

PALGRAVE SERIES  
IN INDIAN OCEAN  
WORLD STUDIES



# THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE AFRICAN RED SEA LITTORAL, 1640–1945

*Steven Serels*



# Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies

Series Editor  
Gwyn Campbell  
McGill University  
Montreal, Canada

This is the first scholarly series devoted to the study of the Indian Ocean world from early times to the present day. Encouraging interdisciplinarity, it incorporates and contributes to key debates in a number of areas including history, environmental studies, anthropology, sociology, political science, geography, economics, law, and labor and gender studies. Because it breaks from the restrictions imposed by country/regional studies and Eurocentric periodization, the series provides new frameworks through which to interpret past events, and new insights for present-day policymakers in key areas from labor relations and migration to diplomacy and trade.

More information about this series at  
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14661>

Steven Serels

The Impoverishment  
of the African Red Sea  
Littoral, 1640–1945

palgrave  
macmillan

Steven Serels  
Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien  
Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg  
Halle, Germany

Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies  
ISBN 978-3-319-94164-6      ISBN 978-3-319-94165-3 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94165-3>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018948845

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer International Publishing AG, part of Springer Nature 2018

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: Manfred Thürig / Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While conducting doctoral research in Sudan in 2011, I developed a strong friendship with two students at the University of Khartoum, M. and A. From when we met until I left, they showed me a level of generosity and hospitality that I had not previously experienced. Our conversations over hot tea and cold juice left a lasting impression on me and, ultimately, set me on the path toward writing this book. Both M. and A. were young, smart, and, like most college students, struggling to figure out their futures. The paths that their parents and grandparents had taken were not available to them. This was especially true for A., who came from the western section of the Bisharin Beja. For A., a life based on the traditional pastoralist practices of his ancestors was not feasible. He was in university to earn his degree, build connections, and get a civil service job. Though this plan came at the steep personal price of moving away from his loving kin and community, A. saw it as an act of loyalty to the very people he was leaving behind. A civil service job meant that A. would have a security that he could share with everyone that he loved. It would guarantee that none of them fell into the harsh poverty that one routinely encounters in Sudan. The conversations that we had stuck with me ever since. I want to thank A. for inspiring me to research the history of the pastoralists of the African Red Sea Littoral.

In the nearly six years that it has taken me to research and write this book, I have been helped by a number of individuals and institutions. I came up with the initial proposal for this project while I was a doctoral student at McGill University. I would like to thank my doctoral co-supervisors, Dr. Gwyn Campbell and Dr. Elizabeth Elbourne, for discussing my initial

proposal and helping me formulate my early ideas. I would also like to thank Dr. Campbell and the rest of the students, researchers, and staff at the Indian Ocean World Centre for repeatedly inviting me back to discuss aspects of my research as it was unfolding. I also want to thank the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) at Harvard University for graciously hosting me at the beginning and very end of this project. I need to thank CMES's director, Dr. William Granara, for opening the center up to me. I want to thank Dr. Roger Owen, who served as my postdoctoral supervisor during my first stay at CMES from 2012 to 2014. I also want to thank Dr. Steve Caton and Dr. Chris Desan who arranged for my return to Harvard in 2017 and who offered me support when I needed it. I also want to thank Harvard University's Weatherhead Initiative on Global History, where I was a Global Fellow in 2013/2014. I especially want to thank the initiative's director, Dr. Sven Beckert. I would like to also thank the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), where I was an Associate Research Fellow from 2014 to 2017. I especially want to thank Dr. Ulrike Freitag, the ZMO's director, for all of her support and encouragement. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the ZMO's research group on 'The Politics of Natural Resources' for hosting me while I was at the ZMO. I want to also thank Dr. Burkhard Schnepel for his support and for arranging a home for me at the Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien. Finally, I want to take this opportunity to especially thank Dr. Julia McClure and Dr. Ali Nobil whose friendship has fundamentally transformed the way I think about history.

Researching and writing this book was facilitated by a number of grants, including a Research Scholarship from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung (2016–2018) and Postdoctoral Fellowships from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (2015–2016), the Volkswagen Stiftung (2014–2015), the Weatherhead Initiative on Global History (2013–2014), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2012–2014). During the final steps in bringing this book to publication, I was supported by a Postdoctoral Researchers International Mobility Experience Fellowship the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme. My research would not have been possible without the work of the archivists and librarians who care for the historical record. I would like to thank everyone who works at the National Archive (London), the British Library (London), the Palace

Green Library of Durham University (Durham, UK), the Duke University Library (Durham, NC), the National Records Office (Khartoum), the Archivio Storico Diplomatico (Rome), the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (Florence), the Centre des Archives diplomatiques (Nantes), and the Archives nationales d'outre-mer (Aix-en-Provence).

I would also like to thank my friends and family, whose support was indispensable. I would like to thank my parents, M. Mitchell and Ruth Serels, as well as Alain, Anna, Diana, Dan, Chad, Haeli, Evan, Jordan, Lexi, Ivy, Gabe, Max, and Sam. I want to thank Jefta Van Dinther, Felix Bethge, and Annegret Schalke for making me feel at home in Berlin. I would like to thank Patrick Drouin for always being there for me.



## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The African Red Sea Littoral has historically been a polyglot, cosmopolitan space. The official languages of the four states that currently rule this region are English, Arabic, Tigrinya, French, and Amharic. The pastoralist communities that historically resided in this region speak their own languages—Tu-Bedawi (Beja), Tigré, Saho, and Afar. In deciding between translating and transliterating, I have been guided by the desire to render the text as simple and clear for those readers who do not have a specialized knowledge of each or all of these languages. Generally, I have used the English version of all terms that can be translated without losing their meaning or nuance. I have also used the English names of well-known places, such as Mecca or Port Sudan. I have used the most widely accepted current transliteration of less well-known places and people, rather than archaic older forms of the names. For example, I have used Sawakin rather than Suakin, and Tawkar instead of Tokar. For transliterated terms, I have used a simplified form that leaves out diacritic marks and marks a plural with an ‘s.’

# CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Becoming Poor	1
2	Survival by Conversion, 1640–1840	31
3	Divided and Conquered, 1840–1883	55
4	War, Disease, Famine, Destruction, 1883–1893	75
5	An Unequal Recovery, 1893–1913	101
6	The Cost of Living Becomes Unaffordable, 1913–1945	131
7	Conclusion: Being Poor	165
	Bibliography	179
	Index	195

## ABBREVIATIONS

ANOM	Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence)
ANSA	Africa News Service Archive, Duke University (Durham, NC)
ARSL	African Red Sea Littoral
ASDAE	Archivio Storico Diplomatico, Archivio Eritrea (Rome)
ASDMAI	Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero Africa Italiana (Rome)
BL	British Library (London)
CAD	Centre des Archives Diplomatiques (Nantes)
CFS	la Côte Française des Somalis
FM	Fonds Ministériels
FT	Fonds Territoriaux
IAO	Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (Florence)
IOR	India Office Records
ITCZ	Intertropical Convergence Zone
KCC	Kassala Cotton Corporation
NA	National Archive (London)
NRO	National Records Office (Khartoum)
RFACS	Reports on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of the Sudan
SAD	Sudan Archive Durham
SCCE	<i>Società per la Coltivazione del Cotone nell'Eritrea</i>
SIA	<i>Società Imprese Africane</i>
SPS	Sudan Plantations Syndicate
SRSR	Southern Red Sea Region

## LIST OF MAPS

Map 1.1	The Southern Red Sea Region	5
Map 1.2	The African Red Sea Littoral showing approximate tribal and clan boundaries in the mid-nineteenth century	13
Map 1.3	Key rivers, inland deltas, and coastal ports	16



## CHAPTER 1

---

# Introduction: Becoming Poor

The rains in the African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL) failed throughout the Second World War. Rains here are normally scarce. The ARSL is the arid and semi-arid northeastern section of the Horn of Africa that is bound in the west by the Sudanese Nile, the Atbara River, and the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands, and in the east by the southern half of the Red Sea and the northern half of the Gulf of Tadjoura. Under normal conditions, this region has enough rain to allow for plentiful pastures. However, conditions in the early 1940s were not normal. Year after year, the drought persisted and life became even harsher. Nonetheless, the drying of the land was not total. Water continued to annually flood the torrential rivers that traverse the region. These rivers are fed by the rains in the neighboring highlands of Eritrea and Ethiopia, and these rains did not stop. The limited supply of surface water that flowed down these rivers was a life saver. It allowed pastures to grow along the riverbanks and in the river beds when the floods subsided. Local pastoralist communities also used this water to irrigate fields and grow part of their subsistence. Unfortunately, drought also fosters the formation of locust swarms. In 1943, nearly three years into the drought, a swarm emerged in Northeastern Eritrea and then migrated north into Eastern Sudan. The swarm devoured everything, including the limited vegetation watered by the torrential rivers. When it

passed, almost nothing was left.<sup>1</sup> With no pastures and no residual fodder from cultivation, pastoralists all along the ARSL had no way to save their herds. Animals died in large numbers. The losses were so severe that many pastoralists would never be able to restock.<sup>2</sup> With the death of their animals, dearth turned to famine.

The pastoralist communities that reside in Eastern Sudan and Northeastern Eritrea were already struggling to survive when the locusts arrived. Many of them did not have the resources to weather the drought even in its early years. Staying in the countryside to tend to their animals meant starving. The only way to avoid famine was to migrate to Port Sudan, whose economy was rapidly expanding as a result of the British war effort. Port traffic increased rapidly in the early stages of the war and job opportunities seemed plentiful. Pastoralists who had previously shunned the city migrated in large numbers, causing the population to swell by about 40 percent between 1940 and 1942.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this boom was short-lived. By the time the locusts had arrived, the British military's regional focus had shifted away from the Horn of Africa to Libya. Military resources had been reallocated away from Port Sudan and the economy of the port had quickly contracted. Demand for the casual labor provided by pastoralist had dried up. Though there was no work, conditions in the city were nonetheless more promising than in the countryside.<sup>4</sup> For starving pastoralist refugees, staying in the countryside meant certain death. At least in the city there was hope.

During the 1943 famine, pastoralists in Eastern Sudan and Northeastern Eritrea starved even though grain markets remained well stocked. Pastoral products have only ever made up a small part of the diets of pastoralists from this region. Traditionally, meat was rarely eaten. Butter, milk, and cheese were important parts of pastoralist cuisine, but grain made up the bulk of the caloric intake of pastoralists throughout the ARSL. The most

<sup>1</sup> M. G. Lampen, *Note-Tokar Grain*. 1 January 1944. CIVSEC19/1/2, National Records Office, Khartoum (NRO).

<sup>2</sup> For example, this drought marks the end of camel ownership for the Atmaan Beja. Following the famine, those members of this sub-klan that continued to own animals owned just goats and sheep. Anders Hjort af Ornäs and Gudrun Dahl, *Responsible Man: the Atmaan Beja of North-eastern Sudan* (Uppsala: Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1991), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Perkins, *Port Sudan: The Evolution of a Colonial City* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 195–196.

<sup>4</sup> Perkins, *Port Sudan*, 205; Governor of Kassala Province to Civil Secretary CIVSEC19/1/2 NRO.

common dish was sorghum porridge prepared with salt and either water or milk. In Tu-Bedawi, the language of the Beja of Eastern Sudan, this dish is called *o'tom*. Though diets throughout the ARSL have recently become more diverse, this dish is still widely eaten.<sup>5</sup> In 1943, sorghum was plentiful throughout the region and yet there was also widespread starvation. Pastoralists could not buy the grain they needed. They had become too poor to afford to eat. Those that died were killed by poverty.

A drought like this should not have been deadly. Droughts are normal in the ARSL. Rainfall is variable. There are good years and bad years. It is normal for there to be a succession of bad years. It is also normal for droughts and locust plagues to coincide. Inadequate rainfall lays the groundwork for the formation of locust swarms. As the ground dries and vegetation cover shrinks, hoppers are forced into close proximity to each other. Physically touching each other induces hormonal changes that cause hoppers to change into their gregarious form that swarms and devours everything. These negative environmental conditions are just part of the harsh reality of living in the ARSL. The pastoralist communities from this region have, over centuries, developed their economic and social practices in relation to this harsh reality. These practices had to help these communities weather the normal negative environmental conditions, just as they had to help them profit from the positive ones. The power of these practices eroded as pastoralist communities sunk into poverty. By the Second World War, these communities could get by only during favorable periods. Their poverty meant that they lacked access to the resources necessary to survive even normal unfavorable environmental conditions. Living through a drought is expensive. It often necessitates the expenditure of money, the using up of reserves and the sale of goods—all tactics that, by definition, are unavailable to the poor.

This book examines the history of the impoverishment of ARSL pastoralist communities. These communities were not always poor. They were once crucial players in the vibrant economy of the broader Southern Red Sea Region (SRSR). Maritime winds in the Red Sea south of the 19°N parallel are controlled by the Indian Ocean monsoons and therefore have a distinct seasonality that facilitates open water sailing. North of the 19°N parallel, the winds reflect meteorological patterns in the Mediterranean basin and, therefore, blow from the northwest throughout the year.

<sup>5</sup> Leif Manger, *Survival on Meager Resources: Hadendowa Pastoralism in the Red Sea Hills* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), 87.

Maritime communication in this region was traditionally limited because ships traveling north had to navigate along the coast in order to catch sea-breezes and the region near the shore is hard to navigate as a result of numerous shoals and coral reefs capable of beaching or damaging ships.<sup>6</sup> The intensive maritime links south of the 19°N parallel extended inland over the extensive networks of caravan roads that led from the ports of the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to important inland markets and productive centers in Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Arabia. As a result, the SRSR includes the Yemeni mountains, the Ethiopian highlands, the Somali Ogaden Plateau, the Awash River Valley, the Sudanese Nile up to the historically impassable second cataract, and Western Arabia, the site of the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina (Map 1.1). Historically, the various communities in the SRSR worked together to harness local environmental conditions to develop and sustain a closely linked, multifaceted socio-economic system that transcended ethnic, linguistic, and political divides. Though this system produced wealth and stability, its dismantling has led to poverty, suffering, and political instability. The story of the impoverishment of ARSL pastoralist communities is the story of the decline of the SRSR socio-economic system.

During its Golden Age, the SRSR socio-system was shaped by the interplay of the natural environment and Islamic religious practices. The Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Western Arabia. All Muslims are required, if they are able, to participate in the hajj to Mecca once in their lifetime and many pilgrims choose to travel to Medina. This requirement has maintained human populations in Western Arabia far in excess of the carrying capacity of the land. Less than two percent of modern-day Saudi Arabia is considered potentially arable because there is insufficient surface water to support cultivation outside of a limited number of oases and mountain valleys.<sup>7</sup> The low agricultural potential of Western Arabia ensured that both the local population and the thousands of pilgrims that came every year were, traditionally, dependent on grain imports. The ready demand for surplus grain encouraged intensive cultivation of fertile land in neighboring regions. Though much of the SRSR is

<sup>6</sup>William Patzert, 'Wind-Induced Reversal in Red Sea Circulation,' *Deep Sea Research and Oceanographic Abstracts*, 21:2 (1974): 109–121; John Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010), 53–55.

<sup>7</sup>Ali Johany, Michel Berne, and J. Wilson Mixon Jr., *The Saudi Arabian Economy* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 110.





**Map 1.1** The Southern Red Sea Region

arid or semi-arid, there is sufficient precipitation at high elevations to support agriculture in the highlands of Ethiopia and in Yemen. In addition, rain in the Ethiopian highlands feeds the Nile and a number of other torrential rivers that flow through neighboring lowland regions. The banks of these rivers were historically sites of intensive grain cultivation.<sup>8</sup> These grain surpluses, supplemented by routine imports of grain from elsewhere in the Indian Ocean World, fueled the regional grain trade and allowed for further economic specialization. A number of niche economic activities became entrenched, such as pearl diving and cloth weaving. This specialization increased inter-communal dependence and allowed for the development of complex states in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Yemen.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>8</sup> Steven Serels, *Starvation and the State: Famine, Slavery and Power in Sudan, 1883–1956* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 49.

<sup>9</sup> For studies of these states and the cultures that they supported, see Jay Spaulding, *The Heroic Age in Sinnar* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2007); Richard Pankhurst, *An*

circulation of goods, people, and ideas that underpinned this system was made possible, in no small part, by the ARSL pastoralist communities that controlled transportation between Red Sea ports and the productive centers and major markets in Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands.

This book charts the economic decline of pastoralism as a viable way of life in the ARSL. Since the Second World War, pastoralists have abandoned their traditional practices and settled. Many moved to cities, contributing to the rapid expansion of Kassala, Sinkat, Khartoum, Massawa, Asmara, Djibouti, and Addis Ababa, among others. The demographic history of Port Sudan is particularly illuminating. Before the Second World War, there were approximately 21,000 people living in that city.<sup>10</sup> The population increased to approximately 50,000 in 1948, 80,000 in 1960, and 130,000 in 1973. By the early 1980s, some observers estimated the population of the city at 350,000 people. Over this same period, the ethnic makeup of the port changed. Before the war, the city was mainly populated by migrants from the Sudanese Nile. By the 1960s, pastoralists made up the majority of the population.<sup>11</sup> But, not all pastoralists chose to settle in cities; others chose to settle in fertile zones fed by torrential rivers and dedicated themselves to cultivation. They planted new crops, including exotic fruits, and their harvests were consumed locally and, eventually in ever increasing quantities, exported to Italy, Arabia, and Aden.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, the mass sedentarization of pastoralists did not alleviate the pressure on those that chose to stay in the countryside. A new equilibrium has not been reached. Instead, it further exacerbated the struggle for the limited resources available to pastoralists. Cities in the region are to a large part fueled by locally produced charcoal. As a result, urbanization has been directly linked to the desertification of the surrounding hinterland.<sup>13</sup> Even more troublingly, the expansion of commercial farming in the

*Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1961); and Husayn Amri, *The Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Political and Intellectual History* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Perkins, *Port Sudan*, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Perkins, *Port Sudan*, 237.

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Rochetti, *La Produzione delle Banane in Eritrea*. December 1954 FASC1018, Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare, Florence (IAO).

<sup>13</sup> Ali Taha Ayoub, 'Extent, severity and causative factors of land degradation in the Sudan,' *Journal of Arid Environments*, 38:3 (1998): 397–409; Girma Taddese, 'Land Degradation: A Challenge to Ethiopia,' *Environmental Management*, 27:6 9 (June 2001): 815–824.

ARSL's limited fertile zones prevents pastoralists from coping with ecological crises. These fertile zones historically served as crucial drought pasture reserves, but now they are reserved exclusively for cultivation. Only a small fraction of pastoralists benefit directly from these lands. For example, only 15 percent of the Afar in the Awash River Valley engages in cultivation and the vast majority of these participate as part-time seasonal workers.<sup>14</sup> For most pastoralists, the development of commercial agriculture has resulted in the loss of access to crucial sources of surface freshwater. Pastoralists have been increasingly forced to pasture their herds on marginal land, leading to problems associated with overstocking.<sup>15</sup> As a result, local environmental conditions have rapidly deteriorated. Periodic droughts have further exacerbated the situation. During these droughts, pastoralists have been forced to further increase the concentration of animals on the limited available pastures. Unfortunately, these pastures cannot support the herds and animals have died during droughts in large numbers. For example, the Afar in the Awash River Valley lost 36,000 animals during the 1969–1973 drought.<sup>16</sup> The loss of this animal wealth has led to a series of widespread famines, during which countless numbers of pastoralists starved to death.

Many of those that choose to remain in the countryside lack access to even the minimum amount of resources necessary to sustain themselves. Violence, either in the form of banditry or armed confrontation with the state, has become a key means to seize life-supporting resources that are otherwise inaccessible. The violence that has become endemic to the ARSL since the Second World War has been the subject of some scholarly attention. Scholars tend to frame this violence in terms of political competition and national awakening. Therefore, violence in Eritrea is classed as part of the broader Eritrean struggle for independence from first the British and then Ethiopia. Similarly, violence in Djibouti has been subsumed in the scholarly literature into a broader struggle for Afar access to the state.<sup>17</sup> This scholarship misses the economic dynamics of violence in

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land, a Study of the New Cotton Wealth of the Old Afar Sultanate of Aussa* (Addis Ababa: Huntington Technical Service, 1973), 56.

<sup>15</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 90.

<sup>17</sup> Kassim Shehim and James Searing, 'Djibouti and the Question of Afar Nationalism,' *African Affairs*, 79:315 (April 1980): 209–226; Yasin Mohammed Yasin, *Regional Dynamics of Inter-ethnic Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: An Analysis of the Afar-Somali Conflict in Ethiopia and Djibouti*, Phd. Dissertation, Universität Hamburg (2010); Tekeste Negash and

the ARSL. In fact, contemporary uses of violence were first taken up as an economic tactic and, only later, became politicized. This book shows that the current wave of violence began during the Second World War famine. As a result of specific British military policies, many pastoralist communities felt that they were being deprived of the spoils of war at a time when they needed them most. So, they picked up arms and began attacking their neighbors. Raiding and counter-raiding was especially intense in the border regions of Eastern Sudan and Northern Eritrea<sup>18</sup> and on the outskirts of the Afar triangle.<sup>19</sup> The groups of predatory bandits that emerged during this period of intense resource competition were subsequently brought into larger politically oriented armed coalitions.

The widespread use of these tactics is a sign that pastoralism is in crisis. Though pastoralists have been migrating to cities, focusing on commercial farming, and taking up arms, they have not repudiated pastoralist practices. For many, pastoralism remains a no-longer-attainable ideal. Anthropologists have recorded that the recently sedentarized express a preference for returning to their pastoral practices. Unfortunately, they cannot make this choice; they have been forced by circumstance to abandon practices that they wish they could continue.<sup>20</sup> Tragically, abandoning pastoralism has not brought with it the opportunity to profit from

Kjetil Tronvoll, *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War* (Oxford: Currey, 2000); Alemseged Abbay, *Identity Jilted or Re-imagining Identity?: The Divergent Paths of the Eritrean and Tigrayan Nationalist Struggles* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1998); Nafi Hassan Kurdi, *L'Érythrée: une identité retrouvée* (Paris: Karthala, 1994); Nicole Hirt, *Eritrea Zwischen Krieg und Frieden: Die Entwicklung seit der Unabhängigkeit* (Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde im Verbund Deutsches Übersee-Institut, 2001); Ali Coubba, *Djibouti: Une Nation en Otage* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993); Lionel Cliffe, *The Long Struggle for Eritrean Independence and Constructive Peace* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1988); Philippe Oberlé and Pierre Hugot, *Histoire de Djibouti: Des Origines à la République* (Paris: Éd. Présence Africaine, 1996).

<sup>18</sup>Andrew Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1971), 127–130.

<sup>19</sup>Octave Aubiore. Note sur le conflit qui s'est élevé entre le Gouvernement Ethiopien et la tribue 'Issa.' [n.d. July 1947] FM IAFPOL/3701. Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence (ANOM).

<sup>20</sup>Hassan Mohammed Salih, *The Hadendowa: Pastoralism and the Problems of Sedentarisation*. PhD Thesis, The University of Hull (1976), 209–223; Amal Hassan Fadlalla, *Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007); Janet Milne, 'The Impact of Labour Migration on the Amara in Port Sudan,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 15 (1974): 70–87.

new economic opportunities in cities or in agriculturally productive zones. Sedentarization is a costly process and the opportunities that can arise from it are extremely limited. The example of impoverished pastoralists who settled in Port Sudan is particularly illuminating. The cost of living in Port Sudan over the past half-century has been high.<sup>21</sup> Sedentarizing pastoralists living in the city had to pay for their food, clothing, and fuel and send back remittances. Many recently arrived pastoralists could only afford to live in appalling conditions in semi-formal settlements or shantytowns on the periphery of the city.<sup>22</sup> Even during the economic expansion of the 1960s and 1970s, most sedentarizing pastoralists did not find work in the city. When they did, it was often in marginal trades with meager incomes.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, sedentarizing pastoralists did not return to their rangelands. Instead, they stayed in the city and more joined them because the squalor in the city was better than what they had previously experienced in the countryside. How this came to be is the subject of this book.

The sudden mass sedentarization of pastoralists in the second half of the twentieth century has been the subject of previous academic inquiry. The scholarship on the particular case of pastoralists from the ARSL is part of a much larger literature that seeks to understand why the rural countryside in the Global South has stopped being able to retain its population. Scholars have highlighted a number of push and pull factors that led pastoralists to settle, including the environmental degradation of the countryside caused by overgrazing and deforestation, and the transformation of the economy in ways that robbed pastoralism of its vitality while creating

<sup>21</sup> Perkins, *Port Sudan*, 207–208.

<sup>22</sup> By the early 1950s, government officials had become concerned that conditions in these large and still expanding settlements were unsanitary and were threatening the health of the laborers that kept the port running. As a result, these officials enacted other impediments to pastoralist migration to Port Sudan. These impediments were not meant to completely restrict pastoralists from living in the city. After all, the effective operation of the port was dependent on their labor. Rather, the impediments were designed to create the city as a space for working to earn a living. Pastoral life was to occur elsewhere. In 1948, officials banned cultivation within the city limits. Two years later, officials extended the city limits to include the greenbelt that residents of the city had been using to pasture animals. Perkins, *Port Sudan*, 207–208; B. A. Lewis, 'Diem el Arab and the Beja Stevedores of Port Sudan,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 43 (1962): 16–49.

<sup>23</sup> Milne, 'The Impact of Labour Migration on the Amarar in Port Sudan,' 72.

new opportunities in other sectors.<sup>24</sup> However, this literature on sedentarization has been hampered by a poor understanding of the time scale of the crisis that has befallen the rural South. There is a near uniform consensus that this crisis is a purely modern one—that its origins are located in the twentieth century. Scholars generally do not consider that this crisis may have deeper roots, stretching back centuries. This book offers a new timeline by showing that sedentarization in the twentieth century is the latest manifestation of a slow-moving crisis whose origins, at least in the case of the ARSL, are located as far back as the mid-seventeenth century.

The crisis of pastoralism face is a crisis of poverty. However, pastoralists were not always poor. Their poverty has a history. Demonstrating that poverty in Africa has a history is still a necessary act. Over 30 years after the publication of John Iliffe's groundbreaking *The African Poor: A History* (1988), Africa is still regularly depicted as a continent that has always been and, in all likelihood, will always be poor. But this is just not

<sup>24</sup> For some examples of this work, see Israel Finkelstein and Avi Perevolotsky, 'Processes of Sedentarization and Nomadization in the History of Sinai and the Negev,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 279 (August 1990): 67–88; Avinoam Meir, 'Demographic Transition Theory: A Neglected Aspect of the Nomadism-Sedentarism Continuum,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 11:2 (1996): 199–211; Gudrun Dahl and Anders Hjort, *Pastoral Change and the Role of Drought* (Stockholm: The Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, 1979); Kathleen A. Galvin, 'Transitions: Pastoralists Living with Change,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 38 (October 2009): 185–198; M. B. K. Darkoh, 'The Nature, Causes and Consequences of Desertification in the Drylands of Africa,' *Land Degradation and Development*, 9 (1998): 1–20; Keith T. Weber and Shannon Horst, 'Desertification and Livestock Grazing: The Roles of Sedentarization, Mobility and Rest,' *Pastoralism: Research Policy and Practice*, 1:19 (2011); John McPeak and Peter D. Little, 'Cursed If You So, Cursed If You Don't: The Contradictory Processes of Pastoral Sedentarization in Northern Kenya,' in *As Pastoralists Settle: Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Pastoral Sedentarization in Marsabit District, Kenya*, Elliot Fratkin and Eric Abella Roth, eds. (New York and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2005), 87–104; Peter D. Little, 'Social Differentiation and Pastoralist Sedentarization in Northern Kenya,' *Africa*, 55:3 (July 1985): 243–261; Philip Salzman, ed. *When Nomads Settle: Processes of Sedentarization as Adaptation and Response* (New York: Praeger, 1980); Maknun Gamaledin, 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,' in *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, John Markakis, ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1993), 45–63; John Morton, 'Pastoral Decline and Famine: The Beja Case,' in *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, John Markakis, ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1993), 30–44; and Giorgio Ausenda, *Leisurely Nomads: The Hadendowa (Beja) of the Gash Delta and Their Transition to Sedentary Village Life*. Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University (1987).

true; communities in Africa became poor—in part by the actions of others, in part by their own actions, and in part by natural conditions outside of human control. The history of poverty is not the only history that can be written about Africa, in general, and ARSL pastoralists, in particular. Life on the continent has not been solely defined by the tragedy of structural poverty. Africans, like everyone everywhere, live the full complexity of life. As a result, this book does not capture the totality of the history of lived experiences of ARSL pastoralists. It cannot. Instead, this book offers an excavation of one aspect of the present. It aims to answer one question: What are the historical causes of structural poverty among pastoralists in the ARSL? Answering this question gives only a partial insight into the history of these communities. Nonetheless, answering this question is absolutely crucial at this moment because man-made climate change is already further heightening tensions over access to the ARSL's life-sustaining natural resources. Tragically, conditions are predicted to only get worse.<sup>25</sup>

## PASTORALIST ECONOMICS

The ARSL is currently divided between four countries—Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. These national boundaries do not reflect natural or communal divisions. The artificiality of territorial borders in Africa has been well documented. Nonetheless, these borders pose an epistemological problem for studying the history of the region over *la longue durée*.

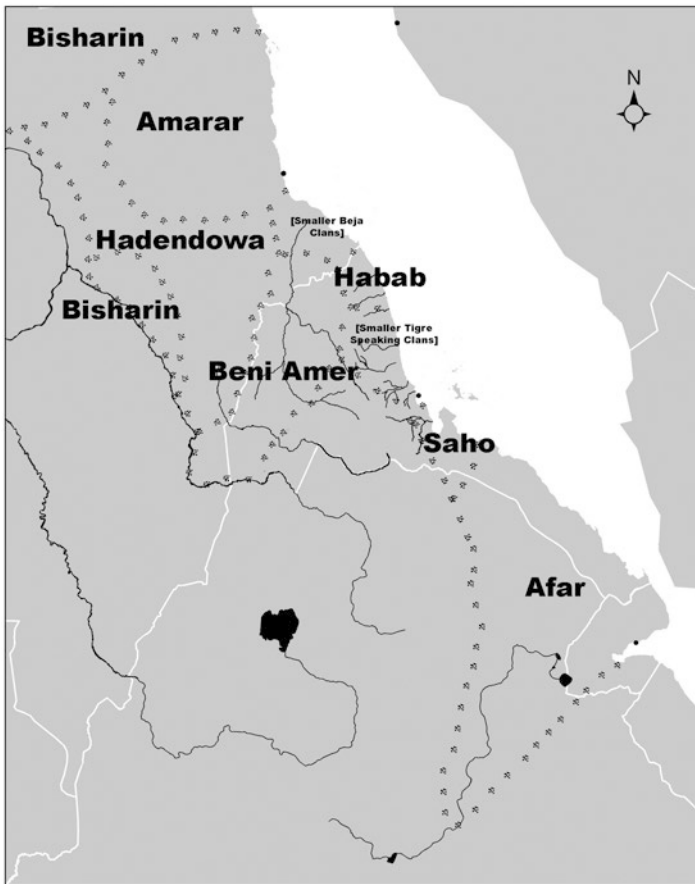
<sup>25</sup> Balgis Osman-Elasha, et al., 'Livelihoods and Drought in Sudan,' in *Climate Change and Vulnerability*, Neil Leary, Cecilia Conde, Jyoti Kulkarni, Anthony Nyong, and Juan Pulhin, eds. (London: Earthscan, 2008), 90–108; M. L. Parrya, C. Rosenzweig, A. Iglesias, M. Livermore, and G. Fischere, 'Effects of Climate Change on Global Food Production under SRES Emissions and Socio-Economic Scenarios,' *Global Environmental Change*, 14:1 (April 2004): 53–67; Gordon McCrangam, Deborah Balk, and Bridget Anderson, 'The Rising Ride: Assessing the Risks of Climate Change and Human Settlements in Low Elevation Coastal Zones,' *Environment and Urbanization*, 19:1 (April 2007): 17–37; Rafael Reuveny, 'Climate Change-Induced Migration and Violent Conflict,' *Political Geography*, 26:6 (August 2007): 656–673; Maarten de Wit and Jacek Stankiewicz, 'Changes in Surface Water Supply Across Africa with Predicted Climate Change,' *Science*, 311:5769 (31 March 2006): 1917–1921; Temesgen Tadesse Deressa and Rashid M. Hassan, 'Economic Impact of Climate Change on Crop Production in Ethiopia: Evidence from Cross-Section Measures,' *Journal of African Economics* (2009): 529–554; Cullen S. Hendrix, and Sarah M. Glaser, 'Trends and Triggers: Climate, Climate Change and Civil Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa,' *Political Geography*, 26:6 (August 2007): 695–715.

While these divisions now have meaning, this meaning is relatively new. These borders did not exist before the late nineteenth-century ‘Scramble for Africa.’ Prior to that, there had been other political divisions—some hard, with concrete on-the-ground impacts, and some more flexible, with limited experienced ramifications. Previous studies of ARSL pastoralists have sidestepped this problem by looking at individual tribes or their subdivision, the clan. Scholars have either overtly or implicitly justified this focus by asserting the primacy of tribal and/or clan identities.<sup>26</sup> Some of the politically important tribes and clans in the ARSL include the Beja (with its main subdivisions the Hadendowa, Bisharin, and Amara), the Beni Amer, the Habab, the Saho, and the Afar (Map 1.2). However, these identities have their own history that is partially captured by the progressive transformation of oral genealogies passed down from generation to generation by pastoralists themselves. Remembering and repeating these genealogies has been shown to be a creative act of community construction that legitimates recent transformations of communal identity in terms of an imagined past. The changes are sometimes subtle, but they map onto significant shifts—such as the emergence of new groups, the disappearance of old ones, the integration of foreigners, the conquest of territory, and the loss of autonomy.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Some examples of this kind of scholarship include Abdulkader Saleh Mohammad, *The Saho of Eritrea: Ethnic Identity and National Consciousness* (Münster: Lit, 2013); Gurdun Dahl and Anders Hjort-af-Ornäs, ‘Precolonial Beja: A Periphery at the Crossroads,’ *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 15:4 (2006): 473–498; Frode F. Jacobsen, *Theories of Sickness and Misfortune among the Hadandowa Beja of the Sudan: Narratives as Points of Entry into Beja Cultural Knowledge* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998); Fadlalla, *Embodying Honor*; Leif Manger, *Survival on Meagre Resources*; A. H. Bakhit and Omer Hayati, ‘The Hadendowa Salif: Successes and Failures of Indigenous Cultural Institutions in Managing the Food System,’ *GeoJournal*, 36:1 (1995): 87–92; Hassan Mohamed Salih, ‘Struggle for the Delta: Hadendowa Conflict over Land Rights in the Sudan,’ *Nomadic Peoples*, 34/35 (January 1994): 147–157; Kelemework Tafere, *Indigenous Institutions of Conflict Resolution among the Ab’ala Afar of North-eastern Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2006); Ali Coubba, *Les Afars: de la Préhistoire à la Fin du XVe Siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004); Didier Morin, *Dictionnaire Historique Afar: 1288–1982* (Paris: Karthala, 2004); Getachew, *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia*; Marcel Chailley, *Notes sur les ‘Afar de la Région de Tadjoura* (Paris: Académie des Sciences d’Outre-Mer, 1980); I. M. Lewis, *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Saho*, 2nd Edition (London: The International African Institute, 1994); and Bekele Hundie, *Pastoralism, Institutions and Social Interaction: Explaining the Coexistence of Conflict and Cooperation in Pastoral Afar, Ethiopia* (Aachen: Shaker, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Mohammad, *The Saho of Eritrea*, 57; Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 50.





**Map 1.2** The African Red Sea Littoral showing approximate tribal and clan boundaries in the mid-nineteenth century

Many scholars have discovered what the creative pastoralist retellers of oral genealogies already knew—collective identities can change over time. Terence Ranger has gone so far as to claim that the very notion of ‘tribe’ was invented for Africans by European colonial agents and given form under specific twentieth-century programs of indirect rule. According to Ranger, and the many scholars who have followed in his footsteps, Europeans saw Africans as organized into tribes because their racist

expectations led them to believe that the primary African identity was tribal. This belief was then inscribed into laws, ordinances, colonial reports, governing practices, and ethnographies that, in turn, compelled Africans to take their tribe as their primary identity. While there is some appeal to this narrative, this line of reasoning assumes that Africans lacked any agency in their own historical development. There have been efforts by other scholars to chart a middle ground between assuming that tribal identities are primordial and asserting that they were completely invented. The most coherent such effort came from Thomas Spears, who argued that ethno-political tribal identities prefigured colonial rule and, as a result, could form a shared space of discursive understanding between European officials and their African subjects.<sup>28</sup> Despite their points of conflict, Spears and Ranger agree that tribal identities changed through colonialism. Their work, and the work that has come after it, has demonstrated that the economic, political, religious, and social significance of collective identities in Africa have a history. Therefore, one cannot simply take them as the neutral frame of reference when writing history.

This book avoids these epistemological problems by focusing on a set of communities with shared patterns of human-environment interaction. Though the ARSL is not environmentally uniform, there are a number of structurally significant and regionally consistent environmental conditions. First, the ARSL is hot. This region contains the hottest place on earth—the Danakil Depression in the Afar Triangle. Temperatures in the depression can reach as high as 50 °C. Other parts of the ARSL are, relatively speaking, cooler, but they are nonetheless very hot. For example, the Eritrean port of Massawa has an average annual temperature of 29 °C and in July (the hottest month) the average temperature is 34.3 °C. The one cool zone within the ARSL can be found in the Red Sea Hills, a mountain chain that runs parallel to the coastline along the Sudanese littoral. The high elevations in these mountains bring slightly cooler temperatures. For example, Sinkat, located approximately 850 m above sea level, experiences temperatures that are, on average, 3 °C cooler than neighboring lowland coastal towns.

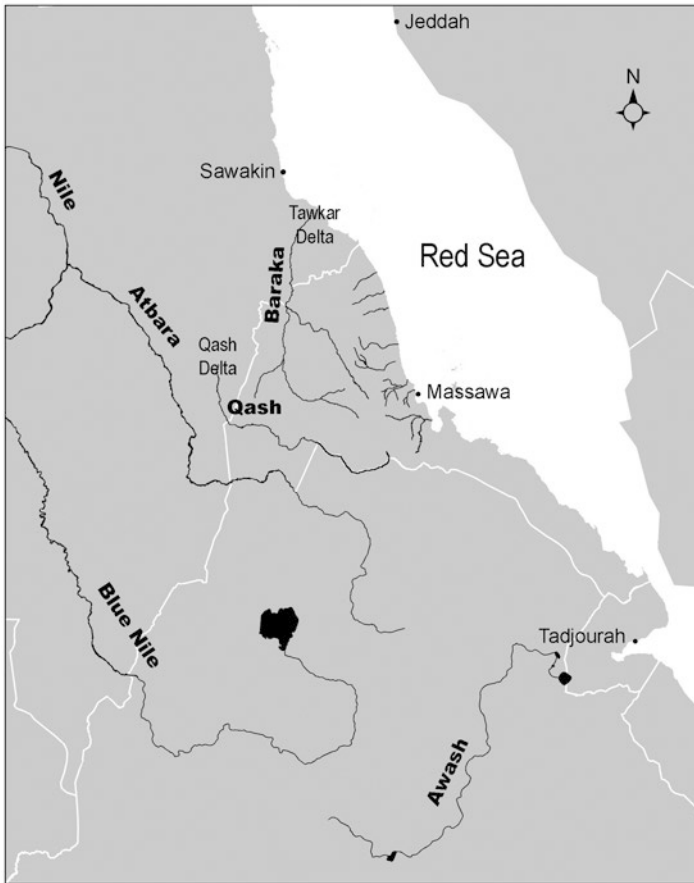
<sup>28</sup> For the originating texts of this debate, see Terence Ranger, 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,' in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–262, and Thomas Spears, 'Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,' *The Journal of African History*, 44:1 (2003): 3–27.

Second, this region is dry. The average amount of rainfall across the ARSL is less than 200 mm per year. Along the coast, the rainy season typically lasts from December to February. In inland Eastern Sudan, the rainy season is in the summer and lasts from July to September.<sup>29</sup> Generally, rainfall is too limited and erratic to allow for rainfed cultivation. The rain does, however, allow for the flourishing of pastures suitable for grazing animals. Since the rains are limited and seasonally concentrated, there are extended periods where there are no pastures. In addition, the limited rains in the wet period ensure that there is no way to grow sufficient quantities of fodder to weather the dry period. As a result, ensuring adequate food for domesticated animals requires moving herds toward pastures as they become available. There are two overlapping transhumance patterns in the ARSL—east-west and low-high. The east-west pattern is only possible in Eastern Sudan, where rains fall in the summer in the western part and in the winter in the more eastern part. The low-high pattern, on the other hand, is more commonly pursued. This pattern takes advantage of the cooler, wetter climates at higher elevations. Pastoralists keep their animals in the lowlands when there are available pastures there. When these are used up, pastoralists drive their animals up, either to the mist oases at high elevations in the Sudanese Red Sea Hills or, more commonly, up the escarpments of the Ethiopian and Eritrean highlands.

The highlands also are the source of a number of torrential rivers that flow through the ARSL. The summer rains in the highlands drain down the slopes and collect into streams that in turn collect into rivers as they continue to flow from high to low elevations. The most important river to flow down from the Ethiopian highlands is the Blue Nile, whose ebb and flow controls the annual Nile flood. Though the waters of the Nile have long been claimed by settled communities of cultivators, pastoralists depend on the water from a number of other rivers that flow from the highlands, including the Atbara, Gash (Mareb), Barka, Anseba, Haddas, Wokiro, and Awash. With the exception of the Atbara and the Awash, these rivers are dry for most of the year. Water flows through these rivers only in short torrential spates following the highland rains. The Gash and the Barka are especially important because they drain into large inland deltas—the Gash into an eponymous delta and the Barka

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive study of environmental conditions in the Red Sea, see Najeeb M. A. Rasul and Ian C. F. Stewart, eds. *The Red Sea: The Formation, Morphology, Oceanography and Environment of a Young Ocean Basin* (New York: Springer, 2015).

into the Tawkar Delta, which is named after the prominent neighboring town (Map 1.3). All of the rivers that flow down from the highlands have relatively large collection basins in the highlands ensuring that there is always some water that flows even during the dry years. ARSL pastoralist communities have fully capitalized on this by treating these rivers as drought pasture reserves. Andrew Gibbs has called the Awash River in Ethiopia, for example, “a refuge of last resort, a place to retreat to with



**Map 1.3** Key rivers, inland deltas, and coastal ports

diminishing herds, to wait out the deadening hand of drought.”<sup>30</sup> Similar strategies have been demonstrated to be pursued by pastoralist communities in Sudan and Eritrea.<sup>31</sup>

There is sufficient water in these torrential rivers and inland deltas, as well as in a few locally fed wadis, to allow pastoralists to cultivate some crops, including sorghum and millet. Historically, pastoralists used low-input cultivation methods that allowed them to engage in farming while concentrating on their herds. These pastoralists did not use artificial irrigation to water their land. Rather, they worked only land that was watered by the natural flow of water down from highlands into the lowlands. They also did little to prepare the land for seeding. Instead, at the opportune moment after the waters had receded, pastoralists either broadcast their seeds or used a bore stick to plant them in the newly deposited silt. They also did not weed or otherwise tend to their crops as they grew. Many migrated away from their fields after sowing, returning only when the crop was ready to be harvested.<sup>32</sup> These low-labor input techniques did not allow for yield maximization. However, their use ensured that little was lost if the crops failed or if drought forced pastoralists to pasture their herds on the planted fields. Sacrificing crops to ensure the health of herds during a drought ensured that temporary periods of hardship did not have permanent consequences. Herds were structurally important to pastoralist economic strategies. Maintaining their health was, under certain conditions, more important than maintaining optimal nutrition. Pastoralists in the ARSL were not unique in adopting this strategy. Alex de Waal has shown that even during severe famines in Darfur “households spent only a fraction of their potential income on food. Their priority was instead to preserve their way of life, to avoid destitution... Farmers strove to keep

<sup>30</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 1; Similar claims have been made by Gamaledin, ‘The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,’ 45–63; Glynn Flood, ‘Nomadism and its Future: the “Afar” Rehab,’ in *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia*, Abdul Majid Hussein, ed. (London: The International African Institute, 1976), 64–66.

<sup>31</sup> See M. E. Abu Sin, ‘Environmental Causes and Implications of Population Displacement in Sudan,’ in *War and Drought in Sudan; Essays on Population Displacement*, Etligani E. Eltigani, ed. (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 11–22; Morton, ‘Pastoral Decline and Famine; The Beja Case,’ 30–44; and Muneera Salem-Murdock, *The Impact of Agricultural Development on a Pastoral Society: The Shukriya of the Eastern Sudan* (New York: Institute for Development Anthropology, 1979).

<sup>32</sup> Isaia Baldrati, *Le Condizioni agricole della valle del Barca* (Florence: Edizioni dell’istituto agricolo colonial italiano, 1911). With sedentarization, weeding and other yield-maximizing techniques have become more common and are now widely observed. Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 117–118.

enough resources to be able to cultivate during the rainy season and herders struggled to keep their animals alive.” Cattle owners would make sure that their herds were fed, even when this meant that they themselves would go hungry.<sup>33</sup>

ARSL pastoralists were extremely mindful of effective herd management. They developed techniques that allowed them to economically exploit their animals while maintain the overall health of their herd. The most important animals in a herd are the breeding stock and the milk-producing females. Breeding stock produced new animals. Milking females could be used to produce ghee, which was an important trade commodity throughout the greater SRSR. Breeding females were rarely killed or sold. Under normal conditions, only females past their breeding age and males not needed as studs would be killed. Animals of these two types could be sold for slaughter or, on special occasions, be eaten. Their hides were dried in the open air, often without being salted. The hides were then sold or bartered. Some pastoralists used the hides they produced to make leather goods, such as shoes and shields. The hides of goats were made into water bladders, which were in high demand throughout the greater SRSR and therefore fetched high prices. John Lewis Burckhardt, the famed Swiss traveler, observed that in the early nineteenth century a water bladder sold at Jeddah for the equivalent price of a whole sheep sold at Sawakin.<sup>34</sup>

Leather goods, meat, animals, and ghee were not the only commodities that ARSL pastoralists produced. Some pastoralists also harvested salt and dates, both of which occupied important places in SRSR trade. Dates were the only form of sweetness for most of the population of this region. Eating sweet dates offset the monotony of a diet that consisted primarily of grain porridge. Other forms of sweetness, such as honey, fruit, and sugar, were expensive or exceedingly hard to come by and, therefore, often reserved for elites. Dates were harvested from date palms. Unlike in neighboring Arabia, pastoralists in the ARSL did not individually cultivate their date palms. Individual cultivation would have ensured large regular yields from a smaller number of male date palms. However, pastoralists did not employ this yield maximization technique. Rather, they let the wind

<sup>33</sup> Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>34</sup> John Lewis Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, Second edition (London: J Murray, 1822), 396–398.

fertilize their palms. As a result, female date palms produced only about four clusters per year. The resulting dates were of inferior quality and, therefore, were eaten within the region instead of exported to the broader Indian Ocean World. The long-distance date trade was generally reserved for better quality fare.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, salt was a commodity harvested by pastoralists that was part of a deep and far-reaching trade. Like dates, salt is also a flavor enhancer. Unlike dates, salt is necessary for survival. A diet too low in salt can result in serious mental and physical health problems. As a result, salt is a necessary component of any diet. In addition, in some parts of the Ethiopian highlands, salt bars, known as *amolé*, were used until the mid-twentieth century as money in settling medium-scale market transactions. These salt bars were produced by Afar pastoralists, who mined the salt in the Danakil Depression.<sup>36</sup> Though *amolé* production was exclusively the purview of a limited number of Afar pastoralists, harvesting salt from natural salt pans was practiced by every pastoralist community with claims to coastal territory. Pastoralists consumed only a small fraction of the Red Sea salt that they harvested. The rest was bartered for grain and other goods from passing merchants, who then sold the salt in markets along the caravan route. There was a consistent high demand for Red Sea salt throughout the SRSR because this salt was the only significant source of dietary salt for local communities.<sup>37</sup>

Pastoralists played another structurally important role in the economy of the SRSR; they rented out, drove, and guided the camels that carried goods and people between Sudan and Ethiopia on the one hand and the Red Sea ports on the other. This caravan trade included both products produced within the SRSR as well as foreign goods from elsewhere in the Indian Ocean World. The monsoon winds that facilitated maritime sailing in the SRSR also allowed ships to make, in one year, the round-trip

<sup>35</sup> Ugo Bolsi, 'Note Economiche su la Dancalia Italiana Settentrionale,' *Ressegna delle Coonie*, 14:1–2 (January–February 1936): 1–25.

<sup>36</sup> Salt bars, along with lengths of cotton cloth and rods of iron, were important currencies in Ethiopia for centuries prior to the Italian invasion in 1935 and the post-WWII monetary reforms introduced by Haile Selassie. Richard Pankhurst, 'The 'Primitive Money' in Ethiopia,' *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, 32:2 (1962): 213–248.

<sup>37</sup> Renato Paoli, *Le condizioni commerciali dell'Eritrea* (Novara: Istituto Geografico de agostini, 1913), 28–29.

journey from western India to SRSR ports.<sup>38</sup> The caravan trade was literally life sustaining. The caravans that carried goods from the sea to major inland market centers also carried the grain that pastoralists ate. The merchants passing with the caravans were the principal purchasers of pastoral products, which the merchants then sold on in distant markets. These merchants did not own the camels that carried their goods. Rather, they rented them. These merchants also had to hire camel drivers and guides. Providing these services was very lucrative for pastoralists. Unfortunately, complete historical statistics do not exist. Nonetheless, the size of the income can be estimated for the second half of the nineteenth century when statistics are more readily available. On just the Sawakin to Barbar route in Eastern Sudan, between 500 and 1000 camels left Sawakin for the interior every few months.<sup>39</sup> Pastoralists charged merchants seven Maria Theresa thalers per camel on this route.<sup>40</sup> As a result, pastoralists could make up to 7000 thalers per caravan. Sawakin was not the only port visited by caravans. The caravan trade out of Massawa was similarly intense.<sup>41</sup> In addition, there were also a number of other, smaller ports such as Obock, Arkiko, and Assab.

Pastoralists augmented their profits from trade with economic rents that they were able to collect by virtue of their claim to the territory between the coast and inland markets. All people and goods traveling overland to or from the coast had to pass through pastoralist territory. As a result, pastoralists were able to extract fees for using the roads, for accessing wells, and for protection on the way. Since caravan routes often passed through the territory of a number of communities, pastoralist leaders tended to cooperate in establishing rates and collecting fees. For example, the Barbar-Sawakin caravan route passes through territory claimed by a number of Amara and Hadendowa clans. Nonetheless, at the end of the

<sup>38</sup> Ashin Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants and Trade in the Indian Ocean, c. 1500–1750,' in *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59–87; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> David Roden, 'The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 51 (1970): 4.

<sup>40</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of Sudan*, 106.

<sup>41</sup> Hay to Secretary to the Admiralty 28 June 1884 FO 407/62/4 National Archive, London (NA).



nineteenth century, the *nazir* of the Amara was solely responsible for the collection of fees and their equitable reapportionment. Though coordination allowed pastoralists to work together to maximize their economic rents, competition between routes acted as a limiting factor on the amount that could be extracted. There were multiple routes between inland markets and the coast, with each route passing through the territory of a different set of pastoralist communities. For example, a caravan leaving from Shandi in Sudan for Sawakin in the sixteenth century could choose between the Shandi-Barbar-Sawakin route and the Shandi-Tawkar-Sawakin. Caravan leaders also could decide to avoid one port in favor of another. A caravan leaving Nilotic Sudan could choose to go to Massawa instead of Sawakin if the routes to Sawakin proved too expensive. Similarly, a caravan leaving Mekele could choose Massawa or Assab.

Pastoralists simultaneously pursued a complex set of economic strategies built upon access to a diverse basket of resources, which included camels, cattle, goats, sheep, fertile land, local rainwater, wells, river water, salt deposits, and date trees. The complexity acted as a kind of insurance. Since economic and environmental conditions have always been variable, it was normal for conditions to be such that some of these resources, in any given year, could not be profitably exploited. These strategies were designed so that there was no normal, foreseeable and regularly occurring set of adverse conditions that could cause the exploitation of every one of these resources to fail simultaneously. Pastoralists developed a set of economic strategies that allowed them to nimbly shift their efforts to compensate for normal variability. For example, if crops failed, pastoralists could focus more on trade. If trade failed, they could rely more heavily on subsistence production. Though pastoralists still struggled during periods of adverse normal economic and environmental conditions, these periods did not pose an existential threat to individual health and communal integrity.

A further level of insurance was embedded in the social and political structures that determined access to these resources. This access was based on the flexible concentricity of pastoralist identities. Individual pastoralists self-identified as members of families, homesteads, age groups, sub-clans, clans, and tribes. These concentric identities were not mutually exclusive. At each level, there were mechanisms for both coordination with other group members and dealing with outsiders. These identities could be activated in different ways and at different times in order to access different resources. As a result, corporate strategies that mobilized different

identities often articulated with each other. For example, herds were the property of an individual household and the right to profit from exploiting any one herd was apportioned throughout the household in ways that were mediated by sex and age. Nonetheless, maintaining herds required the mobilization of the head of household's clan or sub-clan identity because households did not own pastures. Instead, pastures were the collective property of the clan or sub-clan. Households whose heads were members of the clan or sub-clan had the free right to graze their animals on communal land. Outsiders had to pay a fee to the leadership of the clan or sub-clan for similar access.<sup>42</sup> As a result, access to resources was shaped by a web of dependency that was underpinned by a complex set of reciprocal social obligations. Dependency stretched across identitarian divisions and bound pastoralists to other communities within the broader Red Sea region, including cultivators, state elites, religious men, merchants, craftsmen, and so on. The distribution of resources, and with it the ability of each person to command sufficient grain to ensure survival, was shaped by a moral economy, which, to quote E. P. Thompson's characterization of a similar system in pre-modern England, was "grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic function of several parties within the community."<sup>43</sup> The web of dependence that undergirded this moral economy ensured the minimally equitable distribution of life-supporting resources. During periods of plenty, relations of dependence sanctioned the appropriation by elites of a part of the surplus produced by their dependents. However, in times of dearth, the flow was reversed and elites were expected to provide support for as long as was needed. This was true at all levels—that is, on the level of the household, community, clan, tribe, and state.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Kassa Negussie Getachew, *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-Economic Change* (Utrecht: International Books, 2001), 39–45; Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, 57; Salih, *The Hadendowa*, 44–52; Kassa Negussie Getachew, 'Resource Conflicts Among the Afar of North-East Ethiopia,' in *African Pastoralism: Conflict, Institutions and Government*, M. A. Mohamed Salih, Ton Dietz, and Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed, eds. (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 145–171.

<sup>43</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,' *Past and Present*, 50 (February 1971): 79.

<sup>44</sup> This was not just true for pastoralists in the ARSL. This was true for communities throughout the broader Red Sea region. See Richard Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia Prior to the Twentieth Century* (Addis Ababa: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, 1985), 51–55; Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 208–209.

## UNDERSTANDING PASTORALIST POVERTY

The protections afforded by the web of dependency and built into the moral economy of pastoralism in the ARSL have eroded. Without this form of welfare, many communities now experience a kind of want that had not existed in the past. Impoverished ARSL pastoralist communities now often lack access to the resources necessary to ensure their own survival. Scholarly inquiry into the causes and consequences of this shift has been hindered by poor understandings of the nature of poverty. Academics and lay people alike have come to conventionally define poverty as an income shortfall. The poor in the developing world are often described as those living on less than US\$1 or US\$2 per day. However, there is no empirical basis for fixing the poverty line at these amounts. Such a boundary has been shown to inadequately reflect behavior patterns and access to life-sustaining resources.<sup>45</sup> This points to an uncomfortable truth about poverty as a concept. As Frances Stewart, Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, and Ruhi Saith so succinctly write, “while many of the methodological elements, which are part of a monetary poverty assessment, are derived from economic theory (e.g. the literature on equivalence scales) poverty in itself is *not* an economic category. Though efforts have been made to identify natural breaks between poor and non-poor based on some behavioral characteristics, none is fully satisfactory in pointing to a unique poverty line.”<sup>46</sup> Though it has the veneer of economic language, poverty is not a scientifically defined term. Nonetheless, there is still value in recognizing that there are fundamental differences between the poor and the not-poor.

There are fundamental constraints on the lives of the poor that are derived specifically from their status as poor. Amartya Sen has concisely characterized poverty as a condition that reduces the ‘basic capabilities’ needed to live a full life—that is, that reduces “the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Sanjay Reddy and Thomas Pogge, ‘How not to Count the Poor,’ in *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty*, Sudhir Anand and Paul Segal, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 42–85.

<sup>46</sup> Frances Stewart, Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi and Ruhi Saith, ‘Introduction: Four Approaches to Defining and Measuring Poverty,’ in *Defining Poverty in the Developing World*, Frances Stewart, Ruhi Saith, and Barbara Harriss-White, eds. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 14.

<sup>47</sup> Amartya Sen, ‘Capability and Well-Being,’ in *The Quality of Life*, M. Nussbaum and A. Sen, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 40. See also Amartya Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities* (New York: North Holland, 1985).

This insight has been developed by Sen and other subsequent scholars into the human capabilities approach to poverty. Nonetheless, this approach is no more scientific than the poverty line one. Determining which ‘functionings’ are ‘crucially important’ and what level is ‘minimally adequate’ requires subjective judgment. As a result, there have been numerous attempts at creating the definitive list of basic capabilities.<sup>48</sup> Though there is a lack of scholarly consensus about the precise composition of the definitive list of human capacities, there is a broad consensus that there are fundamental differences between the poor and the not-poor with regards to (1) their access to sufficient life-supporting resources; (2) their command of social-capital; (3) their ability to maintain human health; and (4) their resilience in the face of routine adverse conditions. These four fundamental differences point to a meaningful definition of poverty that can account for differences in behavior and outcomes for the poor and the not-poor as conditions change over time. The not-poor have sufficient access to life-supporting resources through a combination of market means and social capital that they are able to maintain their own relative health both during good times and during periods of routine, normal adverse conditions. The poor are all those who do not meet this standard. This definition accounts for the fact that normal conditions are not static and that the range of normal can include droughts, locust plagues, and disease. Historically, ARSL pastoralist communities employed strategies that ensured their individual and communal security during the totality of the range of normal conditions. These strategies have broken-down and many have come to experience routine adverse conditions as severe disasters.

The crisis of pastoralism in the ARSL is not simply a twentieth-century phenomenon. It began long before, as previous scholars have claimed, European colonial rule, the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programs, or man-made climate change. Scholars have misrecognized the origins of this crisis because they have not taken into account the fullness of the history of pastoralism on the ARSL. Scholars consciously or unconsciously tend to present this history as in just two parts—an unchanging period

<sup>48</sup> Meghnad Desai, ‘Poverty and Capability: Towards an Empirically Implementable Measure,’ in *Poverty, Famine and Economic Development: the Selected Essays of Meghnad Desai*, Aldershot, ed. (UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1995), 185–204; Len Doyal and Ian Gough, *A Theory of Human Need* (New York: Palgrave, 1991); Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen’s Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

that ended with the ‘Scramble for Africa’ and a modern period during which the crisis took hold. However, there is a pre-colonial history to pastoralism. Like all people everywhere, ARSL pastoralists have a rich history. It should go without saying that the way pastoralists lived in the sixteenth century differed from how they lived in the eighteenth century, which differed from how they lived in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, there has not been a previous attempt to systematically recover this history. As a result, the links between the current crisis and the more distant past have been previously obscured. This book traces that history.

Anthropogenic climate change is not the first environmental threat to the welfare of ARSL pastoralists. In fact, the history of poverty among these pastoralists is the history of the long-term consequences of earlier environmental changes. Though the ARSL has always experienced environmental variability, there have been periods prior to the Anthropocene during which environmental conditions fluctuated outside of preexisting norms. Two abnormal environmental disasters played crucial roles in setting off and subsequently driving the process of impoverishment. The first was a nearly 200-year-long mega-drought that began around 1640. This mega-drought is associated with a global climatological shift that is commonly referred to as the ‘Little Ice Age.’ Recently, the term ‘Little Ice Age’ has come under attack by scholars who have shown that there is little evidence of a sustained drop in global temperatures between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries.<sup>49</sup> However, this critique only shows that the term ‘Little Ice Age’ may anachronistically focus too closely on temperature shifts. Scholars have definitively demonstrated that between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century there was an increased incidence of global multiannual climatological anomalies that had devastating social, economic, and political consequences throughout Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia.<sup>50</sup> In the ARSL, the Little Ice Age was marked by an unprecedented mega-drought. The length and severity of this mega-drought overwhelmed the coping strategies of pastoralist communities.

The second key abnormal environmental disaster was the introduction of rinderpest at the end of the nineteenth century. Animal diseases are normal. For as long as communities in the ARSL have kept domesticated

<sup>49</sup> Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó. Gráda, ‘Debating the Little Ice Age,’ *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 45:1 (2014): 57–68.

<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

animals, they have had to deal with the reality that their animals can become sick. There are a number of animal diseases that have long been enzootic to the region, including anthrax and cowpox. However, rinderpest was different. Rinderpest was not previously enzootic to the ARSL. This disease kills 90 percent of infected cattle in virgin herds, such as those that had existed in the ARSL. Rinderpest was introduced into sub-Saharan Africa via Massawa in 1887 when the Italian military unknowingly imported infected cows. The disease quickly spread, first to Ethiopia and then Sudan the following year. It eventually made its way across Africa, reaching South Africa around 1896. As the disease spread, cattle died in large numbers. The epizootic was especially devastating in the ARSL because cattle served a number of functions. Maintaining and expanding herds was a means of storing money and investing it with interest in the form of baby calves. Cattle were a tool of production that could be exploited to produce milk, ghee, and hides. Loaning cattle out solidified inter- and intra-communal bonds. Further, cultivators throughout the greater SRSR depended on cattle for their labor power. They pulled the plows and drove the water wheels. When 90 percent of the cattle died, pastoralist wealth evaporated and yields cratered. The economy of the greater SRSR collapsed. The result was a devastating famine during which two-thirds of the population died in some areas, including the ARSL.

This book charts this process of impoverishment from its origins in the Little Ice Age mega-drought until the end of the Second World War. The chapters are organized chronologically. Chapter 2 examines the ways that ARSL pastoralist communities responded to the mega-drought as it was occurring. The mega-drought was unlike other environmental hazards to which these communities were accustomed. Under normal unfavorable conditions, only some of the pastoralist economic strategies and resource exploitation techniques would be rendered ineffective. However, during the mega-drought nearly all were. Pastures dried up. Cultivated plants would not grow. Neighboring states collapsed. The economy of the greater SRSR shrunk. The Indian Ocean monsoons repeatedly failed and the region was cut off from long-distance trade. The bonds of dependence that had structured pastoralist society attenuated and, in many cases, snapped under the new pressure. Traditional pastoralist leaders stopped being able to provide for their dependents in their times of need. Generation after generation tried making small changes to traditional practices, but pastoralists still suffered. By the end of the eighteenth century, pastoralists were open to change. At the start of the nineteenth

century, pastoralists converted *en masse* to a new form of Sufi Islam that purported to offer an innovative set of environmental management tools. Conversion resulted in the creation of new webs of dependence that bound pastoralists to new religious elites instead of to traditional pastoralist leaders.

Chapter 3 follows the legacy of the mega-drought after the return of wetter conditions in 1840. The mega-drought fundamentally transformed the balance of power in the region. During the drought, the rulers of neighboring Egypt successfully reformed a number of natural resource management techniques in ways that allowed them to increase their economic and military power even as surrounding countries suffered. Over the same time, states in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Arabia collapsed under the stress of the mega-drought. As wetter conditions returned, the Egyptian state profited from this power vacuum by conquering much of the greater SRSR, including the ARSL. Pastoralist communities, which had historically been able to flexibly maneuver in ways that allowed them to maintain their autonomy, were unable on their own to mount an effective resistance to Egypt's imperial expansion. Two factors caused the weakness of this response. First, pastoralists had not yet recovered from the mega-drought. Second, they were not a unified front. Rather, traditional pastoral leaders and new religious elites were locked in a power struggle, which Egyptian officials manipulated to their advantage. Egyptian officials turned both groups against their own followers by offering to protect their privilege in exchange for their collaboration in economically exploiting the already suffering population.

Chapter 4 shows that these alliances of exploitation further destabilized pastoralist society because it bred division and discontent. These policies ultimately precipitated an extremely violent civil war in the 1880s. Conventionally, historians subsume this war within broader narratives of the 'Scramble for Africa' and the establishment of European colonial control over the region. However, such narratives mistake the outcome for the process. The war was initially a battle between pastoralist factions. European powers were, at the onset of the fighting, weak and ineffective. Nonetheless, they were brought into the conflict by pastoralist leaders seeking external sources of arms, ammunition, provisions, and, occasionally, military support. This aid helped revive the bonds of dependence within pastoralist society that had acted as a social safety net before Turko-Egyptian rule. The leaders of these various pastoralist factions used the support that they received to create militias. In turn, these militias became

conduits for ensuring that dependents were taken care of during the war. These relationships of dependence were especially important because the war further destabilized the regional economy. Fighting caused trade to stop and turned pastures into battlefields. Violence quickly became the only viable economic strategy. The dynamics of the war shifted abruptly after the introduction of rinderpest in 1887. The ensuing mass-cattle death caused a widespread, deadly famine that decimated the pastoralist population. The social fabric was ripped apart and pastoralist communities collapsed. Those pastoralists that survived were left to fend for themselves.

Chapter 5 looks at the process of rebuilding pastoralist society during the approximately two decades that followed the epizootic/famine. This process took place as British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian officials were dividing the ARSL between their respective empires. Though these officials were eager to delineate the new colonial borders, they were not interested in investing the resources necessary to effectively administer every part of their newly claimed territory. This translated into officials in all four empires adopting practices and policies in the ARSL similar to those of the previous Turko-Egyptian administration. Traditional pastoralist leaders and Islamic religious elites were given salaries and other types of official support in exchange for administering their communities in ways that would be advantageous to the colonial government. This exogenous source of wealth and privilege allowed traditional pastoralist leaders and Islamic religious elites to guide the process of reconstructing their destroyed communities. They did not use this exogenous power to support the radically new initiatives to create non-hierarchical animal-sharing communities that were being pursued by non-elite pastoralists. Instead, traditional pastoralist leaders and Islamic religious elites leveraged their relation to the state to create exploitative, hierarchical communal structures based on non-reciprocal relations of dependence. As a result, non-elites were left without the social safety net that traditionally prevented them from sinking into structural poverty.

Chapter 6 examines the link between the process of reconstruction in the immediate post-epizootic/famine period and the development of structural poverty among non-elite pastoralists in the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, pastoralists lost the ability to cope with the normal variability of the ARSL's natural environment. The dismantling of the pastoralist social safety net meant that pastoralists had lost their guaranteed access to the limited fertile zones that served as drought pas-



ture reserves. Unable to cope with routine droughts, non-elite pastoralists were pushed into a cycle of famine and food insecurity from which there was no real escape. This process was not linear. There were moments of apparent recovery. In the first third of the twentieth century, Afar pastoralist prospered because they held a virtual monopoly on the transport of Ethiopian slaves to ARSL ports. Similarly, Eritrean pastoralists used the income from serving in the colonial army to invest in the expansion of their herds. However, these short-term booms simply masked deeper problems within the economics of pastoralism. Simply put, there was becoming no way for pastoralists to maintain themselves and their animals through the full range of normal ecological conditions. This is the form of structural poverty that took hold among ARSL pastoralists. By the end of the Second World War, pastoralism for the non-elite stopped being a viable option.

Chapter 7 concludes by examining what it means for pastoralists to live in poverty. The setting in of structural poverty did not lead pastoralists to immediately abandon pastoralism. This transition was a process and the amount of time that it took varied from community to community and even within communities. It still is not done. Impoverished pastoralists continue to try and maintain their traditional practices. Since the Second World War, holding onto these practices has meant extreme suffering for many. Non-elite pastoralists have lost their resiliency against unfavorable environmental conditions. Droughts no longer just cause hardship. They have become deadly. Short-term droughts of the kind that had once been easily survivable were the immediate precipitating cause of deadly famines in 1947–1949, 1972–1974, and 1984–1985. The effects of these famines were not even. Elites easily survived as non-elites suffered and, in large numbers, died of disease or starvation. Though droughts were the precipitating cause of these famines, they were not the central factor. Pastoralists were vulnerable to drought-induced famines because they had become structurally poor, a state that had taken nearly 300 years to reach. From the middle of the seventeenth century, pastoralist society was slowly reconfigured in ways that both robbed non-elites of access to life-supporting, exploitable resources and denied them meaningful aid during periods of want.



## CHAPTER 2

---

# Survival by Conversion, 1640–1840

The impoverishment of ARSL pastoralist communities began during the Little Ice Age mega-drought, a 200-year-long dry period that began around 1640. The systemic disastrous effects of this environmental shift have not received much scholarly attention, in part, because of a lack of local records. ARSL pastoralist communities do not have long traditions of writing down and preserving detailed local histories. For these communities, history is recorded in oral genealogies, which reflect a specific local understanding of what is significant enough about the past to be remembered in the present. Historical kin relationships are significant because they help delineate features of ongoing inter- and intra-communal ties. Quantitative data of environmental conditions are not. As a result, the recording and archiving of such data was historically only compiled by foreigners. This activity really began in the mid-nineteenth century and only became systematized in the twentieth century as a result of colonial rule. Extant quantitative data can only really tell us about the period after first Egyptian and then European colonial officials arrived, bringing with them alternate understandings of what is worth recording and keeping for future analysis. This poses a problem for historians interested in recovering the pre-colonial environmental history of the region. This history cannot be recovered from local archives compiled by local communities. Rather, it can only be pieced together indirectly through the study of the written records of other nearby regions and through the scientific study of natural

substances that are capable of marking time, such as coral reefs, tree rings, and soil sediments. Analyzing these sources sheds light on environmental changes over time. These data show that from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, the greater SRSR was plagued by abnormally dry conditions. This mega-drought is associated with other global climatological shifts commonly referred to as the Little Ice Age. Droughts lasting one to three years are normal in the ARSL, but prolonged inter-generational dry periods such as the Little Ice Age mega-drought, are not. The length and not the intensity of this mega-drought is what caused it to have such a drastic impact on communities in the region.

Evidence of the mega-drought can be found in the records of the nilometer on Rawdah Island in Cairo, Egypt. A nilometer is a gage that is used to measure the Nile's annual rise and fall. Precisely measuring the quantity of water flowing through the Nile has been crucially important to Egyptian society for millennia. Until the damming of the Nile in the nineteenth century, the intensity of the rise of the Nile determined the extent of irrigation in Egypt. Since the Egyptian economy was directly tied to local agricultural yields, measuring the Nile was the means of forecasting how the economy would fare during the entirety of the cultivation year. Ancient Egyptians installed and maintained nilometers, as did the subsequent Greek, Roman, Persian, and Arab rulers. The nilometer on Rawdah Island was installed in the ninth century and was continuously used to measure the annual flood until it was rendered obsolete by the Aswan Dam.<sup>1</sup> The readings from this nilometer, which were written down and archived, can serve as an effective proxy for the annual availability of surface fresh water in the ARSL because the rise and fall of the Nile in Egypt reflects climatological conditions at the Nile's African sources.

The Nile has two principal catchment basins. The first is fairly vast and includes parts of contemporary Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Rainwater from this region flows through a number of lakes, including Lake Victoria, Lake Albert, and Lake Kyoga, and rivers, including the Bahr al-Ghazal and the Bahr al-Jabal, before forming a single channel at Lake No known as the White Nile. The second catchment basin, which is more geographically compact, is the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands. Rains in the highlands flow into the Nile

<sup>1</sup>For the history of nilometers, in general, and this nilometer, in particular, see William Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer: Studies in Ibn Taghri Birdi's Chronicles of Egypt: I* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 1–48.

either via the Atbara River or the Blue Nile. The difference between rainfall patterns in these two catchment basins determines the annual ebb and flow of the Nile. The catchment basin that feeds the White Nile is in Africa's wet tropical zone. Therefore, the river has a relatively constant flow throughout the year. On the other hand, the rains in the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands are primarily concentrated between mid-June and mid-September. As a result, the amount of water flowing through the Blue Nile and the Atbara River has a distinct seasonality that determines the Nile flood. When the Nile is at its lowest, which typically occurs in April/May, 80 percent of the Nile's water is drawn from the White Nile and 20 percent from the Blue Nile. The Atbara River contributes almost nothing. However, during the peak flood, the Blue Nile contributes 75 percent, the White Nile 10 percent and the Atbara River 15 percent of the Nile waters.<sup>2</sup> Measurements of the Nile flood can serve as a proxy for weather patterns in the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands and adjacent territories within the same climatological system, such as the ARSL.

Between 1658 and 1840, the average maximum Nile flood as measured by the Rawdah Nilometer was approximately 1050 cm. By contrast, for the period 1841 to 1890, the average maximum flood was approximately 1080 cm. Small differences in maximum Nile floods had large consequences. A 40 cm average annual decline meant that there were fewer good years and that even normal years had bad floods. In Egypt, a Nile flood whose maximum was as little as 90 cm less than expected was considered a failure because it resulted in widespread disruptions in cultivation and often led the government to suspend tax collection. Between 1658 and 1840, the Nile flood failed in 1713, 1766, 1782, 1783, 1784, 1794, 1826, 1833, and 1837. These failures were compounded by a lack of extraordinarily high floods. During this time period, the maximum flood was 90 cm above average in just 1738 and 1757. Extraordinary floods indicate the availability of enough surface water to produce superabundant surpluses that could be stored to offset short-term droughts. Though it is not unusual for the Nile flood to fail, it is unusual for there

<sup>2</sup> Mohammed Umer, et al., 'Late Quaternary Climate Changes in the Horn of Africa,' in *Past Climate Variability through Europe and Africa*, Richard W. Battarbee, Françoise Gasse, and Catherine E. Stickley, eds. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2004), 171–172; Sohair S. Zaghloul, Mohamed El-Moattassem, and Ahmed A. Rady, 'The Hydrological Interactions between Atbara River and the Main Nile at the Confluence Area,' *International Congress on River Basin Management. Proceedings of the International Congress of Water Basin Management. DSI and WWC, Antalya, Turkey* (2007), 787–799.

to be so few extraordinary floods. For example, every Nile failure between 1841 and 1890, with the exception of that in 1853, was preceded or followed within two years by an extraordinary flood.<sup>3</sup> These findings indicate that in the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands the period from the mid-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth century was marked by lower than average rainfall and punctuated with intense droughts.

The Rawdah Nilometer data are further supported by quantitative data recently established by paleoclimatologists. Scholars studying core samples of sediments from a number of Central and East African lakes have demonstrated that there was a major shift in rainfall patterns throughout tropical Africa from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. During this time, dry periods in the region of lakes Malawi and Tanganyika gave way to wet periods. Simultaneously wet periods in the region of lakes Naivasha and Victoria came to an end and were followed by dry periods.<sup>4</sup> This climatological change has been recorded in the sediments of lakes in Ethiopia. Core samples taken from Lake Abijatta in the Ziway-Shala Basin in the Ethiopian Rift Valley show a progressive decrease in water levels in this lake beginning in the eighteenth century. Analysis of the core samples suggests distinct droughts in 1800, 1826–1827, and 1839.<sup>5</sup> Rainfall patterns in Ethiopia, the ARSL, and the rest of tropical Africa are a function of the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), an area of low-pressure where the trade winds of the Northern and Southern Hemisphere's meet. There is a normal seasonal periodicity to the location of the ITCZ's mean point, which migrates across the equator in relation to the sun's zenith point. However, major southerly shifts in the mean point are associated with high latitude cold periods. At the end of the seventeenth century, the mean point of the ITCZ was further south than under normal conditions.

<sup>3</sup> Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, 174–178.

<sup>4</sup> D. Verschuren, K. R. Laird, and B. Cumming, 'Rainfall and Drought in Equatorial East Africa during the Past 1100 Years,' *Nature*, 403 (2000): 410–414; J. C. Stager, et al., 'Solar Variability and the Levels of Lake Victoria, East Africa, during the Last Millennium,' *Journal of Paleolimnology*, 33 (2005): 243–251; Erik T. Brown and Thomas C. Johnson, 'Coherence between Tropical East African and South American Records of the Little Ice Age,' *Geochemistry, Geophysics, Geosystems*, 6:12 (December 2005); S. R. Alin, and A. S. Cohen, 'Lake-Level History of Lake Tanganyika, East Africa, for the Past 2500 Years Based on Ostracode-Inferred Water Depth Reconstruction,' *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 199 (2003): 31–49.

<sup>5</sup> Dagnachew Legesse, et al., 'Environmental Changes in a Tropical Lake (Lake Abiyata, Ethiopia) during Recent Centuries,' *Paleogeography, Paleoclimatology, Paleocology*, 187 (2002): 233–258.

As a result, rainfall patterns throughout the region were disrupted.<sup>6</sup> This nearly two-centuries-long southward displacement of the ITCZ caused the Little Ice Age mega-drought.

The Little Ice Age mega-drought disrupted pastoralist herd maintenance strategies. With the decrease in rainfall in the ARSL, pastures were not adequately replenished during the wet seasons. This increased pressure on local drought pasture reserves at the same time as decreased rainfall in the adjacent Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands meant less water flowing through the torrential rivers that watered these reserves. Changing climatological conditions would have forced these communities into the false choice between retaining the status quo ante, which would have resulted in suffering from persistent mal- and under-nutrition and in the death of many of their animals, or in developing new modes of interacting with the physical environment. The hardship experienced by pastoralists was compounded by the fact that the greater SRSR socio-economic system into which they fit was also pushed into crisis by the mega-drought. This system was predicated on a division of labor based on different communities economically exploiting specific environmental niches. The mega-drought disrupted the range of patterns of human-environment interaction that underpinned this system. When the system faltered, the regional economy collapsed and famine became endemic. As generation after generation suffered, pastoralists became more open to adopting ever more radical innovations to their practices to ensure their survival. Religious conversion was one such innovation.

Between 1780 and 1830, ARSL pastoralist communities converted to Islam *en masse*.<sup>7</sup> Though narrow segments of some of these communities were already Muslim, the vast majority of pastoralists in the region had steadfastly retained their traditional religious practices through centuries of sustained contact with Christianity and Islam. Scholars have previously sought out explanations for this mass phenomenon. J. Spencer Trimingham asserts that these communities were won over through the propagandistic efforts of foreign missionaries arriving in the region from Arabia.<sup>8</sup> By

<sup>6</sup>J. M. Russell and T. C. Johnson, 'Little Ice Age Drought in Equatorial Africa: Intertropical Convergence Zone Migrations and El-Niño-Southern Oscillation Variability,' *Geology*, 35:1 (January 2007): 21–24.

<sup>7</sup>J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan* (New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1949), 14, 126–138; J. Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, 3rd edition (London: Frank Cass, 1976. First edition in 1952), 157, 160.

<sup>8</sup>Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, 14; Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, 235–245.

locating the reasons for conversion in the actions of foreign preachers, Trimingham cannot answer fundamental questions about the motivations of the converted, including (1) why did they convert at this moment and not during earlier missionizing efforts (2) why was this conversion a mass phenomenon, and (3) why did it happen so quickly? Jonathan Miran offers an alternative, multifactorial explanation for this mass conversion. According to Miran, the expansion of Egypt into Sudan, the increase of trade between the Red Sea and the Nile, and the predatory raiding of the highland Christian chiefs at the start of the nineteenth century led many pastoralist communities to seek out “a powerful counter-hegemonic force and ideology.”<sup>9</sup> Though this explanation helpfully broadens the range of factors that led to the conversion, it does not address why this particular ‘counter-hegemonic ideology’ suddenly became appealing to a broad range of people across a large region. This chapter argues that this conversion cannot be understood without an analysis of the particular features of the adopted religious practices. At the turn of the nineteenth century, these communities converted to a particular form of Islam rooted in specific Sufi practices based in the belief that certain religious elites were able to channel divine intercession in the physical world. These practices were appealing because they were a new, promising tool for addressing the mega-drought that was impoverishing them.

### THE CRISIS OF PASTORALISM POSED BY THE LITTLE ICE AGE MEGA-DROUGHT

The mega-drought caused widespread suffering throughout the ARSL. Nonetheless, it is likely that the hardest hit communities were those whose rangelands were located in the north. In this region, rains are even under normal circumstances much more limited than areas further south. In addition, the torrential rivers that bring rainwater from the highlands do not flow into this area. With the southern shift of the ITCZ, rains in the northern ARSL decreased and there was less water to replenish pastures and refill wells. Initially, pastoralist communities in the northern ARSL tried to stick it out. But, as the desert extended south and the pockets of vegetation in the mountains disappeared, this area could no longer support human life. Local pastoralist communities were forced to abandon

<sup>9</sup>Jonathan Miran, ‘A Historical Overview of Islam in Eritrea,’ *Die Welt des Islams*, 45:2 (2005): 185.

their traditional rangelands and make their way south. Between 1760 and 1770, a large section of the Bisharin clan of the Beja migrated away from their traditional grazing zone in the Atbai, the desert coastal region that straddles the border of modern-day Sudan and Egypt. Under the leadership of Hamad Umran Isa, they made their way to the banks of the Atbara River.<sup>10</sup> Around the same time, members of the Hadendowa clan of the Beja led by Wailali Muhammad migrated south from their traditional grazing lands in the northern Sudanese Red Sea Hills. They initially established themselves in the high-altitude fertile zone near Irkuwit, but then ultimately moved to the Gash Delta and its tributary river.<sup>11</sup>

The southern migration of the Bisharin and Hadendowa clans allowed them to ensure their own survival. However, this came at the expense of the overall stability of the region. These clans did not move to empty territory. Rather, they migrated to areas that were already claimed by other pastoralist communities. These areas were particularly important to those with established claims because they were home to crucial drought pasture reserves and there was an ongoing drought. The migration of the Bisharin and Hadendowa were acts of territorial conquest and pastoral colonization. For example, Hadendowa pastoralists established their claim to Irkuwit by forcibly driving out the established Beni Amer pastoralists.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, Hadendowa pastoralists established a claim to the Gash Delta by force. This delta was claimed by the Halenga, Segolab, and Militkinab clans.<sup>13</sup> Hadendowa militias under the leadership of Muhammad al-Din expelled the strongest communities with claims to the delta. Once their local dominance was established, Hadendowa pastoralists assimilated the weaker rival communities by inter-marrying with them.<sup>14</sup> The end of this migration did not bring a new stable and peaceful equilibrium to the area. Rather, the proximity of the militarily ascendant Bisharin and Hadendowa clans to each other set off a protracted cycle of raiding and counter-raiding between these clans that continued throughout the mega-drought.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> T. R. H. Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 20:2 (1937): 188–191.

<sup>12</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 188–189.

<sup>13</sup> O. B. E. Newbold, 'The Beja Tribes of the Red Sea Hinterland,' in *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan from Within*, J. A. de C. Hamilton, ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), 154.

<sup>14</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 189–191.

<sup>15</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 30.



Inter-communal violence was not limited to the area between the Atbara and the Gash Delta. Rather, this kind of violence became endemic to the ARSL during the mega-drought. Pastoralist communities throughout the ARSL raided animals from their neighbors and used force to seize wells and strategically important territory.<sup>16</sup> As a result of the drying up of the region, control over territory became even more important for maintaining the livelihoods and well-being of increasingly stressed pastoralist communities. This control gave these communities a crucial source of income—rents collected from passing caravans. A steady income was necessary because the mega-drought had increased the dependence of pastoralists on grain markets. There was no longer enough sufficiently watered fertile land to both pasture animals and engage in cultivation. So, pastoralists throughout the ARSL abandoned the latter to concentrate on the former. Even in relatively favorable years during the mega-drought, arable land remained fallow. Local grain yields declined precipitously as acacia forest took over once productive fields.<sup>17</sup>

While violence was becoming part of the new normal in the ARSL, changing climatological conditions were causing instability in the supply of grain in local markets. The mega-drought was a regional phenomenon that impacted major grain-producing areas throughout the greater SRSR. Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Arabia were pushed into a vicious circle of economic contraction and political instability. In Ethiopia, the mega-drought caused widespread food insecurity to become endemic. Locally produced grain surpluses turned into grain deficits as yields declined. With increasing numbers of people forced to purchase part or all of their necessary sustenance, grain prices became unstable.<sup>18</sup> This agrarian crisis was, for a time, partially solved by state-sponsored raiding. Free male peasants were subject to annual conscription. They fought alongside the imperial armed forces as they raided neighboring areas. All who fought, including the peasant conscripts, were entitled to a share in the bounty.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Newbold, 'The Beja Tribes of the Red Sea,' 154.

<sup>17</sup>For example, nearly three-quarters of the Gash Delta was under forest by 1860. Ghada Talhami, *Suakin and Masawa under Egyptian Rule* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979), 39.

<sup>18</sup>Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia*, 51.

<sup>19</sup>R. A. Caulk, 'Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia c.1850–1935,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11:3 (1978): 461–466.

Though this helped struggling cultivators, it did not address the underlying problem of insufficient grain yields. As a result, the food crisis not only persisted, it worsened. Repeated famines contributed to the collapse of centralized Ethiopian state power. The Emperor and his court could not ensure the minimum equitable distribution of food to their subjects, a longstanding tradition that underpinned state authority in Ethiopia. Rival *Rases* (lit. ‘head,’ generally translated as princes) began competing for power, ultimately leading to the deposition of Emperor Iyoas in 1769. For approximately the next century, a period typically referred to as *Zemene Mesafint* (the time of the princes), no single *Ras* was able to accumulate sufficient power to reconstitute the collapsed centralized state. The *Rases* also were unable to collectively exert effective control over the rural countryside. Instead, much of the countryside was ruled by *shifta* (outlaw bandit) militias that used violence to grow rich and powerful as the local population suffered.<sup>20</sup> The breakdown of the traditional regional moral economy that ensured the minimally equitable distribution precipitated devastating famines in 1747–1748, 1752, 1772–1773, 1788–1789, 1812, and 1828–1829.<sup>21</sup>

Sudan and Yemen were also pulled into this vicious cycle of economic contraction and political instability. In Sudan, the mega-drought set off a crisis of entitlements in the rural countryside. Cultivators who could no longer grow their own subsistence fell into debt to the merchants that controlled markets. The Funj Sultanate in Sinnar, which controlled much of contemporary Sudan, was unable to protect its subjects from this predatory system. Communities could not cope with the changing conditions and the region was plagued by repeated famines.<sup>22</sup> The widespread hardship created the conditions for new leaders to emerge and precipitated a series of rebellions and civil wars that marked the collapse of the sultan’s power.<sup>23</sup> In Yemen, the mega-drought decreased crop yields. Tax revenues declined and the Yemeni Imamate stopped being able to pay the salaries of

<sup>20</sup> For a classic history of this period, see Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes: The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire (1769–1855)* (London: Longmans, 1968).

<sup>21</sup> Pankhurst, *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia*, 51.

<sup>22</sup> P. M. Holt, *The Sudan of the Three Niles: The Funj Chronicles 910–1288/1504–1871* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 20, 32, 63.

<sup>23</sup> R. S. O’Fahey and Jay Spaulding, *The Kingdoms of Sudan* (London: Methuen and Co, 1974), 82–104.

officials, to provision the troops, and to pay stipends to the Yemeni pastoralist communities that controlled the countryside. As a direct result, rebellions broke out in 1779, 1780, 1793, 1795/1796, and 1808.<sup>24</sup> The Imamate was therefore unable to properly defend itself from the political pressure from Britain, which sought to establish preferential trading rights, and from the aggression of the expanding Saudi-Wahhabi Emirate based in the food insecure central Arabian town of Diriyah.

The Saudi-Wahhabi Emirate, also sometimes referred to as the First Saudi State, developed out of an alliance between Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) and the al-Saud family. Abd al-Wahhab was a reformist Muslim spiritual leader from Western Arabia whose puritanical teachings brought him into conflict with important Najdi elites. After seeking refuge in Diriyah under the protection of Muhammad ibn Saud, the two men entered into a strategic pact to establish an expansionist, religiously guided Saudi state. The Saudi-Wahhabi campaign of conquest directly benefited from the mega-drought, which forced many pastoralist communities to migrate away from Arabia to Iraq in search of pastures.<sup>25</sup> With resistance curtailed by the mega-drought, the Saudi-Wahhabi force was able to conquer central Arabia, the Hijaz, and parts of coastal Yemen. The establishment of Saudi-Wahhabi rule over Mecca and Medina caused a further contraction of not only the economy of the Hijaz but of the SRSR in general. Until the discovery of oil in Arabia in the middle of the twentieth century, the wealth of the Hijaz was shaped more by the spiritual geography of Islam than by balances of trade or other purely economic concerns. This wealth was derived, primarily, from two key sources: (1) the income from the hajj and (2) the annual subventions given by Muslim rulers to local elites in the Hijaz. The region was, on its own, incapable of providing for itself. Mecca and the surrounding countryside had few known natural resources.<sup>26</sup> The hajj and subventions allowed the local population not only to secure its own subsistence, but also to

<sup>24</sup> Husayn ‘Abdullah al-‘Amri, *The Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Political and Intellectual History* (UK: Ithaca Press, 1985), 39–59.

<sup>25</sup> Madawi al Rasheed, *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidis of Saudi Arabia* (London and New York: I B Tauris, 1991), 32–33.

<sup>26</sup> Muslim religious requirements maintained human populations in the Hijaz in numbers that could not be supported by the natural environment. Mecca is not situated in a productive countryside. Less than two percent of modern-day Saudi Arabia is considered potentially arable and the rest is unproductive desert. Outside of a number of oasis and mountain valleys, there is insufficient surface water to support cultivation. Johany, et al., *The Saudi Arabian Economy*, 110.

purchase large quantities of imported, non-essential trade goods produced elsewhere in the Red Sea or imported from the broader Indian Ocean World.<sup>27</sup> Both of these sources declined under Saudi-Wahhabi rule. Abd al-Wahhab's spiritual followers prevented the practice of some customs associated with the hajj that, though popular, they had deemed apostasy.<sup>28</sup> The number of pilgrims declined and stayed low.<sup>29</sup>

Decline in local yields in the SRSR occurred in parallel with a decline in the quantity of grain imported from India. For centuries before the mega-drought, ships from India had brought grain in ballast when trading with Red Sea ports. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw an increased incidence of multiannual, persistently weak monsoons. During these periods, Indian ships would not have been able to make the normal, annual round-trip journey from grain-exporting ports in western India to the grain-importing ports of the SRSR.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, there was less incentive for these Indian merchants to trade at SRSR ports. Demand for imports would have declined in Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, and the Hijaz as the economies of these regions contracted. As a result, Indian merchants withdrew from the SRSR and concentrated their trading activities along the Swahili coast.<sup>31</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, there were only a handful of Indian merchants residing in SRSR ports. At the start of the nineteenth century, there were, for example, just 18 Indian merchants residing in Massawa and just two Indian ships called at the port annually. Other merchant communities did not step in as Indian merchants withdrew. The few Indian merchants that remained at SRSR ports continued

<sup>27</sup> Even at the end of the nineteenth century, exports from Jidda were valued at just three percent of total imports. William Ochsenwald, 'The Commercial History of the Hijaz Vilayet, 1840–1908,' in *Religion, Economy and State in Ottoman-Arab History* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1998), 70.

<sup>28</sup> For a brief summary of Abd al-Wahhab's teachings, see Natana J. Delong-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 41–92.

<sup>29</sup> William Ochsenwald, 'The Commercial History of the Hijaz Vilayet, 1840–1908,' 65.

<sup>30</sup> Edward R. Cook, et al., 'Asian Monsoon Failure and Megadrought during the Last Millennium,' *Science*, 328 (23 April 2010): 486–489.

<sup>31</sup> Pedro Machado, 'Awash in a Sea of Cloth: Gujarat, Africa and the western Indian Ocean, 1300–1800,' in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200–1850*, Prasannan Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 170.

to control the vast majority of the now diminished import/export trade.<sup>32</sup> The decline in the import/export trade meant a decline in caravan traffic passing through the ARSL. This, in turn, meant that the profits that pastoralist communities gained from trade declined. Economic rents collected for access to roads and wells fell as fewer caravans traversed the ARSL, as did the income from renting pack animals and serving as drivers and guides. Demand for the goods pastoralists produced for market also dried up as the SRSR economy contracted. People were no longer able or willing to purchase the salt pastoralists harvested, the mats and baskets they wove, and the water bladders they manufactured.

The mega-drought caused real suffering because it disrupted the long-standing patterns of human-environment interaction that underpinned pastoralist ways of life. The mega-drought was different from the shorter droughts that were normal to the region. Pastoralist economic strategies were resilient and could cope with normal unfavorable conditions. During normal unfavorable conditions, some economic strategies fail. The ones that continued to work allowed pastoralists to pass through the downturn relatively unscathed. The length and intensity of the mega-drought undermined this resilience. After generations of suffering, pastoralists became open to radically transforming their practices. At the end of the eighteenth century, Islamic religious preachers began proselytizing to pastoralists about a new way to manage the natural environment. These preachers were emissaries of Sufi brotherhoods that claimed that some people in this world are graced with *baraka* and therefore can act as the divine's worldly intermediaries. These blessed few, known as *walis*, were believed to have a direct personal relationship with the divine that gives these *walis* special terrestrial powers. *Walis* could act as conduits for direct

<sup>32</sup> Richard Pankhurst, 'Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,' *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 14:55 (1974): 469–472. The Indian merchant population of the Red Sea reached its nadir in the first third of the nineteenth century, after which it began to rebound. In Aden alone, the Indian population grew from just a few merchants at the start of the century to 350 in 1842. The rate of migration from India to Red Sea ports suddenly accelerated in the 1880s and by 1930 there were approximately 5000 Indian merchants residing in the SRSR. See Kundan Kumar, 'Aspects of Indian Merchant Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula during the British Period,' in *Indian Trade Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula*, Prakash C. Jain and Kundan Kumar, eds. (New Delhi: New Academic Publishers: 2012), 65; Claude Markovits, 'Indian Merchant Networks outside India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Preliminary Survey,' in *Indian Trade Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula*, Prakash C. Jain and Kundan Kumar, eds. (New Delhi: New Academic Publishers, 2012), 27.

divine intervention in the material world, and, as such, they could modify the natural environment, dictate the lifecycle of living beings, and ensure both health and wealth.<sup>33</sup>

## SUFI NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ARSL pastoralist communities had encountered Muslims long before the arrival of these Sufi preachers. In fact, small numbers of ARSL pastoralists were already Muslim before the onset of the mega-drought. In hierarchical pastoralist tribes and clans with distinct noble and serf castes, Muslim religious practices had been a mark of elite status and therefore unavailable to the numerically larger serf caste. In these tribes and clans, serfdom was a hereditary state. Individual nobles or groups of nobles had exclusive direct rights over discrete groups of serfs that they claimed. Serfs were required to pay tribute and, in exchange, nobles were required to ensure that their serfs received protection from want during times of need. Customary restrictions placed on serfs ensured that they were always dependent on the nobles that claimed them. Islam and Christianity were, for centuries before the mega-drought, the religion of the nobles and therefore off-limits to their serfs. In fact, the establishment of the two largest hierarchical tribal confederacies—the Beni Amer and the Bait Asgade—and the conversion of their elites were linked. In the sixteenth

<sup>33</sup>The specific features of this theological conceptualization of the nature of divine intervention emerged during a widespread, late-eighteenth-century reformation of Sufi practices during which disparate movements based in Cairo, Istanbul, and parts of the Ottoman periphery started questioning the religious validity of some teachings. Often this questioning centered on evaluating these practices in terms of their coherence to conceptualizations of the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammad. This re-evaluation led to a reconfiguring of Sufi beliefs. This process ultimately re-energized Sufi communities and helped pave the way for the conversion of pastoralist communities on the ARSL. For a more complete understanding of *sufi* practices in the ARSL, see Ali Salih Karrar, *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1992); Abd al-Qadir Maḥmud, *al-Fikr al-Ṣufī fī al-Sūdān: Maṣādiruhu wa-Tayyāratuhu wa-Alwānuhu* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1968); Awad Karsany, *Al Majdhubiyya and Al Mikashfiyya: Two Sufi Tariqas in the Sudan* (Khartoum: University of Khartoum, 1985); Maṣṣur Khalid, *al-Thulathiyah al-Majidiyah: Suwar Min al-Adab al-Ṣufī al-Sūdānī* (Tortola, British Virgin Islands: Turath al-Maḥdudah lil-Nashr, 1997); Abd al-Hamid Muhammad Ahmad, *al-Sharif Zayn al-Abidin al-Hindi: al-Ṣufī al-Muadhdhab, al-Siyasi al-Mutamarrid wa-al-Shair al-Tha'ir* (Khartoum: Dar Azzah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi, 2012); and Albrecht Hofheinz, 'Internalizing Islam: Shaykh Muhammad Majdhub Scriptural Islam and Local Context in the Early Nineteenth-Century Sudan' (PhD dissertation: University of Bergen, 1996).

century, the Funj Sultanate and the Ethiopian Empire each sent militias to conquer the pastoralist communities that lived on their eastern peripheries. These militias won and the victors subsequently intermarried with the vanquished pastoral elites, who converted to the religion of the victors. The clans conquered by the Sudanese became the Beni Amer confederacy and the clans conquered by the Ethiopians became the Bait Asgade. The newly Muslim Beni Amer noble caste and the Christian Bait Asgade noble caste prevented their serfs from converting. Over time, many elite Bait Asgade began adopting the practices of their stronger Beni Amer neighbors. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the noble castes of the Habab and Ad Tamaryam clans of the Bait Asgade had converted to Islam. The noble caste of the Ad Takles remained Christian until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the serfs of all the Bait Asgade clans, as well as of the Beni Amer confederacy, continued to adhere to their traditional spiritual practices.<sup>34</sup>

In the non-hierarchical tribes, Islam was not a mark of elite status before the mass conversion. Rather, it was a mark of foreignness, and these pastoralist communities went to great lengths to block the influence of outsiders. There were two main methods for limiting contact with outsiders. First, these communities tended to practice some form of endogamy by marrying only within their own families, clans, or tribes, with the precise regulations on marriage varying from community to community and over time. Second, they limited interactions with foreign merchants. As was described above, pastoralists had deep, long-lasting, and structurally important trading relationships with Muslim communities elsewhere in the SRSR, as well as throughout the Indian Ocean World. However, foreign merchants did not have free access to ARSL pastoralist communities. Instead, select, narrow segments of pastoralist society acted as gatekeepers that mediated the economic relations with the outside world. Generally, the role of intermediary was played by small groups of pastoralists that settled in ports. Among the Beja of Eastern Sudan, these go-betweens were a recognized distinct group called the Hadariba. Most scholars assert that the Hadariba were Hadhrami merchants who permanently settled in port cities and market towns in modern-day Eastern Sudan and Western

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Paul, 'Notes on the Beni Amer,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 31:2 (December 1950): 224; Anthony d'Avray, 'Introduction,' in *The Nakfa Documents*, Anthony d'Avray with Richard Pankhurst, eds. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 19; Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, 160.

Eritrea sometime before the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> However, Anders Hjort af Ornäs and Gudrun Dahl convincingly argue that the Hadariba were not foreigners. Rather, they were a distinct sub-group of Beja pastoralists. Based on a linguistic analysis of Tu-Bedawi, the language spoken by the Beja, and a close reading of the structure of the economy of Eastern Sudan, they conclude that the Hadariba were a group of Beja who had settled in port cities and market towns, intermarried with foreign merchants and converted to Islam. These settled Beja acted as intermediaries between the foreign merchants and the local population. Other Beja pastoralists preferred to interact with Hadariba intermediaries because doing so prevented foreigners from interfering with their lives in the rural countryside. This socially embedded economic strategy successfully limited external penetration of Beja society. As a result, before the end of the eighteenth century, the Hadariba were the only significant community of Beja pastoralists to convert away from traditional religious practices.<sup>36</sup> A similar process occurred among the Afar. In the fourteenth century, a limited number of Afar pastoralists settled in market towns and port cities and converted to Islam. Subsequently, these urban, Muslim Afar served as intermediaries between foreign merchants and the surrounding Afar pastoralist population. This group was limited in number. Nearly all Afar pastoralists continued both to practice pastoralism in the countryside and to adhere to their traditional spiritual practices.<sup>37</sup>

Over just a few decades at the turn of the nineteenth century, Islam went from being the religion of a select few to a popular religion among ARSL pastoralists. This mass conversion occurred because pastoralists stopped seeing Islam as a threat to traditional social structures and, instead, came to see it as crucial to maintaining both individual well-being and communal cohesion. This change in conceptualization was in part a result of changes internal to pastoralist societies caused by suffering through the mega-drought and, in part, a result in changes internal to Islamic thought.

<sup>35</sup> Paul, *History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 54; Andrew Paul, 'The Hadareb,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 40 (1959): 75–78; Talhami, *Suakin and Massawa under Egyptian Rule*, 109; A. Zaborski, 'Notes on the Mediaeval History of the Beja Tribes,' *Folia Orientalia*, 7 (1965): 291; Osbert Guy Stanhope Crawford, *The Fung Kingdom of Sennar* (Gloucester: John Bellows Ltd., 1951), 123.

<sup>36</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 27–29.

<sup>37</sup> Those Afar clans that did convert retained most of their traditional religious practices. Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands: Essays in Regional History from Ancient Times to the End of the 18th Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1997), 61.



In the late eighteenth century, several disparate Sufi reformist movements sprang up in Cairo, Istanbul, and parts of the Ottoman periphery. Members of these movements challenged the religious validity of some longstanding Sufi practices by comparing them negatively to the way the Prophet Muhammad lived his exemplary life. This protracted questioning and re-evaluation gave rise to new Sufi brotherhoods, including the Khatmiyya and the Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhoods that came to find widespread acceptance in the ARSL. A central figure in the development of both of these Sufi brotherhoods was Ahmad ibn Idris al-Fasi (1760–1837). Ibn Idris was a Sufi preacher who was born in Fez, Morocco, but who was living in Mecca at the time of the Saudi-Wahhabi conquest. Abd al-Wahhab and his followers believed that many longstanding Sufi practices were heretical because they deviated from the righteous path exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime. Though Ibn Idris's teachings diverged from those of Abd al-Wahhab, Ibn Idris continued preaching throughout the period of Saudi-Wahhabi rule in the Hijaz. He taught his students that holy men could channel divine intercession in this world, a belief that Abd al-Wahhab had labeled idolatry.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, Ibn Idris's reputation continued to grow while he lived under Saudi-Wahhabi rule. Increasing numbers of followers traveled from distant parts of Africa and the Middle East to Mecca to study under Ibn Idris, from whom they learned of the importance of missionizing among both the faithful and unfaithful.<sup>39</sup>

Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793–1852), one of Ibn Idris's students, played a key role in the mass conversion of the ARSL pastoralists. Al-Mirghani was born into a prominent Meccan family and, in 1813, he was sent by his uncle to study with Ibn Idris. Almost immediately, al-Mirghani's attention and interest turned to missionary work. In 1815, he made his first missionary trip to the ARSL. Though he was sent as Ibn Idris's student and was instructed to spread Ibn Idris's teachings, al-Mirghani's proselytizing methods came under suspicion by his teacher because Ibn Idris suspected that al-Mirghani was trying to develop his own independent Sufi brotherhood. After Ibn Idris's death, al-Mirghani

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of this theological debate and its political implications, see Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 154–161.

<sup>39</sup> For a brief account of Ibn Idris's life and preaching in Mecca, see R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 58–80.

began further straying from Ibn Idris's teachings and started proselytizing his own message. Al-Mirghani began telling his growing following in the ARSL that he and his descendants possessed a unique, hereditary form of *baraka* (divine blessing). This *baraka* gave the al-Mirghani family the ability to channel divine intercession into this world, including the ability to control rain, disease, and cultivation cycles.<sup>40</sup> Al-Mirghani came to be understood by his followers as the *khatm al-awliya*, that is, the 'seal of the saints' from whom all other saintly sanctity flows. As a result, the Sufi brotherhood that al-Mirghani established became known as the Khatmiyya.<sup>41</sup> Though al-Mirghani ultimately returned to the Hijaz, his son al-Hasan al-Mirghani (d. 1869) settled in the ARSL and continued to missionize among the local pastoralist communities.<sup>42</sup>

The Khatmiyya was not the only Sufi brotherhood to gain adherents among ARSL pastoralists. In Eastern Sudan, the emerging spiritual dominance of the Khatmiyya was challenged by the Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhood led by Muhammad al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir (1795–1832). Al-Majdhub came from a long line of Northern Nilotic Sudanese religious leaders. In the mid-seventeenth century, his Majadhib ancestors established a center of Islamic learning near Daru, on the Sudanese Nile. There they taught the *Maliki* school of Islamic jurisprudence and followed Qadiri Sufi practices. The Majadhib family subsequently moved to al-Damar, where members of the family used their spiritual reputation to forge close relationships with important elites. These ties allowed the Majadhib family to become wealthy and powerful. As their influence increased, the Majadhib family's religious practice changed and they became adherents of the Shadhiliyya Sufi brotherhood.<sup>43</sup> The Majadhib's power rose as the power of the Funj sultan waned during the mega-drought. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Majadhib were effectively the independent rulers of al-Damar and neighboring parts of the Nile.<sup>44</sup> However, the family's political power

<sup>40</sup> Despite the role that Ibn Idris played in al-Mirghani's education and in the development of his understanding of the value of missionary work among the unbelieving, al-Mirghani's teachings minimized the importance of Ibn Idris and played up the special role of the al-Mirghani family. The prayers written by Ibn Idris were not, for the most part, incorporated into the Khatmiyya liturgy. Among followers of the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood, Ibn Idris is remembered only as al-Mirghani's teacher.

<sup>41</sup> O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, 142–153.

<sup>42</sup> Tringham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, 235.

<sup>43</sup> For a brief history of the al-Majdhub family, see Hofheinz, *Internalizing Islam*, 21–26.

<sup>44</sup> O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint*, 177.

was short-lived. In 1820–1821, an Egyptian force conquered the Sudanese Nile and destroyed al-Damar in the process. The following year, al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir met Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani during one of the latter's missionary trips through Sudan. As a result of this encounter, al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir decided to go to Mecca to study with Ibn Idris. In 1829, al-Majdhub returned to Sudan inspired by Ibn Idris's teachings on the importance of missionary work. During a two-year stay in Sawakin, al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir established a *zawiya* (Islamic religious school) and won over many adherents to the developing al-Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhood. The relationship between al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir and his new, Eastern Sudanese followers was solidified through strategic marriages between members of the al-Majdhub family and local pastoralists. To further strengthen his local presence, al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir appointed prominent followers from pastoralist communities as his local *khalifas*. In the years that followed, these *khalifas* brought the Majdhubiyya to the interior of Eastern Sudan.<sup>45</sup>

The Majdhubiyya and Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhoods offered ARSL pastoralists new ways of addressing the ongoing environmental crisis. The spiritual practices and unique *baraka* of the Sufi religious elites were offered to adherents as tools for intervening in the physical world. As such, they could be harnessed to minimize the negative effects of the mega-drought. To access these worldly tools, pastoralists had to participate in the re-ordering of their social structures. Conversion to Islam was just one of the necessary social re-orderings. The other was accepting a new form of trans-communal organization constructed by the Sufi brotherhoods themselves. These were inherently trans-communal because the practitioners were drawn from a diverse set of pastoral communities. Sufi brotherhoods were also hierarchical in a way that was new to pastoralist society. At the head of each brotherhood were the spiritual and, often, biological heirs of the founder and at the lowest level were the followers. Between the religious elites and the followers were a chain of intermediaries each with specific institutional functions. The religious elites appointed *khalifas*, who acted as their local spiritual representatives, and bureaucratic

<sup>45</sup> Though al-Majdhub died without an heir in 1832, the Majdhub continued to develop the Majdhubiyya. In 1853, al-Majdhub's nephew, Muhammad al-Tahir al-Majdhub was sent by the family from the Nile to Sawakin to assume the leadership of the local *zawiya* and to ensure the unity of the Nilotic and Eastern Sudanese branches of the Majdhubiyya. Hofheinz, *Internalizing Islam*, 39.

agents, who collected dues from follower, administered property, and looked after the Sufi brotherhood's financial interests.<sup>46</sup> By formally linking territorially, linguistically, and ethnically diverse populations within a new institutional structure, the Sufi brotherhoods challenged other, older forms of social organization that focused on family, clan, and tribe.

The missionizing work of the Majdhubiyya and Khatmiyya was complemented by that of individual men and whole families who also claimed to possess *baraka*. These claims to *baraka* were often steeped in specifically Islamic rhetoric, and many of these religious elites claimed themselves to be Muslim, even if their practices were heterodox in nature. For example, as the Majdhubiyya and Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhoods were gaining followers, *Shaykh* al-Amin bin Hamid bin Naf was becoming well known for his ability to channel spiritual forces toward affecting specific outcomes in this world. Bin Naf traveled widely through the ARSL with his family in order to preach and to channel divine intercession for his growing following. Bin Naf and his family particularly focused on engaging with Beni Amer serfs. Many of these serfs converted to Islam through their interactions with bin Naf and his followings. Some newly Muslim serfs used their status as the coreligionists of the noble caste to renegotiate the social and economic restrictions that came with their status as serfs. Other converted serfs absconded and joined bin Naf's growing camp. The loss of serfs was not evenly spread; some noble sub-clans lost control over only a few serfs while others lost control of nearly all.<sup>47</sup> As bin Naf's camp grew, it became a distinct clan known as the Ad Shaykh. Bin Naf's spiritual reputation became associated with the Ad Shaykh as a unit and the entire clan developed a reputation as a holy community with special spiritual powers. As a community of holy men, the Ad Shaykh's organization differed from that of other tribes or clans. The Ad Shaykh did not claim a distinct territory. Rather, they preferred to reside among other clans and tribes. Shortly after the formation of the Ad Shaykh, the members of this clan divided into several bands and dispersed throughout the ARSL to engage in missionary work. Despite their distance from each other, these Ad Shaykh bands worked together as a network. This allowed them to expand their collective influence and rapidly increase their power and wealth.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> For a general outline of the structure of Sufi brotherhoods on the ARSL, see Trimmingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, 201–205.

<sup>47</sup> S. F. Nadel, 'Notes on Beni Amer Society,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 26:1 (1945): 65–66.

<sup>48</sup> Miran, 'A Historical Overview of Islam in Eritrea,' 186.

Conversion to Islam did not bring material relief to ARSL pastoralist communities. Despite the activities of the new religious elites, the mega-drought persisted and pastoralists were still food insecure. The spread of Islam in the ARSL could not ameliorate the suffering of pastoralist communities because it could not improve environmental conditions or increase regional trade. In fact, in the decades following the mass conversion, trade shrunk further because Sudan and Ethiopia became more unstable. The further decline of Sudan was caused, in large part, by the sudden rise of Egypt. Egypt had also suffered from the mega-drought. Persistent low Nile floods decreased crop yields and destabilized grain markets in Egypt, which, in turn, precipitated severe famines in 1785, 1790, and 1791.<sup>49</sup> Structural problems in the local economy were compounded by political instability marked by the 1789 French conquest and, after the French troops were forced to withdraw, the armed struggle between the Ottoman forces and the Mamluks. Once Ottoman rule was firmly reestablished, Turko-Egyptian officials embarked on a massive program of repairing and expanding irrigation works. The more efficient use of the Nile's diminished floods resulted in a three- to four-fold increase in annual grain yields.<sup>50</sup> Large grain surpluses allowed Muhammad Ali, who served as the Ottoman *Wali* of Egypt from 1805 until his death in 1848, to increase and consolidate his power by, among other things, modernizing the Egyptian army and launching campaigns of territorial expansion in the Mediterranean Basin, Arabia and, most significantly for ARSL pastoralists, Northeast Africa.

The Egyptian conquest of the Funj Sultanate was relatively quick, but it left Northern Sudan even more poor and unstable.<sup>51</sup> In July 1820, the

<sup>49</sup> Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 218–219, 227–229.

<sup>50</sup> Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 156.

<sup>51</sup> There was little intrinsic value in holding the Funj Sultanate's territory. When compared to its neighbors, the Funj Sultanate was not a particularly wealthy state. In the west, the Dar Fur Sultanate was the starting point of the lucrative *Darb al-Arbain*, or 40 days caravan road, which brought slaves and gold from Africa to Egypt. In the south, Ethiopia was known as a fertile land of riches. The conquest of the Funj Sultanate was driven by political motives. In 1811, recalcitrant Mamluks had fled into Northern Sudan, where they hoped to regroup and launch a campaign to recapture the Egyptian state. The real economic prize of the first campaign of conquest was Dar Fur. Though Muhammad Ali did not publicly discuss his reasons for conquering Sudan, the progress of the campaign indicates that the initial motivation for the conquest was political and not economic. The search for treasure only began once the fall

Egyptian army invaded the Funj Sultanate's northern reaches and by June 1821 this force had captured the capital of Sinnar. The new Turko-Egyptian rulers of Northern Nilotic Sudan immediately turned their attention to maximizing the economic value of their recently conquered territory. They used legal compulsion and the threat of retaliatory violence to compel local cultivators to focus on the commercial cultivation of sugar and indigo. These initiatives met with some early success. A large sugar plantation was almost immediately established at al-Kamlin. In 1832, 17 tons of indigo were exported to Egypt from Northern Nilotic Sudan.<sup>52</sup> However, these ventures were unsustainable. Sudan lacked the irrigation technologies used in Egypt; therefore, yields from flood cultivation in Sudan were, even under normal circumstances, less drought-resilient. Cultivators who diverted their fields from grains to cash crops could not cope with the ongoing mega-drought. This resulted in the deadly 1835–1837 famine that threatened to end Turko-Egyptian control over the region.<sup>53</sup> To provide relief and calm growing tensions between cultivators and the administration, Turko-Egyptian officials abolished the requirement to grow indigo and made its cultivation voluntary. Suffering Sudanese cultivators quickly abandoned commercial crops and returned to cultivating grain, which they needed for their own subsistence.<sup>54</sup>

The Ethiopian highlands also saw increased instability during the 1820s and 1830s. Without a functioning central state, *Rases* competed for influence. Some were more successful than others. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Sahle Selassie succeeded at compelling rival factions in Shewa to submit.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, Sahle Selassie was unable to address the underlying structural economic issues that plagued the region. As a result, Shewa was plunged into a devastating famine in 1828, during which half of the population of Ankobar, the regional capital, died and thousands

of Sinnar was all but assured. In April 1821, Muhammad Ali sent a force to conquer Dar Fur. As it was making its way through Kurdufan, the expedition was defeated. Richard Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1821–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 8–13. For a summary of the progress of the expeditions to conquer the Funj Sultanate and Dar Fur, see P. M. Holt and M. W. Daly, *A History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 4th edition (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 47–58.

<sup>52</sup> Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 54–55.

<sup>53</sup> Anders Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region, 1821–1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 74.

<sup>54</sup> Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia*, 152–156.

from the neighboring countryside offered themselves as slaves to Sahle Selassie. As many as two-thirds of those who made this offer died, mainly of cholera, before he accepted. Nonetheless, nearly 5000 people voluntarily entered into slavery.<sup>56</sup> The end of the acute crisis led to renewed, widespread resistance to Sahle Selassie's rule. The Oromo population of Shewa rose up in open rebellion. The uprising continued until 1835, when repeated failures of the annual rains caused herds to die in large numbers and resulted in such profound devastation that the rebels were left with the false choice of continuing their struggle and starving or submitting and receiving limited assistance.<sup>57</sup> The end of the Oromo uprising did not bring peace to the Ethiopian highlands. In 1838, the Turko-Egyptian force in Sudan began raiding into Ethiopia, causing widespread panic. Efforts by Ethiopian *Rases* to form ad hoc mutual defense alliances collapsed in 1837 when the rains failed again.<sup>58</sup> *Ras* Ubye of Tigray recognized that he and the other Ethiopian *Rases* needed outside help. Fearing that a Turko-Egyptian invasion was imminent, *Ras* Ubye wrote to the British and French governments asking them to intervene. In response, diplomatic pressure came down on Muhammad Ali to abandon any plans to conquer Ethiopia.<sup>59</sup>

Increasing instability in Ethiopia and Sudan exacerbated the negative economic consequences of the mega-drought. As a result, pastoralists continued to suffer. Nonetheless, they did not turn away from the Ad Shaykh, Majdhubiyya, and Khatmiyya religious elites preaching of their own spiritual powers. Instead, pastoralists doubled down. By 1840, nearly all ARSL pastoralists had converted to Islam. This conversion was only partially the result of the activities of the religious elites themselves. The speed and breadth of the conversion indicate that this was a mass movement driven by the pastoralists themselves. Pastoralists developed their own independent interest in the religious practices preached by these new religious elites. This interest was rooted, fundamentally, in a breakdown of the old socio-economic order. Pastoralists converted because they were suffering and had been for generations. The mega-drought had caused the economy to shrink by rendering valueless previously important natural

<sup>56</sup> Richard Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892: A New Assessment* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1964), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Abir, *Ethiopia*, 156–157.

<sup>58</sup> As evidenced by the recording of an extremely low flood by the Cairo Nilometer.

<sup>59</sup> Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, 115–116.

resources. With the drying of the land, pastoralists could not both maintain their herds and grow a share of their subsistence. So, they chose their animals over cultivation. This choice meant that they were forced to depend to an even greater extent than had been normal on grain markets. But, their access to these markets was unstable. Pastoralists' incomes had shrunk and, by the end of the eighteenth century, were too small to allow them to purchase their necessities. Pastoralists needed new tools to help them feed themselves, maintain their animals, and ensure communal cohesion. The Ad Shaykh, Majdhubiyya, and Khatmiyya religious elites claimed they had such tools. The claim of possessing *baraka* or other spiritual powers was a claim about this world, that is, it was a claim to be able to improve the physical environment and to render it more propitious. Belief rendered this tool understandable, accessible, and, in the eyes of the true believers, effective. Pastoralists believed in the terrestrial effectiveness of *baraka* because they had few alternatives.

Gaining access to the *baraka* of the new religious elites unleashed new tensions within pastoralist societies. As conversion spread, the new religious elites formally organized their followers into new theological communities that transcended traditional pastoralists divisions of family, clan, and tribe. The growing power of the new religious elites posed a fundamental threat to the power of traditional pastoralist leaders. The power struggle between these two groups slowly began to take hold during the waning years of the mega-drought. The return of wetter conditions after 1840 could not bring about an end to these tensions. Too much had changed during the mega-drought. Wetter conditions could not dissolve the Sufi brotherhoods. Nor could it return the power and prestige of traditional pastoralist leaders. It also could not make the ascendant Egyptian state decide to reverse course and return to its previous boundaries. The full, devastating implications of these changes were only beginning to play out by the time the mega-drought had ended.





## CHAPTER 3

---

# Divided and Conquered, 1840–1883

The Little Ice Age mega-drought ended around 1840, but the hardship it had caused persisted. The ARSL was still a generally dry and hot place where annual rainfall was uncertain. Between 1840 and 1890, 32 percent of the years were either exceptionally dry or wet.<sup>1</sup> Before the mega-drought, pastoralist communities protected themselves from this climatic variability by engaging in a range of economic strategies that were based on exploiting a robust basket of social and natural resources. The variety and complexity of these strategies ensured that even when ecological and economic variability made one ineffective, pastoralists would be protected from experiencing the hardship of real want. The mega-drought weakened this protection. Unfortunately, the end of the mega-drought did not suddenly revive this safeguard. These strategies had been embedded in a specific social order. The allocation of access to social and natural resources was embedded in a web of dependence that undergirded each pastoralist community. When the mega-drought ended, pastoralist communities could not simply return to their previous practices because the socio-economic order had been fundamentally altered. The mass conversion to Islam and the proliferation of trans-communal religious institutions challenged intra-communal ties. This was especially true of the ties that bound pastoralists to traditional leader. These leaders had shown their weakness

<sup>1</sup> Popper, *The Cairo Nilometer*, 174–178.

during the mega-drought; they could not protect their dependents from this slow-moving disaster. Pastoralists responded to this failure by aligning themselves with the new Islamic religious elites in their midst who claimed to be carriers of *baraka*.

The mega-drought had also contributed to the sudden rise in Turko-Egyptian power. In the final decades of this ecological disaster, Muhammad Ali used his position as *Wali* of Egypt to (1) amass autonomous power at the expense of the central Ottoman state; (2) conquer the Funj Sultanate; and (3) drive the Saudi-Wahhabi state out of the Hijaz. Though Muhammad Ali returned the Hijaz to direct Ottoman administration, by the end of the mega-drought Egypt had established its own African empire. Expanding and consolidating power was expensive and Turko-Egyptian officials sought to make their empire a source of profit. When efforts to wring as much treasure as possible from Northern Nilotic Sudan precipitated a deadly famine in 1835–1837, officials began looking further afield to territories still outside of their control. Though they did not in any way rule the ARSL, Turko-Egyptian officials came to believe in the middle third of the nineteenth century that extracting tribute from pastoralists in this region would be a cheap and effective way of increasing state revenues.

Turko-Egyptian designs for the ARSL should have failed. Pastoralist communities from this region had a strong disincentive to paying—the mega-drought had made them food insecure. Using part of their limited income to pay tribute, instead of purchasing their subsistence, was a heavy burden. Further, pastoralists could have avoided paying, as they had when Sudanese, Ethiopian, or Ottoman officials had tried similar actions in the past. Pastoralists were mobile and knew the terrain well enough to avoid encountering foreign tribute collecting patrols. Nonetheless, Turko-Egyptian officials succeeded at extracting large quantities of tribute from ARSL pastoralist communities. Turko-Egyptian efforts succeeded where those of other imperial powers had previously failed because it was predicated on coopting hierarchical divisions within pastoralist communities and redeploying them to meet colonial objectives. This pattern was first established in Eastern Sudan in the 1840s when Turko-Egyptian officials convinced traditional pastoralist leaders from this region that collaboration was in their interest. By allying themselves with the expanding Turko-Egyptian colonial state, these leaders could, at least temporarily, neutralize the existential threat posed by the power of the new Islamic religious elite. This system of colonial exploitation by proxy was effective for two reasons. First, it could be flexibly deployed. When traditional leaders in Eastern

Sudan stopped collaborating in the 1860s, officials marginalized them and brought the new Islamic religious elites into the system of indirect rule. Second, it could serve as a template for further colonial expansion. As Turko-Egyptian officials incorporated more of the ARSL into Egypt's expanding empire, they encountered other traditional pastoralist leaders who felt threatened by other groups of religious elites. These officials then made the same offer. Traditional pastoralist leaders, who were more concerned with conserving their own power, prestige, and position, almost invariably agreed to collaborate in exploiting their dependents.

### STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND THE DECLINING POWER OF TRADITIONAL PASTORALIST LEADERS

Turko-Egyptian officials' early efforts to collect tribute were met with unified pastoralist resistance and, therefore, failed. Though tensions were mounting within pastoralist communities because of the mass conversion, all segments of pastoralist society initially worked together to undermine Turko-Egyptian plans. In 1831–1832, the Turko-Egyptian rulers of Sudan sent several military expeditions to Eastern Sudan to collect tribute from the local pastoralist communities. Initially, these communities simply migrated collectively to avoid encountering these armed parties. Avoidance turned to offensive action in early 1832, when a pastoralist militia attacked an Egyptian army camp near the Gash Delta. Several soldiers were killed and the remainder of the camp was forced to retreat to its base on the Nile.<sup>2</sup> Following this defeat, Turko-Egyptian officials abandoned their plans to extract tribute from pastoralists and, instead, returned to focusing on maximizing the returns from colonizing Northern Nilotic Sudan. As mentioned earlier, these efforts precipitated a devastating famine, which forced Turko-Egyptian officials to again look for other sources of state revenue. In 1840, officials resumed their efforts to collect tribute from pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan. That year, Abu Udan, the Governor General of Sudan and the son-in-law of the Egyptian *Wali*, personally led a tribute and raiding expedition into Eastern Sudan. Again, little was collected because pastoralists simply migrated to avoid the expedition.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*; Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 100.

Turko-Egyptian officials interpreted their failure to extract tribute as a problem of strategy. Eastern Sudan was a peripheral territory neighboring but outside the control of the colonial state in Sudan. Pastoralists rightfully recognized themselves as independent from Turko-Egyptian rule and, therefore, recognized efforts to extract tribute as illegitimate. Turko-Egyptian officials also came to understand that they had to make pastoralists in Eastern Sudan submit to colonial rule before they could demand tribute. A claim to this area could not be easily established through conquest because there were no cities or settled agricultural communities to capture. There were just desert, pastures, a mobile population, and, crucially, a limited number of cultivable zones. Officials came to believe that capturing the strategic Gash Delta with its crucial supply of surface water would force pastoralists to submit. In 1840, officials established a garrison at the mouth of the delta near Jabal Kassala and then dammed the river. However, officials underestimated the vulnerability of soldiers garrisoned far away from the main Egyptian army bases in Sudan. At the time of that year's first torrential rush, a 200-man Hadendowa militia overwhelmed the garrison and breached the dam.<sup>4</sup> Though it did not force the garrison to retreat, this attack proved the limits of any Turko-Egyptian strategy based on capturing territory.

In 1844, Turko-Egyptian officials again changed tactics by inaugurating a campaign of brutal violence that specifically targeted the traditional leaders of the Hadendowa clan. This was not the first time that Hadendowa elites were targeted. Following the 1840 attack of the Kassala garrison, Turko-Egyptian officials tricked Muhammad al-Din, the *nazir* of the Hadendowa, to come in with an offer to negotiate peace. During this meeting, al-Din was arrested and sent in chains to Khartoum, where he subsequently died of smallpox.<sup>5</sup> What changed between 1840 and 1844 was the scale of the campaign of terror. In 1844, Turko-Egyptian officials tried to eliminate the entire leadership of the Hadendowa clan. Again, they invited all the Hadendowa *shaykhs* to come in on the pretense of negotiating peace. Those that came in were either murdered or enslaved. The exemplary punishment of the Hadendowa *shaykhs* had an immediate

<sup>4</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 193. Though this plan failed, the remnants of the dam were not cleared. Thus, they permanently altered the course of the river and the area of the delta into which it drained. Secretary of the Kassala Cotton Company to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, UK, 18 January 1924 *CIVSEC* 2/8/32 National Records Office, Khartoum (NRO).

<sup>5</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 193.

effect. Hadendowa sub-clans with rangelands in the northern reaches of the ARSL retreated to more isolated areas in the Red Sea Hills to avoid contact with the Turko-Egyptian forces. But the leadership of other sub-clans, clans and tribes decided to stop resisting.<sup>6</sup> The remaining leadership of the southern Hadendowa sub-clans made public acts of submission to the Turko-Egyptian colonial state. They were followed by the traditional leadership of the other Beja clans, as well as those of the Beni Amer.<sup>7</sup>

While these traditional pastoralist leaders may have initially submitted out of fear, they continued to support the Turko-Egyptian colonial government out of self-interest. These leaders quickly came to see Turko-Egyptian officials not as threats but as allies in their struggle to maintain power, privilege, and influence. Rather than marginalize traditional leaders, Turko-Egyptian officials brought them into the emerging colonial administration of Eastern Sudan. These officials were unwilling to invest in constructing a robust regional administration. For these officials, the central purpose of the new administration was to extract as much revenue as possible. Incorporating traditional leaders into the administrative apparatus was a way of keeping costs down. In setting up the system of indirect rule, Turko-Egyptian officials generally sought to avoid interfering in pastoral politics. Instead, they simply confirmed those leaders that submitted in the positions they already held and deputized them as agents of the colonial state. For example, Turko-Egyptian officials recognized Hamid Muhammad as the *Diglal* (chief) of the Beni Amer tribe, a position he had before the 1844 submission of the Beni Amer and that he would keep until his death in 1875.<sup>8</sup> Relations between the emerging colonial government and the leadership of the Hadendowa were necessarily different. Turko-Egyptian officials had enslaved or murdered much of the leadership of the southern Hadendowa in 1844. However, following the submission of the remaining Hadendowa leadership, Turko-Egyptian officials released from captivity Musa Ibrahim, the nephew of Muhammad al-Din (the deceased *nazir* of the Hadendowa who had died in a Khartoum prison). Musa Ibrahim had a legitimate claim to the title of *nazir*, and Turko-Egyptian officials immediately recognized him in this position. Musa Ibrahim retained this position throughout the period of Turko-Egyptian rule in Eastern Sudan.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the traditional leaders who

<sup>6</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 195.

<sup>7</sup> Paul, 'Notes on the Beni Amer,' 226.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Owen, 'The Hadendowa,' 193.

aligned themselves with the colonial government did not have to worry about the emergence of any rivals from within their own communities.

This alliance also protected traditional leaders from two other threats to their power. First, it protected them from threats posed by other pastoral communities. Over the previous centuries, the Hadendowa and the Bisharin clans of the Beja had migrated south and forcibly seized important pastures. Their submission to Turko-Egyptian rule ended this territorial expansion. Turko-Egyptian officials recognized the territorial claims of the various communities as they stood at the time of submission. Further expansion would have been considered an act of rebellion. This constraint on the further southern expansion of northern ARSL pastoralist communities was especially attractive to members of the Beni Amer tribe. The southern expansion of the Hadendowa in the eighteenth century had brought them into the vicinity of Beni Amer territory and a further southern expansion would have necessarily come at the expense of the Beni Amer. Second, and perhaps more universally significant, an alliance with the Turko-Egyptian colonial state protected traditional pastoral leaders from the existential threat posed by the rising power of the Islamic religious elites. Turko-Egyptian officials also wanted to minimize the influence of Sufi brotherhoods and of leaders of heterodox Islamic movements throughout their colonial territories. Instead, these officials wanted to foster the development of a single, unified form of Islamic religious teaching and practice. This was not simply an act driven by missionary piety. The type of practice that Turko-Egyptian officials sponsored was designed to support the goals and aims of the state. For example, these officials had three *Ulamas* accompany the force that conquered the Funj Sultanate in 1820–1821. These *Ulamas* were deputized to assist in compelling the vanquished communities to submit to Turko-Egyptian rule. Prior to the annexation of Eastern Sudan, Turko-Egyptian officials had already been actively marginalizing Sufi elites and local *fakirs* in Northern Nilotic Sudan by preventing them from the adjudication of both religious and civil matters. Instead of relying on local religious leader, Turko-Egyptian officials had established state-sponsored Sharia courts guided by the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Mahmoud, 'Sufism and Islamism in the Sudan,' in *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*, Eva Evers Rosander and David Westerlund, eds. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997), 170.

The alliance between the traditional pastoralist leaders and the colonial state fundamentally altered the relationship between these leaders and the members of their communities. Previously, networks of mutual dependence bound the leaders to their communities. The power of the various leaders came with a set of responsibilities to care for and protect the other community members. However, the alliance with the state severed this dependence. The one demand the state placed on these leaders was that they extract exceedingly large quantities of tribute each year. This demand could not be fulfilled without contravening the requirement to care for and protect community members. Turko-Egyptian officials levied and traditional elites collected what Samuel Baker observed to be a “heavy and burdensome” tribute.<sup>11</sup> For example, the Hadendowa clan and the Beni Amer tribe were each required to pay an annual tribute of 60,000 Maria Theresa thalers.<sup>12</sup>

The level of tribute demand was especially burdensome because pastoralist communities were still economically losing ground. Though the mega-drought ended around the time of the Turko-Egyptian annexation of Eastern Sudan, the caravan trade was continuing to contract. By 1862, customs receipts collected at Sawakin and Massawa had declined to just five percent of what they had been in 1845.<sup>13</sup> The contraction of this trade was partially caused by changes to Sudan’s import/export trade. Turko-Egyptian rule was transforming trade in Northern Nilotic Sudan so that it favored Egypt and Egypt’s Mediterranean ports, to the detriment of trading with the Red Sea. Trade between Egypt and Sudan had historically been hampered by impassable Nile cataracts blocking the river route and political instability blocking the overland, desert route. However, in 1820 the advancing Turko-Egyptian force blasted a channel through the previously unnavigable second Nile cataract.<sup>14</sup> After they conquered the Funj Sultanate, officials constructed a network of shipyards and port facilities at

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia and the Sword Hunters of the Hamran Arabs*, 3rd edition (London: Macmillan and Co, 1868), 73–74.

<sup>12</sup> *Memoria sulla tribù Ad Sciaraf* [n.d. June 1892]. Posizione 4/3 Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero Africa Italiana, Rome (ASDMAI).

<sup>13</sup> William Ochsenwald, ‘The Financial Basis of Ottoman Rule in the Hijaz 1840–1877,’ in *Nationalism in a Non-Nation State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald, eds. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 134–135.

<sup>14</sup> Hassan Dafalla, *The Nubian Exodus* (London: C Hurst & Co, 1975), 21.

strategic points along the Sudanese Nile, and assembled a large fleet of cargo ships to carry both internal Sudanese trade and trade between Sudan and Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

As Sudan's Red Sea trade was drying up, the trade passing through the northern ARSL on its way from the Red Sea and the Ethiopian highlands was also decreasing. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the center of the Ethiopian economy shifted southward away from the northern highlands to the autonomous kingdom of Shewa. The rapid growth of the Shewan economy in the 1840s was driven by state-sponsored raiding. In the early 1840s, Sahle Selassie, the *Negus* of Shewa began organizing large, annual raiding expeditions into Oromo territory along Shewa's southern marches. These expeditions consisted of as many as 30,000 armed men, comprised primarily of irregular peasant conscripts. The central aim of these expeditions was extractive, that is, the seizure of goods, slaves, and animals.<sup>16</sup> The large bounties taken during these raids fueled a profitable trade with the rest of the SRSR. However, Shewa's links to the coast did not pass through Eastern Sudan. Rather, caravans from the Shewan capital of Ankobar generally first traveled southeast to the major regional market city at Harar and then on to the coast at Zayla. While the steady increase of trade on this route was good for the Afar and Somali pastoralists that controlled it, this increase came at the expense of northerly routes.<sup>17</sup>

The caravan trade through the northern ARSL was also hindered by the further political destabilization of the northern Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands. Shewa's rise and Egypt's imperial expansion posed an existential threat to the *Rases* that were still competing for supremacy of the northern highlands. On the one hand, these *Rases* were individually too weak to resist the expansionist ambitions of their neighbors to the north and south. On the other hand, working together to redevelop a strong, effective central state based in the northern Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands would mean that each *Ras* would have to give up some power to the state. Kassa Haile Giorgis, a *shifta* leader in the Tigre region, tried to capitalize on this crisis to amass his own power. In 1855, he was crowned emperor of Ethiopia, at which time he took the name Tewodros II. Immediately, Tewodros set

<sup>15</sup> Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 60–61.

<sup>16</sup> Charles-Xavier Rochet d'Héricourt, *Second Voyage sur les Deux Rives de la Mer Rouge Dans le Pays des Adels et le Royaume de Choa* (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1846), 179–180.

<sup>17</sup> Colette Dubois, *Djibouti 1888–1967: Héritage ou frustration?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 50.



about remaking this position, which had been effectively powerless since the deposition of Emperor Iyoas in 1769. Tewodros had ambitions to be the powerful ruler of an effective, centralized state ruling over a unified Ethiopia.<sup>18</sup> While his plans met with some initial success, they were soon thwarted by widespread resistance. By 1862, nearly all of the highlands were in open rebellion.<sup>19</sup> Tewodros needed arms and ammunition to put down the rebellions and gain control of the region. However, the Ottoman officials that ruled Massawa refused to let cargos of arms and ammunition pass through the port to the Ethiopian interior.<sup>20</sup> In a misguided effort to open negotiations for a treaty of mutual protection against the Ottoman sultan, Tewodros II took some British diplomats and European officials hostage. Rather than use diplomatic means to secure their release, the British sent an imperial force of over 13,000 men to punish Tewodros II. The Magdala Campaign, as it subsequently came to be known, was not a war of conquest. The British force marched from the coast to Tewodros's fortress compound at Magdala, burned and looted it, and retreated. During the fighting, Tewodros committed suicide.<sup>21</sup> British officials refused to intervene and establish a new, post-campaign political order in Ethiopia. As a result, the northern highlands were thrown into a bloody, multiyear war of succession that was resolved only after the 1871 crowning of Yohannes IV as emperor.<sup>22</sup>

In the northern ARSL, the alliance between the traditional pastoralist leaders and the Turko-Egyptian colonial state lasted nearly 20 years. For reasons that are unclear from the historical record, in the mid-1860s many pastoralist leaders became unwilling or unable to collect the tribute from their dependents. Turko-Egyptian officials responded by dispatching armed tribute collecting parties. These expeditions proved just as ineffective as those that had been sent in the 1830s and 1840s. By 1865, the administration did not have enough cash on hand to pay the troops and

<sup>18</sup> Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1991*, 2nd edition (Oxford: James Currey, 2001), 31.

<sup>19</sup> Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 39–40.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan A. Grant, *Rulers, Guns, and Money: The Global Arms Trade in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 47–48.

<sup>21</sup> For a thorough retelling of this campaign, see Volker Matthies, *The Siege of Magdala: The British Empire Against the Emperor of Ethiopia*, translated by Steven Rendall (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> K. V. Ram, *Anglo-Ethiopian Relations 1869 to 1906: A Study of British Policy in Ethiopia* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009), 4–8.

soldiers mutinied.<sup>23</sup> Pastoralists, who were already chaffing at the demand for tribute, seized this opportunity to exert their independence. They formed armed bands that patrolled the countryside and, often, engaged in banditry. Turko-Egyptian officials responded by increasing their military presence in Eastern Sudan by establishing permanent garrisons at Tawkar, Sawakin, Irkuwit, and Sinkat, as well as by expanding the garrison that had been at Kassala since the 1840s.<sup>24</sup> These garrisons served as bases for the regular expeditions sent to punish and/or collect tribute from recalcitrant pastoralist communities. The escalating violence led many pastoralist leaders to break their alliance with the administration. The few leaders that continued to side with the administration were rewarded with salaries, preferential treatment, and unique opportunities to profit. For example, Hamad Mahmud, the *nazir* of the Amara, was officially recognized as the head *shaykh* of the Barbar-Sawakin road. His *wakil*, Mahmud Ali, was given official sanction to arrange camels for the caravans leaving Sawakin for the Nile and to collect the tolls for using the road.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, the *shaykhs* of the Hadendowa communities that claimed the road were not allowed to participate in its official management.

Though they were no longer supported by much of the pastoralist leadership, Turko-Egyptian officials did not give up on ruling indirectly. Rather, they developed a new pattern of indirect rule in Eastern Sudan based on a strategic alliance with the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood, in general, and the al-Mirghani family, in particular. As officials shifted from systematically marginalizing local Islamic religious elites to promoting the interests of some of them, the Khatmiyya religious elites began to use their increasing power to promote the interests of the state.<sup>26</sup> With the help and support of the increasingly powerful Khatmiyya theological bureaucracy, officials increased the assessed annual tribute. Under tribute regulations introduced in 1875, each traditional leader of a sub-clan was required to collect and turn over three-fourths of a dollar for every camel, one-fourth of a dollar for every mature head of cattle, and one-fifth of a dollar for each sheep or goat owned by his followers.<sup>27</sup> This new rubric caused the tribute assessment to

<sup>23</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 101–102.

<sup>24</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> *Memorandum by Major Chermiside Respecting the Situation of Affairs at Suakin and the Proposed Measures to be Taken to Open the Berber Road*, 29 March 1884 FO407/61/61. NA.

<sup>26</sup> P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 82.

<sup>27</sup> Il Capitano Boari to il Governatore della Colonia Eritrea, 11 March 1891, *The Nakfa Documents*, 272–286.

rise. For example, the total tribute assessment for the Hadendowa clan doubled to 100,000 thalers under this new scheme.<sup>28</sup> Officials counted on the Khatmiyya theological bureaucracy to compel compliance.

### COLONIZING THE SOUTHERN ARSL

Turko-Egyptian officials did not limit their ambitions to just Eastern Sudan. In the third-quarter of the nineteenth century, they began to progressively extend their colonial control over the rest of the ARSL through a mixture of force, diplomatic pressure, and interfering in local politics. In 1865, the Ottoman Porte ceded Massawa and Sawakin in perpetuity to the ruler of Egypt, who had recently succeeded to establish Egyptian autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and who was now governing with the hereditary title of Khedive. Turko-Egyptian officials subsequently used Massawa as a base for annexing the neighboring hinterland.<sup>29</sup> Again, Turko-Egyptian officials sought to establish a system of indirect rule that would maximize state revenues. Many traditional leaders of local pastoralist communities willingly collaborated with the developing colonial administration because they, like their counterparts in Eastern Sudan, had lost power and influence during the mega-drought.

<sup>28</sup> Intelligence Branch, War Department, Great Britain, *Report on the Egyptian Provinces of the Sudan, Red Sea and Equator* (1884), 40. Sudan Archive Durham (SAD).

<sup>29</sup> Turko-Egyptian officials also used Massawa to establish claims to territory on the African littoral of the Gulf of Aden. In 1867, Khedive Ismail sent an agent from Massawa to Barbara to settle a dispute between Somali factions. Similar missions over the next five years strengthened the Turko-Egyptian presence on the Somali coast and laid the groundwork for a permanent occupation. In 1873, several hundred Turko-Egyptian troops landed at Barbara and constructed a permanent fort. Military officers subsequently used Barbara as a base to extend control over Bulhar. In July 1875, Turko-Egyptian diplomatic efforts led to the Ottoman Porte ceding Zayla, which had previously been ruled from Yemen, to the Khedive. As Turko-Egyptian officials were establishing a claim to the coast up to Ras Hafun, officials were also extending Turko-Egyptian rule into the interior. In June 1872, Werner Munzinger, who had recently appointed governor of Massawa, sent troops to permanently occupy Keren and Senheit. At the start of 1874, Munzinger traveled to Barbara, where he met with Somali elites from the interior and compelled them to submit to Turko-Egyptian protection. The following year, a Turko-Egyptian force conquered Harrar, the strategic center of trade and Islamic learning in the interior. This expansionist campaign only came to a halt in 1875, after an expedition led by Muzinger to take the port of Tajoura and two other expeditions into the Ethiopian highlands were defeated. R. J. Gavin, *Aden under British Rule, 1839–1967* (London: C Hurst and Co, 1975), 148; A. W. M. *Egyptian Claim to Sovereignty over the Somali Coast (No. 1)*. 26 February 1876 IOR L/PS/20/MEMO41 British Library, London (BL); Stephen Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea*, reprint of the 1945 edition (Eastport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 106–108.

Turko-Egyptian officials were selective when choosing their local collaborators. They did not choose to align themselves with the *Naib* of Arkiko, who, at least officially, was the local agent of the Ottoman Empire. The position of *Naib* of Arkiko had been created by Ottoman officials shortly after Özdemir Pasha conquered Massawa and Arkiko in 1557. Though the Ottoman military had initially hoped to use these ports as a base for conquering Ethiopia, the Ethiopian state quickly proved itself capable of launching an effective defense. Rather than continue to pursue this losing strategy, Ottoman officials narrowed their regional ambitions to simply maintaining a nominal hold over the coast. Ottoman officials chose to rule indirectly through a strategic alliance with the Balaw, a local pastoralist clan. Like the Hadariba of Eastern Sudan, the Balaw had formed as a distinct community centuries earlier when a small group of Beja pastoralists settled in Sawakin, intermarried with the families of foreign traders and converted to Islam. In the fourteenth century, the Balaw migrated from Sawakin to Arkiko, where they then married into pastoralist communities from the neighboring countryside. Like the Hadariba of Eastern Sudan, the Balaw in Arkiko leveraged their kinship ties and their Muslim faith to become the intermediaries in the trade between local pastoralist communities and foreign merchants. Though the Balaw were important players in local trade, they were not politically influential at the time of the establishment of Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, the Balaw were urban Muslims who spoke the local language, knew local customs, and had local kinship ties. In the early seventeenth century, Ottoman officials formally incorporated the Balaw into the system of indirect rule by creating the position of *Naib*, appointing the leading Balaw *shaykh* in Arkiko to this position and making it hereditary. The *Naib* was responsible to the Ottoman *Wali* (governor) of the Hijaz. In exchange for maintaining the Ottoman presence in and around Arkiko, the *Naib* was given arms, ammunition, and a stipend to allow him to maintain a personal militia.<sup>30</sup> This militia allowed him to collect customs duties by forcing the import/export trade to pass through Arkiko and Massawa, as opposed to any of the other natural harbors in the area. As a result, both the *Naib's* power and wealth came from his position at the fringes of the Ottoman Empire and not from the network of dependence that underpinned pastoralist society.

<sup>30</sup> Jonathan Miran, 'Power without Pashas: The Anatomy of Na'ib Autonomy in Ottoman Eritrea (17th–19th C.),' *Eritrean Studies Review*, 5:1 (2007): 33–44.

The *Naib*'s influence declined severely during the Little Ice Age mega-drought. This ecological disaster had led directly to the *Naib* losing his ability both to collect import/export duties and to command the support of the Ottoman Imperial state. At the start of the nineteenth century, pastoralists began helping merchants avoid paying duties by guiding caravans to the port of Edd, where there was no customs house, instead of to Massawa and Arkiko. In response, *Naib* Idris walad Uthman sent his militia to burn Edd and force the *shaykh* of the port to publicly submit.<sup>31</sup> In the years that followed, pastoralist discontent deepened. Caravans continued to bypass the customs houses by meeting ships at the numerous natural harbors along the shore. The refusal to pay tribute became widespread. Around the same time, the Saudi-Wahhabi force drove the Ottoman state out of the Hijaz. The *Naib* was forced to turn to the *Sharif* of Mecca for assistance. In 1808, walad Uthman agreed to pay an annual tribute of 1200 thalers to the *Sharif* and, in exchange, the *Sharif* agreed to raise and provision a force of 500 soldiers to restore the *Naib*'s influence.<sup>32</sup> However, this agreement was short-lived. When Ottoman rule was reestablished over the Hijaz, officials decided to deploy their own troops to occupy Massawa. Recognizing that the *Naib* was no longer useful, Ottoman officials ended their financing of the *Naib*'s militia in 1827. By the end of the mega-drought, the *Naib* had no local influence, the Ottomans occupied Massawa but could not project their power in the interior and pastoralist communities in the southern ARSL effectively ruled themselves with little outside interference.

The new status quo continued until 1853, when Ottoman officials decided to finally sever all formal ties with the *Naib*. In response, *Naib* Muhammad Abd al-Rahim, walad Uthman's successor, migrated with his followers to Ethiopia, collected men and returned to the southern ARSL to lead a revolt that aimed to drive the Ottomans from Massawa. This rebellion was soon put down through a mix of force and diplomatic pressure. As part of a negotiated settlement, the *Naib* was brought back into the Ottoman administration. However, his position was reduced. The *Naib* was now just a salaried government official in charge of collecting the tribute that the Ottoman rulers of Massawa were trying to levy from neighboring pastoralist communities.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Miran, 'Power without Pashas,' 47.

<sup>32</sup> Il Capitano Boari to il Governatore della Colonia Eritrea, 11 March 1891, *The Nakfa Documents*, 272–286.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

When the Ottoman sultan turned Massawa over to the Egyptian Khedive in 1865, Turko-Egyptian officials found that they had no need for the *Naib*. They recognized that it was more effective to compel traditional pastoralist leaders to collect the tribute from their dependents. Again, officials sought to establish a colonial administration based on a system of indirect rule and designed in such a way as to maximize revenues and minimize expenses. Under this system, traditional pastoralist leaders were granted salaries. For example, the *Kantibai* of the Habab was placed on a salary of approximately 140 thalers per month and given an additional subsidy to maintain scribes and a clan bureaucracy.<sup>34</sup> In exchange, the *Kantibai* and the other salaried leaders were expected to collect and turn over annual tribute payments. As was the case in Eastern Sudan, the amount of tribute levied was high. It was even considerably higher than Ottoman officials had previously required the *Naib* to collect. For example, whereas Ottoman officials required the Habab to annually pay 3000 Maria Theresa thalers, the new Turko-Egyptian rulers assessed the Habab's tribute at 15,000 thalers per year.<sup>35</sup>

Traditional pastoral leadership in the southern ARSL, like their counterparts in Eastern Sudan, willingly collaborated with the administration in exploiting their own communities. This leadership was also facing an existential crisis caused by the sudden spread of Islam. Recently converted serfs were abandoning their clans to join the Ad Shaykh religious community. As a result, the spread of Islam caused the wealth and prestige of the noble caste to decline while it allowed for the sudden rise of prominence of a new, rival clan. Turko-Egyptian officials undermined the influence of the Ad Shaykh in two ways. First, they marginalized their main political benefactor. At the start of the nineteenth century, *Naib* walad Uthman recognized that the Ad Shaykh were amassing considerable influence, which he could tap for his benefit. Unlike the traditional pastoralist leaders, walad Uthman and his successor actively supported the missionizing work of the Ad Shaykh.<sup>36</sup> Since Turko-Egyptian officials did not rely on the *Naib* to collect tribute, they reduced his salary to just 25 thalers per

<sup>34</sup> 'Tributi' [n.d.], *The Nakfa Documents*, 152.

<sup>35</sup> 'Tributi pagati dalla mudiria (provincia) di Massaua sotto gli Egiziani al tempo di Munzinger confrontati con quelli che si propongono' [n.d. 1891], *The Nakfa Documents*, 287–288.

<sup>36</sup> Miran, 'A Historical Overview of Islam in Eritrea,' 186.

year.<sup>37</sup> As a result, he could no longer serve as patron to the Ad Shaykh. Second, Turko-Egyptian officials recognized only the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood as a legitimate local religious institution. Therefore, officials treated the Ad Shaykh as just another pastoralist clan, no different from, for example, the Habab. Officials required the Ad Shaykh to pay tribute, assessed on a similar basis to other communities. When the head *shaykh* of the Ad Shaykh, who had a reputation for his religious powers, refused, he was imprisoned. He was only released after agreeing to pay 8000 thalers collected from his followers.<sup>38</sup>

### THE FAILURE TO RECOVER AND THE ROPING IN OF OTHER ALLIES

The high level of tribute demanded from pastoralist communities by the Turko-Egyptian administration prevented these communities from profiting from the revival of trade in the SRSR. From the mid-1860s, the import/export trade passing throughout the ARSL increased rapidly, with the largest share passing through Sawakin. By the early 1880s, the number of ships calling at Sawakin doubled and there were caravans of between 500 and 1000 camels that left the port every few months.<sup>39</sup> In 1882 alone, 1.2 million Maria Theresa thalers worth of goods were exported through Sawakin.<sup>40</sup> The trade revival had an immediate and visible effect on the population of Sawakin. Merchants began investing in the city by repairing and enlarging old building or by building new ones.<sup>41</sup> The revival of trade was partially the result of the new relative political stability in the SRSR, which encouraged the revival of both trade and pilgrim traffic, and the return of regular Monsoon winds, which facilitated regular communication with the broader Indian Ocean World. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Indian merchant community in the SRSR, which had declined dramatically during the mega-drought, grew rapidly. Indian merchant houses established far-ranging commercial networks. Generally,

<sup>37</sup> Il Capitano Boari to il Governatore della Colonia Eritrea, 11 March 1891, *The Nakfa Documents*, 272–286.

<sup>38</sup> *Memoria sulla tribù Ad Sciaraf* [n.d. June 1892]. Posizione 4/3 ASDMAI.

<sup>39</sup> Hassan al-Aziz Ahmed, 'Aspects of Sudan's Foreign Trade During the 19th Century,' *Sudan Notes and Records*, 55 (1974): 17; Roden, 'The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin,' 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Consual Reports. Suakin. Commercial*, No. 82 (C4293, 1887), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Roden, 'The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin,' 5.

these houses had their main SRSR offices at either Jeddah or Aden and had agents stationed at the other regional ports.<sup>42</sup> There were other important factors in the revival of trade, including the expanded use of steamships. However, steamships supplemented, rather than replaced, the traditional dhows that plied the SRSR.<sup>43</sup> Dhow transport continued to be cheaper and faster than that by steamship for intra-SRSR trade.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the Indian merchant community that drove the trade revival remained dependent on them for short-haul transport between SRSR ports, even though they increasingly used steamships to carry cargo from India to the major SRSR ports of Jeddah and Aden.

The expansion of trade brought price and supply stability to grain markets throughout the SRSR. Ships from India calling at SRSR ports brought grain with them as ballast.<sup>45</sup> In the early years of the trade revival, grain was not shipped directly from India to ARSL ports. Rather, it was shipped to Jeddah or Aden often on steamships and then sent onto ports like Sawakin or Massawa on dhows. The SRSR grain trade was partially subsidized by the Ottoman government in the Hijaz. Ottoman officials recognized it as

<sup>42</sup> Markovitz, 'Indian Merchant Networks Outside India,' 27.

<sup>43</sup> A dhow is a masted boat with one or more lateen sails. For specific descriptions of the various types of dhows still in use in the SRSR in the second half of the twentieth century, see Hikoichi Yajima, *The Arab Dhow Trade in the Indian Ocean: Preliminary Report* (Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1976).

<sup>44</sup> Dhows were dependent on wind or human power and therefore did not have to factor in the cost of fuel into the price of transport. Further, dhows could charge lower fees because they minimized maintenance and staffing costs. In addition, dhows did not require that goods be immediately offloaded at port. Therefore, merchants could avoid on shore storage fees. Hala Fattah, *The Politics of Regional trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 85. This was especially true for short-haul trips between Red Sea ports. The crews on board dhows had specialized knowledge of the navigable channels, barrier reefs, and sand shoals in the Red Sea. They could better navigate near the shore and could land goods at more ports and natural harbors than steamers. Dhows were even able to outrun and outmaneuver the steamers operated by the British Navy. Secretary to the Admiralty to Lister, 8 June 1881 FO84/1597. NA.

<sup>45</sup> This had been the case since the start of regular trade between India and Red Sea ports. Shipments of grain from India had a profound impact on the food culture of Western Arabia. Before the fourteenth century, rice was not typically eaten in the SRSR. The preferred grains were sorghum and wheat. In the seventeenth century, Indian rulers began sending shipments of rice to be distributed as charity to the caretakers of the Muslim holy sites. These gifts familiarized communities with rice and led to the development of a regular demand, which was subsequently met by regular commercial trade. Suraiya Faruqi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517–1683* (London and New York: I B Tauris & Co, 1994), 166.



their duty as the rulers of the Hijaz to provide for the inhabitants of the Islamic Holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In addition, these officials provided subventions of cash and food to the nomadic communities in the countryside so that these communities would ensure the safety of pilgrim caravans.<sup>46</sup> Though Egyptian, Indian, and Iraqi merchants had competed to supply the Ottoman administration of the Hijaz, by the 1870s Indian merchants held a near monopoly.<sup>47</sup> Grain exports from Egypt to the Hijaz ended following the deadly 1864 Egyptian famine.<sup>48</sup> Iraqi exports ended following food riots in December 1877.<sup>49</sup> Since the sale to the Ottoman government was always guaranteed, Indian merchants could risk importing excess grain to sell at other SRSR ports for low-profit margins. If there were no other buyers, they could always store it and sell it later to Ottoman officials. With little downside, Indian merchant imported large quantities of grain to the SRSR, which they sold for relatively low prices. Therefore, the demand for Indian grain rose sharply and Indian grain became the most important trade commodity. For example, in 1879, grain accounted for over half of all imports into Massawa by value, double the value of the next most valuable import—cloth.<sup>50</sup>

The steady supply of cheap grain alleviated some of the pressure on ARSL pastoralist communities. For the most part, pastoralist had not resumed grain cultivation. Working the land would have required pastoralists to repeatedly return to the same spot during planting and harvesting, which would have limited their ability to avoid the tribute collecting measures implemented either by the traditional pastoralist leaders or by the Turko-Egyptian administration. The sole communities to deviate from this pattern were those with rights to the Gash Delta. In the 1830s, over a

<sup>46</sup> Ochsenwald, 'The Financial Basis of Ottoman Rule in the Hijaz 1840–1877,' 131–132.

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad al-Sha'afi, *The Foreign Trade of Jeddah during the Ottoman Period, 1840–1916* (Saudi Arabia: King Saud University, 1985), 146–147.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Benjamin Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt: Its People and Products* (London: Blackie, 1878), 275.

<sup>49</sup> In September of that year, when officials in Baghdad suspended grain exports because they feared that there would be an insufficient yield to meet local needs because cultivators had been conscripted to fight in the Russo-Turkish war. Grain continued to be exported from Basra as contraband for the next few months. When food riots broke out on 1 December 1877, this contraband trade was blamed and effective police measures were put in place. Grain exports from Iraq were not resumed for over a decade. Fattah, *The Politics of Regional trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf*, 151–153.

<sup>50</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea: nel cinquantennio dell'occupazione di Assab (1882–1932)* (Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1932), 48–49.

decade before the establishment of the first Turko-Egyptian garrison in the region, Hadendowa pastoralists resumed cultivating the Gash Delta. However, they did not focus their efforts on grain cultivation. Rather, they began cultivating cotton, which was in high demand in the neighboring highlands where there was a long tradition of cotton spinning and weaving.<sup>51</sup> The *shaykhs* of the various Hadendowa sub-clans with rights to the delta introduced the *shayote* system, a new land tenure system that divided the fertile zone into large parcels, each administered by a *shaykh*. Each *shaykh* had the right to subdivide his parcel into annually allocated tenancies. Tenancy rents were paid in shares of yields and landholders were obligated to financially support their tenants during the harvest period, thereby ensuring that the risks associated with cotton cultivation were shared by the landholders and the cultivators.<sup>52</sup> By 1865, over 2500 acres in the Gash Delta were annually cultivated with cotton.<sup>53</sup> Turko-Egyptian officials subsequently sought to expand on the success of Gash Delta cotton by introducing cotton cultivation in the Tawkar Delta. A relatively small number of pastoralists had resumed a limited amount of grain cultivation in the Tawkar Delta since the end of the mega-drought. However, when these pastoralists refused to turn some of their land over to cotton, officials prohibited the cultivation of grain in the delta and used troops to force compliance. In response, many abandoned cultivation. Rather than leave the delta fallow, officials seized the land and forced convicts to cultivate cotton.<sup>54</sup>

Since they did not grow their own subsistence, ARSL pastoralist communities remained dependent on international trade both to supply the grain that formed the bulk of their diets and to earn the income necessary to purchase it. Unfortunately, access to this trade was mediated by the very Turko-Egyptian officials that were demanding high tribute payments. In the late 1870s and the early 1880s, Turko-Egyptian officials, either directly or through close local allies, controlled nearly all the regional ports on the ARSL. Under this system, pastoralists were left with the choice of either submitting to the Turko-Egyptian administration or starving. However,

<sup>51</sup> In addition to domestic production, there were large workshops in Gondar and Adawa that were regionally renowned for producing a range of textiles of differing quality. Richard Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800–1935* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968), 257–260.

<sup>52</sup> Johan A. Van Dijk, *Taking the Waters: Soil and Water Conservation among Settling Beja Nomads in Eastern Sudan* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1995), 75.

<sup>53</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes*, 103.

giving in meant paying tribute, which, in turn, meant not having enough to rebuild after the losses from the mega-drought. Those that paid tribute may have had enough left over to buy the grain they consumed and other necessities, but they were unlikely to have had enough to regain their lost wealth.

Though it succeeded at extracting considerable wealth from the region, the Turko-Egyptian colonial administration in the ARSL was weak and built on a shaky foundation. Schematically, the administration was by the early 1880s a hybrid institution formed through the agglomeration of three disjointed and often conflicting parts: (1) an underdeveloped Turko-Egyptian bureaucracy supported by a thin military force stationed at a handful of inland garrisons and port cities; (2) select traditional pastoralist leaders and their indigenous ruling structures, especially in the southern ARSL; and (3) the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood in the northern ARSL. The colonial order was deeply exploitative and widely disliked. Unfortunately, pastoralists could not depend on their own communal bonds to protect them from this parasitic state. The communal structures that had acted as a social safety were now mobilized to force pastoralists to pay tribute to a colonial state that offered them virtually nothing. As Turko-Egyptian rule expanded and set in, more and more pastoralists became increasingly eager to free themselves from a political structure that tied their food security to their own exploitation by foreign rulers. Changing political conditions outside the ARSL opened new ways of rebelling against this structure. However, the only way to free themselves from colonial rule was to fight against the pastoralist structures that made up the administration.



## CHAPTER 4

---

# War, Disease, Famine, Destruction, 1883–1893

The war in the ARSL that began in 1883 was always more a civil war than a war for independence from the Turko-Egyptian rule. The war was sparked by the outbreak of the Mahdist Rebellion in neighboring Central Sudan, but the causes were local, deep, and longstanding. Though the war eventually involved French, Italian, and British troops, it is a mischaracterization to subsume it within broader narratives of the European ‘Scramble for Africa.’ Nonetheless, scholars often treat the internecine pastoralist fighting as a secondary theater of an imperial war. The main theater is always treated by scholars as elsewhere—Northern Nilotic Sudan, the Eritrean highlands, Ethiopia, and so on. The conventional academic narrative of this war begins in June 1881, with Muhammad Ahmad, a religious leader based on the Sudanese White Nile who was already known for preaching against the Turko-Egyptian government, proclaiming himself al-Mahdi (the prophesied eschatological Muslim leader). Al-Mahdi subsequently declared a *jihad* against the Turko-Egyptian colonial government and won several rapid victories in Central and Western Sudan. Buoyed by early military success, al-Mahdi sent an emissary named Uthman Dinqa to Eastern Sudan. According to the conventional account, Dinqa succeeded at gaining local adherents to the Mahdist cause and at opening a new theater of war. The rapid spread of Mahdism led Britain to force Egypt to withdraw from its African empire. Italy, France, and Britain then stepped into the power vacuum and began carving up the region. For Britain, the

prize was Sudan. Following the Turko-Egyptian withdrawal, Britain began a nearly 15-year-long military campaign to conquer the newly established Mahdist Sudanese state. For both Italy and France, the prize was Ethiopia, though France's ambitions were smaller than those of Italy. Since France wanted to only open trade with Ethiopia, French officials simply signed treaties of protection with some traditional pastoral leaders near the Bab al-Mandeb. These treaties established France's initial claim to the territory that came to be known as the Côte Française des Somalis (Djibouti). Italy's ambitions were grander, and as a result, Italy launched an offensive war to conquer the Ethiopian highlands. The Italian force was subsequently routed by the Ethiopians at the Battle of Aduwa in 1896, after which Italy consolidated its conquered territory into the colony of Eritrea.

This conventional narrative fails to accurately portray events on the ground in the ARSL during this tumultuous period because it assumes that foreigners always drove the action and that violence only served their interests. However, reading the historical record from the perspective of the pastoralist communities that lived through the fighting reveals a different story. Throughout the early phase of the fighting, European officials were the junior partners who did little more than provide arms, ammunition, provisions, and subsidies to the pastoralists that were involved in their own internecine civil war. For the first five years of the war, pastoralists had no reason to believe that their war would lead to the division of the ARSL between foreign, imperialist states. The rebels that started the war were not Mahdist; they did not want to bring themselves under the rule of the emerging Mahdist Sudanese state. Though they initially allied themselves with the Mahdists, pastoralist rebels took up arms to free themselves from foreign rule, not to replace one foreign ruler with another. This objective was quickly met. But after the Turko-Egyptian administration of the ARSL was withdrawn in 1885, the violence escalated. The fighting continued because the colonial political order had not been completely dismantled; the pastoralist institutions that had formed the architecture of indirect rule remained. Real freedom could only come from dismantling these as well. After the Turko-Egyptian administration withdrew, rebels continued to attack the sub-clans of the pastoralist leaders that had worked closely with the state and the adherents of the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood.

The war disrupted pastoralist economic strategies. Trade stopped, cultivation became impossible, and pastures turned into battlefields. Soon after the outbreak of the war, fighting had become the only available means of subsistence. This was not just true for the rebels. For all ARSL

pastoralist communities refraining from fighting quickly ceased to be a sound economic proposition. Remaining pacific would have meant standing by as all your possessions were raided away. Raiding just shifted goods around; it was not economically generative. As a result, it could not provide enough even for the more powerful groups. However, fighting created the context in which local pastoralists groups could develop strategic alliances with outsiders who had access to foreign resources. For the rebels, the alliance with the Mahdists provided them with unique access to the contraband trade in slaves, arms, and grain that bypassed official channels in the SRSR. Those that didn't have this access increasingly turned to the British, French, and Italian officials that were establishing themselves at ports along the Red Sea coast. These officials were locally weak and unable to maintain even their own basic security. Officials needed the traditional pastoralist leaders who commanded local militias to physically protect them from the rebel groups who they saw as an immediate, clear threat. This created an opportunity for traditional pastoralist leaders to not only profit but to coopt the European colonial project for their own aims.

The war ended abruptly and inconclusively a few years after it began because of an unprecedented ecological disaster. In 1887, rinderpest, a cattle disease that kills 90 percent of infected cattle in virgin populations like those that had existed in the ARSL, was introduced into the region. The ensuing epizootic was especially devastating because it took place in the context of war. When their cattle died, pastoralists had no way to make up for their lost wealth. They stopped being able to purchase whatever grain there was in the market, and they began to starve. The ensuing famine was perhaps the most deadly in the history of the ARSL. The devastation was complete. Starvation and extreme suffering caused communities to collapse. All social bonds were severed, and people were cut adrift, left to fend for themselves alone. Those that could, tried to migrate to the European-controlled ports or markets in neighboring regions. Most died on the way. Those that made it fared little better because aid was not forthcoming. Foreign colonial officials no longer felt dependent on or threatened by the ARSL pastoralists that surrounded them. They also were not bothered by humanitarian concerns. As a result, starving pastoralists died in large numbers. By the time the acute crisis had ended in 1892, an estimated two-thirds of the human population of the ARSL had perished.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892*, 39.

## A WAR BUILT ON STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

The civil war in the ARSL started in 1883 after Uthman Diqna, an emissary of al-Mahdi, brokered a three-way strategic alliance between the Mahdist leadership from Western and Central Sudan, Tahir al-Tayyib al-Majdhub (the leader of the Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhood) and a number of traditional Hadendowa leaders. It is important to note that this agreement was brokered by someone with deep ties to the ARSL. Though Dinqa was one of al-Mahdi's early followers, he was originally from Eastern Sudan. Dinqa's mother was a member of the Bishariyyab sub-clan of the Hadendowa and he had been a merchant at Sawakin until the late 1870s.<sup>2</sup> Though al-Majdhub and the Hadendowa leaders accepted the call to *jihad* and publicly swore oaths to al-Mahdi, they may have had a number of non-spiritual reasons to align themselves with al-Mahdi's rebellion. Al-Majdhub may have been responding to the Turko-Egyptian administration's longstanding policy of marginalizing the Majdhubiyya while bringing the Khatmiyya into the colonial apparatus. The traditional Hadendowa leaders also had, since the 1860s, been marginalized by the administration.<sup>3</sup> Their long-simmering resentment had been brought to the fore again shortly after the arrival of Dinqa's mission when Turko-Egyptian officials paid just one-seventh the amount that they had promised Hadendowa pastoralists for transporting military provisions.<sup>4</sup> Though they answered al-Mahdi's call to *jihad*, it is clear that neither the Hadendowa leaders nor al-Majdhub shared al-Mahdi's vision for the post-colonial political order. While al-Mahdi was looking to construct a large, centralized theocratic state with him at the head, his ARSL allies were looking mainly at the narrow goal of ending the exploitation that was at the core of Turko-Egyptian rule.

The alliance immediately proved that it could be powerful even if its constituent members had opposing medium- and long-term goals. From the Hadendowa stronghold in the Gash Delta, alliance militias launched attacks on Egyptian army garrisons throughout Eastern Sudan. By 1885,

<sup>2</sup> In the late 1870s, Diqna was imprisoned by the Turko-Egyptian authorities for participating in the slave trade. Imprisonment left Diqna disgraced, impoverished and bitter toward the Turko-Egyptian government. Shortly after his release from prison, Diqna made his way to al-Mahdi's camp on the White Nile. Richard Hill, 'Uthman Aby Bakr Diqna,' in *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 367–368.

<sup>3</sup> Moncrieff to Baring, 4 November 1883 FO407/28/276, NA.

<sup>4</sup> Granville to Egerton, 22 May 1884 FO407/66/309, NA.

they had forced the capitulation of all inland garrisons and defeated a number of military expeditions sent to support the collapsing colonial administration. The alliance also conquered the Tawkar Delta from rival pastoralist groups and gained control of the Barbar-Sawakin and Kassala-Sawakin caravan routes. Despite this early success, the alliance did not succeed at completely capturing Eastern Sudan. They were unable to take Sawakin, the area's most significant port. Between November 1883 and January 1885, alliance militias launched a number of small-scale attacks on the port. However, these were too small to inflict real damage. For example, on 11 February 1884, alliance militiamen destroyed the melon gardens near Sawakin and on 17 May 1884, they raided 100 sheep belonging to residents of Sawakin.<sup>5</sup> Neither of these attacks was followed by actions that would have forced the capitulation of the Turko-Egyptian garrison in the port. Another tactic employed by the alliance militia was to open fire on Sawakin from a distance every night for weeks or months at a time. However, the distance and the narrow range of the militiamen's rifles limited the effectiveness of these prolonged attacks. For example, in the attack that lasted from the beginning of December 1884 through the end of January 1885, only one townspeople, a child, was killed.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, these attacks terrorized the population of the port by reminding them that the rebels controlled the surrounding hinterland.

The rebellion was not just limited to Eastern Sudan. Alliance victories inspired Afar communities in the southern ARSL to rebel. The rebel Afar did not join the Mahdist-pastoralist alliance even though their goals overlapped. Like their counterparts in Eastern Sudan, these rebels also wanted to force the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian administration and stop the oppressive tribute regime. The Afar attack was swift and effective. In mid-November 1884, an Afar militia led by the sultan of Tadjoura attacked the local Turko-Egyptian garrison, which had been used to forcibly collect tribute. The garrison was unable to protect itself and, on 25 November, the administration abandoned the port, which was its only significant presence in Afar territory.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Baker to Egerton, 17 May 1884 FO407/61/348, NA.

<sup>6</sup> Molyneux to Hay, 16 December 1884 FO407/64/26, NA. The accounts of these night attacks are contained in FO407/61; FO407/62; FO407/63; FO407/64; FO407/66; FO407/68; and FO407/72, NA.

<sup>7</sup> A W M *Correspondence Respecting Egyptian Evacuation of the Somali Coast*. 28 February 1885 IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO41, BL.



Widespread fighting throughout the ARSL caused trade to contract sharply. Rebel pastoralists, whether they were allied with the Mahdists or not, focused on attacking major trading centers and ports because that is where the Turko-Egyptian garrisons were stationed. This, in turn, caused merchants to divert their trade away. As overall trade declined, it became harder and harder for pastoralist communities to earn enough to purchase grain from the market. The only way that a community could ensure that its profits from trade did not shrink was to use force to capture an ever-larger share of the declining trade. In Eastern Sudan, the rebel alliance sought to completely monopolize trade by seizing the main caravan routes and by controlling the main port. Since they were unwilling or unable to take Sawakin and Massawa, the alliance sought to marginalize their importance. The coast of the northern ARSL is dotted with numerous minor ports and natural harbors, any of which could be developed into important ports. The use of Sawakin and Massawa was just a convention that the rebel alliance sought to change. Doing so required cutting off these two ports from trade with the interior and establishing a new official port. In November 1883, rebel militiamen closed the overland routes to Sawakin.<sup>8</sup> A few months later, Uthman Diqna declared the suspension of trade with Massawa.<sup>9</sup> Initially, the rebel alliance tried diverting trading to the alliance-controlled port of Shinab. By 1885, the rebel alliance had attracted multiple merchants to Shinab. These merchants imported grain and cloth from India via Jeddah, which they traded for slaves and gum brought from Southern and Western Sudan.<sup>10</sup> In late August 1885, government officials in Sawakin discovered the market at Shinab and launched a successful attack on it, during which these officials confiscated the merchandise and arrested the merchants.<sup>11</sup> In response, the rebel alliance simply began using uninhabited natural harbors as their import/export ports. Rebels that were seeking to trade would prearrange with foreign merchants to meet at specific harbors at specific times.<sup>12</sup> Though exact statistics are unavailable from the historical record, trade between these alliance-controlled harbors and the Arabian coast was brisk. In February 1887, the British Consul at Jeddah reported that merchants from Northern Nilotic Sudan had recently

<sup>8</sup> Moncrieff to Baring, 4 November 1883 FO407/28/276, NA.

<sup>9</sup> Government of Italy, *Agordat: Note e Documenti* (Rome, Tipografo delle LL MM il Re E La Regina, 1894), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Cochran to Jones, 10 September 1885 FO407/67/16, NA.

<sup>11</sup> *Deposition*, 25 August 1885 FO407/66/191, NA.

<sup>12</sup> Watson to Nubar, 10 June 1886 FO407/88/79, NA.

imported nearly 200,000 Maria Theresa thalers worth of cloth and grain from Jeddah via a natural harbor near the 19°N parallel.<sup>13</sup>

The rebel alliance had an advantage over all their competitors in the northern ARSL in their effort to monopolize the import/export trade. Sudan was important to the overall economy of the SRSR as both a market and a productive center. Though the economy of Sudan had shrunk since the outbreak of the Mahdist Rebellion, trade had not disappeared completely. The alliance between Mahdists and rebel ARSL pastoralists created a conduit for Sudanese trade. In the early years of the rebellion, goods shipped between Sudan and the Red Sea were exclusively transported by the allied pastoralists that controlled the major caravan routes through Eastern Sudan. Though this ensured the economic security of Mahdist-allied pastoralist communities, it harmed that of others. A particularly hard-hit community was the Fadlab sub-clan of the Amarar. During the later years of the Turko-Egyptian period, the *shaykh* of the Fadlab Amarar controlled the caravan traffic on the Sawakin-Barbar road.<sup>14</sup> However, there was almost no trade at Sawakin now. The Mahdist trade embargo with Sawakin was effective and caused the total maritime exports from Sawakin to decrease by over 90 percent over the course of the first few years of the rebellion.<sup>15</sup> Some rebel pastoralists also suffered. The rebel alliance directed all trade to ports and harbors north of Sawakin even though the alliance included pastoralist communities that resided to the south of that port. These communities could not profit from the new trade arrangement. So, they tried to subvert it. For example, some Bet Asgade sub-clans that were aligned with the Mahdists also acted as the conduits for trade between Massawa and the Tawkar Delta despite the embargo on trade with Massawa. However, this lasted only a short while. In 1886, Diqna discovered this flouting of regulations and retaliated by seizing all the merchandise in the markets in Tawkar. After this the trade south of Sawakin stopped completely.<sup>16</sup>

By 1885, the rebel alliance seemed on the brink of completely monopolizing much of Eastern Sudan. They had kidnapped a number of women and children from neighboring unallied communities and successfully used these hostages as leverage to force the unallied communities to agree to a

<sup>13</sup> Jago to Baring, 17 February 1887 FO407/70/88, NA.

<sup>14</sup> *Memorandum by Major Chermiside Respecting the Situation of Affairs at Suakin and the Proposed Measures to be Taken to Open the Berber Road*, 29 March 1884 FO407/61/61, NA.

<sup>15</sup> *Consular Reports. Suakin. Commercial*, No. 6 (C4657, 1886), 215.

<sup>16</sup> Government of Italy, *Agordat*, 10.

truce and commit to migrating away from the region.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the rebels had succeeded in achieving two of their key political goals. First, the Khedive ordered the withdrawal of the administration of nearly all of Egypt's African empire. Only Sawakin was kept. This choice had been imposed on the Khedive by his British advisors.<sup>18</sup> The escalating, coordinated rebellions in Western, Central, and Eastern Sudan created the opening for British advisors in Cairo to assert the right to determine Egypt's colonial policy. These advisors were primarily concerned with maintaining the solvency of the Egyptian state. The rebellion in Sudan led these British advisors to see Egypt's colonial possessions as a financial liability and to come to believe that retaining these territories in the face of escalating violence was not economically viable. Further, the rebel alliance had either killed or forced the retreat of the Khatmiyya spiritual elite. This Sufi brotherhood was built upon the *baraka* of the al-Mirghani family. At the start of the rebellion, much of the al-Mirghani family lived in Kassala, the center of the Khatmiyya. Shortly after the rebellion broke out, the spiritual head of the brotherhood, Uthman Taj al-Sirr al-Mirghani, fled to Cairo. The many members of his family that remained in Kassala were either killed or arrested when the rebel alliance captured the city in 1885. Family members in other parts of the ARSL fled to Massawa, Cairo, or Mecca. Though their representatives generally remained behind and tried to keep the Khatmiyya alive in the ARSL despite the violence, this task was difficult without the presence and, therefore, ready access to the *baraka* of the al-Mirghani family.<sup>19</sup>

The rebel alliance was so strong that it would likely have completely succeeded at establishing its supremacy in Eastern Sudan had it not been for changing global geo-politics. Intensifying intra-European rivalries had the ripple effect of turning violence into a viable near-term economic strategy for even relatively weak ARSL pastoralist communities. In the mid-1880s, participating in the Civil War became a strategy for making a claim on international resources. Just as taking up arms against the Turko-Egyptian administration became a way of accessing Mahdist Sudan's

<sup>17</sup> Baring to Granville, 16 October 1884 FO407/63/42, NA.

<sup>18</sup> In 1882, a British force conquered Egypt and brought an end to the Urabi Revolt. Though the conquering British force confirmed the Khedive as the head of the Egyptian state, British political advisors seized control, over the following years, of various state functions. Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 204, 239–240.

<sup>19</sup> Giorgio della Croce, *Note sul Commissariato Regionale di Cheren* [n.d. 1920s] FASC3123, IAO.

resources, fighting against the rebellion became a way of tapping into imperial resource allocation networks. Pastoralist communities that opposed the rebellion were not signaling their willingness to be colonially dominated and economically exploited. From the outset, these communities made it clear that they had no interest in maintaining the status quo ante. Rather, their participation was predicated on receiving both material support and a commitment that, when the war was over, there would be political concessions made in their favor. These demands were first signaled by Ali Birkeet, the head of the Beni Amer, in October 1884. During the rebel alliance siege of Kassala, Birkeet offered to use his militia to evacuate the city. In exchange, he asked that the head of the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood be allowed to select a new, autonomous ruler of Eastern Sudan chosen from among the traditional pastoralist leadership.<sup>20</sup> Officials rejected this proposal and the Beni Amer did not attack the rebel alliance forces around Kassala. In December 1884, Birkeet was killed by a rebel militia.<sup>21</sup> After this loss, the Beni Amer withdrew from Eastern Sudan and retreated up the Barka River toward the Ethiopian highlands.<sup>22</sup>

Following the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian administration, non-aligned pastoralists sought out material support from the British, French, and Italian officials who were trying to establish imperial claims to the greater SRSR. Though British officials tried to position themselves as the determiner of succession in the all of Egypt's abandoned African territories, this effort failed because it was based in a toothless diplomacy. During the withdrawal, British officials had the Khedive announce that he retained his *de jure* claim to sovereignty over his empire even as he dismantled his *de facto* government. Since the British military invasion of Egypt in 1882 that brought an end to the Urabi Revolt and restored the Khedive to power, British officials saw themselves as the protectors of Egypt's interest internationally and, therefore, the protectors of all of Egypt's African empire. However, British officials could not make this claim outright in the 1880s. Egypt was still a part of the broader Ottoman Empire and therefore Egypt's African empire was actually Ottoman territory. British officials understood that claiming it for the British Empire would be an act of aggression against their Ottoman allies.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Molyneux to Hay, 4 October 1884 FO 407/63, NA.

<sup>21</sup> Molyneux to Secretary of the Admiralty, 27 December 1884 FO 407/63, NA.

<sup>22</sup> Nadel, 'Notes on Beni Amer Society,' 52.

<sup>23</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 61.

France and Italy had no such misgivings about conquest. They alternately claimed that Egypt had in fact abandoned its *de jure* claim to its empire or that they had claims to the region that antedate those of Egypt. The latter assertion was dubious. The Italian claim was established in 1870 by the Società Rubattino, a Sardinian shipping company. Agents of this company purchased the port of Assab from two Afar sultans, Ibrahim ben Ahmad and Abdallah Shaihim. The company hoped to develop Assab into a coaling station and a port for trading with Ethiopia. However, the company's presence at Assab was short-lived. Company agents began operating from the port immediately after its purchase. A few months later, an Afar militia attacked Assab and drove out the company's agents. This militia was sent by a rival Afar sultan who did not believe that ben Ahmad and Shaihim had the right to cede the port. The company agents did not subsequently return to Assab. Similarly, France's claim to part of the coast mirrored that of Italy. On 11 March 1862, France entered into a treaty with a number of Afar *shaykhs* under which the *shaykhs* ceded Obock to France in exchange for 10,000 thalers. In addition, France was granted the right to exploit nearby forests, pastures, and sources of fresh water, as well as to excavate salt from Lake Assal.<sup>24</sup> Following the signing of the treaty, the French flag was raised at Obock. The raising of the flag was not followed up by any meaningful action and, for the next two decades, the French claim remained nothing more than a flapping tricolor flag. In the 1880s, the long-ignored claims of France to Obock and Italy to Assab took on a new importance. European empires were in the process of rapid territorial expansion through the establishment of spheres of influence, protectorates, and colonies. When the expansionist ambitions of French and Italian officials turned to Ethiopia, French, and Italian officials sought to revive their claims to these Red Sea ports in order to legitimate their imperial ambitions.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Traite, 11 March 1862 FM SG CFS//6, ANOM.

<sup>25</sup>For French officials, adding an economically viable Red Sea port to their expanding empire had the added benefit of acting as a check on British dominance in the Indian Ocean. France's control over its Asian empire had recently become vulnerable to British interference. Following the opening of the Suez Canal, steamships traveling between Europe and Asia via the Red Sea stopped to take on coal at British-controlled Aden. In 1884, Britain used this control to intervene in the Sino-French War. British officials prevented the French Navy from procuring necessary provisions at Aden. To prevent this from recurring, French officials developed Obock into a strategic coal depot. Service des Douanes, Cote Française des soma-

The revival of French and Italian interests in the region, coupled with a fear that the Mahdist state posed an existential threat to Egypt, led British officials in 1884 to start trying to establish an autonomous, but dependent, pastoralist buffer state in Eastern Sudan. They envisioned this state as serving both as the first line of defense against Mahdist aggression and as a bulwark against further French or Italian encroachment.<sup>26</sup> For over three years, British officials attempted to create this buffer state by providing arms, ammunition, salaries, and provisions to a succession of local prominent men that they thought would serve as effective rulers. The first of these men was Uthman Taj al-Sirr al-Mirghani. The plan for his state was very ambitious; it was to have a fully functioning bureaucracy and a standing army. However, this plan was abandoned in December 1884, when Herbert Chermide, the *Sirdar* (Commander-in-chief) of the Egyptian army, estimated that for the first few years, the new state would require an annual subvention of £120,000.<sup>27</sup> British officials then began to focus on establishing Mahmud Ali, the *shaykh* of the Fadlab sub-clan of the Amarar, as the head of a more rudimentary state built upon the structures of tribal politics. British officials had been working with Mahmud Ali since they took over the administration of Sawakin in 1883. Mahmud Ali was the Sawakin-based *wakil* (agent) of the *nazir* of the Amarar, whom the Turko-Egyptian administration had entrusted in the early 1880s with the management of the caravan traffic into and out of that port. By 1884, trade had collapsed, and Mahmud Ali needed a new way to make money. So, he raised an Amarar militia and proposed to the British officials in Sawakin that he defend the city in exchange for a salary for himself and provisions for his men.<sup>28</sup> British officials agreed. As they became more and more dependent upon Mahmud Ali's militia, officials became more willing to promote Mahmud Ali as the future ruler of Eastern Sudan. Material support in terms of a large monthly stipend and subventions for the maintenance of his militia slowly grew into active support for Mahmud Ali's political ambitions. Subtle interventions in this regard gave way to concrete actions in February 1887 when Herbert Kitchener, the head of the Sawakin government, pressed all Anglo-Egyptian-allied *shaykhs* to enter

lis, *Note sur les répercussions de l'occupation de l'Éthiopie et sur le trafic du port de Djibouti précédée d'un bref historique*, 10 October 1936 FM 1AFFPOL/704, ANOM.

<sup>26</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 54–57.

<sup>27</sup> Baring to Granville, 6 December 1884 FO407/63/244, NA.

<sup>28</sup> Granville to Baring, 21 March 1884 FO407/60/746, NA.

into a formal agreement to establish a league of *shaykhs* with Mahmud Ali as its head. This league was to form the nucleus of the future state.<sup>29</sup>

Official support for Mahmud Ali perpetuated the cycle of violence in the neighborhood of Sawakin. The provisions, arms, ammunition, and logistical support provided by the Anglo-Egyptian administration allowed Mahmud Ali to regularly launch offensive attacks against the Mahdist-allied pastoralists. Generally, these attacks were little more than cattle raids that inevitably, inspired counter-raids. Occasionally, these attacks would clear territory. However, Mahmud Ali's militia lacked the manpower to hold and administer parts of the interior. As a result, these gains could not be consolidated. For example, from July to October 1886, the militia repeatedly raided animals and slaves from the large Mahdist-allied camp at Tamai. The militia finally took the camp on 7 October 1886 and British officials in Sawakin rewarded Mahmud Ali and his family with lavish gifts of cash and property.<sup>30</sup> Despite pressure from his British patrons, Mahmud Ali refused to follow up this victory with a march on the more strategically important Mahdist-allied camp in the Tawkar Delta.<sup>31</sup> This was the only significant fertile zone in the immediate interior of Sawakin capable of supporting a permanent large settlement. Taking the delta would have driven this large rebel camp back to Kassala, approximately 500 km away. But, the militia did not take Tawkar. It did not even hold Tamai. Instead the militia retired back to the outskirts of Sawakin. By the following year, the Mahdist-allied camp at Tamai had been reestablished and the cycle of violence in the vicinity of Sawakin had resumed.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the reestablishment of the camp at Tamai, the rebel alliance was in the process of breaking apart in early 1887. Though rebel ARSL pastoralists were growing increasingly suspicious of the intentions of their Mahdist allies, the Mahdist leadership sent a militia comprised of Baqqara pastoralists from Western Sudan to Eastern Sudan to participate in the fighting.<sup>33</sup> The presence of these foreigners led relations between the rebel

<sup>29</sup> Kitchener to Baring, 19 February 1887 FO407/70/80, NA.

<sup>30</sup> Wolff to Iddesleigh, 7 October 1886 FO407/69/102, NA.

<sup>31</sup> Clarke to Salisbury, 8 June 1887 FO407/70/200, NA.

<sup>32</sup> Cameron to Baring, 12 December 1887 FO407/71/107, NA.

<sup>33</sup> In June 1885, al-Mahdi died. He was succeeded by Abd Allahi Muhammad Turshain, who ruled the developing Mahdist State from Umm Durman with the title of al-*Khalifat al-Mahdi*. Al-Khalifa was suspicious of the senior Mahdist leadership. He feared that officials appointed by al-Mahdi could lead a palace coup and force al-Khalifa out of office. As a result, he took moves to limit their power. The Baqqara force was commanded by Abu Qirja and

ARSL pastoralists and the Mahdist leadership to deteriorate.<sup>34</sup> Growing tensions in the rebel alliance were briefly papered over by renewed offensive action against Sawakin. In the second half of 1888, rebel alliance forces dug trenches around the port's mainland suburbs. By early October, an estimated 2000 rebel militiamen were stationed in these trenches. These men used this position to launch regular attacks on Sawakin.<sup>35</sup> This plan provoked an armed, government counter-attack that is remembered as the Battle of al-Jummayza. On 20 December 1888, a joint Anglo-Egyptian force marched from Sawakin and attacked the trenches. The rebel camp was easily defeated, and the trenches were quickly taken by the government force.<sup>36</sup> Following the battle, British officials abandoned their efforts to establish a dependent, autonomous state in Eastern Sudan. In a proclamation that they circulated near Sawakin, they announced that Egypt had no intention of reclaiming its abandoned territory and that their intention was to live peacefully alongside the inhabitants of Sudan. This proclamation and the defeat that followed it caused the fault lines within the rebel alliance to deepen. In March 1889, a meeting between rebel pastoralist leaders and their Mahdist counterparts to discuss the structure of the Mahdist presence in Eastern Sudan ended in an armed demonstration of force by the assembled pastoralists. Shortly thereafter, many traditional leaders of various Hadendowa sub-clans publicly renounced their allegiance with the Mahdists. Many of them subsequently went to Sawakin, proclaimed their alliance to the government and began fighting against their former allies.<sup>37</sup>

While pastoralist alliances were shifting in Eastern Sudan, French and Italian officials were seeking out relationships with pastoralist communities in the rest of the ARSL that would allow them to transform their once abandoned claims to Assab and Obock into lasting political and economic institutions that could tap Ethiopia's riches. Pastoralist communities con-

therefore not under the command of Dinqa. Al-Khalifa hoped this would limit Dinqa's local influence. Al-Khalifa was similarly suspicious of the Mahdist leaders that were waging the war on Sudan's northern frontier. So, al-Khalifa withheld provisions from 'Abd al-Rahman al-Najumi, the *amir* of Northern Nilotic Sudan because al-Khalifa feared that al-Najumi would use the military force under his command to lead an armed coup. Shundi Pasha to Baring, 23 January 1887 FO407/70/58, NA.

<sup>34</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes*, 115; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Bradford to Baring, 5 October 1888 FO407/75/13, NA.

<sup>36</sup> Baring to Salisbury, 20 December 1888 FO407/75/118, NA.

<sup>37</sup> Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 188–189.



trolled the roads and, therefore, determined whether, when, and how much of the caravan traffic came into each port. In the early 1880s, French officials recognized that pastoralist communities could divert trade away from Obock to either neighboring Assab or Zeila. They also recognized that other imperial rivals could lay claim to neighboring territory. So, French officials entered into treaties of protection with traditional pastoralist leaders along the coast between these two competing ports and along the Rift Valley route to Shewa. To further secure their position, French officials created a new, deep water port at Djibouti that could better accommodate steamships. They then reduced customs duties for goods passing through Obock to 0.5 percent *ad valorem* and, ultimately, designated Djibouti a free port.<sup>38</sup> Italian officials also recognized that the economic vitality of Assab as a port was tied directly to its neighboring rivals, which in this case were Obock and Massawa. To compete against Obock, these officials also entered into treaties with local elites. However, rather than compete against Massawa, in 1885 officials used diplomatic means to secure control of the port upon the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian administration.

Though the French and Italian officials that administered their Red Sea ports were part of imperial networks, they lacked any real power on the ground. They had a limited military presence, they were not major trading partners with the SRSR and they did not have a strong navy in the Red Sea. In the mid-1880s, ARSL pastoralist communities were locally more powerful than the few in number and militarily vulnerable European imperial agents in the region. As a result, the terms of the treaties that they signed were all in favor of traditional pastoralist leaders and not the European empires. Though French and Italian officials subsequently called them treaties of protection that granted their respective empires territorial claims to the region, there is no reason to believe pastoralist leaders recognized them as such at the time of their signing. Rather, it is more likely that these treaties were seen as recognizing the European foreigners as the weak dependents of the pastoralist leaders. In every one of these treaties, European officials committed to granting pastoralist leaders a monetary subvention either in the form of a monthly salary or a payment tied to the intensity of trade. For example, in May 1887, Italian officials entered into a treaty with the *Kintabi* of the Habab under which the Italians agreed to provide the *Kintabi* with a monthly salary of 500 Maria

<sup>38</sup> Gouverneur de la Colonie d'Obock to Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, 31 October 1887, FM SG CFS//1, ANOM.

Theresa thalers and the *Kintabi* agreed to allow caravans to pass through his territory unmolested.<sup>39</sup> Under the treaty of friendship signed between France and the Afar sultan of Gobad on 9 August 1884, the French administration of Obock agreed to provide the sultan with one Maria Theresa thaler for every laden camel or European passenger that passed through his territory.<sup>40</sup> Traditional pastoralist leaders could have easily interpreted these payments as a kind of tribute. After all, tribute was a long-established local practice through which weaker groups demonstrated their deference to strong rulers.<sup>41</sup> These payments came with few obligations demanded of the traditional pastoralist leaders that received them. They did not have to cede their territory, resources, or power over intra-communal politics. Rather, they only had to make vague promises of refraining from making agreements with other foreign powers.

Treaty payments allowed traditional pastoralist leaders to purchase European manufactured guns and ammunition. These weapons were imported into the Red Sea region by French arms dealers that set up operations first in Obock and then in Djibouti in the mid-1880s.<sup>42</sup> ARSL pastoralist communities used these weapons to fight each other. Though they had forced the withdrawal of the Turko-Egyptian administration,

<sup>39</sup> *Schema di dichiarazione da firmarsi da Kantibai Hamed*, 5 June 1887, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 149–151.

<sup>40</sup> *Traité entre la France et le Sultan de Gobad (Amed Loïta)*, 9 August 1884 FM SG CFS//6, ANOM.

<sup>41</sup> Even European imperial officials recognized the payment of tribute as an act of submission. In 1901, Reginald Wingate, the Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, wrote to ‘Ali Dinar, the Sultan of Dar Fur that the payment of tribute “would tend to show your submission and obedience to [the government’s] orders, as well as your connection with it.” *Letter from his Excellency the Governor General to Sultan Ali Dinar* reproduced in full in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, No. 83 (1 to 30 June 1901), 10, SAD.

<sup>42</sup> The arms trade grew out of French and Italian efforts to gain influence in the Ethiopian highlands. In the early 1880s, French and Italian officials came to recognize that the first step in penetrating the highlands was securing the loyalty of Menelik, the most powerful rival of Emperor Yohannes. Menelik believed that acquiring modern weapons was necessary for defeating Yohannes and establishing supremacy over the highlands. French and Italian officials believed that providing Menelik with his desired weapons would be a relatively cheap and effective way of securing his loyalty. Officials also hoped that opening their ports to the arms and armament trade would pave the way for the expansion of the trade in other European manufactured goods. The trade in European manufactured weapons quickly flourished because it was very lucrative, with profits as high as 200 percent. Grant, *Rulers, Guns, and Money*, 49–50; Oberlé and Hugot, 95.

there were still vestiges of the old imperial order that had to be rooted out. Turko-Egyptian officials ruled indirectly through preferential treatment granted to certain traditional leaders and religious elites. Following the withdrawal, rebels used their weapons to attack these former collaborators. The fighting was fundamentally different from what had previously been seen in the ARSL. Until the late nineteenth century, violence was primarily symbolic in nature. Combatants generally carried spears and daggers. Those that had firearms tended to have slow-loading and outmoded matchlock rifles. As a result, few died in battle. Beginning in the 1880s, these traditional weapons were replaced with Le Grad, Remington, and Martini-Henry rifles. The impact of the sudden introduction of modern arms was immediate. Raiding between pastoralist groups became deadly. Blood feuds proliferated, and pastoralists were pushed into cycles of retaliatory violence that further destabilized the region.<sup>43</sup>

### THE WAR ENDS IN FAMINE AND DESTRUCTION

The civil war ended in an unprecedented deadly famine that lasted from 1888 to 1892, during which an estimated two-thirds of the pastoralist population died.<sup>44</sup> The famine was precipitated by an outbreak of rinderpest, though its causes were more complex and far-reaching. Rinderpest is a viral disease that affects most cloven-hooved animals, including cattle. The gestation period for rinderpest in cattle is, typically, 5 days, but can be as long as 15. During this period, infected cattle appear healthy, showing no outward symptoms. Infected cattle become contagious two days before the onset of observable symptoms. From the onset of symptoms, the progress of the disease is rapid and horrifying. For the first two to five symptomatic days, infected cattle have a fever, decreased appetite and discharges from the eyes and nose. Then, necrotic lesions form around and inside their mouths and on their visible genitalia. The animals stop eating, become very thirsty, and begin to experience diarrhea and abdominal pain. Infected cattle die, typically, within 12 days of the onset of symptoms. Death is often caused by dehydration resulting from the excessive quantities of diarrheal discharge. The mortality rate in virgin cattle populations, such as those that existed in Africa at the end of the nineteenth

<sup>43</sup>The pattern in the ARSL mirrored that of neighboring Southern Yemen. Gavin, *Aden Under British Rule*, 203–209.

<sup>44</sup>Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine*, 39.

century, is over 90 percent. The few cattle that survive develop a permanent immunity to the disease. Immunity is also partially heritable; mothers can temporarily pass their antibodies to their nursing calves. Typically, maternal antibodies remain in the calves for up to 11 months, after which the calves lose their immunity to the virus and can become infected. As a result, mortality rates decrease in subsequent outbreaks in regions where rinderpest has become enzootic.<sup>45</sup>

Cattle diseases were not new to Africa. In fact, there were a number of minor cattle epizootics in the ARSL during the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> However, the rinderpest epizootic was different. Traditional disease management techniques, such as quarantine and variolation, could not prevent rinderpest from spreading. Infected cattle become contagious two days before the onset of observable symptoms. At this stage, the disease can be passed from infected cattle to healthy cattle through direct contact or through water. In arid and semi-arid regions of Africa, such as in the ARSL, surface water is limited and watering places are shared. With no way of knowing whether a seemingly healthy looking animal is contagious, there was no way to prevent infectious but still asymptomatic animals from congregating at wells, torrential rivers, and other sources of surface water. Therefore, quarantining only those animals experiencing symptoms was ineffective and quarantining all infected animals was impossible. Further, the practice of variolation may have contributed to the spread of the disease. ARSL pastoralist communities, like those elsewhere in Africa, practiced variolation on both humans and domesticated animals. For example, these communities customarily implanted a small piece of the lung of a cow that died of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia under the skin of healthy animals as a means of inducing acquired immunity. In the late 1880s, these communities extended the logic of this practice to combating the new disease infecting their animals. They began spreading the milk,

<sup>45</sup>The Center for Food Security and Public Health and the Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics, 'Rinderpest' (Iowa: Iowa State University, 2008).

<sup>46</sup>Clements Robert Markham, *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), 163; Henry M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala* (London: S. Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1874), 344; Henry Montague Hozier, *The British Expedition to Abyssinia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), 175, 178; Baker, *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia*, 717; Guebere Sellassie, *Chronique du regne de Menelik II* (Paris: Maisonneuve Frères, 1931), 11, 414; Augustus Blandy Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia* (London: Methuen and Co., 1901), 344; Frederick Harrison Smith, *Through Abyssinia* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1890), 118–120.

urine, and feces of cattle believed to have benign forms of rinderpest on healthy cattle. Unfortunately, this new practice only further facilitated the transmission of the disease.<sup>47</sup>

Rinderpest was introduced into Africa in 1887 when Italian military personnel accidentally imported infected cattle through the Red Sea port of Massawa. After its introduction, rinderpest spread quickly along the overland trade routes. The epizootic spread first into the Eritrean highlands and south along the coast. The epizootic reached the hinterland around the port of Tadjoura by the middle of 1888.<sup>48</sup> Between July and September 1888, the disease also spread from the Eritrean highlands through northern Ethiopia and then along the Pibor and Sobat rivers and into Southern Sudan.<sup>49</sup> Following the end of the summer rains in 1889, the disease spread north from the Eritrean highlands into Eastern Sudan.<sup>50</sup> The disease eventually spread throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa, finally reaching South Africa in 1895.<sup>51</sup> In the ARSL, herds died in astonishing numbers. By the beginning of 1890, over 90 percent of the cattle in the region had perished.<sup>52</sup> This mass cattle death set off a devastating famine that was not just limited to the ARSL. Rather, the afflicted area stretched to Western Sudan and the Ethiopian highlands. During the famine, an estimated two-thirds of the pastoral population and one-third of the settled population in the afflicted area died.<sup>53</sup> Throughout this area, this famine continues to serve as the touchstone against which all subsequent famines are evaluated in terms of intensity and loss. In Ethiopia, it

<sup>47</sup> Gaetano Conti, 'Il Servizio Veterinario in Eritrea' in Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Comitato per la documentazione dell'opera dell'Italia in Africa, *Italia in Africa: Serie Civile, Volume Secondo, Il Servizio Veterinario Nell'Africa Italiana* (Rome: 1965), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Le Gouverneur de la colonie d'Obock to le Ministre de la Marine et des colonies, 25 December 1888 FM SG CFS//6, ANOM.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Pankhurst and Douglas Johnson, 'The Great Drought and Famine of 188–192 in Northeast Africa,' in *The Ecology of Survival; Case Studies from Northeast African History*, Douglas Johnson and David Anderson, ed. (Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 63.

<sup>50</sup> John Rowe and Kjell Hødnebo first posited that the rinderpest epizootic spread into Eastern Sudan in the late 1880s. John Rowe and Kjell Hødnebo, 'Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888–1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic,' *Sudanica Africa*, 5 (1994): 149–179. The timeline for this epizootic was first laid out in Steven Serels, 'Famines of War: The Red Sea Grain Market and Famine in Eastern Sudan, 1889–1891,' *Northeast African Studies*, 12:1 (2012): 73–94.

<sup>51</sup> For a comprehensive history of rinderpest, see Clive A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 77.

<sup>53</sup> Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892*, 39.

is remembered as the *Kefu Qan* (lit. ‘evil days’) and in Sudan as *Sanat Sitta* (lit. ‘sixth year,’ referring to year 1306 in the Islamic calendar).<sup>54</sup>

The epizootic caused the famine because it led to the complete collapse of agricultural production and, with it, trade. Settled agricultural populations in the grain-producing regions of Northern Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian highlands depended on the labor of their cattle. The ox-drawn plow had been introduced into the highlands before the BCE/CE change over. By the beginning of the nineteenth century all of the land in the highlands was worked with this plow.<sup>55</sup> In Northern Nilotic Sudan, cultivators used cattle to run the water wheels that drew water up from the Nile and deposited it in the irrigation canals. When the cattle died, the land could no longer be cultivated. Some farmers tried to use donkeys, horses, mules, camels, or even other men to pull the plows or work the water wheels. However, they could not replace the lost animal power. For many cultivators, the limited grain yields harvested in October and November 1888 were insufficient to meet their basic needs and the needs of their dependents. As a result, many cultivators were forced to try and purchase grain from the market. This increased demand for grain from the market could not be met by the very limited supply, which caused market prices to rise sharply. As starvation began, desperate cultivators must have begun to sell their goods to purchase whatever grain was available. When they ran out of possessions to sell or when the market had been drained of all grain, starving people began to eat forbidden food, such as dead animals, engage in cannibalism, and sell themselves or their dependents into slavery. In search of food, starving highlanders began migrating to Massawa, while Northern Nilotic Sudanese made their way to the Mahdist capital of Umm Durman. Untold numbers died *en route*, and the major roads became lined with dead bodies.<sup>56</sup>

Though rinderpest had caused a sudden decrease in the availability of grain in markets in Northern Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian highlands, the same was not true in the ARSL. Throughout the famine, ARSL mar-

<sup>54</sup> Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, 72; De Waal, *Famine that Kills*, 63; Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 36.

<sup>55</sup> James McCann, *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800–1990* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 40–42.

<sup>56</sup> Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892*; Ferdinando Martini, *Nell’Africa Italiana* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1925), 31; A. B. Wylde, ‘The Starving Soudanese and Our Responsibilities,’ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 4:10 (May and June 1890): 92; Barnham to Baring, 5 March 1890 FO407/99/83, NA.

kets remained well stocked with cheap grain. These markets had long drawn some of their supply from India, and Indian imports continued throughout the famine. In the year before the famine, Indian merchant firms opened agencies at Sawakin and Massawa in order to develop direct trading relationships with the ARSL and, through it, Sudan and Ethiopia. Previously, goods from India were shipped first to Aden or Jeddah, where they were transshipped onto smaller dhows destined for the African coast. Following the outbreak of the pastoralist civil war, Indian merchants seized the commercial opportunity created by the fighting and began shipping grain to these ports directly from India. In 1888, British and Italian officials reopened direct trade between, respectively, Sawakin and Massawa, and the rest of the ARSL. These factors allowed the grain trade in the ARSL to flourish even as famine conditions were setting in. For example, 860,000 kg of grain was exported from Sawakin to inland ARSL markets in the first few weeks of 1890.<sup>57</sup> This trade, generally, kept down prices in ARSL markets despite the sharp decline in grain yields in Northern Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian highlands.<sup>58</sup>

ARSL pastoralists starved because they had no means to purchase the grain in the market. The civil war had disrupted trade and made cultivation impossible. Now, the epizootic was decimating the one key resource pastoralists had left—their herd. Centuries of instability had made herds even more economically, symbolically, and socially important. Now this key resource was disappearing. There are no precise figures for the animal population of the region in the nineteenth century. However, Italian officials in Eritrea observed in 1910 that the cattle population at the time was one-sixth of what it had been prior to the rinderpest epizootic.<sup>59</sup> An animal census conducted in Eritrea in 1913 counted 517,000 head of cattle.<sup>60</sup> By extrapolation, one can estimate that there had been at least 3.1 million head of cattle in Eritrea alone on the eve of the rinderpest epizootic. With an estimated mortality rate of 90 percent, nearly 2.8 million cattle died between 1887 and 1889 in Eritrea. This figure does not include the cattle that died in Eastern Sudan, Northern Djibouti, and the Awash River Valley. The epizootic did not just rob these pastoralists of

<sup>57</sup> Wingate to Grenfell, 12 February 1890 FO407/99/58, NA.

<sup>58</sup> Martini, *Nell'Africa Italiana*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Ghino Valenti, 'Introduzione,' in *La Colonia Eritrea: Condizioni E Problemi*, Omodeo, A., V. Peglion, and G. Valenti, eds. (Rome: Tipographia Nazionale di G. Bertero, 1913), 67.

<sup>60</sup> Ezio Marchi, *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*, 2nd edition (Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1929), 113.

their cattle. During the epizootic and the famine that followed, pastoralists were left with no choice but to sell, barter, or eat their sheep, goats, and camels. The crisis caused most to lose everything.

The famine did what years of violence could not—it dismantled those pastoralist political institutions that had been coopted by the Turko-Egyptian administration. But, the famine was an imprecise weapon that destroyed indiscriminately. As starvation set in, all pastoralist social structures broke down. Pastoralists abandoned their communities. Husbands abandoned their wives. Parents abandoned their children. This is typical of a deadly famine of this severity. Amrita Rangasami has characterized these kinds of famines as having three distinct phases. During the first phase, which Rangasami calls ‘Dearth,’ people remain committed to maintaining their societal norms despite the deepening hardship of want. In the next phase, termed ‘Famishment,’ the community-oriented strategies begin to break down and there is a slow recognition that new strategies oriented toward self-preservation are necessary. In the final phase, called ‘Morbidity,’ the community-oriented strategies are totally discarded and “the community is spatially, socially and economically dismembered.” It is at this stage that people begin to die in large numbers.<sup>61</sup> This progression can be seen in the ARSL. Real want began to set in in the summer of 1889, and within a few months pastoralists had begun to migrate in search of food. Initially, this migration was organized and whole communities moved together under the leadership of their traditional leaders. As the situation deteriorated further, starving pastoralists began abandoning their communities. By early 1890, they were observed arriving at Red Sea ports alone or in small, improvised groups.<sup>62</sup> One witness described these famine refugees as “living skeletons.”<sup>63</sup> In their quest for survival, these refugees had completely abandoned all social norms. They were reported to have started eating animal feces,<sup>64</sup> rotting carrion,<sup>65</sup> and human flesh.<sup>66</sup> Pastoralist social structures had collapsed and the starving were now each alone in their suffering.

<sup>61</sup> Amrita Rangasami, ‘Failure of Entitlements’ Theory of Famine: A Response,’ *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20:41 (12 October 1985): 1750.

<sup>62</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 73.

<sup>63</sup> Wylde, ‘The Starving Soudanese and Our Responsibilities,’ 92.

<sup>64</sup> Barnham to Baring, 5 March 1890 FO407/99/83, NA.

<sup>65</sup> Martini, *Nell’Africa Italiana*, 26–34.

<sup>66</sup> Wylde, ‘The Starving Soudanese and Our Responsibilities,’ 92.



Tragically, migration did not alleviate the suffering. The Italian and British officials that governed Massawa and Sawakin, respectively, elected not to provide meaningful assistance to the thousands of starving refugees that had arrived at their respective ports. Italian officials responded to the arrival of the first famine refugees by closing the port to people from the interior. Refugees that were turned away ended up settling 10 km inland on the Otumlo plain. Italian officials in Massawa provided no assistance to the growing refugee camp just up the road. As a result, untold numbers perished in the camp.<sup>67</sup> Some refugees recognized that Otumlo was a death camp and, therefore, tried to move on to Harar. However, Harar was over 1000 km away, and untold numbers must have died on the way.<sup>68</sup> Unlike their Italian counterparts, British officials initially responded to the emergence of a large famine refugee camp on the outskirts of Sawakin with humanitarian concern. On 26 February 1890, these British officials established a relief committee<sup>69</sup> with a budget of £E500.<sup>70</sup> The committee opened an inpatient hospital to provide for the 100 worst cases and began granting rations of sorghum bread to another 2500 that needed urgent care.<sup>71</sup> In addition, officials initiated relief works and hired an additional 200 men and boys, each of whom was given double rations in place of a wage.<sup>72</sup> By September 1890, the number of refugees receiving assistance had increased to 6000. However, officials had grown suspicious of the refugees because some of them were from rebel communities. Officials decided neither to help all in need nor to attempt to distinguish between the rebel and the loyal refugees. Instead, these officials cruelly chose to cease distributing food aid altogether and to close the refugee camp. On 18 February, an armed police force was sent to drive the refugees from the camp and to prevent them from returning. Only those too sick to move

<sup>67</sup> At the end of April 1891, Ferdinando Martini, who would subsequently become the Governor of Eritrea, traveled to Massawa and was shocked by the government's callousness to the plight of the starving refugees. In his account of this voyage, Martini recounts attending a lavish official party in Massawa to salute the king of Italy while officials did nothing for "the living dead" camped in Otumlo. Martini would later write that the memories of his visit to the camp gave him nightmares for years. Martini, *Nell'Africa Italiana*, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892*, 42–46.

<sup>69</sup> Baring to Salisbury, 27 February 1890 FO407/99/55, NA.

<sup>70</sup> Baring to Salisbury, 2 March 1890 FO407/99/70, NA.

<sup>71</sup> Barnham to Baring, 31 March 1890, FO407/99/83, NA; The currency conversion is based on figures in Alamanni Ennio Quirino Mario, *La Colonia Eritrea e i suoi commerci* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1891), 276.

<sup>72</sup> Barnham to Baring, 31 March 1890 FO407/100/15, NA.

were allowed to remain.<sup>73</sup> With nowhere to go and no means of support, many subsequently died from starvation in the nearby hills.<sup>74</sup>

British officials also engineered the collapse of the only successful large-scale pastoralist-led famine relief program because they saw this program as a threat to their regional interests. This program was set up by Ahmad Mahmud in late 1889, just as starvation was setting in. Immediately prior to beginning to give out aid, Ahmad Mahmud had declared himself the *nazir* of the Amara and the *amir* of the Barbar-Sawakin road. Though he aligned himself with the Mahdist state and had been recognized in this position by the Mahdist leadership, Ahmad Mahmud also had the support of other key Amara *shaykhs*.<sup>75</sup> The program that he created guaranteed that all those who arrived in his camp at Handub would receive enough to eat. Ahmad Mahmud did not distinguish between his loyal camp followers and the constantly arriving famine refugees. To feed the ever-expanding population of Handub, Ahmad Mahmud levied a ten percent tax on all passing merchandise.<sup>76</sup> Since a considerable amount of the commercial traffic was imported Indian grain, Ahmad Mahmud quickly amassed a large grain store that supplied this aid program.<sup>77</sup> Providing aid to dependents in times of hardship was a traditional obligation of pastoralist leaders, and Ahmad Mahmud was fulfilling his through this program. However, British officials in Sawakin read nefarious intentions into this act of charity. They saw it as part of a larger Mahdist plot to marginalize and then conquer Sawakin.<sup>78</sup>

Further, British officials were particularly interested in curtailing Ahmad Mahmud's rising prestige among the Amara because they wanted to establish Hamad Darib Karti as the real Amara *nazir*. Hamad Darib Karti and Ahmad Mahmud were brothers. They were both the sons of Mahmud Ali, the *shaykh* of the Fadlab Amara who, until his death on 22 December 1889, had been an important ally of the British in Sawakin.<sup>79</sup> Neither

<sup>73</sup> Barnham to Baring, 18 October 1890 FO407/102/10, NA.

<sup>74</sup> Hall to Haskins, 8 October 1890 FO407/102/26, NA.

<sup>75</sup> Francis Reginald Wingate, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan*, 2nd edition (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 449–450.

<sup>76</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 116 (2 to 20 September 1890), 2, SAD.

<sup>77</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 103 (4 to 17 March 1890), SAD.

<sup>78</sup> Portal to Salisbury, 22 July 1890 FO407/101/13, NA.

<sup>79</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 97 (December 11 to 23, 1889), SAD.

brother had a legitimate claim to the position of *nazir*, which had been vacant since the previous *nazir* had been killed shortly after the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>80</sup> Their father had been only the *wakil* (agent) of the *nazir* before the civil war and the Fadlab did not have a traditional right to the position. Ahmad Mahmud sought to establish his legitimacy by taking on the traditional role of providing for his followers during adverse periods. Further, he was establishing himself in opposition to British intervention in pastoralist society and, therefore, as leading the effort for pastoralist autonomy. The British made no similar effort to legitimize Hamad Darib Karti's claim to the title. Rather, they placed him in the title by fiat, and they assumed their fiat would be enough. It was not, and few Amara accepted the legitimacy of this appointment.

Ahmad Mahmud's food aid program proved to be good politics. No other traditional pastoralist leader could offer such a program. Even the Mahdists could not. Uthman Diqna's camp at Kassala could not feed its own soldiers, let alone the large numbers of camp followers. As a result, untold numbers migrated away from Kassala during the first half of 1890 in a desperate search for food.<sup>81</sup> By the summer of 1890, Ahmad Mahmud had grown so regionally powerful that even Hamad Darib Karti left from Sawakin to go to Handub to publicly submit to his brother. When British officials found this out, they decided to punish the Handub camp by suspending all trade between Sawakin and the Sudanese interior.<sup>82</sup> Without the steady income from taxing trade, the economic fortunes of Handub declined. It quickly became difficult for Ahmad Mahmud to continue to provide for all of his camp follower and for the continuously arriving refugees. To get the British to reopen trade, Darib Karti returned to Sawakin. But, this did not convince the British officials there to change their policy—trade remained closed and the food crisis worsened. When Ahmad Mahmud suddenly died in November 1890, the Handub camp began to dissolve. Nafir ibn Mahmud succeeded his brother, Ahmad Mahmud, as head of the Handub camp, with all of Ahmad Mahmud's associated titles. However, the camp had no income and Nafir ibn Mahmud

<sup>80</sup> This position had been created by the Turko-Egyptian colonial government and was vacant since Mahdist forces had killed the previous *nazir*. Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 100 (January 21 to February 4, 1890), SAD.

<sup>81</sup> Portal to Salisbury, 13 August 1890 FO407/101/25, NA.

<sup>82</sup> Herbert Kitchener, 'Memorandum' in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 116 (September 2 to 20, 1890), 2, SAD.

turned to raiding to steal what the Handub camp could no longer get through taxation.<sup>83</sup> Raiding increased as the camp began to dissolve. Within a month of Nafir ibn Mahmud taking power, a number of Amara *shaykhs* had left Handub and made overtures to the Sawakin administration.<sup>84</sup> British officials quickly stopped perceiving the camp at Handub as an existential threat. It had become just a weak nuisance. In January 1891, British officials finally decided to stop the raiding and sent a military force to clear the camp. In so doing, they brought about an end to the only meaningful food aid program in the ARSL. Pastoralist communities now really had nowhere to turn for aid during this devastating famine.

By the time the famine had ended in 1892, two-thirds of the pastoralist population of the ARSL had died. Communal ties had broken and pastoralists had stopped following their traditional leaders. The Khatmiyya leadership had either fled, died, or been arrested. Those pastoralists who somehow managed to survive, generally, had nothing. They were totally impoverished. Tragically, the devastation could have been minimized. This tragedy could have been averted. There was an alternative, as demonstrated by Ahmad Mahmud. The famine relief program that Ahmad Mahmud set up was not a complete innovation. Rather, it was an adoption of longstanding social norms to a new context. This program reflected the proper functioning of the web of dependence that had long structured the moral economy of the ARSL. Elites were traditionally expected to use their position of privilege to ensure that all of their dependents had enough during periods of dearth. Tragically, only Ahmad Mahmud continued to uphold this obligation. Other pastoralist leaders, the new religious elite, Mahdist rebels, and European officials did not. There was no social safety net and, as a result, pastoralist society collapsed. The famine destroyed everything. It did not have to be this way. Those with power could have found ways to divert the resources that they continued to command during the famine into relief programs. This would not have prevented the rinderpest epizootic. Millions of cattle would still have perished. But, people would not have had to starve in such great numbers. Instead, those in power focused on maintaining their power as everything around them was destroyed.

<sup>83</sup> Holled Smith to Grenfell, 26 January 1891 FO407/106/20, NA.

<sup>84</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, No. 123 (24 December 1890 to 6 January 1891), SAD.



## An Unequal Recovery, 1893–1913

Following the initial epizootic, rinderpest became enzootic to the ARSL. In 1896, just a few years after the first rinderpest epizootic had run its course, the disease returned to the region. The exact trajectory of the 1896–1897 epizootic is unclear from the extant historical record. However, it is likely that the disease returned to the ARSL via the Ethiopian highlands. At the time of this new outbreak, Ethiopian officials were escalating raiding along the southern and southwestern frontiers of their empire. The number of heads of cattle taken during these annual raids tripled between 1892 and 1894. The lion's share of the booty from these large-scale state-sponsored raids was divided between the Emperor, the nobility, and church officials.<sup>1</sup> Some cattle brought to the Ethiopian province of Tigray after the 1896 raids were likely infected with rinderpest. After this, the disease probably spread via normal trade routes first to other parts of the highlands and then into the ARSL. By late 1897, rinderpest had made its way to the Red Sea coast near Zula.<sup>2</sup> The disease then spread north along the coast and then was brought into Eastern Sudan by migrating Beni Amer pastoralists. At the end of 1897, it was reported in the region around Kassala.<sup>3</sup> From

<sup>1</sup> Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892*, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Shaykhs of Zula and Macallile to Governor of Eritrea, 4 November 1896, Pacco 236 Archivio Storico Diplomatico Archivio Eritrea, Rome (ASDAE).

<sup>3</sup> 'Notes on the Outbreak of Bovine Typhus at Suakin and in the Neighbouring Districts' reprinted in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, No. 62 (16 February to 30 April 1899), 17, SAD.

there, the disease was reimported into the highlands, thereby completing the circle.<sup>4</sup> There was a similarly progressing outbreak in 1904–1905, during which at least one-third of the cattle population died.<sup>5</sup> There were additional, less deadly outbreaks in 1906,<sup>6</sup> 1909,<sup>7</sup> 1911,<sup>8</sup> 1912,<sup>9</sup> and 1913.<sup>10</sup> Each of these outbreaks was less deadly than the previous because herds were developing some forms of immunity. Cattle that survive a rinderpest infection acquire immunity to the disease. Mothers can partially transmit their immunity to their calves through their milk, though this immunity lasts in calves for less than a year after weaning.<sup>11</sup>

Repeated rinderpest outbreaks impeded pastoralist efforts to rebuild their communities after the total devastation of the 1888–1892 famine. Cattle had traditionally served a number of structurally important social and economic functions within pastoralist society. They were productively exploited, used as a currency, loaned, and borrowed to solidify bonds of dependence and treated as an investment vehicle. Before the first rinderpest epizootic, cattle ownership was a way that pastoralists defined themselves as members of their own communities. When rinderpest became enzootic to Africa, cattle ownership could no longer occupy this role. There were too few cattle and cattle herds were too unstable to be

<sup>4</sup> Comando della Zona del Serai Hamasen to Commandante delle R Truppe, 18 February 1898, Pacco 292, ASDAE.

<sup>5</sup> In Eritrea, officials recorded that 100,000 head of cattle died from the disease in 1904 and 1905. However, these officials recognized this number as a gross underestimate. A census of the domesticated animal population in Eritrea taken during the outbreak counted approximately 296,000 head of cattle. Gaetano Conti, 'Il Servizio Veterinario in Eritrea' in Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Comitato per la documentazione dell'opera dell'Italia in Africa, *Italia in Africa: Serie Civile, Volume II: Il Servizio Veterinario Nell'Africa Italiana* (Rome, 1965), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Wingate, 'Memorandum by the Governor-General,' in *Reports on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of the Sudan (REACS), 1906* (1906), 9, SAD.

<sup>7</sup> F. U. Carr, 'Annual Report, Veterinary Department, 1909,' in *REACS, 1909* (1909), 568, SAD.

<sup>8</sup> Agnus Cameron, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1911,' in *REACS, 1911*, Vol. II (1911), 90, SAD.

<sup>9</sup> Agnus Cameron, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1912,' in *REACS, 1912*, Vol. I (1912), 92, SAD.

<sup>10</sup> C. H. Townsend, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1913,' in *REACS, 1913*, Vol. I (1913), 96, SAD.

<sup>11</sup> R. D. Brown, 'Rinderpest Immunity in Calves,' *Journal of Hygiene*, 56:4 (December 1958): 427–434.

depended upon. So, ARSL communities had to be creative about rebuilding. Directly recreating the lost past was now impossible. But, few seemed interested in abandoning all that they had known; they did not try to build a completely new society that had few connections to the lost past. Instead they selectively innovated in order to conserve what they could.

In the process of creative rebuilding, pastoralist communities selectively employed their remaining domesticated animals in new ways. Pastoralist had always kept diverse herd. Alongside their cattle, they kept camels, goats, and sheep. The latter three were unaffected by the rinderpest epizootic and, therefore, represented nearly all of the animal wealth in the ARSL in the immediate wake of the epizootic. Nonetheless, using them to rebuild required reimagining their roles in pastoral life. Goats and sheep had traditionally been the least important animals in diversified herds. Pastoralists had raised goats and sheep as a supplement to their economic and social investment in cattle and camels. As a result, goats and sheep were relatively cheap and therefore easily expendable. They were the animals most likely to be sold or killed for food because large numbers of them were not desired. There had historically been little reason to invest heavily in them because the return was so low. However, after the epizootic, this changed. Pastoralists began to focus a lot of their attention on rapidly growing their goat and sheep herds. These efforts were dramatically successful. Between 1905 and 1913, the population of sheep and goats in Eritrea alone increased by nearly a million head.<sup>12</sup> This success was built upon new egalitarian social structures that emerged within pastoralist communities around collective investment. In the years after the rinderpest epizootic, pastoralists developed new types of animal-sharing partnerships under which herds could be held collectively by small, non-hierarchically organized groups. These new partnerships opened up the pool of potential investors because they allowed even those that could not afford to purchase animals on their own to invest in a collectively held herd.<sup>13</sup>

The egalitarian social structures that were emerging around collectively owned goat and sheep herds stood in sharp contrast to the rebuilding efforts that were beginning around camel ownership. Camels were always expensive, and after the epizootic, they became even more so. Between 1887 and 1894, the market value of a camel increased by 50 percent to 30

<sup>12</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Marchi, *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*, 16.

Maria Theresa thalers per head.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, the price of goats and sheep remained low at about 2 Maria Theresa thalers per head.<sup>15</sup> The exact number of camels in the ARSL at the time of the epizootic is unknown. A census of domesticated animals in Eritrea carried out in 1905 counted 47,000 camels.<sup>16</sup> This figure reflects only a small proportion of the camel population in the ARSL at the time. There are no known statistics for camel populations in Eastern Sudan, Northern Djibouti, or the Awash River Valley for this period.<sup>17</sup> Camels experience just subclinical rinderpest infections and therefore would have survived this epizootic. Most of those who had owned camels before the 1888–1892 famine probably had to sell them to avoid starving. It is therefore likely that the famine allowed the wealthiest traditional pastoralist leaders to come to monopolize the ownership of camels. When the acute crisis abated, these elite camel owners sought to use these camels to rebuild the hierarchical relationships that had previously been expressed through the loaning and borrowing of cattle.

The investment in camels was, in many ways, not a shrewd one. First, camels reproduced slowly; female camels take over five years to reach puberty. As a result, efforts to expand the camel population through intensive breeding were slow going. For example, the population of camels in Eritrea increased by only 4000 head between 1905 and 1913. This represented an increased value of approximately 120,000 Maria Theresa thalers. Over the same time period, intensive breeding programs allowed pastoralists to increase the sheep and goat population in Eritrea by over one million head, representing an increased value of nearly two million thalers.<sup>18</sup> Second, the investment in camels was a bet on the return of the caravan trade at a time when colonial rule was transforming the regional economy. This bet was therefore a risky one that did not consider the willingness of foreign capital to invest in railroads in the ARSL and the determination of colonial officials to ensure that these investments pay off. Investing in camels placed pastoralist traditional elites in direct competition with the alliance between international finance and European imperial power. However, there was one way in which this investment was very savvy; it helped ensure

<sup>14</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report: Egypt*, No. 32 (November 1894), 9, SAD.

<sup>15</sup> Marchi, *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Graham C. Kerr, 'Annual Report, Red Sea Province, 1905,' in *RFACS, 1905* (1905), 121, SAD.

<sup>18</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 37.



that, despite having seen their power collapse during the famine, traditional political leaders continued to be attractive local allies of the emerging colonial administrations. In the crucial years immediately following the famine, these leaders monopolized the ownership of camels and, therefore, were able to continue to stand between European imperial officials on the coast and the regional economy. Though this position proved short-lived because railroads overtook caravans in much of the transport trade, it nonetheless allowed traditional leaders to maintain their privileged relationships with colonial officials despite changing local conditions.

The alliance between pastoralist leaders and the emerging colonial administrations at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century allowed these leaders to effectively control the recovery process. The regular salaries provided by the administrations to these leaders formed an independent base of wealth that these leaders used to ensure that their communities were not reconstituted along the lines of the non-hierarchical goat and sheep owning collectives. Rather, these leaders used their wealth to ensure the rebuilding of the old hierarchies that had given them power. The process of rebuilding recreated one of the central pre-famine weaknesses of pastoralist society—the source of elite privilege had become exogenous. It stemmed from relationships developed with foreign rulers. Since this privilege was not grounded in internal pastoralist structures, pastoralist elites had no reason to redevelop the reciprocity of dependency that had existed prior to the Little Ice Age mega-drought. Without this reciprocity, the web of dependency that undergirded pastoralist society could not act as a social safety net that protected the vulnerable from abject poverty.

The parasitic relationship between pastoralist traditional leaders and their dependents remerged even though the colonial administrations that were being developed were themselves weak. In the 1890s and early 1900s, British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian officials divided the ARSL among themselves. Through a set of multilateral treaties, they established the boundaries between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Côte Française des Somalis. This treaty regime had at its core a fiction. The British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian empires exercised almost no territorial control in the ARSL. They certainly did not control the population that lived there. The treaty regime was less an acknowledgment of facts on the ground than it was an aspirational statement about future geo-politics. However, this aspiration was short-lived; it did not even endure the years-long process of creating this treaty regime. By the time the last treaty was signed, British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian

officials had concluded that colonial control over the ARSL was not worthwhile. The borders on the map were fixed, but the administrations on the ground were not constructed. The governments that British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian officials established in the ARSL were hollow. They existed more on paper than in actuality. As a result, these officials, like their Turko-Egyptian predecessors, ceded power to the pastoralist elites that were trying to reacquire the prestige, wealth, and power that they had lost during the years of war, disease, and famine.

### THE HOLLOWNESS OF EARLY COLONIAL RULE

The division of the ARSL between the British, French, Italian, and Ethiopian empires was driven by diplomatic pressures in Europe, not local dynamics in the ARSL. This process was set off by the Italians. In April 1890, Italian officials in Rome became interested in colonizing Nilotic Sudan.<sup>19</sup> Under the Principle of Effective Occupation established at the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, establishing a claim to a port along the African coast created a claim to inland territory. Inland from Massawa is the Ethiopian highlands. To establish a claim to Sudan, Italy needed to establish a claim to a port north of the highlands, but south of British-controlled Sawakin. In early 1890, the Italian ambassador to the United Kingdom met with Prime Minister Salisbury to request that a boundary between Italian and Anglo-Egyptian territory in the ARSL be fixed at Ras Kassar, which is at about 17°N. A small number of British officials in Cairo and Sawakin instantly recognized this for what it was. Ras Kassar is north of Khartoum. Though the Italians proposed delimitating just a few kilometers of the land boundary, doing so would have created an Italian claim to all inland territory south of 17°N. The Italians had a legitimate claim to Ras Kassar. This part of the coast was claimed by the Habab, with whom the Italians had signed a treaty in 1887. To further strengthen their claim to Habab territory, Italian officials appointed in 1890 Salvatore Persico as the first *Residente* in Habab territory.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Previously, Italian imperial ambitions had been narrowly focused on conquering the Ethiopian highlands. This changed with the signing of the Treaty of Wuchale in 1889. Through this treaty, Menelik II of Shewa ceded the northeastern highlands to Italy and Italian officials agreed not to press further into Ethiopia. However, the treaty said nothing about Sudan. Further, Italian officials believed that the British and Egyptians had given up their claim to Sudan in a proclamation issued from Sawakin in December 1889.

<sup>20</sup>Anthony D'Avray, *Lords of the Red Sea: The History of a Red Sea Society from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 67–68.

Italian actions brought out tensions within the British imperial structure. British officials stationed on the ground throughout Britain's empire often acted independently and at cross purposes from their supposed superiors in London. In the specific case of the SRSR, British imperial officials and politicians in London agreed that their central objective in the region was to hold Egypt without further territorial expansion. On the other hand, British officials in Cairo and Sawakin believed that the only way to profitably hold Egypt was to ensure that Britain monopolizes control of the Nile and its sources. Allowing any other European imperial power to control these rivers would open up the possibility that they divert the water for local use and that there would not be enough left over to meet Egypt's needs. These British officials successfully lobbied senior British officials in London to ignore Italy's invitation to delimit the border.<sup>21</sup> However, this was not enough for the officials on the ground who recognized that leaving the boundary undefined was only a temporary fix. There were only two possible permanent solutions—either Britain conquer Sudan or Italy abandon its colonial claims. Since senior British politicians were unlikely to willingly authorize the conquest of Sudan, British officials stationed in Cairo and Sawakin sought to force the issue by orchestrating the gradual conquest of Sudan starting with the Tawkar Delta. In early 1891, these officials used the chaos caused by the ongoing famine to claim to their superiors in London that Sawakin was under an imminent threat that could only be avoided by taking the delta.<sup>22</sup> Unaware of the ridiculousness of the claim that people who were literally starving to death posed a clear

<sup>21</sup> Wingate to Kitchener, 7 April 1890, Wingate Papers, Box 1, c.1, Duke University Library.

<sup>22</sup> To hide their true aims, this group of officials began to tell the senior British politicians that taking the delta was necessary to secure Sawakin. They argued that British control over this delta would push the frontline of the rebellion back across over 400 km of desert to Kassala. However, privately the architects of this plan acknowledged that their real motives were different. In a letter from 17 April 1890, shortly after the plan to take Tawkar was rejected, Reginald Wingate, the Director of Intelligence in the Egyptian army, wrote to Herbert Kitchener, the Governor of Sawakin, that conquering the delta "was the one thing necessary to show our hand and would have been an effective topper to Italian penetration." Wingate to Kitchener, 17 April 1890 Wingate Papers, Box 1, c.1, Duke University Library. There is no indication that Wingate, Kitchener, or any of their collaborators told senior British politicians that the goal of the advance on Tawkar was to frighten the Italians. Instead, over the next half year they just sent repeated memos arguing that taking the delta was necessary for securing Sawakin from rebel threat. Grenfell, *Memorandum* [n.d. November 1890] FO407/102/24, NA; Dormer to Horse Guards, 3 November 1890 FO407/102/24, NA.

and present military danger, British officials in London agreed. With a relatively brief campaign, a British-led force conquered the delta in February 1891. This military action had its desired effect; in April 1891, Italy formally recognized Sudan as the *de jure* territory of Egypt.<sup>23</sup>

Though British and Italian actions in 1890–1891 were driven by diplomatic concerns about securing colonial claims to distant parts of Sudan, their actions over the next few years seemed to indicate a genuine interest in establishing real colonial administrations in the northern half of the ARSL. British officials recognized the boundaries of their new possession as the triangle between Handub, Sawakin, and the Tawkar Delta. This possession was to be ruled through the Anglo-Egyptian administration of Sawakin. To offset the costs of rule, British officials issued a proclamation in July 1891 declaring all land in the fertile Tawkar Delta to be government land. Officials decided that the land was only to be used for farming. Pastoralists willing to engage in cultivation could rent the land on an annual tenancy at a rate of 40 Egyptian piasters per *faddan* (approximately one Maria Theresa thaler per acre). Renewals of leases would be at the discretion of the colonial administration.<sup>24</sup> While British officials focused on mediating access to one of the most important fertile zone in Eastern Sudan, their Italian counterparts immediately began treating the Habab as Turko-Egyptian officials had done before the rebellion and civil war. Shortly after Persico's appointment as *Residente*, Italian officials discovered that the Habab leadership had made overtures to Uthman Digna and the Mahdist forces at Kassala. In response, these officials arrested *Kintabai* Hamad and his two closest collaborators, Mussa al-Akid and Said al-Safi. The three men were tried, found guilty of treason and exiled to Assab. Italian officials then deposed Hamad and chose his successor.<sup>25</sup> The following year, Italian officials decided to start levying tribute from the Habab at rates slightly higher than those that had been levied by the Turko-Egyptian administration in the 1880s. In 1892, Italian officials demanded that the Habab pay 18,000 thalers, a rate that was especially cruel because the rinderpest epizootic and famine were only just ending.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ford to Baron Blanc, 24 July 1894 FO 407/127/36, NA.

<sup>24</sup> Hardinge to Salisbury, 16 July 1891 FO407/107/16, NA.

<sup>25</sup> 'Proposta di soluzione per gli Habab [n.d. 1890]' reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 156.

<sup>26</sup> Governor of Eritrea to Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 29 March 1893 Posizione 4/3, ASDMAI.

Pastoralists had few options for resisting these efforts because they happened during the famine or immediately thereafter. People were still suffering and communal institutions were still weak. Those pastoralists with rights to the Tawkar Delta could not launch the types of attacks that had driven the Turko-Egyptian administration out of the region less than a decade earlier. Instead, all they could do was simply refuse to take up allotments. As a result, much of the land remained fallow during the next few cultivation years.<sup>27</sup> The Habab similarly could not launch a systematic attack that would have driven the Italians from their land. Instead, they decided to migrate away. In February 1895, the entire Habab clan migrated north under the leadership of the *Kintabai*. There are conflicting accounts of the exact number who made the journey, with estimates ranging from 15,000<sup>28</sup> to 30,000 people.<sup>29</sup> As the Habab were on their way north into British-controlled territory, Italian officials asked their British counterparts to turn them back claiming that the Habab were Italian colonial subjects and therefore must live in Italian-controlled territory. British officials agreed. Though they did not force them to return, British officials confined the Habab to camps where there were insufficient pastures to maintain the Habab's herds.<sup>30</sup> Unable to stay or continue their northward migration, the Habab soon returned to their traditional rangelands.<sup>31</sup>

The diplomatic exchange between British and Italian officials in response to the Habab migration led to the development of a new local definition of colonial territorial sovereignty that potentially could have had negative consequences for pastoralists. British and Italian officials agreed that their sovereignty in the ARSL would be over both people and land. Following the peaceful resolution of the Habab migration, the British and the Italians began to delimitate the border. To be clear, British and Italian officials did not effectively control the territory between the Tawkar Delta and the Habab rangelands. This land was controlled by independent pastoralist communities. So delimiting the border was a way for British and Italian officials to, at least in their own minds, peacefully annex territory and subjugate the local population. British officials wanted to make sure that this process in some way considered the interests of

<sup>27</sup> Hardinge to Salisbury, 16 July 1891 FO407/107/10, NA; Arbuthnot to Governor Kassala, 18 October 1942 SAD849/7/19-28.

<sup>28</sup> Lloyd to Baratieri, 6 February 1895, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 198.

<sup>29</sup> Lamb to Kimberly, 9 February 1895 FO 407/131/60, NA.

<sup>30</sup> Angherà to Governor, 10 March 1895, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 202–205.

<sup>31</sup> Lam to Kimberly, 16 March 1895 FO407/131/77, NA.

pastoralists by ensuring that borders would conform to the already existing, locally recognized divisions between communally held rangelands. Italian officials claimed that pastoralist communities did not really own land and therefore this could not be used as the basis for dividing colonial territory.<sup>32</sup> Pastoralist communities were not invited to participate in these border negotiations. By May 1895, the British and Italian negotiating parties had reached a compromise based on both communal structure and territorial boundaries. British and Italian officials divided both the land and the pastoral population. The Hadendowa were under British rule, the Habab were under Italian. The Beni Amer were divided, with the followers of *Shaykh* Idris Hamad under the British and of *Shaykh* Ali Hussain and *Shaykh* Muhammad Sharif under the Italians.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the two sides established a protocol for dividing the land using major geographic features, such as riverbeds and mountain ranges, as the guide.<sup>34</sup> The process of determining the border was completed on 5 July 1895 and ratified by treaty on 7 December 1898.<sup>35</sup>

This boundary delimitation process, with its encoded understandings of territorial sovereignty and colonial subjecthood, subsequently became the model for determining the boundaries that divided the ARSL between the four competing empires. The various boundary commissions that were set up at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were not efforts to map already existing colonial realities. This is most clearly demonstrated in the division of the Afar territories of southern ARSL. The process of delimiting colonial territorial rights in this region sat on a very shaky foundation. In the 1880s, Italian, French, and Ethiopian officials had entered into formal and informal agreements with various Afar sultans. These agreements were limited in scope and, in no case, granted these foreign powers claims to territorial sovereignty. Nonetheless, when Italian, French, and Ethiopian officials agreed to delimit their boundaries, they agreed that they had already established their claims to territorial sovereignty. The boundary commissions' job was just to determine, for example, where the frontier of the sultan of Raheita's territory lay because that was to be part of the border of Eritrea.

<sup>32</sup> Lamb to Cromer, 18 May 1895 FO407/131/110, NA.

<sup>33</sup> Appendix to Protocol signed by the Egyptian and Italian Delegates at Suakin, 1 May 1895 FO407/131/110, NA.

<sup>34</sup> Rodd to Salisbury, 3 September 1895 FO407/132/19, NA.

<sup>35</sup> Appendix to Protocol signed by the Egyptian and Italian Delegates at Suakin, 1 May 1895 FO407/131/110, NA.

From the perspective of the Afar, this represented a gross misreading of these treaties. When these sultans entered into these treaties in the 1880s, they likely saw them as encoding the dependent status of the foreigners in their midst. Here it is helpful to look at one example. On 21 September 1884, the sultan of Tadjoura entered into an agreement with the French under which the French agreed to pay the sultan and his *vazir* monthly stipends of 100 and 80 Maria Theresa thalers, respectively. French officials also promised not to interfere in the legal system of the sultanate. In exchange, the sultan agreed to “donne son payé à la France pour qu’elle le protège contre tout étranger.”<sup>36</sup> The sultan likely interpreted this stipend as tribute. Throughout the greater SRSR paying tribute was a sign of a community’s subjugation to a foreign ruler. European colonial officials also had the same cultural understanding of the significance of tribute. In a slightly different context, Reginald Wingate, the governor-general of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, wrote to Ali Dinar, the sultan of Dar Fur in 1901 that paying tribute “would tend to show your submission and obedience to [the government’s] orders, as well as your connection with it.”<sup>37</sup> When the boundary commissions used this and other similar treaties to determine the boundary, they were reversing this understanding. Treaties that the Afar leadership interpreted as signs of their local dominance were now being used in an effort to map their subjugation.

The lines on the map remained abstract geo-political concepts that meant effectively nothing on the ground in Afar territory. Once the process of settling territorial claims through boundary commissions was well underway, officials believed that they no longer needed to fear each other’s territorial aggrandizement. So, officials could turn away from trying to establish claims of effective occupation of Afar territory. Instead, they moved toward working on other, more important goals. As a result, the limited efforts in the direction of effective occupation were rapidly dismantled. The French example is the most dramatic. Before the boundary commissions process was inaugurated, French officials had established garrisons and small administrative offices in the Afar ports of Obock and Tadjoura. In 1899, the governor of the Côte Française

<sup>36</sup> *Traite avec Hamed ben Mohammed Sultan de Tadjourah*, 21 September 1884, FM SG CFS//6, ANOM.

<sup>37</sup> “Letter from his Excellency the Governor General to Sultan Ali Dinar” reproduced in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, No. 83 (1 to 30 June 1901), 10, SAD.

des Somalis calculated that it would cost 20,000 francs per year to maintain their presence in the parts of the colony beyond the limits of the port of Djibouti. The Ministre des Colonies determined that this expense was not worthwhile.<sup>38</sup> All French civilian and military personnel were progressively withdrawn from those parts of the colony that were outside Djibouti, including from Obock and Tadjoura. The colonial government then issued instructions forbidding any European, including officials, from traveling from Djibouti to any other part of the colony.<sup>39</sup> By 1911, French officials began recognizing in internal memoranda that they had no hold over any Afar territory.<sup>40</sup> Their Italian and Ethiopian counterparts similarly could not claim to rule over the Afar that they asserted were their respective colonial subjects. This did not mean that the Afar were stateless. Their territory was divided into states. They were just not colonial in nature. Though there were treaties that divided these regions into French, Italian, and Ethiopian territory, the region continued to be ruled by the various Afar sultans who effectively acted with near complete independence.

The British and Italian officials that divided the northern ARSL subsequently sought to establish effective, but skeletal, administrations. Though the demarcation of the division of this region began with the conquest of Tawkar, the rest of the region did not need to be directly conquered in order to be claimed. During the famine, coordinated opposition to outside rule collapsed. In the years that followed, the only ongoing resistance in the northern ARSL was led by Uthman Digna and his relatively small group of followers who occasionally raided Eastern Sudan and Northeastern Eritrea. When Italy sent a force to conquer Kassala in 1895, they were met with little local resistance. The same was true the following year, when the British sent an expedition along the Barbar to Sawakin road. ARSL pastoralist communities had already put down their arms in order to focus on rebuilding. Nonetheless, officials did not notice. For years, they assumed that fighting was always on the verge of resuming. Officials only began to recognize that the northern ARSL was at peace in September 1898, when a

<sup>38</sup> Governor of French Somaliland to le Ministre des Colonies, 3 February 1899 FM 1AFFPOL/121, ANOM.

<sup>39</sup> Oberlé and Hugot, *Histoire de Djibouti*, 103.

<sup>40</sup> Norès to le Ministre des Colonies, 10 April 1911, FM 1AFFPOL/133, ANOM.



British-led force conquered Umm Durman, the capital of Mahdist Sudan. When this did not provoke a second pastoralist uprising, officials declare the war in the ARSL that had ended nearly six years earlier to finally be over.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike their counterparts in the southern ARSL, the British and Italian officials that ruled the northern ARSL sought to administer their respective territories. Both the British and the Italians modeled their administrations on the tripartite governmental structure that Turko-Egyptian officials had created in the mid-nineteenth century. The new administrations had a limited bureaucracy staffed by a very small number of colonial officials that were based at the ports and a few market towns and that were supported by a small military presence. The main tasks of government were handed over to traditional pastoralist leaders and the Khatmiyya religious elite. Bringing the Khatmiyya religious elite into the new colonial administrations posed two problems. First, the al-Mirghani family was no longer a presence in the region. In 1884 and 1885, key members of the family fled to Arabia and Egypt. Those that remained behind were either arrested by the Mahdists and jailed in Umm Durman or killed by the rebels. Second, there were adherents of the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood in both Sudan and Eritrea. The Khatmiyya spiritual elite had proven themselves amenable, during the period of Turko-Egyptian rule, to inducing their followers to submit to foreign rule. Both British and Italian officials wanted these elites to do the same for them. In 1897, Italy handed over control of Kassala, the historic center of the Khatmiyya, to an Anglo-Egyptian force. Shortly thereafter, British officials had Ali al-Mirghani, the head of the al-Mirghani family, return permanently to Kassala as a sign of support for the new colonial administration.<sup>42</sup> The al-Mirghani family immediately set about rebuilding their theocratic bureaucracy, which they used to preach about the need to submit to the Anglo-Egyptian government that had been established in Sudan following the collapse of the Mahdist state in 1898. Italian officials began to fear that the Khatmiyya religious elite's support for the Anglo-Egyptian government was weakening the prestige of the government of Eritrea. So, Italian officials negotiated with the al-Mirghani family to have one member move to Keren and

<sup>41</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 97–108.

<sup>42</sup> Cromer to Salisbury, 25 December 1897, FO 407/143/132, NA.

lead their Eritrean followers from there. In 1903, Jafar al-Mirghani became the head of the Eritrean Khatmiyya.<sup>43</sup>

While British and Italian officials were turning to the Khatmiyya religious elite to provide a theological justification for submitting to colonial rule, they were relying on traditional pastoralist leaders to ensure law and order and, perhaps more importantly, to facilitate the collection of tribute. In 1892, Italian officials began levying tribute on the Habab clan.<sup>44</sup> Two years later, they started demanding an annual tribute from the Beni Amer and the Nara.<sup>45</sup> In 1899, Italian officials systematized and generalized the tribute system. All pastoralist communities were expected to pay an annual tribute based on the number and kind of animals they owned. The rates were fixed at 2.50 L per camel, 2 L per head of cattle and 2 L per 20 head of sheep or goats.<sup>46</sup> In 1901, British officials followed the Italian lead and began demanding tribute from pastoralist communities in Eastern Sudan.<sup>47</sup> In both Eastern Sudan and northern lowland Eritrea, colonial officials expected traditional pastoralist leaders to collect the assessed tribute and turn it over to the government. For this service, and for ensuring peace, these leaders were paid a regular salary. For some leaders, this salary was quite generous. For example, throughout the 1890s, the *Kintabai* of the Habab was paid 400 Maria Theresa thalers per month.<sup>48</sup>

The administrations that British officials established for Eastern Sudan and Italian officials for northern lowland Eritrea were weak and ineffectual. They were built on shaky ground. The powerful theocratic bureaucracy that the Khatmiyya religious elite once commanded had been dismantled during the civil war. Therefore, these elites had no readily available institutional mechanism to mobilize in the service of the colonial administrations they were asked to serve. Similarly, the power and prestige of traditional pastoralist leaders had collapsed

<sup>43</sup> Giorgio della Croce, *Note sul Commissariato Regionale di Cheren* [n.d.], FASC3123, IAO.

<sup>44</sup> Governor of Eritrea to Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 29 March 1893, Posizione 4/3, ASDMAI.

<sup>45</sup> Boari to Governatore, 13 November 1894, Pacco 4, ASDAE.

<sup>46</sup> *Stralcio dalla proposta di Tributo per l'esercizio 1899–1900 del Commissariato di Massaua*, 28 November 1898, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 264–265.

<sup>47</sup> Henry St. George, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1903,' in *RFACS, 1903* (1903), 53, SAD.

<sup>48</sup> Boari to the Governor of Eritrea, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 272–286.

during the famine. They could not readily command their dependents. This is especially evident in the response to paying tribute. Pastoralist leaders paid by the administration could not get the communities they were paid to lead to pay. For example, in 1897 Italian officials and the *Kintabai* of the Habab came up with a new schedule for the amount of tribute that each Habab sub-clan would pay. When this schedule was flat out rejected by the heads of the sub-clans, the Italian *Residente* sent a force to punish all the recalcitrant *shaykhs*.<sup>49</sup> As another similar example, the leaders of the Hadendowa could only collect £E100 as tribute in 1901 and 1902 combined. So, the following year the administration was forced to send an armed patrol to collect tribute. Nonetheless, even this patrol failed. It collected only £E800, just a fraction of the assessed amount.<sup>50</sup> Pastoralists in Eastern Sudan and northern lowland Eritrea didn't pay tribute because they did not have to. They had no reason to see themselves as colonial subjects that owed the state a percentage of their wealth. There was also no real mechanism to force their compliance. The indigenous institutions through which colonial power was to be exercised were themselves only coming back into existence. The ethno-political and religious bonds that had structured these institutions had broken during the civil war and ensuing famine. The colonial administrations in Eastern Sudan and northern lowland Eritrea could not just be grafted onto existing indigenous institutions because these institutions were just not there. They too had to be built.

### TRYING TO PROFIT FROM RAILROADS AND THE SLAVE TRADE

Though the colonial administrations were either weak or non-existent, they were powerful in one respect—they could channel international capital flows toward the development of modern transportation facilities. British, French, and Italian colonial officials were part of a large international network that linked them to politicians, bankers, and wealthy investors in Europe. Ethiopian officials did not have the same access. These networks funded the construction of railroads from the Sudanese Red Sea

<sup>49</sup> Missione Ademollò, 30 June 1897, reprinted in *The Nakfa Documents*, 260–262.

<sup>50</sup> Henry St. George, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1903,' in *RFACS, 1903* (1903), 53, SAD.

coast to the Nile,<sup>51</sup> Massawa to the Eritrean highlands<sup>52</sup> and Djibouti to Addis Ababa.<sup>53</sup> They also funded the development of other modern transportation networks that fed cargo onto these rail lines. In Sudan, colonial officials used foreign funding to construct Port Sudan, a new modern port less than 70 km north of Sawakin, and to develop an extensive steamer service that was frequently used by merchants to carry goods on private account between major inland ports and rail terminals along the Nile and its tributaries. In Eritrea, officials financed the laying out of over 400 km of roads linking all major markets, either directly or indirectly, to each other and to Massawa.<sup>54</sup> French officials financed the construction of the

<sup>51</sup>The Red Sea line was part of a relatively extensive for African standards rail network. The first two lines of this network were built during the British-led conquest of Sudan. Both of these lines began at Wadi Halfa, on the Egyptian border. One line hugged the Nile and terminated at Karma. The other line bypassed the Sudanese bend in the Nile, rejoined the river near Wadi Halfa and reached the banks of the Blue Nile across from Khartoum. At the start of the twentieth century, the line to Karma was closed, and in the years before the First World War, the main Nile line was extended south and then west through the fertile Jazira plain and into the rainlands of Kordofan. In addition, branch lines were built linking the main line to Dongola in the west and the Red Sea in the east. In the 1920s, an additional branch line was constructed to link the main line in the Jazira via Qadarif and Kassala to the Red Sea line. To further extend the modern communication network, officials developed an extensive steamer service that was frequently used by merchants to carry goods on private account between major inland ports and rail terminals along the Nile and its tributaries. For a history of the construction of the Sudanese railroad, see Richard Hill, *Sudan Transport: A History of Railway, Marine and River Services in the Republic of the Sudan* (London, Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>52</sup>Work on the Eritrean railroad began in October 1887 with the construction of 27 km of rail between Massawa and Saati. The railroad was subsequently extended to Ghenda in 1904 and to the new Eritrean highland capital in Asmara in 1911. Following the First World War, the line was further extended to Keren in 1922, Agordat in 1928, and then to Tessenei near the Sudanese border in 1929. Redie Bereketeab, *Eritrea: the Making of a Nation, 1890–1991* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2007), 101.

<sup>53</sup>In 1896, Menelik II designated the new French port as the official port for all of Ethiopia's export trade. The following year work began on a railroad from Djibouti to Ethiopia. Progress on the railroad was slow and commercial service did not begin until 1901. Five years later, *Compagnie Impériale des Chemins de fer d'Éthiopie*, which held the railroad concession, failed. The company's assets, including the section of the railroad that had already been built, were transferred to the newly established *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer Franco-Éthiopien*. Work extending the rail line was eventually resumed and the railhead finally reached its terminus in Addis Ababa in 1917. Service Intercolonial d'information et de documentation, *Ministre des colonies. Côte des Somalis*, 1940, FM 1AFFPOL/2681, ANOM.

<sup>54</sup>*Situazione della Colonia*, 1905, Possizione 3/20, ASDMAI.

new modern port of Djibouti. The new trading facilities all along the Red Sea coast succeeded at attracting further foreign investment in transportation. Private steamship companies began regular service between Europe and Port Sudan, Massawa and Djibouti. The intensity of trade at these ports was on its own not enough to attract these companies, but it was enough to make these ports important stops on the journey to and from the Indian Ocean. For example, four steamships per month from the *Messageries Maritimes* stopped at Djibouti; two of these ships were traveling the route between Marseille and China and two others between Marseille and Madagascar.<sup>55</sup>

To encourage the use of these new transportation facilities, colonial officials ensured that their rates were well below competing facilities. For example, the rate for shipping goods from Massawa to Asmara on the railroad was set in 1911 at one-quarter the rate for shipping via pack animals.<sup>56</sup> The sudden drop in transportation costs stimulated regional trade because it brought down the costs of imported goods in inland markets in Nilotic Sudan and in the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands. Previously unaffordable items were now cheap enough for purchase by even the Sudanese and Ethiopian peasants that had also been impoverished by war, disease, and famine. For example, at the start of the twentieth century, imported sugar went from being an expensive luxury good reserved for only wealthy elites to an object of mass consumption. Drinking heavily sugared tea became a widely practiced custom especially among agricultural communities on the Sudanese Nile and in the Ethiopian highlands. The quantity of sugar imported into Sudan alone increased from 140,000 kg in 1881<sup>57</sup> to approximately 13 million kg in 1913.<sup>58</sup> Agricultural communities could generate enough income to afford these now inexpensive luxuries because grain prices were high. After years of disruptions to cultivation, grain yields in Nilotic Sudan and the Eritrean/Ethiopian highlands were well below market demand. Inadequate supply resulted in elevated market prices. Though cultivators used some of their profits to buy imported

<sup>55</sup> *Rapport Mensuel*, April 1917, FM 1AFFPOL/122, ANOM.

<sup>56</sup> Michele Checchi, *La Palma Dum e l'Euphorbia candelabra nella colonia Eritrea* (Rome, Istituto Coloniale Italiano, 1910), 15.

<sup>57</sup> *Report on the Soudan by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart* (C3670, 1883), 35.

<sup>58</sup> 'Annual Report, Sudan Customs, 1913,' in *REACS, 1913*, Vol. 2 (1913), 198–199, SAD.

goods, they invested much of it into their holdings.<sup>59</sup> The surplus yields they produced were sold to merchants who shipped them with the new, cheaper transportation facilities to other markets in Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.<sup>60</sup>

Caravan transport was generally too expensive to compete against trains and steamers. In addition, trains shaped the flow of trade toward those market towns with stations and away from those without. As a result, pastoralist communities lost an important source of income in the first decades of the twentieth century even as trade expanded. The negative effects for the caravan trade are most clearly demonstrated in Eastern Sudan. In the 1890s, the Sudanese Red Sea coast experienced a small trade boom caused by the expanding British presence in the region. Historically, Sawakin had been the major Sudanese Red Sea port and it had served as the hub of the caravan trade between the coast and the Nile. When the railroad from the Egyptian frontier to Khartoum was opened to commercial traffic in 1898, it immediately became cheaper to ship goods by train and steamer from Nilotic Sudan to Egypt and via Egyptian ports to international markets than it was to ship them by camel caravan to Sawakin. As a result, trade at Sawakin suddenly declined. By 1901, the port had lost sufficient economic vitality that the Indian merchant houses that dominated the import/export trade began to shift their operations away.<sup>61</sup> The following year, the remaining population was reported to have become poor. Houses quickly fell into disrepair as people no longer had the money to maintain them.<sup>62</sup> The sole bright spot was the trade to Kassala, which shifted away from Massawa to Sawakin in 1902.<sup>63</sup> As a result, the pastoralists who had previously serviced the Massawa-Kassala caravans lost their source of income. However, the increased Sawakin-Kassala trade was only a fraction of what had passed on the previously more important Sawakin-Nile route. In

<sup>59</sup> Between 1898 and 1913, cultivators on the Sudanese Nile between Khartoum and the Egyptian frontier invested nearly 6.25 million Maria Theresa thalers back into their farms. Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 123.

<sup>60</sup> British officials further sought to stimulate this trade by setting a preferential rate on the carriage of grain. The grain freight rate was set in 1906 at 25 percent below the lowest rate. Wingate, 'Memorandum by the Governor-General,' in *RFACS, 1906* (1906), 40, SAD.

<sup>61</sup> *Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Soudan in 1901* (Cd1012, 1902), 70.

<sup>62</sup> N. F. Playfair, 'Annual Report, Suakin Province, 1902,' in *RFACS, 1902* (1902), 339–341, SAD.

<sup>63</sup> P. M. Saville, 'Annual report, Kassala Province, 1902,' in *RFACS, 1902* (1902), 296, SAD.

1903, 300 fewer camels left Sawakin than the previous year.<sup>64</sup> This downward trend continued for the next two years. In 1906, trade at Sawakin rebounded because of the opening of a branch rail line linking Sawakin and Port Sudan on the coast to the main rail line at Atbara on the Sudanese Nile.<sup>65</sup> However, even this was short-lived because the expansion of Port Sudan came at the expense of Sawakin.<sup>66</sup> A similar pattern was experienced in the southern Eritrean port of Assab over the same period. At the start of the twentieth century, the caravan traffic that had passed through Assab shifted onto the railroad between Djibouti and the interior.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, Assab continued to serve some caravan trade. As the long-distance trade dried up, Assab became a minor port servicing only the import/export trade of pastoralist communities in southern Eritrea. In 1907, the total value of exports from Assab was 27,329 Maria Theresa thalers and of imports was 15,024 Maria Theresa thalers.<sup>68</sup> However, this was too small to attract merchants. By 1913, so many merchants had moved away that this port city was virtually abandoned.<sup>69</sup>

There was one trade that continued to expand and that could not shift onto the railroad—the slave trade. In the nineteenth century, Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia all made international commitments to eradicate the slave trade in their African possessions. Nonetheless, the slave trade grew rapidly in the first quarter of the twentieth century, driven by growth on both the supply and demand side. There were two main centers of demand for slaves in the greater Red Sea region at the start of the twentieth century—Northern Nilotic Sudan and the Hijaz. At the start of the twentieth century, cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan invested much of their profits from high grain prices in purchasing slaves so as to have the labor necessary to bring more land under cultivation. Between 1898 and 1913, these cultivators purchased over 80,000 male and untold numbers

<sup>64</sup> G. B. Macauley, 'Annual Report, Railways Department, 1903,' in *REACS, 1903*, Vol. 3 (1903), 119, SAD.

<sup>65</sup> Graham Kerr, 'Annual Report, Red Sea Province, 1909,' in *REACS, 1909* (1909), 778, SAD.

<sup>66</sup> For a complete retelling of the economic collapse of Sawakin, see Roden, 'The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin.'

<sup>67</sup> Luigi Cufino, *La Parabola Commerciale di Assab* (Naples: Stab. Tip. Francesco Golia, 1913), 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Riepilogo del movimento carovaniero di importazione ed esportazione avvenuto durante l'anno 1907 nella piazza di Assab*, 1908, Pacco 508, ASDAE.

<sup>69</sup> Cufino, *La Parabola Commerciale di Assab*, 3.

of female slaves to work the land so as to maximize yields for the market.<sup>70</sup> In the Hijaz, demand for slaves was buoyed by an economic boom brought on by an increase in pilgrim traffic. The average number of pilgrims arriving in the Hijaz via Red Sea ports alone rose from 39,000 people in the late 1890s to 87,000 a decade later. This increase was driven, in large part, by the expansion of steamship travel in the Indian Ocean World.<sup>71</sup>

The slaves purchased by Northern Nilotic cultivators and wealthy Hijazi families, generally, came from two different sources. The patterns of trade that emerged around supplying these groups with slaves created the opportunity for different groups of pastoralists to profit. Slaves destined for Sudanese markets were raided from the traditional slave raiding grounds along Sudan's Western and Southern frontiers<sup>72</sup> or from newly forming settlements of ex-slaves. Following the collapse of the Mahdist state, tens of thousands of slaves absconded from their masters or from the Sudanese slave military regiments. While some made their way back to their ancestral homes in Western and Southern Sudan, many settled on the outskirts of market towns along the Nile, in Eastern Sudan and in the Eritrean highlands. Though these slaves saw themselves as free, many of their neighbors did not. As a result, they were particularly vulnerable to forced re-enslavement.<sup>73</sup> However, this vulnerability was not absolute. The policies pursued by British and Italian colonial officials directly impacted the security of these communities.

Ex-slave communities in Eritrea were relatively safe. Italian colonial officials used the limited means at their disposal to pursue a number of initiatives designed to actively combat the slave trade and bring about an end to slavery. First, officials publicly proclaimed all slaves who enter Eritrea, including those belonging to subjects of neighboring countries, to be free-men.<sup>74</sup> Then officials began issuing freedom papers to any slave that presented him- or herself to an agent of the state. Between 1903 and 1913,

<sup>70</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 117–118.

<sup>71</sup> Ochsenwald, 'The Commercial History of the Hijaz Vilayet,' 65.

<sup>72</sup> Wingate to Kitchener, 16 January 1911 SAD300/1/63; Wingate to Kitchener, 24 January 1911 SAD300/1/77; Wingate to Hamilton, 9 December 1908 SAD284/5/8-9; Cromer to Wingate, 1 January 1906 SAD278/1/2.

<sup>73</sup> *Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of Egypt and the Soudan, 1899* (cd95, 1900), 62; E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1904,' in *REACS, 1904* (1904), 77, SAD.

<sup>74</sup> Residente del Sahel to Governor of Eritrea, 26 June 1905, Pacco 454, ASDAE.



officials issued freedom papers to 393 runaway slaves.<sup>75</sup> The success of these initiatives was limited; Italian officials did not effectively rule all of their claimed territory and large areas of the colony, including those in the ARSL, had little to no administrative presence. Communities in these un-administered areas were known to continue to own slaves and to engage in the slave trade.<sup>76</sup> As a result, colonial anti-slavery measures were not completely effective. Despite the risks, some ARSL pastoralists exported small numbers of slaves via Eritrean ports. This very limited trade was generally in the hands of members of the Rashayda, a clan that had migrated from Arabia in the nineteenth century to what would become the borderlands between Sudan and Eritrea.<sup>77</sup> Occasionally, Rashayda pastoralists kidnapped slaves from neighboring communities or from the outskirts of regional towns, brought them to the northern Eritrean coast and sold them.<sup>78</sup>

Despite its limits, Italian policy was sufficiently robust that Eritrea became known throughout the slave community of the greater SRSR as uniquely the land of freedom. Sometime around the turn of the twentieth century, a rumor began to spread that Italian officials were freeing and offering protection to all slaves that made their way to Eritrea. Evidence of this rumor is contained in the testimony of the runaway slaves that were granted freedom papers by Italian officials. For example, Muhammad Nur Ali told the Italian officials that provided him with his papers in 1906 that after 30 years as a slave of a Hadendowa *shaykh* he ran away to Eritrea because he had heard that Italian officials were liberating slaves.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, the following year 14 slaves navigated a pearl diving ship that they had stolen from Fisan Island to Massawa so that they could ask the Italian officials there to liberate them.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, this rumor also spread among merchants. In 1913, the Italian Commercial Agent in

<sup>75</sup> *Elenco degli Schiavi Liberati dalla Autoriza della Colonia dal 1905 al 1913*, Pacco 193, ASDAE.

<sup>76</sup> Residente del Sahel to Governor of Eritrea, 26 June 1905, Pacco 454, AEMAE.

<sup>77</sup> For a study of the history and communal structure of the Rashayda, see W. C. Young, *The Rashaayda Bedouin: Arab Pastoralists of Eastern Sudan* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996).

<sup>78</sup> Il Regente di Residenza del Sahel to Governor of Eritrea, 4 July 1907, Pacco 440, ASDAE; Il Direttore Degli Affari Civili, *Schiavi Liberati nell'anno 1907*, 10 January 1908, Pacco 520, ASDAE.

<sup>79</sup> Corsi, *Relazione riguardante gli schiavi liberati durante gli anni 1905 e 1906 dalle varie autorità della Colonia*, 15 May 1907, Pacco 440, ASDAE.

<sup>80</sup> Il Direttore Degli Affari Civili, *Schiavi Liberati nell'anno 1907*, 10 January 1908, Pacco 520, ASDAE.

northern Ethiopia reported that merchants from the Ethiopian region of Tigray were reluctant to come to Eritrea because they feared that the slaves that they brought with them would seize the opportunity to declare themselves free.<sup>81</sup> While this rumor probably overstated Italian commitment to anti-slavery measures, it captured the relative safety of ex-slave communities in Eritrea.

Ex-slaves in Sudan were, by contrast, extremely vulnerable to re-enslavement. British officials not only did not make any real effort to end slavery in Sudan, they actively encouraged the expansion of the slave trade. These officials believed that the only way to ensure the food security of Sudan was to allow cultivators in Northern Nilotic Sudan to rebuild their slave system, which had collapsed during the years of Mahdist rule. As a result, these officials created a legal framework that recognized and protected the institution of agricultural slavery, gave loans to slave-owning cultivators who were investing in expanding their operations and, at least initially, turned a blind eye to the kidnapping of ex-slaves and penalized slaves that tried to establish their own freedom.<sup>82</sup> This created an opening for pastoralists in Eastern Sudan to profit by raiding the emerging communities of ex-slaves and selling their captives to neighboring cultivators. Pastoralists controlled the whole process. They raided the slaves, transported them to market, and sold them. At the start of the twentieth century, the most important figure in this trade was Ibrahim wad Mahmud, whose Hadendowa slaving militia was known to be particularly aggressive.<sup>83</sup>

Though British officials encouraged the sale of slaves to Northern Nilotic Sudan, they did not want Sudan to become a source of slaves for Hijazi markets. British officials in Sudan allowed the slave trade to flourish because they wanted to secure the labor necessary to rebuild and expand commercial grain cultivation in Northern Nilotic Sudan. They were willing to support this trade only in so far as it met this objective. Almost immediately after the conquest of Sudan, British officials realized that the slavers that they supported were not interested in limiting their activities to just the internal Sudanese market. In 1902, officials discovered that Eastern Sudanese pastoralists had begun to kidnap slaves from neighbor-

<sup>81</sup> L'Agente Italiano in Tigré to Governor of Eritrea, 31 August 1913, Pacco 580, ASDAE.

<sup>82</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 121–123.

<sup>83</sup> F. R. Wingate, 'Memorandum by the Governor-General,' in *REACS, 1904* (1904), 35, SAD.

ing Nilotic farms in order to sell them to Jeddah-based merchants.<sup>84</sup> In the wake of this revelation, officials pursued a number of policies that they hoped would ensure that the recently enslaved were not exported. To prevent the re-kidnapping of slaves from Northern Nilotic farms, officials registered all slaves in the region.<sup>85</sup> In order to ensure that this registration did not hinder Nilotic cultivators from purchasing new slaves, officials left these registrars open.<sup>86</sup> In 1904, these officials established a Sudanese coast guard tasked with suppressing the maritime slave trade in Sudanese waters.<sup>87</sup> When officials discovered that specific pastoralist slave raiding militias were exporting slaves, they targeted them. For example, rumors that wad Mahmud sold slaves to Jeddah made him a particular target and, ultimately, led officials to arrest him in 1904.<sup>88</sup> To ensure that these policing activities were limited and targeted, officials dismantled the semi-independent government department that had been created before the conquest to police the Sudanese slave trade.<sup>89</sup>

By cutting pastoralists off from the lucrative Red Sea slave trade, British policy in Sudan and Italian policy in Eritrea created the opportunity for pastoralist communities in the Côte Française des Somalis to establish a near monopoly over the maritime slave trade. At the start of the twentieth century, nearly all slaves exported from the African to the Arabian Red Sea littorals originated on the southern and southwestern frontiers of Ethiopia's expanding empire. In order to rebuild after the famine, Emperor Menelik II channeled considerable state resources toward funding large-scale cattle and slave raids along the empire's southern and southwestern frontiers. Slave raiding was so intense that the population of these areas shrank by as much as 90 percent in the first third of the twentieth century.<sup>90</sup> Newly raided slaves were not put to work rebuilding Ethiopia's collapsed agricultural system, which remained powered by peasant labor.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> H. W. Jackson, 'Annual Report, Dongola Province, 1903,' in *REACS*, 1903, Vol. 4 (1903), 27, SAD.

<sup>85</sup> H. W. Jackson, *Behind the Modern Sudan* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 94.

<sup>86</sup> Bonham-Carter to Wingate, 1 August 1913 SAD187/2/1.

<sup>87</sup> R. Wingate, 'Memorandum by the Governor-General,' in *REACS*, 1906, Vol. 2 (1906), 39, SAD.

<sup>88</sup> F. R. Wingate, 'Memorandum by the Governor-General,' in *REACS*, 1904 (1904), 35, SAD.

<sup>89</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 119–120.

<sup>90</sup> Noel Edward Noel-Buxton, 'Slavery in Abyssinia,' *International Affairs*, 11:4 (July 1932): 517; Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia*, 111.

<sup>91</sup> Ethiopian cultivators did not widely own slaves, and slave labor was rarely used to resume cultivation after the famine. Cultivation in the grain-producing regions in northern Ethiopia

Rather, slaves kidnapped during raids were distributed by state officials to key groups of allies. Though some slaves remained in elite Ethiopian households, most were sold to Arabia.<sup>92</sup>

Nearly the entirety of the trade in slaves between Ethiopia and Arabia passed through the Côte Française des Somalis. This territory attracted slave merchants because they could operate out in the open without fear of arrest. At the start of the twentieth century, all French colonial officials were withdrawn from all of the colony except the city of Djibouti as a budget-saving measure.<sup>93</sup> Though French officials subsequently learned that the port of Tadjoura was becoming a major hub in the slave trade between Ethiopia and Arabia, they did not take any measures to expand the reach of the state.<sup>94</sup> As a result of this inaction, the first anti-slavery criminal case in the colony was not brought until 1915, 30 years after the purported start of French colonial rule.<sup>95</sup> Slave traders seized the opportunity created by French inaction by guiding the trade in slaves between Ethiopia and Arabia along a narrow, well-defined route. Slaves were forcibly marched from the frontiers of the expanding Ethiopian Empire to its new political and economic imperial center in Shawa. Then they were taken along the Awash River and through territory controlled by Afar pastoralists in the Côte Française des Somalis. For the most part, slaves were brought to the coast near Tadjoura and loaded onto dhows destined for the Arabian coast.<sup>96</sup>

continued to be limited by insufficient animal labor resulting from repeated outbreaks of rinderpest. See James McCann, *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia: A Rural History 1900–1935* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 80–81.

<sup>92</sup> Philip Zaphiro, *Memorandum on the Slave Traffic between Abyssinia and the Coast of Arabia* [n.d. November 1929] IOR/R/20/1/1560, BL.

<sup>93</sup> Governor of French Somaliland to le Ministre des Colonies, 3 February 1899, FM 1AFFPOL/121, ANOM.

<sup>94</sup> Norès to le Ministre des Colonies, 10 April 1911, FM 1AFFPOL/133, ANOM.

<sup>95</sup> This case was only brought because of unusual international circumstances. In April of that year, a boat belonging to the government of Aden discovered a dhow anchored off al-Hudayda with eight slaves on board. The crew, which was comprised entirely of Afar *protégés* from the Côte Française des Somalis, was arrested on suspicion of engaging in the slave trade and turned over to French officials in Djibouti for prosecution. The next anti-slavery case was brought in 1922. *Rapport sur la Traite des Esclaves à la Côte Française des Somalis*, 16 February 1923, FM 1AFFPOL/402, ANOM.

<sup>96</sup> Philip Zaphiro, *Memorandum on the Slave Traffic between Abyssinia and the Coast of Arabia* [n.d. November 1929] IOR/R/20/1/1560, BL.

The Afar came to dominate this trade because they were actively supported by the Ethiopian state. Ethiopian officials had two reasons to direct the slave trade through Tadjoura. First, this region was not under any effective European control. This part of the ARSL was controlled by an autonomous Afar sultan, who was eager to profit from servicing the slave trade.<sup>97</sup> More importantly, the slave trade opened the door to the trade in arms. At the end of the nineteenth century, British and Italian officials outlawed the sale of arms to Ethiopia. However, French officials did not. As a result, large quantities of firearms were able to pass through ports in the Côte Française des Somalis while none could pass through Eritrean and Sudanese ports. In 1906 alone, the Société Française des Munitions imported over one million Gras rifles into Djibouti, nearly all were destined for re-export.<sup>98</sup> French officials finally succumbed to British and Italian diplomatic pressure and placed an arms embargo on Ethiopia in 1912.<sup>99</sup> However, this embargo was ignored in practice and weapon shipments continued unimpeded. Generally, weapons shipments were landed at Djibouti and loaded onto ships that were supposedly destined for Arabia, where there were no weapons trade restrictions. Despite the official itinerary, these ships often covertly made their way to Tadjoura, where they would be handed over to the same Afar pastoralist networks that dominated the slave trade.<sup>100</sup>

### REBUILDING SUFFERING

Profiting from the slave trade was predicated on access to camels. While the demand for camels in legitimate trade was drying up, camel caravans continued to be used to bring slaves to market. Though many slaves were forced to march this distance, prized slaves such as young girls and eunuchs rode on camelback. Camels were also ridden by the pastoralists who super-

<sup>97</sup> Il Commissariato Regionale di Assabb to Affari Civili, 18 February 1913, Pacco 580, ASDAE; Barton to Henderson, 8 July 1930, IOR/R/PS/12/4088, BL.

<sup>98</sup> Grant, *Rulers, Guns, and Money*, 67.

<sup>99</sup> Grant, *Rulers, Guns, and Money*, 76.

<sup>100</sup> The French engaged in contraband sales of modern weapons throughout Africa, despite being a signatory to the 1890 Brussels Protocol that prohibited the sale of modern firearms in Africa. The continuation of arms sales in French Sudan, Nigeria, Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, and Sierra Leone has been well documented. See James J. Cooke, 'Anglo-French Diplomacy and the Contraband Arms Trade in Colonial Africa, 1894–1897,' *African Studies Review*, 17:1 (April 1974): 27–41.

vised the slave transport. In Eastern Sudan, slave raiders also launched their attacks on ex-slave settlements on camelback. As a result, camel owners commanded the lion's share of the profits and determined how the remainder was to be distributed. The slave trade produced few other ancillary economic benefits. The slaves were not generally kept by pastoralists. Their labor was not of any material productive benefit to the pastoralists themselves. As a result, the profits from the slave trade, like the salaries pastoralist elites received from the new colonial administrations, were of narrow benefit. This income allowed elites to control the recovery process, and they used this control to ensure that the old system of elite privilege that had collapsed during the famine was rebuilt with all of its exploitative internal contradictions. Elites sought out dependents. They required them. Slavers and slave traders needed manpower to run their operations. Traditional leaders needed followers to be seen as legitimate by the colonial administrations. However, this dependence did not translate into a system of reciprocal protection. The system that elites rebuilt in the 1890s and 1900s was not the moral economy of the pre-mega-drought period that was based upon the obligations of elites to provide for their dependents in times of want. Rather, it was the system that had developed under Turko-Egyptian rule. Elite power was exogenous; it was supported by foreign rulers and access to external markets. Therefore, elites were not beholden to their dependents. They did not have to offer protection from want in order to remain powerful. So, they didn't.

The parasitic nature of traditional pastoralist leaders was hidden to some extent by the profits from slavery and the salaries of leaders. This money allowed the pastoral economy to expand in the most visible way, that is, in making herds grow. Though statistics are limited and partial, the best animal census statistics for the early twentieth century come from Eritrea. Between 1905 and 1913 alone, the population of sheep and goats in the colony increased by one million head, of camels by 4000 and of cattle by 220,000 head.<sup>101</sup> These figures include those animals owned by highland cultivating communities. They are also imprecise in that the census was not rigorously done. Nonetheless, these figures give a sense of the trajectory and intensity of the growth in the domesticated animal population during this period. These gains were not linear. Herds grew and shrank over this period. The dramatic reduction in the cattle population owing to the 1887–1892 rinderpest epizootic disrupted environmental and herd man-

<sup>101</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 37.

agement techniques in ways that changed the regional disease environment. At the turn of the twentieth century, repeated epizootics of rinderpest, trypanosomiasis, and pleuropneumonia swept through the region. Epizootics killed cattle, sheep, goats and/or camels in 1898–1899,<sup>102</sup> 1904–1905,<sup>103</sup> 1906,<sup>104</sup> 1909,<sup>105</sup> 1911,<sup>106</sup> 1912,<sup>107</sup> and 1913.<sup>108</sup>

As herd size grew and traditional pastoralist leaders were regaining their wealth and prominence, structural poverty was setting in among the rest of the pastoralist population. Non-elite households no longer had the resources, even in good years, to maintain themselves and their animals. They had to choose. In the past, this choice had been limited to bad years, during which pastoralists would forgo some of their food so as to ensure that their animals survived. In the post-rinderpest/famine period, every year was a bad year and this strategy became unsustainable. Pastoralists who had traditionally bought much or all of the grain that they ate from the market struggled because grain was too expensive. Grain yields in the major grain-producing areas of Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands recovered only slowly after years of war, disease, and famine.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>102</sup> ‘Notes on the outbreak of Bovine Typhus at Suakin and in the Neighbouring Districts’ in Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, No. 62 (16 February to 30 April 1899), 17, SAD.

<sup>103</sup> Conti, ‘Il Servizio Veterinario in Eritrea,’ 8.

<sup>104</sup> G. R. Griffith, ‘Annual Report, Veterinary Department, 1906,’ in *REACS*, 1906 (1906), 526, SAD.

<sup>105</sup> St. C. M. G. Macewen, ‘Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1909,’ in *REACS*, 1909 (1909), 705, SAD.

<sup>106</sup> Agnus Cameron, ‘Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1911,’ in *REACS*, 1911, Vol. II (1911), 90, SAD.

<sup>107</sup> J. D. M. Jack, ‘The Sudan,’ in *A History of the Overseas Veterinary Services*, G. P. West, ed. (London: British Veterinary Association, 1961), 127–128.

<sup>108</sup> C. H. Townsend, ‘Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1913,’ in *REACS*, 1913, Vol. 1 (1913), 96, SAD.

<sup>109</sup> Grain yields in Sudan had shrunk because the Mahdist Rebellion had caused the Sudanese slave plantation system to collapse and because the Mahdist state implemented a series of policies that hindered recovery in agricultural areas. Similarly, grain yields in the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands decreased sharply when rinderpest killed 90 percent of the cattle. Agriculture in this region was dependent on cattle-driven plows. Rudolf 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), 456; Pankhurst and Johnson, ‘The Great Drought and Famine of 1888–1892 in Northeast Africa,’ 63; Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 13–43; Pankhurst, *The Great Ethiopian Famine*, 39; Gino Bartolimhei Gioli, ‘La Produzione Frumentaria in Eritrea di fronte alle relazioni doganali fra Metropoli e Colonia,’ *Atti della R. Accademia dei Geografi*, Series V, 1:1 (1904): 86–88.

In the two decades that followed the famine, there were repeated adverse ecological conditions that negatively impacted regional crop yields. There were droughts in 1893,<sup>110</sup> 1897, 1898,<sup>111</sup> 1899,<sup>112</sup> 1902–1904,<sup>113</sup> and 1912–1913.<sup>114</sup> Locust swarms formed in 1892,<sup>115</sup> 1895,<sup>116</sup> 1904,<sup>117</sup> 1905,<sup>118</sup> 1906,<sup>119</sup> 1908,<sup>120</sup> and 1913.<sup>121</sup> Cultivation was also disrupted by the Italian offensive war against Ethiopia (1894–1896) and by the British-led military campaign to conquer the Mahdist State (1895–1898). Despite all of this, cultivating communities were able to expand production. As a result, grain prices declined in the early years of the twentieth century. For example, the cost of wheat in highland Eritrean markets declined by half between 1900 and 1902 because yields were improving.<sup>122</sup> However, grain prices did not return to pre-civil war levels. In fact, grain remained expensive because yields were still not enough to meet local demands.<sup>123</sup> Traditionally, in periods of unaffordable grain prices, traditional pastoralist leaders would have stepped in and supported their dependents. There is no

<sup>110</sup> Jackson to Wingate, 22 December 1893, SAD255/1/854.

<sup>111</sup> *Report for the Year 1897 on the Trade of Suakin*. Commercial No. 1859 (C8648, 1898), 8.

<sup>112</sup> J. H. Neville, 'Annual Report, Agriculture and Lands Department, 1903,' in *RFACS, 1903* (1903), 165, SAD.

<sup>113</sup> A. F. Broun, 'Annual Report, Agriculture and Lands Department, 1904,' in *RFACS, 1904*, Vol. 3 (1904), 11–12.

<sup>114</sup> G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>115</sup> Intelligence Department, Egyptian Army, *Intelligence Report: Egypt*, No. 8 (December 1892), 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Report for the Year 1896 on the Trade of Suakin*. Commercial No. 1859 (C8277, 1897), 2.

<sup>117</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1904,' in *RFACS, 1904* (1904), 74, SAD.

<sup>118</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1905,' in *RFACS, 1905* (1905), 88, SAD.

<sup>119</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kssala Province, 1906,' in *RFACS, 1906* (1906), 648, SAD.

<sup>120</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1908,' in *RFACS, 1908* (1908), 545, SAD.

<sup>121</sup> G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>122</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 42.

<sup>123</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1905,' in *RFACS, 1905* (1905), 87, SAD; *Riepilogo del movimento carovaniero di importazione ed esportazione avvenuto durante l'anno 1907 nella piazza di Asab*, Pacco 508, ASDAE.



evidence that they did this at the start of the twentieth century. In fact, all evidence points to the contrary. Without this aid, pastoralists could not secure enough grain. Year after year they suffered from want and undernutrition. Until, slowly pastoralists changed their practice and began actively exploiting their animals for food. In the early twentieth century, Ezio Marchi, the famed Italian veterinary researcher, observed that three-fifths of all Eritrean pastoralists ate only dairy products and the meat of dead animals, sterile females, and non-breeding males.<sup>124</sup> Pastoralist households were still careful to only eat their animals in ways that would protect herd health. They still had enough resources to do so. But, structural poverty is a vicious cycle. Insufficient access to the resources that support life renders the poor vulnerable to more resource loss.

<sup>124</sup> Marchi, *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*, 15.



## The Cost of Living Becomes Unaffordable, 1913–1945

In the first half of the twentieth century, some traditional pastoralist leaders and Islamic religious elites parleyed their access to the state and their government salaries into large fortunes. This was not guaranteed; it required foresight and shrewd investing skills—qualities that not all possessed. Those that did became very wealthy. Perhaps the most successful of all was Ali al-Mirghani, the head of the Khatmiyya Sufi Brotherhood in Sudan. Al-Mirghani invested his government salary in cultivation. By 1926, he had amassed a nearly 400-acre farm at al-Kabbashir in Khartoum Province, a 1600-acre farm at Aliab in Berber Province and a 50 percent stake in a farm owned by a Dr. N. Maluf.<sup>1</sup> Until the government granted a concession over the Gash Delta to a British firm in 1923, al-Mirghani also controlled a large share of the delta's arable land.<sup>2</sup> Al-Mirghani's wealth, power, and prestige grew even though his commercial operations had little spillover benefits for his pastoralist followers. The farms that he owned employed only West African migrants and not his local followers.<sup>3</sup> This did not matter. Al-Mirghani's spiritual reputation and exogenous sources of income allowed him to maintain a large following even though he did not fulfill all the traditional functions of pastoral elites. He did not

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on a Meeting between Assistant Director of Agriculture and Mirghani*, 27 December 1926, CIVSEC 2/6/24, National Records Office, Khartoum (NRO).

<sup>2</sup> Ali El Mirghani to Lyall, 29 April 1925, CIVSEC 2/9/38, NRO.

<sup>3</sup> Hewing to Director of Agriculture, 28 May 1923, CIVSEC 2/8/30, NRO.

use his wealth and power to protect his followers from want. While he and his family got richer, food insecurity became endemic and their followers suffered through famines in 1913–1914, 1925–1927, 1934–1935, and 1944–1945.

Non-elite pastoralists continued to suffer long after the acute crisis of the 1887–1892 famine/epizootic had subsided because there was no social safety net to help them out. At the turn of the twentieth century, the relations of dependence that linked non-elites to elites were rebuilt without their traditional reciprocity. Pastoral elites did not feel compelled to care for their dependents during periods of want. In the first half of the twentieth century, the expanding colonial states partially stepped into this breach. However, government aid was only reserved for the most extreme crises. Colonial officials did not cultivate meaningful and direct reciprocal relations with pastoralists in general. They were uninterested in helping construct a new moral economy that allowed for both profits through new forms of resource exploitation and insurance against the harms of economic innovation. Instead, officials continued to cultivate relations of dependence with traditional pastoralist leaders and Islamic religious elites. These relations harmed non-elite pastoralists because they were designed to ensure the complicity of the population in the face of exploitative economic and political innovations.

During the first half of the twentieth century, an inescapable structural poverty began to take root in the ARSL. This poverty was different in kind from what had previously been experienced because it was a crisis of the normal state. During the Little Ice Age mega-drought and the 1887–1892 famine/epizootic, pastoralists suffered from extreme want. But these were not normal conditions. They were abnormal in ways that made them totalizing and powerfully destructive. There was no way that pastoralist communities could anticipate and defend themselves from their effects. However, this was not the case during the first half of the twentieth century, which was marked by a return to the normal variability of local ecological conditions. But, non-elite pastoralists had lost the ability to cope. They did not have the resources to do so. Food had become too expensive and animals too hard to maintain. Pastoralists were pushed into a vicious cycle defined by failing to cope precipitating a crisis during which more resources were lost, thereby rendering pastoralists less able to cope. By the end of the Second World War, it was clear that non-elite pastoralists could no longer live as pastoralists and maintain themselves.

## THE FOOD CRISIS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The First World War exacerbated food insecurity in the ARSL by disrupting supplies and driving up prices. This wartime food crisis was multi-causal. First, the war exacerbated political tensions within Ethiopia and ultimately led to the suspension of grain exports. These tensions had been simmering for years and were partly linked to Emperor Lij Iyasu's efforts to incorporate Ethiopia's Muslim population into the state. Though Ethiopia was officially neutral during the war, Lij Iyasu openly worked with the Turkish and German governments because he thought this alliance could be leveraged to build bridges with Ethiopia's Muslim neighbors. In 1915 Emperor Lij Iyasu bowed to pressure from German and Ottoman diplomats in Addis Ababa and outlawed the export of grain to neighboring Allied-controlled territories.<sup>4</sup> Ethiopia had been the major source of grain for the Côte Française des Somalis since Ras Makonnen Wolde Mikael Gudessa, the governor of the Ethiopian province of Harar, had removed all restrictions on the grain trade in 1904.<sup>5</sup> Ethiopia also served as a secondary supplier of grain to Eritrea. In September 1916, Amhara elites and the Ethiopian Church leadership conspired to depose Lij Iyasu. This eventually successful coup set off a deadly civil war that lasted about a month. The fighting disrupted the cultivation cycle and led to decreased yields. As a result, the new Empress Zewditu and her regent, Ras Tafari Makonnen, were forced to retain the grain export ban until 1918.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the war led British officials to take command of the grain economy within their large Indian Ocean empire. These officials recognized that the global nature of the First World War posed a unique threat. Provisions could not be guaranteed as everywhere was either an actual or potential theater of war. There were no secure sources of food. Yet, the increased fighting force had to be well provisioned to ensure its effectiveness. And, colonial subjects needed to be fed in order to prevent sedition. British imperial war planners tried to ensure that sources of grain within the British Empire were used for the exclusive benefit of the Allied countries. This had important consequences for the ARSL. India had long been the major maritime supplier of grain to the region. At the start of the war, British officials decided to restrict the export of grain from India to

<sup>4</sup> Colli to Ufficio Finanza, 14 April 1916, Pacco 804, ASDAE.

<sup>5</sup> Governor to Ministère des colonies, 14 February 1905, FM1AFFPOL/187/2, ANOM.

<sup>6</sup> Consulat de France à Dirré-Daoua, *Rapport Commercial Année 1920*, 4 June 1921, FM1AFFPOL/186, ANOM.

Red Sea markets. Grain would be allowed to be freely exported to British-controlled Aden and Sudan. However, severe restrictions were placed on exports to French-controlled Côte Française des Somalis and Italian-controlled Eritrea. The order to restrict grain imports to Eritrea came from the highest levels of the British war planning effort.

The initial decision to cut Eritrea off from Indian grain was part of a broader carrot-and-stick approach to push Italy, which was then a neutral territory, into the war on the side of the Allied powers. However, when Italy entered the war, British officials decided not to reopen the grain trade between Eritrea and India. To prevent alienating their Italian allies, British officials allowed Eritrea to import grain from Sudan. However, even this trade was restricted. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, British war planners became concerned that grain supplies in Egypt would fall short of demand. So, they began ordering their counterparts in Sudan to implement increasingly draconian measures to at first regulate exports and then completely take over the internal Sudanese grain market. The new rules and regulations implemented during the war were designed to prioritize meeting Egyptian demand over all others, including even the internal Sudanese demand for grain.<sup>7</sup> As part of these efforts, in 1917 they capped the export of grain from Sudan to Eritrea at one-third the quantity exported in 1916.<sup>8</sup>

Cut off from Indian, Sudanese, and Ethiopian sources of grain, Eritrean markets remained undersupplied throughout the war. This was especially harmful to the population of Eritrea because they were already trying to cope with high grain prices when the war started. Drought and locusts had caused the 1913 crop to fail and the price of sorghum to rise tenfold.<sup>9</sup> By December 1913, there were reports of widespread famine throughout the country, including among the lowland pastoral population.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, this famine was relatively mild. There are no reports that it led to the kind

<sup>7</sup> Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board, 1918*, No. XII (1918), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board, 1915*, No. IX (1915), 24; Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board, 1916*, No. X (1916), 27; Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board, 1918*, No. XII (1918), 8.

<sup>9</sup> G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>10</sup> Carrora to Governatore, 20 December 1913, Pacco 645, ASDAE; G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

of social dislocation and increased mortality experienced during the 1888–1892 famine. In 1914, local crop yields returned to normal and they remained so throughout the war. This alleviated pressure on the internal grain market, but it did not lead to them being well supplied. Prior to the war, Eritrea was importing nearly one million liras worth of grain per year.<sup>11</sup> During the war, Italian officials did little to materially address the supply deficit beyond ineffectively trying to exert diplomatic pressure on their British counterparts to lift the grain export restrictions. Within Eritrea, Italian officials responded by regulating the internal grain trade so as to ensure that Asmara, the colonial capital, was always well supplied. These measures diverted the limited grain supply in Eritrea to Asmara, thereby contributing to the food crisis in the countryside.<sup>12</sup>

Eritrean pastoralists were unable to cover the increased cost of food by more fully exploiting their herds because Italian officials had implemented measures that abrogated the rights of pastoralists to manage them. Rather than recognize these herds as the private property of the pastoralists that owned them, Italian officials saw Eritrean herds as an underutilized colonial resource with important strategic potential. Before the outbreak of the First World War, officials had already begun to try and tap this potential. Following the Italian conquest of Tripoli in 1911–1912, Italian officials became concerned about the difficulty of supplying rations of meat to the colonial army comprised of Eritrean soldiers. So they entered into an agreement with *La Società Italiana di Prodotti Alimentari 'L. Torrigani'* in January 1914 under which the latter agreed to open a cattle processing and meat canning operation in Eritrea in order to supply the Eritrean force both within the colony and abroad. Within the framework of the concession, the government agreed to supply the company with as many head of cattle as the company required and the company agreed to pay for each head of cattle based on its live weight upon arrival at the processing facility.<sup>13</sup> The outbreak of the war in Europe led Italian officials to expand the Eritrean force under their command to 15,000 men.<sup>14</sup> In response, the

<sup>11</sup> Michele Checchi, *Movimento Commerciale della Colonia Eritrea* (Rome: Istituto Coloniale Italiano, 1912), 32–43.

<sup>12</sup> Il Commissariato Speciale della Città di Asmara to Direzione degli Affari Civili, 5 March 1919, Pacco 859, ASDAE.

<sup>13</sup> Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai, *Relazione sulla fornitura dei buoi allo Stabilimento del Sembel da parte del Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai*, 19 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE.

<sup>14</sup> Stefano Bellucci and Massimo Zaccaria, 'Wage Labour and Mobility in Colonial Eritrea, 1880s to 1920s,' *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 86 (Fall 2014): 96.

company ramped up production. Over the course of the war, officials were required to provide nearly three times as many cattle as originally anticipated.<sup>15</sup> By the end of the war, the company had produced over 20 million tins of beef and 50,000 flasks of beef broth for the military.<sup>16</sup> All of the cattle processed at this industrial plant were requisitioned by the government from the Eritrean population. Though the company paid for the animals that they slaughtered, they did not pay the full market price. In Eritrean markets, cattle were sold by the head and not by the live weight. The normal market price per head was between 16 and 30 liras more than what the company paid.<sup>17</sup> This represented an enormous economic loss for Eritrean pastoralists. The scale of this loss is evidenced by contrasting it to an Eritrean soldier's wage of one lira per day.<sup>18</sup> Though the company ended its operations in Eritrea shortly after the armistice,<sup>19</sup> the wartime industrial slaughter and processing of Eritrean cattle was predicated on forcing pastoralists to sacrifice their animal wealth at a time when they could barely afford to eat.

Pastoral communities in the Côte Française des Somalis also suffered from endemic food insecurity during the war as a direct result of British policing of the SRSR grain trade. British restrictions on the export of grain to the Côte Française des Somalis came from the government of Aden. Officially, this French colony was allowed to freely import grain from India via Aden because France was a British ally. However, this special permission ended in 1917. The official reason given was that this French territory was an important node in the contraband trade in grain in the greater SRSR.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai, *Relazione sulla fornitura dei buoi allo Stabilimento del Sembel da parte del Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai*, 19 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE; Il Commissariato Regionale dello Hamasien to the Governo della Colonia, 22 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE.

<sup>16</sup> Fernando Santagata, *La Colonia Eritrea nel Mar Rosso davanti all'Abyssinia* (Naples: Libreria Internazionale Treves di Leo Lupi, 1935), 124.

<sup>17</sup> Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai, *Relazione sulla fornitura dei buoi allo Stabilimento del Sembel da parte del Commissariato Regionale dell'Acchelé Guzai*, 19 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE; Il Commissariato Regionale dello Hamasien to the Governo della Colonia, 22 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE.

<sup>18</sup> Marco Scardigli, *Il Braccio Indigeno: Ascari, Irregolari e Bande nella Conquista dell'Eritrea 1885–1911* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996), 171.

<sup>19</sup> Luigi Maria Bologna, 'L'Avvaloramento in Eritrea' in Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Comitato per la documentazione dell'opera dell'Italia in Africa, *Italia in Africa: Serie Economico-agricola, Volume I: L'avvaloramento e la Colonizzazione* (Rome, 1970), 86–87.

<sup>20</sup> Gouverneur de la Côte Française des Somalis to Consul de France à Aden, 10 January 1918, 12PO/1/9, Centre des Archives diplomatiques, Nantes (CAD).

However, this was only a pretext invented after this policy were already determined. In August 1917, the French consul at Aden met with Major W. M. P. Wood, the British Political Officer at Aden. Wood admitted that the government of British India, of which Aden was a part, was contemplating restricting re-exports from Aden because that port, as well as the rest of British India's Red Sea possessions, was undersupplied owing to insufficient cargo space. Wood further advised the French consul that Djibouti should try and rapidly stockpile at least three months' worth of provisions so as to cope with the want that will be caused by these restrictions.<sup>21</sup> When the restrictions were put in place, they were clearly not meant to combat contraband. Dhows were free to leave Aden if they flew the British flag and claimed to be destined either for Yemeni or Somali ports. The movement of these dhows was not tracked after they left port. Nonetheless, all dhows flying French flags and dhows destined for the Côte Française des Somalis were prevented from leaving the port of Aden.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these restrictions, communities in the Côte Française des Somalis seemed to have passed through the war without experiencing real food insecurity. This may indicate that grain continued to flow into the territory. Though the Côte Française des Somalis had been a center for the contraband arms and slaves trade prior to the war, grain could not be imported into the territory through the black market. There were two central reasons for this. First, the war precipitated a currency crisis in the region that crippled most aspects of regional trade. The SRSR currency system was based on silver, though gold coins and other token currencies also circulated. In the early months of the war, silver flowed rapidly out of the SRSR to India where the value of silver had spiked.<sup>23</sup> What little silver was left was often hoarded. One estimate asserts that 40 percent of Ethiopia's silver stock fell out of circulation during the war.<sup>24</sup> Without silver, local merchants were unable to engage in international trade and foreign merchants had little reason to export goods to the region. Second, France suspended the export of arms to Djibouti during the war<sup>25</sup> and worked

<sup>21</sup> l'Agent consulaire de France à Aden to l'Inspecteur général des colonies, 8 August 1917, 12PO/1/15, CAD.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *Rapport Mensuel*, April 1917, FM1AFFPOL/122, ANOM.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Schaefer, 'The Politics of Banking: The Bank of Abyssinia, 1905–1931,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25:2 (1992): 381–384.

<sup>25</sup> La Commission de Marseille, *Relations Commerciales avec la Côte Orientale d'Afrique*, 1 December 1915, FM 1AFFPOL/186, ANOM.



closely with the increased British naval presence in the Red Sea to rigorously prosecute local arms smugglers.<sup>26</sup> Though grain was unlikely to have been smuggled in by sea, it was likely to have passed along overland routes. Ethiopian merchants would have been willing to violate the export ban in order to trade grain for *amolé*, bars of salt mined exclusively by Afar pastoralists in the Danakil Depression. Ethiopian communities often used *amolé* as a currency to settle most medium-scale market transactions. The silver famine caused by the war would have raised demand for *amolé* in Ethiopia and given extra incentive to trade with Afar communities.

These Afar communities only began to really suffer from food insecurity after the war had ended. Since British restriction on exports to the Côte Française des Somalis remained in place until 1921,<sup>27</sup> Afar communities remained dependent on Ethiopian grain. Though Ethiopian exports by train resumed shortly after the armistice, the private market could not import enough grain to meet demand in the Côte Française des Somalis. The black market was not able to meet the deficit. In 1918, French colonial officials estimated that the colony was experiencing a supply shortfall of 1200 sacks of sorghum per month.<sup>28</sup> Officials floated the idea of importing grain from Australia, Indo-China, or Madagascar and selling it at the regular market rate in the Côte Française des Somalis. However, they determined that this was prohibitively expensive.<sup>29</sup> With no solution to the problem of supply, grain prices rapidly rose to levels that were unaffordable to much of the pastoralist population. The following year, pastoralists began migrating in large numbers to Djibouti in search of work and food. By the middle of the year, there had formed a sizable population of food insecure and impoverished pastoralists living on the outskirts of the city. French officials responded to this alarming humanitarian crisis by opening food kitchens to provide 1000 of the worst cases with food rations.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Le Ministre des colonies to Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 3 January 1928, FMIAFFPOL/696, ANOM.

<sup>27</sup> Consul de France à Aden to Gouverneur de la Côte Française des Somalis, 27 October 1921, 12PO/1/16, CAD.

<sup>28</sup> Gouverneur de la Côte Française des Somalis to Consul de France à Aden, 21 November 1918, 12PO/1/9, CAD.

<sup>29</sup> Gouverneur de la Côte Française des Somalis to Consul de France à Aden, 26 February 1920, 12PO/1/10, CAD.

<sup>30</sup> Gouverneur de la Côte Française des Somalis to Consul de France à Aden, 26 February 1920, 12PO/1/10, CAD.

Sudan also experienced a severe food crisis in 1918–1919 caused, in large part, by British mismanagement of the Red Sea grain economy during the war. During the war, British officials used Sudanese grain to ensure the food security of Egypt and the Hijaz. Though Sudan has an abundance of cultivatable land, it was not a reliable exporter of grain in the years before the First World War. Cultivation had collapsed at the end of the nineteenth century owing to the Mahdist Rebellion and the subsequent British-led conquest. Though Sudanese cultivators were making serious gains in terms of rebuilding and increasing annual yields, these gains were not assured. In 1909 and 1910, they produced sufficient grain surpluses as to allow for the export of approximately 38,000 tons of grain. However, in the subsequent years that followed, yields shrank and cultivators fell into debt. The situation was unstable and, ultimately, collapsed when the failure of the Nile flood in 1913 set off a widespread famine in 1914 that affected much of Northern, Eastern, and Central Sudan. During the famine, the slaves that worked the grain plantations in the strategically important Northern Nilotic Sudan ran away from their starving masters in large numbers. Nonetheless, the following year, British officials began to commandeer the Sudanese grain economy to ensure that Sudan routinely exported grain. Between 1915 and 1918, Sudan exported over 133,000 tons of grain.<sup>31</sup> The government grain management program was predicated on better managing of Sudan's existing food resources. There was no effort to invest in expanding yields. Nonetheless, there was no reported hardship during the war because the government was able to use its new position as monopoly grain purchaser to rigorously enforce the price controls that it established. When the war ended and price controls were removed, the price of grain rose by 25 percent. However, even this masked a deeper crisis of supply. Normally, Sudanese cultivators stored some of their yield to act as insurance in case of future bad harvests. During the war, they were unable to do this, leaving them vulnerable to ecological hazards. In 1918, the rains failed and the price of sorghum tripled in some Sudanese markets, causing widespread distress.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board*, 1916, No. X (1916), 6, SAD; Central Economic Board, *Annual Report of the Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board*, 1918, No. XII (1918), 8, SAD.

<sup>32</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 152–153.

Eastern Sudanese pastoralists were particularly hard hit by the 1918 food price spike. Many began to visibly starve. In 1919, British officials stepped in by distributing nearly two million kg of sorghum. These pastoralists were particularly hard hit because the rise in the price of sorghum coincided with the end of the maritime animal export trade to Egypt. Prior to the war, Eastern Sudan did not export animals to Egypt because it did not have adequate quarantine and veterinary police services. Instead, Egypt imported live animals via Mediterranean ports or its southwestern frontier with Sudan.<sup>33</sup> During the war, British officials feared that Egypt would become undersupplied with meat and therefore relaxed its restrictions on importing animals via the Red Sea.<sup>34</sup> Under the new wartime regulations, cattle and sheep from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the Côte Française des Somalis could be brought to Port Sudan, Massawa, and Djibouti, placed into quarantine there and then exported to Suez.<sup>35</sup> Though theoretically this new trade opportunity was open to all ARSL pastoralists, those from Eastern Sudan effectively cornered the market because only they had access to the shipping facilities necessary to supply animals on a large scale. However, this trade was short-lived. When the war ended and the military force in Egypt was reduced, demand for imported cattle and sheep declined sharply.<sup>36</sup> Though Egypt remained open to imported animals from the ARSL, it was cheaper to ship cattle from Western Sudan to Egypt via the Nile railroad line than from the ARSL to Egypt via steamer.<sup>37</sup> The British officials administering Eastern

<sup>33</sup> *Note on the Cattle and Sheep Trade with Egypt* [n.d. 1923], CIVSEC64/3/13, NRO.

<sup>34</sup> At the start of the war, trade between Egypt and Ottoman ports was halted. The number of cattle imported into Egypt from the Ottoman Mediterranean declined from 31,876 head in 1913 to 1386 head in 1915. Similarly, the number of sheep imported declined from 273,249 to 1183 over the same period. Supply dried up at the same time that demand increased owing to the expanded British military presence in Egypt. British officials feared that meat shortages would lead to widespread opposition to the British presence in Egypt. So, they sought to actively develop new sources of supply. British officials initially turned to Western Sudan to make up the difference. However, this trade was limited by the maximum capacity of the rail connection between Sudan and Egypt. *Note on the Cattle and Sheep Trade with Egypt* [n.d. 1923], CIVSEC64/3/13, NRO; Jack, 'The Sudan,' 127.

<sup>35</sup> Consul de France à Alexandrie to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 6 January 1915, FM 8AFFECO/27, ANOM.

<sup>36</sup> *Note on the Cattle and Sheep Trade with Egypt* [n.d. 1923], CIVSEC64/3/13, NRO.

<sup>37</sup> A. N. Gibson, *Summary of Expenses from El Obeid to Alexandria (via Port Sudan) on Sudan Cattle* [n.d. 1924], SAD602/2/9; A. N. Gibson, *Summary of Expenses in the Sudan on Sudan Cattle and Sheep* [n.d. 1924], SAD602/2/10.

Sudan realized that the only way to create a profitable market for local herds would be to entice foreign investors to open a local meat processing and canning facility. However, this did not happen. When the market value in the ARSL of cattle and sheep declined rapidly in 1917 and 1918, pastoralists in Eastern Sudan stopped being able to afford to purchase grain from the market and began to starve.<sup>38</sup>

The complete resumption of normal trade in the greater SRSR in 1921 brought only temporary relief for ARSL pastoralist communities. The liberalization of the grain trade was followed by a devastating multiyear drought that began in 1925. When the rains failed, pastures disappeared and wells dried up. There was no forage for herds and no way to provide animals with water.<sup>39</sup> Pastoralists diverted their limited resources to ensuring that as many of their animals survived as was possible. For many pastoralists, this meant forgoing eating so that their animals could do so. Sacrificing personal health in the short term to ensure herd health in the long term was a rational choice. Allowing herds to die would have meant that pastoralists would have had little resources to exploit for rebuilding when the acute crisis has passed. This personal sacrifice was the only way to ensure that recovery can be possible.<sup>40</sup> However, it also meant that pastoralists suffered the effects of chronic malnutrition. The physical toll this was taking on pastoralists was already obvious in the first half of 1926. Seeing pastoralists in Eastern Sudan become emaciated led British officials to allocate £1000 for famine relief. Pastoralists were unable to save their animals. British officials observed that most of the domesticated animal population in Eastern Sudan died by the end of the first year of the drought.<sup>41</sup> Italian officials similarly estimated that Afar pastoralist communities in southern Eritrea had lost 60 percent of their herds by the time favorable rains returned in 1927.<sup>42</sup>

Pastoralist communities throughout the ARSL were only beginning to recover from this acute crisis when a locust swarm destroyed much of the grain harvest in the Eritrean highlands in 1929. Again, grain prices rose.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> W. Newbold, *The Tribal Economics of the Hadendawa*, CIVSEC64/2/5, NRO.

<sup>39</sup> Commissariato Regionale di Cheren to Direzione degli Affari Civili e Politici, 7 September 1925, Pacco 955, ASDAE.

<sup>40</sup> This trade-off is a normal practice throughout Africa. De Waal, *Famine that Kills*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> W. Newbold, *The Tribal Economics of the Hadendawa*, CIVSEC64/2/5, NRO.

<sup>42</sup> Bolsi, 'Note Economiche su la Dancalia Italiana Settentrionale,' 2–3.

<sup>43</sup> *Attività Agricola durante il mese di luglio 1930*, FASC1224, IAO.

The following year rinderpest returned to the region.<sup>44</sup> Efforts to control the epizootic were hindered by another locust plague which destroyed pastures throughout the ARSL.<sup>45</sup> This series of environmental disasters that followed the prolonged food crisis of the First World War reversed much of the gains that pastoralists had made in their recovery from the devastation of the late nineteenth century. For many, the state of affairs had become untenable and they began to look for a new way out. The strategies pastoralists pursued differed by region. In the northern ARSL, pastoralists began to imagine new ways of extracting value from the land. In the southern ARSL, pastoralists sought to use violence to create a new political order.

### NORTHERN ARSL: THE RACE TO ENCLOSURE

There was a way for pastoralists to free themselves from the volatile grain market—they could cultivate grain for their own consumption. However, this was a risky proposition. Between 1892 and 1930, the ARSL was hit by drought and/or locust in 20 out of 36 years. Nonetheless, some took up cultivation anyway. The first, significant return to the land took place in the Tawkar Delta around the turn of the twentieth century. Pastoralists from smaller, poorer communities that had not previously had rights to the Tawkar Delta took advantage of the tenancy system that the Anglo-Egyptian government had put in place after their conquest of this fertile region (see Chap. 4). They applied for and received tenancies, which they initially used to grow grain for their own consumption.<sup>46</sup> In 1901, some enterprising tenants decided to plant cotton as a secondary crop alongside grain. Cotton had long been a widely cultivated crop in Nilotic Sudan and the Ethiopian highlands, where there were vibrant weaving traditions. In the 1870s, Turko-Egyptian officials had tried to force pastoralists in the Tawkar Delta to grow cotton, though this initiative failed because pastoralists refused to cooperate.<sup>47</sup> Despite the previous history of resisting

<sup>44</sup> *Attività Agricola durante il mese di gennaio 1930*, FASC1224, IAO; *Attività Agricola durante il mese di agosto 1930*, FASC1224, IAO.

<sup>45</sup> *Cavallette*, October 1930, FASC1224, IAO; *Attività Agricola durante il mese di dicembre 1930*, FASC1224, IAO.

<sup>46</sup> Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 144–145.

<sup>47</sup> Steven Serels, 'Spinners, Weavers, Merchants and Wearers: The Twentieth Century Decline of the Sudanese Textile Industry,' in *The Road to Two Sudans*, Souad T. Ali, Stephanie Beswick, Richard Lobban, and Jay Spaulding, eds. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 160–176.

cotton cultivation, the Tawkar tenants in 1901 took up this practice without the prompting or even the explicit support of the colonial government. The resulting harvest was readily purchased by merchants operating in the region, who then sold it on to exporters in Egypt or to local spinners.<sup>48</sup> Though there was demand for their cotton, the Tawkar tenants did not respond to their success by suddenly expanding grain cultivation. These tenants worked the land so that they could produce grain. So, the following year over 95 percent of the 60,000 acres worked in the delta were sown with grain. Less than 3000 acres were under cotton.<sup>49</sup>

News of the unexpected success of the Tawkar Delta cotton crop spread quickly and led several European investors to become interested in the cotton-growing potential of Eastern Sudan and neighboring lowland Eritrea. These investors sought out ways to encourage the further expansion of pastoralist cotton production; they did not petition for large colonial concessions or implement any initiatives that would have otherwise displaced pastoralists. In 1907, the National Bank of Egypt decided to offer loans at low interest rates to pastoralists working the Tawkar Delta. These loans were granted on condition that these pastoralists exclusively market their cotton through the bank's agents, who, in turn, committed to selling the cotton in the more lucrative Egyptian market.<sup>50</sup> The same year, the *Società per la Coltivazione del Cotone nell'Eritrea* (SCCE), a company established by Milanese cotton mill owners in 1904 to develop new sources of cheap raw cotton for their mills, began a program to replicate the Tawkar success in neighboring parts of Eritrea. The SCCE invested in pastoralist cotton cultivation by providing free seeds and interest-free cash advances to individual pastoralists who were willing to cultivate the crop. In addition, the SCCE established a relatively modest plantation on the Barka River upstream from the Tawkar Delta.<sup>51</sup> The terms offered by the SCCE to pastoralists in Eritrea were better than those offered by the National Bank of Egypt to pastoralists in the Tawkar Delta. The SCCE offered both flexibility and price guarantees. Eritrean pastoralists that took

<sup>48</sup> Grace Crowfoot, 'Spinning and Weaving in the Sudan,' *Sudan Notes and Record*, 4:1 (1921): 21–38; Pankhurst, *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800–1935*, 257–260.

<sup>49</sup> F. J. Howard, 'Annual Report, Suakin Province, 1904,' in *RFACS, 1904*, Vol. 4 (1904), 128, SAD.

<sup>50</sup> C. J. Hawker, 'Annual Report, Red Sea Province, 1906,' in *RFACS, 1906*, Vol. 4 (1906), 724, SAD.

<sup>51</sup> Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

loans from the SCCE did not commit to selling their yields to the SCCE. They had the choice either to sell to the SCCE's agent at a price fixed before the growing season or to sell on the open market. Those that chose the latter just had to pay the SCCE for the inputs they had been given and to repay the loan.<sup>52</sup>

Despite their differences, the programs implemented by the National Bank of Egypt and the SCCE allowed pastoralists to minimize the risks associated with returning to cultivation, in general, and with cultivating a non-food crop, in particular. Tawkar tenants turned more and more of their land over to cotton. They also experimented with new cotton seeds and began utilizing more labor- and input-intensive cultivation techniques. As a result, the relative extent of cotton cultivation increased from just 5 percent of cultivated land in 1902–1903 to 50 percent in 1907–1908. The greater yields of better quality cotton fetched higher prices in Egypt, where the National Bank required the yields to be sold. Between 1908 and 1910, the sale price of Tawkar cotton nearly doubled.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, pastoralists working with the SCCE returned to cultivation and dedicated much of their effort toward cotton cultivation. Their cotton yields increased from almost nothing at the start of the twentieth century<sup>54</sup> to 5000 quintals of seed cotton in 1910–1911.<sup>55</sup>

The successful expansion of cotton cultivation did not reflect a sea-change for pastoralists. There was not a sudden rush back to the land and a sudden spreading of cotton cultivation outside of these programs. Most ARSL pastoralists chose to keep their lands as drought pasture reserves.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup>G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO. In addition, the SCCE offered local pastoralists Allen Improved cotton from the Uplands of Mexico, which had a long staple and short vegetation cycle and which was well suited to local climatological conditions. Demand for this type of cotton was growing among local spinners and weavers who recognized its commercial potential. Spinners began to differentiate their threads by the variety of cotton because consumers of locally weaved textiles were willing to pay a premium for fabric made from Allen Improved cotton. Crowfoot, 'Spinning and Weaving in the Sudan,' 25.

<sup>53</sup>C. J. Hawker, 'Annual Report, Red Sea Province, 1908,' in *REACS, 1908* (1908), 623–624, SAD; Graham Kerr, 'Annual Report, Red Sea Province, 1910,' in *REACS, 1910* (1910), 365, SAD.

<sup>54</sup>G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>55</sup>Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

<sup>56</sup>Marchi, *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*, 22; Hardinge to Salisbury, 16 July 1891, FO407/107/10, NA; Arbuthnot to Governor Kassala, 18 October 1942, SAD849/7/19-28.

Even those that took up cultivation ensured that they had adequate provisions for drought pastures. This was certainly the case in Eastern Sudan's Gash Delta. At the beginning of the twentieth century, pastoralist communities resumed extensive grain cultivation in this delta. The renewed interest in cultivation was spurred on by the high demand for imported grain in Eritrean markets.<sup>57</sup> A number of pastoralist communities with no previous rights to the delta were able to assert new 'traditional' claims to the land during the confusion brought about by the establishment of Anglo-Egyptian rule. Anglo-Egyptian officials at the start of the twentieth century recognized the claims of some Hadendowa and Beni Amer communities to work the land in the delta.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Anglo-Egyptian officials parceled out land to key allied Sudanese groups, including the al-Mirghani family<sup>59</sup> and Sudanese soldiers retiring from the Egyptian army.<sup>60</sup> Officials recognized claims to land in the Gash as, by definition, communal claims to specific parcels of land. These claims were vested in the office of the respective *shaykh*. There were 36 *shaykhs* with officially recognized claims.<sup>61</sup> These *shaykhs* controlled a total of 129 parcels of land of varying sizes.<sup>62</sup> Though officials recognized land in the delta as communal, land was individually worked. Each *shaykh* was in charge of allotting sub-parcels of land to individual cultivators. In general, *shaykhs* demanded four days' work from each of their tenants, two days for sowing, and two for harvesting.<sup>63</sup> The *shaykhs* that controlled cultivation required that the land was used for grain and not cotton. This ensured that, in years of bad pasture, cultivation could be suspended and the land could be used as pasture.

Similarly, the pastoralists in Eritrea that participated in the SCCE's cotton financing program were only doing so as a hedge to support their traditional practices. Rather than being committed to cotton cultivation, these pastoralists saw the loans from the SCCE as insurance against food

<sup>57</sup> E. B. Wilkinson, 'Annual Report, Kassala Province, 1905,' in *REACS, 1905*, Vol. 4 (1905), 87, SAD.

<sup>58</sup> Hewing to Director of Agriculture, 28 May 1923, CIVSEC2/8/30, NRO.

<sup>59</sup> E. Bonus, 'Annual Report, Agriculture and Lands Department, 1908,' in *REACS, 1908* (1908), 17, SAD.

<sup>60</sup> Hewing to Director of Agriculture, 28 May 1923, CIVSEC2/8/30, NRO.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Gash Delta Project. Note on Payment of Compensation to Sheikhs of Shaiotes*, 8 March 1924, CIVSEC2/8/32, NRO.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



price spikes. This is evidenced by their actions during the 1913–1914 cultivation year. When a severe drought and a plague of locusts caused unusually low grain yields,<sup>64</sup> the price of sorghum in Eritrea tripled.<sup>65</sup> Many Eritrean pastoralists responded to this food crisis by seeking out loans from the SCCE, which the company issued to promote cotton production. However, these pastoralists took the loans and did not grow cotton. Rather, they used the loans to support themselves and to finance their sorghum crop. Though participation in the program increased in 1914, cotton yields decreased that year because pastoralists generally did not plant the crop. The decline in cotton yield was so dramatic that it caused the collapse of the SCCE. With little cotton to sell and no easy way to recoup the loans, the company ran out of money in 1914. The SCCE tried to find new investors, but the outbreak of the First World War led international capital markets to seize up and the company closed.<sup>66</sup>

Persistent high grain prices in the ARSL during the first third of the twentieth century gave further impetus to pastoralists to return to the land. For most communities, cultivation became a more and more important secondary activity used to support raising animals. As a result, pastoralist often adopted low-input cultivation strategies. Little was done to prepare the land which was watered naturally by torrential rivers or mountain runoff. Seed was broadcast. Pastoralist would often migrate away from their fields between planting and harvesting. Crops were left unattended as they grew and no weeding was done. Pastoralists would only return when the crops were ready for harvest.<sup>67</sup> Though low-input/low-yield techniques were the norm, some communities responded to the decades of food insecurity by experimenting with higher-input strategies. They began increasing the amount of time they spent on their crops by using sticks to bore holes into the land to plant seeds and by weeding. They also started to leave members of their households behind to tend to their crops as they grew.<sup>68</sup> Some even began to imitate the cultivators of the Tawkar Delta and settle by their fields to focus primarily on cultivation. Sedentarization happened in pockets throughout the northern ARSL. These new settled communities tended to form along the torrential

<sup>64</sup> G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>65</sup> Il Commissariato Regionale del Serai to Governo, 19 August 1915, Pacco 804, ASDAE.

<sup>66</sup> G. de Ponti, *Il Cotone in Eritrea*, 27 August 1930, FASC1962, IAO.

<sup>67</sup> See Baldriati, *Le Condizioni agricole della valle del Barca*.

<sup>68</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 117–118.

rivers that flowed down from the highlands because these were the most reliable fertile zones. Settling often meant adopting even more labor-intensive cultivation techniques. For example, shortly after pastoralists settled at Zula, they began to imitate the Yemeni technique of annually building u-shaped mud and stone dams across the riverbed while it was dry. When the torrent began, these dams would divert the river water onto neighboring fields.<sup>69</sup> Small settlements quickly grew into towns. Generally, each town had a *shaykh* that was in charge of regulating the yearly distribution of land. Each household was given a plot based on its access to available labor. These settlements often produced surplus grain that was sold at nearby markets.<sup>70</sup>

The expanded place of cultivation in their socio-economic strategies brought pastoralist groups in conflict with the colonial state. British and Italian officials were also interested in agriculturally developing the limited fertile zones of Eastern Sudan and lowland Eritrea, respectively. Whereas pastoralists saw a return to cultivation as a way of diversifying economically and protecting themselves from the market, colonial officials saw expanded agricultural production as a way of integrating their territory into imperial supply networks. Though these visions were not inherently conflicting, they were made to be by the colonial officials that shaped agricultural development policy. These officials did not fully consider the needs, interests, or wants of their pastoralist subjects. Instead, both British and Italian officials were primarily concerned with creating the conditions that would inspire foreign capital to invest in their respective colonies. One such condition was the creation and maintenance of a compliant and stable workforce whose labor could be bought for cheap. The full implementation of this vision would have robbed pastoralist communities of their own land while denying them real access to the material benefits of its development. Fortunately, for the pastoralist communities of Eastern Sudan and lowland Eritrea, these colonial plans all, to a greater or lesser extent, failed.

In Eastern Sudan, colonial officials partnered directly with British financiers linked to the cotton-growing industry. This partnership was

<sup>69</sup> Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

<sup>70</sup> F. Cappelletti, *Rapporto Sulle zone agricole di Zula, Uangabò, Bardoli e Badda (Bassopiano Orientale) nel periodo 3–8 Febbraio 1947*, FASC2201, IAO; Marcello Gubellini, *Economia Agraria Indigena della zona costiera dell'Eritrea* (Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1933), 3–5.

inspired by the early success of the Gezira Scheme, which was designed to expand cotton cultivation in the fertile Jezira plane south of Khartoum through a system of highly regulated tenancies worked by the local population.<sup>71</sup> The Gezira Scheme was developed in the immediate post-war period through a joint public-private partnership with the Sudan Plantations Syndicate (SPS), a corporation established by the British Cotton Growers Association. When the scheme proved an early commercial success, the syndicate petitioned the colonial government for a concession over the Gash Delta in order to develop a similar scheme there. In February 1923, British officials granted such a concession to the Kassala Cotton Corporation (KCC), a specially established subsidiary of the SPS.<sup>72</sup> The terms of the concession agreement stipulated that the KCC had to construct a network of irrigation canals throughout the delta and to create a system of cotton farming tenancies to be let to the local population.<sup>73</sup> The agreement did not make provisions for protecting the interests of pastoralists with rights to the delta. From the outset, the KCC's management decided to not let land in their scheme to local pastoralists because they believed them to be poor workers. Instead, the KCC granted tenancies to West African immigrants.<sup>74</sup> Further, the KCC's management prohibited non-tenants from grazing their herds in the delta.<sup>75</sup> This decision had devastating consequences during the 1925–1927 drought. Unable to utilize this drought pasture reserve, pastoralists had no way to protect their animals from dying of thirst and hunger.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> For critical history of this scheme, see Tony Barnett, *The Gezira Scheme: An Illusion of Development* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), and Serels, *Starvation and the State*, 143–161.

<sup>72</sup> At that time, Anglo-Egyptian officials were still concerned about Sudan's food security. Officials believed that the only way to ensure an adequate supply of grain in Sudanese markets was to extend the railroad network into the fertile, sorghum-producing rainlands along the Ethiopian and Eritrean frontiers. Though the Anglo-Egyptian government was unable to secure the financing for this railroad extension on its own, the SPS's management offered to assist in financing this railroad in exchange for the concession. *Northern Governor's Meeting 1921, 5th Sitting, 29th January 1921*, CIVSEC32/1/2, NRO.

<sup>73</sup> C. P. Browne, *Note on 50% Assessment of Dura in the Gash Delta*, 1 September 1924, CIVSEC2/9/35, NRO.

<sup>74</sup> Newbold to Baily, 13 March 1927, CIVSEC2/10/42, NRO. For a study of the settlement of West African Muslim pilgrims in Sudan, see C. Bawa Yamba, *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> Newbold to Baily, 13 March 1927, CIVSEC2/10/42, NRO.

<sup>76</sup> Dingwall to Governor Kassala Province, 29 March 1949, CIVSEC19/1/2, NRO.

The drought crystalized local pastoralist resistance to the KCC. In March 1927, desperate pastoralists drove their herds into the delta. Managers responded by impounding the animals.<sup>77</sup> Tensions between pastoralists and the managers quickly escalated to the point that officials feared that a widespread pastoralist revolt was imminent. To ease the tensions, officials entered into a new agreement with the KCC under which the KCC returned its concession to the state in exchange for a large tract of irrigated land in the Jazira.<sup>78</sup> However, officials did not return the land to pastoralists. They did not even stop the development of cotton cultivation in the delta and along its source river. In 1927, the British officials established a parastatal company, the Gash Board, to take over management of the delta. The Gash Board's mission included encouraging local pastoral groups to settle and take up cotton cultivation. The Board was, as R. E. H. Baily, the governor of Kassala Province wrote, "to guide the Beja into becoming themselves proficient cultivators."<sup>79</sup> The Gash Board worked closely with the *nazir* of the Hadendowa to choose tenants and this collaboration ultimately transformed the position of *nazir* from 'shaykh of all Hadendowa shaykhs' to a position of territorial authority over the delta. The *nazir* enforced the Gash Board's requirement that tenants focus on cultivating cotton as a cash crop and that tenants grow only sufficient sorghum to meet their personal needs.<sup>80</sup>

Pastoralist communities in lowland Eritrea were also harmed by colonial commercial agriculture development initiatives, though to a much more limited extent than their counterparts in Eastern Sudan. In 1902, Italian officials adopted a colonial development strategy that reserved the highlands for indigenous Eritrean farmers to continue to cultivate grain and that conceptualized the lowlands as the site for future foreign-capital financed commercial cash crop plantations.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, the lowlands

<sup>77</sup> Macintyre to Baily, 28 March 1927, CIVSEC2/10/42, NRO.

<sup>78</sup> Kassala Cotton Company, *Circular to Shareholders and Debenture Holders*, 15 November 1927, CIVSEC2/13/35, NRO.

<sup>79</sup> R. E. H. Baily, *Gash Delta Cotton Organization*, 20 August 1932, SAD989/6/36-60.

<sup>80</sup> Governor Kassala Province to Chairman of the Gash Board, 31 October 1933, CIVSEC2/10/44, NRO.

<sup>81</sup> This strategy was developed by the famed agronomist, Gino Bartolommei Gioli. In 1901, Ferdinando Martini, the governor of Eritrea, invited Gioli to tour Eritrea and propose a plan for the future economic development of the colony. Gino Bartolommei Gioli, *Le Attitudini della Colonia Eritrea all'Agricoltura* (Florence: Tipografia di M. Ricci, 1902), 34.

were only of a limited interest to foreign capital. Between 1901 and 1923, 138 land concessions were granted in the lowlands. Almost all of these concessions failed within the first few years.<sup>82</sup> Failed concessions were often re-allotted, with the same outcome. For example, in 1919 the Eritrean government granted G. Caramelli a concession over 4000 hectares of land watered by the Haddas River on the Zula plain. Caramelli established the *Società Imprese Coloniali Caramelli & Co.* to develop this land. The company planned to construct a system of barrages and canals that would systematize the distribution of flood waters. However, the company was unable to secure sufficient financing and its plan was only partially implemented before it closed in 1921. The Zula concession was then granted to L. E. Beltramo, one of Caramelli's creditors, who continued to manage the region until his death in 1927. However, the concession proved insufficiently profitable and Beltramo could only finance the development of 300 hectares.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, in 1923 the Eritrean government gave a concession to the *Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale* to cultivate the region around Badda with water from the Regale River. The company immediately encountered difficulties recruiting sufficient labor, and by 1927 the concession was abandoned.<sup>84</sup>

The most notable exception to this pattern of failure in Eritrea was the plantation at Tessenei, which received water from the same river that fed the Gash Delta. This plantation was established in response to British officials granting the KCC a concession over the Gash Delta. Italian officials feared that the development of the delta would preclude them from claiming rights to the water from its source river. So, they rushed to establish their own plantation in 1921, which was initially operated with government funds and managed by government officials.<sup>85</sup> From the outset, the Tessenei plantation struggled financially. The cotton was of a lower quality than that produced in the Jazira and at Tawkar. Profits on the cotton once it was sold were meager. On 11 May 1931, the Eritrean government turned over the plantation at Tessenei to the *Società Imprese Africane*

<sup>82</sup> Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, *L'Economia Eritrea*, 9.

<sup>83</sup> Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

<sup>84</sup> F. Cappelletti, *Rapporto Sulle zone agricole di Zula, Uangabò, Bardoli e Badda (Bassopiano Orientale) nel periodo 3-8 Febbraio 1947*, FASC2201, IAO.

<sup>85</sup> Ufficio Agrario della Colonia Eritrea, *Relazione Annuale sull'Agricoltura e pastorizia in Eritrea nel 1939*, FASC638, IAO.

(SIA),<sup>86</sup> a private company founded the previous year with capital invested by the *Banca Commerciale Italiana* and a group of private Venetian investors.<sup>87</sup> To better ensure the SIA's financial fortunes, the Eritrean government increased the size of the concession at Tessenei in 1936 from 3500 to 16,000 hectares. However, the SIA was unable to finance the expansion of cultivation, and in 1938 less than 3500 hectares were cultivated.<sup>88</sup> The SIA was quickly driven into debt by poor economic returns,<sup>89</sup> and the Italian *Ministero delle Finanze* was forced to purchase a majority stake in the SIA in order to keep it afloat.<sup>90</sup>

The transformation of the northern ARSL's limited fertile zones from drought pasture reserves to permanent plantations increased the pressure on pastoralist communities. Herds became more vulnerable to ecological hazards, and therefore pastoral wealth became less assured. Some pastoralists responded to the new conditions by further diversifying their economic strategies through participation in the wage labor market. This option was not widely available. There was only a small, though growing, demand for wage labor in the northern ARSL in the first half of the twentieth century. The demand was primarily centered around the expanding commercial farming sector. Some pastoralists, often the poorest ones, migrated to the Tawkar and Gash Deltas, as well as to Tessenei, during the harvest to earn money by picking cotton. The only other significant demand for wage labor was in the ports. Initially, the British and Italian officials that controlled this sector preferred to hire foreign migrant labor. For example, all the stevedores working in Port Sudan were Egyptians until 1924 when they were replaced with Yemenis. In 1931, British officials replaced these foreign with impoverished Amara pastoralists from the immediate interior. To ensure a steady supply of labor for the port, British officials turned over control of the stevedore gangs to Amara leaders, who in turn hired either their immediate kin or members of their sub-clan. In 1932, there were 2000 Amara pastoralists working in the port.

<sup>86</sup> Marcello Gubellini, *Un Triennio di osservazioni economiche nell'azienda agraria della società imprese africane a Tessenei*, June 1936, FASC1245, IAO.

<sup>87</sup> Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

<sup>88</sup> Ufficio Agrario della Colonia Eritrea, *Relazione Annuale sull'Agricoltura e pastorizia in Eritrea nel 1939*, FASC638, IAO.

<sup>89</sup> Guido Mangano, *La Cotonicoltura e le iniziative cotoniere nell'Eritrea*, 1945, FASC2345, IAO.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

These pastoralist port workers used their income to support themselves and their families. Whatever surplus income they received was, generally, reinvested in their herds.<sup>91</sup>

### SOUTHERN ARSL: THE COLLAPSE OF THE SLAVE TRADE

The post-war dynamics in the southern ARSL differed from those in the northern ARSL because they were driven in large part by the revival and sudden collapse of the trans-Red Sea slave trade. At the end of the nineteenth century, the trade of Ethiopian slaves to Arabia passed almost exclusively through Afar territory. During the First World War, the slave trade, like all trans-Red Sea trade, seized up. The ending of the war and the lifting of wartime shipping restrictions allowed for the resumption of normal maritime trading. In the immediate post-war period, there was an increased demand for slaves resulting from a sudden increase in the fortune of Hijazi elites owing to an expansion in the value of their annual subventions. Since the tenth century, Muslim leaders have provided annual subventions to the Hijazi keepers of the holy sites as signs of their piety.<sup>92</sup> Early in the war, British officials blockaded the Hijaz and prevented the transfer of these payments from the Ottomans. These officials then took over responsibility for paying the subventions so as to use them as part of a broader effort to bring about the end of Ottoman rule in the Middle East and the installation of a British-leaning government over the Muslim Holy sites in the Hijaz. British officials directed their subventions to al-Husayn bin Ali al-Hashimi, the Sharif of Mecca. Between 1916 and 1920, Britain granted al-Husayn nearly £4 million. During the First World War, some of this money was used by al-Husayn to purchase the support of local elites for the 1916–1918 Arab Revolt. Following the cessation of hostilities, al-Husayn continued to distribute some portion of his ongoing

<sup>91</sup> Lewis, 'Diem el Arab and the Beja Stevedores of Port Sudan,' 19–25.

<sup>92</sup> Initially, the subventions were only gifts of money. However, this practice was further developed by subsequent Muslim rulers, who expanded the subventions to include relatively small gifts of grain. In the nineteenth century, the amount of these subventions increased dramatically. Following the Egyptian campaign against the first Saudi-Wahhabi state, Muhammad Ali assumed responsibility for the annual subventions paid by Muslim rulers to the Hijaz. Though previous Ottoman officials had given annual gifts of 1 million kg of grain, Muhammad 'Ali increased the amount of grain to nearly 30 million kg per year. Duman Nurtaç, 'Emirs of Mecca and the Ottoman Government of Hijaz, 1840–1908' (Master's Thesis: Boğaziçi University, 2005), 18; Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt*, 272.

subvention to other elites in order to ensure their support for al-Husayn's emerging Hijazi state.<sup>93</sup> The sudden increase in the fortunes of elites allowed them to divert money toward forms of conspicuous consumption, including owning large slave retinues.

These fortunes were short-lived, and the 1920s and 1930s were a period of severe economic contraction and then depression in the Hijaz. Once al-Husayn's state was established, British officials saw no need to continue the same level of economic support. In February 1920, British officials decided to end the subventions. Though these officials reversed course in September 1921, they resumed the subventions at a rate of only £5000 per month.<sup>94</sup> The subventions finally were ended in 1925, after a Saudi-Wahhabi force conquered Mecca and ended Hashimite rule in the Hijaz.<sup>95</sup> Shortly thereafter, the number of annual pilgrims began to decline from a post-war peak of 132,109 in 1927 to just 21,065 in 1932 owing to the global economic depression. The number of pilgrims did not recover until after the Second World War. As a result, the annual government revenue from the hajj declined from an estimated £1 million to £250,000.<sup>96</sup> Without the subventions and the income from the hajj, Hijazi elites could not continue to purchase slaves. When demand in the most important market disappeared, the Red Sea slave trade collapsed.<sup>97</sup>

Losing the income from the slave trade made Afar pastoralists vulnerable to new forms of colonial exploitation. The economic hardships of the 1920s coincided with a sudden shift in official French and Ethiopian attitudes toward their claims to sovereignty over Afar territory. For decades, French and Ethiopian officials had shown little real interest in this territory. They had not been concerned with the normal prerogatives of governance, such as maintaining law and order, taxing the local population, and regulating trade. They did not establish a local presence in these territories, which were effectively ruled by the Afar Sultanates that had ruled this region before the 'Scramble for Africa' (see Chap. 4). This

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Kostiner, *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57–62.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> For a description of al-Sa'ud's rise to dominance in the Hijaz, see Askar al-Enazy, *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914–1927* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 129–157.

<sup>96</sup> Roger Owen and Sevket Pamuk, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 81.

<sup>97</sup> Ryan to Simon, 23 April 1934, IOR/R/PS/12/4088, BL.



changed in 1924 with the appointment of Pierre Aimable Chapon-Baissac as governor of the Côte Française des Somalis. Chapon-Baissac brought with him new ideas about colonial economic development. The implementation of these ideas required the effective occupation of every part of the colony, which in turn meant wresting political control away from the Afar sultans. Chapon-Baissac began with the sultan of Tadjoura, whose fortunes were declining because they had been so thoroughly tied to the slave trade. On 2 March 1927, a detachment of 60 soldiers landed at Tadjoura and established a permanent garrison. Though French officials saw this as just stationing troops within already established colonial boundaries, Afar pastoralists who had never encountered French soldiers before likely interpreted this as an act of imperial conquest. They certainly responded as such. An Afar militia led by the sultan and his *vazir* attacked the garrison almost immediately after it was established. The battle was short and decisive. The French were victorious. French officials then deposed the sultan and his *vazir*, deported the two of them to Madagascar and named their successors. This outside interference in succession broke with the centuries-long Afar tradition of a council of elders selecting political leaders from among dynastic families.<sup>98</sup>

The French occupation of Tadjoura had a cascading effect that led to a general Afar uprising that lasted until 1937. Afar communities were not just responding to the loss of their autonomy. They interpreted the occupation of Tadjoura as part of a broader French-backed effort to economically and physically displace the Afar for the benefit of the neighboring Somali communities to the south. For decades, French policy had favored Somali communities. In 1888, French officials founded the port of Djibouti, which is located in Somali territory. The subsequent expansion of this port came at the expense of neighboring Afar ports. Further, the Djibouti to Addis Ababa railroad ran through Somali territory, and as a result, only Somali communities benefited from its spillover economic effects, such as servicing inland stations. Until the 1920s, the negative effects of the railroad on the Afar economy were mitigated by Afar control over the slave trade. But, the collapse of the slave trade meant that there was no longer any significant trade passing through Afar territory. Somalis now received nearly all of the benefits of international trade and the Afar received next to nothing. Further, French military and policing power was

<sup>98</sup> *Rapport sur la situation politique, économique et financière de la Côte Française des Somalis. Année 1934*, FM 1AFFPOL/2666, ANOM.

exercised through Somalis. After the First World War, French officials embarked on a process of ‘indigenizing’ the colonial forces by replacing the Senegalese troops that guarded government installations and the rail-road with a locally raised force. Of the 100 local men hired, only 5 were Afar and the rest were Somalis.<sup>99</sup> The force that was sent to Tadjoura in 1924, as well as that which was used to fight the Afar insurgency, was a force of Somali soldiers.

Following the occupation of Tadjoura, Afar militias began raiding Somali communities to their south. The sudden outbreak of violence in the interior led French officials to establish a permanent garrison at Dikhil, on the frontier between Afar and Somali territory. This post was supposed to prevent future Afar aggression by providing actionable intelligence on Afar movements and a forward base of operations for state troops.<sup>100</sup> Instead, the post further incensed the Afar. Dikhil was in territory claimed by the Afar and the post was, yet again, garrisoned by Somali soldiers. Afar leaders interpreted this as more evidence of the French-sponsored Somali expansion. This led to an increase in violence. In the weeks after the establishment of this garrison, Loitah Houmed, the sultan of Gobhat, attacked a caravan that had originated in Djibouti. French officials responded by sending a police patrol to arrest the sultan of Gobhat and his *vazir*. Both of these men were, ultimately, sentenced to exile in Madagascar, and their posts were eliminated.<sup>101</sup>

By interfering in the internal politics of Gobhat right after having done so in Tadjoura, French officials created the opportunity for Muhammad Yahyou, the sultan of Aussa, to position himself as the independent leader of all the Afar. At the same time, the establishment of the post at Dikhil gave Muhammad Yahyou a reason to channel Afar aggression against the French and the Somalis. Though Aussa was territory claimed by the Ethiopian state, the sultanate of Aussa had, in practice, retained nearly complete political independence.<sup>102</sup> Initially, the sultan’s efforts were pacific in nature and focused on diplomacy. In February 1933, he sent a militia detachment to present the Dikhil post with a letter demanding its withdrawal. This produced no effect and the sultan did nothing for another ten months. In November, the sultan sent his Afar militia to occupy the wells

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Oberlé and Hugot, *Histoire de Djibouti*, 103–105.

<sup>101</sup> *Relations Avec l’Aoussa* [n.d. 1935], FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

near Dikhil. The Franco-Somali force at Dikhil quickly drove the militia away. Recognizing the weakness of his position, the sultan halted offensive operations for about a year so that he could amass a large arsenal.<sup>103</sup> In early 1935, the sultan used his increased fighting power to launch a new cycle of raids on Somali communities inside French territory<sup>104</sup> and to attack Franco-Somali military posts.<sup>105</sup> To further shore up his position within Afar politics, the sultan imprisoned all internal threats to his power, including members of his own family. In 1936, some of these imprisoned family members escaped, fled to Addis Ababa, and organized a military expedition against the sultan. As part of this expedition, the Ethiopian state sent 1200 members of the imperial guard to arrest the sultan. The expedition was successful. The sultan was deposed, and the Ethiopian state installed his brother as successor.<sup>106</sup>

The Afar uprising ended after the Ethiopian-backed coup, though it is likely that the later was only partially responsible for the former. Though key Afar leaders were no longer in power, there was nothing stopping a new Afar leader from emerging and taking over the insurrection. But, no one did. Afar pastoralists stopped resisting the French encroachment on their territory and offered no meaningful response to the Ethiopian intervention in their internal politics. Afar pastoralists resigned themselves to the loss of their autonomy because they had no choice—they were too poor to continue fighting. Over the years of the insurrection, the Afar economy had continued to contract. Afar pastoralists lacked the income needed to purchase sufficient grain. By 1934, chronic malnutrition had descended into the early signs of famine. French officials became very alarmed by the worsening food crisis and, in late October, opened soup kitchens in Afar territory to help the worst cases.<sup>107</sup> Conditions deteriorated further over the next three years owing to a protracted drought<sup>108</sup> and disruptions in local patterns of trade with Ethiopia

<sup>103</sup> *Expédition en Aoussa, Avril-May 1944*, FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>104</sup> Le Commandant de Cercle de Dikhil, *Chronologie de nos rapports avec les Assahyamara et le Sultan de l'Aoussa*, 28 August 1943, FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>105</sup> Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), 11.

<sup>106</sup> *Expédition en Aoussa, Avril-May 1944*, FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>107</sup> Governor to les Commandants de Cercle, 2 November 1934, FM 1AFFPOL/2666, ANOM.

<sup>108</sup> *Rapport de Mission Effectué en Côte Française des Somalis par M. Le Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts Pierre Saboreau*, 1947, FT CFS 1E7, ANOM.

resulting from the Italo-Ethiopian War.<sup>109</sup> Afar pastoralists had no choice. Putting down their weapons was the only way to access the aid that was literally preventing them from starving to death.

### THE ARSL DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Afar insurrection was just the opening salvo in a protracted multisided armed conflict that should be characterized as the ARSL theater of the Second World War. As was true in every theater, the unfolding of the war in the ARSL was shaped by the confluence of global and local forces. On the local level, pastoralist communities were sinking into a kind of structural poverty which often denied them peaceful access to even the basics of subsistence. On a global level, the violence was driven by the exportation of intra-European tensions to the ARSL via the mechanisms of a militarized imperialism. The parties involved in this ARSL conflict included the British, French, Italians, Americans, Germans, Ethiopians, and the local population of the ARSL and its surrounding regions. Some of these actors played minor supporting roles. The Americans and the Germans did not have boots on the ground. But they did lend material, diplomatic, and strategic support to their allies who had troops in the region. Others were more key players. Italian officials were responsible for much of the aggression; they made the broader SRSR into the theater of war by conquering Ethiopia in 1935–1936 and invading Eastern Sudan in 1940. When Italian aggression was aimed exclusively at Ethiopia, British and French officials did not see it as a threat and, therefore, took no real steps to end the bloodshed. French officials even lent actual material support to the Italian military in Ethiopia during its post-conquest policing efforts by allowing goods to move unrestricted through the port of Djibouti and along the railroad. However, after the Italians took Kassala in June 1940, British officials sent troops to retake Eastern Sudan and, ultimately, take all of Italy's African empire. The Italian empire fell quickly, and in 1942 British officials turned their attention to using force to replace the Vichy-allied government of the Côte Française des Somalis with a Free French-allied one. By the end of 1942, Britain and its allies controlled all of the ARSL and its surrounding regions.

<sup>109</sup> Le Commandant de Cercle de Dikhil, *Chronologie de nos rapports avec les Assahyamara et le Sultan de l'Aoussa*, 28 August 1943, FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

ARSL pastoralist communities were drawn into this conflict in a myriad of ways. First, they served as soldiers fighting on behalf of both the Allied and Axis Powers. In the run-up to the invasion of Ethiopia, Italian officials instituted a universal draft in Eritrea. All healthy men of fighting age were required to enlist. Through this draft, the Eritrean colonial army was expanded from 10,000<sup>110</sup> to 150,000 men.<sup>111</sup> At the time, the total population of Eritrea was slightly larger than 600,000 people.<sup>112</sup> Though the draft was mandatory, there was little resistance. Eritreans of all backgrounds, including pastoralists, willingly went to the enlistment stations. Once enlisted, few deserted even though service was dangerous because it involved active combat against a hostile adversary. But, service came with a perk—money. The army paid at a time when there was little real demand for wage labor. Soldiers received a daily wage of 2 L plus a 1 L bonus for each day of actual fighting. Those who reached a higher rank through additional training could receive a monthly salary of up to 500 L.<sup>113</sup>

Pastoralists from Eastern Sudan fought against the Italians, though they were not formally enlisted. Following the Italian conquest of Kassala in 1940, a Hadendowa militia began regularly attacking Italian military installations and army convoys. Inspired by its early successes, British officials began providing the militia, which they termed the Frosty Force, with material support. British officials also sought to repeat this success by providing support to the population of Italian-held Qadarif and Qallabat to form their own militia, which came to be called the Banda Force. Shortly thereafter, British officials established the Meadow Force, which was a small militia drawn from the Beja pastoralists around the Red Sea Hills and the Tawkar Delta.<sup>114</sup> Though these militias received material support from the British, enlistment was not driven by a desire for daily wages. Rather, pastoralists believed that they would be given some of the spoils of war in the form of increased pastures and fertile land in the Eritrean lowlands.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Alessandro Volterra, *Sudditi Coloniali: Ascari Eritrei 1935–1941* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 85–86.

<sup>111</sup> Volterra, *Sudditi Coloniali*, 111.

<sup>112</sup> Santagata, *La Colonia Eritrea nel Mar Rosso davanti all'Abyssinia*, 25.

<sup>113</sup> Volterra, *Sudditi Coloniali*, 174–175.

<sup>114</sup> Martin Daly, *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1934–56* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 131.

<sup>115</sup> Paul, *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*, 127–130.

Afar pastoralists in the southern ARSL also organized militias that collaborated with the British. Afar militias under the command of the Sultan of Aussa helped enforce the blockade around the Côte Française des Somalis.<sup>116</sup> After British forces took Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1941, they extended the already existing maritime blockade of the Vichy-allied French colony to include a land blockade. However, the British force did not have enough resources to police the Côte Française des Somalis nearly 510 km border. Until the sultan began to actively collaborate with the British, the land blockade was ineffective. Afar pastoralists illegally moved provisions across the border with impunity.<sup>117</sup> In November 1941, the sultan of Aussa took it upon himself to enforce the blockade along the part of the frontier that ran through Afar territory.<sup>118</sup> The sultan also organized a militia that he used to further pressure the Vichy French colonial government. Between 6 July 1941 and 2 February 1942, this militia made 15 incursions into French territory to attack French military installations within the Côte Française des Somalis or Somali communities that were suspected of participating in the cross-border contraband trade.<sup>119</sup> The impact of the blockade was magnified by a severe drought in the region of Djibouti, which reduced the output in the colony's only agriculturally productive zone—Wad Ambouli.<sup>120</sup> Food became scarce, and discontent soon set in among the French population of the Côte Française des Somalis. Large protests in Djibouti in November and December 1942 led the Vichy-allied leadership of the colonial government to step down and for a new Free French government to be established.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Following the signing of the Franco-Italian Armistice on 24 June 1940, British officials laid a maritime blockade around the Côte Française des Somalis. Initially, the blockade exempted food, which continued to be freely imported. However, this changed on 16 November 1940 when the British Navy issued new orders requiring its patrols to scuttle the cargos of all ships that it encountered in the territorial waters of the Côte Française des Somalis. Until 1941, this blockade was important but not total because provisions could still be freely imported overland from Italian-held Ethiopia. Marine en Côte Française des Somalis, *Compte Rendu de Renseignements No. 23*, 18 Novemeb 1940, FM 1AFFPOL/3699, ANOM; Nouauehead to Secrétariat d'Etat aux Colonies, 25 August 1941, FM1AFFPOL/894, ANOM.

<sup>117</sup> Cercle de Tadjoura, *Rapport Mensuel*, July 1942, FT CFS, 1E6, ANOM.

<sup>118</sup> Le Commandant de Cercle de Dikhil, *Chronologie de nos rapports avec les Assahyamara et le Sultan de l'Aoussa*, 28 August 1943, FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>119</sup> *Note au sujet de l'occupation d'Afambo* [n.d. May 1944], FT CFS 2E7, ANOM.

<sup>120</sup> *Rapport de Mission Effectué en Côte Française des Somalis par M. Le Conservateur des Eaux et Forêts Pierre Saboreau*, 1947, FT CFS 1E7, ANOM.

<sup>121</sup> *La Résistance à Djibouti* [n.d. June 1943], FM 1AFFPOL/3699, ANOM.

The wages and provisions that soldiering pumped into pastoralist society partially offset the effects of the adverse environmental conditions that plagued the ARSL throughout the Second World War. There were severe droughts in 1939,<sup>122</sup> 1940,<sup>123</sup> and 1943,<sup>124</sup> and locust swarms in 1938–1939<sup>125</sup> and 1943.<sup>126</sup> Pastures disappeared, and pastoralists were forced to concentrate their animals. This created the condition for the outbreak of deadly animal diseases in 1938,<sup>127</sup> 1939,<sup>128</sup> and 1943.<sup>129</sup> Conditions were so bad on the northern fringes of the ARSL that the Atmaan sub-clan of the Amarar, as well as the Bisharin clan, lost all of their animals.<sup>130</sup> Without anyway to maintain their herds, pastoralists throughout the ARSL sold their animals in large numbers. Luckily, there was increased demand both for live animals and for meat as a result of the ongoing war. During the war, the population of Djibouti consumed 100,000 to 120,000 sheep and goats and 3000 to 5000 cattle per year, all of which had to be provisioned locally because of the blockade.<sup>131</sup> The war also increased Egyptian demand for Sudanese animals. Between 1941 and 1946, Sudan exported to Egypt 212,003 head of cattle and 581,053 sheep. The total value of these exports was approximately three million Egyptian pounds. Though Eastern Sudanese pastoralists were not the only source of supply, they captured much of this market.<sup>132</sup> Eritrean pastoralists sold their cattle to the local canned meat industry, which ramped up

<sup>122</sup> Ufficio Agrario della Colonia Eritrea, *Relazione Annuale sull'agricoltura e pastorizia in Eritrea nel 1939*, FASC638, IAO.

<sup>123</sup> Cercle de Tadjoura, Subdivision d'Obock, *Rapport Mensuel*, April 1941, FT CFS 3G3, ANOM.

<sup>124</sup> *Notizie generali sulla cerealcotura Eritrea dall'anno 1933 all'anno 1938*, FASC851, IAO.

<sup>125</sup> Servizio Zootechnica e Pastorizia, *Estrato Dalla 'relazione annuale' dell'ufficio agrario, 1939*, FASC510, IAO.

<sup>126</sup> *Notizie generali sulla cerealcotura Eritrea dall'anno 1933 all'anno 1938*, FASC851, IAO.

<sup>127</sup> Prunier, *Rapport de Tournée*, 20 January 1939, FT CFS 1E7, ANOM.

<sup>128</sup> Servizio Zootechnica e Pastorizia, *Estrato Dalla 'relazione annuale' dell'ufficio agrario, 1939*, FASC510, IAO.

<sup>129</sup> Le Commandant de Cercle de Tadjoura to La Gouverner, 9 Septembre 1943, FT CFS 1E6, ANOM.

<sup>130</sup> Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 8.

<sup>131</sup> Prunier, *Rapport de Tournée*, 20 January 1939, FT CFS 1E7, ANOM.

<sup>132</sup> Jack, 'The Sudan,' 138.

production throughout the 1930s. By 1939, three million cans of meat were being produced in Eritrea per year.<sup>133</sup>

The effects of the repeated droughts and locust plagues were compounded by wartime measures that curtailed pastoralist access to the limited fertile zones that had traditionally served as drought pasture reserves. The expropriation of this land was a key part of Italian policy in Eritrea and Ethiopia. In the 1930s, Fascist Italian officials sought to establish imperial autarchy. As an aspect of a much larger imperialist program, Italian officials sought to expand commercial agriculture in the ARSL. Italians were particularly concerned with increasing cotton yields so as to better supply Italian mills. Fascist planners estimated the annual demand for cotton by the Italian textile industry at 1.6 million quintals. In the late 1930s, only 7.5 percent of this demand was being met by Italian domestic and imperial sources. The rest came primarily from the United States, Egypt, and India.<sup>134</sup> Following the conquest of Ethiopia, Italian officials implemented a number of measures designed to end dependence on foreign sources of cotton. They allowed the SIA to expand the plantation at Tessenei by 3500 hectares.<sup>135</sup> They also worked with pastoralist leaders to expand cotton cultivation along the Barka River and its tributary, the Anseba. This met with a rapid success and, in 1939, an additional 500 hectares of land along the river was under cotton.<sup>136</sup> Italian efforts were not just limited to Eritrea. They also sought to develop cotton cultivation in their new Ethiopian territories, including in the Awash River Valley. In 1938, Italian officials granted a concession over the fertile parts of the valley to the *Compagnia Nazionale per il cotone di Etiopia*. The company immediately began work, and by the following cultivation year 2500 hectares were under cotton.<sup>137</sup>

After the conquest of Ethiopia and Eritrea, British officials expanded many Italian agricultural development programs. However, the new British rulers of the region changed the goals of these programs from cotton to grain production. Throughout the Second World War, as they had

<sup>133</sup> Direzione Generale degli Affari Politici, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, *L'Italia e le sue colonie prefasciste*, 1947, FASC1113, IAO.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ufficio Agrario della Colonia Eritrea, *Relazione Annuale sull'Agricoltura e pastorizia in Eritrea nel 1939*, FASC638, IAO.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Compagnia Nazionale per il cotone di Etiopia, *Distretto cotoniero Dell'Ausc. Relazione finale campagna cotoniera anno 1939–40*, April 1940, FASC1761, IAO.



been during the First World War, British officials were concerned about the food security of the territories under their command and, therefore, focused on expanding grain yields and controlling their distribution. Shortly after the conquest of Eritrea, British officials seized the plantation at Tessenei from the SIA, which they considered a parastatal company, and turned the plantation over to sorghum cultivation. Over the next few years, British officials reinvested the profits from the sale of the Tessenei crop into bringing new land under cultivation.<sup>138</sup> By 1947, the plantation had been extended to cover 16,000 hectares.<sup>139</sup> British officials similarly repurposed the cotton fields along the Barka and Anseba rivers to grain cultivation. British officials also launched their own programs designed to convert the drought pasture reserves of the ARSL into productive fields. In 1942, British officials began a program to build sand and stone dams along the various torrential rivers that flowed down into the Eritrean lowlands. The stored water was to be used to irrigate fields and expand the cultivation of grains and vegetables, and to support the establishment of fruit tree orchards. By 1945, dams had been built on nearly all of these crucial torrential rivers.<sup>140</sup>

At the end of the Second World War, the distribution of access to land in the ARSL had become incompatible with pastoralism. The process of enclosing the limited fertile zones was sufficiently far along that non-elite pastoralists could no longer count on using these zones as drought pasture reserves. Enclosure was driven by the state, pastoralist traditional leaders and Islamic religious elites, all of whom wanted to maximize their returns from investing in the land. This represented a radical break from past practices. Traditionally, pastoralists made only minimal investments in these lands because they viewed the land's potential in relation to the more central economic strategy of raising and exploiting herds. The unique fertility of these zones had made them valuable, in the eyes of pastoralists, only in so far as this offered a necessary insurance against normal adverse ecological conditions. Since short-term droughts were part of the normal

<sup>138</sup> Armando Maugini, *Società Imprese Africane: Rassunto delle notizie trasmesse dai Sigg. Colonello Ippoliti e Umberto Pinzano, dall'11 giugno 1945 al 22 Aprile 1946* [n.d. May 1946], FASC1794, IAO.

<sup>139</sup> *Documentazione Statistica Sulle Attività Agricole e Zootecniche durante l'amministrazione militare britannica (al giugno 1947)*, FASC788, IAO.

<sup>140</sup> Giuseppe Jannone, *Rapporto confidenziale sull'attività della popolazione italiana dell'Eritrea dal 1942 all'agosto 1946 e sulle condizioni economiche di essa durante lo stesso periodo*, 1946, FASC592, IAO.

variability of the ARSL's climate, pastoralists could not depend exclusively on rainfed pastures. Depending exclusively on rainfed pastures meant that their animals would routinely starve to death. Nonetheless, this is precisely what non-elite pastoralists were increasingly forced to do. By enclosing the land and turning it over to high-input, high-yield cultivation, state officials, pastoralist traditional leaders, and Islamic religious elites were locking non-elite pastoralists into a cycle of poverty-induced food insecurity and famine from which non-elites could not escape. Most could no longer continue. Under such conditions, the only way to survive was to abandon pastoralism.



## Conclusion: Being Poor

The enclosure of drought pasture reserves in the first half of the twentieth century was the last step in a longer process of dismantling the moral economy of pastoralism in the ARSL. Historically, pastoralist economic relations were social relations. The structure of pastoralist society was co-constituted with the structure of access to life-supporting resources. Pastoralists ate, drank, clothed themselves and had shelter because they were members of households, homesteads, sub-clans, clans, and tribes. Though communal and kinship relations were key parts of the economic structure of pastoralism, pastoralist society was not economically homogeneous. Everyone did not have an equal claim to resources. Rather, there was a hierarchy of claims that stemmed from the hierarchies that were a part of every pastoralist community and household. Nonetheless, the construction of the distribution of claims offered protection from want precisely because these claims were socially constructed. Communal and kinship relations placed all pastoralists into a web of reciprocal dependence that ensured a minimally equitable distribution of access to resources. Those with a smaller claim could use their position within society to demand that those with a bigger claim guarantee that they always had enough, even and especially during lean periods. The reciprocal nature of the bonds of dependence that undergirded the moral economy of pastoralism was a hedge against the inherent variability of the environmental conditions in the ARSL. In good years and in bad, claims had to be always at least minimally equitable because social relations demanded that they be so.

This did not mean that the social structures behind the moral economy were robust enough to withstand the full range of all possible environmental conditions. They could not cope with environmental conditions that were so far outside of the norm that this deviation itself disrupted longstanding patterns of human-environment interaction. This is exactly what happened during the Little Ice Age mega-drought. Historically, pastoralist communities had developed ways to cope with droughts that lasted one to three years. They did not have the tools to protect themselves from 200-year-long dry periods. For generations after the mega-drought began, pastoralists tried to use their old tools to deal with the new conditions. However, this just caused generation after generation to suffer from want. One effect of this suffering was to weaken the bonds of dependence between pastoralists and their traditional leaders who had stopped protecting the non-elites from the ongoing hardship. When the old leaders proved ineffective, pastoralists looked for new ones and found them in the Islamic religious elites who had started missionizing in the ARSL.

The effect that the early nineteenth-century conversion would have had on the moral economy of pastoralism by itself is unclear. Would these new Islamic religious elites have maintained old practices around ensuring the minimally equitable distribution of access to resources? Or would they have innovated new practices around resource access? The reason we cannot answer these question is because the mega-drought had other, broader regional effects. The drought changed the balance of power in the SRSR in favor of Egypt and formed the context for the early phase of Egyptian imperial expansion. The rise of Egypt created a new opportunity for traditional pastoralist leaders in the ARSL to retain their power without doing the hard work of rebuilding their relationships with their disaffected dependents. Instead, these leaders turned on their dependents by forming an alliance with the new colonial state. Their reciprocal relationships with their dependents were replaced with parasitic relations based on maximizing the exploitation of non-elite pastoralists. The new religious elite soon followed suit. They traded in their developing local power, which came with all the responsibilities of reciprocal dependence, for exogenous power derived from participating in the structure of indirect colonial rule. The price for gaining access to state power was also collaborating in the colonial exploitation of their dependents.

The transformation of the relationships between elite and non-elite pastoralists had deep and far-reaching consequences because they were helped by another abnormal environmental disaster. The late nineteenth-century

rinderpest epizootic, and the famine that it caused, was so devastating that it destroyed all pastoral social structures. When starvation set in and people began to die in large numbers, communities collapsed. Those who did not die were cut adrift, forced to find their means of survival by themselves. Once the acute crisis had passed, surviving non-elite pastoralists tried to rebuild by forming egalitarian shepherding communities. But, these communities could only mobilize their own limited resources. Elite pastoralists, whether traditional leaders or religious elites, continued to have access to exogenous sources of wealth and resources. Though Egypt had withdrawn its empire in 1884/1885, imperial officials representing Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia took over the role of patron to these elites. As a result, the process of rebuilding focused on the development of elite and state privilege. It did not focus on reconstituting the reciprocal relations of dependence that had traditionally sat at the core of the moral economy of pastoralism. Instead, state and pastoralist elites worked together to implement policies that undermined non-elite efforts to rebuild. One way they did this was by enclosing drought pasture reserves. For non-elites, the harms caused by loss of access to these reserves was not, for the most part, offset by some other benefits from the increase in agricultural production in the ARSL. Non-elites had little way to profit directly when their land was taken away from them and turned over to fruit tree orchards, sugar plantations, and grain fields. Instead, increased investment in agricultural productivity came at the cost of herd health because there was less and less land to pasture animals during routine failures of the rain. Without these pasture reserves, the normal ecological variability of the ARSL became a crisis for pastoralism. The solution to this crisis was obvious—reversing the enclosure process and rebuilding the pastoralist social safety net. Unfortunately, this did not happen, and the results were deadly.

The precariousness of the lives of non-elite pastoralists was revealed shortly after the end of the Second World War. The summer rains in 1946 failed in the southern ARSL. By July 1947, two-thirds of all cattle and half of all camels, sheep, and goats in this area had died. Many southern ARSL pastoralists lost the ability to support themselves and mass starvation set in.<sup>1</sup> Tragically, the summer rains the following year also failed. By September 1947, Afar pastoralists had lost up to 90 percent of their herds.

<sup>1</sup> Lafaurie, *Rapport sur la sécheresse sévissant actuellement dans la Cercle de Tadjoura* [n.d. September 1947], FT CFS 1E6, ANOM.

Famine set in and human mortality rates doubled.<sup>2</sup> That year, the rains failed in the northern ARSL as well, causing the hardship to spread. In July 1948, G. M. Hancock, the governor of Sudan's Kassala Province, estimated that approximately 13,000 pastoralists from the Amarar and Bisharin clans were at risk of famine.<sup>3</sup> When the rains failed again in 1948, the condition throughout Eastern Sudan deteriorated further. By March 1949, British officials were estimating that at least 90,000 pastoralists required immediate famine aid.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the obvious harms that enclosure had already caused, the development of commercial farming in the ARSL continued in the second half of the twentieth century. The various states that ruled the region continued to seize large tracts of land and turn them over to agricultural development programs that prioritized increasing yields over addressing the needs of the local pastoralist population. In the 1960s, Sudanese officials granted a concession of nearly 190,000 hectares of land on the right bank of the Atbara River to the Halfa Agricultural Production Corporation, a parastatal company created to bring the land under wheat, sugar, peanut, and cotton. This land had previously been used as pastures by Shukriyya pastoralists and the Atbara River had been a crucial drought pasture reserve for other neighboring communities.<sup>5</sup> Around the same time, the Ethiopian government sought to encourage the development of commercial agriculture on the Awash River. In 1961, the Ethiopian government granted the Tendaho Plantation Share Company concessions over 9800 hectares of land at two sites along the Awash River.<sup>6</sup> The following year, the government established the Awash Valley Authority which focused on bringing more land in the region under commercial agriculture.<sup>7</sup> In the late 1940s, British Military Administration of Eritrea allowed Italian firms to invest in expanding fruit production in lowland areas. By the time that Eritrea was federated to Ethiopia in 1952, there were large foreign-owned banana plantations on the Gash and Barka Rivers as well as a number of smaller fruit orchards scattered elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Larange, *Rapport de l'Adjudant-Chef de Poste administratif d'Obock sur la sécheresse sévissant dans la subdivision et ses conséquences* [n.d. September 1947], FT CFS 1E6, ANOM.

<sup>3</sup> Hancock to the Financial Secretary, 6 June 1948, CIVSEC19/1/2, NRO.

<sup>4</sup> Hancock to the Financial Secretary, 30 March 1949, CIVSEC19/1/2, NRO.

<sup>5</sup> Salem-Murdock, *The Impact of Agricultural Development on a Pastoral Society*.

<sup>6</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 89.

<sup>7</sup> Helmut Kloos, 'Development, Drought and Famine in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia,' *African Studies Review*, 25:4 (December 1982): 28.

<sup>8</sup> Lotti, *Rapporto Annuale per il periodo 15 Settembre 1952–31 Dicembre 1953*, FASC593, IAO.

State action often spurred pastoralist elites to invest in commercial farms. The sultan of Aussa, Ali Mirah Hanfare, and other Afar elites responded to the concession on the Awash River by establishing their own cotton plantation on neighboring land.<sup>9</sup> By 1973, there were plantations working a total of 52,370 hectares along the river.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the success of the Italian operations on the Gash and Barka Rivers led pastoralist elites in neighboring areas to plant their own vegetable fields and fruit tree orchards. By 1963, Eritrea was exporting 20,000 tons of fruits and vegetables per year, much of it from Eritrean-owned farms and orchards.<sup>11</sup>

The expansion of commercial agriculture locked non-elite pastoralists in an untenable position. These pastoralists had to rapidly innovate new practices that could help them and their animals cope with the new situation. Unfortunately, more often than not, these innovations failed dramatically. This is best exemplified by the Afar in the Awash River Valley. Despite the large local and foreign investment in cultivation in this area, only 15 percent of the Afar in the Awash River Valley engaged in cultivation by the end of the 1960s, and the vast majority of these participated as part-time seasonal workers.<sup>12</sup> Afar pastoralists who were left out of these developments quickly recognized the harm that the establishment of permanent plantations in this area was having on their herds. They saw that the new arrangement would be especially difficult for their cattle. So, they divested of cattle and invested in camels and sheep. Since there was often insufficient pasture during the dry season, pastoralists cut tree branches to feed leaves to their animals. This led to deforestation, which was exacerbated by the demand for charcoal and wood for fuel on the plantations. Deforestation in turn caused soil erosion and desertification, which further reduced pastures.<sup>13</sup> When drought conditions returned during the 1969–1970 cultivation year, Afar pastoralists had no way to ensure that their animals received enough to eat and drink. The drought continued for four years, during which time 36,000 camels, sheep, and cattle died.<sup>14</sup> Hardship turned into want and then, in 1973, into a widespread famine.

<sup>9</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 4–6, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Kloos, 'Development, Drought and Famine in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia,' 28.

<sup>11</sup> Provincial Government of Eritrea, *Social and Economic Development of Eritrea Since 1962* (1966), 83–84.

<sup>12</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 56.

<sup>13</sup> Flood, 'Nomadism and its Future: the 'Afar' Rehab,' 64–66.

<sup>14</sup> Gibbs, *Green Heart of a Dying Land*, 90.

By the time the acute crisis had ended, 30 percent of the Afar population of the Awash River Valley had died of famine-related causes.<sup>15</sup>

The new herd-less and land-less class of pastoralists that was emerging all over the ARSL was left with only one real dependable resource—their bodies' labor power. Without access to other productive resources, the only pacific way to earn an income was to work for wages. In the second half of the twentieth century, there were two structural problems that prevented this from being a way out of poverty. First, the growth in the labor supply always outstripped demand. Too many impoverished pastoralists were competing in the labor market, which kept wages low.<sup>16</sup> Second, wage labor made people even more dependent on the money economy at a time of fiscal instability. The various currencies in circulation in the ARSL were poor stores of wealth, and prolonged periods of uncontrolled inflation and repeated government devaluations prevented low-income earners from accumulating savings.<sup>17</sup> In Ethiopia, inflation in the early 1970s led to the widespread protests that brought the *Derg* to power in 1974, which, in turn, escalated the military conflict between the Ethiopian government and Eritrean independence rebels. Further, mounting government debts forced Sudan and Ethiopia to agree to World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs that decreased the government services upon which the poor relied.<sup>18</sup> The Côte Française des Somalis, which was renamed the *Territoire français des Afars et des Issas* in 1967 and then Djibouti at independence in 1977, only partially escaped some of these

<sup>15</sup> Gamaledin, 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,' 56–57.

<sup>16</sup> For histories of the post-war labor market, see Milne, 'The Impact of Labour Migration on the Amarar in Port Sudan'; Barney Cohen and William J. House, 'Labor Market Choices, Earnings, and Informal Networks in Khartoum, Sudan', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 44:3 (1996): 589–618; Matteo Sisti, *Lotte sociali in Eritrea: dall'Occupazione di Massawa alla costituzione della National Confederation of Eritrean Workers* (Rome: Ediesse, 2010); and Ilyas Said Wais, *L'Ambivalente libéralisation du droit du travail en République de Djibouti* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> This was the local consequence of the shortcomings of the post-war Bretton Woods system which required all countries to maintain a fixed exchange rate for their currencies. This system posed a structural problem for the Sudanese pound and the Ethiopian birr. The balance of trade for both Sudan and Ethiopia was generally in favor of imports. The federation of Eritrea to Ethiopia in 1952 and its subsequent annexation in 1962 did not change this. Neither Sudan nor Ethiopia could earn the foreign currencies needed to both pay for imports and maintain their currencies.

<sup>18</sup> Mulatu Wubneh and Yohannis Abate, *Ethiopia: Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 87; Mohamed Hassan Fadlalla, *A Short History of Sudan* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2004), 126.



currency problems by pegging its currency to the US dollar in 1949. High inflation led the government to devalue the currency in 1971 and 1973. However, the dollar peg was maintained, and the country has experienced an average inflation rate of under four percent over the past 30 years.<sup>19</sup>

There was another way for the otherwise resource-less to exploit their labor power—use violence to take what could not be acquired through pacific means. In the immediate post-war period, pastoralists in the northern ARSL turned to banditry to make up for the income that they lost when the Sudanese wartime militias and the Eritrean colonial army were decommissioned.<sup>20</sup> However, many pastoralists quickly recognized that banditry could only offer limited economic gains. A more effective use of violence seemed to many to be turning their arms against the political structure itself with the aim of seizing the state. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, centralizing states had claimed for themselves key resources in the ARSL, as well as the right to determine lawful patterns of access to those resources that remained in the private sector. For ARSL pastoralists, taking over the state would mean taking over the state's assets. Rebellion was therefore a way out of the structural poverty that was causing real suffering. In the second half of the twentieth century, armed political militant groups claiming to represent the interests of ARSL pastoralists were created in Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.

Eritrean militant groups are perhaps the most important of those that formed in the region after the Second World War. These groups coalesced out of the disorganized gangs of bandits that formed in Eritrea in the immediate post-war periods. This process was helped by outside interference. At the time, Eritrea was ruled by the British Military Administration and British officials were openly looking to pull out of the territory. Italian

<sup>19</sup>Trading Economics, *Djibouti Exchange Rate*, Accessed 17 July 2018 <https://trading-economics.com/djibouti/inflation-cpi>. Maintaining the US dollar peg has not posed structural problems for the economy of Djibouti because the economy has for decades been driven by the presence of a French army base and large facilities for the French navy. During the period of high US dollar inflation, these two installations injected an estimated 40 billion Djibouti francs directly into the economy. Ministère des Relations Extérieures, République Française, *Dimensions monétaires et financiers du développement de l'économie de Djibouti*, November 1985, 201PO/1/15, CAD.

<sup>20</sup>British Military Administration of Eritrea, *Annual Report by the Chief Administrator on the British Administration of Eritrea, Report V, for Period 1 January to 31 December 1943*, 7; Giuseppe Jannone, *Rapporto confidenziale sull'attività della popolazione italiana dell'Eritrea dal 1942 all'agosto 1946 e sulle condizioni economiche di essa durante lo stesso periodo*, 1946, FASC592, IAO.

and Ethiopian officials sought to influence the future political settlement by providing financial support to sympathetic local militant groups. While Ethiopian officials courted groups of Coptic Christians from the highlands who sought union with Ethiopia, Italians supported Muslim pastoralists from the lowlands. The militant groups on both sides used their foreign support to launch terror campaigns against civilian, state and military targets in the late 1940s.<sup>21</sup> Though Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia under the leadership of Haile Selassie in 1952, the violence persisted. The push for independence was guided by a number of militant groups that were formed and dissolved, and that splintered and merged in various permutations. Some important groups included the Eritrean Liberation Front, the Obelites, the People's Liberation Forces, and the Eritrean People's Liberation Forces. The war between pro-independence forces and the Ethiopian state lasted until 1991. During this protracted struggle, the Ethiopian state responded with programs of forced villagization, land mining, and scorched earth offensives.<sup>22</sup> Though the fighting led the farms that had been established on former drought pasture reserves to close,<sup>23</sup> it more importantly made living in much of Eritrea impossible for local pastoralists. As a result, many fled across the border into Sudan. By 1983, there were over a half a million Eritrean refugees living in Sudan.<sup>24</sup> Generally, these refugees were forced to settle on marginal lands far from adequate water sources. As a result, they were unable to independently support themselves and became dependent on food aid.<sup>25</sup>

Eritrean independence militant organizations were not alone in seeking to use violence to seize control of the state and its resources. Similar organizations formed in Eastern Sudan, Northern Djibouti, and Ethiopia's Awash River Valley. The last of these three formed in the wake of the 1973 famine. As the survivors were recovering from the devastation, Ali Mirah

<sup>21</sup> British Administration, Eritrea, *Eritrea: Annual Report for 1949* (1949), 5.

<sup>22</sup> For a striking assessment of the atrocious human rights violations and war crimes committed during the brutal Eritrean War for Independence, see Africa Watch, *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Haile Awalom, 'Food Security: Problems, Policies and Programmes,' in *Post-conflict Eritrea: Prospects for Reconstruction and Development*, Martin Doornbos and Alemseged Tesfai, eds. (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1999), 184.

<sup>24</sup> Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, 117, 125.

<sup>25</sup> Economic and Social Research Council, Ministry of the Interior, Republic of the Sudan, *Social and Economic Survey of South Tokar District Eastern Region Sudan (with special reference to refugees and self-reliance)* (1989), 19.

Hanfare, the sultan of Aussa, was able to channel the rage of his followers into a rebellion against Ethiopian rule. During the 1975 Afar Revolt, the sultan's militia burned the Tendaho plantation and Afar pastoralists launched a pogrom against non-Afar residents of the area. During the ensuing government crackdown, officials arrested and exiled the sultan. Far from ending the revolt, this action led to its transformation into a persistent, low-level conflict. The sultan responded to being exiled by founding the Afar Liberation Front, an armed independence militant organization that fought against the Ethiopian government until the fall of the Derg in 1991.<sup>26</sup> The end of Derg rule seemed to promise increased Afar access to the state. The new Ethiopian government allowed Ali Mirah Hanfare to return from exile and recognized the Afar Liberation Front as a legitimate political party. However, the new government also worked to undermine the Afar independence movement by marginalizing both the sultan and his party. Government officials fostered the creation of a rival party, the Afar People's Democratic Organization, which won control of the Afar Region from the Afar Liberation Front during the 1995 elections.<sup>27</sup>

A militant Afar group similar to the Afar Liberation Front emerged in neighboring Djibouti in the run-up to independence from France in 1977. Since the introduction of limited elected local government in 1957, French officials had rigged electoral rolls to favor the Afar. By denying many local Somalis access to the vote, they ensured that the Afar minority, which was seen as more favorable to continuing French rule, controlled the territorial government. At the end of 1975, French officials abruptly changed course. Over the next year, they dismantled Afar supremacy by granting tens of thousands of Somalis the voting cards that they had been previously denied. As a result, the Somali share of the electorate increased by approximately 10 percentage points to 52.8 percent. Afar militants responded to the enfranchisement of their previously disenfranchised Somali neighbors by forming the *Mouvement de libération de Djibouti*.<sup>28</sup> The group immediately began a terror campaign that, in the first few months after independence, included shooting down a small passenger plane, kidnapping and then murdering a French school teacher and using

<sup>26</sup> Gamaledin, 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,' 56–57.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Vaughan, 'Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia,' PhD. diss. (University of Edinburgh, Department of Political Science, 2003), 213.

<sup>28</sup> James Buxton, 'Discord in Djibouti,' *Financial Times*, 24 March 1977, Box 44, Africa News Service Archive, Duke University, Durham, NC (ANSA).

a hand grenade to blow up a café.<sup>29</sup> There was a second recrudescence of Afar political militancy in Djibouti in 1991, after Eritrea won independence. When Ethiopian rule in Eritrea ended, Eritrean militant forces took the Afar-controlled port of Assab. Afar militants in Djibouti interpreted this as a setback to the overall project of creating an independent Afar state. These militants responded by forming the *Front révolutionnaire pour l'unité et la démocratie* and attacking the government of Djibouti's forces.<sup>30</sup> This set off a multiyear, low-level civil war in Djibouti, during which, at one point, Afar militants controlled two-thirds of the country. French military intervention on the side of the government, ultimately, prevented Afar militants from seizing complete control. Nonetheless, a brokered peace settlement in the mid-1990s opened the way for greater Afar political participation.<sup>31</sup>

Pastoralists in Eastern Sudan turned to political violence later than their counterparts elsewhere in the ARSL. From shortly after Sudanese independence until 1993, Beja militants tried to work within the system to advance their interests. In 1958, a number of Beja intellectuals founded the Beja Congress to argue for regional autonomy as a means toward promoting Beja culture and bringing development to the region. However, there were two barriers to using politics to advance Beja interests. First, in its early years, the Beja Congress competed for support in Eastern Sudan with the National Unionist Party, which was co-founded by the leadership of the Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood. Second, democratic institutions in Sudan were weak. Coups led to military rule from 1960 to 1964, 1969 to 1986, and 1989 to the present. Nonetheless, Beja militants did not turn to political violence until 1993 when the Beja Congress joined a broad coalition of militant groups from across Sudan that were fighting against the government. Over the next 13 years, Beja militants regularly attacked military installations, strategic assets, and important towns in Eastern Sudan. However, these militants made few permanent gains because their tactics focused on attacking and withdrawing, rather than on conquering and holding territory. When South Sudanese militants signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005, Beja militants lost a key ally in their struggle against the government. The following year, Beja militants signed

<sup>29</sup> 'Djibouti Premier Resigns with 4 of His Ministers as Tribal Tension Rises,' *New York Times*, 18 December 1977, Box 44, ANSA.

<sup>30</sup> Agence France-Presse International News, 'Djibouti Government Orders General Mobilization to Counter Rebels,' 13 November 1991, Box 44, ANSA.

<sup>31</sup> 'Rebels Shake Djibouti's Stability,' *Washington Post*, 23 November 1993, Box 44, ANSA.

the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement. Under the terms of the agreement, Beja militias agreed to end their rebellion and formally integrate their militias into the Sudanese army. In exchange, the government agreed to grant the Eastern Front, the umbrella militant organization that subsumed the Beja Congress in 2004, participation in governing Sudan's eastern states.<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as militants were fighting to gain access to state resources, pastoralists continued to suffer from the effects of poverty. The deteriorating security situation exacerbated conditions. This became very clear when the ARSL entered into a dry period at the end of the 1970s that lasted through the middle of the 1980s. Year after year, pastoralists struggled to pasture their herds. Most failed to do so and animals died in large numbers. As herds collapsed, pastoralists lost the ability to secure their sustenance. Many resorted to selling whatever animals they had left, often at depressed prices. Eastern Sudan was particularly hard hit. By January 1985, 88 percent of camels, 66 percent of sheep, 79 percent of goats, and 28 percent of cattle in this area had died.<sup>33</sup> Eastern Sudan was an extreme case but by no means unique. Vast numbers of pastoralists throughout the ARSL lost nearly all of their animals, and with them, they lost their ability to secure their sustenance. Starvation became widespread as famine took hold.

The 1984/1985 famine was not limited to the ARSL. The drought also affected neighboring parts of the Horn of Africa. By compounding ongoing political and economic tensions, the drought precipitated deadly famines in much of Sudan and the Ethiopian/Eritrean highlands. According to one estimate, there were 700,000 excess deaths in Ethiopia, which included Eritrea, in 1984/1985 as a result of the famine.<sup>34</sup> The death toll was particularly high in Ethiopia because the government seized the opportunity of the famine to intensify its war against independence militant groups. From August to October 1985, the government suspended its famine relief programs and launched a major offensive in Eritrea and Tigray, during which government forces sought to disrupt the supply lines of the famine relief programs set up by pro-independence groups.<sup>35</sup> Starving famine refugees tried to escape the devastation in Ethiopia and

<sup>32</sup> John Young, *The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Peter Cutler, 'The Response to Drought of Beja Famine Refugees in Sudan,' *Disasters*, 10:3 (September 1986): 181–188.

<sup>34</sup> A. Kidane, 'Mortality Estimates of the 1984–85 Ethiopian Famine,' *Scandinavian Journal of Social Medicine*, 18:4 (December 1990): 281–286.

<sup>35</sup> Africa Watch, *Evil Days*, 183.

Eritrea by migrating across borders, into cities and toward relief camps. By the time the acute crisis had ended, there were over 1.1 million refugees in Sudan alone.<sup>36</sup> In Sudan, 6.8 million people, or approximately 30 per cent of the total population, were displaced by the famine.<sup>37</sup> Of this figure, 1.2 million people were displaced in Eastern Sudan.<sup>38</sup> In the southern ARSL, starving Afar were forced into permanent relief camps in towns in the Awash River Valley.<sup>39</sup> Generally, famine refugees in the ARSL became dependent on food aid because they were forced to settle on marginal land far from adequate water sources and prospective employment.<sup>40</sup>

As the famine abated, a narrative began to take hold among scholars, officials, and NGO workers that located the causes of the famine in conditions during the previous decade. Though they debated how best to apportion blame between state governments, militant groups, transnational organizations, environmental conditions, and impersonal economic forces, they all agreed that there was no need to look beyond the 1970s to understand the famine of the 1980s.<sup>41</sup> The conventional narrative that took hold did not see that ARSL pastoralists were already in crisis in the 1970s. They had become trapped in a poverty defined by a lack of access to the resources necessary to support themselves through the full

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, *Fact Sheet: Sudan*, March 1987, Box 161, ANSA.

<sup>37</sup> Hatim A. Mahran, 'The Displaced, Food Production, and Food Aid,' in *War and Drought in Sudan: Essays on Population Displacement*, Etligani E. Eltigani, ed. (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 64.

<sup>38</sup> Young, *The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Gamaledin, 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,' 58.

<sup>40</sup> Economic and Social Research Council, Republic of the Sudan, *Social and Economic Survey of South Tokar District Eastern Region Sudan*, 19; Hjort af Ornäs and Dahl, *Responsible Man*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Tesfaye Teklu, Joachim von Braun, and Elsayed Zaki, *Drought and Famine Relationships in Sudan: Policy Implications* (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*, 33 (August, 1995): 23–32; Hassan Ahmed Abdel Ati, 'The Process of Famine: Causes and Consequences in Sudan,' *Development and Change*, 19 (1988): 267–300; Giorgio Ausenda, 'Leisurely Nomads; the Hadendowa (Beja) of the Gash Delta and Their Transition to Sedentary Village Life,' PhD. diss. (University of Columbia, Department of Anthropology, 1987); Catherine Miller, 'Power Land and Ethnicity in the Kassala-Gedaref States: An Introduction,' in *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy in Eastern Sudan (Kassala and Gedaref States)*, Catherine Miller, ed. (Cairo: Centre d'études et de documentation économique, juridique et sociale, 2005), 27; Van Dijk, *Taking the Waters*, 81; Mahran, 'The Displaced, Food Production, and Food Aid,' 64; Gamaledin, 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,' 58; Walter Kok, 'Self-Settled Refugees and the Socio-Economic Impact of their Presence on Kassala, Eastern Sudan,' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2:4 (1989): 421.

range of normal conditions. The process of impoverishment that brought them to this point had begun centuries earlier—during the Little Ice Age mega-drought. Generation after generation had slowly lost access to their life-sustaining resources as the traditional moral economy of pastoralism in the ARSL was progressively dismantled. The social safety net that had allowed pastoralists to thrive in the ARSL's harsh and variable climate had disappeared. The result was horrific levels of extreme human suffering.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES

Archivio Storico Diplomatico, Rome

Archivio Eritrea

Ministero Africa Italiana

Archives nationales d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence

FM—Fonds Ministériels

FT—Fonds Territoriaux—Côte Française des Somalis

Centre des Archives diplomatiques, Nantes

Aden

Dire Dawa

Djibouti

Djeddah

Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare, Florence

Il Centro di documentazione inedita

Eritrea

Ethiopia

National Records Office, Khartoum

CIVSEC—the archive of the Civil Secretary



The National Archive, London  
ADM—Admiralty Records  
FO—Foreign Office Records  
WO—War Office

British Library, London  
IOR—India Office Records

## NON-GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES

Durham University  
The Wylde Family Papers

Sudan Archive, Durham University  
Arbuthnot, Ernest Douglas  
Balfour, Francis Cecil Campbell  
Donald, J. C. N.  
Porter, W. A.  
Thomson, C. H.  
Wingate, Francis Reginald

Duke University  
Wingate, Francis Reginald  
Africa News Service Archive

## PUBLISHED GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

### ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN

*Annual Report of the Director, Commercial intelligence Branch, Central Economic Board, 1914–1934.*

*Memorandum by General Sir Reginald Wingate on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan, 1914, 1914.*

Reports on the Finances, Administrations and Conditions in the Sudan, 1902–1913.

*Sudan Gazette, 1899–1911; continued as Sudan Government Gazette, 1911–1955.*

### BRITAIN

*Consular Reports, Jeddah, 1883–1897.*

*Consular Reports, Suakin, 1886–1897.*

*Reports by His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General on the Finances, Administration, and Conditions of Egypt and the Soudan*, 1899–1919; continued as *Reports by His Majesty's High Commissioner on the Finances, Administration and Conditions of Egypt and the Sudan*, 1920.

*Reports on the Finances, Administration and Conditions of the Sudan*, 1921–1932; continued as *Reports on the Administration, Finances of the Sudan*, 1933–1938; continued as *Reports on the Administration of the Sudan*, 1939–1944; continued as *Reports by the Governor-General on the Administration, Finances and Conditions of the Sudan*, 1945–1947; continued as *Report on the Administration of the Sudan*, 1948–1952.

*Reports on the Province of Dongola*, 1897.

*Report on the Soudan by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart*, 1883.

#### BRITISH ADMINISTRATION OF ERITREA

*Annual Report*, 1943–1950.

#### EGYPTIAN ARMY

*Intelligence Report, Egypt*, 1892–1898.

*Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Eastern Sudan*, 1891–1892.

*Staff Diary and Intelligence Report, Suakin*, 1889–1891.

*Sudan Intelligence Report*, 1898–1925.

#### ETHIOPIA

Provincial Government of Eritrea, *Social and Economic Development of Eritrea Since 1962*, 1966.

#### ITALY

*Agordat: Note e Documenti*, 1894.

#### REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

Economic and Social Research Council, Ministry of the Interior. *Social and Economic Survey of South Tokar District Eastern Region Sudan (with special reference to refugees and self-reliance)*, 1989.

## UNPUBLISHED THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

- Ausenda, Giorgio. 'Leisurely Nomads; the Hadendowa (Beja) of the Gash Delta and Their Transition to Sedentary Village Life.' PhD diss. University of Columbia, Department of Anthropology, 1987.
- Hargey, Taj. 'The Suppression of Slavery in the Sudan, 1898–1939.' PhD diss. Oxford University, Department of History, 1981.
- Hofheinz, Albrecht. 'Internalizing Islam: Shaykh Muhammad Majdhub Scriptural Islam and Local Context in the Early Nineteenth-Century Sudan.' PhD diss. University of Bergen, Department of History, 1996.
- Nurtaç, Duman. 'Emirs of Mecca and the Ottoman Government of Hijaz, 1840–1908.' MA thesis. Boğaziçi University. Department of History, 2005.
- Salih, Hassan Mohammed. 'The Hadendowa: Pastoralism and the Problems of Sedentarisation.' PhD diss. The University of Hull, Department of Anthropology, 1976.
- Vaughan, Sarah. 'Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia.' PhD diss. University of Edinburgh, Department of Political Science, 2003.
- Yasin, Yasin Mohammed. 'Regional Dynamics of Inter-ethnic Conflicts in the Horn of Africa: An Analysis of the Afar-Somali Conflict in Ethiopia and Djibouti.' PhD diss. Universität Hamburg, Department of Political Science, 2010.

## PUBLISHED MATERIAL

- Abbay, Alemseged. *Identity Jilted or Re-imagining Identity?: The Divergent Paths of the Eritrean and Tigrayan Nationalist Struggles*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1998.
- Abir, Mordechai. *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes: The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire (1769–1855)*. London: Longmans, 1968.
- Abu Sin, M. E. 'Environmental Causes and Implications of Population Displacement in Sudan.' *War and Drought in Sudan: Essays on Population Displacement*. Etligani E Eltigani, ed. Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995. 11–22.
- Africa Watch. *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1991.
- Ahmad, Abd al-Hamid Muhammad. *al-Sharif Zayn al-Abidin al-Hindi: al-Sufi al-Muadhdhab, al-Siyasi al-Mutamarrid wa-al-Shair al-Thair*. Khartoum: Dar Azzah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzi, 2012.
- Ahmed, Hassan al-Aziz. 'Aspects of Sudan's Foreign Trade During the 19th Century.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 55 (1974) 16–32.
- al-'Amri, Husayn 'Abdullah. *The Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Political and Intellectual History*. UK: Ithaca Press, 1985.

- al-Enazy, Askar. *The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914–1927*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- al Rasheed, Madawi. *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidis of Saudi Arabia*. London and New York: I B Tauris, 1991.
- al-Sayyid-Marsot, Afaf Lutfi. *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- al-Sha'afi, Muhammad. *The Foreign Trade of Jeddah during the Ottoman Period, 1840–1916*. Saudi Arabia: King Saud University, 1985.
- Alin, S. R. and A. S. Cohen. 'Lake-Level History of Lake Tanganyika, East Africa, for the Past 2500 Years Based on Ostracode-Inferred Water Depth Reconstruction.' *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology* 199 (2003) 31–49.
- Alkire, Sabina. *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Amri, Husayn. *The Yemen in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Political and Intellectual History*. London: Ithaca Press, 1985.
- Ati, Hassan Ahmed Abdel. 'The Process of Famine: Causes and Consequences in Sudan.' *Development and Change* 19 (1988) 267–300.
- Ausenda, Giorgio. *Leisurely Nomads: The Hadendowa (Beja) of the Gash Delta and Their Transition to Sedentary Village Life*. Doctoral Dissertation. Columbia University (1987).
- Awalom, Haile. 'Food Security: Problems, Policies and Programmes.' *Post-conflict Eritrea: Prospects for Reconstruction and Development*. Martin Doornbos and Alemseged Tesfai, eds. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1999. 141–203.
- Ayoub, Ali Taha. 'Extent, severity and causative factors of land degradation in the Sudan.' *Journal of Arid Environments* 38:3 (1998) 397–409.
- Baker, Samuel. *The Nile Tributaries of Abyssinia and the Sword Hunters of the Hamran Arabs*. 3rd edition. London: Macmillan and Co, 1868.
- Bakhit, A. H., and Omer Hayati. 'The Hadendowa Salif: Successes and Failures of Indigenous Cultural Institutions in Managing the Food System.' *GeoJournal* 36:1 (1995) 87–92.
- Baldrati, Isaia. *Le Condizioni agricole della valle del Barca*. Florence: Edizioni dell'istituto agricolo colonial italiano, 1911.
- Barnett, Tony. *The Gezira Scheme: An Illusion of Development*. London: Frank Cass, 1977.
- Bellucci, Stefano, and Massimo Zaccaria. 'Wage Labour and Mobility in Colonial Eritrea, 1880s to 1920s.' *International Labor and Working-Class History* 86 (Fall 2014) 89–106.
- Bereketeab, Redie. *Eritrea: The Making of a Nation, 1890–1991*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2007.
- Björkelo, Anders. *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region, 1821–1885*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

- Bologna, Luigi Maria. 'L'Avvaloramento in Eritrea.' *Italia in Africa: Serie Economica-agraria, Volume I: L'avvaloramento e la Colonizzazione*. Rome: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1970. 3–101.
- Bolsi, Ugo. 'Note Economiche su la Dancalia Italiana Settentrionale.' *Rassegna delle Colonie* 14:1–2 (January–February 1936) 1–25.
- Brown, Erik T., and Thomas C. Johnson. 'Coherence Between Tropical East African and South American Records of the Little Ice Age.' *Geochemistry, Geophysics, Geosystems* 6:12 (December 2005).
- Burckhardt, John Lewis. *Travels in Nubia*. 2nd edition. London: J Murray, 1822.
- Caulk, R. A. 'Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia c.1850–1935.' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11:3 (1978) 457–493.
- The Center for Food Security and Public Health and the Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics. *Rinderpest*. Iowa: Iowa State University, 2008.
- Chailley, Marcel. *Notes sur les 'Afar de la Région de Tadjoura*. Paris: Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1980.
- Chaudhuri, K. N. *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Checchi, Michele. *Movimento Commerciale della Colonia Eritrea*. Rome: Istituto Coloniale Italiano, 1912.
- . *La Palma Dum e l'Euphorbia candelabra nella colonia Eritrea*. Rome: Istituto Coloniale Italiano, 1910.
- Cliffe, Lionel. *The Long Struggle for Eritrean Independence and Constructive Peace*. Nottingham: Spokesman, 1988.
- Cohen, Barney, and William J. House. 'Labor Market Choices, Earnings, and Informal Networks in Khartoum, Sudan.' *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 44:3 (1996) 589–618.
- Conti, Gaetano. 'Il Servizio Veterinario in Eritrea.' *Italia in Africa: Serie Civile, Volume II: Il Servizio Veterinario Nell'Africa Italiana*. Rome: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1965. 1–52.
- Cook, Edward R., et al. 'Asian Monsoon Failure and Megadrought During the Last Millennium.' *Science* 328 (23 April 2010) 486–489.
- Cooke, James J. 'Anglo-French Diplomacy and the Contraband Arms Trade in Colonial Africa, 1894–1897.' *African Studies Review* 17:1 (April 1974) 27–41.
- Coubba, Ali. *Djibouti: Une Nation en Otage*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993.
- . *Les Afars: de la Préhistoire à la Fin du XXe Siècle*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004.
- Crawford, Osbert Guy Stanhope. *The Fung Kingdom of Sennar*. Gloucester: John Bellows Ltd. 1951.
- Crowfoot, Grace. 'Spinning and Weaving in the Sudan.' *Sudan Notes and Record* 4:1 (1921) 21–38.

- Cufino, Luigi. *La Parabola Commerciale di Assab*. Naples: Stab. Tip. Francesco Golia, 1913.
- Cutler, Peter. 'The Response to Drought of Beja Famine Refugees in Sudan.' *Disasters* 10:3 (September 1986). 181–188.
- D'Avray, Anthony. *Lords of the Red Sea: The History of a Red Sea Society from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.
- D'Avray, Anthony, and Richard Pankhurst, eds. *The Nakfa Documents*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000.
- Dafalla, Hassan. *The Nubian Exodus*. London: C. Hurst & Co, 1975.
- Dahl, Gurdun, and Anders Hjort af Ornäs. 'Precolonial Beja: A Periphery at the Crossroads.' *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 15:4 (2006) 473–498.
- Daly, Martin. *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1934–56*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Darkoh, M. B. K. 'The Nature, Causes and Consequences of Desertification in the Drylands of Africa.' *Land Degradation and Development* 9 (1998) 1–20.
- De Waal, Alex. *Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- De Wit, Maarten, and Jacek Stankiewicz. 'Changes in Surface Water Supply Across Africa with Predicted Climate Change.' *Science* 311:5769 (31 March 2006) 1917–1921.
- Delong-Bas, Natana J. *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Deressa, Temesgen Tadesse, and Rashid M. Hassan, 'Economic Impact of Climate Change on Crop Production in Ethiopia: Evidence from Cross-Section Measures.' *Journal of African Economies* (2009) 529–554.
- Desai, Meghnad. 'Poverty and Capability: Towards an Empirically Implementable Measure.' *Poverty, Famine and Economic Development: The Selected Essays of Meghnad Desai*. Aldershot, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 1995. 185–204.
- Doyal, Len, and Ian Gough. *A Theory of Human Need*. New York: Palgrave, 1991.
- Dresch, Paul. *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Dubois, Colette. *Djibouti 1888–1967: Héritage ou frustration?*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997.
- Fadlalla, Amal Hassan. *Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.
- Fadlalla, Mohamed Hassan. *A Short History of Sudan*. Lincoln: iUniverse, 2004.
- Faroqi, Suraiya. *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517–1683*. London and New York: I B Tauris & Co, 1994.
- Fattah, Hala. *The Politics of Regional trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745–1900*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Finkelstein, Israel, and Avi Perevolotsky. 'Processes of Sedentarization and Nomadization in the History of Sinai and the Negev.' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 279 (August 1990) 67–88.

- Flood, Glynn. 'Nomadism and its Future: The 'Afar' Rehab.' *Drought and Famine in Ethiopia*. Abdul Majid Hussein, ed. London: The International African Institute, 1976.
- Galvin, Kathleen. 'Transitions: Pastoralists Living with Change.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38 (October 2009) 185–198.
- Gamaledin, Maknun. 'The Decline of Afar Pastoralism.' *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*. John Markakis, ed. London: Macmillan Press, 1993.45–63.
- Gavin, R. J. *Aden under British Rule, 1839–1967*. London: C Hurst and Co, 1975.
- Getachew, Kassa Negussie. *Among the Pastoral Afar in Ethiopia: Tradition, Continuity and Socio-Economic Change*. Utrecht: International Books, 2001.
- . 'Resource Conflicts Among the Afar of North-East Ethiopia.' *African Pastoralism: Conflict, Institutions and Government*. M. A. Mohamed Salih, Ton Dietz and Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed, eds. London: Pluto Press, 2001. 145–171.
- Gibbs, Alexander. *Green Heart of a Dying Land: A Study of the New Cotton Wealth of the Old Afar Sultanate of Aussa*. Addis Ababa: Huntington Technical Service, 1973.
- Gioli, Gino Bartolommei. *Le Attitudini della Colonia Eritrea all'Agricoltura*. Florence: Tipografia di M. Ricci, 1902.
- . 'La Produzione Frumentaria in Eritrea di fronte alle relazioni doganali fra Metropoli e Colonia.' *Atti della R. Accademia dei Geografi*. Series V, 1:1 (1904) 81–110.
- Grant, Jonathan. *Rulers, Guns, and Money: The Global Arms Trade in the Age of Imperialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Green, Nile. *Sufism: A Global History*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Gubellini, Marcello. *Economia Agraria Indigena della zona costiera dell'Eritrea*. Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1933.
- Gudrun, Dahl, and Anders Hjort af Ornäs, *Pastoral Change and the Role of Drought*. Stockholm: The Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, 1979.
- Gupta, Ashin Das. 'Indian Merchants and Trade in the Indian Ocean, c. 1500–1750'. *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant 1500–1800: Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 59–87.
- Hendrix, Cullen, and Sarah Glaser. 'Trends and Triggers: Climate, Climate Change and Civil Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa.' *Political Geography* 26:6 (August 2007) 695–715.
- Hill, Richard. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.
- . *Egypt in the Sudan, 1821–1881*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- . *Sudan Transport: A History of Railway, Marine and River Services in the Republic of the Sudan*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

- Hirt, Nicole. *Eritrea Zwischen Krieg und Frieden: Die Entwicklung seit der Unabhängigkeit*. Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde im Verbund Deutsches Übersee-Institut, 2001.
- Hjort af Ornäs, Anders, and Gudrun Dahl. *Responsible Man: The Atmaan Beja of North-eastern Sudan*. Uppsala: Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 1991.
- Holt, P. M. *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of the Origins, Development and Overthrow*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- . *The Sudan of the Three Niles: The Funj Chronicles 910–1288/1504–1871*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Holt, P. M., and M. W. Daly. *A History of the Sudan from the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*. 4th edition. London and New York: Longman, 1994.
- Hozier, Henry Montague. *The British Expedition to Abyssinia*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1869.
- Hundie, Bekele. *Pastoralism, Institutions and Social Interaction: Explaining the Coexistence of Conflict and Cooperation in Pastoral Afar, Ethiopia*. Aachen: Shaker, 2008.
- Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano. *L'Economia Eritrea: nel cinquantennio dell'occupazione di Assab (1882–1932)*. Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1932.
- Jack, J. D. M. 'The Sudan.' *A History of the Overseas Veterinary Services*. G. P. West, ed. London: British Veterinary Association, 1961. 123–146.
- Jackson, H. W. *Behind the Modern Sudan*. London: Macmillan, 1955.
- Jacobsen, Frode. *Theories of Sickness and Misfortune among the Hadandowa Beja of the Sudan: Narratives as Points of Entry into Beja Cultural Knowledge*. New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998.
- Johany, Ali, Michel Berne, and J. Wilson Mixon Jr. *The Saudi Arabian Economy*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- Karrar, Ali Salih. *The Sufi Brotherhoods in the Sudan*. London: C. Hurst and Co., 1992.
- Karsany, Awad. *Al Majdhubiyya and Al Mikashfiyya: Two Sufi Tariqas in the Sudan*. Khartoum: University of Khartoum, 1985.
- Kelly, Morgan, and Cormac Ó. Gráda. 'Debating the Little Ice Age.' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 45:1 (2014) 57–68.
- Khalid, Manşur. *al-Thulathiyah al-Majidiyah: Suwar Min al-Adab al-Şufi al-Sudani*. Tortola, British Virgin Islands: Turath al-Mahdudah lil-Nashr, 1997.
- Kidane, A. 'Mortality Estimates of the 1984–5 Ethiopian Famine.' *Scandinavian Journal of Social Medicine* 18:4 (December 1990) 281–286.
- Kloos, Helmut. 'Development, Drought and Famine in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia.' *African Studies Review* 25:4 (December 1982) 21–48.
- Klunzinger, Karl Benjamin. *Upper Egypt: Its People and Products*. London: Blackie, 1878.



- Kok, Walter. 'Self-Settled Refugees and the Socio-Economic Impact of their Presence on Kassala, Eastern Sudan.' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 2:4 (1989) 419–441.
- Kostiner, Joseph. *The Making of Saudi Arabia 1916–1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Kumar, Kundan. 'Aspects of Indian Merchant Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula during the British Period.' *Indian Trade Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula*, Prakash C. Jain and Kundan Kumar, eds. New Delhi: New Academic Publishers, 2012. 51–76.
- Kurdi, Nafi Hassan. *L'Érythrée: une identité retrouvée*. Paris: Karthala, 1994.
- Legesse, Dagnachew, et al. 'Environmental Changes in a Tropical Lake (Lake Abiyata, Ethiopia) during Recent Centuries.' *Paleogeography, Paleoclimatology, Paleocology* 187 (2002) 233–258.
- Lewis, B. A. 'Diem el Arab and the Beja Stevedores of Port Sudan.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 43 (1962) 16–49.
- Lewis, I. M. *Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar and Sabo*. 2nd Edition. London: The International African Institute, 1994.
- Little, Peter. 'Social Differentiation and Pastoralist Sedentarization in Northern Kenya.' *Africa* 55:3 (July 1985) 243–261.
- Longrigg, Stephen. *A Short History of Eritrea*. reprint of the 1945 edition. Eastport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974.
- Machado, Pedro. 'Awash in a Sea of Cloth: Gujarat, Africa and the western Indian Ocean, 1300–1800.' *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200–1850*. Prasanna Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. 161–179.
- Maḥmūd, Abd al-Qādir. *al-Fikr al-Ṣufī fī al-Sūdān: Maṣādiruhu wa-Tayyāratuhu wa-Alwanuhu*. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1968.
- Mahmūd, Muhammad. 'Sufism and Islamism in the Sudan.' *African Islam and Islam in Africa: Encounters between Sufis and Islamists*. Eva Evers Rosander and David Westerlund, eds. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997. 162–189.
- Mahrān, Hatim. 'The Displaced, Food Production, and Food Aid.' *War and Drought in Sudan: Essays on Population Displacement*. Etligani E. Eltigani, ed. Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995. 63–74.
- Manger, Leif. *Survival on Meager Resources: Hadendowa Pastoralism in the Red Sea Hills*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996.
- Marchi, Ezio. *Studi sulla Pastorizia della Colonia Eritrea*. 2nd edition. Florence: Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano, 1929.
- Markham, Clements Robert. *A History of the Abyssinian Expedition*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1896.
- Markovitz, Claude. 'Indian Merchant Networks outside India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Preliminary Survey.' *Indian Trade Diaspora in the Arabian Peninsula*, Prakash C. Jain and Kundan Kumar, eds. New Delhi: New Academic Publishers, 2012. 15–50.

- Martini, Ferdinando. *Nell' Africa Italiana*. Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1925.
- Matthies, Volker. *The Siege of Magdala: The British Empire Against the Emperor of Ethiopia*. translated by Steven Rendall. Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2012.
- McCann, James. *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia: A Rural History, 1900–1935*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987.
- . *People of the Plow: An Agricultural History of Ethiopia, 1800–1990*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- McCrangam, Gordon, Deborah Balk, and Bridget Anderson. 'The Rising Ride: Assessing the Risks of Climate Change and Human Settlements in Low Elevation Coastal Zones.' *Environment and Urbanization* 19:1 (April 2007) 17–37.
- McPeak, John, and Peter D. Little. 'Cursed If You So, Cursed If You Don't: The Contradictory Processes of Pastoral Sedentarization in Northern Kenya.' *As Pastoralists Settle: Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Pastoral Sedentarization in Marsabit District, Kenya*. Elliot Fratkin and Eric Abella Roth, eds. New York and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2005. 87–104.
- Meir, Avinoam. 'Demographic Transition Theory: A Neglected Aspect of the Nomadism-Sedentarism Continuum.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 11:2 (1996) 199–211.
- Meloy, John. *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*. Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010.
- Mikhail, Alan. *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Miller, Catherine. 'Power Land and Ethnicity in the Kassala-Gedaref States: An Introduction.' *Land, Ethnicity and Political Legitimacy in Eastern Sudan (Kassala and Gedaref States)*. Catherine Miller, ed. Cairo: Centre d'études et de documentation économique, juridique et sociale, 2005. 3–58.
- Milne, Janet. 'The Impact of Labour Migration on the Amarar in Port Sudan.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 15 (1974) 70–87.
- Miran, Jonathan. 'A Historical Overview of Islam in Eritrea.' *Die Welt des Islams* 45:2 (2005) 177–215.
- . 'Power without Pashas: The Anatomy of Na'ib Autonomy in Ottoman Eritrea (17th–19th C.)' *Eritrean Studies Review* 5:1 (2007) 33–44.
- Mohammad, Abdulkader Saleh. *The Saho of Eritrea: Ethnic Identity and National Consciousness*. Münster: Lit, 2013.
- Morin, Didier. *Dictionnaire Historique Afar: 1288–1982*. Paris: Karthala, 2004.
- Morton, John. 'Pastoral Decline and Famine; The Beja Case.' *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*. John Markakis, ed. London: Macmillan Press, 1993. 30–44.
- Nadel, S. F. 'Notes on Beni Amer Society.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 26:1 (1945) 51–94.

- Negash, Tekeste, and Kjetil Tronvoll. *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*. Oxford: Currey, 2000.
- Newbold, O. B. E. 'The Beja Tribes of the Red Sea Hinterland.' *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan from Within*, J. A. de C. Hamilton, ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1935. 140–160.
- Noel-Buxton, Noel Edward. 'Slavery in Abyssinia.' *International Affairs* 11:4 (July 1932) 512–526.
- O'Brien, Jay. 'Sowing the Seeds of Famine: The Political Ecology of Feed Deficits in Sudan.' *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (August 1995) 23–32.
- O'Fahey, R. S. *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmed Ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990.
- O'Fahey, R. S., and Jay Spaulding. *The Kingdoms of Sudan*. London: Methuen and Co, 1974.
- Oberlé, Philippe, and Pierre Hugot. *Histoire de Djibouti; Des Origines à la République*. Paris: Éd. Présence Africaine, 1996.
- Ochsenwald, William. 'The Commercial History of the Hijaz Vilayet, 1840–1908.' *Religion, Economy and State in Ottoman-Arab History*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1998. 53–77.
- . 'The Financial Basis of Ottoman Rule in the Hijaz 1840–1877.' *Nationalism in a Non-Nation State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald, eds. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977. 129–149.
- Osman-Elasha, Balgis, et al. 'Livelihoods and Drought in Sudan.' *Climate Change and Vulnerability*. Neil Leary, Cecilia Conde, Jyoti Kulkarni, Anthony Nyong and Juan Pulhin, eds. London: Earthscan, 2008. 90–108.
- Owen, Roger. *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Owen, Roger, and Sevkett Pamuk. *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century*. London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998.
- Owen, T. R. H. 'The Hadendowa.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 20:2 (1937) 183–208.
- Pankhurst, Richard. *Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800–1935*. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1968.
- . *The Ethiopian Borderlands: Essays in Regional History from Ancient Times to the End of the 18th Century*. Lawrenceville, NJ; Red Sea Press, 1997.
- . *The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888–1892: A New Assessment*. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1964.
- . *The History of Famine and Epidemics in Ethiopia Prior to the Twentieth Century*. Addis Ababa: Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, 1985.
- . 'Indian Trade with Ethiopia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.' *Cahiers d'études africaines* 14:55 (1974) 453–497.

- . *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia from Early Times to 1800*. Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University Press, 1961.
- . 'The 'Primitive Money' in Ethiopia.' *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 32:2 (1962) 213–248.
- Pankhurst, Richard, and Douglas Johnson. 'The Great Drought and Famine of 188–92 in Northeast Africa.' *The Ecology of Survival: Case Studies from Northeast African History*. Douglas Johnson and David Anderson, eds. Colorado: Westview Press, 1988. 47–73.
- Paoli, Renato. *Le condizioni commerciali dell'Eritrea*. Novara: Istituto Geografico de agostini, 1913.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014.
- Parrya, M. L., et al. 'Effects of Climate Change on Global Food Production under SRES Emissions and Socio-Economic Scenarios.' *Global Environmental Change* 14:1 (April 2004) 53–67.
- Patzert, William. 'Wind-Induced Reversal in Red Sea Circulation.' *Deep Sea Research and Oceanographic Abstracts* 21:2 (1974) 109–121.
- Paul, Andrew. 'The Hadareb.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 40 (1959) 75–78.
- . *A History of the Beja Tribes of the Sudan*. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1971.
- . 'Notes on the Beni Amer.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 31:2 (December 1950) 223–245.
- Pearson, Michael. *The Indian Ocean*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Perkins, Kenneth. *Port Sudan: The Evolution of a Colonial City*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993.
- Popper, William. *The Cairo Nilometer: Studies in Ibn Taghri Birdi's Chronicles of Egypt*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951.
- Ram, K. V. *Anglo-Ethiopian Relations 1869 to 1906: A Study of British Policy in Ethiopia*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009.
- Rangasami, Amrita. 'Failure of Entitlements' Theory of Famine: A Response.' *Economic and Political Weekly* 20:41 (12 October 1985) 1747–1752.
- Ranger, Terence. 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa.' *The Invention of Tradition*. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. 211–262.
- Rasul, Najeeb, and Ian Stewart, eds. *The Red Sea: The Formation, Morphology, Oceanography and Environment of a Young Ocean Basin*. New York: Springer, 2015.
- Reddy, Sanjay, and Thomas Pogge. 'How not to Count the Poor.' *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty*. Sudhir Anand and Paul Segal, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 42–85.
- Reuveny, Rafael. 'Climate Change-Induced Migration and Violent Conflict.' *Political Geography* 26:6 (August 2007) 656–673.

- Rochet d'Héricourt, Charles-Xavier *Second Voyage sur les Deux Rives de la Mer Rouge Dans le Pays des Adels et le Royaume de Choa*. Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1846.
- Roden, David. 'The Twentieth Century Decline of Suakin.' *Sudan Notes and Records* 51 (1970) 1–22.
- Rowe, John, and Kjell Hødnebo. 'Rinderpest in the Sudan 1888–1890: The Mystery of the Missing Panzootic.' *Sudanic Africa* 5 (1994) 149–179.
- Russell, J. M., and T. C. Johnson. 'Little Ice Age Drought in Equatorial Africa: Intertropical Convergence Zone Migrations and El-Niño-Southern Oscillation Variability.' *Geology* 35:1 (January 2007) 21–24.
- Salem-Murdock, Muneera. *The Impact of Agricultural Development on a Pastoral Society: The Shukriya of the Eastern Sudan*. New York: Institute for Development Anthropology, 1979.
- Salih, Hassan Mohamed. 'Struggle for the Delta: Hadendowa Conflict over Land Rights in the Sudan.' *Nomadic Peoples* 34/35 (January 1994) 147–157.
- Salzman, Philip, ed. *When Nomads Settle: Processes of Sedentarization as Adaptation and Response*. New York: Praeger, 1980.
- Santagata, Fernando. *La Colonia Eritrea nel Mar Rosso davanti all'Abissinia*. Naples: Libreria Internazionale Treves di Leo Lupi, 1935.
- Scardigli, Marco. *Il Braccio Indigeno: Ascari, Irregolari e Bande nella Conquista dell'Eritrea 1885–1911*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996.
- Schaefer, Charles. 'The Politics of Banking: The Bank of Abyssinia, 1905–1931.' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 25:2 (1992) 361–389.
- Sellassie, Guebere. *Chronique du regne de Menelik II*. Paris: Maisonneuve Frères, 1931.
- Sen, Amartya. 'Capability and Well-Being.' *The Quality of Life*. M. Nussbaum and A. Sen, eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. 30–52.
- . *Commodities and Capabilities*. New York: North-Holland, 1985.
- Serels, Steven. 'Famines of War: The Red Sea Grain Market and Famine in Eastern Sudan, 1889–1891.' *Northeast African Studies* 12:1 (2012) 73–94.
- . 'Spinners, Weavers, Merchants and Wearers: The Twentieth Century Decline of the Sudanese Textile Industry.' *The Road to Two Sudans*. Souad T. Ali, Stephanie Beswick, Richard Lobban and Jay Spaulding, eds. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. 160–176.
- . *Starvation and the State: Famine, Slavery and Power in Sudan, 1883–1956*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Shehim, Kassim, and James Searing. 'Djibouti and the Question of Afar Nationalism.' *African Affairs* 79:315 (April 1980) 209–226.
- Sisti, Matteo. *Lotte sociali in Eritrea: dall'Occupazione di Massawa alla costituzione della National Confederation of Eritrean Workers*. Rome: Ediesse, 2010.
- von Slatin, Rudolf. *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879–1895*. F. R. Wingate, translator. London: Edward Arnold, 1896.

- Smith, Frederick Harrison. *Through Abyssinia*. New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1890.
- Spaulding, Jay. *The Heroic Age in Sinnar*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2007.
- Spears, Thomas. 'Neo-traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa.' *The Journal of African History* 44:1 (2003) 3–27.
- Spinage, Clive A. *Cattle Plague: A History*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003.
- Stager, J. C., et al. 'Solar Variability and the Levels of Lake Victoria, East Africa, during the Last Millennium.' *Journal of Paleolimnology* 33 (2005) 243–251.
- Stanley, Henry M. *Coomassie and Magdala*. London: S. Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1874.
- Stewart, Francis, Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, and Ruhi Saith 'Introduction: Four Approaches to Defining and Measuring Poverty.' *Defining Poverty in the Developing World*. Frances Stewart, Ruhi Saith, and Barbara Harriss-White, eds. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 1–35.
- Taddese, Girma. 'Land Degradation: A Challenge to Ethiopia.' *Environmental Management* 27:6 (June 2001) 815–824.
- Tafere, Kelemework. *Indigenous Institutions of Conflict Resolution among the Ab'ala Afar of North-eastern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 2006.
- Talhami, Ghada. *Suakin and Massawa under Egyptian Rule*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979.
- Teklu, Tesfaye, Joachim von Braun, and Elsayed Zaki. *Drought and Famine Relationships in Sudan: Policy Implications*. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 1991.
- Thompson, E. P. 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century' *Past and Present* 50 (February 1971) 76–136.
- Thompson, Virginia, and Richard Adloff. *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. *Islam in Ethiopia*. 3rd edition. London: Frank Cass, 1976.
- . *Islam in the Sudan*. New York: Barnes and Noble Inc, 1949.
- Umer, Mohammed, et al. 'Late Quaternary Climate Changes in the Horn of Africa.' *Past Climate Variability through Europe and Africa*. Richard W. Battarbee, Francoise Gasse and Catherine E. Stickley, eds. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2004. 159–180.
- Valenti, Ghino. 'Introduzione.' *La Colonia Eritrea: Condizioni E Problemi*, Omodeo, A., V. Peglion, G. Valenti, eds. Rome: Tipographia Nazionale di G. Bertero, 1913. 9–80.
- Van Dijk, Johan. *Taking the Waters: Soil and Water Conservation among Settling Beja Nomads in Eastern Sudan*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1995.
- Verschuren, D., K. R. Laird, and B. Cumming. 'Rainfall and Drought in Equatorial East Africa during the Past 1100 Years.' *Nature* 403 (2000) 410–414.

- Volterra, Alessandro. *Sudditi Coloniali: Ascari Eritrei 1935–1941*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005.
- Wais, Ilyas Said. *L'Ambivalente libéralisation du droit du travail en République de Djibouti*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016.
- Weber, Keith, and Shannon Horst. 'Desertification and Livestock Grazing: The Roles of Sedentarization, Mobility and Rest.' *Pastoralism: Research Policy and Practice* 1:19 (2011).
- Wubneh, Mulatu, and Yohannis Abate. *Ethiopia: Transition and Development in the Horn of Africa*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.
- Wylde, Augustus Blandy. *Modern Abyssinia*. London: Methuen and Co., 1901.
- Yajima, Hikoichi. *The Arab Dhow Trade in the Indian Ocean: Preliminary Report*. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1976.
- Yamba, C. Bawa. *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.
- Young, John. *The Eastern Front and the Struggle against Marginalization*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2007.
- Young, W. C. *The Rashaayda Bedouin: Arab Pastoralists of Eastern Sudan*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996.
- Zaborski, A. 'Notes on the Mediaeval History of the Beja Tribes.' *Folia Orientalia* 7 (1965) 289–307.
- Zaghloul, Sohair, Mohamed El-Moattassem, and Ahmed A. Rady. 'The Hydrological Interactions between Atbarar River and the Main Nile at the Confluence Area.' *International Congress on River Basin Management. Proceedings of the International Congress of Water Basin Management. DSI and WWC, Antalya, Turkey* (2007) 787–799.
- Zewde, Bahru. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855–1991*. 2nd edition. Oxford: James Currey, 2001.

# INDEX<sup>1</sup>

## A

Abdallah Shaihim, 84  
 Addis Ababa, 6, 116, 116n53, 133, 154, 156  
 Ad Shaykh, 49, 52, 53, 68, 69  
 Ad Takles, 44  
 Ad Tamaryam, 44  
 Aden, 4, 6, 42n32, 65n29, 70, 84n25, 94, 124n95, 134, 136, 136n20, 137, 137n21, 138n27–30  
 Afar, ix, 7, 7n17, 8, 12, 19, 29, 45, 45n37, 62, 79, 84, 89, 110–112, 124, 124n95, 125, 138, 141, 152–157, 159, 167, 169, 170, 173, 174, 176  
 Afar People's Democratic Organization, 173  
 Afar People's Liberation Front, 173  
 Afar Triangle, 8, 14  
*See also* Danakil Depression

## Africa

climatological conditions, 32, 35, 38, 144n52  
 communal structures, 28, 110, 121n77  
 history of poverty, 11, 25  
 spread of rinderpest, 91, 92, 92n50  
 territorial boundaries, 110  
*See also* African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL); Horn of Africa  
 African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL)  
 communal divisions, 11  
 cultivation, 2, 7, 15, 18, 26, 38, 47, 71, 76, 94, 142, 144, 146, 162  
 definition, 24  
 ecological conditions, 29, 128, 132, 162  
 economy, 3, 23, 99, 104, 165, 170, 177  
 impoverishment, 3, 4, 31, 177

<sup>1</sup>Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.



- African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL) (*cont.*)  
 political structures, 21, 73, 171  
 violence, 7, 38, 76, 82, 90, 142,  
 157, 171, 174
- Ahmad Mahmud, 97–99
- Ali Mirah Hanfare, 169, 172–173
- Ali Birkeet, 83
- Al-Amin bin Hamid Bin Naf, 49
- Amolé*, 19, 138
- Animal diseases, 25, 26, 77, 90, 91,  
 101, 102, 160  
*See also* Anthrax; Cowpox;  
 Rinderpest
- Ankobbar, 51, 62
- Anseba (river), 15, 161, 162
- Anthrax, 26
- Anthropocene, 25
- Arabia, 4, 6, 27, 35, 38, 40,  
 50, 70n45, 113, 121, 124,  
 125, 152  
 during Little Ice Age mega-drought,  
 25, 26, 31, 32, 35–43, 55, 67,  
 105, 132, 166, 177
- Arkiko, 20, 21, 66, 67
- Arms, 8, 27, 63, 66, 76, 77, 82, 85,  
 86, 89, 89n42, 90, 112, 125,  
 125n100, 137, 138, 171  
 trade, 89n42, 125n100
- Asmara, 6, 116n52, 117, 135,  
 135n12
- Assab, 20, 84, 87, 88, 108, 119, 174
- Aswan Dam, 32
- Atbara (town), 15, 38, 119
- Atbara River, 1, 33, 33n2, 37, 168
- Australia, 138
- Awash River, 15, 16, 124, 168, 169
- Awash River Valley, 4, 7, 94, 104, 161,  
 169, 170, 172, 176
- B**
- Bab al-Mandeb, 76
- Bahr al-Ghazal (river), 32
- Bahr al-Jabal, 32
- Bait Asgade, 43, 44
- Balaw, 66
- Banditry, 7, 64, 171  
*See also Shifita*
- Baqqara, 86, 86n33
- Baraka*, 42, 47–49, 53, 56, 82
- Barbar (city), 20, 65n29
- Barka (river), 15, 83, 143, 161, 162,  
 168, 169
- Battle of Aduwa, 76
- Battle of al-Jummayza, 87
- Beja, v, ix, 2n2, 3, 9n22, 12, 12n26,  
 37, 44, 45, 59, 60, 66, 149, 158,  
 174, 175, 176n41  
*See also* Bisharin; Fadlab Amara;  
 Hadendowa; Halenga;  
 Militkinab; Segolab; Tu-Bedawi
- Beja Congress, 174, 175
- Beni Amer, 12, 37, 43, 44, 49, 59–61,  
 83, 101, 110, 114
- Berber (province), 131
- Berlin Conference, 106
- Bisharin, 12, 37
- Bishariyyab Hadendowa, 78
- Blue Nile, 15, 33, 116n51
- Britain  
 in Egypt, 75, 82, 82n18, 83, 85,  
 87, 107, 134, 139, 140,  
 140n34  
 imperial expansion, 63, 107, 133  
 involvement in pastoralist civil war, 94  
 military, 2, 8, 83, 140n34, 168,  
 171, 171n20  
 policy on slavery, 52, 93, 120,  
 122, 126  
 rule in Eritrea, 114, 123, 174  
 rule in Sudan, 94, 96–97, 107, 108,  
 113, 115, 139–141, 147,  
 149–151, 158  
 subventions to Hijazi rulers, 120,  
 122, 152, 153
- Burckhardt, John Lewis, 18, 18n34
- Butter, 2  
*See also* Ghee

## C

- Cairo, 32, 43n33, 46, 52n58, 82, 106, 107, 176n41
- Camels, 2n2, 19–21, 64, 69, 89, 93, 95, 103–105, 114, 119, 125–127, 167, 169, 175
- Caravans, 4, 19–21, 38, 42, 50n51, 61, 62, 64, 67, 69, 71, 81, 85, 88, 89, 104, 105, 118, 119, 125, 155
- routes, 19, 20, 79–81
- Cattle, 18, 21, 26, 64, 77, 86, 90–95, 99, 101–104, 102n5, 114, 123, 126, 127, 127n109, 135, 136, 140, 140n34, 141, 160, 167, 169, 175
- See also* Rinderpest
- Charcoal, 6, 169
- Cheese, 2
- Chermside, Herbert, 85
- China, 117, 138
- Christianity, 35, 43
- Climate change, 11, 11n25, 24, 25
- See also* Anthropocene; Little Ice Age
- Compagnia Mineraria Coloniale, 150
- Congo, Democratic Republic of, 32
- Côte Française des Somalis (CFS), 76, 84n25, 105, 111, 123–125, 124n95, 133, 134, 136–138, 136n20, 138n27–30, 140, 154, 157, 159, 159n116, 170
- Cotton, 19n36, 72, 142–151, 144n52, 161, 162, 168, 169
- Cowpox, 26
- Cultivation
- crops, 6, 11n25, 17, 21, 39, 50, 51, 128, 134, 135, 142–144, 146, 149, 162
- techniques, 17, 17n32, 18, 26, 27, 144, 146, 147
- Currencies, 19n36, 96n71, 102, 137, 138, 170, 170n17, 171
- See also* Amolé; Gold; Silver
- Customs duties, 66, 88

## D

- al-Damar, 47, 48
- Danakil Depression, 14, 19, 138
- Darfür, 17
- Daru, 47
- Dates, 18, 19, 21
- Debt, 39, 139, 151, 170
- Deforestation, 9, 169
- Derg*, 170, 173
- Desertification, 6, 10n24, 169
- Dhows, 70, 70n43, 70n44, 94, 124, 124n95, 137
- See also* Ships
- al-Din, Muhammad, 37, 58, 59
- Dinqa, Uthman, 75, 78, 80, 98, 108, 112
- Diriyah, 40
- Djibouti (city)
- arms trade through, 89n42
- transportation facilities, 115
- during wartime, 140
- Djibouti (country), 11, 170, 171, 171n19, 174
- political violence, 174
- See also* Côte Française des Somalis (CFS); *Territoire français des Afars et des Issas*
- Donkeys, 93
- Drought
- 1925–1927, 141, 148
- 1969–1970, 169
- ‘Little Ice Age’ mega-drought, 26, 31, 32, 35–43, 55, 67, 105, 132, 166, 177
- during the Second World War, 26, 29, 160, 162

## E

- Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, 175
- Edd, 67
- Egypt
- British rule in, 75, 82, 82n18, 83, 87, 107, 140

Egypt (*cont.*)

- imperial expansion, 27, 62, 166
- during the Little Ice Age, 31
- relationship with religious leaders, 60, 75
- rule in Northern Sudan, 50, 50n51
- rule on the African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL), 27, 32, 140
- withdrawal from its African empire, 75, 82

## Eritrea

- British rule, 161
- domestic animal population, 102n5, 126
- economic conditions, 29, 136, 147, 149n81, 171, 175
- environmental conditions, 35
- Ethiopian rule, 173, 174
- highlands, 1, 6, 15, 32–35, 62, 75, 92, 116, 116n52, 117, 120, 127, 127n109, 141, 175
- independence movements, 7, 170, 172, 173
- Italian rule, 76, 94, 114, 120, 121, 123, 134, 158, 161, 168
- slavery, 120–122

## Eritrean Liberation Front, 172

## Eritrean People's Liberation Forces, 172

## Ethiopia

- Afar separatist movements, 173, 174
- cultivation, 123n91
- Eritrean independence movements, 170
- European colonial designs for, 84
- highlands, 4, 5, 15, 19, 51, 52, 62, 65n29, 76, 83, 89n42, 92–94, 101, 106, 106n19, 117, 142
- Italian rule, 76, 84, 106n19, 119, 122, 167

- political conditions, 38, 133, 171
- rule on the African Red Sea Littoral (ARSL), 1, 11, 34, 67
- slavery, 29, 152
- trade, 34, 50, 76, 84, 116n53, 124, 138, 152, 156

## F

- Fadlab Amarar, 12, 20, 21, 64, 81, 85, 97–99, 151, 160, 168, 170n16

*Fakir*, 60

## Famine

- in 1835–1837, 51, 56
- in 1889–1892, 92n50
- in 1913–1914, 132
- in 1925–1927, 132
- in 1934–1935, 132
- in 1947–1949, 29
- in 1948–1949, 168
- in 1972–1974, 29
- during the Little Ice Age mega-drought, 132
- during the second world war, 8

## Fez, 46

- First World War, 116n51, 116n52, 133–142, 146, 152, 155, 162

## Fisan Island, 121

## France

- arms trade to Red Sea, 89, 125, 137
- imperial expansion, 167
- rule on the African Red Sea Littoral, 28, 77, 84, 87–89, 105, 106, 157
- slavery policy, 119, 124, 124n95

*Front révolutionnaire pour l'unité et la démocratie*, 174

## Fruits, 6, 18, 162, 167–169

- Funj Sultanate, 39, 44, 47, 50, 50–51n51, 51, 56, 60, 61

## G

- Gash (river), 15, 145, 168, 169
- Gash Delta, 37, 38, 38n17, 57, 58, 71, 72, 78, 131, 145, 148, 150, 151, 176n41
- Germany, 133, 157
- Ghee, 18, 26
- Goats, 2n2, 18, 21, 64, 95, 103–105, 114, 126, 127, 160, 167, 175
- Gobad (Sultanate), 89
- Gold, 50n51, 137
- Grain
  - cultivation, 5, 71, 72, 122, 143, 145, 162
  - trade, 5, 70, 94, 133–136, 141
  - yields, 38, 39, 50, 93, 94, 117, 127, 127n109, 162
- See also* Sorghum; Wheat
- Gulf of Aden, 4, 42n32, 65n29
- Gulf of Tadjoura, 1

## H

- Habab, 12, 44, 68, 69, 88, 106, 108–110, 114, 115
- Haddas (river), 15, 150
- Hadendowa, 12, 20, 37, 58–61, 64, 65, 72, 78, 87, 110, 115, 121, 122, 145, 149, 158
- Haile Selassie, 19n36, 172
- Hajj, 4, 40, 41, 153
- Halenga, 37
- Hamad Darib Karti, 97, 98
- Hamad Mahmud, 64
- Hamad Umrans Isa, 37
- Handub, 97–99, 108
- Harar, 62, 96, 133
- Hides, 18, 26
- Hijaz, 40, 40n26, 41, 46, 47, 56, 66, 67, 70, 71, 119, 120, 139, 152, 152n92, 153

Honey, 18

Horn of Africa, 1, 2, 42n32, 175

Horses, 93

## I

- Ibn Idris al-Fasi, Ahmad, 46
- Ibn Saud, Muhammad, 40
- Ibrahim ben Ahmad, 84
- Ibrahim wad Mahmud, 122
- Idris walad Uthman, 67, 68
- Iliffe, John, 10
- India
  - British colonial government, 133–134, 137
  - cotton exports, 161
  - demand for silver, 137
  - grain exports Southern Red Sea markets, 41
  - merchants in the Southern Red Sea, 41, 42n32, 69–71
- Indian Ocean
  - maritime communications in, 4
  - monsoons, 3, 19, 26
  - trade across, 5, 19, 69
- Indigo, 51
- Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), 34–36, 35n6
- Irkawit, 37, 64
- Irrigation, 17, 32, 50, 51, 93, 148
- Islam, 27, 35, 36, 40, 43–45, 49, 50, 52, 55, 66, 68
  - political role of religious leaders, 27, 28, 56–57, 60, 64, 68, 90, 113–114, 131, 162–163, 166
- See also* Maliki School of Islamic Jurisprudence; Sufism
- Istanbul, 41n27, 43n33, 46
- Italy
  - military, 26, 92, 157, 158

Italy (*cont.*)

- rule in the African Red Sea Littoral,  
75, 106, 112, 113, 121
- slavery policy, 120

## J

*Jihad*, 75, 78

## K

- al-Kamlin, 51
- Kassala, 6, 58, 64, 82, 83, 86, 98,  
101, 107n22, 108, 112, 113,  
116n51, 118, 157, 158, 168
- Kassala Cotton Corporation (KCC),  
58n4, 148–150
- Khartoum, 6, 43n33, 58, 59, 106,  
116n51, 118, 118n59, 131,  
148, 170n16
- Khatmiyya Sufi Brotherhood, 52, 83,  
114, 131
- formation, 46, 49, 73
- incorporation into the colonial state,  
64–65, 69, 73, 76, 78, 82,  
113–114
- in Post-independence politics, 174

## L

- Lake Abijatta, 34
- Lake Albert, 32
- Lake Kyoga, 32
- Lake Malawi, 34
- Lake No, 32
- Lake Tanganyika, 34, 34n4
- Lake Victoria, 32, 34n4
- Leather goods, 18
- See also* Hides; Shields; Shoes; Water  
bladders
- Libya, 2

## Little Ice Age, 25

- mega-drought (*see* Drought)
- Locusts, 1–3, 24, 128, 134, 141, 142,  
146, 160, 161

## M

- Madagascar, 117, 138, 154, 155
- Magdala, 63
- Mahdist Rebellion, 75, 81, 127n109,  
139
- Mahmud Ali, 64, 85, 86, 97
- Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhood,  
46–49, 52, 53, 78
- al-Majdhub al-Sughayyir, Muhammad,  
47, 47n43, 48, 48n45
- al-Majdhub, Tahir al-Tayyib, 78
- Maliki* School of Islamic  
Jurisprudence, 47
- Marchi, Ezio, 94n60, 104n15, 129,  
129n124, 144n56
- Mareb (river), 15
- See also* Gash (river)
- Marseille, 117
- Massawa
- under Italian colonial control, 96, 106
- in the Ottoman Empire, 61, 63, 65,  
66, 68
- trade, 20, 61, 66, 70, 80, 81, 94,  
117, 118
- Mecca, ix, 4, 40, 40n26, 46, 46n39,  
48, 67, 71, 82, 152, 152n92, 153
- Medina, 4, 40, 71
- Mediterranean basin, 3–4, 50
- Messageries Maritimes*, 117
- Middle East, 25, 46
- See also* Arabia; Egypt; Turkey; Yemen
- Migration, 9n22, 37, 42n32, 95, 96, 109
- See also* Refugees
- Milan, 93n56, 158n110
- Militkinab, 37

Milk, 2, 3, 26, 91, 102  
 al-Mirghani, Ali, 113, 131  
 al-Mirghani, al-Hasan, 47  
 al-Mirghani, Jafar, 114  
 al-Mirghani, Muhammad Uthman,  
   46–48, 47n40  
 al-Mirghani, Uthman Taj al-Sirr,  
   82, 85  
 Morocco, 46  
*Mouvement de libération de Djibouti*, 173  
 Muhammad Abd al-Rahim, 67  
 Muhammad Ahmad (al-Mahdi),  
   43n33, 75  
 Muhammad Ali, 50, 50–51n51, 52,  
   56, 152n92  
 Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, 40, 46  
 Mules, 93

## N

Nafir ibn Mahmud, 98, 99  
 Najdi, 40  
 National Bank of Egypt, 143, 144  
 National Unionist Party, 174  
 Nile

  archival records of floods, 32  
   cataracts, 4, 61  
   floods, 15, 33, 50, 139  
   markets and towns along, 120

## O

Obelites, 172  
 Obock, 20, 84, 84n25, 87–89, 111,  
   112  
 Ogaden, 4  
 Oromo people, 52  
 Ottoman Empire  
   in the African Red Sea Littoral, 65  
   in Egypt, 65, 83  
   in the Hijaz, 61n13, 66

## P

Paleoclimatology, 34, 34n5  
 Pastoralists, 2  
   communal structures, 28, 110  
   conceptions of history, 24  
   cultivation, 2, 6, 7, 9n22, 17, 18,  
     53, 71, 72, 76, 94, 143–147,  
     149, 161, 163  
   diets, 2  
   economic strategies, 17, 21, 26, 42,  
     76, 151, 162  
   herd management techniques, 18, 127  
   marriage, 48  
   patterns of human-environment  
     interaction, 35, 42, 166  
   political violence, 174  
   population collapse in early 1890s,  
     26, 99  
   relations with foreign rulers, 105  
   religion, 45  
   sedentarization, 6, 9, 10n24, 146  
   territorial boundaries, 110  
   transhumance patterns, 15  
   *See also* Pastures; Raiding  
 Pastures  
   access, 7, 28, 161  
   drought reserves, 7, 16, 28, 35, 37,  
     144, 148, 151, 161, 162, 165,  
     167, 168, 172  
 Pearl diving, 5, 121  
 People's Liberation Forces, 172  
 Pilgrimage, *see* Hajj  
 Ploughs, 26, 93  
 Ports, 2, 4, 6, 9n22, 14, 16, 19–21,  
   29, 41, 42n32, 44, 45, 61, 63,  
   65n29, 66, 67, 69–73, 70n44,  
   70n45, 77, 79–81, 84, 84n25,  
   85, 87, 88, 89n42, 92, 94, 96,  
   106, 111–113, 116–121,  
   116n51, 116n53, 124, 125, 137,  
   140, 140n34, 151, 154, 157, 174

Ports (*cont.*)

*See also* Arkiko; Assab; Djibouti (city);  
Massawa; Obock; Port Sudan;  
Sawakin; Tadjourah (city)

Port Sudan, ix, 2, 6, 8n20, 9, 9n22,  
9n23, 116, 117, 119, 140, 151,  
152n91, 170n16

## Poverty

definition, 3, 11, 23, 24, 176  
history in Africa, 10, 11  
among pastoralists, 3, 10, 11,  
23–29, 105, 127, 157, 175  
and resiliency, 24, 29

## R

Raheita (sultanate), 110

Raiding, 8, 36–38, 52, 57, 62,  
77, 90, 99, 101, 120, 122,  
123, 155

Rain, 1, 5, 15, 32, 33, 36, 47, 52, 92,  
139, 141, 167, 168

Ras Kassar, 106

Ras Tafari Makonnen, *see* Haile Selassie

Rashayda, 121, 121n77

Rawdah Nilometer, 33, 34

Red Sea, 1, 3, 4, 6, 14, 15, 19, 22,  
22n44, 36, 37, 41, 42n32, 59,  
61, 62, 70n44, 70n45, 77, 81,  
84, 84n25, 88, 89, 92, 95, 101,  
115, 116n51, 117–120, 123,  
134, 137–140, 153, 158

*See also* African Red Sea Littoral  
(ARSL); Southern Red Sea  
Region (SRSR)

Refugees, 2, 95–98, 96n67, 172,  
175, 176

Rift Valley, 34, 88

Rinderpest, 25, 26, 28, 77, 90–94,  
92n50, 99, 101–104, 108,  
124n91, 126, 127, 127n109,  
142, 167

Rivers, 1, 5, 6, 15–17, 21, 32, 33,  
35–37, 42, 58, 58n4, 61, 91, 92,  
107, 116n51, 146, 147, 149,  
150, 161, 162, 169

Roman Empire, 32

## S

Saho, ix, 12

Salt, 3, 18, 19, 19n36, 21, 42, 84, 138

*See also* Amolé

Saudi Arabia, 4, 40n26

*See also* Arabia; Hijaz; Najd;  
Saudi-Wahhabi Emirate

Saudi-Wahhabi Emirate, 40

Sawakin, ix, 18, 20, 21, 48, 48n45,  
61, 64–66, 69, 70, 78–82, 85–87,  
94, 96–99, 106–108, 106n19,  
107n22, 112, 116, 118, 119,  
119n66

Second World War, 1, 3, 6–8, 26, 29,  
132, 153, 157–163, 167, 171

Segolab, 37

Sellassie, Sahle, 51, 52, 62

Sen, Amartya, 23, 23n47, 24

Serfs, 43, 44, 49, 68

Shewa, 51, 52, 62, 88, 106n19

Shields, 18

*Shifta*, 39, 62

Shinab, 80

Ships, 4, 19, 41, 62, 67, 69, 70, 117,  
118, 121, 125, 140, 159n116

*See also* Dhows; Steamships

Shipyards, 61

Shoes, 18

Shukriyya, 168

Silver, 137, 138

Sinkat, 6, 14, 64

Sinnar, 39, 51, 51n51

Slavery, 52, 58, 59, 62, 86, 93, 139  
maritime trade, 80, 119, 123, 124,  
137, 152–153

pastoralist participation in trade in,  
29, 77, 121–124, 154  
under colonial rule, 119, 124, 125  
*Società Imprese Africane* (SIA), 150,  
151, 161, 162  
*Società Imprese Coloniali Caramelli &  
Co.*, 150  
*Società Italiana di Prodotti Alimentari  
'L. Torrigani*, 135  
*Società per la Coltivazione del Cotone  
nell'Eritrea* (SCCE), 143–146,  
144n52  
Società Rubattino, 84  
Soil erosion, 169  
Somali (people), 62, 65n29, 137,  
154–156, 159, 173  
Somaliland, 112n38, 124n93  
Sorghum, 3, 17, 70n45, 96, 134,  
138–140, 146, 149, 162  
Southern Red Sea Region (SRSR),  
3–5, 18–20, 26, 27, 32, 35, 38,  
40–42, 42n32, 44, 62, 69–71,  
70n43, 70n45, 77, 81, 83, 88,  
107, 111, 121, 136, 137, 141,  
157, 166  
South Sudan, 32  
Steamships, 70, 84n25, 88, 117, 120  
Sudan  
Anglo-Egyptian rule, 105, 108,  
111, 113, 145, 148n72  
cultivation, 51, 117, 119, 122  
Eastern Sudan, 1–3, 8, 15, 20, 44,  
45, 47, 48, 56–62, 64–66, 68,  
75, 78–83, 85–87, 92, 92n50,  
94, 101, 104, 108, 112, 114,  
115, 118, 120, 122, 126, 140,  
141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 157,  
158, 168, 172, 174–176  
Mahdist rule, 82, 113, 122  
Northern Nilotic Sudan, 51, 56, 57,  
60, 61, 75, 87n33, 93, 94,  
119, 122, 139

post-independence state, 168, 170,  
174, 175  
trade, 36, 50, 61, 62, 80, 81, 122,  
123, 140n34, 170n17  
Turko-Egyptian rule, 27, 57–61,  
65n29, 68, 73, 75, 78, 113, 126  
*See also* Funj Sultanate; Mahdist  
Rebellion  
Sufism, 27, 36, 42–53, 43n33, 60, 82  
*See also* Khatmiyya Sufi brotherhood;  
Majdhubiyya Sufi brotherhood  
Sugar, 18, 51, 117, 167, 168  
Swahili coast, 41

## T

Tadjoura (city), 1, 92, 111, 112, 124,  
125, 154, 155  
Tadjoura (sultanate), 111  
Tawkar (city), ix, 64, 81, 86, 107n22,  
112, 143, 144, 150  
Tawkar Delta, 16, 72, 79, 81, 86,  
107–109, 142, 143, 146, 151, 158  
Taxes, 33, 39, 97  
Tendaho Plantation Share Company, 168  
*Territoire français des Afars et des  
Issas*, 170  
Tessenei, 116n52, 150, 151, 161, 162  
Tewodros II, 62, 63  
Tigray, 52, 101, 175  
Trade  
within the African Red Sea Littoral,  
14, 81  
goods, 41  
passing through the African Red Sea  
Littoral, 62  
*See also* Arms; Caravans; Grain;  
Slavery  
Tribute, 43, 56–58, 61, 63–65,  
67–69, 71–73, 79, 89, 89n41,  
108, 111, 114, 115  
Tu-Bedawi, ix, 3, 45



**U**

Uganda, 32  
*Ulama*, 60  
 Umm Durman, 86n33, 93, 113  
 United States (US), 161, 171,  
 171n19

**W**

Wage labor, 151, 158, 170  
 Wailali Muhammad, 37  
 Water bladders, 18, 42  
 Water wheels, 26, 93  
 West African immigrants, 131  
 Wheat, 70n45, 128, 168  
 White Nile, 32, 33, 75

Wokiro, 15

World Bank, 24, 170

**Y**

Yahyou, Muhammad, 155  
 Yemen, 4, 5, 38–41, 65n29  
 Yemeni migrants, 5, 137  
 Yohannes IV, 63

**Z**

Zeila, 88  
 Zewditu, 133  
 Ziway-Shala Basin, 34  
 Zula, 101, 147, 150