

Conflict with Others at a Bleeding Frontier: The Case of *Tagoi* in the Northeastern Nuba Mountains – Sudan

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OSMAN MOHAMED OSMAN ALI

**CONFLICT WITH OTHERS
AT A BLEEDING FRONTIER**

**THE CASE OF TAGOI IN THE NORTHEASTERN
NUBA MOUNTAINS – SUDAN**

ABSTRACT

This article looks at the escalating conflict between the Tagoi and Hawazma and their allies over natural resources and political authority in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains, from the Tagoi's perspective. It explains why and how the Tagoi Area has become a free zone for settlement by the Hawazma and their allies, who have succeeded in developing an independent native administration in the area and have begun to contest the Tagoi's rights to political authority and land. It illustrates how security concerns associated with the Second Civil War between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) first and the Sudan/South Sudan international border after the secession of South Sudan in 2011 have contributed to the escalation of this conflict. It also shows how this conflict has recently become entangled with the armed conflict between the GoS and the SPLM/A-North, thus attaining a new dimension.

The subject of this article is the *Tagoi* tribe¹, who have not received a great deal of attention from social scientists. It deals with the disputes over natural resources and political authority between the *Tagoi*, who claim prior access to the north-eastern Nuba Mountains,² and the *Hawazma Baggara* (or simply the *Hawazma*) and their allies,³ who have arrived in the region recently in response to a variety of interests and attractions.⁴ It studies the arguments from the *Tagoi*'s perspective.

The article is based on material collected during fieldwork carried out from November 2012 to March 2015 among *Tagoi* migrants in Khartoum State. The concentration of fieldwork in Khartoum State was due to security threats in the *Tagoi* Area and the recent presence of the largest group of *Tagoi* migrants in Khartoum, mostly on the outskirts of the three towns. Only one short field trip to the *Tagoi* Area, which focused on corrective and additional data, was organized in March 2015 as a finale to the fieldwork. This trip only became possible when an opportunity arose to visit the *Tagoi* Area to offer condolences for the death of the tribe's king, *Mek Mohamed Ahmed Hamdan Jabouri*, which presented an opportunity for large numbers of *Tagoi* mourners to visit their home region, from which they had fled in 2011 because of an surge in the conflict between the government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army North (SPLM/A-N) in areas of South Kordofan, including the *Tagoi* Area. The majority of *Tagoi* families were forcibly displaced to safer areas in Sudan, and the *Tagoi* villages were totally stripped of their populations. Only the families of the royal kin group (*khashum albeit*) are currently in Alfaydh, the capital of the *Tagoi* Kingdom, as

1. Although currently contested in African studies, the term "tribe" is used in this article because all the *Tagoi* informants speak of their own and their neighbouring groups as "tribes". Many people from neighbouring groups (such as the *Kajajjah*, *Rashad*, *Tegali*, *Tira*, and *Kawalib*) also identify the *Tagoi* as a "tribal group". It is therefore practical to use this term.

2. According to an oral tradition, the *Tagoi* migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to Abyssinia, from Abyssinia to the *Funj* Kingdom, and then from the *Funj* Kingdom to the North-Eastern Nuba Mountains. They arrived there in the second quarter of the 18th century, at the beginning of the reign of their first king, *Mek Kundan* (1726-1751). This chronological calculation is what the *Tagoi* depend on for proving the precedence of their existence in the area of the Mount of *Tagoi* and its surrounding plains. *Hawazma* settlement in the *Tagoi* Area began in the 1940s and 1950s during the reign of *Mek Hamdan Jabouri* (1933-1968). In short, the *Tagoi* claim their status as "first comers" to the area, and are thus autochthonic there.

3. These include *Jallaba* merchants and some groups from West Africa: *Barno*, *Bargo* and *Fallata* (locally known as "BBF").

4. These interests and attractions involved grasslands, extensive fertile lands that are suitable for growing important cash crops, and opportunities for successful trading.

Tagoi customary law prevents them from leaving *Tagoi* land under any circumstances, even if they risk extermination.

The fieldwork included group interviews with men and women. Data were also collected through face-to-face individual interviews and telephone conversations with *Tagoi* with a profound knowledge of the history and culture of their tribe. Unplanned brief conversations with males and females of various ages were also conducted during occasions for celebration and mourning in *Tagoi* households in Khartoum and Alfaydh.

All the group interviews were conducted in Khartoum State, with the exception of one, which took place in Alfaydh. Between three and eight *Tagoi* from the elite and the ordinary population participated in each of twenty-six group interviews. The criteria for the selection of participants were the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and new information on issues for discussion. The participants were between 50 and 85 years of age. Two attended all the group interviews, as they were the link between the author and the *Tagoi* people and were the organizers of the group and individual interviews. Most of the participants were male; women were only present at one group interview, but it lasted for six consecutive hours, concentrating on important issues relating to women. The participants were both members of the royal kin-group and commoners, including native administrators, casual workers, housewives, businessmen, soldiers, police, school teachers, government employees, workers and medical staff. Pensioners formed the majority of these participants.

To illustrate how the *Tagoi*'s oral history, which is briefly mentioned at various stages of this article, makes sense within the wider regional context (that is, the north-eastern Nuba Mountains, the "Kingdom of *Tegali*" and other areas of Sudan), brief relevant historical sources were reviewed; they will be cited later in this article. Other secondary data were obtained by reviewing previous studies in the context of violent conflicts in Southern Kordofan, and a variety of extra secondary data has also been used in certain sections.

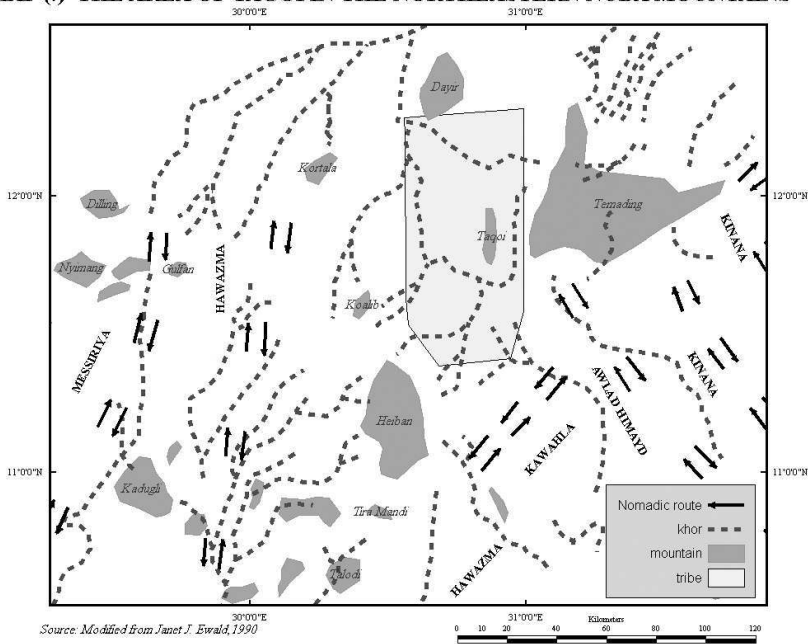
The article seeks to answer two principal questions stemming from the preliminary observations: (1) how did the mostly simple and locally manageable farmer-herder disputes about natural resources in the *Tagoi* Area escalate and then coalesce into the armed conflict between the GoS and the armed rebel movements in South Kordofan? (2) what is behind the armed intervention by the government in favour of the Arab nomadic pastoralists in their conflict with the *Tagoi* over land and authority?

THE TAGOI: AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Over the course of history, a large number of tribes have found refuge in the granite hills of the Nuba Mountains, which cover an area of 30,000 square miles, and whose boulders rise above the plain of Kordofan (Elles 1935: 4). We are therefore presented with a substantial variety of cultures over the small area

in which the *Tagoi* live. The irregular rectangular-shaped *Tagoi* area (“*Tatgoi*”, in the *Tagoi* language) is located in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains and stretches from north to south, angled in a slightly north-westerly direction (see map no. 1, below). According to a recent government-imposed boundary demarcation in South Kordofan State, the *Tagoi* Area is part of the Abu Kershola Locality,⁵ and is surrounded by the localities of Al-Rahad, Um Rawabah, Al-Abbasiyya, Rashad, Haiban, Dellami, and Habila. A number of tribal groups also surround the *Tagoi*: *Nuba* of the Mount of Daeir, *Kajagjah*, *Tukom*,⁶ *Rashad*, *Tegali*, *Lunfan*, *Kawahla*, *Tira*, *Heiban Uttar*, *Kortala*, *Kawalib*, and the inhabitants of the “Six Mounts”.

MAP (!) THE AREA OF TAGOI IN THE NORTHEASTERN NUBA MOUNTAINS



The Modern History of the Tagoi

Prior to the 16th century, many *Nuba* peoples were spread over what is today northern, central, and western Kordofan. The arrival in the 16th century

5. Source: warrant of establishment of Abu Kershola Locality, South Kordofan State, 2014.

6. One should not confuse “*Tukom*” with “*Tagum*”. The first is a subgroup of the *Tagoi* tribe, while the other is a subgroup of the *Rashad* tribe. Both live in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains.

of the Muslim *Juhaina*, who later formed the pastoral seasonal migrant tribes (such as the *Baggara*) in northern Kordofan and later on the Muslim *Ja'aliyyin* and *Chudiyat* (of largely indigenous origin) in central Kordofan, and who also organized slave-raids and engaged in inter-tribal warfare, played their part in confining the *Nuba* to South Kordofan (Stevenson, 1962: 118-119; Stevenson 1963: 9). In South Kordofan, some *Nuba* occupied uninhabited hills, while others drove out weaker communities from their homes and occupied them themselves. There followed a time of plenty for the *Nuba* in South Kordofan. Vast tracts of land surrounding the hills were cultivated, so that when the *Baggara* arrived in Kordofan in search of pasture and water, they naturally turned southwards into this prosperous region at some time during the 18th century, drove the *Nuba* into the hills, and occupied all the best watering places. Sub-divisions were then put into place, with each sub-tribe of the *Baggara* taking its own area of hills and watering places. Each of these sub-tribes usually protected the hills in its own area in return for supplies of grain and slaves, and raided hills belonging to other sub-tribes. Much the same state of affairs persisted during the Turco-Egyptian occupation of the country in the 19th century. A few hills were attacked, and their populations wiped out, some sub-tribes paid tributes in the form of recruits for the army, and the remainder were left to the *Baggara*, who in return paid heavy tributes and provided the army with recruits who had been taken from the *Nuba* by force (Sagar 1925: 138-140).

The first parts of the Nuba Mountains to be influenced by Islam through Islamic preachers were the hills in the north-east (*Tegali*, Tagoi, Rashad, etc.), which was perhaps the most easily accessible area (Stevenson 1963: 10-11). One of these preachers, Mohammed Al-Ja'ali, came to *Tegali* from the north in about 1530. Kabr-Kabr, the chieftain of *Tegali*, gave him his daughter in marriage, and she bore him a son (Abu Jaridah). Kabr-Kabr died in due course, and Abu Jaridah was chosen as his successor. The kingdom to which he succeeded consisted of no more than a few hills in *Tegali*. It was he who first conceived the idea of facilitating the spread of Islam and extending his own power by bringing in settlers from the north and east. His descendants continued to spread Islam and expand the kingdom, and by the middle of the 17th century they ruled supreme over all the north-eastern Nuba Mountains. As rulers of an independent state who were on friendly terms with the powerful kings of Sinnar, they installed migrants from the *Funj* as subject kings (*Meks*) over the hills of Rashad, Tagoi, and Gadir, and in later years, both Rashad and Tagoi were allowed to become independent kingdoms. This was the Kingdom of *Tegali* before the coming of the Arab nomadic tribes, who began to arrive towards the end of the reign of Isma'il Mohammed Jeelyh Abu Gurun, the eighth king of *Tegali* (1705-1773), and continued to infiltrate the area until the 19th century. They all became subject to the kings of *Tegali* (Elles 1935: 4-10, 19).

During the *Mahadiyya*, the Khalifa Abdullahi Al-Ta'aishi in 1885 dispatched a force to punish the Nuba Mountains for the increasing insurgencies

there. Hamdan Abu Anja in the west, and El-Nur Angara in the east, reduced the old kingdom of *Tegali* to a state of ruin and desolation. Eventually, towards the end of 1887, the two Emirs returned to Omdurman, taking with them the majority of those who had not been killed. Once again, Ibrahim El-Khalil, a young leader of the *Mahdiyya* army, who raided the Nuba Mountains in about 1892, inflicted severe punishment on *Tegali*, contenting himself with sacking the *Tagoi* and *Kajajah* hills. Jeelyh Adam Dabello (1892-1916), who was king of *Tegali* when Kordofan was reoccupied, soon acknowledged the government of the new Anglo-Egyptian regime and remained loyal by force of circumstances. In 1899, a *Mamur* was posted to Keraia,⁷ but it was not until some years later that a British Inspector was also posted (Elles 1935: 25-26, 28-29). The new administrators saw that the only possible method of controlling the "broken fragments" of the old kingdom of *Tegali*, which consisted of diverse, largely autonomous, units in an area stretching from north to south (230 miles) with very poor communications, was to proceed slowly and allow the broken fragments to grow together, assisted by two main influences: common economic interests and the old traditions of the *Tegali* crown. The essential prerequisite – that all these fragments should be within a single administrative district – was satisfied in 1931, when Talodi was added to the Eastern Jebels District. Thereafter, common district headquarters and judicial and taxation systems, frequent meetings of the heads of the various divisions, and the opportunity for *Mek* Adam, the son of Jeelyh Adam Dabello, to visit even the most southerly of the areas that once owed allegiance to his forbears, all worked towards the same end: to bind the various parts into a greater whole without making them feel that they were losing their local or tribal identities. The expansion of the *Tegali* Kingdom then began, and *Kawahla*, *Kenana*, *Hawazma Halafa*, *Moreib*, *Tukom*, *Turjok*, *Tagoi*, *Rashad*, *Nuba* of Kau-Nyaro hills, *Elliri*, *Aulad Himeid* and *Talodi Omodia* were gradually added over a period of twenty-four years, after which time the kingdom of *Tegali* covered almost the whole of the Eastern Jebels District and comprised some 140,000 people within an area of around 15,000 square miles. No sooner had the government completed its policy of piecing together the broken fragments of the old kingdom and restoring the authority of its hereditary ruler than it transformed it into a warranted rural district council in 1947. This change was brought about with the minimum amount of dislocation. In this way, the old kingdom of *Tegali*, which had been founded in the 16th century, reached its apex in the 19th century, and was disturbed by the *Mahdiyya* and rebuilt by the Anglo-Egyptian government in the 20th century, ceased to exist after that time. It is not dead, however: rather, it has undergone a natural transformation in line with modern trends in Sudan (Kenrick 1948: 144-150).

7. Keraia was the capital of Tegali Kingdom until it was moved to Abbasiyya in 1929, during the Anglo-Egyptian rule.

The main turning points in the history of the *Tagoi*, which is chiefly based on traditional tales recounted by *Tagoi* informants⁸ and embedded in the main historical changes described above, are these: a small Arabic-speaking group of Muslim *Funj* was exiled from Sinnar, the capital of the *Funj* Kingdom, to the north-eastern Nuba Mountains following a dispute over political authority. This movement had taken shape during the reign of the first *Tagoi* king “Mek Kundan” (1726-1751), during a period that saw major political changes in the *Funj* Kingdom that explain why and how the *Tagoi*, as a *Funj* group, were exiled from Sinnar: between 1650 and 1750, the king of the Muslim Nubians reigned over lands from Dongola to Ethiopia and from the Red Sea into Kordofan, and exacted tributes from the neighbouring southern lands of Kordofan and Fazughli and from the *Shilluk*. Their kingdom was known both by the name of its capital, Sinnar, and as *Funj* Kingdom, after the name of its ruling group, the *Funj* (or *Unsab*), who were recognized as Arabs (Spaulding 1985: 3, 96, 212). The *Unsab* dynasty was overthrown in a coup that took place in about 1718. The reigning sultan was replaced by his maternal uncle, Nol. After a brief reign, Nol’s son, Badi IV, succeeded him, and their combined reigns (1718-1762) constituted the opening phase of what the historian Jay Spaulding has called the Heroic Age of Sinnar. The *Funj* then suffered repression, and Badi IV made a bold bid for the support of other elements in society (Spaulding 1985: 212-223, 284-286).

Intermarriages between the expatriate and host groups in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains resulted in a socio-cultural cross-fertilization, giving the *Tagoi* their distinctive culture and an acquired language with a local class-prefix and concord system and considerable Arabic influences (Stevenson 1962: 122-125). The expatriates founded a kingdom and became holders of political authority. In line with the quotation from Elles (1935: 19) above, the kings of *Tegali*, who were on friendly terms with the powerful kings of Sinnar, installed *Funj* migrants as subject kings over the *Tagoi* and other hills. The *Tagoi* thus began to have direct contact with the Islamic world, and their lives started to undergo a number of changes during the reign of *Mek* Jabouri I (1828-1851) in the form of serious conversions to Islam and the Arabicization of the names of people and villages. Religious authority was acquired by the political rulers during the reign of *Mek* Jabouri II (1888-1896), when the

8. The historical accounts that follow are based on a version of oral history that is common among the *Tagoi* and is narrated by informants of different ages and from different social strata. No other versions of this history were touched on during the prolonged fieldwork. Hardly any documents were available to cast light on the history of the *Tagoi*: the documents that related these historical accounts were burnt in 1942 in a lightning strike on the home of *Mek* Hamdan Jabouri Jeely (1933-1968), the father of the late *Mek* Mohamed Ahmed (1968-2015), the former kings of *Tagoi* (mentioned by *Mek* Mohamed Ahmed Hamdan in a group interview, Khartoum, 24/11/2012).

orientation towards Islam first became prevalent among the *Tagoi*. After that time, the kings of *Tagoi* became both political leaders and men of religion, and the numbers of Qur'anic schools, mosques, and scholars of Fiqh and Islamic Shari'a grew rapidly and Sufi missionary work accelerated a change in people's perceptions, the disappearance of many local religious beliefs and practices, and the emergence of a new understanding of religion.

The Tagoi in the 20th Century

Between the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium period (1899-1956) and the present day, the *Tagoi* in the Nuba Mountains have undergone significant socioeconomic and political transformations: with the establishment of a strong administrative system in the Nuba Mountains during the Condominium, inter-tribal wars were brought under control, cultivation was extended outwards from around the foothills, and *Nuba* farmers began to rebuild their homesteads on the lower slopes and pediments fringing the massifs in areas exposed to government and commercial influences. This down-migration started in the early 1930s (Roden 1972: 79-80), and the *Tagoi*, too, descended from their mountains on the orders of their king, *Mek* Hamdan Jabouri (1933-1968) and occupied a number of permanent villages situated several miles on to the plains. The reasons for this descent included over-crowding, waves of epidemic diseases, the need for the newly-emerging modern social facilities (such as schools, hospitals, and markets), their desire to take advantage of better natural resources and protect their lands from settlement by outside groups, the introduction of rain-fed short staple cotton farming on the plains, and the construction of a cotton gin in Um Berimbeta in 1936.⁹ Since that time, the *Tagoi* have lived rather different lives, and have opened up to neighbouring tribal groups and wider Sudanese society.

As I will show in a later section of this article, there have recently been mass migrations from the *Tagoi* Area, as a consequence of which many villages there have been depopulated. The *Tagoi* have also suffered from a loss of access to many cultivable and grazing lands as a consequence of outright land-grabbing resulting from expanding agricultural schemes and direct interventions by the government or government-supported armed pastoralists. As they became one of the populations that inhabited a "hard border" with the newly-established South Sudan, while also remaining socially and culturally on the margins as before, the *Tagoi* have also been involved in the ongoing civil war since 2011, many of them fighting alongside the SPLM/A-N. They have been seriously affected by the counter-insurgency operations led by the government in the region, and have become almost an internal diaspora population, spread across various parts of Sudan.

9. Source: the foundation stone of the cotton gin in Um Berimbeta.

Leif Manger sees the current violent conflicts in Southern Kordofan as falling within a tradition of enmities, unrest, and violence throughout the region's history that is a result of the struggle for sovereignty over land and the right of self-determination of their development. Manger traces the historical legacies of these conflicts back to pre-war colonial times, and argues that since that time, questions of land rights and use have been framed in ethnic, religious, and racial terms, with the *Nuba's* past as an enslavable population being perceived as the basis for their relations with other groups (Manger 2007, 2001).

Some studies have analysed how historical, social, and political dynamics have systematically marginalized the *Nuba* and deprived them of their customary lands. The *Nuba* were ignored during the peace negotiations between the GoS and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A),¹⁰ even though they were in a similar position of socioeconomic and political marginalization to the southern Sudanese. They are marginalized in the political and economic spheres in different ways, as they have also suffered a long history of oppression, and so the recent conflicts might also be a result of *Nuba* resistance to any further repression. These studies also explore how the Nuba Mountains have emerged as a borderland with geopolitical significance in the wake of South Sudan's separation. This situation is associated with violent conflicts and contested boundaries, not only between Sudan and South Sudan, but also among several groups with economic and other interests in the area (Komey 2013, 2008; Abbas 1973; Mohamed Salih 1995; Kadouf 2001).

As other studies have shown, denial of access to natural resources is also a key factor in the violence between the sedentary *Nuba* and the pastoralist *Baggara* groups in Southern Kordofan. While coexistence between the *Baggara* and *Nuba* is an important cultural feature, it was also shaped by competition over fertile land, water sources, and forest products, but the different modes of cooperation and conflict changed significantly during the civil war, and many forms of coexistence ceased to exist when one group lost its land rights entirely. To this one must add the natural resource-based conflicts between farmers and nomadic pastoralists in the Nuba Mountains, which intensified after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the GoS and the SPLM/A

10. These are the negotiations between the GoS and the SPLM/A that began in June 2002 to end the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005), to develop democratic governance countrywide, and to share oil revenues. They culminated in the January 9, 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), also known as the Naivasha Agreement. The CPA was a collection of agreements that the GoS and the SPLM/A signed between 2002 and 2005. Included in the CPA are updates and amendments to previous protocols. It further sets a timetable for a referendum in Southern Sudan on its independence. The peace process was encouraged by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as by IGAD-Partners, a consortium of donor countries.

in 2005, because they were no longer manageable using traditional conflict resolution patterns (Adam 2009; Suliman 1998; Komey 2008).

Intervention by the State, which often favours one side and excludes the other from land use, is one of the factors that escalated the conflicts in Southern Kordofan into nationwide civil wars. The revival of tribal militias there started at the beginning of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005).¹¹ The government backed militias among the *Baggara* and incorporated them into the State's institutions of violence. As a result of this, the *Nuba* people experienced extreme violence, as the government supported the *Baggara* groups in their claims over *Nuba* land and other resources by arming these groups against them (Mohamed Salih 1995, 1994), and the relations between the *Nuba* and *Baggara* changed from an uneasy peace to irremediable enmity (Suliman 1999).

Some studies argue that the concepts of identity and belonging have been driving forces of conflicts in Southern Kordofan. They focus on claims of an autochthonous identity among the *Nuba*, and explore the myths surrounding their origins, their relationship to the area, and the political implications in the context of socio-political processes in the region. Claims over communal land on the grounds of autochthony become a source of identity politics, and the way the *Nuba* constructed these policies and how the neighbouring *Baggara* responded to these claims in the context and aftermath of the civil war are explained. The *Nuba's* land claims, which were backed up with ethnic, cultural, and religious explanations that were closely connected to the concept of the *Nuba* Mountains as their ancestral homeland, have been challenged by the *Baggara* and the modern Sudanese state, and this has led to a conflict between legality according to the State and the legitimacy of the traditional institutions (Komey 2009, 2008; Manger 2007; Suliman 2002).

A Basic Perspective

The *Tagoi* people generally draw their social life and social relations perspectives from their tribe's political and administrative hierarchy, in the past from the king down to his advisors and then his subjects, and nowadays from the *Amir* down to the *Omdas* and *Sheikhs* and then his subjects. They used this pyramid of authority formally to depict how their homes were located on the Mount of *Tagoi*, where the homes of the king and his married children were at the top of the mountain, the homes of the king's advisers directly below, and the commoners' homes at the bottom of the mountain. This depiction extends to the conical roof of the hut: *Tagoi* informants perceive its

11. The Second Sudanese Civil War was largely a continuation of the First Sudanese Civil War, which was a conflict between the northern part of Sudan and the southern Sudan region from 1955 to 1972 that demanded representation and more regional autonomy.

structure as being similar to the pyramid of authority and the style of their houses on the Mount of *Tagoi*. Typically, the roof of a hut consists of four main large wooden posts that are installed vertically and then tied together with three main round ties of thin horizontal wooden posts that bear the names of the social strata in the politico-administrative hierarchy: the king (*jittar*), the king's advisors (*jindi*), and the general public (*yidro*).

During the reign of *Mek Adam Jabouri* (1910-1933), the *Tagoi* native administration attempted to build the *Tagoi* kingdom across its wider geographical area using the same perspective for building huts or homes, both of which have the same name in the *Tagoi* language (*kon*). They demarcated its borders with neighbouring tribes and then installed *Tagoi* families from the various social strata along these borders to secure property rights and control entry by non-*Tagoi*. *Mek Adam Jabouri* then announced the borders of *Tagoi* Area and that they were owned by his tribe, and issued a decree imposing fees on non-*Tagoi* persons who crossed through or resided in this area. This action became necessary when the *Tagoi* began to descend from the Mount of *Tagoi* and spread out in villages on the plains below.¹²

In the run-up to the reign of *Mek Adam Jabouri*, no regional government had authority over the *Tagoi* area. It was only after the execution of *Mek Gedayl Jabouri*¹³ that the Anglo-Egyptian colonial authorities established their tutelage in the area, which has been part of the State of Sudan since that time. It was therefore essential for *Mek Adam Jabouri* to demarcate the borders of the *Tagoi* kingdom. The main reason behind this demarcation was to reserve the land and its natural resources. Some *Tagoi* informants claim that when their grandparents first left their mountain, the surrounding flatlands were completely devoid of people, as they were also part of the *Tagoi* territory. For them, the areas within this territory are currently either inhabited by the *Tagoi* alone or shared between the *Tagoi* and the other recently arrived groups (*Hawazma*, *Barno*, *Bargo*, *Fallata*, *Bedeiriyya*, and *Masalit*).

The building of the wider kingdom structure was not complete following the border demarcation, however. For the *Tagoi* informants, the main bonds representing the different social strata were not strengthened as a hut is traditionally built, and did not connect all the parts and levels of the kingdom.

12. As mentioned previously, the documents that related this information were burnt in 1942 at the home of *Mek Hamdan Jabouri Jeelyh*.

13. *Mek Gedayl* led an active *Tagoi* rebellion against the new Anglo-Egyptian colonial rule in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains until he was captured and executed in 1910. Later in the same year, the Anglo-Egyptian colonial authorities preferred his brother, *Adam Jabouri*, as his successor in order to calm the volatile situation in the area of *Tagoi*. The *Tagoi* then became subject to the Tegli Kingdom, which, with the support of the Anglo-Egyptian rule, became the dominant kingdom in the region, before it was converted into the so-called "East Jebels District" (Kenrick 1948: 144-148).

Many *Tagoi* migrated out of the area, and the kingdom has therefore become a free area for settlement by *Hawazma* and their allies,¹⁴ who have succeeded in developing an independent native administration in the area, and have begun to contest the *Tagoi*'s rights to political authority and land.

Many *Tagoi* are of the opinion that it was their former native administrations after the reign of *Mek Adam Jabouri* that gave these newcomers tracts of land to temporarily settle on and cultivate, but they have recently claimed ownership of these lands. As I have mentioned before, the *Tagoi* claim that they were deported from *Sinnar* areas in the early 18th century and settled in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains. Later migrations brought groups from *Barno*, *Bargo*, and *Fallata*, who over time became minorities in the newly-established *Tagoi* territory, working in rain-fed agriculture and in orchards. Another three groups of nomadic cattle herders (*Baggara*: the *Hawazma* and *Ambararo*) and camel herders (*Abbala*: the *Shanabla*) began passing through *Tagoi* territory as they moved between their autumn homes (*makharif*) in North Kordofan and summer homes (*masayif*) in South Kordofan or South Sudan (the Kaka area of the Upper Nile region).

Initially, there was peaceful coexistence and reciprocity between *Tagoi* and these late arrivals. Men from these groups would leave their wives and children with their *Tagoi* neighbours when they moved southwards with their animals. They even had "sowaybat" (stores) at the homes of *Tagoi* families to store the crops they harvested from the cultivable land tracts that were often offered to them for use during their presence in the *Tagoi* Area and that they could not take with them to North Kordofan. In return, many *Tagoi* used to give the new arrivals their cows to look after with their own. Members of these late-arriving groups celebrated occasions of both

14. The *Hawazma* who settled in the north-eastern Nuba Mountains have splintered into subgroups: (1) the *Abu Al-Ali Hawazma*, who in turn split into four internal kin-groups: *Dar Gwad*, *Awlad Qaboush*, *Dar Baytti* and *Naiili*; (2) the *Al-Halafa Hawazma*, who are divided in turn into eight internal kin-groups: *Dar Ali*, *Dar Fayid*, *Al-Assirrah*, *Awlad Quhaym*, *Awlad Tatbiddo*, *Salamat*, *Al-Ayadgah*, and *Al-Togiyah*; and (3) the *Rawawgah Hawazma*, who split into three internal kin-groups: *Dar Jama'a*, *Awlad Nuba* and *Dallahya*. Each of these *Hawazma* subgroups has an administration led by an *Omda*. These administrations were formed with the introduction of the *Nazirate* system in the early 1950s, before Sudan gained independence from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. The *Hawazma* then nominated a *Nazir* to rule over them (Al-Tahir Al-Nour Khawai). During these last years of Anglo-Egyptian rule, the *Hawazma* had no permanent settlement in the *Tagoi* Area. Later, they only had three settlements in the *Alfaydh* and *Um Berimbeta* areas, each of which was confined to a small kin-group from the *Al-Halafa Hawazma*, which was expelled from the *Hawazma* homeland for misconduct (committing murder or engaging in conflict over political authority): *Salamat*, *Dar Fayid*, and *Al-Ayadgah*.

celebration and bereavement with their *Tagoi* neighbours, and enjoyed close friendships with them. Even in situations where their animals encroached on to *Tagoi* cultivations, the *Hawazma* consistently and voluntarily came to the affected farmers to pay adequate compensation for their losses. These intimate relationships extended to the point where the native administration of *Tagoi* provided the *Hawazma* with places to stay overnight on dunes of red sandy or semi-laterized clay loam soil (“*garadid*”, singular “*gardood*”), which in most cases extended from the north to the south of the *Tagoi* territory. This gift led to disagreements between the native administration of *Tagoi* and the ordinary *Tagoi* people¹⁵ that escalated to violence. As some *Tagoi* informants describe them, these *garadid* are areas where large trees abound, and there are plentiful large termite hills (*ganattiir*) where large serpents live (such as the serpent called “*ras al-shaytan*” [head of the demon]). For the *Tagoi*, the north-south direction is inauspicious and associated with demons and their movement, and it is the direction of the *garadid* that is believed to make them a “natural” abode for demons. In any event, the *garadid* are the places where the *Hawazma* stay overnight, and many *Tagoi* identify them and their cattle as demons. The relationship between *garadid*, demons and the *Hawazma* not only tells us that the *Tagoi* informants are inclined to demonize the *Hawazma*, portraying them as wicked and threatening, but also shows that the *Tagoi* leaders gave *garadid* to *Hawazma* because according to the *Tagoi*’s belief system they are uninhabitable and uncultivable areas of land: the *Tagoi* do not live or cultivate crops on the *garadid* because they are the places where demons reside. The subsequent conflict between the two groups was not about the *garadid*, however, but about fertile land and housing areas. Nevertheless, although they were unusable, inauspicious and associated with demons, the *garadid* could be

15. The old political and administrative hierarchy of the *Tagoi* included representatives from the different residential areas, who made up a “board of advisors” for the king. The king and his advisory council represented the political authority, and were involved in all large and small matters concerning the *Tagoi* tribe. Since the reign of the late king (*Mek Mohamed Ahmed Hamdan*), the label “king” has been replaced with “*Amir*” (prince), just as the label “advisors” has been replaced with “*Omdas*” and “*Sheikhs*”. Political and administrative offices are hereditary through the male line, and hence exclusive to certain families. The office of king is inherited as follows: two girls who have never been married, and who are selected according to certain criteria, are seated beside the new king at his investiture, one on his right and the other on his left. One of these two girls must be from his mother’s side, and the other from his father’s (to satisfy the two parties). The new king must marry these two girls at that moment, even if he has been married before. The first son the king fathers by one of these two wives becomes the Prince of the Crown, or the son who deserves to be the next king of the *Tagoi*.

granted to the *Hawazma* as temporary overnight accommodation in accordance with certain agreements and conditions. They are not allowed to form permanent settlements for them, however, simply because they form an integral part of the *Tagoi's* inherited lands.

CONTROLLING THE MOVEMENT OF OUTSIDERS

For the *Tagoi* informants, the *Hawazma* had an ancient "*mirhal*" (plural "*maracheel*"), a term that means a specific route for a nomadic pastoral group. Their *mirhal* still exists today: it starts from their home area of Al-Hammadi in the north and goes south, first through the areas of Kadero and Kortala, and then across the areas of the "Six Mountains" to the west of the *Tagoi* Area's western border, and through the areas to the west of *Kawalib* and *Sheibun* and the east of Kadugli (see Map no. 1, above). It then proceeds southwards to Bahr Al-Arab. Since the early 1970s, however, the *Hawazma* have started to use new *maracheel* that cross the *Tagoi* Area from north to south.

According to some informants, when the *Tagoi* were living on the Mount of *Tagoi*, the *Hawazma* were grazing their cattle in the surrounding lowlands. Just after the *Tagoi* descended on to these lowlands, the *Hawazma* and other smaller groups began to settle with them. The *Tagoi* native administration allowed these groups to settle with the *Tagoi* on the steppes, which they thought of as *Tagoi* property for many years. At the time, there were other *maracheel* that were used by other small nomadic pastoral groups, who crossed the *Tagoi* Area as they moved between their *masayif* on the rich savannahs of South Kordofan and South Sudan and their *makharif* on the poor savannahs of North Kordofan in search of water and pastures. Over time, many families from the host and transient groups, which were rapidly growing in size, began to take possession of tracts of land with a view to settling in the region permanently.

The reign of *Mek* Adam Jabouri saw the beginnings of the organization of the *maracheel* for the nomadic pastoral groups that had been accustomed to crossing the *Tagoi* Area. These *maracheel* had entrances, exits, places to stay overnight and tracks for movement, which the *Tagoi* native administration used to identify at its annual meetings, and which were basically intended to prevent animals encroaching on to the *Tagoi's* cultivations and other properties. Um Berimbeta was the first area the *Hawazma* passed through on their journey from the Allouba area (Al-Rahad) in North Kordofan southwards to the Liyya Um Sharmout area in the southern part of the Nuba Mountains or the Kaka area (Upper Nile) in South Sudan.¹⁶ When they arrived at Um Berimbeta, the *Hawazma* would send a delegate to the king of *Tagoi* to inform him of their

16. *Hawazma* families that only had a few cows tended to stop in the Liyya Um Sharmout area, while families with many cows usually continued on to Kaka.

arrival in the region and their numbers and to pay the transit fees. It was only after this had been done that the *Tagoi* king would give them permission to dig wells for drinking water and use the pastures along the marked *marheel*. At the beginning of the rainy season in North Kordofan in June, the *Hawazma* returned to their *makharif* in North Kordofan along the same marked *marheel*. There were three *marheel* for the *Hawazma* in *Tagoi* territory, which still remain open today. The first passes through non-agricultural areas, starting in Um Berimbeta and crossing the areas of Tandawah, Toamah and Tajmalah. The second starts in Um Berimbeta and passes to the east of the Tarawah agricultural areas and to the west of the Rashad agricultural areas (that is, the Malgat and Sharak agricultural schemes). The third starts in Um Berimbeta and crosses Al-Awaja and Al-Rihaynah, and then Hajar Yasin near Ambayr, from where it goes along the *sharie alhawa* (highway) directly to Talodi.

The descent from the Mount of *Tagoi* on to the plains did not create clear conflicts with the tribal groups in the region at that time. In the beginning, the conflict between the *Tagoi* and *Hawazma* took the form of simple underlying disputes between farmers and shepherds about natural resources, and it was manageable by the use of the available conflict mitigation mechanisms. When, for example, a conflict emerged as a result of an encroachment of nomads' animals on to the *Tagoi* farmers' cultivations outside the marked *marheel*, it was resolved by a committee of "*ajawiid*" (mediators) made up of representatives of the tribal groups in the particular area and chosen by the advisor concerned, a *Sheikh* or an *Omda*. If the native administrators failed to resolve a conflict, they would hand it over to the police, to be handled through the justice system by applying Sudanese criminal law.

REPEATED EVACUATION AND LAND GRABS

There have been several waves of forced mass migrations from the *Tagoi* Area over more than a hundred years. Some have been due to authority issues and feelings of injustice, oppression and exclusion, while others have been associated with national resistance uprisings.¹⁷ These six migrations took the following forms: (1) the group that accompanied *Mek* Jabouri Jeelyh II (1888-96) on his military campaign against Abyssinia during the *Mahdist* revolution; (2) the group of soldiers *Mek* Gedayl Jabouri (1897-1910) sent to support Sultan Ali Dinar in his fight against the Anglo-Egyptian army in Darfur; (3) the

17. There were other voluntary migrations from the *Tagoi* Area (labour, educational, rural-urban, etc.). These were migrations of individuals with no significant impact on the local demographic structure, which is why they have been excluded from the list. Besides, there was no mass migration from the *Tagoi* Area during the First Sudanese Civil War, simply because the area was not part of the war zone.

families and other close relatives of the assassinated *Mek* Idris Karbos Jeelyh (1896-7) and his brother Ismail, who migrated to Abbasiyya; (4) the groups that fled from the Mount of *Tagoi* after heavy artillery shelling in 1910 by Anglo-Egyptian forces during the reign of *Mek* Gedayl Jabouri; (5) the group of horse-riding *Tagoi* fighters the Anglo-Egyptian government deported to Darfur after the killing of *Mek* Gedayl Jabouri; and (6) the groups that have recently been displaced from the area because of the ongoing civil war in South Kordofan between government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM/A-N). Over the course of time, all these events and mass exoduses have led to a sharp decline in the number of *Tagoi* and to many areas being depopulated.

A hundred years after the significant population loss in their tribe as a result of violence between the forces of *Mek* Gedayl Jabouri and the Anglo-Egyptian government, the *Tagoi* have also found themselves involved in the current civil war, which began in 2011 and has produced an acute crisis and the displacement of large numbers of *Tagoi* families.

Since the late 1970s, many pockets of *Hawazma*, *Bargo*, *Barno*, *Fallata*, *Masalit*, and *Jallaba* merchants have settled permanently in the various *Tagoi* areas and have become involved in disputes with them over natural resources and political authority. The reason behind these settlements is that when the land included in the mechanized agricultural schemes that had been constructed in the areas of Um Lubia and Rideena within the *Tagoi* Area by the Nimeiri government in 1978, which included a total area of more than 50,000 acres, was distributed,¹⁸ these groups took the lion's share, as they had the funds to purchase it. Owing to a lack of money, and despite the complaints filed by the *Tagoi* native administration with the authorities concerned, most *Tagoi* were not successful in buying land within the mechanized agricultural schemes.¹⁹ The establishment of mechanized agricultural schemes in the *Tagoi* Area did not affect the nomadic pastoral activities of the *Hawazma* and others, however, because the areas where these schemes were established had previously been marshland and therefore were no good for cattle herding, and the nomadic pastoral groups' *maracheel* also passed through the mountains, away from these marshlands. Establishment of these schemes involved a considerable portion of the *Tagoi* agricultural lands that have been completely abandoned by them with the passage of time. Other parts of the *Tagoi* agricultural lands were taken away to become *maracheel* for the nomadic pastoralists. Because of this, claims of ownership of these lands by these

18. Um Lubia is in the southern part of the *Tagoi* Area, between Alfaydh and the border with Liri and Tira. Rideena is in the western part of the *Tagoi* Area, between the Mount of *Tagoi* and the border with Kawalib.

19. Source: *Mek* Mohamed Ahmed, the former king of *Tagoi*, in a group interview, Khartoum, 24/11/2012.

groups have begun to surface. This is in addition to the *Tagoi* land that had previously been cut for cotton production and cotton gins, and other land that was taken from the *Tagoi* Area and annexed to neighbouring areas. For example, Um Berimbeta, Um Lubia, Waykaya, and other areas of fertile agricultural lands were attached to the native administration of the *Hawazma* (the *Emarat Al-Halafa*). The *Hawazma* also took Abu Kershola, to which the areas of *khore* Dileeb and Ambayr were later affiliated administratively. These were the fertile western and southern areas of *Tagoi* territory, and had formerly been used for cotton production. As a result of all of this, the social map of the *Tagoi* Area has been changed with regard to its borders.

As the *Tagoi* informants told me, the period in Sudan the recently arrived migrants into the *Tagoi* Area exploited most was the Nimeiri Regime (1969-1985).²⁰ They did so by taking control of all the administrative structures at a provincial level by becoming involved in the Sudanese Socialist Union, which was the country's only legal political party between 1971 and 1985. By so doing, the members of these groups took possession of political authority and were thus instrumental in setting up the mechanized agricultural schemes in the areas of Um Lubia and Rideena and distributing their lands on terms that took the financial capabilities of the members of their groups into consideration.

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Since the beginning of the Second Sudanese Civil War between the central GoS and the SPLA/M, security concerns have prevented the *Hawazma* and *Ambararo* from reaching their traditional *masayif* in the South Sudan side of the border. These security concerns previously arose because of the war, but since the secession of South Sudan in 2011 they have shifted to the international border between Sudan and South Sudan. Nonetheless, the *Ambararo* easily managed to move their *masayif* to the *Liri* area in South Kordofan, although they still pass through *Tagoi* territory without settling in the *Liri* or *Tagoi* areas permanently. The *Shanabla* had no tradition of travelling to any area beyond the present border with South Sudan, because the final destination of their southbound movement is the Kabus area of *Rashad* Locality in South Kordofan. The *Ambararo* and *Shanabla* therefore had no problem with adapting to the latest developments; this problem was confined to the *Hawazma*, who had to look for a solution. Some settled in *Tagoi* territory in the form of dense concentrations (*hallal*, neighbourhoods) in three areas (Alfaydh, Um Berimbeta and Abu Kershola), where they began to purchase *Tagoi* land.

20. These recently arrived migrants include groups of *Hawazma*, *Bargo*, *Barno*, and *Fallata*.

According to the *Tagoi* informants, the *Tagoi* have recently felt that the *Hawazma's* strategy for adapting to the recent security and political developments involves a plan to grab land and settle in *Tagoi* territory, emptying it of its traditional owners through militarization and joining the militias supported by the GoS in its war against the SPLM/A-N rebels in South Kordofan. Based on this feeling, many young *Tagoi* males²¹ have joined the SPLM/A-N to be armed and to receive military training that might help them protect their land.²² Consequently, there has been an escalating conflict over land and political authority between the two tribal groups under the umbrella of the armed conflict between the GoS and the SPLM/A-N.

In order to increase their strength against the *Tagoi*, the *Hawazma* joined the *Barno*, *Bargo* and *Fallata* in an alliance under the name "*Al-Halafa*" based on a common interest in land acquisition. Historically speaking, during the reign of Mek Adam Jabouri (1910-33) a "*Mandobia*" (representative office) with limited authority was granted to the chief of the *Hawazma* to permit him to rule his group on behalf of the *Tagoi* king. Under the current National Salvation Government (specifically in 1995), the *Hawazma Mandobia* has been upgraded to an independent principality known as the "*Emarat Al-Halafa*",²³ with a shift of most of the group's members from the former *Ansar Al-Mahdi* and Umma Party to current support of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), and heavy involvement in the government-supported militias.²⁴

For many *Tagoi* informants, the current key difference between the *Emarat Tagoi* and the *Emarat Al-Halafa* is that the former governs settled people who enjoy the right to both own and use land, whereas the latter governs nomads,

21. Most of these young rebels joined the SPLM/A-N in response to the *Hawazma's* attack on the *Tagoi* areas in April 2011. They came from a variety of social strata.

22. These *Tagoi* rebels engage in military activities that are designed to halt *Hawazma* expansion over *Tagoi* land. These activities manifest themselves in the form of engaging in armed skirmishes with *Hawazma* cattle herders, killing large numbers among them, and abducting their livestock. They also take the form of targeting *Hawazma* residential areas. Their aim is to weaken the potential of the *Hawazma* and destabilize their settlements.

23. The headquarters of the *Emarat Al-Halafa* is Um Berimbeta.

24. This political and administrative development coincided with the change in the old political and administrative hierarchy of the *Tagoi* through the replacement of the king-advisers structure with the *Amir-Omdas-Sheikhs* structure that is known and used in many Sudanese communities. The change was part of an overhaul imposed by the government of South Kordofan State in 1995, when every king in the region was renamed "*Amir*", and their advisors were given the labels "*Omdas*" and "*Sheikhs*" in accordance with their particular administrative levels. One purpose of the change was to create some sort of equality between the various existing kingdoms and emirates in the region in terms of the rights to land and socio-political significance and weight.

who only have the right to use the land along the *maracheel* for cultivation and grazing. The disagreement regarding the nature of the two types of native administration was what lay behind the escalation of the conflict between the *Tagoi* and the *Hawazma* and their allies (*Al-Halafa*). The *Tagoi* informants believe that granting *Al-Halafa* an independent administration parallel to the *Tagoi's* means that these newcomers share ownership of land with them, an attempt that they depict as looking for a bloody conflict on the ground.

There had been a series of conflicts between *Tagoi* and *Hawazma* in previous times,²⁵ but these were resolved by the use of a successful mechanism: the king of *Tagoi* and the *Omda* of *Hawazma* routinely met in a place between their residential areas (mostly at the Mangala rest-house in the Toamah area). The litigants had to appear before them and relate their problems from their own respective points of view. Since the conflict between *Tagoi* and *Hawazma* has been associated with the renewed civil war in South Kordofan, however, the native administration no longer has adequate authority or powers to intervene in and resolve local disputes.

All of this is in addition to the premeditated intention to drive the *Tagoi* from the area. The current National Salvation Government has used the fact that one of the leaders of the SPLM/A-N (Abdel Aziz Al-Hilo) is a *Tagoi* and that many young *Tagoi* men have recently joined the SPLM/A-N against the *Tagoi*, and the situation has encouraged the government to support the *Hawazma* and their allies politically and militarily in their conflict against *Tagoi* over the ownership and use of natural resources. The *Tagoi* informants believe that this support is extensive, and that one of its consequences has been the mingling of Arabism with the popular defence force that supports the official army of the government against the rebel movement, which has also mingled with non-Arabism. Political mobilization in the *Tagoi* Area to participate in the war has therefore been along "government versus opposition" lines. The *Tagoi* have split into two segments: a smaller one that supports the government, and a larger one that supports and/or joins the SPLM/A-N. The former group is said to come mostly from the lower, and politically weak, social strata in the various local communities of *Tagoi*, while the latter is mostly from the

25. The first war between the two sides was in the 1940s, when the *Tagoi* expelled the *Hawazma* from the *Tagoi* Area by force.

upper, and politically strong, social strata.²⁶ The *Hawazma* have chosen to support the government in order to bring their plan to seize land and political authority in the region, which all the *Tagoi* informants view as being historically properties belonging to them, to fruition. The *Hawazma* have also had the opportunity to acquire sufficient strength to achieve this. The government has had to balance its support for the *Tagoi*, who support it to a limited degree, but clearly support the armed opposition, and its support for the *Hawazma*, who support it completely. The *Tagoi* have therefore been deprived of government support, and they also feel that the government “stands in line” with the *Hawazma* and their allies. As a result, and with the escalation of conflict into more excessive violence, more *Tagoi* have joined the armed opposition in the Nuba Mountains, and others have been displaced to other parts of Sudan. The *Tagoi* Area has become a land of war, armed robbery, and other forms of mass violence that have generated a feeling of insecurity among all the residents of the area (the *Tagoi*, *Hawazma*, and others) and hence have forced many to move away to safer areas. It has been observed that during the escalation of the conflict, the *Hawazma* frequently failed to stick to the defined *maracheel*, as the cases of the intentional encroachment of herdsmen’s animals on to *Tagoi* farms has increased considerably, stirring a great deal of violent friction.

Some *Tagoi* informants are of the opinion that the conflict between the *Tagoi* and the *Hawazma* over land and political authority has recently become entangled with the political conflict between the GoS and the SPLM/A-N: these informants describe the conflict between the *Tagoi* and *Hawazma* as both “tribal” and “political”, as between the *Tagoi* and the *Hawazma* and their

26. One legend recounted by the *Tagoi* informants tells that in ancient times, a man and his wife gave birth to pairs of leopards, serpents, lions, bees, humans, and small red locusts. All these pairs lived as one family. Over time, the pairs of leopards, serpents, lions, bees, and locusts were expelled into the wilderness for misconduct, while the human pair remained with the parents. The pairs in the wilderness developed into spiritual beings that the *Tagoi* distinguish from similar natural beings. It is believed that there are spiritual and blood bonds between these spiritual beings and various *Tagoi* families, as they are all come from one couple. Members of the families associated with these spiritual beings could see them or use them for their own benefit. The importance of each animal or insect illustrates the social statuses of the *Tagoi* kin-groups. At the top in terms of importance is the leopard, for its strength, courage and fierceness, as it is the “king of animals”. The kin-group linked to the leopard (royal families) enjoys political authority and the highest social status. Next come the serpent and the lion, which are seen as deputies of the leopard, because they are also strong, brave, and fierce, but to a lesser degree than the leopard. Next are the bees, which provide people with food and symbolize goodness, while also being dangerous. In last position come the locusts, which are harmful. Importantly, persons inherit their fathers’ social status, whether it be the kin-group of the leopard, serpent, locusts or other spiritual beings.

allies, including the central government. With the intervention of the government and opposition groups, the local conflict between the *Hawazma* and *Tagoi* has reached a new dimension. The government wanted more supporters who could carry arms and fight on its behalf against the rebel SPLM/A-N in the Nuba Mountains in general, and the *Hawazma* and their allies have taken advantage of this need, enrolled in the government-backed militias, and thus obtained arms and advanced military training that has benefited them in their conflict with the *Tagoi*, which was formerly of a limited scope, because it was associated with the use of elderly light weapons between limited numbers of people. The recent possession of modern firearms has extended the conflict to include highly-trained armed forces and armaments.

In June 2011, after the secession of South Sudan, the civil war broke out again between the GoS troops and the SPLM/A-N in many areas of South Kordofan, including the *Tagoi* Area. The renewed war has forcibly displaced the majority of *Tagoi* families to safer areas in Sudan, particularly in Khartoum, Kosti, Al-Rahad, El-Obeid, Wad Medani, and Sinnar. As I mentioned above, the result of this mass displacement has been that most *Tagoi* areas are now unpopulated. Only the families of the royal kin-group (the *iyal Jabouri*) are in Alfaydh at present, as the king and his family are prevented by *Tagoi* customary law from travelling and settling permanently outside the borders of the kingdom under any circumstances.

Some of the *Tagoi* informants described the latest escalation of conflict between *Tagoi* and *Al-Halafa*. As they tell it, this escalation started with the assassination of *Omda* Abdul Karim, the *Omda* of Abu Al-Hassan village, in Alfaydh by a group of armed *Hawazma*, who attacked him as he was leaving his home to conduct the night-time prayer (*ṣalat al-‘isha*) at the mosque. *Omda* Abdul Karim was one of the harshest critics of the presence of *Al-Halafa* in the *Tagoi* Area and was outspoken in declaring the need to force them to leave the area. After his assassination, a powerful movement to expel the *Al-Halafa* from the area grew among the *Tagoi*. Meanwhile, the *Al-Halafa* called a meeting, at which large numbers of their young men assembled and were armed, and a plan was prepared to attack the *Tagoi* in their various areas during the Eid prayer and wipe them out. As an incentive for the young combatants, land and orchards owned by *Tagoi* people were distributed to them in advance as proceeds of war. The plan was to make the entire *Tagoi* Area the property of the *Al-Halafa*. The attack began in Alfaydh and moved to a number of other *Tagoi* villages – Ambayr, Toamah, Abu Al-Hassan, Al-Mansur, Jibaylat, and Tarawah – which were completely run down and abandoned and occupied by Sudanese army forces during the period of fieldwork on which this article is based. The attack, which was carried out by troops from the popular defence forces composed exclusively of *Al-Halafa* and backed by the government army, was accompanied by the killing of residents and the burning of houses. The young *Tagoi* from the SPLM/A-N intervened militarily to defend their people, taking the Mount of *Tagoi* as their base, and with this military intervention, the attack was halted.

CONCLUDING REMARK

The social order the *Tagoi* have built over more than two centuries has weakened due to factors including armed conflicts or security threats, land grabs for agricultural investment, government-influenced native administration, migrations, and contacts with other communities. Their old independent kingdom no longer governs them; instead they are currently living in a modern State in which they cannot organize themselves as their grandparents did. National and local developments have affected their possession of both political authority and land, with its natural resources, as they have lost both with the passage of time. The former land ownership, the customarily agreed tribal boundaries, and control over the passage of nomadic pastoralists are no longer recognized under the modern State, whose conditions have created most of the changes we have studied in the lives of the *Tagoi*.

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