the profits generated from the sale of cash crops. Under the new agreement, tenants were allowed to keep outright only the yields from their 10 *faddāns* of *dhura*.¹⁴⁰

At the end of July 1913, the SPS assumed the management of the Tayyiba plantation and, even though tenancies had already been allotted a few months earlier under the old agreement, the SPS's management announced that the terms of the tenancy agreements had been modified.¹⁴¹ The tenants resisted this change. They complained to both the SPS's management and to government officials that this modification violated their contracts. In a petition delivered to the Acting Governor of Blue Nile Province on August 8, 1913, the tenants stated that they had taken up their tenancies in April on the understanding that they would pay a flat combined rent and water rate of £E2.5 per *faddān*. The tenants recognized that under the new system, they would receive just two-fifths of the net profits, which would amount to a large reduction in their return. These tenants claimed that they would not have taken up tenancies under the new system and they, therefore, asked to return to the old agreement until the end of the cultivation year, at which time they would all leave the plantation.¹⁴²

Some Anglo-Egyptian officials were sympathetic to the tenants' complaints. E. A. Dickinson, the Governor of Blue Nile Province, calculated that, under the old agreement, tenants could expect to earn approximately £E150 per year and that, under the new profit-sharing agreements, tenants would earn just £E40 per year. Dickinson argued that, since the tenants' complaint was justified, accommodations should be made to allow tenants to leave the scheme, including compensating them for the work that they had already completed in preparing the tenancies for the summer flood.¹⁴³ Phipps, the Civil Secretary, agreed that the complaints were justified, but he felt that the old agreement should remain in force until the end of the cultivation year because it was too late for dissatisfied tenants to begin cultivating elsewhere.¹⁴⁴

After consulting with the SPS, Governor-General Wingate offered each tenant wishing to leave the plantation PT50 per *faddān* as compensation and required those who stayed to sign new contracts that included the profit-sharing tenancy agreements.¹⁴⁵

Despite Wingate's offer, tenants did not truly have the choice to leave the plantation. In the summer of 1913, both the Nile flood and the rains failed. However, the Tayyiba plantation, in that it was irrigated by mechanical pumps, was less affected by the drought. The tenants recognized that they would not be able to cultivate at all if they left the plantation. As a result, 69 of the 71 tenants signed the new agreements.¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the tenants subsequently sent a letter of protest to the Legal Secretary in which they stated that they had signed their new agreements under duress and that they were unhappy with the new profit-sharing system.¹⁴⁷

The drought also provided the SPS, which was backed by a cotton-lobbying organization, with the opportunity to eliminate wheat from the crop rotation. Owing to poor rains, the average cotton yield on the plantation was only 3.8 *qintārs* per *faddān* during the 1913–1914 cultivation year.¹⁴⁸ The low cotton yield threatened the profitability of the Tayyiba plantation and caused the SPS's profits to drop from £16,608 in 1913 to £4,761 in 1914.¹⁴⁹ To ensure a better return during the 1914–1915 year, the SPS's management petitioned the Anglo-Egyptian government for permission to expand the area under cotton by lifting the requirement that tenants grow wheat. Anglo-Egyptian officials, who feared that the failure of the Tayyiba plantation would threaten their efforts to raise the remainder of the £3,000,000 loan, agreed to the modification.¹⁵⁰ Tenancies under the new crop rotation were allotted in April 1914, during the height of the famine. Tenants yet again faced a false choice; they could either accept the new crop rotation or leave the plantation and hope that the famine would soon subside.

The modifications to the tenancy agreements did not, as Anglo-Egyptian officials hoped, make Sudan an attractive place for British capitalists to invest. At the beginning of the 1914–1915 cultivation year, the First World War broke out and capital markets froze. As a result, the Anglo-Egyptian government was unable to raise the remainder of the loan at a reasonable rate of interest. The war also caused the international cotton market to collapse and the SPS's profits to further shrink. The SPS had opened an additional plantation at Barakat before the 1914–1915 cultivation year. Nonetheless, the company reported profits of just £1,392 in 1915 and £2,678 the following year.¹⁵¹

Without the necessary financing, Anglo-Egyptian officials had to suspend work on the Gezira Scheme and shelve plans for the railroad extension.¹⁵² Though the future of cotton and the railway extension were now uncertain, the British war effort provided senior Anglo-Egyptian officials with another motive for developing Sudan into a major exporter of grain.

Sudanese Grain and the War Effort

The outbreak of the First World War caused many senior officials to see the 1914 famine as politically beneficial. They believed that the indigenous population of Sudan would not rise up against the government during the war because, as Governor-General Wingate wrote in late September 1914, “the people are quite satisfied with our rule—the issue of Indian dura [during the famine] was an excellent stroke and of immense political value; in fact in that respect it has paid itself a hundred times over.”¹⁵³ Wingate’s prediction of peace was right. The indigenous population remained loyal and Sudan was not a theater of war.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Anglo-Egyptian officials and indigenous Sudanese cultivators played a crucial role in the war effort because *dhura* produced in Sudan was used to secure Italy’s position in the Red Sea, to end Ottoman control of the Hijaz, and to expand Britain’s Middle Eastern Empire.

During the early months of the war, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials secured declarations of loyalty from key Sudanese elites. In November 1914, Wingate traveled to a number of large towns in Sudan, including Umm Durman, Wad Madani, Sinnar, and Port Sudan, and met with local notables and religious leaders. At each of his stops, Wingate delivered a speech in Arabic, outlining, as he subsequently recounted, “in full the origins and causes of the war and attacking Germany in no unmeasured terms.”¹⁵⁵ Sudanese elites responded positively to Wingate’s call for continued loyalty. On November 8, 1914, 15 religious leaders, including the Grand *Muftī* of Sudan and ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, the son of the former Mahdist leader, signed a proclamation in which they declared that “the war is in no way whatever waged for the benefit or interest of Islam or the Mohammedans” and they distanced themselves from Ottoman aggression against the Triple Entente.¹⁵⁶ To further ensure Sudanese loyalty, Wingate had a number of key Sudanese elites, including ‘Ali al-Mirghani, publish articles in the Arabic portion of *The Sudan Times* newspaper, calling for continued loyalty to the Anglo-Egyptian government and to Britain.¹⁵⁷

Believing that Sudanese support was assured, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials focused on assisting Britain's campaign against the Ottoman Empire. At the end of 1914, the British War Office tried to contain the Ottoman threat in the Red Sea by preventing the provisioning of the Turkish garrisons in the Hijaz. Toward this end, British officials ended Egyptian grain subventions to Mecca and Medina,¹⁵⁸ detained a shipment of approximately 42,000 *ardabbs* of grain destined for Jidda,¹⁵⁹ and imposed a trade embargo on Arabia.¹⁶⁰ Though Anglo-Egyptian officials helped enforce these restrictions, they pressured the War Office, in early 1915, to change course and to supply Arabs in the Hijaz with grain.¹⁶¹ These officials were acting on the advice of a group of Sudanese religious leaders, who had told Wingate, as he subsequently recounted, that "although the Turks might get a certain amount of supplies [if the British resumed the grain trade], the Arabs will be saved from starvation and will be grateful to the hand that feeds them."¹⁶² The Arab Bureau, which was established to coordinate the British war effort in the Middle East, initially ignored the calls from Anglo-Egyptian officials to repeal the restrictions. However, in May 1915, British intelligence received reports of severe distress among the civilian population of Mecca and, as a result, the Arab Bureau authorized the resumption of the grain trade to Arabia.¹⁶³ After the embargo was lifted, Sudan became a major supplier of grain to Arabia and, between May 1915 and December 1916, over 300,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* were exported from Sudan to Jidda via Sawakin.¹⁶⁴

The war effort further increased demand for Sudanese grain and prompted Anglo-Egyptian officials to assume command of the unified grain market. The 1916 Egyptian harvest was insufficient to meet the needs of both the civilian and military population in Egypt. Therefore, the following year, British officials in Cairo began coordinating efforts with their counterparts in Sudan to ensure that sufficient quantities of Sudanese grain would be exported to Egypt. In exchange for a temporary easing of restrictions on the use of Nile waters in Sudan and a grant of £E400,000 from the Egyptian Treasury, Anglo-Egyptian officials committed to establishing grain-plantations on 20,000 *faddāns* of pump irrigated land in Northern Nilotic Sudan and to setting up a Resources Board to regulate the marketing of Sudanese foodstuffs.¹⁶⁵ In addition, Anglo-Egyptian officials agreed to hire Egyptian Agriculture Inspectors to work with indigenous cultivators to increase the grain yields on their plots.

Official efforts to manage and expand the unified grain market had mixed results. In 1917 and 1918 combined, the Resources Board

authorized the export of over 880,000 *ardabbs* of grain, much of which was used to feed camels during the British campaign in Sinai and Palestine, support the Arab Revolt and provision Italian troops in Eritrea.¹⁶⁶ By comparison, approximately 140,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* was exported in 1909 and 200,000 *ardabbs* in 1910.¹⁶⁷ However, this increase in exports did not come with an attendant increase in grain yields. Despite official efforts to expand pump-irrigation, grain yields in the unified grain market continued to be dependent primarily on rainfall patters in Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, and Kassala Provinces. Though these regions produced record yields of 1,200,000 *ardabbs* in 1916¹⁶⁸ and 1,340,000 *ardabbs* in 1917,¹⁶⁹ exports depleted local supplies and, in 1917, grain prices rose by approximately 25 percent.¹⁷⁰ In 1918, poor rains produced a *dhura* yield of only 780,000 *ardabbs* in these key rainland provinces.¹⁷¹ Nonetheless, the Resources Board authorized the export of large quantities of *dhura*. At the same time, high global coal prices forced Anglo-Egyptian officials to increase freight rates on the railroad.¹⁷² As a result, the price of *dhura* in Sudanese markets rose dramatically.¹⁷³ The price of an *ardabb* of *dhura* in Berber Province increased from PT62 in March 1916¹⁷⁴ to PT230 in November 1918.¹⁷⁵ Over the same time period, the price in Dongola Province rose from PT127¹⁷⁶ to PT350.¹⁷⁷

The rapid increase in grain exports precipitated the 1918–1919 famine. Unfortunately, there is only limited extant archival documentation of the devastation caused by this food crisis. At the end of 1918, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials reported that high grain prices were causing “famine conditions” in Dongola Province and widespread distress elsewhere.¹⁷⁸ In response, the Resources Board limited grain exports.¹⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the price of *dhura* continued to rise; the highest recorded price during the famine was PT560 per *ardabb* in Kassala, nearly double the peak price during the 1914 famine.¹⁸⁰ To alleviate the distress, officials authorized famine relief measures, including the distribution of over 13,000 *ardabbs* of *dhura* in Eastern Sudan.¹⁸¹

When the famine abated during the 1919–1920 cultivation year,¹⁸² senior Anglo-Egyptian officials drafted new famine regulations, which were guided by the premise “that it is the duty of the Government to offer to the necessitous the means of relief in times of famine.” Officials were told to offer relief as soon as possible because: “When people are on the verge of starvation a day or two’s delay in giving relief may reduce them so much in condition that recovery is hopeless or protracted.” However, these officials were instructed to give direct food aid only to those too weak to work; the able bodied were expected to

work for their rations. These regulations required Provincial Governors to devise famine relief programs in advance of any food crisis and to submit them for approval to the Civil Secretary.¹⁸³ Unfortunately, these new procedures proved insufficient to prevent future famines.

The Expansion of Cotton Cultivation

The Barakat and Tayyiba plantations were unaffected by the 1918–1919 famine. Tenants were protected from the famine because they did not participate in the unified grain market. These tenants grew their own *dhura*, which they were forbidden from selling. Since their plots were irrigated by pumps operated by the SPS, cotton and *dhura* yields were, to some extent, protected from inauspicious climatological conditions, including the drought that limited yields on surrounding farms. In fact, the SPS's profits rose during the famine, from £14,238 in 1917 to £58,492 in 1918. The postwar boom drove cotton prices higher and, in 1919, the SPS earned £57,146. By contrast, prior to the war, the SPS's annual profits never exceeded £17,000.¹⁸⁴

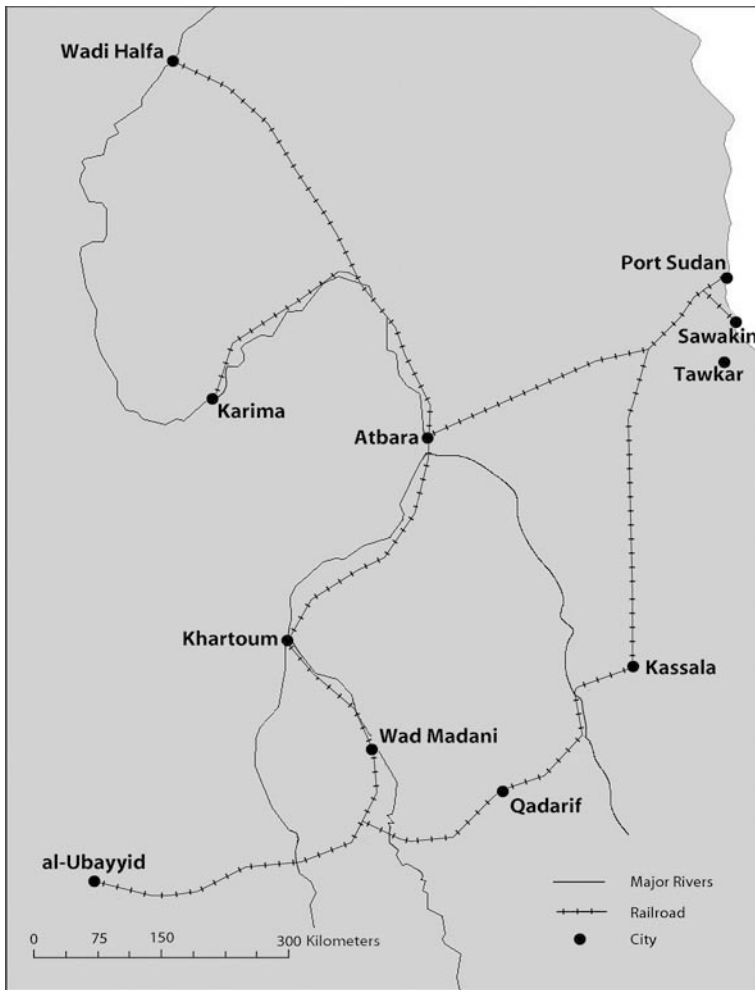
The postwar success of Barakat and Tayyiba revived interest in the Gezira Scheme. Prior to the war, Anglo-Egyptian officials agreed to invest £2,000,000 of a British government guaranteed loan to develop 100,000 *faddāns* in the Jazira as a cotton plantation to be managed by the SPS on a profit-sharing basis. During the war, the cost of materials and labor increased. In order to justify the inflated cost of its implementation, Anglo-Egyptian officials decided, in 1919, to expand the planned scheme to encompass 300,000 *faddāns*. These officials, with the help of the SPS and the BCGA, then convinced the British Treasury to guarantee the interest on a £6,000,000 loan to be floated by the Sudanese government.¹⁸⁵ The Anglo-Egyptian government subsequently entered into a new agreement with the SPS, whereby the SPS agreed to manage the expanded Gezira Scheme on the same profit-sharing system and tenancy conditions prevailing at Barakat and Tayyiba.¹⁸⁶

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials ignored early warning signs of the potential for economic instability in the Gezira Scheme. In 1921, the price of cotton on international markets crashed and the SPS's profits shrank to £8,968 from £223,259, the previous year. As the price of cotton dropped, senior officials realized that early cost estimates for starting the scheme had been too low and that they needed additional financing. Just before the cotton price reached its nadir, Anglo-Egyptian officials convinced the British government to guarantee the

principal and the interest on a further loan of £3,500,000. Though its profitability was uncertain, the SPS and the Anglo-Egyptian government continued their efforts to implement the Gezira Scheme. While the Sinnar Dam was being constructed and the network of canals dug, Anglo-Egyptian officials authorized the SPS to establish temporary pumping stations at Haj 'Abd Allah and Wad al-Naw in the Jazira. Though nearly 50,000 *faddāns* were brought under pump-irrigation between 1921 and 1923, the SPS's profits remained uncertain because they were dependent on the highly variable price of cotton. As a result, though profits rebounded to approximately £126,520 in 1922, they shrank to £45,082 in 1923 only to return to £112,934 in 1924.¹⁸⁷

Concerns about the negative impact of the Gezira Scheme on the unified grain market, ironically, led senior Anglo-Egyptian officials to turn over even more land to the SPS for cotton cultivation. At a meeting in early 1921, the governors of the northern provinces concluded that the reduction in the total supply of *dhura* in the unified grain market caused by the Gezira Scheme could be offset by extending the railroad through *dhura*-producing regions along the Abyssinian and Eritrean frontiers. Officials believed that the extension of the railroad would stimulate the expansion of commercial grain cultivation in these regions and increase marketable surpluses.¹⁸⁸ The SPS's directors, who were looking for new opportunities to invest in Sudan, subsequently agreed to loan the government half of the £2,000,000 necessary to construct the Port Sudan to Kassala to Sinnar railroad (see map 6.1)¹⁸⁹ in exchange for a concession to grow cotton in the Qash Delta in Kassala Province on a tenancy system similar to the one in place in the Gezira Scheme. These directors were attracted to the Qash Delta by an official 1920 report, which claimed that, with proper controls on the Qash River, the extent of cultivation on the delta could be increased from the usually cultivated 15,000 *faddāns* to as much as 250,000 *faddāns*.¹⁹⁰

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials, eager to finance the railroad extension, accepted the SPS's offer. In February 1923, they concluded a concessionaire agreement with the Kassala Cotton Company (KCC), a subsidiary corporation of the SPS. The agreement with the KCC differed from that with the SPS in a number of ways. First, the profit-sharing agreement in the Jazira allocated 40 percent of the profits to the tenants, 35 percent to the government, and 25 percent to the company. Since yields in the Qash Delta were, on average, less than those in the Jazira, Anglo-Egyptian officials agreed to reduce the government's share so that the cultivator's share could be increased to 50 percent.



Map 6.1 The Sudan Government Railroad, 1929–1956.

Source: The extent of the railroad is based on the map “Sudan Railway and River Services,” in Richard Hill, *Sudan Transport* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

In addition, under the SPS agreement, only cotton grown on the Jazira concession was subject to profit sharing and tenants kept the entirety of their *dhura* yield. Under the KCC agreement, all crops grown on the Qash Delta concession were subject to profit sharing and each cultivator was allowed to keep outright the yield from just one *faddān* of

dhura for every ten *faddāns* of cotton that he cultivated. The remainder of the crop had to be turned over to the KCC for sale.¹⁹¹ The two agreements further differed in the manner in which they defined the extent of the concession. The SPS agreement limited the SPS's rights to the canalized zone included in the Gezira Scheme. However, the KCC agreement, because it was signed before a detailed assessment of the Qash Delta could be completed, left the extent of the concession undefined. As a result, in the years that followed, KCC's agents claimed the right to share in the profits of all crops grown in the delta, including those grown outside the canalized area.¹⁹²

A number of officials in the government of Kassala Province feared that the KCC's concession would lead to food insecurity and civil unrest. Cecil Pownall Browne, the Provincial Governor, claimed that the Qash Delta was cultivated by pastoralists who came to the delta following the flood to grow their subsistence and that these pastoralists would not take up cotton cultivation. Rather, he asserted, these pastoralists would withdraw from the delta, abandon cultivation, and purchase necessary grain. Browne feared that the resulting decrease in grain cultivation and increase in local demand for *dhura* would endanger the provincial food supply.¹⁹³ Francis Cecil Campbell Balfour, the Province's Deputy Governor, similarly argued that the restrictions on *dhura* cultivation in the Qash would force pastoralists, who would stop being able to grow their subsistence, to become wage laborers for the tenants in the scheme.¹⁹⁴ C. H. Thompson, who succeeded Balfour as Deputy Governor, warned, in early 1924, that, when Qash cultivators would learn that the government and the KCC claim a combined 50 percent of the *dhura* yield, "their faith in the Government will receive somewhat of a shock, and honestly I do not contemplate the future with a tranquil mind."¹⁹⁵ However, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials, including the Governor-General¹⁹⁶ and the Civil Secretary dismissed these concerns and repeatedly reaffirmed the government's commitment to the KCC.¹⁹⁷

Cotton cultivating in the Qash Delta under KCC management immediately proved itself to be a commercial failure for both the company and the tenants. During the 1923–1924 cultivation year, the KCC managed a small, experimental area. Prior to the harvest, Anglo-Egyptian officials calculated that cultivators in the experimental area, owing to the profit-sharing agreement, were to make a profit of just PT12 per *qintār* of cotton, but cultivators elsewhere in the delta were to make a profit of PT74 per *qintār*.¹⁹⁸ Senior officials, fearing that these results would discourage future participation in the scheme, reduced

the government's share of the profits in order to increase the payments to the tenants.¹⁹⁹ Financial results did not improve the following year. At the end of the 1924–1925 cultivation year, the payment of profits was delayed because the KCC was unable to sell the cotton harvest at Port Sudan, as originally planned, and had to ship it to Liverpool unsold.²⁰⁰ By October 1925, tenants still had not received the balance of their profits and J. A. Hamilton, the District Commissioner for Kassala, reported that “real hardship has been caused by this delay, especially for those who have no grain reserve and who have to buy at a high price in the suq. Many of these have suffered physically from the holding up of their money.”²⁰¹

Hardship turned into a regional famine in 1925 because the KCC's operations disrupted traditional pasturing patterns. In 1925, the rains in Kassala Province failed and the Qash flood was exceptionally poor, watering only 13,000 *faddāns* in the delta.²⁰² During previous droughts, the Qash Delta had served as a pasture reserve and Hadandawa pastoralists had let their herds pasture on previously cultivated land. However, the KCC's management responded to the poor 1925 flood by closing the delta to grazing by the herds of nontenants. To enforce this regulation, the KCC impounded all trespassing domesticated animals.²⁰³ This policy had a disproportionate negative impact on the health of Hadandawa herds because Hadandawa pastoralists were boycotting the scheme by refusing to apply for tenancies.²⁰⁴ Unfortunately, these pastoralists could not find alternate grazing grounds and their animals died in large numbers. Anglo-Egyptian officials responded to the devastation by offering famine relief to affected pastoralist communities.²⁰⁵ The summer rains failed again in 1926, and Hadandawa herds continued to die of starvation and thirst.²⁰⁶ Reduced agricultural yields led market prices to rise and, the price of *dhura* reached PT320 per *ardabb* in July 1926. Though Anglo-Egyptian officials sold *dhura* from the government reserve in an effort to bring down the price, *dhura* remained expensive. In January 1927, Reginald Davies, the Director of Intelligence reported that “the economical situation in Kassala is very bad and suggests dear of a famine.”²⁰⁷

The worsening famine crystallized local resistance to the KCC and, subsequently, created the opportunity for the Anglo-Egyptian government to assume control of the Qash Delta. Following the death of their herds in 1925–1926, a number of Hadandawa pastoralists applied for tenancies from the KCC for the 1926–1927 cultivation year. However, the KCC did not let land to many of the Hadandawa applicants, which only deepened their resentment of the company.²⁰⁸

Hadandawa pastoralists also resented the numerous West African migrants who were given tenancies in the delta.²⁰⁹ In March 1927, Hadandawa pastoralists stopped respecting the regulations imposed by the KCC and, as the KCC's management subsequently reported, drove their herds onto plots leased to West Africans.²¹⁰ Tensions in the delta continued to escalate and senior Anglo-Egyptian officials became concerned that they, as George Schuster, the Financial Secretary, stated, "were leading to very serious political difficulties." To prevent a feared Hadandawa revolt, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials decided, at the end of March 1927, to take over the KCC's operations in the Qash Delta. After protracted negotiations, the KCC's Board of Directors agreed to relinquish its claims in the delta in exchange for compensation for the capital already expended and a 30-year concession of at least 45,000 *faddāns* in a planned extension of the Gezira Scheme.²¹¹

Anglo-Egyptian officials did not subsequently return the Qash Delta to indigenous control; rather, they established a semi-independent entity, the Gash Board, to take over the concession and continue developing cotton cultivation in the region. Officials, who now believed that pastoralism was no guarantee of food security, wanted the Gash Board to help Bija pastoralists develop a new, settled way of life. To address the prevailing discontentment, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials mandated that the Gash Board incorporate indigenous *shaykhs* into the management of the scheme. As Robin E. H. Baily, the Governor of Kassala Province outlined in 1927, "the tenancy system must be on a sheikly instead of an individual basis, and the allotments will be by clan blocks, inside which the Sheikh will control the distribution. The official staff will no longer deal with individuals but will work entirely through Sheikhs."²¹² Anglo-Egyptian officials also required the Gash Board to give preference to Hadandawa pastoralists when allocating tenancies, in order, as Baily wrote, "to guide the Beja into becoming themselves proficient cultivators and instructors."²¹³ This policy was implemented gradually and, by 1932, 75 percent of tenancies were allotted to Bija pastoralists, 50 percent of whom were Hadandawa.²¹⁴ The Gash Board worked closely with the *nāzīr* of the Hadandawa to choose tenants and this collaboration ultimately transformed the position of *nāzīr* from "*shaykh* of all Hadandawa *shaykhs*" to a position of territorial authority over the delta. The *nāzīr* enforced the Gash Board's requirement that tenants cultivate cotton as a cash crop and ensured that tenants only grew *dhura* sufficient to meet their personal needs. As a result, under the Gash Board's management, only a fraction of the Qash Delta was dedicated to *dhura* cultivation. In

the 1932–1933 cultivation year, only 6,009 of the 36,695 cultivated *faddāns* were under *dhura*.²¹⁵

The Gezira Scheme similarly led to widespread impoverishment and endemic food insecurity. The tenancy agreements in that scheme tied the tenants' fortunes to fluctuating cotton yields and international raw cotton prices. During the boom years, which lasted from 1924 to 1927, tenants prospered. In 1925–1926, the average cotton yield in the scheme was 4.8 *qinṭārs* per *faddān*, more than double the previous year's results, and cotton prices were high. As a result, tenants received an average profit payment of £E117.²¹⁶ However, these boom times did not last and both cotton yields and cotton prices declined. Between 1927 and 1931, yields in the scheme dropped from 4.7 to 1.4 *qinṭārs* per *faddān*, as blackarm, a bacterial infection that affects cotton plants, spread through the Jazira. Yields remained low until the 1934–1935 cultivation year, when a new crop rotation that allowed for longer fallow periods was introduced to better control plant diseases. The negative financial effects of declining yields were compounded by the global collapse of commodity prices in 1929. In the years that followed, the SPS was unable to sell most of the Gezira Scheme's cotton yield and the cotton that was sold fetched as little as half of pre-collapse prices.²¹⁷ The SPS's policy of offering advances on future profits allowed tenants to rapidly fall into debt. By the end of 1934, the tenants had collectively amassed nearly £E700,000 in debt to the SPS and the government.²¹⁸ However, this figure does not represent the total of the tenants' losses during this period. *Dhura* yields were often insufficient to meet the needs of both the tenant and his dependents and many tenants had to sell their animals to purchase grain. The growing poverty on the tenancies led the indigenous population in the surrounding region to claim that the Gezira Scheme "imprisons the people."²¹⁹

Senior Anglo-Egyptian officials refused to intervene on behalf of the Gezira Scheme's tenants. When W. P. Clarke, the Governor of Blue Nile Province, requested, in 1933, that the government prioritize the financial and health needs of the tenants over the SPS's bottom-line, the Financial and Civil Secretaries responded by claiming that dissatisfied tenants were free to leave their tenancies.²²⁰ Rather than assist the impoverished tenants, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials took measures to ensure that the scheme was not run at a loss to the SPS and the government. In 1935, senior officials and the SPS's directors agreed to create a Tenants' Reserve Fund, financed from levies on the tenants' share of the profits. This fund was responsible for the repayment of

the tenants' debt. Though cotton yields in the scheme returned to, on average, 4.5 *qintārs* per *faddān* during the following cultivation year, the levies prevented the tenants from benefiting from the increased returns. Over the years that followed, tenants did not recover their lost wealth and, in 1940, they still collectively owed approximately £E240,000.²²¹

On the eve of the Second World War, the initial promise of Anglo-Egyptian rule had faded. The boom years that followed the collapse of the Mahdist state had been succeeded by devastation and economic distress. Regions that had economically prospered at the beginning of the twentieth century, including Dongola Province and the Jazira, were pushed into economic decline. For many communities in these regions colonialism had brought poverty and uncertainty, not prosperity and liberation. Food insecurity had returned and famine, again, had become the opportunity for the state to expand at the expense of local communities. Famines in 1914, 1918–1919, and 1925–1927 allowed Anglo-Egyptian officials to seize a number of key indigenous-owned and managed resources, including the Jazira and the Qash Delta. As a result, the role of the Anglo-Egyptian state in agricultural production greatly increased. However, the state was not the only beneficiary of these famines. For a select few indigenous elites, the expansion of the Anglo-Egyptian state and the progressive undermining of pastoralist and agricultural ways of life brought economic opportunity. These elites soon began to demand the opportunity to invest in the state's resources.

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Food Insecurity and the Transition to Independence, 1940–1956

In October 1951, a medical auxiliary working at the Civil Hospital in Wadi Halfa was sent on a tour of inspection of ten nearby villages. The conditions that he encountered were appalling. As the district's Medical Inspector subsequently reported, the auxiliary discovered that

the whole population are [*sic*] undernourished and consequently anemic and physically weak. The mode of living, their clothes and dwellings eloquently spoke of their marked poverty. Most of the children were either naked or with rags on them, and the majority of the people have no bedding, or covers. In many houses the examiner could not find any grain stored or any food that might have been left over or prepared to use next meal.

Of the 2,844 people that the auxiliary examined, 2,753 were in need of immediate food assistance. An additional 500 were so undernourished that they required urgent medical attention. The auxiliary also found that cultivation in this region was insufficient to meet local needs, that many people were too poor to afford to purchase their sustenance and that the remittances from family members working abroad that had previously sustained these communities had dried up.¹

Impoverished cultivators near Wadi Halfa believed that the adoption of pump-irrigation was the best means of improving their lot. As they told the District Commissioner, they hoped that pumps would decrease cultivation costs and allow for the development of commercial agriculture in the region. Unfortunately, these cultivators lacked the capital to purchase, install, and run these pumps. In the early

1950s, they repeatedly petitioned the local government to design and implement a pump-irrigation scheme for the region.² This request was echoed by communities in other economically depressed parts of Northern Nilotic Sudan. Among the growing chorus calling for government pump schemes were a group of cultivators in Shandi. In 1950, these cultivators asked the District Commissioner to install an irrigation pump because they realized that *sāqiya* cultivation was insufficiently profitable to support the rapidly expanding local population.³

Some Sudanese cultivators had recognized the benefits of pump-irrigation as early as 1914. During the 1914 famine, cultivators with plots near the Zeidab Plantation in Berber Province prospered because they received pumped water, for a fee, from the SPS. These cultivators subsequently wrote to Governor-General Wingate:

Had it not been for their valuable pump the years 1913 and 1914 would have been far worse than [the *sanat sitta* famine] during which the people were real cannibals and more even, they ate dogs, donkeys, etc., and many people died for want of food. The natives of Zeidab were very lucky and lead a happy life on account of this pump, quantities of dura were sent to other parts of the Sudan who were unlucky not having such a pump.⁴

Once the famine subsided, indigenous cultivators elsewhere on the Nile sought out tenancies on pump irrigated plantations, such as those established by the Anglo-Egyptian government during the First World War in Dongola and Berber Provinces.⁵

Though officials encouraged settlement on government-run pump-irrigation plantations during the war, they subsequently denied requests to expand pump-irrigation to other parts of Northern Nilotic Sudan. In the 1920s and 1930s, officials increasingly came to view cultivation in much of Northern Nilotic Sudan as inherently uneconomical. These officials believed that the best way to alleviate endemic poverty in the region was to encourage outmigration to fertile rainlands in the Jazira, Qadarif and Qallabat. Ernest Arbuthnot, while District Commissioner of Wadi Halfa District in the early 1950s, summed up this position when he wrote to the Governor of Northern Province that providing aid in the past had “encouraged the population to hang on where they are, rather than facing what is obviously essential emigration. The position is very simple. For far too many people are trying to scrape a living off far too little land.”⁶ Anglo-Egyptian officials refused to assist impoverished small-scale cultivators to improve irrigation techniques

despite the fact that changes to the Nile waters agreement with Egypt in the 1920s had opened the way for the widespread use of modern irrigation technologies in Sudan. Instead, officials pursued policies that narrowly focused on expanding government-owned large-scale commercial agriculture schemes and on promoting the economic interests of a small group of indigenous elites.

The Second World War created the opportunity for officials to further expand the reach of the state at the expense of promoting local interests. As part of the effort to turn Sudan into a major supplier of grain to the Allied war effort, officials assumed control of the unified grain market and seized valuable rainlands near the Ethiopian frontier. When combat ended, Sudanese elites demanded both the end of Anglo-Egyptian rule and the opportunity to invest in the resources managed by the state. These elites, who had increased their wealth in the first half of the twentieth century while other segments of Sudanese society had become impoverished, were handed the reins of power at independence. Rather than returning state resources to local management, postindependence leaders continued exploitative policies that compelled pastoralists and cultivators to become tenants on elite-owned or state-managed estates. As a result, many pastoralists and cultivators were unable to amass the resources necessary to break the cycle of famine and food insecurity.

Mechanical Pumps and Anglo-Egyptian Control of the Nile

Small-scale indigenous cultivators became increasingly interested in erecting their own mechanical pumps as the slave cultivation system in Northern Nilotic Sudan collapsed in the 1920s and 1930s. The 1914 famine had already led large numbers of slaves to self-manumit by fleeing from their masters in Dongola Province. In the 1920s and 1930s, Anglo-Egyptian officials were forced by mounting international pressure to adopt a series of measures that prevented masters from retrieving their runaway slaves. These measures, coupled with the declining local economy, led increasing numbers of slaves to seek their freedom by leaving their masters. In 1924, P. G. E. Diggle, a former member of the Sudan Political Service, publicly exposed the Anglo-Egyptian government's complicity in Sudanese slavery. Diggle, while posted as an Agriculture Inspector in Berber Province, encountered numerous cases of masters abusing their sick and elderly slaves. As a result,

he concluded that the slave system in Sudan was not “voluntary,” as senior officials routinely asserted; rather, it was a system despised by the slaves and propped up by the government’s active support.⁷ When Diggle brought his conclusions to the attention of senior Anglo-Egyptian officials, his complaints were dismissed. These officials told Diggle, as T. A. Leach, the Governor of Berber Province, stated, that “the Sudanese,” which was a common code in official documents for slaves, “are presumably generally content with the arrangement or they would break the connection” with their owners.⁸ Angered by these responses, Diggle resigned his post and brought his complaints to the attention of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, which promptly publicized Diggle’s account and lodged a formal complaint with the League of Nations.⁹

The ensuing scandal forced senior Anglo-Egyptian officials to modify both their official and unofficial slavery regulations and, ultimately, hastened the decline of agricultural slavery in Sudan.¹⁰ In anticipation of Diggle’s public protest, the Civil Secretary issued a new circular, dated April 14, 1924, instructing junior Anglo-Egyptian officials to treat all persons born after 1898 as freemen and to prohibit masters from hiring out their slaves as wage laborers. In May 1925, after Diggle’s account was made public, senior officials circulated another memorandum in which they forbade officials from assisting masters seeking to retrieve runaway slaves.¹¹ Despite these policy changes, the Anti-Slavery Society continued, over the next few years, to exert pressure on the Anglo-Egyptian government by repeatedly drawing attention to the persistence of large-scale slave trading across the Abyssinian–Sudanese frontier. In response to this public scrutiny, senior Anglo-Egyptian officials signed on, in 1930, to the International Labor Organization’s anti-forced labor convention and, in 1931, to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children.¹² Without the government’s assistance, slave owners were unable to prevent their slaves from absconding and large numbers self-manumitted. Though some slaves continued to work for their masters, many migrated to large towns.¹³ The loss of this slave labor further disrupted cultivation in Northern Nilotic Sudan because *sāqiya* irrigation was extremely labor intensive. As a result, the exodus of slaves led to a reduction in the extent of cultivation and to a secular decline in the economy of this agricultural region. By 1930, large swaths of land in Northern Nilotic Sudan had fallen out of cultivation.¹⁴

Indigenous cultivators responded to their changing economic fortunes by trying to replace the lost slave labor with mechanical

irrigation pumps. As Walter Ferguson Crawford, the Deputy Governor of Northern Province, reported, local interest in pumps stemmed from the

shortage of labour to work the sagias [*sic*] and shortage of fodder for the sagia bulls. Some of the pumps bring new ground under cultivation, some take the place of existing sagias, but, generally speaking, it can be said that all the ground has at one time or another been under sagia cultivation. Much of it went out when the slaves were freed.¹⁵

Unfortunately, small-scale indigenous cultivators individually lacked the capital to purchase and run irrigation pumps. As a result, some indigenous cultivators petitioned the government to establish pump-irrigation schemes to water their land.¹⁶ Other cultivators started indigenous-managed agricultural cooperatives to pool resources so as to erect and manage pump-irrigation works. The first cooperative was begun in 1936 in Karma, in what had been Dongola Province and had recently become Northern Province, with a working capital of £E1,056, raised from selling 96 shares at £E11 each.¹⁷ The following year, cultivators elsewhere in Northern Province established a number of other indigenous-managed pumping cooperatives, including the Koya Cooperative Society, the Urbi Cooperative, and the Sali Cooperative Scheme, many of which were funded by remittances sent back by men who had left their families to find wage labor in urban centers.¹⁸

Officials could have chosen to support indigenous efforts to adopt new irrigation technologies. After the 1924 assassination of Lee Stack, the Governor-General of Sudan, by Egyptian nationalists, British officials in Egypt forced the Egyptian Prime Minister to modify existing Nile water regulations. The new regulations, for the first time since the start of Anglo-Egyptian rule, opened up the possibility of expanding the extent of cultivation in Sudan. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Egyptian Irrigation Service imposed restrictions on the usage of the Nile for irrigation in Sudan in order to reserve the water during the crucial low Nile months for the development of perennial irrigation in Egypt. These rules, which the Anglo-Egyptian government recognized, severely limited the extent of land in Sudan that could be watered with modern irrigation technologies, such as mechanical pumps. Initially, the cap was set at 2,000 *faddāns*, though, when the Aswan Dam was raised in 1902, the allowance was increased to 10,000 *faddāns*. However, no limitations were placed on traditional

irrigation techniques and indigenous Sudanese cultivators were free to draw unlimited quantities of water from the Nile using *sāqiya*s or irrigation channels. Under the 1929 Nile Waters Agreement, the Anglo-Egyptian government was authorized to permit the use of mechanical pumps to water up to a half a million *faddāns* and allowed to use canals to irrigate a million *faddāns* in the Jazira.¹⁹

Despite the new regulations, Anglo-Egyptian officials continued to limit Sudanese cultivators' access to pumped water. Between 1931 and 1935, senior officials closed most of the government pumping schemes in Northern Province because they felt that the collapse of the international cotton market had made these schemes unprofitable.²⁰ Officials subsequently prevented indigenous cultivators from forming agricultural cooperatives to install and run their own pumps. In 1939, the Pumping License Board ruled that cooperative societies, in general, were insufficiently profitable both to cover the cost of installing the pumps and engines necessary for irrigation and to ensure their continued operation. At a February 1939 meeting, the members of the board concluded:

If pumps were started without due consideration and failed, the final position was [*sic*] probably worse than before, as the sagias which such pumps would replace would take some time to restart and further capital for this would be necessary.

The Board did not take into account the fact that the loss of slave labor had made *sāqiya* cultivation unsustainable. As a result, the board decided to, as a rule, deny requests from cooperatives for pumping licenses.²¹

However, Anglo-Egyptian officials did not uniformly prevent Sudanese investment in pump-irrigation. In the 1920s and 1930s, they allowed a small number of religious leaders and local *shaykhs* who wanted to engage in commercial agriculture to erect mechanical pumps. 'Ali al-Mirghani, the great-grandson of the founder of the Mīrghaniyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, was reported, in 1926, to own a 380 *faddān* farm in Khartoum Province worked by a pump and to have erected a pump in Berber Province in order to cultivate an additional 15,000 *faddāns*.²² Al-Mirghani and a number of other indigenous elites primarily invested in cotton, *dhura*, wheat and, in rare instance, sugarcane cultivation. Most of these indigenous elites modeled their operations on the SPS's Zeidab Plantation. They used their pumps to irrigate land rented to tenants, as well as to provide water, for a fee, to neighboring

indigenous-owned farms. For example, ‘Abd al-Qadir Karim al-Din’s pump irrigated 328 *faddāns* that were let out as tenancies and 318 *faddāns* of indigenous-owned land.²³ As a result, the differential access to new irrigation technologies was turning some impoverished cultivators into the tenants of a small group of indigenous elites. This trend, which was accelerated after the Second World War, deepened preexisting economic and social disparities in Sudanese society.

Benefiting from the State

Despite repeated food crises, certain segments of Sudanese society continued to prosper throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Many of those that benefited from Anglo-Egyptian rule were members of prominent families that had been closely connected to either the Turko-Egyptian or Mahdist states. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, members of these elite families developed relationships with the Anglo-Egyptian state, as either its employees or its clients. From the outset, the lowest echelons of the Anglo-Egyptian bureaucracy were staffed, primarily, by indigenous male graduates of Gordon Memorial College, established by Herbert Kitchener in 1898. Many of these men were the sons of large Sudanese land owners and wealthy merchants, important local Muslim religious leaders, and “tribal” *shaykhs*, as well as the sons and grandson of prominent Mahdist leaders.²⁴ As the Anglo-Egyptian state took on more functions, the number of indigenous employees increased. By 1922, there were over 1,800 Gordon Memorial College alumni in government service. Their numbers swelled in the late 1920s, as senior officials began replacing their junior counterparts with lower paid indigenous employees.²⁵

Anglo-Egyptian officials also sought ways to formally incorporate traditional elites into the state. “Tribal” *shaykhs* served as important intermediaries between the Anglo-Egyptian government and indigenous communities for decades prior to the 1922 publication of Lord Lugard’s *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* and the formal adoption of indirect rule throughout Britain’s African Empire.²⁶ These *shaykhs* were crucial collaborators during the campaign against the Mahdist state and, after the British-led conquest in 1898, Herbert Kitchener, the first Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, instructed senior staff “to seek out the better class of native, through whom we may hope to influence the whole population.”²⁷ In the

decades that followed, officials assigned key *shaykhs* to formal positions within local administrations and rewarded them with a share of local tax returns.²⁸ Following the emergence of secular opposition to the Anglo-Egyptian state, signaled by the creation of the League of Sudan Union and the White Flag League in the early 1920s and by a series of urban protests in Northern Sudan in 1924,²⁹ Anglo-Egyptian officials devolved additional judicial powers to “traditional” rural *shaykhs* as part of an effort to contain the influence of educated townspeople.³⁰

Anglo-Egyptian officials also developed strong working relationships with key local Muslim leaders, including, most significantly, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi, ‘Ali al-Mirghani, and Yusuf Muhammad al-Amin al-Hindi, all of whom were materially rewarded for their collaboration with the state. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi increased his standing as the spiritual leader of the followers of his late father, Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi, the original leader of the Mahdist Rebellion. Following the 1924 unrest, officials sought, as Governor-General John Maffey stated, “to bind [‘Abd al-Rahman] to us by economic fetters”³¹ and, accordingly, provided him with a salary, preferential access to government contracts, loans, gifts in both cash and kind, and exclusive rights to land in White Nile and Blue Nile Provinces.³² ‘Ali al-Mirghani was rewarded for his family’s support during the Mahdist Rebellion and in the early years of the Anglo-Egyptian state with a salary and preferential access to both loans and government managed territory in the Qash and Tawkar Deltas,³³ as well as with concessions to develop commercial agriculture on the Nile.³⁴ Similarly, Yusuf Muhammad al-Amin al-Hindi, the leader of the Hindiyya, an offshoot of the Sāmāniyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, worked closely with the Anglo-Egyptian state at the beginning of the twentieth century³⁵ and, as a result, was awarded a large estate within the Gezira Scheme.³⁶

Other local Muslim leaders who were less connected to the Anglo-Egyptian state also benefited financially from Anglo-Egyptian rule. These leaders were able to grow wealthy by investing traditional subventions from their followers in new financial opportunities in the colonial economy. For example, the al-Majdhub family, who led the Majdhūbiyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, was able to invest in pump-irrigation plantations near al-Damar. The Siwar al-Dahab family of the Qādiriyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*, invested in similar plantations near al-‘Urdu. The al-Makki family of the Ismā‘iliyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa* established a large trading company in Darfur and Kordofan Provinces.³⁷

Though Anglo-Egyptian officials were initially able to channel the economic and political ambitions of this diverse array of indigenous elites into supporting the state, in the late 1940s these elites began to demand control of the reins of power. Scholars have analyzed the post-war nationalist struggle in sectarian terms (i.e., as a contest between the spiritual followers of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and 'Ali al-Mirghani) or in geo-political terms (i.e., as an effect of the independent Egyptian state's maneuvering to limit Britain's regional influence).³⁸ However, this struggle was also a means for indigenous elites to gain access to the economic and productive resources of the state. During the Second World War, food crises allowed Anglo-Egyptian officials to seize additional resources, including important grain-producing regions along the Ethiopian frontier, and to monopolize key commercial activities, including the distribution, sale, and marketing of staple food crops. Following the war, indigenous elites demanded the opportunity to invest in these state-owned resources.

Grain, the Second World War, and Independence

State control of the production, marketing, and distribution of crops increased dramatically during the Second World War. In late 1939, shortly after Britain declared war on Germany, Anglo-Egyptian officials re-established the Resource Board to manage regional inventories of staple food crops, such as *dhura*. The Resource Board was tasked with ensuring that local needs were met and that exported surplus aided the British war effort. In early 1941, Sudan was included in the Middle East Supply Centre (MESC), which was responsible for coordinating the movement of resources into and within Allied-held territories in the region. The MESC's regional provisioning policies were predicated on Sudan supplying large quantities of *dhura* to Middle Eastern garrisons. To comply with the MESC's directives, Anglo-Egyptian officials implemented a number of measures that increased government management of Sudanese markets. One of these measures was the *Defense of the Sudan (War Supply) Regulations Act, 1941*, which created the War Supply Board tasked with ensuring compliance with the MESC's procurement program. Toward this end, the board developed and managed a system of import and export licensing.³⁹ In addition, officials dedicated all land watered by the few remaining government pumps in Northern Province to the intensive production of wheat and, as a result, the quantity of wheat flour imported into Sudan decreased from 17,321 tons in 1942 to 5,518 tons in 1943 and then to only 1

ton in 1944.⁴⁰ To further augment grain yields, officials persuaded the MESC, in 1944, to finance the introduction of mechanized cultivation on a large-scale, government-owned plantation to be established near the Ethiopian frontier and, the following year the Mechanized Crop Production Scheme opened on 21,000 *faddāns* east of Qadarif. Establishing this scheme required officials to appropriate land and, in so doing, abrogate the long-established, government-recognized land rights of local communities.⁴¹

The expansion of the state's role in the grain market and the appropriation of fertile land near Qadarif occurred during a period of food insecurity, hardship, and economic turmoil caused, in part, by the war. In the early 1940s, a series of low Nile floods and droughts reduced grain yields in key rainland regions in Central and Eastern Sudan from approximately 2,500,000 *ardabbs* in 1939 to 1,900,000 *ardabbs* in 1941⁴²—an amount insufficient to meet the combined needs of the local population, the Sudan Defense Force and the additional British troops brought in to defend against Italian attacks. However, Sudanese markets could not import foreign grain because the war had disrupted normal patterns of regional and global trade.⁴³ Though Anglo-Egyptian officials were forced to release grain from government reserves, they nonetheless continued throughout the drought to permit the export of large quantities of grain from Sudan as directed by the MESC.⁴⁴ Anglo-Egyptian officials were forced to look for new sources of grain to meet export quotas and found them in Southern Sudan. Until the war, the south had not participated in the long-distance grain trade. During the war, Anglo-Egyptian officials arranged the shipment of large grain cargos from the south to the north as part of an effort to ensure that the Sudan Defense Force was sufficiently provisioned despite the rapid exhaustion of government stocks. Unfortunately, many regions in the south were also experiencing a drought that had led to reduced crop yields. As a result, the export of *dhura* during the war precipitated a famine in Southern Sudan. Signs of an impending famine were first reported in 1941, when Anglo-Egyptian officials noted that large numbers of Dinka pastoralists were migrating further south in search of food. In late 1942, officials declared that adverse conditions had developed into famine in the southwest of Sudan. The famine quickly spread to the regions around Yei and Juba. Hardship continued the following year, during which officials reported food shortages in the Eastern District of Equatoria, famine around Juba and “semi-famine” conditions in western districts. That year, in response to reports of increased mortality among the young and the elderly,

government officials ordered the distribution of government aid in the affected areas.⁴⁵

From the start of 1942 onward, the Sudanese population, for the most part, experienced the war through food scarcity and strict rationing. A series of offensives by the Sudan Defense Force in 1941 retook Kassala from the Italians, ended air assaults on major towns, and successfully neutralized the Italian threat. However, food shortages and regional famines continued to plague Sudan. To stabilize the grain economy, the War Supply Board, in 1942, banned the export of *dhura*, established purchasing commissions, set maximum market prices, and began rationing important market goods.⁴⁶ Though only staple foods were subject to rationing in 1942, by 1945 the list of rationed goods had grown to also include sugar, tea, coffee, cloth, butter, and petrol. Procedures for rationing goods were established on the provincial and district level and were designed both to ensure the proper distribution of scarce goods and to prevent the development of a black market. Merchants were generally required to keep up-to-date sales ledgers and their storehouses and shops were subject to surprise inspections. In regions where a robust black market was suspected officials imposed additional safeguards, including the use of ration cards.⁴⁷ Overwhelmingly, the indigenous population disliked rationing and Anglo-Egyptian officials reported that the continuation of rationing after the German defeat in 1945 caused “disappointment and a sense of frustration.”⁴⁸

The end of price controls on grain in 1946 was followed by a period of high inflation. Though the 1946–1947 harvest was larger than average, the market price of *dhura* rapidly increased from approximately PT280 per *ardabb* at the end of 1947⁴⁹ to approximately PT420 at the end of 1948.⁵⁰ The following year, the price of *dhura* in Khartoum peaked at approximately PT550 per *ardabb*.⁵¹ This price increase was part of an inflationary trend triggered by exceptionally high profits in the Gezira Scheme. Annual payouts to tenants rose moderately after the armistice from a wartime average of approximately £E24 to £E54 in 1945 and £E69 in 1946. Thereafter, profits increased rapidly, with tenants receiving an average pay out of £E96 in 1947, £E204 in 1948, £E221 in 1949, and £E281 in 1950.⁵² The tenants’ increased spending power drove up market prices throughout Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan.

Inflation caused widespread hardship and social unrest. Anglo-Egyptian officials estimated that the cost of living for those earning less than £E12 per annum increased from a baseline value of 100 in

1938 to 183.4 in 1946 and 229.3 in 1947.⁵³ By the middle of 1948, it had reached 304.6.⁵⁴ Wages either remained stagnant or did not keep pace with inflation. The pay scale for Sudanese employees of the Anglo-Egyptian government, for example, remained the same over this time period. The general decline in real earnings at the end of the 1940s led to widespread labor unrest, strikes, the establishment of trade unions, and the political radicalization of the emerging Sudanese working class.⁵⁵ Some rural communities that depended on remittances, particularly those in Northern Province, also suffered the negative effects of inflation because the men who had left to work in town were no longer able to send money back to their relatives. Without this money, many in these communities were unable to purchase sufficient food, which caused widespread, endemic under-nutrition.⁵⁶

A limited number of indigenous cultivators profited from the prevailing high grain prices. Following the war, Anglo-Egyptian officials could no longer claim that pump-irrigation was unremunerative and, as a result, were forced to lift restrictions on pump licenses. Consequently, the number of privately owned pump cultivation schemes jumped from 140 in 1945 to 1,166 in 1955. On the eve of independence, these schemes were watering over 740,000 *faddāns*, or one-third of all irrigated land in Sudan.⁵⁷ Though impoverished small-scale cultivators had, in the 1930s, expressed an interest in establishing pump-irrigation cooperative schemes, without remittances from family members, these cultivators were unable to save the capital necessary to invest. As a result, the majority of pump schemes erected in the 1940s and 1950s were owned and operated by Sudanese elites.⁵⁸ These private schemes were primarily concentrated in Northern and Blue Nile Provinces and were, in general, worked on a tenancy system. The specifics of these tenancy arrangements varied. Schemes located in Blue Nile Province were generally worked on a system of cotton producing tenancies modeled after the Gezira Scheme, whereby pump-owners normally received 60 percent of the profits and tenants the remaining 40 percent. In Northern Province, pump schemes focused on cultivating food crops and tenancy arrangements were based on a division of crops, not profits. Though many tenancies were worked on a 50/50 produce sharing basis, tenants could receive anywhere between 55 percent and 25 percent of the produce. These percentages were negotiated locally and depended on a number of factors including who owned the land, the social position of the tenants, the quality of individual plots, and the choice of cash crop (i.e., market vegetables, grain, fruit, etc.).⁵⁹

While they were expanding their holdings in Northern and Blue Nile Provinces, indigenous elites increasingly demanded the right to invest in resources controlled by the state. In 1953, members of the recently formed Legislative Assembly successfully petitioned the government to open the Mechanized Crop Production Scheme near Qadarif to private investment. Anglo-Egyptian officials agreed to this demand because they believed that indigenous elites would be better able to manage the scheme's tenants, many of whom routinely smuggled out grain, and to bring about an end to an ongoing strike of wage laborers. To allow for elite investment, Anglo-Egyptian officials, in 1954, increased the minimum size of a tenancy from 30 to 1,000 *faddāns*, extended the life of the leases from one to eight years and reallocated the tenancies. Minimum capitalization requirements ensured that tenancies were reserved exclusively for wealthy indigenous investors, who were permitted to subdivide and sublease their holdings. These investors, generally, sublet their holdings in 30 *faddān* plots, thereby effectively maintaining the previous system while allowing elite investors to share in the profits. With the investment of indigenous elites, the state rapidly expanded the Mechanized Crop Production Scheme. At independence, it encompassed approximately 380,000 *faddāns* leased out to over 300 tenants.⁶⁰

Independence did not end the process that turned independent cultivators and pastoralists into small-scale tenant farmers working either on estates owned by politically connected indigenous elites or in schemes managed by the government. In the nearly decade and a half between independence and the military coup that brought Jaafar Nimeiri to power, state elites in successive parliamentary and military governments perceived traditional cultivation techniques and pastoralist practices as obstacles to economic development and therefore, pursued policies to promote commercial agriculture through heavy investment in modern technologies by either the state or politically connected elites.⁶¹ Between 1958 and 1962, the state rapidly expanded the Gezira Scheme, adding approximately 800,000 *faddāns* as part of the Managil South-West Extension.⁶² Officials also created new opportunities for private investment in pump-irrigation. As a result, between 1956 and 1963, wealthy elites, with capital derived, primarily, from cotton, opened 1,117 privately owned pump-irrigation schemes, bringing the total amount of land under pump-irrigation to approximately 1,300,000 *faddāns*.⁶³ Fluctuations in the price of cotton slowed investment in pump-irrigation in the 1960s. However, wealthy elites, with assistance from the state, continued to invest in mechanized dry

grain cultivation and, by 1969, there were over 500 privately managed mechanization schemes in operation covering approximately 1,800,000 *faddāns*.⁶⁴

The process of transferring resources from local to elite or state management and converting pastoralist and small-scale cultivators into tenants was intensified, rather than halted, by postindependence leaders. Indigenous elites continued to profit at the expense of the rest of society and social stratification intensified. The continued loss of resources increased the vulnerability to food crises of many segments of Sudanese society. As a result, the processes of exploitation that propagated the cycle of famine and food insecurity under Anglo-Egyptian rule continued into the second half of the twentieth century with well-known disastrous results.

Conclusion

Sudanese society was not uniformly injured by the devastating cycle of famine and food insecurity that has afflicted much of Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan since the late nineteenth century. In fact, food crises tended to produce both victims and beneficiaries. Differing outcomes during food crises typically correlated with differing access to resources. Segments of Sudanese society that practiced a diverse array of economic strategies based on a varied basket of social, political, and material resources tended to fare better. Unfortunately, access to resources has not been fixed and many Sudanese communities have seen previously successful economic strategies fail. Occasionally, reductions in the basket of resources stemmed from ecological hazards, such as the introduction of rinderpest into Sudan at the end of the nineteenth century or periodic droughts, epidemics, insect invasions, etc. More frequently, these reductions resulted from intergenerational exploitative processes driven by social, economic, and political disparities. These disparities determined the unequal allocation of food stocks during both normal conditions and periods of crisis and, therefore, determined the degree of vulnerability to food crises. Food crises, in turn, created opportunities for those with greater and more stable access to food, to facilitate the transfer of resources away from those with insufficient and irregular access to food. Sometimes these transfers were for selfish ends. However, frequently these transfers were part of famine relief efforts and food insecurity mitigation programs. The transfer of resources increased the vulnerability of victim communities to successive food crises and insured that famine and food insecurity were, and continue to be, recurring phenomena. In addition, the concentration of resources in the hands of the few further expanded divisions in Sudanese society and deepened the dependence

of the vulnerable on the narrow segment of society that has in the past benefited from recurring food crises.

The victims of these exploitative processes have sought out ways to minimize the harmful effects of food crises as they arose. These strategies have included migrating, redefining gender roles, offering to serve foreign governments, developing new patterns of trade, seeking out wage-labor opportunities, and adopting new agricultural technologies and crops. Sometimes these strategies were successful and could ensure continued food security. This was the case for a small subset of Bija pastoralists in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills who remade themselves into agro-pastoralists. Changing systems of government in the region and patterns of trade in the Red Sea caused the collapse of Bija economic strategies and contributed to the deadly *sanat sitta* famine. By the first quarter of the twentieth century, the returns from economically exploiting herds had stopped being sufficient to ensure ready access to sufficient food. A small number of Bija pastoralists responded to these changing conditions by including commercial agriculture in their set of economic strategies, alongside the continued exploitation of their herds. These Bija agro-pastoralists initially focused on growing grain for local consumption. Soon they diversified their agricultural practice to include growing cotton for export. Following the Second World War, these agro-pastoralists responded to growing demand for all-season fruits in Europe and the Persian Gulf by planting orchards and growing fruits. As a result, these agro-pastoralists were able to escape from the cycle of famine and food insecurity that continued to plague the region. However, doing so further harmed the food security of the Bija pastoralists who could not invest in commercial agriculture. Surface water in Eastern Sudan and the Red Sea Hills is scarce and therefore the extent of land that can be cultivated is limited. Those pastoralists left out of the development of commercial agriculture were increasingly forced to pasture their herds on marginal land, leading to problems associated with overstocking.¹ Periodic droughts further exacerbated the situation because they required pastoralists to further increase the concentration of animals on the limited available pastures. Pastoralists could not drive their animals onto traditional drought pasture reserves because these lands were claimed by the agro-pastoralists. Without access to these pastures, pastoralists could not maintain their herds during times of drought. Frequently, animal mortality during droughts was high enough that pastoralists were unable to rebuild their herds when conditions improved. Without their animal wealth, these pastoralists were forced to become wage-laborers

in Sudan or the Gulf states. Those that were left behind often suffered from endemic food insecurity and increased mortality during famine. Studies conducted during the 1984–1985 and 1990–1991 droughts demonstrated that Bija agro-pastoralists had far fewer casualties from starvation than pastoralists without access to these lands.²

The exploitative processes that fueled the cycle of famine and food insecurity also facilitated the creation of the modern Sudanese state. As a result, the state has been implicated in a politics of famine from its inception during the Mahdist Rebellion. Food crises assisted the British-led conquest of the Mahdist state and subsequently allowed British imperial agents, acting through the Anglo-Egyptian government, to seize control of many of Sudan's natural resources. A series of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century famines limited the ability of Sudanese communities to resist colonial projects because they progressively eroded the social, political, and economic foundations of pastoralist and agriculturalist ways of life in much of Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan. However, this politics of famine also created threats to state power. The rise of the modern Sudanese state was fueled by differential access to food resources, but the state did not hold a complete monopoly on these resources. Nonstate actors also used access to food resources to accrue power for themselves. Though famine helped establish Anglo-Egyptian rule on the fringes of the Mahdist state in the 1880s and to bring about the end of Mahdist rule in the 1890s, persistent food insecurity limited the reach of the Anglo-Egyptian state at the beginning of the twentieth century. Anglo-Egyptian officials, seeking to stabilize the Sudanese grain market and to ensure a steady supply of grain to the capital, were forced to abandon early state initiatives and to align state programs with the interests of key indigenous agricultural communities in Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan. Anglo-Egyptian officials quickly realized that maintaining local systems of landownership was crucial to the country's food security. As a result, officials stopped enforcing a series of proclamations, ordinances, and acts designed to establish the Anglo-Egyptian state as the arbiter of land tenure and these communities were initially able to retain control over their productive resources. However, these gains were short-lived and many segments of Sudanese society lost ground socially, economically and politically during subsequent famines. A number of indigenous elites, including 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and 'Ali al-Mirghani, were able to position themselves during periods of crisis so as to further augment their prestige and economic wealth. After the Second World War, these elites offered the

most coherent Sudanese challenge to the colonial order and, at independence, they were handed control of the state. In the years that followed, the postindependence state continued to focus on expanding the portfolio of state-managed resources, while nonstate elites sought out new opportunities for investment in agriculture. At times the state and nonstate elites worked in concert, at other times in opposition.

The politics of famine born during the Mahdist Rebellion gave rise to the disastrous breadbasket development strategy of the 1970s. This strategy failed to expand yields at a time when the state removed barriers to exporting grain and, in so doing, contributed to the deadly 1984–1985 famine.³ This strategy was neither an aberration nor a break from past policies. The breadbasket strategy of the 1970s finally realized Wingate's early twentieth-century dream of turning Sudan into a major exporter of grain to Red Sea markets. In the years preceding the First World War, Anglo-Egyptian officials worked to link Northern Nilotic Sudan, Kurdufan, the Jazira, Eastern Sudan, and the Red Sea littoral into a single grain market. These officials believed that this market would be sufficiently robust both to ensure the food security of Sudan and to consistently produce grain surpluses that could be profitably exported to Europe and the Middle East. The implementation of this policy under Anglo-Egyptian rule was only partial and, as a result, Sudan did not routinely export large quantities of grain in the first half of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, this partial implementation was brought about through the expropriation of long-established local rights to land and the transfer of resources from indigenous control to state, foreign, or elite management. When the Anglo-Egyptian, British, and Egyptian Treasuries proved unwilling or unable to finance this project, officials sought out private British capital. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, officials entered into a series of agreements with the BCGA and its subsidiary corporations in which the state agreed to hand over large swaths of indigenous-owned and managed land in exchange for assistance financing the extension of the railroad into key grain-producing regions. The communities whose land had been seized were unable to effectively protest the loss of these rights because the transfers of these resources occurred during periods of famine, as was the case in the early phases of the Gezira Scheme in 1914 and 1918–1919 and in the Gash Delta Scheme in 1925–1927. With few exceptions, displaced communities were permitted to participate in agriculture development schemes only as small-scale tenants. Once the schemes were established, tenancies proved to be insufficient guarantees of economic stability and food security. When market

prices for primary produce were high, tenancies proved profitable. However, when market prices declined, tenants were pushed into debt, which, in turn, prevented them from leaving their tenancies and, at times, impeded them from acquiring sufficient food.⁴ Cultivators and pastoralists who remained outside of these schemes were frequently impoverished by the loss of access to fertile land and water and by the negative ecological impacts commonly associated with large-scale, commercial agriculture projects, including land degradation, soil erosion, and deforestation.⁵ As a result, the development of modern commercial agriculture was, from the outset, wrapped up in the exploitative processes that drove the cycle of famine and food insecurity.

The politics of famine has produced power built on weakness; the state and nonstate elites became powerful only because others were weakened. As a result, the politics of power has not produced stability. This instability has manifested itself in virulent form in the decades-long civil war that, tragically, did not end with the independence of South Sudan. It has also manifested itself in more subtle shifts in power dynamics over the course of the twentieth century. This subtle instability is evident in the rapid rise and decline of agricultural slavery in Sudan. Slaves had ceased to be a factor in agricultural production in Sudan by the late nineteenth-century collapse of the Mahdist state. The start of Anglo-Egyptian rule in Nilotic Sudan created an opportunity for local cultivators to invest heavily in male slaves and, between 1897 and 1914, nearly 80,000 male slaves were imported into the region. This period marked a high point in local autonomy during which the Anglo-Egyptian state was constrained and officials were forced to craft procedures and protocols that supported the interests of Sudanese cultivators. However, the rebuilt agricultural slavery system was insufficient insurance against future food crises. The early twentieth-century innovations in the Sudanese economy that created markets for northern grain surpluses also reduced cultivator's profits. Deepening food insecurity developed into famine in 1914 and 1918–1919. During these food crises, masters were unable to feed their idle agricultural slaves and thousands of slaves self-manumitted by fleeing and resettling in regions outside the reach of the state. The loss of this labor prevented cultivators from recovering economically after the famine had abated and cultivators were pushed into a state of poverty and dependence on the state and on nonstate elites.

There are indications that the politics of famine is being replaced with a new politics of oil. The increasing importance of oil in Sudan is tied directly to the rapid expansion of the Chinese economy at the

end of the twentieth century. Increased industrial production in China led to a rise in demand for fossil fuels and in 1993 China became a net importer of oil. Chinese consumption of oil doubled between 1995 and 2005, when it reached a rate of over 6 million barrels per day. If the rate of increase is maintained, China is projected to consume oil at a rate of 11 million barrels a day by 2030. In order to prevent a potentially destabilizing dependence on the global oil market, the Chinese government embarked on an aggressive strategy of acquiring long-term rights to foreign oil deposits, including those in Sudan. As a result, China has become Sudan's largest investor. The infusion of Chinese capital and the new politics of oil that it birthed have not ushered in a period of security in Sudan. Chinese investment in Sudanese oil resources has been facilitated, in part, by a Chinese policy of "non-intervention" in local affairs that allows the Chinese government to simultaneously justify both the blocking of international efforts to curtail human rights abuses in Sudan and the selling of large quantities of arms, ammunitions, and other military technologies to the Sudanese government. These weapons have allowed the Sudanese government to launch and/or support attacks on minority populations with competing claims to oil resources.⁶ Though state power in Sudan is increasingly wrapped up in access to oil, the investment in oil production also has not led to food security in the rest of Sudan. Food crises still recur and food insecurity remains endemic.⁷ The Sudanese state continues to implement policies that prevent many Sudanese communities from amassing the diverse array of social, political, and economic resources necessary to ensure their food security.

Notes

Preface

1. See Tesfaye Teklu, Joachin von Braun, and Elsayed Zaki, *Drought and Famine Relationships in Sudan: Policy Implications*, Research Report 88 (Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 1991); Jay O'Brien, "Sowing the Seeds of Famine: The Political Ecology of Feed Deficits in Sudan," *Review of African Political Economy*. No. 33, *War and Famine* (August 1995), 23–32; Hassan Ahmed Abdel Ati, "The Process of Famine: Causes and Consequences in Sudan," *Development and Change* 19 (1988): 267–300. An important exception, though limited to an analysis of famine in Darfur, is Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. For examples of this kind of analysis see Henk-Jan Brinkman and Cullen S. Hendrix, "Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences and Addressing the Challenges." Occasional Paper No. 24 (World Food Program, 2011); Rabah Arezki and Markus Brückner, "Food Prices and Political Instability," *IMF Working Paper* (International Monetary Fund, March 2011); Philip McMichael, "A Food Regime Analysis of the "World Food Crisis," *Agriculture and Human Values* 26 (1009): 281–295; Lester R. Brown, *Full Planet, Empty Plates: The New Geopolitics of Food Scarcity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012); Julia Berazneva and David R. Lee, "Explaining the African Food Riots of 2007–2008: An Empirical Analysis," *Food Policy* 39 (April 2013), 28–39; Marc Cohen and James Garrett, "The Food Price Crisis and Urban Food (In)security," *Environment and Urbanization* 22 no. 2 (October 2010): 467–482.
3. David Curtis, Michael Hubbard, and Andrew Shepherd claim that Anglo-Egyptian officials established procedures for addressing food crises when they arose, thereby preventing these crises from escalating into famines because they were "concerned about preventing hunger. The absence of hunger was a source of [British] legitimacy in the eyes of the world." See David Curtis, Michael Hubbard, and Andrew Shepherd, *Preventing Famine: Policies and Prospects for Africa* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 36; similarly, David Keen claims that Anglo-Egyptian officials, as part of their strategy of indirect rule in Sudan, were committed to developing relationships with Sudanese

collaborators and therefore shielded indigenous communities from processes of exploitation that would have, under other conditions, denied them access to food. See David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18–19.

4. The simultaneous, devastating famines in 1889 and 1890 in Western, Nilotic, and Eastern Sudan are collectively remembered as *sanat sitta*, which translates from the Arabic as year six and refers to the year 1306 in the Islamic calendar. Peter Robertshaw, David Taylor, Shane Doyal, and Robert Marchant have found similar famine naming practices in Uganda. Peter Robertshaw, David Taylor, Shane Doyal, and Robert Marchant. “Famine, Climate and Crisis in Western Uganda,” *Developments in Paleoenvironmental Research* 6 (2004): 535–549.
5. Alex de Waal observed that the victims of the 1984–1985 famine in Darfur frequently compared that famine to a famine in 1914 because they associated both of them with wandering in search of food. See de Waal, *Famine that Kills*, 59. Amal Hassan Fadlalla similarly notes that Hadandawa women in Eastern Sudan interviewed in 1989 claimed that the 1984–1985 famine was similar to a famine in the region in 1890, which caused high mortality, and unlike the 1925–1927 famine, which caused a large out-migration. See Amal Hassan Fadlalla, *Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 31–32.
6. For a brief history of the Mahdist archive and description of their contents see Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 267–271.
7. Jean and John Comaroff argue that the experiences of the colonized can be recovered from the colonial archive because the archive does not exclusively reflect the partial perspectives of the colonizers. According to them: “The flood of writings by colonizing whites conveys much that was unintended; even the most tightly rationalized texts are polyvalent and convey far more than they mean to say. In subtexts that disrupt their major themes, the voice of the silent other is audible through disconcerted accounts of his ‘irrational’ behavior, his mockery, or his resistance.” Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, 1 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37.

I Introduction

1. Babikr Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, trans. George Scott (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 204.
2. George Warrington Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1898), 297.
3. Bennet Burleigh, *Khartoum Campaign 1898 or the Re-Conquest of the Soudan* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), 213.

4. Winston Churchill, *The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Sudan*, 3rd ed., 1951 print (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1899), 305.
5. Burleigh, *Khartoum Campaign 1898*, 215–16.
6. Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, 240.
7. Burleigh, *Khartoum Campaign 1898*, 214.
8. Steevens, *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, 297.
9. A number of scholars assert that the British-led force's victory at Karari was a result of differences in armament. These scholars point out that, though the Mahdist force on the battlefield was nearly double the size of the Anglo-Egyptian force, the Anglo-Egyptian force was better armed. Al-Khalifa commanded nearly 52,000 men during the battle, but only 14,000 of these men were armed with rifles. The rest had swords and spears. Kitchener, on the other hand, commanded 8,200 British and 17,600 Egyptian and Sudanese soldiers. However, all of the men under Kitchener's command were armed with rifles. In addition, these soldiers were supported by 44 guns and 20 Maxim machine guns on land and an additional 36 guns and 24 Maxim machine guns on steamboats strategically placed on the Nile. See Mekki Shibeika, *British Policy in the Sudan, 1882–1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 389; Martin Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5–7; Ian Beckett, "Kitchener and the Politics of Command," in *The Reconquest of the Sudan, 1898: A Reappraisal*, ed. Edward Spiers (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 1998), 35–53.
10. For studies of the Turko-Egyptian government see Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); Anders Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region, 1821–1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For studies of the pre-Turko-Egyptian period see Jay Spaulding, *The Heroic Age in Sinjar* (East Lansing: African Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1985); Janet Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700–1885* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
11. Famines plagued Sudan before the 1880s. Anders Bjørkelo shows that agricultural reforms introduced by the Turko-Egyptian government in the 1820s and early 1830s led to the 1835–1837 famine in Barbar Province. De Waal demonstrates that Turko-Egyptian officials dismantled local social safety nets in the 1870s, which intensified local food crises in Darfur. Similarly, elsewhere in Sudan, Turko-Egyptian officials implemented policies that eroded the resource base of some segments of Sudanese society. Jay Spaulding shows that Turko-Egyptian policy in Northern Nilotic Sudan in the 1850s and 1860s forced many small cultivators to sell their land holdings and migrate south to work as itinerant merchants. However, the present study demonstrates that the exploitative processes that structured the food economy under Turko-Egyptian rule were upended by the Mahdist Rebellion. Anglo-Egyptian and Mahdist policies in the 1880s unleashed an alternative set of processes and instigated a new cycle of famine and food insecurity that weakened indigenous communities and, ultimately, allowed for the expansion and consolidation of the Anglo-

- Egyptian state. See Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 74; Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62–66; Jay Spaulding, “Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15 no. 1 (1982): 1–20.
12. A partial list of the studies that employ this periodization include: Daly, *Empire on the Nile*; Tim Niblock, *Class and Power in Sudan: The Dynamics of Sudanese Politics, 1898–1985* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1987); Dirar Salih Dirar, *Tarikh al-Sudan al-Hadith* (Beirut: Manshurat Dar Maktabat al-Haya, 1968); Mohamed Omer Beshir, *Educational Development in the Sudan, 1898–1956* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Muhammad Fu’ad Shukri, *Miṣr wa-al-Sudan: Tarikh Waḥdat Wadi al-Nil al-Siyasiyya Fi al-Qarn al-Tasi’ ‘Ashar, 1820–1899* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, 1957); Peter Woodward, *Sudan, 1898–1989: The Unstable State* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1990); Robert Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Heather Bell, *Frontiers of Medicine in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
 13. Scholars subscribing to this theory, which dominated the field of famine studies until the 1980s, make a distinction between food scarcity and food absence. They claim that famine is not caused by the complete and total absence of food in a region. Rather, they assert that a famine can be precipitated by a reduction in the total available food in a region by as little as 20 percent. They posit that sudden small reductions in the total quantity of available food lead to price spikes, thereby rendering the most vulnerable unable to secure their sustenance. As a result, there is an increased mortality from starvation. Though the “food availability decline” theory does not posit a necessary cause of famine, proponents of the hypothesis routinely link the reduction in the quantity of food to ecological disasters that directly affect crop yields. As a result, proponents of this theory assert that famines are, generally, natural disasters. However, these scholars do not rule out the possibility of manmade famines. Nonetheless, they assert that, during these famines, human action reproduces the effects of a “typical” natural disaster by disrupting the normal cultivation cycle and producing decreased crop yields. For examples of scholarly analysis that employs this theory see Wallace Ruddell Aykroyd, *The Conquest of Famine* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974); Geoffrey Bussell Masefield, *Famine: Its Prevention and Relief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); Jean Mayer, “Preventing Famine,” *Science* 227 no. 4688 (February 15, 1985), 707; D. Gale Johnson, *World Food Problems and Prospects* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1975).
 14. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 45.
 15. Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 154.
 16. Sen outlines four main types of entitlement relations common to private-ownership-based market societies: (1) entitlements of trade (“one is entitled to own what one obtains by trading something one owns with a willing party”); (2) entitlements of production (“one is entitled to own what one gets by

- arranging production using one's owned resources or resources hired from willing parties"); (3) entitlements of own-labor ("one is entitled to one's own labour power and thus to the trade-based and production-based entitlements related to one's labour power"); and (4) entitlements of transfer ("one is entitled to own what is willingly given to one by another who legitimately owns it"). See Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 2.
17. Sen recognizes that his theory has some limitation in application in that it is unable to account for famines resulting from illegal transfers, such as looting and brigandage. See Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, 45. Subsequent scholars have pushed Sen's auto-critique even further. For example, Jenny Edkins questions Sen's differentiation between legal and illegal transfers. Edkins asserts that Sen does not account for the ways in which entitlements are produced and reproduced by force, especially during times of crises such as famines. See Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
 18. David Keen shows that Sudanese officials implemented policies in South Sudan in the 1980s designed to push the Dinka into famine as part of a strategy designed to strip Dinka pastoralists of their wealth. See David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
 19. In this way, the study of famines can draw from recent scholarship on the anthropology of war. Stephen Lubkemann writes that for inhabitants of regions that experience protracted wars, war "become[s] *the* normal—in the sense of 'expected'—context for the unfolding of social life." Lubkemann calls on researchers to study war in terms of the "transformation of social relations and cultural practices *throughout* conflict," and to treat war "as a transformative social condition and not simply as a political struggle conducted through organized violence." See Stephen Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1.
 20. Amrita Rangasami, "'Failure of Entitlements' Theory of Famine: A Response," Part 1, *Economic and Political Weekly* 20 no. 41 (October 12, 1985): 1749–1750.
 21. Amrita Rangasami, "'Failure of Entitlements' Theory of Famine: A Response," Part 2, *Economic and Political Weekly* 20 no. 42 (October 19, 1985): 1797.
 22. De Waal notes that communities in Darfur define *majā'a*, the Arabic word typically translated as famine, as food scarcity that precipitates destitution and social breakdown. Communities in Darfur recognize famines with increased mortality, which they term *majā'a al-qatala* (which de Waal translates as "famines that kill"), as a special case of a famine that causes social breakdown. These communities account for the increased mortality during "famines that kill" as stemming from the hardship associated with destitution and not with starvation as such. See de Waal, *Famine that Kills*, 6–7.
 23. Holt and Daly were typical of this approach when they wrote: "The north is, with certain exceptions, Arabic in speech, and its people are largely Arabized in culture and outlook. Its indigenous inhabitants are universally Muslim...The southern Sudan contains a bewildering variety of ethnic

groups and languages. Unlike the northerners, its peoples are not generally Muslims, nor do they claim Arab descent.” In their study, Holt and Daly do not discuss the origin and evolution of this “bewildering variety of ethnic groups” in Southern Sudan. However, they detail the process of “Arabization” and “Islamization” in Northern Sudan, which began shortly after the seventh-century Arab conquest of Egypt, in order to show that these processes were incomplete and that indigenous “tribal” identities remained in Northern Sudan despite the adoption of outward expressions of Arabness. Peter Malcolm Holt and Martin Daly, *A History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 4th edition, (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 3–9 and 15–25.

24. In his seminal chapter in an edited collection on invented traditions, Terence Ranger demonstrates that key elements of “tribal” identity and structure in Africa were invented by colonial administrators as part of their strategy of indirect rule. Scholars have subsequently debated the extent to which colonial states had the power to fundamentally reshape African identities. See Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Thomas Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Intention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 44 (2003): 3–27; Sara Berry, *No-Condition is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).
25. Analysis of the atrocities in Darfur must address the origin and meaning of “tribal,” “ethnic,” and “religious” identities because the 1948 UN convention defines genocide in terms of the planned destruction of an ethnically, racially, nationally, or religiously defined group. Scholars, who claim that the Sudanese government sponsored genocide, must assert that there are salient, identity-based divisions in the country. Mahmood Mamdani counters this form of analysis by showing that “Arab” and “African” have multiple meanings in Sudan and that these meanings can be both exclusive and inclusive. Mamdani argues that the focus in the West on the role of identity in the conflict in Darfur occludes the true cause of political struggle in Sudan—that is, a contest for political control of the region. See Martin Daly, *Darfur’s Sorrow: A History of Destruction and Genocide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Robert Collins, “Disaster in Darfur; Historical Overview,” in *Genocide in Darfur: Investigating the Atrocities in the Sudan*, ed. Samuel Totten and Eric Markusen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3–24; Gerard Prunier, *Darfur: A 21st Century Genocide*, 3rd edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon, 2009).
26. Scholars have similarly problematized the role of identity in the protracted civil war that led to the secession of South Sudan. Many scholars have minimized the role of interethnic and interreligious conflict in causing and sustaining the civil war and have highlighted the role of contrasting political ideologies and

- exploitative economic policies. See Ann Mosley Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Douglas Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: James Curry, 2003).
27. See Paul Lovejoy and Toyin Falola (eds), *Pawnship, Slavery and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003); Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).
 28. Scholars have offered a variety of reasons why colonial officials in a number of colonies in the 1920s and 1930s changed course and adopted policies designed to end slavery, including the mounting pressure from international bodies and humanitarian organizations and the demands of evolving economic conditions. For studies on the end of slavery in twentieth-century colonial Africa, see Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Problem* (New York: Altamira Press, 2003); Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers (eds), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).
 29. For studies of the end of slavery in Sudan see Daly, *Empire on the Nile*; Gabriel Warburg *The Sudan under Wingate: Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1899–1916* (London: Frank Cass, 1971); Taj Hargey, “Festina Lente: Slavery Policy and Practice in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan,” in *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa*, ed. Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 250–271; Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

2 Famine and the Making of Sudan’s Northern Frontier, 1883–1896

1. James Grant, *Cassell’s History of the War in the Sudan*, Volume 2 (London: Cassell, 1885), 175–178.
2. Baring to Granville May 23, 1885 FO407/65/253. National Archive, UK (NA).
3. Baring to Salisbury June 29, 1885 FO407/65/343, NA.
4. *Report by Mr. Garstin on the Province of Dongola* [n.d. April 1897] FO407/143/12, NA.
5. *Reports on the Province of Dongola* (C8427, 1897), 1.
6. *Reports by His Majesty’s Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1903* (Cd1951, 1904), 79.
7. R. T. Wilson, “Systems of Agricultural Production in Northern Sudan,” in *The Agriculture of the Sudan*, ed. G. M. Craig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 193–213.

8. *Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 3.
9. *Ibid.*, 2.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Peter Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian: A Study in Social Symbiosis* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1986), 26.
12. Peter Malcolm Holt and Martin Daly, *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 4th ed. (London and New York: Longman, 1988), 30–31.
13. John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Murray, 1822), 59.
14. Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 47.
15. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 66.
16. *Ibid.*, 61.
17. Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 47.
18. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 66.
19. Historians have had to speculate as to the reasons that drove Muhammad ‘Ali’s desire to conquer Sudan because, as Richard Hill notes, he did not publicly discuss them. There seems to have been two motivations. The first and more immediate one was to defeat the *Mamlūks*. This required only the conquest of Northern Nilotic Sudan and parts of the Jazira. However, once the troops were mobilized, Muhammad ‘Ali ordered the conquest of the southern frontiers of the Funj Sultanate in a quest to acquire slaves to staff his army and gold to fund his administration. See Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1821–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 8–13.
20. Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 50.
21. *Ibid.*, 51.
22. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 60.
23. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 27.
24. Hassan Dafalla, *The Nubian Exodus* (London: C. Hurst, 1975), 21.
25. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 60–61.
26. Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian*, 21.
27. *Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 3.
28. William Nichols, “The Sakia in Dongola Province,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 1 no. 1 (January 1918): 23–24.
29. 1 *faddān* = 2295 m² = 1.038 acres.
30. *Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 3.
31. This discussion of the transformation of slave ownership in northern Nilotic Sudan under Turko-Egyptian rule draws heavily from Jay Spaulding, “Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 15 no. 1 (1982): 1–20.
32. Ahmed Al-Ashi, *An Anthropological Study of a Sudanese Shaiqiya Village (Nuri)*, PhD Dissertation (Oxford 1971) 233–234.
33. El Haj Bilal Omer, *The Danagla Traders of Northern Sudan: Rural Capitalism and Agricultural Development* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), 17–21.
34. The first Turko-Egyptian efforts to implement a new tax regime did not go unopposed and, in 1822, led al-Makk Nimr to kill Isma‘il at Shandi by burning

down his quarters with him in it. This attack was followed by a general revolt in the Nile valley. The new Turko-Egyptian rulers responded with a campaign of violence and reprisals that lasted for the next few years. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 15–21.

35. Janet Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700–1885* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 165–169.
36. Spaulding, “Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan,” 1–20.
37. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 27.
38. Geiser, *The Egyptian Nubian*, 21–26; C. S. Sonninin, in his report on his trip to observe trading conditions in Egypt for France’s new revolutionary government, noted that Nubian men were, in general, the preferred source of domestic servants for Egypt’s European merchant community. However, the French had been officially forbidden from employing Nubian domestic servants since one murdered the physician Du Roelle in 1706. C. S. Sonninin, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt Undertaken by Order of the Old Government of France*, translated by William Combe (London: J. Debrett, 1800), 468.
39. 100 piaster (PT) = 1 Egyptian pound (£E).
40. Bayard Taylor, *A Journey to Central Africa: Or, Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile*, 11th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852), 164.
41. John Gadsby, *My Wanderings: Being Travels in the East 1846–47, 1850–51, 1852–23* (London: John Gadsby, 1855), 352.
42. Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 45–46.
43. Kim Searcy, *The Formation of the Sudanese Mahdist State: Ceremony and Symbols of Authority: 1882–1898* (Boston: Brill, 2011), 24–25.
44. Searcy, *The Formation of the Sudanese Mahdist State*, 26.
45. Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 85–86.
46. The reason for the mass appeal of al-Mahdi’s call to arms has long been the subject of scholarly debate. In 1903, Na’um Shuqayr, an official in the Egyptian Army’s Intelligence Department, concluded that there were four main causes of the rebellion. First, General Gordon’s attempts, in the late 1870s, to end the Sudanese slave trade led to the growth of anti-government feelings in key slaving populations, including the Baqqara of Kurdufan. Second, some Sudanese sought revenge for the brutal campaigns of conquest that expanded Egypt’s Sudanese territory in the 1860s and 1870s. Third, many Sudanese wanted to free themselves from the Turko-Egyptian government’s rapacious tax collectors. Finally, there was widespread discontentment with the government’s preference for the Shayqiyya and for followers of the Khatmiyya *ṣūfī ṭarīqa*. P. M. Holt has subsequently argued that, though all four factors listed by Shuqayr contributed to some extent in expanding the appeal of al-Mahdi, the rebel leader, the

Mahdist Rebellion was fomented primarily by the government's antislavery campaigns. On the other hand, A. B. Theobald has shown that in the early 1880s, the government abandoned its antislavery measures. Instead, Theobald has argued that al-Mahdi, as a result of his charisma, reputation for piety and religious conviction, was able to harness a number of disparate discontented groups, each with their own reason for rebelling. Janet Ewald has confirmed Theobald's assertion for the population of Kurdufan. Ewald, through a study of the evolution of long-distance trade in the Nuba Mountains in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, has shown that the rebellion in its early stages in Kurdufan was a response to unique local conditions which led "farmers, herders and small traders" to resent "how wealthy traders and their allies used the government to aggrandize themselves." The analysis of Theobald and Ewald suggest that the causes of the Mahdist Rebellion can only be analyzed at the regional level. See Na'um Shuqayr, *Ta'rikh al-Sudan al-Qadim wa al-Hadith wa Jughrafiyatuba* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'arif, 1903), 315–320; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 32–44; A. B. Theobald, *The Mahdiya: A History of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881–1899* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 25–26; Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders and Slaves*, 175.

47. Holt and Daly, *A History of the Sudan*, 88–91.
48. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 95–100.
49. Donne to Wood, July 25, 1884 FO407/62/180, NA.
50. Egerton to Granville, August 26, 1884 FO407/62/337, NA.
51. Baring to Granville, September 10, 1884 FO407/62/409, NA.
52. Al-Ashi, *An Anthropological Study*, 24.
53. See the entries for Tanbal Hamad Tanbal and Mustafa Yawar Pasha in Richard Hill, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1967).
54. Robert Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 48.
55. Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 176.
56. Owen, *Lord Cromer*, 204.
57. *Ibid.*, 219.
58. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt*, 51.
59. John Richmond, *Egypt 1798–1952: Her Advance towards a Modern Identity* (London: Methuen, 1977), 140.
60. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt*, 88–92.
61. *Ibid.*, 160.
62. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 69.
63. *Report on the Soudan by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart* (C3670, 1883), 25–26.
64. Baring to Granville, October 26, 1883 FO407/28/242, NA.
65. Baring to Granville, November 26, 1883 FO407/28/317, NA.
66. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 87.
67. Dufferin to Granville, August 2, 1883 FO407/27/135, NA.
68. Baring to Granville, December 22, 1883 FO407/28/411, NA.
69. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 87.

70. Baring to Gordon, January 28, 1884 FO407/60/260, NA.
71. Baring to Granville, February 12, 1884 FO 407/60/334, NA.
72. Granville to Egerton, August 15, 1884 FO407/62/266, NA.
73. Egerton to Granville, August 24, 1884 FO407/62/327, NA.
74. Wolseley to Baring, October 22, 1884 FO407/63/65, NA.
75. Baring to Wolseley, October 23, 1884 FO407/63/65, NA.
76. Granville to Baring, October 25, 1884 FO407/63/68, NA.
77. Baring to Granville, January 4, 1885 FO407/64/11, NA.
78. Baring to Granville, February 12, 1885 FO407/64/195, NA.
79. Granville to Baring, March 6, 1885 FO407/64/357, NA.
80. Egerton to Granville, July 4, 1884 FO407/62/8, NA.
81. Ibid.
82. Egerton to Granville, July 16, 1884 FO 407/62/82, NA.
83. Baring to Granville, May 3, 1885 FO407/65/159, NA.
84. Baring to Granville, May 13, 1885 FO407/65/215, NA.
85. Baring to Granville, May 14, 1885 FO407/65/221, NA.
86. Hartington to Wolseley, May 8, 1885 FO407/65/194, NA.
87. Baring to Granville, May 23, 1885 FO407/65/264, NA.
88. Ibid.
89. Baring to Granville, May 21, 1885 FO407/65/253, NA.
90. Baring to Salisbury, June 29, 1885 FO407/65/330, NA.
91. Baring to Granville, June 9, 1885 FO407/65/343, NA.
92. Egerton to Salisbury, July 28, 1885 FO407/66/69, NA.
93. Wolseley to Harington, June 4, 1885 FO407/65/308, NA.
94. Henry Cecil Jackson, *Halfa Province, the Years of Waiting: The Reconquest Volume II*, SAD466/16, Sudan Archive, Durham University (SAD).
95. Henry Cecil Jackson, *Summary Notes on Halfa Province*, SAD466/14.
96. Babikr Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, translated by George Scott (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 51.
97. Henry George Lyons, "On the Nile Floods and Its Variations," *The Geographical Journal* 26 no. 4 (October 1905): 403.
98. *Petition Submitted by Some Refugees of Dongola Province at Assuan* [n.d. August 1885] FO407/66/113, NA.
99. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 196.
100. Ibid., 178.
101. Shundi Pasha to Baring, January 23, 1887 FO407/70/58, NA.
102. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 175–9.
103. Egerton to Salisbury, October 12, 1885 FO407/67/38, NA.
104. *Report by R. H. De Montmorency* FO407/70/23, NA.
105. Grenfell to Baring, December 22, 1886 FO407/70/17, NA.
106. Egerton to Salisbury, July 27, 1885 FO407/66/68, NA.
107. Grenfell to Watson, July 27, 1885 FO407/66/68, NA.
108. *Circular Issued by Nubar Pasha to the Mudirs of Assiout, Kenah, and Esneh*, August 13, 1885 FO407/66/155, NA.
109. Egerton to Salisbury, October 12, 1885 FO407/67/38, NA.
110. Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, 59–60.
111. Salisbury to Wolff, November 10, 1885 FO407/67/102, NA.

112. Salisbury to Wolff, January 7, 1886 FO407/68/16, NA.
113. Stephenson to Smith, November 1, 1886 FO407/69/139, NA.
114. Jackson, *Halfa Province, the Years of Waiting* SAD466/16.
115. Ibid.
116. Baring to Salisbury, March 18, 1888 FO407/72/110, NA.
117. *Memorandum by F. F. Grenfell* [n.d. May 1889] FO407/88/51, NA.
118. Grenfell to Riaz Pasha, [n.d. May 1889] FO407/88/51, NA.
119. Grenfell to the Egyptian Minister of War, March 26, 1890 FO407/100/13, NA.
120. *Petition Submitted by Some Refugees of Dongola Province, at Assuan* [n.d. August 1885] FO407/66/113, NA.
121. Grenfell to Riaz Pasha, [n.d. May 1889] FO407/88/51, NA.
122. Grenfell to Baring, December 22, 1886 FO407/70/17, NA.
123. Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur Sudan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63.
124. Richard Pankhurst and Douglas Johnson, "The Great Drought and Famine of 1888–92 in Northeast Africa," in *The Ecology of Survival; Case Studies from Northeast African History*, ed. Douglas Johnson and David Anderson (Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 47–73.
125. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 192–197*. Robert Kramer relays a report that stated that the Baqqara immigrants consumed the entirety of Umm Durman's grain reserve, totaling over 500,000 ardabbs. Robert S. Kramer, *Holy City on the Nile: Omdurman during the Mahdiyya, 1885–1898* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010), 30.
126. See Rudolph von Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879–1895*, translated by F. R. Wingate (London: Edward Arnold, 1896), 452–457; Francis Reginald Wingate, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp 1882–1892* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston and Co., 1892), 284–291.
127. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 178–183.
128. Clarke to Salisbury, August 26, 1889 FO407/89/108, NA.
129. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 179.
130. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 187 (May 25 to 31, 1889), SAD.
131. General Officer Commanding in Egypt to Secretary of State for War, July 15, 1889 FO407/89/45, NA.
132. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 191 (June 28 to July 21, 1889), SAD.
133. General Officer Commanding Egypt to the Secretary of State for War, July 15, 1889 FO 407/89/45, NA.
134. Clarke to Salisbury, July 7, 1889 FO407/89/16, NA.
135. General Officer Commanding in Egypt to Secretary of State for War July 11, 1889 FO407/89/30, NA.
136. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 197 (August 25 to 31, 1889), SAD.
137. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 183 (April 28 to May 4, 1889), SAD.

138. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 184 (May 5 to 11, 1889) to No. 213 (December 15 to 28, 1889), SAD.
139. See Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 184 (May 5 to 11, 1889) to No. 268 (August 9 to 21, 1891), SAD.
140. *Extract from an Intelligence Report by Bimbashi Duig*, January 20, 1890 FO407/99/44, NA.
141. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 197 (August 25 to 31, 1889), SAD.
142. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 220 (February 9 to 15, 1890), SAD.
143. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 229 (May 11 to 17, 1890), SAD.
144. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 233 (June 8 to 14, 1890), SAD.
145. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 244 (September 28 to October 11, 1890), SAD.
146. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 194 (July 29 to August 13, 1889), SAD.
147. Grenfell to Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, July 28, 1889 FO407/89/90, NA.
148. Maxwell to Wingate, September 28, 1889 SAD155/9, NA.
149. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 199 (September 8 to 14, 1889), SAD.
150. *Ibid.*
151. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 201 (September 22 to 28, 1889), SAD.
152. Grenfell to the Egyptian Minister of War, March 26, 1890 FO407/99/100/13, NA.
153. Dormer to Stanhope, February 2, 1890 FO407/99/44, NA.
154. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 244 (September 28 to October 11, 1890), SAD.
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156. Baring to Salisbury, December 11, 1889 FO407/90/37, NA.
157. See Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report, Egypt*, No. 2 (May 1892) to No. 59 (August 28 to December 31, 1896), SAD.
158. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Frontier Field Force*, No. 280 (December 6 to 13, 1891), SAD.
159. Grenfell to Baring, November 16, 1889 FO407/90/19, NA.
160. Baring to Salisbury, December 11, 1889 FO407/90/37, NA.
161. *Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 2.
162. Spaulding, "Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan," 9–11.
163. *Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 3.
164. *Ibid.*, 2.
165. *Ibid.*, 7.

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1. Molyneux to Hay, October 4, 1884 FO407/63/36, NA.
2. Hay to Secretary of the Admiralty, December 1, 1884 FO407/63/279, NA.
3. Gunnar M. Sørbø, "Systems of Pastoral and Agricultural Production in Eastern Sudan," in *The Agriculture of the Sudan*, ed. Gillian M. Craig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 214–229.
4. Leif Manger notes that "original claims to certain territories are significant inputs for identity definition." Leif Manger, *Survival on Meager Resources: Hadendowa Pastoralism in the Red Sea Hills* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), 83. Similar claims are made by a number of other scholars. See Anders Hjort and Gurdun Dahl, *Responsible Man: The Altmaan Beja of North-eastern Sudan* (Uppsala: Stockholm Studies Anthropology, 1991), 57; Frode Jacobson, *Theories of Sickness and Misfortune among the Hadendowa Beja of the Sudan: Narratives as Points of Entry into Beja Cultural Knowledge* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 24–25; Amal Hassan Fadlalla, *Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 33.
5. Andrew Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 93.
6. *Ibid.*, 100.
7. D. C. Cumming, "The History of Kassala and the Province of Taka, Part I," *Sudan Notes and Records* 20 no. 1 (1937): 19.
8. Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes*, 101.
9. John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Murray, 1822), 397.
10. Ghada Talhami, *Suakin and Massawa under Egyptian Rule, 1865–1885* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1979), 39.
11. Jonathan Miran, *Red Sea Citizens: Cosmopolitan Society and Cultural Change in Massawa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 89–91.
12. Duman Nurtaç, "Emirs of Mecca and the Ottoman Government of Hijaz, 1840–1908" (Master's Thesis: Boğaziçi University, 2005), 18.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Karl Benjamin Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt: Its People and Products* (London: Blackie and Son, 1878), 272.
15. Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt*, 272–274.
16. David Roden, "The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin" *Sudan Notes and Records*, 51 (1970), 4.
17. Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes*, 106.
18. *Ibid.*, 101.
19. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, 396–8.
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- Transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884–1986*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 27.
23. Muhammad Al-Sha'afi, *The Foreign Trade of Juddah during the Ottoman Period, 1840–1916* (Saudi Arabia: King Saud University, 1985), 50–55.
 24. Kluzinger, *Upper Egypt*, 275.
 25. Kitchener to Portal, July 22, 1890 FO407/101/13, NA.
 26. Reginald Wingate, "Memorandum by the Governor-General," in *Reports on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan, 1903* (RFACS), Volume 2 (1903), 3, SAD.
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 29. C. C. Balfour, *Note on the Growth of Dura in the Gash Delta with Reference to the Terms of Agreement with the Kassala Cotton Company*, May 3, 1923 CIVSEC2/8/30. National Records Office, Khartoum (NRO).
 30. *Notes on Khor Baraka and Its Delta Around Tokar Prepared by the Inspector General of the Sudan Irrigation Service*, January 1, 1913, SAD185/1/2–9. 1 faddān = 4200 m².
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 32. Ibid.
 33. See Talhami, *Suakin and Massawa under Egyptian Rule, 1865–1885*.
 34. Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes*, 103.
 35. Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 82.
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 38. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 82.
 39. Moncrieff to Baring, November 4, 1883 FO407/28/276, NA.
 40. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 166.
 41. Granville to Baring, November 22, 1883 FO407/28/293, NA.
 42. Wylde to Baring, December 4, 1883 FO407/28/400, NA.
 43. Darwall to Hewett, December 10, 1883 FO407/28/449, NA.
 44. Baring to Granville, February 8, 1884 FO407/60/282, NA.
 45. Hewett to Baring, February 13, 1884 FO407/60/525, NA.
 46. Baker to Granville, March 23, 1884 FO407/60/767, NA.
 47. Baker to Baring, January 8, 1884 FO407/60/219, NA.
 48. Baring to Granville, December 22, 1883 FO407/28/411, NA.
 49. Granville to Dufferin, March 8, 1884 FO407/60/626, NA.
 50. *Memorandum by Lieutenant Colonel Sir C Wilson* [n.d. February 1884] FO407/60/468, NA.
 51. Granville to Baring, March 21, 1884 FO407/60/746, NA.
 52. *Memorandum by Major Chermiside Respecting the Situation of Affairs at Suakin and the Proposed Measures to be Taken to Open the Berber Road*, March 29, 1884 FO407/61/61, NA.
 53. Ashburnham to Egerton, May 9, 1884 FO407/61/282, NA.

54. *Memorandum by Major Chermiside Respecting the Situation of Affairs at Suakin and the Proposed Measures to be Taken to Open the Berber Road*, March 29, 1884 FO407/61/61, NA.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Egerton to Granville, May 20, 1884 FO407/61/296, NA.
57. Granville to Egerton, May 22, 1884 FO407/66/309, NA.
58. *Draft Instructions for Political Officer at Front* FO407/65/212, NA.
59. Graham to Hartington, April 22, 1885 FO407/65/212, NA.
60. *Consul Reports. Suakin. Commercial*, No. 6, Part 3 (C4657, 1886), 215.
61. Watson to Baring, April 16, 1886 FO407/68/141, NA.
62. Chermiside to Wood, May 18, 1884 FO407/61/459, NA.
63. Graham to Hartington, April 22, 1885 FO407/65/212, NA.
64. *Deposition*, August 25, 1885 FO407/66/191, NA.
65. Cochran to Jones, September 10, 1885 FO407/67/16, NA.
66. Watson to Nubar, June 10, 1886 FO407/88/79, NA.
67. Baring to Kitchener, January 15, 1887 FO407/70/36, NA.
68. George Cassar, *Kitchener: Architect of Victory* (London: William Kimber, 1977), 57–8.
69. 331 House of Commons Debates 3s., December 15, 1888, col. 341–345.
70. Baring to Salisbury, February 19, 1887 FO407/70/80, NA.
71. Baring to Kitchener, January 15, 1887 FO407/70/36, NA.
72. Hay to Secretary of the Admiralty, October 13, 1885 FO407/67/56, NA.
73. “Convention between the British and Egyptian Government for the Suppression of the Slave Trade Signed August 4, 1877” reprinted in *Correspondence with British Representatives and Agents Abroad, and Reports from Naval Officers Relating to the Slave Trade* (C2319, 1878), 30–33.
74. Watson to Nubar, June 10, 1886 FO407/88/79, NA.
75. C. M. Watson, *Report No. 4, Reports upon the State of the Eastern Sudan from May to August 1886*, WYL/Pam31. Wylde Family Papers, Durham University.
76. Kitchener to Baring, February 19, 1887 FO407/70/80, NA.
77. Wolff to Iddesleigh, October 7, 1886 FO407/69/102, NA.
78. Kitchener to Grenfell, October 15, 1886 FO407/69/138, NA.
79. Iddesleigh to Wolff, October 9, 1886 FO407/69/111, NA.
80. Kitchener to Grenfell, October 15, 1886 FO407/69/138, NA.
81. Kitchener to Baring, February 19, 1887 FO407/70/80, NA.
82. Clarke to Salisbury, June 8, 1887 FO407/70/200, NA.
83. Secretary to the Admiralty to Lister, June 8, 1881 FO84/1597, NA.
84. Hartington to Wolseley, January 14, 1885 FO407/64/59, NA.
85. See FO407/69, FO407/70, FO407/71, FO84/1721, FO84/1770, and ADM193/16, NA.
86. Jones to Hay, October 20, 1885 FO407/67/165, NA.
87. Baring to Salisbury, April 29, 1887 FO407/70/147*, NA.
88. Egerton to Salisbury, December 27, 1885 FO407/67/203, NA.
89. Hay to Secretary of the Admiralty, January 17, 1886 FO407/68/52, NA.
90. *Ibid.*
91. Thompson to Pauncefote, April 13, 1886 FO407/68/124, NA.

92. Secretary of the Admiralty to Paunceforte, April 26, 1886 FO407/68/143, NA.
93. See FO407/69, FO407/70, FO407/71, FO407/72, FO407/73, FO84/1721, FO84/1770, FO84/1849, FO84/1903, and ADM193/16, NA.
94. Simons to Iddesleigh, October 30, 1886 FO407/69/144, NA.
95. Lambton to the Duke of Edinburgh, December 1, 1886 FO84/1770, NA.
96. Simons to Iddesleigh, October 30, 1886 FO407/69/144, NA.
97. For a full account of all of his varied humanitarian work see J. E. G. de Montmorency, *Francis William Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).
98. Montmorency, *Francis William Fox*, 7.
99. *Ibid.*, 43–45.
100. *Ibid.*, 46–50.
101. Cameron and Fox to Salisbury, December 18, 1885 FO407/67/181, NA.
102. Lamprey to Salisbury, September 17, 1888 FO407/67/46, NA.
103. FO to London Chamber of Commerce, November 8, 1887 FO407/71/90* and The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society to Salisbury, March 8, 1888 FO407/72/88, NA.
104. Cameron and Fox to Warren, January 9, 1886 FO407/68/27, NA.
105. “*Draft for a Soudan Charter*” FO407/68/9, NA.
106. Cameron and Fox to Salisbury, December 18, 1885 FO407/67/181, NA.
107. “*Draft for a Soudan Charter*” FO407/68/9, NA.
108. Cameron Fox to Warren, January 9, 1886 FO407/68/27, NA. Cameron and Fox did not mention how company rule would directly improve the lives of the women of the Sudan.
109. Baker to Salisbury, January 21, 1885 FO407/68/40, NA.
110. White to Salisbury, January 22, 1886 FO407/68/45, NA.
111. “*Minute by Major-General Brackenberry on the Proposed Soudan Company*,” FO407/68/84, NA.
112. Salisbury to Wolff, November 10, 1885 FO407/67/102, NA.
113. Egerton to Salisbury, July 27, 1885 FO407/66/68, NA.
114. Baring to Salisbury, December 30, 1888 FO407/87/24, NA.
115. Pauncefote to Cameron and Fox, March 19, 1886 FO407/68/89, NA.
116. Fox to Pauncefote, November 27, 1886 FO407/69/156a, NA.
117. Pauncefote to Fox, December 8, 1886 FO407/69/169, NA.
118. Fox to Iddesleigh, December 27, 1886 FO407/69/205, NA.
119. Jones to Hay, October 20, 1885 FO407/67/165, NA.
120. “A Project for the Pacification of the Soudan,” *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* Series 4, Volume 7, No. 3 (May and June 1887), 112–115.
121. Baring to Salisbury, February 3, 1887 FO407/70/52, NA.
122. Baring to Salisbury, February 5, 1887 FO407/70/54, NA.
123. Baring to Salisbury, April 3, 1887 FO407/70/123, NA.
124. Cameron to Baring, April 1, 1887 FO84/1878, NA.
125. Lambton to the Admiralty, March 9, 1887 FO407/70/120, NA.
126. Cameron to Baring, April 1, 1887 FO84/1878, NA.
127. *Ibid.*
128. Kitchener to Grenfell, April 1, 1887 FO84/1878, NA.
129. *Form of Guarantee Actually in Force* FO84/1878, NA.

130. Kitchener to Grenfell, April 1, 1887 FO84/1878, NA.
131. Baring to Salisbury, April 18, 1887 FO84/1878, NA.
132. Wylde to the Chairman of the Anti-Slavery Society, March 31, 1887 reprinted in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Series 4, Volume 7, No. 3 (May and June 1887), 110.
133. [no title, undated May 22, 1890] WYL67/39–40. The Wylde Family Papers, Durham University.
134. Ibid.
135. Portal to Salisbury, August 17, 1887 FO407/71/35, NA.
136. Baring to Salisbury, May 19, 1887 FO407/70/193, NA.
137. Baring to Salisbury, April 26, 1887 FO407/70/146a, NA.
138. Baring to Salisbury, April 29, 1887 FO407/70/147*, NA.
139. Baring to Salisbury, May 19, 1887 FO407/70/193, NA.
140. Salisbury to Baring, September 30, 1887 FO407/71/53, NA.
141. *Proclamation by Colonel Kitchener*, October 11, 1887 FO407/71/81*, NA.
142. Cameron to Baring, December 4, 1887 FO407/72/2, NA.
143. Cameron to Baring, December 12, 1887 FO407/71/107, NA.
144. Rooke to the Duke of Edinburgh, December 19, 1887 FO407/72/19, NA.
145. Salisbury to Baring, December 19, 1887 FO407/71/126, NA.
146. Cameron to Baring, December 30, 1887 FO407/72/11, NA.
147. Rooke to the Duke of Edinburgh, January 11, 1888 FO407/72/53, NA.
148. Rooke to the Duke of Edinburgh, January 25, 1888 FO407/72/64, NA.
149. Stephenson to Stanhope, January 17, 1888 FO407/72/20, NA.
150. Portal to Salisbury, July 20, 1887 FO407/71/11, NA.
151. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 188
152. May to Baring, October 15, 1888 FO407/75/20, NA.
153. Paget to Baring, November 9, 1888 FO407/75/48, NA.
154. Salisbury to Baring, December 7, 1888 FO407/75/81, NA.
155. Baring to Salisbury, December 20, 1888 FO407/75/118, NA.
156. Baring to Grenfell, December 29, 1888 FO407/87/24, NA.
157. *Proclamation by the Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral to the Handab, Hadendowa, Amarat, Gambab, and Other Tribes*, December 30, 1888 FO407/87/55, NA.
158. *Instructions Addressed to Colonel Kitchener* [n. d. January 1889] FO407/87/55, NA.
159. Baring to Salisbury, January 4, 1889 FO407/87/13, NA.
160. *Report for the Year 1888 on the Trade of Suakin*. Commercial No. 562 (C5618, 1889), 1.
161. Barnham to Baring, May 29, 1889 FO407/88/116, NA.
162. Barnham to Baring, February 21, 1890 FO407/99/58, NA.
163. Wingate to Grenfell, February 12, 1890 FO407/99/58, NA.
164. See Summary of Events at Suakin from December 26, 1888 to January 8, 1889 FO407/87/93, NA, and Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 82 (April 30 to May 15, 1889), No. 83 (May 28 to June 11, 1889), No. 84 (June 11 to 26, 1889), and No. 88 (August 7 to 15, 1889), SAD.
165. Barnham to Baring, February 21, 1890 FO307/99/58, NA.

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1. Barnham to Baring, March 5, 1890 FO407/99/83, NA.
2. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 97 (December 11 to 23, 1889), SAD.
3. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 98 (December 24 to January 6, 1889), SAD.
4. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 104 (March 18 to April 1, 1890), SAD.
5. Barnham to Baring, March 5, 1890 FO407/99/83, NA.
6. Ibid.
7. Hardridge to Salisbury, July 16, 1891 FO407/107/10, NA.
8. Baring to Salisbury, December 20, 1889 FO407/90/48, NA.
9. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 101 (February 4 to 18, 1890), SAD.
10. A. B. Wylde, "The Starving Soudanese and Our Responsibilities," *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Series 4, Volume 10 (May and June 1890), 92.
11. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 97 (December 11 to 23, 1889), SAD.
12. Wingate to Grenfell, February 12, 1890 FO407/99/58, NA.
13. Barnham to Baring, May 29, 1889 FO407/88/116, NA.
14. Barnham to Baring, February 21, 1890 FO307/99/58, NA.
15. Baring to Salisbury, December 20, 1889 FO407/90/84, NA.
16. Banian Merchant at Suakin to Portal, September 2, 1890 FO407/101/31, NA.
17. Hall to Hoskins, October 8, 1890 FO407/102/26, NA.
18. Baring to Salisbury, December 5, 1888 FO407/75/107, NA.
19. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 100 (January 21 to February 4, 1890), SAD.
20. John Rowe and Kjell Hødnebo, "Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888–1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic," *Sudanic Africa* 5 (1994): 149–179.
21. Richard Pankhurst and Douglas Johnson, "The Great Drought and Famine of 1888–92 in Northeast Africa," in *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History*, ed. Douglas Johnson and David Anderson (Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 63.
22. Bazett Annesley Lewis, *The Murle: Red Chiefs and Black Commoners* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
23. Rowe and Hødnebo, "Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888–1890," 173.
24. Ibid., 172–175.
25. "Notes on the Outbreak of Bovine Typhus at Suakin and in the Neighbouring Districts," in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 62 (February 16 to April 30, 1899), 16, SAD.
26. Part of a letter from A. B. Wylde at Jidda, probably to his father [undated, November 1879] WYL/72/22.

27. J. J. McGrane and A. J. Higgins, "Infectious Diseases of the Camel; Viruses, Bacteria and Fungi," *British Veterinary Journal* 141 no. 5 (September–October 1985): 533–534.
28. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 91 (September 17 to 30, 1889), SAD.
29. Peter Malcolm Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 187–8.
30. Barnham to Clarke, July 10, 1889 FO407/89/67, NA.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Holled Smith to Kitchener, September 15, 1889 FO407/90/2, NA.
34. Clarke to Salisbury, August 30, 1889 FO407/89/106, NA.
35. Holled Smith to Kitchener, September 15, 1889 FO407/90/2, NA.
36. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 96 (November 27 to December 10, 1889), SAD.
37. Baring to Salisbury, March 2, 1890 FO407/99/70, NA.
38. Baring to Salisbury, February 27, 1890 FO407/99/55, NA.
39. Barnham to Baring, March 5, 1890 FO407/99/83, NA.
40. Barnham to Baring, March 19, 1890 FO407/100/5, NA.
41. Baring to Salisbury, March 2, 1890 FO407/99/70, NA.
42. Barnham to Baring, March 31, 1890 FO407/100/15, NA.
43. Holled Smith to Baring, March 4, 1890 FO 407/100/84, NA.
44. Hardinge to Salisbury, July 26, 1891 FO 407/107/18, NA.
45. Holled Smith to Baring, March 4, 1890 FO407/99/84, NA.
46. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 104 (March 18 to April 1, 1890), SAD.
47. Barnham to Baring, March 5, 1890 FO 407/99/83, NA.
48. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 97 (December 11 to 23, 1889), SAD.
49. Ibid.
50. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 187.
51. This was the second time that Ahmad Mahmud defected to the Mahdist side. The first time was in October 1888 during the early stages of Diqna's siege of Sawakin. Following his first defection, Ahmad Mahmud was sent by Diqna to besiege Rawaya. Ahmad Mahmud subsequently settled at the wells near Rawaya and cut off that Anglo-Egyptian outpost from its water supply. Mahmud 'Ali eventually negotiated Ahmad Mahmud's return into the Anglo-Egyptian fold. See Francis Reginald Wingate, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 363–364 and 449–450.
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53. Ibid.
54. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 103 (March 4 to 17, 1890), SAD.
55. Portal to Salisbury, July 22, 1890 FO407/101/13, NA.

56. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 105 (April 2 to 15, 1890), SAD.
57. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 110 (June 10 to 23, 1890), SAD.
58. Portal to Salisbury, July 22, 1890 FO407/101/13, NA.
59. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 101 (February 4 to 18, 1890), SAD.
60. Barnham to Baring, May 26, 1890 FO407/100/52, NA.
61. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 108 (May 13 to 26, 1890), SAD.
62. Barnham to Baring, May 26, 1890 FO407/100/52, NA.
63. Barnham to Baring, May 30, 1890 FO407/100/52, NA.
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65. *Summary of News*, July 22, 1890 FO407/101/21, NA.
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68. Holved Smith to Foreign Office, August 12, 1890 FO407/101/22, NA.
69. Portal to Salisbury, August 6, 1890 FO407/101/17, NA.
70. Salisbury to Portal, August 15, 1890 FO407/101/23, NA.
71. Portal to Salisbury, August 26, 1890 FO407/101/29, NA.
72. Ibid.
73. Banians and Indians at Suakin to Portal, August 29, 1890 FO407/101/30, NA.
74. Mohamed Ibrahim to Portal, August 31, 1890 FO407/101/30, NA.
75. Herbert Kitchener, "Memorandum," in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 116 (September 2 to 20, 1890), 2, SAD.
76. Portal to Salisbury, August 13, 1890 FO407/101/25, NA.
77. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 112 (July 9 to 21, 1890), SAD.
78. Barnham to Baring, October 18, 1890 FO407/102/10, NA.
79. Ibid.
80. Pain to Grenfell, September 22, 1890 FO407/102/10, NA.
81. Ibid.
82. Hall to Haskins, October 8, 1890 FO407/102/26, NA.
83. Ibid.
84. Portal to Salisbury, August 13, 1890 FO407/101/25, NA.
85. Banians and Indians at Suakin to Portal, August 29, 1890 FO407/101/30, NA.
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87. Barnham to Baring, November 5, 1890 FO407/102/23, NA.
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89. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 123 (December 24, 1890 to January 6, 1891), SAD.
90. Barnham to Baring, January 20, 1891 FO407/106/22, NA.

91. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 124 (January 7 to 21, 1891), SAD.
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93. Baring to Salisbury, January 29, 1891 FO407/106/14, NA.
94. Salisbury to Baring, February 7, 1891 FO407/106/17, NA.
95. Barnham to Baring, February 19, 1891 FO407/106/52, NA.
96. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 192.
97. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, no. 127 (March 1 to 8, 1891), SAD.
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99. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Eastern Sudan*, no. 2 (March 23 to April 1, 1891), SAD.
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101. See Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Eastern Sudan*, no. 2 (March 23 to April 1, 1891) to no. 22 (December 31, 1891 to January 29, 1892), SAD.
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103. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Eastern Sudan*, no. 6 (May 14 to 25, 1891), SAD.
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105. Barnham to Baring, April 29, 1891 FO407/106/78, NA.
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116. Hardinge to Salisbury, July 26, 1891 FO407/107/18, NA.
117. Ibid.
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119. Hardinge to Salisbury, August 16, 1891 FO407/107/36, NA.
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122. Hunter to Grenfell, September 1, 1891 FO407/107/58, NA.
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143. *Report for the Year 1895 on the Trade of Suakin*. Commercial no. 1689 (C7918, 1896), 1–2.
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154. Cromer to Salisbury, March 31, 1896 FO407/136/168, NA.
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156. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report, Egypt*, no. 46 (April 13 to 25, 1896), 4, SAD.
157. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report, Egypt*, no. 47 (April 26 to May 22, 1896), 3, SAD.
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5 Slavery, Anglo-Egyptian Rule, and the Development of the Unified Sudanese Grain Market, 1896–1913

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4. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 199.
5. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report, Egypt* no. 6 (September 1892), 2, SAD.
6. Babikr Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, trans. George Scott (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 222.
7. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report* no. 62 (February 16 to April 30, 1899), 5, SAD.
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18. Signor Crispi’s Speech to the Senate [n.d. July 1894] FO407/127/29, NA.

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23. Gleichen to Wingate, March 16, 1896 SAD261/1/252, NA.
24. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 230.
25. Cromer to Kitchener, June 23, 1896 FO407/138/13, NA.
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29. Rodd to Salisbury, September 23, 1896 FO407/138/63, NA.
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41. Rodd to Salisbury, September 7, 1897 FO407/144/38, NA.
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45. Cromer to Salisbury, November 28, 1897 FO407/144/107, NA.
46. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report* no. 66 (October 6 to November 12, 1897), 8, SAD.
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49. Cromer to Salisbury, March 24, 1898 FO407/146/132, NA.
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51. Badri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, 228.
52. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 232.
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8 Conclusion

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