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The Sudan

Richard Lobban

Rhode Island College, rlobban@ric.edu

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban

Rhode Island College, cfluehr@ric.edu

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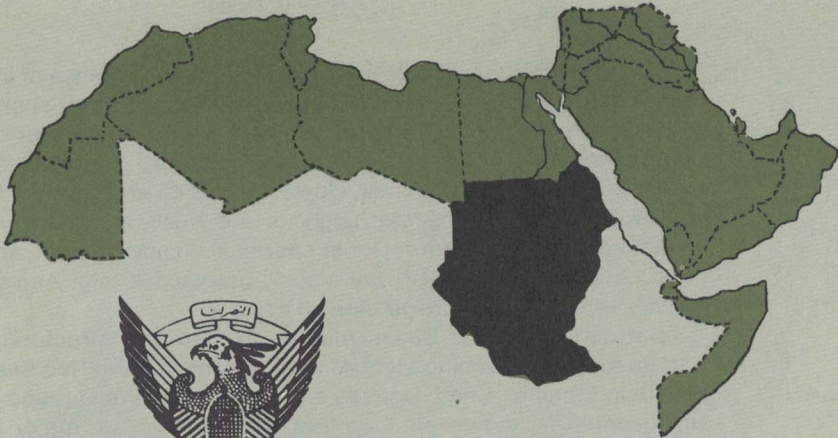


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SUDAN

جمهورية السودان الديمقراطية

PROFILE

Official Name: Democratic Republic of Sudan (Jumhuriyyat al-Sudan al-Dimuqratiyyah)

Head of State: Jaafer Nimeiri

Government: Republic

Area: 967,499 sq. mi. (=United States east of the Mississippi)

Population: 16,300,000

Population Density: 17/sq. mi.

Capital: Khartoum (350,000)

Other Urban Centers: Khartoum North, Omdurman, Merowe, Dongala

National Holiday: January 1

Currency: Sudanese Pound (1 SP = \$2.90)

Press: Al-Ayyam and Al-Sahafa, most important dailies

Radio & Television: Radio programs in Arabic, French, Italian
Television network.

Sites of Interest: Ancient Nubian tombs and pyramids

Main Airports: Khartoum and Jubal

Date of Joining the United Nations: November 12, 1956

Date of Joining the Arab League: January 19, 1956

INTRODUCTION

Sudan, Africa's largest country, straddles a vast expanse of geography, history and culture. Its great diversity is a most prominent characteristic. While Sudan has not itself played a central role in world history, the great powers from the ancient Egyptians to the British imperialists have involved it in international affairs. However, it is often forgotten that Sudan once ruled Egypt during the height of the Kushites, that it was under Byzantine Christian rule for a longer period than under Islam, and that the great Sudanese nationalist, the Mahdi, defeated a joint Anglo-Egyptian military venture in the late nineteenth century.

To a certain degree Sudan may be likened to a structural keystone with its frontiers touching eight African nations and the Red Sea. Links to people in Ethiopia, Chad, Uganda and Egypt have often proved extremely significant. The immensely long Nile River and its two major tributaries are in appropriate proportions for this African giant.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Topography

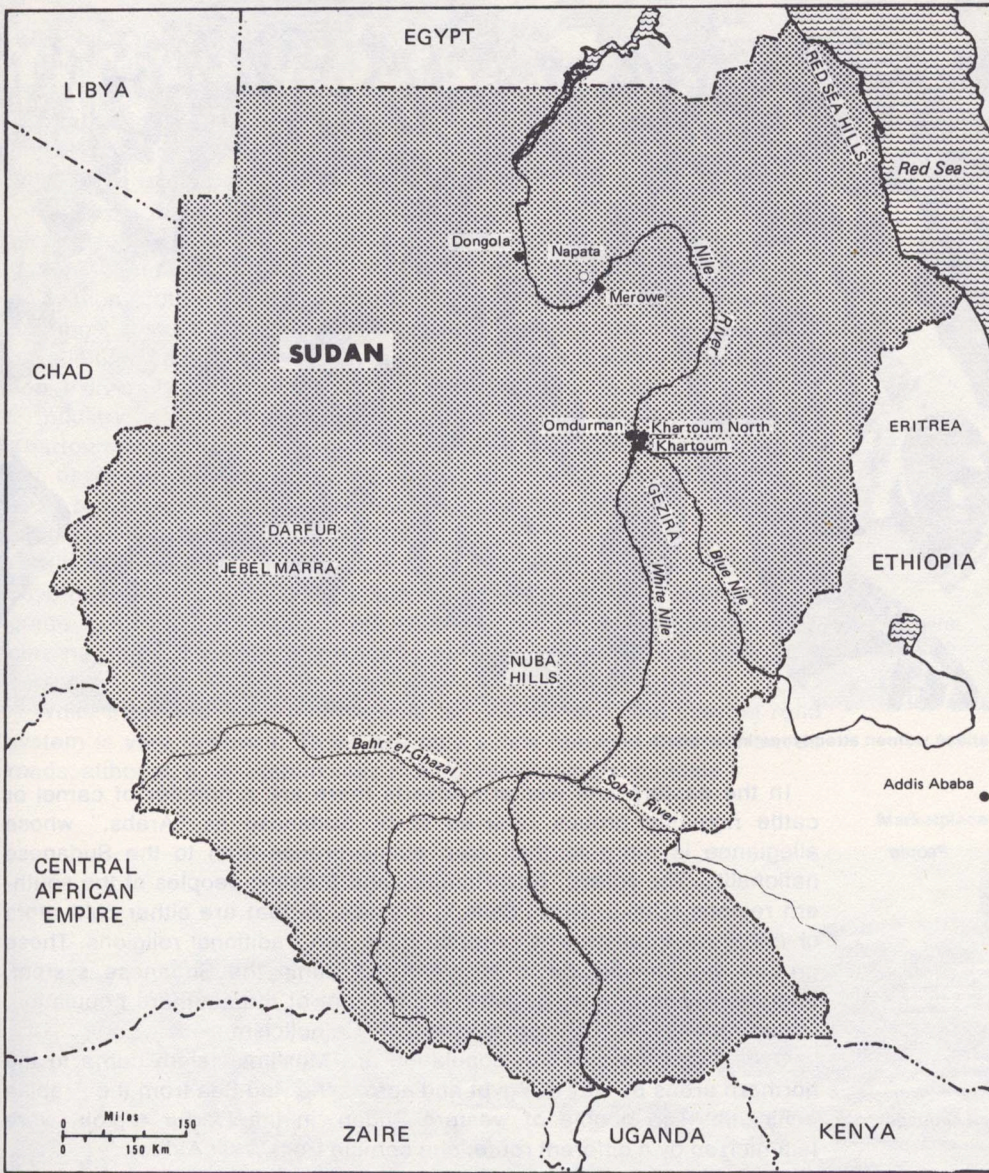
The Democratic Republic of Sudan is essentially a huge, shallow basin, mostly over 1500 feet above sea level, rimmed by highlands and mountains, and dominated by the Nile drainage system. Its area of 967,499 square miles is roughly equivalent to all of Western Europe, or to the United States east of the Mississippi River. In the far west in Darfur are the Jebel Marra highlands with the highest mountain reaching 10,070 feet. In the east, the Sudanese plains push all the way to the mountains which mark the border with Eritrea. Some of these mountains continue into Sudan as the Red Sea Hills which provide a relatively cool region above the hot, dry plains. A few prominent volcanic hills rise in the south, but most of the southern countryside is rather undifferentiated in terms of altitude.

Nile Valley

The most important region is the Nile Valley, particularly the extensive portion known as the Gezira which lies between the Blue and White Niles. It is in the irrigated Gezira that the agricultural wealth is concentrated. Once cotton was the monocrop, but more recently other cash crops like grains and sugar cane have become important. The country may be divided into three climatic zones. In the northern third there are extensive regions of virtual desert with very infrequent rains. The central third is characterized by savanna vegetation if the seasonal rainfall has been adequate. Blinding sandstorms may occur in this zone. The southern third is scrub forest with more regular summer rainfall, especially in the area along the frontier with Zaire and Uganda which contains flora typical of the tropical forest. The Red Sea coast is hot and humid.

In northern and central Sudan daytime summer temperatures may exceed 110°F, while winter nights may fall to 60°F. The range between day and night temperatures is often considerable.

Soil types reflect the climatic pattern. In the north the surface is either covered by shifting sands or is bare rock with no soil. As aridity diminishes southwards immature soils begin to appear. In central and southern Sudan alkaline clay soils are found, and along the Uganda and Zaire borders there is a belt of tropical lateritic soils. Alluvial soils are found along the rivers.



HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

The mid-1977 population is estimated at 16.3 million. Arabs predominate with about 40 percent, followed by Black Africans (such as Dinka and Nuer) in the south with 30 percent, mixed groups in the western Darfur region with 13 percent, Nuba in the Nuba Hills region with 6 percent, Beja in the northeast with 6 percent, and Nubians along the Nile near Egypt with 3 percent.

The boundaries of Sudan, like those of other colonies in Africa and the Middle East, were not drawn with much account taken of the peoples who would live within them. As a result Sudan is a highly heterogeneous state. In the northern regions the people are of mixed Arab and African ancestry—they are predominantly agriculturalists, Arabic-speaking, and followers of Islam.



Northern Sudanese women attend meeting in South.



People

Language

Urban
Centers

In the eastern and western deserts there are a number of camel or cattle nomadic groups referred to by Sudanese as "Arabs," whose allegiance is more to their own ethnic groups than to the Sudanese nationality. The Niletic, Nile-Hamitic, and Sudanic peoples of the southern regions (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Annuak, Zande) are either cultivators or cattle pastoralists who practice their own traditional religions. These groups are steadily being incorporated within the Sudanese system. Educated southerners, perhaps 0.5 percent of the southern population, follow various Christian sects, especially Catholicism.

Over 70 percent of the population are Muslims. Islam came to the northern areas by way of Egypt and across the Red Sea from the Arabian peninsula. The people of western Sudan, in the Darfur region, were Islamicized by a different route, one coming from West Africa.

In the political and economic spheres the peoples of northern and central Sudan dominate, and their language, Arabic, is the official language of the country. Arabic is the first language of slightly more than one-third of the population, but Sudanese colloquial Arabic is the lingua franca. Educated Sudanese have considerable knowledge of English, the former colonial language.

The largest urban concentration is the Three Towns area (Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman), with a population of 800,000, comprising 5.6 percent of the national total. Khartoum is the center of politics, administration and transport, while Omdurman is the center of commerce and northern Sudanese culture.

The population is unevenly distributed over the often harsh landscape. More than 50 percent of the people are concentrated on about 15 percent of the land, primarily along the Nile and around Khartoum. Most of the rest are in the savanna areas west of the White Nile and south of Bahr el-Ghazal.

ECONOMY

The backbone of the Sudanese economy is agriculture. There are 617 million cultivable acres, but only 200 million are currently being used. Animal resources and forestry products each account for about 10 percent of the gross national product (GNP). Eighty-five percent of the work force is concentrated in primary production. Not only is the economy heavily weighted toward primary production but much of the agricultural wealth revolves around one cash crop—cotton. The irrigated Gezira cotton scheme began in 1925 and has more than 2 million acres under cultivation. Cotton alone has provided about two-thirds of the total export earnings. Instability in cotton prices and conversion to synthetic fibers have initiated a program which emphasizes sugar cane and grain production to diversify the economy and boost export earnings.

Industry is concentrated in the Three Towns area of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman where there are textile mills and chemical, beverage, tile, cigarette and leather industries. Legislation passed in 1972 provides incentives to foreign investors. Manufacturing industries contribute about 2 percent of the GNP.

Mineral resources may include some petroleum reserves, but these have not been tapped. There is some gold in the Red Sea Hills and low grade iron ore in portions of the south. Copper, gypsum, manganese, chrome, lead and sulphur are found but are not exploited to any great extent.

While there are good international air connections, the internal road system is very deficient. There are only a few hundred miles of paved roads, although a rail system links most of the provincial capitals.

*Agriculture**Industry**Mineral
Wealth*

Marketplace in Khartoum.



HISTORY

Ancient

For tens of thousands of years Sudan was populated by hunters, foragers and fishermen. Sedentary life began with the farming of the Nile floodplains. Some of the first recorded contact with other nations occurred when representatives of the Old Kingdom of Egypt (3200-2100 B.C.) arrived in search of gold, ivory, slaves, and incense and built rudimentary military outposts. During the Middle Kingdom (2100-1700 B.C.), northern Sudan was an Egyptian province, a source of slaves and rare minerals. The New Kingdom rulers (1570-1100 B.C.) brought an even greater Egyptian influence which penetrated as far south as Napata.

Kushites

The close links with Egypt began to erode during the rise of the Kushites (1100-750 B.C.), with their capital of Merowe, and a great sense of economic and political autonomy was evident. From 750 to 500 B.C. the Kushitic influence expanded to such a degree that a variety of Sudanese innovations made the Merotic culture significantly different from Egyptian patterns, including a unique form of writing. The Kushites occupied extensive areas of Egypt until Assyrians found them over-extended and seized Egypt for themselves. Merowe shrank in territory but lasted until 350 A.D. The high level of cultural achievement was in conjunction with the period of greatest political autonomy. The Merotic period saw Black Africa's first extensive trade network, an independent production of iron ore and the manufacture of iron implements.

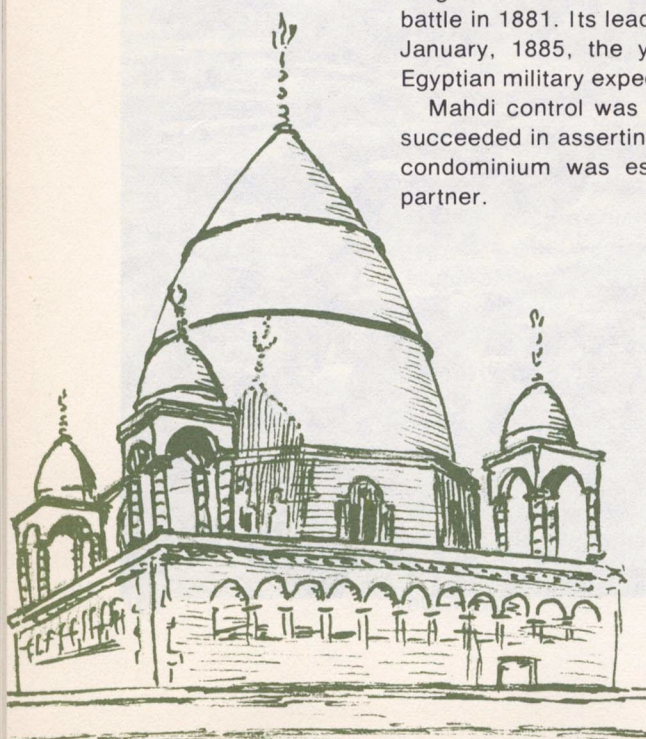
Medieval

The ensuing contest among the great Mediterranean powers for influence in Sudan was resolved with the imposition of Byzantine and Coptic Christianity from 540 to 1504 A.D. The Christian period began to fade with the Islamic conquest in 1323 of the northern areas of Sudan; the southern Christian kingdom fell in 1504. Islamic expansion characterized the remainder of the medieval period with central Sudan coming under the influence of the Funj sultanates in 1504.

Mahdi

In 1821, the Turkish ruler in Egypt, Mohammad Ali, extended his control up the Nile into Sudan. A degree of improvement in trade and communication occurred, but brutal taxation, widespread corruption and persistent slavery made his rule unpopular. The Mahdiyya, a politico-religious movement with a fierce sense of nationalism, won a significant battle in 1881. Its leader, the Mahdi, gained control of much of Sudan by January, 1885, the year when General Gordon, leader of an Anglo-Egyptian military expedition, was killed.

Mahdi control was short-lived. By 1899 the Anglo-Egyptian force had succeeded in asserting its control. In that year the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan condominium was established, with Britain very much as the senior partner.



Mahdi's tomb at Omdurman

On January 1, 1956, Sudan became independent. In 1958 the parliamentary government was toppled by a pro-West coup under General Ibrahim Abboud, who was himself overthrown in the wake of a series of massive demonstrations in October, 1964. Secessionist disturbances in the south began as early as 1955 and were a constant dilemma for Khartoum. From 1965 to 1969 the country drifted with no decisive action taken on the pressing problems of the south and national development. On May 25, 1969 the second parliamentary period closed with a coup d'etat by Jaafer Nimeiri. The Nimeiri regime's initial strong leftist support deteriorated. After a three-day coup d'etat in July, 1971, Nimeiri turned to the West and relations with the Soviet Union chilled. The March 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement ended the civil war in the south.

Independence

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

In May, 1969 the Democratic Republic of Sudan, committed to a policy of Sudanese socialism, was proclaimed. The Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) was formed in 1972 and is the only legal political party. After local SSU elections the People's Assembly was convened to form a new constitution.

The National Judiciary is comprised of a Civil Branch (including civil and criminal sections) and a Shari'a or Islamic Branch. The Shari'a is relegated to the domain of personal or family law only. People's Courts were instituted to combine national law with customary law at the local level. These courts are now referred to as Village Councils and are operated with SSU personnel. A High Judicial Council supervises legal affairs as provided by the SSU-promulgated constitution.

Administration

Primary education is available on a mass level in the towns and cities. A smaller percentage of students go on to secondary school. Through the secondary school level the language of instruction is Arabic. At the University of Khartoum courses are taught in both Arabic and English. In the south, English and Arabic are used for education and administration. However, following the Addis Ababa Agreement there has been a commitment to expand the use of the languages of the south.

Education

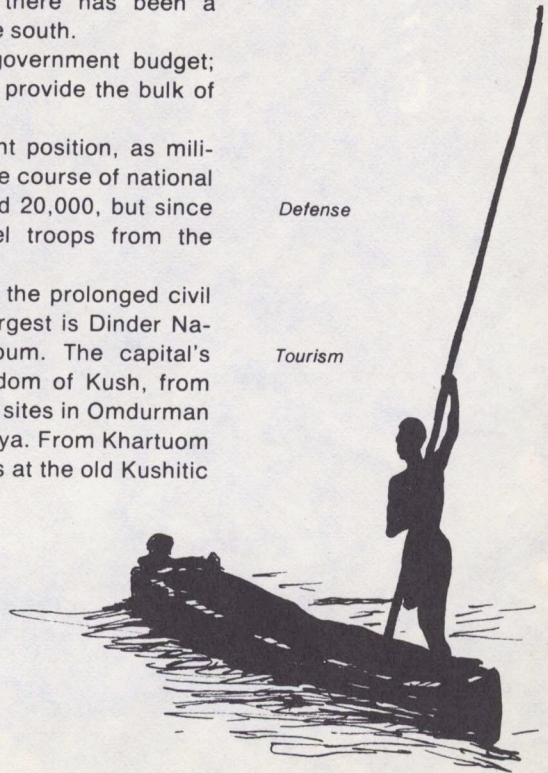
Social services account for 45 percent of the government budget; most services are free. Government health services provide the bulk of medical care.

The Sudanese Armed Forces occupy an important position, as military support has always been critical in influencing the course of national politics. In 1972 the Armed Forces numbered around 20,000, but since that time large numbers of former southern rebel troops from the Anya-Nya have been absorbed into the national army.

Defense

Tourism has grown rapidly since the resolution of the prolonged civil war. The south has a number of game parks; the largest is Dinder National Game Park, 320 miles southeast of Khartoum. The capital's museums contain treasures from the ancient kingdom of Kush, from Pharaonic rule and from the Christian period. Historic sites in Omdurman give testament to the once powerful rule of the Mahdiyya. From Khartoum it is less than a day's travel to the archaeological ruins at the old Kushitic capital of Merowe.

Tourism



PROSPECTS

While foreign debts, a low per capita GNP and a reliance on imported manufactured items are serious handicaps to Sudan's development, there is an immense potential for future growth. Many of its human and natural resources have hardly been tapped. Hydroelectric power could be generated in vast amounts for internal consumption and for export. Proper water management could expand the irrigated lands to help raise foreign revenue by state-controlled agribusiness. Sudan is not yet suffering the intense population pressure that is so common in many Third World nations. Any development policy must have consistency and continuity and Sudan's several changes of government and oscillations from right to left have undermined the development program. The resolution of the southern problem which kept the nation divided for almost seventeen years is a most encouraging sign. Without national unity there can be no national development, yet it is only with a fair development of the resources of both the north and south that unity will be maintained.



A Sudanese singer accompanies herself on a lyre-like instrument.

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Hassan S. Haddad is Professor and Chairman of the Department of History and Political Science at St. Xavier College, Chicago.

Basheer K. Nijim is Professor and Head of the Department of Geography at the University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

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