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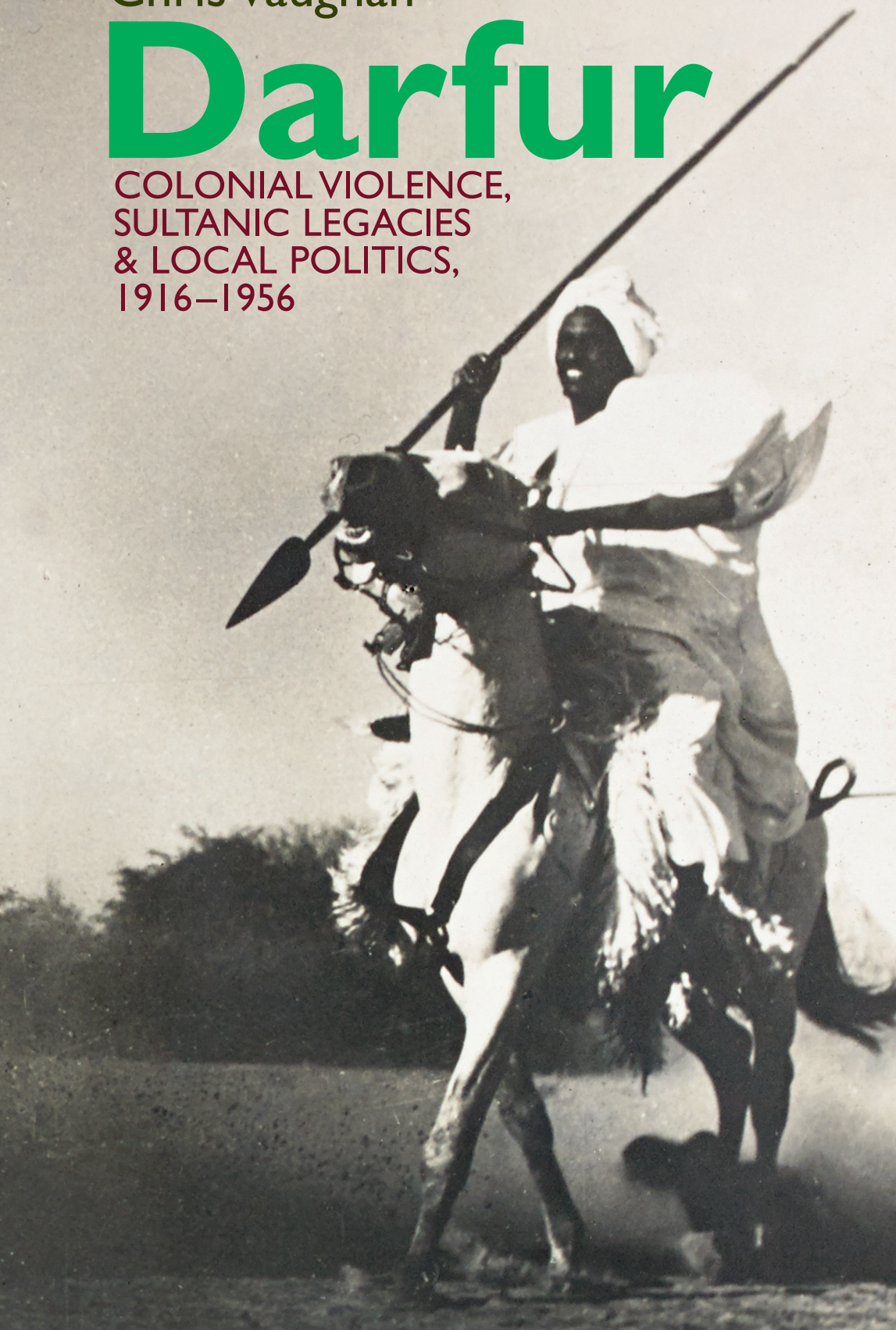
Darfur

COLONIAL VIOLENCE, SULTANIC LEGACIES & LOCAL POLITICS, 1916–1956

Eastern Africa Series

DARFUR

Eastern Africa Series

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Dedication

For Eunice, Alan, Vanja and Mila

Contents

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Abbreviations

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
CIVSEC	Civil Secretary
DC	District Commissioner
DPMD	Darfur Province Monthly Diaries
£E	Egyptian Pounds
FEA	French Equatorial Africa
NDD	Northern Darfur District
NDDMD	Northern Darfur District Monthly Diary
NRO	National Records Office, Khartoum
RHL	Rhodes House Library, Oxford
SAD	Sudan Archive, Durham
SAR	Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi
SDD	Southern Darfur District
TNA	The National Archives, London
WAC	Western Arab Corps
WDD	Western Darfur District

Glossary

aba diimang	hereditary governor of the southwest province of Darfur under the Sultans
Abbala	camel-keeping Arab peoples
abbo uumo	hereditary governor of the southeastern province
'abd, abid (pl.)	slave
agawid	elders, mediators; sometimes used by the colonial administration to refer to chiefs participating in inter-tribal mediation efforts.
angarib	rope bed
awaid	customs
Baqqara	cattle-keeping Arab peoples
bey	Turco-Egyptian official/chief
dar	abode, land, territory: under Condominium rule, an ethnic homeland, in which the majority ethnic group had dominant rights.
dimlij	sub-chief in central and northern Darfur
diya	blood-money
durra	sorghum
effendi	educated man; often used in derogatory way by colonial officials
falagna	agent
faqih	holy man (*fiki* in Condominium documents)
fashir	royal residence
feriq	Baqqara cattle camp
fitr	Islamic due
firsha	district chief among Masalit
genabek	form of address, 'your honour'
goz	area of stabilized sand dunes in Central, Eastern and Southern Darfur districts
hafir	water-yard, underground reservoir
hakim	governor
hakura	land, estate
hakuma	government
jallaba	in Darfur refers to riverine traders (*gellaba* in some Condominium documents)

jibba	Muslim robe for men
jizzu	seasonal grazing in the northern desert
khashm beits	lineage segments
kuttab	government elementary school
majlis	council, often used for meetings or gatherings involving local elites and officials
malik	king, title for paramount chief common in Northern Darfur
mandub	agent
maqdum	viceroy
marissa	beer
markaz	district headquarters
muawin	subordinate administrative government official
mudiriyya	sub-province
mulahiz	police inspector
murasla	messenger
nahas	copper kettle drums, symbol of autonomous leadership
nas	ordinary people/subjects
nazir	paramount chief, used of Baqqara leaders
qadi	judge of Islamic law
shaibas	wooden neck restraints for prisoners
sharia	Islamic law
shartay	district chief, in central and northern Darfur
shaykh	chief, in Darfur usually referring to village-level chiefs
sid al-awaid	master of the customs
sulh	peace
sulta	powers
umda	sub-chief
wadi	seasonal river, riverbed
wakil	deputy
zariba	a thorn enclosure, camp
zeka	Islamic due
zol	ordinary man
zalim	oppressor
zulm	oppression
zurug	dark blue, black

CHAD

Dongola

NORTHERN

TEIGA PLATEAU

MEIDOB HILLS

ZAGHAWA

Galla

IRAYQAT

Tuar

Kobe

Artag

MAHAMID

MAHRIYYA

MEIDOB

Wadi Hawar

ZAYYADIYYA

QIMR

BANI HUSAYN

Kuttum

BERTI

Mellit

DAR MASALIT

Adre

Geneina

FUR

El Fasher

Umm Kedada

BERTI

Dar Kerne

Wadi Kaja

MASALIT

JABAL MARRA

Lewing

EASTERN

Zalingei

BIRGID

Wadi Azum

FUR

FUR

MISSIRIYYA

Kordofan

WESTERN

DAJU

Nyala

BANI HALBA

SOUTHERN

FALLATA

MA'ALIA

MASALIT

Kubbe

Buram

HABBANIYYA

RIZAYQAT

TA'AISHA

UBANGI-SHARI

Bahr al-Arab

0 kilometres 100

Bahr al-Ghazal

17°

16°

15°

14°

13°

12°

11°

10°

9°N

22°E   23°   24°   25°   26°   27°

Map of Darfur showing colonial administrative divisions and approximate locations of ethnic groups

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Introduction

Graham Dudley Lampen first set foot in Khartoum at the age of a mere 23. He was soon to join the Sudan Political Service, the corps of British officials governing Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.[1] The capital was a disappointment: Lampen recalled in his memoirs that it was 'sadly unlike an Arab city of my imagination with imposing mosques or elegant minarets'. That night, restlessly anticipating his future, Lampen pored over his map of Sudan. His memoirs claimed 'my eye was caught by a province called Darfur where large tracts were marked unexplored or uninhabited forest.' The far north of the province met the Libyan desert and showed only 'a few dotted tracks and wells of which many had a question mark beside their names'. This was apparently enough to ignite Lampen's imagination: Darfur…

> seemed the kind of place I had hoped to find in Sudan. Pioneering, little office work and much trekking, independence of command, no telephones and few telegraph lines, no cars, no bridge or tennis parties or dance nights at the Club…. If I had come to the Sudan not to lead a comfortable town life and carry out local regulations and try the petty criminals, but to rule someone – and I fear this was my undemocratic wish – Darfur seemed to call me![2]

This anecdotal material encapsulates the perceptions that shaped colonial governance in Darfur under the British. This region of western Sudan was remote from the centre of colonial power in Khartoum; and

[1] As an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, Sudan was ruled by British officials nominally on behalf of the King of Egypt, but practically under British direction in a manner very similar to that employed in British colonial territories elsewhere in Africa. Lampen served in Darfur as Assistant District Commissioner in Northern Darfur 1924–1926, Assistant Resident in Dar Masalit in 1927, Assistant District Commissioner Baggara between 1927 and 1929, District Commissioner Southern Darfur District 1930–1932. He later returned to Darfur as Governor between 1944 and 1949.

[2] Lampen memoirs, SAD 735/1/3. This aloof attitude towards the capital and to colonial social life was probably widely shared: Lampen's sentiments are strikingly similar to those expressed by Harold MacMichael, future Civil Secretary of the Condominium government, on his own arrival in Sudan. See M.W. Daly, 'Great white chief: H.A. MacMichael and the tribes of Kordofan' in E. Stiansen and M. Kevane (eds), *Kordofan Invaded* (Boston, 1998), pp. 102–103.

in the British imagination, therefore also isolated and removed from the modern world. Elsewhere in his memoirs, Lampen wrote of his later return from leave in England to southern Darfur and his first subsequent meeting with Ibrahim Musa Madibbu, *nazir* (paramount chief) of the Rizayqat Baqqara nomads, and his retainers:

> They dismounted in dead silence while the Nazir grasped me by the hand: *Kaif Halaf…* the well known greetings were soothing to my ear and plunged me from London, Europe and the twentieth century straight back into the timeless desert life. The thick bush closed behind me and shut me off from Western Civilisation like a soundproof door.[3]

This imagining of Darfur as a land outside of time itself is an extreme version of a very common motif in representations of the region: even the best recent account of Darfur's history proclaims it to be 'set apart: huge, remote and poverty stricken'.[4] This conception of Darfur as a vast backwater justified its under-development in the colonial period and its continued economic and political marginalization after independence: it continues to shape much political, journalistic and scholarly analysis of the region.

Yet this is also a land with a deep history of independent statehood that dates back to at least the late 17th century. The power of the Muslim Sultans of Darfur rested on their control of long-distance trade routes, and in particular the export of slaves to Egypt along the so-called 'Forty Days Road' that crossed the Sahara.[5] Darfur was also an important stopping point on the long-distance pilgrimage route from West Africa to Mecca. It is home to a complex overlapping range of ethnic groups, pursuing shifting, dynamic livelihood strategies in an environment that presents significant challenges for individuals and communities. Camel and cattle herders (broadly of the north and south of the region) exchange their animals and animal products for food crops grown by cultivators especially in western areas of the region: trade and inter-marriage connect ethnic groups. Peoples move through the various ecological zones of Darfur according to the seasons and rainfall.

In other words, Darfur was never the isolated, static backwater of the British (and post-colonial) imagination. And despite clichés of unexplored, blank space on a map, the British governing Darfur were attempting to impose colonial rule on a region of considerable dynamism and political sophistication. These simple facts had far-reaching implications for the character of colonial governance in Darfur, explored in depth for the first time in this book. The British conquered Darfur in 1916 as a supposedly defensive measure in the midst of World War I. Conquest forestalled the much reported (and highly improbable) chance of the Darfur Sultan joining the Ottoman war effort – more significantly it also decisively incorporated the region into Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Yet what followed was not a straightforward history of colonial

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[3] Ibid., SAD 734/10/5.
[4] M. Daly, *Darfur's Sorrow* (Cambridge, 2008), back cover.
[5] T. Walz, *The Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan, 1700–1820* (Paris, 1978).

domination. Whilst the British ruled Darfur in sometimes brutal and violent fashion, local actors, especially the emergent chieftaincy elite, negotiated the terms of their subordination to state power. More than this, these actors shaped the practices and orders of the state at a local level, drawing on a deeper history of 'dealing with government'.[6] Colonial officials were indeed 'plunged' into a complex local political environment of which they often understood rather little and, as Lampen's account suggests, local elites took them by the hand in their attempts to turn the alien power of colonialism to their advantage.

THE PAST OF THE PRESENT

The character of the colonial state and the manner of its rule in Darfur is a topic of more than purely historical consequence: significant continuities and parallels may be drawn between the dynamics of power and authority in the colonial period, and those of Darfur's more contemporary politics and conflicts. Since 2003–4, Darfur has been embroiled in continuing conflict and disorder. By 2015, the level of violence had much reduced from the earliest years of the crisis, which was characterized by many observers as genocide, but peace remained difficult to imagine. Outright rebellion against government in 2003 – the first in Darfur since the early colonial period – by rebel groups denouncing their marginalization in Sudanese politics, prompted a counter-insurgency which led to massive levels of death and displacement. Darfur's rebellion became a war between its various peoples, as Khartoum armed local militias to target the ethnic groups deemed to be supporters of the rebels. Whilst rebel movements subsequently fragmented and consequently became less effective opponents of government, the Government of Sudan has also been entirely unable to rebuild stable governance arrangements in the region, partly because of its inability to control the local militias that it had itself armed.

Existing accounts of the historical roots of the crisis in Darfur often emphasize the significance of colonialism in underdeveloping Darfur relative to the centres of wealth and power in riverine Sudan. They argue this entrenched the marginalization of the region in post-colonial Sudanese politics that finally resulted in the rebellion of 2003.[7] Alternatively, Mahmood Mamdani has recently attempted to locate the roots of conflict among Darfur's peoples in what he terms the 'retribalisation' of Darfur by the British, in particular the way they defined land rights in collective, ethnic terms, and the exclusion of certain groups from those rights to land who later became easily recruited into government militias.[8]

[6] C. Leonardi, *Dealing with Government in South Sudan: Histories of chiefship, community and state* (Oxford, 2013).
[7] Daly, *Sorrow*, p. 157, 162–171, 184. The classic statement of Sudan's core-periphery political geography is given in D. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2003).
[8] M. Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, politics and the war on terror* (New York, 2009).

This work eschews the search for definitive root causes of the conflict in the colonial past: it does, however, argue for the significance of colonial (and indeed precolonial) political dynamics in understanding more recent events – both by excavating the history of state violence in the region, pointing to a deep history of intimidation and predation which recent government policy has emerged from, whilst also emphasizing the significance of local initiative in shaping or deflecting state interventions. As well as a dangerous and unpredictable coercive force, the state might also be a usable resource for local actors willing to take a chance in approaching government.[9] Indeed, the violence of the state might itself become a resource for local elites. Alongside the use of its own military technologies and armies, the colonial state also facilitated and licensed the violence of particular local groups and individuals, whatever its rhetoric of bringing peace and order to Darfur. This is one of the most striking parallels to more recent violence in Darfur, which has so often been inflicted on people as a joint enterprise between the state military and semi-formal locally recruited militias – as was also the case in southern Sudan during the 1980s and 1990s. What might be termed the outsourcing of violence, or 'counterinsurgency on the cheap' was not dreamt up by uniquely evil minds in Khartoum in the 1980s and onwards: rather it was a revival of a strategy employed by an over-stretched colonial state to defeat enemies in a remote borderland, playing on and exacerbating local divisions in order to find ways into the societies it wished to control.[10]

A closer understanding of the dynamics of interactions between state and local actors in the colonial period therefore also helps us to understand enduring processes of state formation which continue to play out in the present day. The recent conflict in Darfur, rather than being understood simply as an example of specifically contemporary 'state failure' or a 'crisis of governance', has to be seen against the backdrop of the continual emergence and reshaping of the Sudanese state in the region from historical processes of violence and local negotiation.[11] This book is an account of just these processes.

STATE FORMATION IN COLONIAL DARFUR

Mamdani's view of the decisive and negative impact of British rule in Darfur is one example of a broader set of views that argue for the transformative effects of the colonial state on African politics and societies, its radical reordering of local politics and identities in line with an agenda of what James C. Scott calls 'legibility' – the goal of remaking

[9] Leonardi, *Dealing* makes very similar arguments about southern Sudan.
[10] A. De Waal, 'Counter-insurgency on the cheap', *London Review of Books*, 5 (2004) pp. 25–7.
[11] R. Cockett, *Sudan: Darfur and the failure of an African state* (New Haven, 2010); S. Hassan and C. Ray (eds), *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan* (New York, 2009).

and simplifying complex local societies and realities in order to make them more knowable, comprehensible, and therefore governable.[12] However, more recent scholarship has voiced growing scepticism over the degree to which colonial states were able to achieve these goals, or control the outcomes of the innovations they introduced. An emphasis on enduring precolonial conceptions of political authority – which emphasize the personal relationships of unequal reciprocity between powerful patrons and their dependent clients – together with growing awareness of the continuous reinvention of ethnic identities over long periods of time, has led scholars to look more closely at the way in colonial projects were compromised or reshaped by the initiative of Africans themselves, and indeed to play down the transformative impact of colonialism in general.[13] Yet this remains a controversial debate, and is mirrored by other discussions of whether the state in Africa is – crudely put – weak or strong, and, indeed, debate over the extent to which colonial rule in general relied either on the use of coercion and violence or on accommodation with local populations, especially local elites.[14]

This book addresses these broad questions about the character and significance of the colonial state in the specific context of Darfur. It argues that colonial government did change local cultures and practices of authority in Darfur, whilst also showing how the historical and cultural context within which the administration operated inevitably shaped the outcomes of those changes. In particular, Darfur's precolonial history as a Muslim Sultanate created a range of institutions and expectations of government that influenced the character and practices of the colonial state. That said, whereas in several other colonial African territories the British retained the rulers of precolonial kingdoms – for example, in Asante in the Gold Coast the office of Asantehene was restored by 1935, and in Buganda the *kabaka's* position was maintained throughout almost the entire period of colonial rule – in Darfur the Sultans were never restored. The British toyed with the idea, and indeed attempted to incorporate members of the old ruling dynasty into their administrative structures, but the Sultanate was not re-established. Instead, various figures of local authority, with varying kinds and degrees of connection with earlier states in the region, were re-invented as servants of the colonial state: their practices of rule

[12] For legibility see Scott, J., *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (Yale, 1994), pp. 2–3. The classic statement of colonialism's transformative power is T.O. Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa' in E.J. Hobsbawm and T.O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

[13] T. Spear, 'Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of invention in British Colonial Africa', *Journal of African History* 44 (2003), pp. 3–27; P. Chabal, and J.P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as political instrument* (Oxford, 1999).

[14] B. Lawrence, E. Osborn, and R. Roberts, 'Introduction: African intermediaries and the 'bargain' of collaboration', in B. Lawrence, E. Osborn, and R. Roberts (eds), *Intermediaries, Interpreters and Clerks* (London, 2006); J. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton, 2000); R. Gott. *Britain's Empire: Resistance, repression and revolt.* (London, 2011).

varied across space and time, and the degree to which these represented change or continuity with the period of the Sultanate also varied.

This book thus attempts to move away from conceptions of either the colonial state or 'Darfuri' society as being single monolithic structures, or even as necessarily being clearly divided from one another: rather it emphasizes the multiple, contingent points of interaction between the diverse societies of the region and individual state actors: interactions which constituted the very making of the state. In doing so it moves away from the assumption of distance or alienation between state and society which much existing literature on the core-periphery relationship in Sudan has assumed – real though that distance was – towards an approach which helps us to understand how the Sudanese state has become part of the naturalized order of things in Darfur, even despite its obvious failings and limitations.[15]

This approach is similar to that taken by recent historical scholarship which has considered state formation in Sudan and elsewhere in Africa as a process which takes place in the heat of local contest and negotiation. Such work has focused on the ways in which state policies and agendas are resisted, evaded or appropriated by local populations in ways which actually shape the way the state is manifested at a local level.[16] The analysis here is therefore concerned with the idea of state as process rather than as thing. As such it draws on insights in wider state theory which question the existence of the state as a coherent entity which stands above society and acts upon it, and rather frame the state as an effect or an idea: a convincing *claim* to be a clearly bounded neutral entity, an effect which masks both internal incoherence and multiple points of embeddedness in what is supposedly a distinct and removed 'society'.[17]

The colonial state in Darfur was indeed incoherent, pursuing multiple, often only loosely connected agendas: the importance of personal 'pet projects' in setting policy at a local level is striking. This incoherence

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[15] Johnson, *Root Causes*; J. Willis, '*Hukm*. The creolization of authority in Condominium Sudan', *Journal of African History,* 46 (2005), pp. 29–50.

[16] Leonardi, *Dealing*; Jocelyn Alexander. *The Unsettled Land: State-making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1893–2003* (Oxford, 2006). This is not an altogether novel approach – 25 years ago, Janet Ewald described the 'building' of the Taqali kingdom in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan as an incomplete process that emerged out of 'confrontation' between kings and subjects – subjects 'shaped the structure of the kingdom by trying to evade the demands of their ruler' and also by 'yielding certain prerogatives' to those rulers. *Soldiers, Traders and Slaves: State formation and economic transformation in the Greater Nile Valley*, 1700–1885 (London, 1990), p. 182.

[17] P. Abrams, 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 1, (1988), pp. 58–89; G.M. Joseph and D. Nugent 'Popular culture and state formation in revolutionary Mexico' in G.M. Joseph and D. Nugent (eds), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico* (London, 1994); T. Mitchell, 'The limits of the state: beyond statist approaches and their critics', *American Political Science Review*, 85 (1991), 77–96.

gave local populations, especially chieftaincy elites, significant opportunity to shape the state and its agendas at the local level. And while officials did pursue attempts at projecting an image of remote, neutral 'stateness', these performances often broke down or were otherwise unconvincing: divisions and conflicts among colonial administrators exposed the confusion of the state, and again local elites were able to exploit those divisions to pursue their own goals. Administrators sometimes felt more connection to local chiefs than they did to Khartoum, or even to El Fasher, the regional hub of colonial culture, even as their adherence to disciplinary, bureaucratic routines of report and official diary writing spelled a continued participation in the culture of the state. The administrator thus became a figure performing in at least two registers, pursuing impersonal effects of distance, neutrality and superiority even as he pursued effects of intimacy and interiority, and usually achieving neither. The colonial state in Darfur was therefore always a fractured, uncertain network rather than a coherent, unified thing, and officials were often 'participants...not arbiters' in the processes of bargaining and negotiation which characterized local politics: 'advocates' for the rights of 'their' people vis-à-vis other groups in neighbouring districts or provinces.[18] In his classic work on the Swahili coast, Glassman argued that European intruders were often seen 'not as challengers to the prevailing system of big man politics but rather as players in the same game... yet another set of potential patrons'.[19] Views of British colonial officials in Darfur were surely complex and multiple: but it also seems clear that here too claims were often made on officials as personal patrons rather than distant bureaucrats. And several of these officials almost certainly saw themselves in the same terms. The resulting interconnections between state and local agendas, created an uncertain and fluid political dynamic which was perhaps the principal legacy of colonialism here (as elsewhere in Africa): the pluralistic, hybrid and often contradictory institutional and discursive political landscape bequeathed to post-colonial states, which continues to shape political dynamics and indeed expectations and visions of the state to the present day. They also created a fragile variety of hegemony for the colonial state: it was on the grounds of these local negotiations that government extracted a limited degree of consent to its authority.

VIOLENCE AND GOVERNMENT

Despite this emphasis on negotiation, it is crucial to emphasize that violence ran throughout government in colonial Darfur: it was always

[18] B. Berman, 'Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa' in B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa: Book One* (London, 1992), p. 152; D.L. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, ethnicity and the cultural politics of development* (Oxford, 1999), p. 60.
[19] J. Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, rebellion and popular consciousness on the Swahili coast* (Portsmouth, 1995), p. 178.

the defining context for the local negotiation of political authority. But people, of course, respond to violence in a variety of ways, and are not always silenced by it. People resist the application of force, evade it, even sometimes invite its use in the pursuit of local agendas. The violence of the state is not always simply a pathological external imposition but can also be a resource to achieve particular goals for those able to channel its devastating effects. Indeed, among some people, and at some times, (and rather paradoxically) the state's use of violence may have been part of the attraction of dealing with it: it was an irresistible and potentially terrifying force with the capacity to destroy local livelihoods, and could be used to intimidate and weaken troublesome rivals.

The violence of the state was at its most obvious and explicit in the years of conquest and 'pacifiction' in Darfur. The display and use of machine guns was thought particularly effective in terrifying local peoples into obedience; yet these were also years when some local populations were armed by government to assist in the repression of their neighbours. The patterns and direction of colonial violence were thus highly differentiated at a local level, and some peoples profited significantly from their association with government military campaigns. Government was, therefore, an extremely dangerous enemy – but also potentially a powerful ally against local rivals. This was the case not just in Darfur, but was also true elsewhere in Condominium Sudan, and early colonial Africa more generally: Johnson demonstrates that colonial violence against the Nuer of southern Sudan in the early years of Anglo-Egyptian rule was directly instigated and participated in by neighbouring, rival Dinka groups.[20] In the Nuba Mountains, similarly, 'friendlies', drawn from local populations – both Baqqara Arabs and Nuba – participated enthusiastically in punitive government patrols against resistant Nuba populations.[21] The form and direction of colonial state violence was itself sometimes the outcome of a negotiated process, reminding us of the interaction and connection between the different facets of colonial authority and state formation. Of course, the violence of colonialism is definitely not something that should be reduced to the outcome of ground level negotiations among equals. Clearly, colonial subjects were manoeuvring within parameters imposed by the state, and in ways which often ultimately reinforced their own subordination to that state. But to understand state formation, we also need to under-

[20] D. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets* (Oxford, 1994), p. 10. For other examples and broader discussions see John Lonsdale, 'The Conquest State of Kenya, 1895–1905' and 'The Politics of Conquest in Western Kenya 1894–1908' in B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Vol. 1* (London, 1992); Jamie Monson, 'Relocating Maji Maji: The Politics of Alliance and Authority in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania, 1870–1918', *Journal of African History* 39 (1998), pp. 95–120; D. Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, civil war and decolonization* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 26–29.
[21] J. Willis, 'Patrol No. 32: British colonial violence in the Nuba Mountains', *Sudan Studies* 28 (2001), pp. 48–49; Ewald, *Soldiers,* p. 133.

stand some of its violence to have been directed and channelled by the influence of local actors.

After the falling away of rebellion, and a diminished need for the overt use of military violence against local peoples, the British established a durable politics of alliance with local chiefs who they empowered to enact administrative and judicial functions at the local level. This was a policy pursued in varying form right across Condominium Sudan, although Darfur and neighbouring Kordofan were seen as key 'laboratories' for this policy, intended to harness the imagined legitimacy of local elites to the alien state. But as others have noted in wider studies of colonial Africa, ruling through chiefs did not imply an end to violence.[22] At one level the bribes, fines and extra-legal taxation that chiefs extracted from their subjects, exercising and abusing their powers as the local functionaries of the state, created sometimes new forms of structural violence within local societies. Chiefs also inflicted physical violence on the bodies of subjects who refused to fulfil their demands. Torture and flogging were central to the character of chiefly authority in parts of Darfur, and it was these forms of violence and abuse which very much defined the state at the local level in these areas. Moreover, the colonial project of legibility associated with the politics of Indirect Rule – rendering and controlling tribes and tribal territories – might be read as a form of political violence, policing complex inter-group relationships in a manner which impeded people's everyday livelihoods. Such a policy was sometimes imposed with the use of physical coercive force to keep people within ethnically defined territorial units.

The violence of the Sudanese state in recent years in Darfur is unprecedented in scale and scope. But it does very definitely need to be set within this historical context of violent processes of state formation. States are, however, always multi-faceted: and people's expectations of and attitudes towards the state are accordingly complex and often contradictory. This is particularly obvious in Sudan, as in many other African states. People have come to expect great violence, predation and extraction from the state, but they have also, with remarkable consistency, demanded the state act as a guarantor of collective security, even when the state has been the prime agent of insecurity. Sometimes the state has also been used as an influential ally in the pursuit of local political agendas; and, especially in more recent times, people have demanded the state act as the beneficent provider of public services and economic development. These contradictory attitudes towards government in Sudan have in some contexts been explained in popular discourse by the equally contradictory character of the state. The Nuer of southern Sudan in the 1980s talked of the 'government of the left' which included civil institutions of the state that might be made use of and be of some value in people's lives;

[22] Most famously in M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton, 1996). For a similar case in Sudan see Willis, 'Violence, authority and the state in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan', *The Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 89–114.

and the 'government of the right' – the military – which brought only death and destruction.[23] As Ewald argued of the precolonial kingdom of Taqali in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, the state can thus be seen as both 'predator and protector'.[24] Archival records, unsurprisingly, do not capture much of popular discourse; but this book suggests that state power was indeed both something to be used and something to be evaded in Darfur; indeed that the state was seen as *both* the agent of order and disorder. The local agents of the state might be the principal source of disorder in people's everyday lives; yet people also expected that the state should ultimately regulate the behaviour of those agents. This was, perhaps, the most important function of government in the eyes of Darfur's many diverse populations. In the colonial period, it was the chiefs of Darfur who became the key local agents of the state and therefore also those men who people expected the state to restrain.

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Chiefs – defined here as all 'Darfuri' holders of authority assumed by colonial officials to derive their authority primarily from custom or tradition, rather than from the colonial state – and their ambivalent relationship to that same state in the system of 'Native Administration' are central to understanding the character of colonial governance.[25] They also remain figures of great interest in their own right in more contemporary discussion.

In some analyses of the current conflict in Darfur the dismantling of the Native Administration in the 1970s by the Nimeiri regime (a course reversed by the current government) is crucial to understanding the failure to mediate the conflicts that broke out from that time. One of the more astute proponents of this view, James Morton, has suggested that the strength of the Native Administration in the colonial period, coupled with the strong emphasis of the colonial state on maintaining order, 'controlled and settled disputes in a manner that lasted.'[26] Yet there are doubts whether present-day chiefs in Darfur still have the legitimacy to broker local peace. Although the Native Administration was re-established by the NIF from 1989, in Darfur it has become *de rigueur* to draw attention to the 'politiciza-

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[23] S. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with money, war and the state* (Berkeley, 1996), p. 110. Also cf. G. Lienhardt, 'The Sudan: aspects of the south government among some of the Nilotic peoples, 1947–52', *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 (1982), p. 27.
[24] Ewald, *Soldiers*, p. 182.
[25] This definition paraphrases J. Willis, 'Chieftaincy' in J. Parker and R. Reid (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 214–215.
[26] J. Morton, *Conflict in Darfur: A different perspective* (Hemel Hampstead, 2004).