

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Migrant Workers in an Urban Situation: A Comparative Study  
of Factory Workers and Building Sites Labourers in Khartoum  
(Sudan)

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

*has never used*

*These names as appear  
Agar Famer, this is the name*

Elwathig Mohamed (Hag Elkhidir Ali) Kameir, B.Sc.(Khartoum)

*Confidential  
Elwathig  
Mohamed  
Kameir*

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM AND THE METHODS OF FIELD WORK

## The Problem

This is a study of migrant workers in two different wage-earning, urban situations. It deals with a number of problems in the field of urban and industrial sociology which have by now long been centred in African social anthropological and sociological literature, as well as in other parts of the Third World, particularly in Latin America.

The main purpose of the thesis is to conduct a comparative analysis of migrant behaviour in two very different kinds of industrial situations. I first studied workers in two fairly similar establishments, the Blue Nile Brewery and the Modern Company for the Production and Distribution of Matches. After that, I turned my attention for comparison to manual workers on building sites under the control of private entrepreneurs. The brewery and the match factory are located in the industrial area of the town of Khartoum North, and the building sites I studied are mainly in Khartoum itself.

The workers in the brewery and the match factory were for the most part from the Northern and Western provinces of the Sudan, while the building site labourers were all Nuer<sup>1</sup> from the Upper Nile province of Southern Sudan. The migration patterns of the factory workers (the brewery and the match factory) from the North and the West are very different from those of the Nuer from the South. Among the former there is a strong tendency to settle in town on a permanent basis, and they are increasingly proletarian in their situation and outlook. Among the Nuer building labourers, on the other hand, the dominant pattern is one of oscillation between town and country. This pattern has often been studied intensively, especially in Southern and Central Africa, and the term "circulation of labour"<sup>2</sup> was introduced to emphasise the contrast between the ordinary one-way rural-urban migration normally leading to permanent urbanization.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to answer questions concerning both the stabilization and the circulation of labour migrants. My field data show that the life patterns and social experiences of the factory



workers, to be discussed in Part II of the thesis, differ markedly from those of circulatory migrants, to be discussed in Part III. Firstly, the former come from rural socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in the North and the West which are quite different from those of their Southern counterparts. The implications of these differences for their social organization and manner of living in town will be examined closely. Secondly it will be seen that the differing employment opportunities to which the two categories have access, and consequent differences in their work situations in town, cannot be understood without an analysis of the labour market in the Three Towns, and that this in turn depends for a proper appreciation on a historical view of the political economy of the country as a whole.

Thus the thesis is concerned with both the causes and the consequences of differences between the two sets of workers. It dwells on their rural origins, their migratory patterns, their employment opportunities, and their total urban-industrial experiences, all of which are set in the wider context of the political and economic processes that have over a long period of time-spanning both the colonial and post-colonial periods - led to the emergence of these two categories of wage-earners and of the different employment situations in which they find themselves.

Within the limits of the concerns outlined above, the thesis accords priority to two salient issues: 1) The social organization of each category of migrant workers in the total urban situation, including the ways in which each interprets, and responds to, this situation, 2) The emergence<sup>e</sup> and development of diverse kinds of social relationships in different working circumstances which are themselves products of the overall urban-industrial situation. Here, particular attention is devoted to the study of the conflicts, tensions, and disputes which inevitably arise in the "structured opposition" between workers and their employers.

## Urban and Industrial Research in Africa

The literature on industrialization and urbanization arising out of the colonial presence in Africa, and especially on the overall impact of colonialism on indigeneous socio-economic structures, is vast and varied. For the purposes of this thesis attention needs to be drawn specifically to studies on: a) the rural exodus as one of the most salient aspects of social change following on the capitalist penetration which accompanied imperialism, and b) the emergence of different categories of urban wage-earners and their modes and patterns of incorporation into urban life. In relation to the second point, however, it is worth noting that research has thus far been concentrated somewhat disproportionately on problems of "adaptation to urban life" to the relative neglect of analyses of the urban labour market and of the differential participation of migrant workers in wage employment.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is twofold: to review the major earlier studies of migratory patterns and migrant incorporation into the urban-industrial situation, including a brief assessment of the models to which they have given rise, and to assess the advantages and limitations of these models with particular concern about their applicability to the urban industrial conditions of present day Sudan.

### Labour Migration Studies

A considerable number of studies of labour migration were conducted in Southern and Central Africa in the immediate post-war decades. These were mainly by British social anthropologists and economists. The anthropological studies are well represented by Schapera (1947),<sup>3</sup> Watson (1958, 1959),<sup>4</sup> Mitchell (1959, 1951, 1969),<sup>5</sup> Von Velson (1960).<sup>6</sup> As examples of the economists we may take Baldwin (1966)<sup>7</sup> and Houghton (1966).<sup>8</sup> The major pre-occupation of these studies was the explanation of the phenomenon of "migrant labour" or, in Mitchell's words, the "recurrent nature of labour migration".<sup>9</sup>

Schapera attributes labour migration in the former Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana) to three main categories of causes, namely social and psychological factors, economic necessity, and propaganda and political pressures.<sup>10</sup> However, he also allowed, as does Van Velsen,<sup>11</sup> for a number of other factors including escape from domestic control, tribal disputes, and avoidance of labour obligations. These latter factors are cited by Schapera and Van Velsen to indicate that, as they saw the problem, basic economic motivations for migration were incorporated in the normative and social system of the societies they studied.

Watson conceives of the new economic pressures introduced by the colonial economic system as "needs" and "necessities" (since the Africans themselves consider them as such) that induced the willing participation of Africans in the newly established cash economy.<sup>12</sup> Arguing on similar lines, Mitchell sees Africans as reconciling their economic "needs" for money with their psychological "needs" for social relationships through participation in labour migration. In this sense, he sees the pattern of labour migration as determined by a combination of centrifugal and centripetal forces:

Once centrifugal have overcome the centripetal tendencies and a man migrates to a labour centre, he is subject to the opposing pulls of these influences. The dilemma in which he finds himself may be resolved either when his economic wants are satisfied and he is drawn back into the social system out of which he recently moved, or with continued absence he starts to build up a new network of social relationships where he happens to be working and these tend to replace and weaken those he left behind. 13

The works of the economists, Baldwin and Houghton, are in many respects similar to the analysis of labour migration developed by the social anthropologists mentioned above. Thus Baldwin analysed the system of labour migration in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in terms of the individual preferences and choices of Africans, who only partially participate in the cash economy in order to satisfy certain calculated cash "needs".<sup>14</sup> He argues that the European urban economy provides the migrants with cash

"incentives" through the requirement to pay taxes and the desire for manufactured goods and bridewealth. These compel engagement in wage-labour for certain periods, thus fulfilling the European colonial interests as well as their own. Houghton's analysis is very similar to Baldwin's, and he sees the migratory labour system in South Africa as a bridge across the gap between the "primitive" and modern economic systems.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Baldwin, Houghton recognizes the deleterious and destructive social effects of labour migration on African society,<sup>16</sup> but he still considers migratory labour as a necessity for the ultimate objective of incorporating Africans into European industrial society.

A general and far-reaching critique of such studies by Magubane and O'Brien appears in Critical Anthropology (1972).<sup>17</sup> Their main criticism rests on the simple contention that the central underlying assumption of all these studies is that the colonial economic system was thought to be the result of "natural" interaction with indigeneous African economic structures. Specifically, they write that the implicit yet central assumption of these studies "is that the development of imperialism was neutral, inevitable, and in harmony with traditional structures".<sup>18</sup> This belief in the harmony of interests between African colonial subjects and the imperial powers was reflected in the formal concepts developed to analyse the "dualistic" nature of the situation. In this view, such concepts derived from implicit ideological commitments. Thus Magubane and O'Brien write that:

In the model which assumes the harmony of interests, the causal sequence - the subordination or domination of the African worker by the white - is omitted. Ultimately, the sense of the Africans struggle with an alien reality to which they are subjected is not even considered a possibility. Such mystification is, of course, the very purpose of ideology. 19

The weakness common to all the above studies is their neglect of quite central aspects of the colonial political economy either by ignoring the colonial situation altogether, or taking it for granted. The failure

to take the colonial context, which profoundly shaped the lives of Africans as itself a topic for analysis, and their consequent failure to examine the structure of the political economy of imperialism, led these scholars to see the Central and Southern Africa as a neutral arena in which Africans satisfied their rising expectations.

In the light of this over-riding criticism we examine the studies in more detail. The analysis of circular migration based on "push" and "pull" forces, as suggested by Mitchell, is built on two assumptions. First, in drawing the distinction between economic and social "needs", the social needs are given equal weight with the economic ones. Thus it is pointed that their "pull" may be sufficiently strong to counteract the economic "needs". Since the time of Mitchell's analysis, there has been increasing interaction and co-responsence between rural and urban areas, but the satisfaction of social needs, in Mitchell's terms, does not necessarily require circulation. It was the "taking of <sup>the</sup> colonial situation in Southern Africa for granted", without examining or querying its inherent racial, economic and social policies, which led Mitchell to see the circulation of labour as based on the distinction between social and economic "needs" of individual Africans.

In Sudan, however, many migrants readily become permanent and settled urban residents - as in deed has also been the case in Central and Southern Africa. Many of these residents have found stable jobs, plots of land for housing, and all manner of urban opportunities for themselves and their families even though in most cases they still maintain strong kinship and other social links with the countryside.

It is also rational to note, as Parkin does, that Mitchell's model is based on the assumption of the steady availability of jobs in town where the problem of unemployment is not considered as a factor in the analysis of migration.<sup>20</sup> Parkin argues that "...unemployment has nowadays the effect of 'freezing' most circulatory migration for wage

labour. Of the 'employable' population only the unemployed job seekers circulate between town and country or between town and town".<sup>21</sup> But although Parkin correctly highlights Mitchell's neglect of the significance of employment in studying migration, he fails to characterize the employment situation that emerged to meet the specific needs of the colonial system. Moreover, he does not relate his discussion on employment to the inequalities inherent in the development of colonial capitalism, especially as between the "central" and "peripheral" areas of individual colonies.

Garbett later introduced the concept of "decision models" and the problems associated with these, in analysing circulatory labour migration in Rhodesia.<sup>22</sup> To develop his argument he conceives of the individual migrant as located in a social field of relationships which acts as a set of constraints on his choices. It is through the interplay of these constraints that the migratory pattern takes shape. Thus, he writes:

The decision model is constructed around the notion of an individual set in a network of social relationships. The constraints of these relationships act variably to affect the strategies pursued by the individual according to the particular context and according to the individual's degree of investment in, and commitment to, particular relationships. <sup>23</sup>

My general view is, however, that Garbett's conceptualization again fails to set the analysis in the broader context of limitations on action imposed on Africans by the political and economic processes operating in Southern and Central African society as a whole.

Working somewhat similarly to his contemporaries, Elkan introduced the concept of "target" worker in writing on the problem in East Africa. He suggests that circulatory migrants have fixed ideas of the purpose for which they need particular sums of money.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly a migrant goes to work in the towns with a fixed sum of money in mind which he wants to take back to the village. As soon as he gets it, he returns to the rural economy. This is yet another example of the

failure to dwell on the structural determinants of the system of labour migration. In the central explanation he is still concerned with the individual, even if partially institutionalized, behaviour and calculations of the migrants whom he assumes to be rational. My objection to this line of argument is, of course, not based on the assumption of rationality, but on its narrow focus.

On the whole, the basic limitations of the studies reviewed above are that they dwell almost exclusively on the stated reasons for migration and thus on the motivations of the individual migrants. In other words, their main units of study are individuals and mechanisms of adaptation to a "given" situation, and then analyses are pursued with the total exclusion of the colonial context that shaped the lives and choices of the individuals. As stated by Magubane and O'Brien, "the empiricism of this approach over-values the data of immediate experience, and replaces the problems of social and political structures with opinion surveys."<sup>25</sup>

The conventional approach to the study of labour migration in West Africa was comprehensively reviewed by Samir Amin in his assessment of a series of papers presented to the 11th International African Seminar held in Dakar in 1972.<sup>26</sup> According to Amin, the "decisions" of migrants are effectively predetermined by the overall strategy of development in any country or region. In this way, it is a distortion of reality to assess the migrants' decisions solely or primarily as a function of the gap in income between the city and the countryside, of the opportunities for employment in the city, as argued by Todaro, for example.<sup>27</sup> A weakness of the conventional analyses is, thus, their "individualistic" approach in that migrants are seen simply as individuals attracted by better payments and wages. If this becomes the central interest, no effort is devoted to studying the organization and structure of the overall society within which these migrants travel. In this connection, Amin argues that the conventional approach is "rooted in the 'marginalist' economics which ignores the modes of production and replaces them with 'false juxtaposition' of

the concepts of 'factors of production' and 'population'.<sup>28</sup>

In the view of critics like Magubane and O'Brien and Amin, the central focus of study should be the penetration of capitalism in African countries, with rural-urban migration and the development of wage labour being seen as direct products and consequences of this. The expansion of market relationships is, in broad terms, what ought to be understood first.

In keeping with this line of argument, I contend that the coexistence of different patterns of migratory movement in the Sudan, namely a circular and permanent one-way migration, must involve a specific study of the way in which capitalism has expanded there. This involves the study of two simultaneous processes: a) uneven capitalist penetration between different regions, and b) the particular developments of the export-import activities and of the urban economy. Here, however, we encounter a difficulty, namely that scholars like Amin and Magubane and O'Brien argue at a level of abstraction which is not directly relevant to the study of micro-problems of the social organization of migrants. Their generalizations are based on data of a different kind from those I am using, and their analyses of labour migration, with which I full agree, does not in fact emerge from empirical data on the experiences of one country but from a review of numerous studies abstractly assessed in a broad international context. If we are interested in micro-level analyses and their relevance to certain aspects of the context of urban-industrial work, we have also to take into account socio-cultural data of the kind I gathered. Thus while I agree that the drift of migrants to towns is a direct function of processes in the political economy engendered by capitalist colonialism,<sup>29</sup> any attempt to explain the persistence of a particular pattern of migration, or a particular pattern of concentration in one occupation, or certain modes of incorporation into town life and social adaptation to urban society, we are bound to consider such socio-cultural differences as may



exist between migrants from different backgrounds.

### Urban Studies

Associated with the conventional studies of labour migration were numerous analyses of the migrants' social behaviour in their urban destinations. But, here again, the early studies devoted a quite disproportionate share of attention to problems of adaptation and the development of urban social life to the near-total exclusion of the political economy or urbanization. Thus, the anthropological and sociological literature on the subject of urbanization in Africa all too often placed primary emphasis on the concepts of "tribalism", "detrribalization", "ethnicity", and the like. Though emphases vary, a considerable number of studies have dealt in one way or another with the response of the heterogeneous urban labour force to the changing social reality brought about by urbanization and industrialization (Gluckman,<sup>30</sup> 1940, 1960; Banton,<sup>31</sup> 1957, 1961; Little,<sup>32</sup> 1965, 1974; Mitchell,<sup>33</sup> 1957, 1962, 1969; Epstein,<sup>34</sup> 1958, 1964; Southall,<sup>35</sup> 1961; Mayer,<sup>36</sup> 1961, 1962; Pons,<sup>37</sup> 1969). An important topic in all these studies is the relevance of ethnicity to the understanding of African migrants' behaviour in urban centres. Arguments of this kind were often discussed in relation to wider processes of social change associated with urbanization and of the growth of different kinds of African towns and cities.

The main theme of the above studies concerns the extent and the manner in which, in the process of labour migration, people reject or modify their "traditional" forms of behaviour and of institutional and social relationships in order to adapt to the new (urban) situation. The contrasts between urban and rural life were often stressed, and the coexistence of "traditional" and "modern" institutions in towns became a major focus of analysis. The migrants were seen as moving between two different "social systems" with different social institutions. The contrast between the rural and urban "social systems" was seen as the

main basis for analysing the behaviour of migrants within the towns.

Thus, in summarizing Mitchell's and Epstein's studies on the towns of Northern Rhodesia, Gluckman writes:

...there is some kind of working, integrated social system in these towns. But the social system must not be thought of as rigid, tight, closed, or self-consistent. The social field of the towns consists of many semi-independent areas of life, where people associate for specific purposes: to run a home and raise children, to be entertained with friends, to work and improve status, to achieve political objectives, etc. Different principles of organization may be effective in the various areas of relations. 38

In general, these studies conceive of the whole situation as a totality composed of different situations with specialized, yet not antagonistic, functions. Accordingly their main units of analysis are the individual migrant and his family. On finding themselves in the new (urban) situation, migrants begin to build up various sets of social relations to achieve through them adaptation to the urban situation. Thus, the main concern here is to study the social behaviour of immigrants in terms of independent "social systems" with their own "internal" mechanisms of adaptation to change. As I argued in the case studies of migration itself, these studies are also open to criticism for their failure to relate social behaviour to the overall colonial capitalist system. They tended to postulate the problem in terms of individual migrants, while largely ignoring the "external" constraints stemming from the uneven development of colonial capitalism. It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt a reconceptualization of the process of urbanization itself.<sup>39</sup> I am primarily interested in one particular aspect of the migrants' social organization in town, namely their ethnic relations, and in the relevance of this aspect to the understanding of their behaviour in the total urban-industrial situation, particularly in the sphere of work.

Despite the large number of studies that focus on ethnicity and ethnic relations, there is a relative lack of emphasis in them on the relevance of the latter to the understanding of working situations and

of workers' organization and actions in industry. The studies that also touch on this are mainly of two types: a) studies on the political economy of African societies and the process of working class formation. (Arrighi,<sup>40</sup> 1967; Arrighi and Saul,<sup>41</sup> 1973; Gutkind and Wallerstein,<sup>42</sup> 1976; Gutkind and Waterman,<sup>43</sup> 1977); and, b) studies that dwell on the development of workers' organization or the labour movement which in most cases focus mainly on the effects of "tribalism" or ethnic identity as a divisive factor within trade unions, or as preventing the emergence of working class consciousness (Yesufu,<sup>44</sup> 1962; Scott,<sup>45</sup> 1966; Girillo,<sup>46</sup> 1969; Lloyd<sup>47</sup> 1967; Soley<sup>48</sup> 1972; Peace<sup>49</sup> 1974; Sandbrook and Cohen,<sup>50</sup> (eds.) 1975; Sandbrook<sup>51</sup> 1975; Gutkind, Cohen, and Copans,<sup>52</sup> (eds.) 1978, Cohen, Gutkind, and Brazier,<sup>53</sup> (eds.) 1979).

In these studies ethnicity is defined in a variety of ways, usually depending on the field experience and the interests of the researchers. Mitchell, for example, initially interpreted "tribal" groups as basic categories of social interaction.<sup>54</sup> Since then, there has been a steady shift away from the use of ethnicity as a category towards a study of it as a live political and economic issue. Cohen uses ethnicity as a political factor which he defines in terms of culture and political conflict.<sup>55</sup> Parkin then objected to the inclusion of politics in the definition of ethnicity, arguing that ethnic differences can, and do, distinguish groups which are not necessarily either in competition or in conflict and which may in fact act cooperatively.<sup>56</sup>

However, the basic issue for me lies not in the question of definition, but in the way in which ethnicity, as a socio-cultural factor, is related to the whole question of socio-economic change which accompanied industrialization in African societies. I have already indicated that in the past these questions were not analysed in relation to the colonial situation imposed on African societies through imperial expansion. Assuming either that the colonial situation was neutral or that its

general characteristics were too well known to call for analysis, the participants in the new urban social structure were taken as independent and free for many purposes. Magubane makes the point forcefully in his critique of the studies of social change in colonial Africa:

Attention has been focused on the behaviour and value systems of the Africans in towns - the objects of investigation - as though they exercised free choice. Consequently their attitudes and actions have been distorted; some features have been given exaggerated emphasis, while others less noticeable but in the long run more enduring, have tended to be overlooked. 57

### Studies of Ethnicity

In this connection Epstein's study of African mine workers on a Copperbelt town in Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) is of interest.<sup>58</sup> He perceived the initial use of ethnic relations by the African workers in the industrial context as a paradox and showed how this changed over time. To explain this change he used the concept of "situational selection".<sup>59</sup> He conceptualized the overall social field as composed of two sets of social relationships, those between white employers and black employers, and those between black workers in the "domestic" field lying outside the work place. In Epstein's schema, the White/Black cleavage is essential to the total social system and influences the whole field of African urban life, and he argues that "tribalism" ceases to be a useful concept to understand social interaction in the industrial framework. This was evident in the decline of the Tribal Representatives system and the establishment of the African Mine Workers' Trade Union. Thus Epstein writes:

...the authority of tribal representatives has been overthrown because the traditional political functions they came to acquire related to the total field of Black-White relations. Here "tribalism" was irrelevant: its continued operation in the form of tribal representation could only raise impediments to the effective unity of the mine employees vis-a-vis the employers. 60

But, notwithstanding Epstein's awareness of the White/Black cleavage, he failed to emphasise the inherent characteristic of this division as one of subordination and domination. The resolution of conflicts

and disputes among Africans in the "domestic" field according to "traditional" norms and customs was the only choice open to Africans within the political system of a racist settler economy. Indeed, the partial autonomy of the two fields of social relationships was part and parcel of the racial colonial policy which limited the "choice" of responses open to the African. One major element of this policy lay in the Mine Compounds residential system. Thus, what made the separation between the "industrial" and "domestic" fields seem so profound was the deliberate colonial policy that limited interactions between whites and Africans. As expressed, once again, by Magubane:

The sociologist will overlook significant developments and misinterpret the phenomenon he observes if he does not relate his findings to the framework of the colonial system and to the type of conflict that is dominant or latent in the society. 61

Epstein's failure to dwell on the inequalities that characterized the Whites/Blacks relationship led him to attribute differentiation within the African labour force to "historical chance":

...these inter-tribal relations are a function of the developing social system of the towns, in which as a result of historical accident the lines of an emerging class structure are tending to coincide with tribal divisions. 62

Thus, overlooking the totality of the colonial situation, Epstein explained the conflict that ensued between Bemba and Nyasalanders by reference to the "growing division within the urban communities along the lines of 'economic class'",<sup>63</sup> and his analysis is further obscured by his definition of social class as a prestige category. He argues that the Union leaders' position is "...derived from their education and conscious approximation to European standards".<sup>64</sup> Thus, what takes the form of an opposition between two "categories" in the "prestige system" may in fact be an important aspect of a general opposition between Whites and Blacks whose unequal shares are predetermined by the political economy of colonialism.

Magubane stresses this, quoting Kuper:

Class formation among Africans cannot be analysed simply as an attribute or correlate of the occupational differences between them. It must be related to the overall structure of South African society, and to the transition of Africans from a tribal matrix to a system of racial domination. The classes emerge out of the tribal matrix and develop in the context of a racially structured society. Inevitably there is interaction between tribe, race, and class, each of which may provide a basis for association and loyalty. 65

In terms of this perspective the conflict that emerged between, for example, the Bemba and the Nyasalanders cannot be conceived as a "class conflict" but rather as an inevitable response and, more fundamentally, as an expression of discontent by Africans with the whole colonial situation.

As interpreted by Magubane:

The history of the colonial situation as opposed to its economics, its sociology, its psychology, is in large measure a history of the variety of African response to the new situation, a history of the ways the Africans came to terms with a new set of forces, the ways they accommodated, resisted or escaped. 66

To understand the ways in which ethnicity is used by workers in industrial situations, the analysis must be set in the context of particular wage employment situations and of resultant differentiations within the broad category of all wage earners. In general terms, Stichter reminds us of the special features which differentiate the working class in a peripheral society from that in a metropolitan one.<sup>67</sup> According to him there are mainly three differences: 1) the working class in African societies is still a relatively small part of the population, 2) a segment of this class remains migrant and semi-proletarianized, gaining part of its living from subsistence farming, and 3) members of the working class usually maintain strong ties with rural areas. After spelling out these differences, Stichter concludes that "these considerations suggest that capitalism on the periphery breeds a distinctive proletariat within a distinctive peripheral social context."<sup>68</sup> Thus, to understand the relevance of ethnicity in the work situation, and especially to the worker-employer relationship, the question must be examined in broad terms.

### The Present Study

It will be seen that my data on industrial workers in two different types of wage employment oblige me to consider the relevance of ethnicity in order to understand workers' behaviour in particular situations. But I attempt to keep my analysis closely linked to the wider factors of the emergence of industrial employment that followed the penetration of capitalist relations, and of the differential participation of various categories of wage-earning especially in the manufacturing and building industries. In different employment situations there are different kinds of worker organizations and differing patterns of opposition to employers. We shall see, for example, that the precarious nature of the building industry has inhibited the development of trade unionism among its labourers, and that workers' organization in this industry is closely related to their general social organization in town and thus to their pattern of ethnic relations. The development of relationship between a contractor and a "broker" in a building enterprise is also a consequence of temporary employment, and of the migratory nature of the labour force. In this situation, contractors tend to rely heavily on older workers who act as "broker" in recruiting their "home fellows" as labourers. The circumstances have rendered reliance on ethnic social organization in opposition to employers inevitable. However, another set of circumstances prevails among unionized workers in the public sector and in large-scale manufacturing industry. The industrial workers in stable wage employment have gained privileged status through unionization and the protective measures of labour legislations. Here the situation is characterized by a "structured opposition" that largely defines the relations between workers and employers at work.<sup>69</sup> Despite this, ethnic relations are still manipulated by the factory workers, but in ways which I maintain can only be understood through their analysis in the setting of such structured opposition. It is the workers' position

in society as reinforced by their position in the industrial system that highlights the relevance of ethnicity to the issues at hand. Thus, I cannot agree with Epstein's conclusion that "tribalism" and "class" are pervasive concepts in the sense that they pervade and operate within all various sets of relationships that make up the urban system.<sup>70</sup>

To sum up: we saw that the conventional studies take the individual migrants as their units of analyses and furthermore, that they study the social behaviour of migrants in towns in terms of independent social systems with their own "internal" mechanisms of adaptation and change. However, a critical body of studies has developed in response to such findings. The critics have pointed out the relevance and importance of "external" determinants of, and "constraints" upon, the social behaviour of the migrants, and the fact that these "external" forces are inherent in the workings of colonial capitalism. However while I fully agree with this, at a conceptually different level of analysis I contend that it is still necessary to study socio-cultural factors, but that this must be done with full recognition of the importance of placing our findings in the context of analysis of the political economy. Thus, if I diverge from the analysis of Magubane and others, it is primarily because I am pursuing differing interests and laying emphasis on different aspects of the problem of labour migration. For the development of a more satisfactory and more adequate interpretation, one needs to develop models which deal with micro-situations, but which still allow us to take into account both politico-economic and socio-cultural factors.

#### Choice of the area of research

The field work for this study was carried out mainly in Khartoum North industrial estate and on building sites in Khartoum itself. These two towns, together with Omdurman, constitute the primate city of the Sudan. I chose Greater Khartoum as my field work area because of the size and diversification of its labour force, its remarkable urban growth,



and the considerable amount of information already available on the total urban situation.

The striking "primacy" of the Khartoum conurbation in relation to the other major urban centres of the Sudan, has been emphasised in all the studies and reports on urbanization and rural-urban migration available to us. (El Sayed El-Bushra, 1971, 1972; Salih El Arifi, 1971; Al-Sadatyy . 1972; Mohamed El Award Galal Eldin, 1973; MEFIT Report 1975, ILO Report, 1975). Although the Sudan is one of the least urbanized countries, even by African standards, the shift from a rural to an urban mode of life has been taking place at a remarkable pace, particularly during the last decade. As noted by El Sayed El-Bushra, and Salih El-Arifi, for example, in 1955/56 about 40 per cent of all Sudanese urban dwellers lived in towns of less than 20,000 and only about 13 per cent lived in towns of 100,000 or more. But in 1973 the proportion of those living in cities of 100,000 plus had risen to nearly 40 per cent and the proportion of those living in towns of under 20,000 had fallen to under 30 per cent. As in other countries of the Third World, regional variations in urbanization are very pronounced. The emergence of Greater Khartoum as an unrivalled primate city of Sudan is in this respect a good example of a general phenomenon. Although other towns have shown high and steady rates of growth between 1964/65 and 1974,

the forces currently at work in the political economy of the country are likely to lead to an even greater gap between the primate city and the rest of the country, and this will inevitably militate against any goals of equity and induce further political strain and conflict. 72

Khartoum and its immediate environs began to assume their present form at the turn of the century when the site was chosen by the Anglo-Egyptian forces as the capital of the colony. The Khartoum labour market grew steadily as a result of initiatives by the colonial administration to attract a continuous flow of workers. Khartoum was at that time described as a reservoir of labour that distributed workers to other

regions, particularly, in the 1920s, to the cotton agricultural schemes in the Gezira and Kassala areas. Khartoum emerged as the capital and major centre of the country serving many specialized functions, and constituting its administrative, commercial, industrial, and communication hub. Today Greater Khartoum reveals far greater diversification than any other Sudanese town. This process has been intensified by the ever-increasing pace of growth (in population and function) since World War II, and even more so since independence. Conditions of flux associated with rapid growth and diversification are evident in all directions, and especially so among the migrant population and its waves of recent recruits. It is also reflected in the expansion and extension of new residential areas and in the emergence of shanty towns surrounding the urban areas. The dwellers of these settlements come from other towns, as well as from rural areas in Western and Southern Sudan. The growth in the numbers of Southern migrants has been particularly marked since the conclusion of the Peace Agreement with the South in 1972.

#### A note on field work and methods

The data for this study were collected during a period of 14 months from October 1976, to December 1977. The field materials were obtained in several ways, different procedures being largely determined by the nature of the immediate problems under investigation. The two categories of migrant workers studied demanded different methods of study. Starting my work in the brewery and the match factory, I gathered much information by participant observation, by in-depth interviews (especially on the informants' life histories), and by questionnaire applied to samples of workers in both establishments as a preliminary step. The questionnaire findings helped me to formulate a specific problem in the early stages of the field work.

At the start I had only a vague idea about what I wanted to do. I was generally interested in how the migrant industrial workers in Khartoum

North responded to the urban-industrial setting and how they defined their particular work situations. At this early stage of my work I was not certain what particular aspects I should concentrate on because I had little knowledge of the migrant workers and their different industrial experiences and situations. Grillo's study of African railway workers in Kampala (Uganda)<sup>73</sup> provided me with valuable stimulation. This is primarily because Grillo touches upon a number of issues concerning industrial workers in Uganda's primate city. There was clearly sufficient similarity between his view of the workers in their overall urban-industrial context and the kind of interests I wanted to pursue. I found myself trying to devise working procedures both to locate and define more specific problems. I tried to follow lines of inquiry that would be sufficiently flexible to allow problems to emerge while yielding information that could be re-formulated in the course of study.

My early work was thus mainly on the formulation of questionnaire using alternative answers.<sup>74</sup> I based the questionnaire on six different aspects of migrants' lives both in the work place and outside it. These were 1) background information on the migrant and his family, 2) the migrant in town, his arrival, length of stay, etc. 3) the social and economic problems facing migrants in town, 4) the nature of work done on the shop, preferences for different kinds of job, and salient attachments at work, 5) participation in work groups, 6) the workers' participation in and attitudes to their trade unions.

I then chose two industrial enterprises based on the criterion of ownership, one in the public sector and the other in the "private" sector of the economy. I thought this would enhance the interest of the research. The Blue Nile Brewery is owned by the government, whereas the match factory is a private enterprise, one of a series of companies owned by the Gulf International Corporation. Both are situated in the industrial area of Khartoum North..

Before I started the field work, I wrote letters to the general managers of both factories asking for permission to undertake the study. My personal acquaintance with them facilitated my approaches. Both directed me to their respective Personnel Managers, Production Managers and Technical Managers, and it was through these that I was introduced to different departments and different groups of workers. The latter also helped me to gain access to information, both about the workers and about various aspects of factory organization. The Technical Manager in each establishment took me round the plant and explained the production processes to me in detail.

As the questionnaire was intended only as a preliminary pilot survey, I obtained the assistance of some sociology students from the University of Khartoum for the interviews. My main interest was in workers who were directly engaged in the production process. I drew a random sample of 10% of all production workers (27 in the match factory and 42 in the brewery). While the questionnaire was being completed, I recorded as much additional information as possible on workers' experiences, both inside and outside the factory.

The questionnaire and my own observations yielded the following information: 1) The majority of workers in the brewery were migrants from Northern Sudan, particularly Nubians, whereas in the match factory most were from the Western Sudan. 2) An increasing tendency towards stabilization in town was reflected in the large number of workers who had their families with them, especially the older workers in the brewery. 3) The percentage of migrants from Southern Sudan was very low. All this is discussed in detail in Chapter III.

At that stage of the field work the interest of aiming to conduct a comparative study with a quite different category of migrants became apparent in the course of discussions with my teachers, colleagues and friends. When I had decided to extend the work, the small number of

Southern migrants in the two factories led me to look for work situations in which the latter would be found in larger numbers. The presence of Southern migrants, clearly distinguishable by their physical appearance, working on the building sites of the Three Towns is a common observation. This, combined with the fact that despite the large literature of classical anthropological works on the Southern Sudanese there is virtually no work on urban Southerners encouraged me to select building sites for further work intended for comparison with the industrial workers in the modern manufacturing plants. I describe this work below, after outlining the development of my work in the brewery and the match factory.

The questionnaire had provided me with invaluable preliminary information. I now started to conduct in-depth interviews with as many workers as possible. I also obtained a great deal of information by direct observation, both inside and outside the factory. I spent the whole working day in the factory conducting interviews and recording daily events. As the work progressed, I found myself following up workers outside the factory. My main interest was to trace their life histories and their interpretations of their own lives. I was able to interview 145 workers who constituted a large proportion, about 50 per cent, of production workers in the two factories.

During my periods of observation in the match factory and the brewery, events relating to the way in which the workers manipulated their respective ethnic relations attracted my interest and attention. Despite the workers adherence to, and participation in, trade unions, they mobilized and articulated their ethnic relations in various ways in their relations with the management.

The field procedures outlined above should not necessarily be thought of as having fallen into neat stages. On the contrary, the tracing of issues and events, the interviewing of workers, and partial

participation as a fieldworker were closely intertwined and inter-related.

The second part of my field work was undertaken mainly among one group of manual workers on one building site, though I also visited a number of others. This does not mean that I ignored other participants on building sites (builders, plasterers, carpenters, etc.) It will be seen that I also gathered a lot of information about them, and from them, and that I use this whenever relevant. Indeed, this information is crucial to my analysis of the relationships and interactions of the group of manual workers who were the focus of my study. Two striking features of the life of manual building workers are their constant migration back and forth between town and country, and the fact<sup>that</sup>/practically all of the labourers are Nuer from the Southern Sudan.

I carried out field work in what is known in Khartoum as a "First Class Residential Area". Plots of land in such areas are allocated to people of the highest income groups in the country: businessmen, merchants; top civil servants, and military officers. The houses are built of concrete and most of them are of two or more storeys. This area, Garden City, lies between Jeraif East to the east of Khartoum Town, Khartoum Airport to the West, Barri Extension to the North and Erkawit Extension to the South East (See map in Appendix VI for the location of this area.<sup>75</sup> Building in this area only started in the early 1970s. Up to May, 1977, (the time of the research) only 40% of the houses had been completed, and only 25% of these were occupied. There were still 60% in various stages of building. On some plots the building has not yet started. It is difficult to forecast when building in this area will be completed, because building houses of this kind is a private venture subject to many unpredictable external circumstances, such as the uncertain availability of money to proceed with a house, the lack of an assured regular supply of building materials, and the shortage of

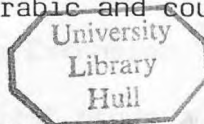
skilled labour.

As I have explained, different phases or stages of building were taking place on different sites within this area. This, and the fact that the building labour force is exceptionally mobile, made it difficult for me to obtain a strictly representative sample of the total labour population in the area. Unemployment (a characteristic feature of building industry) was another obstacle making it difficult to draw a good sample. In this situation of flux, the only way I could proceed was to start with one group of building site workers (approximately 22 workers) and I then tried to trace their movements over about 4 months. This allowed me to observe closely the transfer of workers from one site to another according to the contractor's strategy. Each contractor is normally in charge of more than one building contract and he transfers his labour force and new recruits from day to day according to the immediate requirements of his total work operations. By attaching myself to one group, I also established a good base for studying the dynamics of the internal organization of the production system.

I approached a contractor, introduced myself, and explained the purpose of my study. Through him I contacted his senior labourer who acted as the foreman of the contractor's group of Southern manual workers (Tulab).<sup>76</sup> This "senior worker" told me that he was a Nuer, and I later came to realize that almost all workers in his charge were also Nuer. I approached him first mainly because he spoke Arabic fluently having been in Khartoum and other towns of the North for eight years. He understood my purpose and, through him, I was introduced to the group of workers at that site. It took me about two weeks to establish a working rapport with the Nuer Tulab, to be accepted on the site as a researcher and to be able to start asking questions freely. Altogether I spent about 4 months on building sites of this area and in another adjacent residential area.

As part of the field work I joined the labourers when they went to the shops for breakfast and when eating together; I invited some of them to the cinema and visited them in the evenings, sometimes going out drinking Marisa (a local brew) in the nearby Marisa houses in Jeraif East. In due course I was accepted among the members of this particular group of Nuer. My main difficulty was over communication. Most of them either knew no Arabic or very little. However, I managed to get a lot of information in various ways. The workers' foreman who spoke Arabic well was a great help to me and, at a later stage, I employed two Nuer university students (studying social science) to act as interpreters. I used them especially when I set about interviewing a large number of Nuer workers in a different area to test the direct observations I had made on my "own" site workers.

The working day on the building site usually started at 6.30 a.m. and continued till 3 p.m. I used to spend most of this time on the site, observing, talking and recording my observations. My field notes came to consist of information on: a) the organization of work, b) the allocation of roles, c) the relations between the different participants on the site, and d) disputes that emerged between workers and the contractor. I had the opportunity to observe a number of labour disputes, the procedures followed in conflict resolution, and the role played by the "senior worker" regarding the latter. I was also able to study the workers' responses to wages and rewards, their opportunities for promotion and the like, I conducted interviews on the site whenever this was possible, particularly with those who spoke Arabic and could therefore understand my questions.



Another important part of the field work was the study of the socio-economic life of this group outside the working hours. This was relatively easy because the centre of their social activities was their place of accommodation. Most of them resided together in a half-finished .



house. The workers' headman was responsible for guarding the premises as a Ghaffir, and members of this group of workers and some others often came there after working hours. I used to spend the afternoons and evenings with this group at their place of residence, and was thus constantly in a position to observe their social activities. My own status was further stressed by the presence of Nuer university students working with me. On the whole, I relied a great deal on "stranger value" for my field work. The fact that I acted differently from other Northerners they normally encountered must undoubtedly have helped me to gain their trust. My impression is that the group got used to my presence and that it did not affect their own behaviour very much. They used to complain to me about the way the contractors and builders treated them. They often asked me to take them to Omdurman market place to buy articles they wanted to take home. Whenever one of them was leaving for the country, I took him to the bus station. Many confided in me, even about very private experiences. Here again, the "senior worker" was very helpful in giving me information and in interpreting.

During my stay with this group, I noted their frequent interaction with another group of Nuer workers living nearer to Garden City, Manshia.<sup>77</sup> The former often asked me to take them there, and I subsequently interviewed some members of the latter group as well. This gave me further data for the analysis of wider networks of Nuer migrants.

Finally, I conducted some interviews with building labourers in yet another area, Khartoum 1st Class Extension.<sup>78</sup> I did this to follow up observations I had made on the first group of workers. In general, I observed that interactions were often restricted to particular groups of Nuer from the same villages or areas.

### Limitations of the Study

There are inevitably some limits on the scope of the study which restrict its value in certain directions. The factory workers I studied were mostly first-generation migrants, largely because the establishments in which they worked were of recent origin; particularly the match factory which was only established in 1965. In contrast to this, most railway workers and employees of the Government's Mechanical Transport or Stores and Equipment Departments, for example, are likely to be second-generation immigrants because these establishments date back to the early 1920s. The relative exclusion of second-generation immigrants from the study is partly a result by my own interests in studying workers in manufacturing industry, and partly because gathering and comparing data between too many different categories would have been difficult and too time consuming for one study.

A second limitation is that the field work was carried out only among factory and building workers with little or no education and low levels of skill. But comparing two categories of workers with similar backgrounds of participation in subsistence farming before migration to town had its own interest.

Yet another limiting factor rests on the kind of information I collected from the two categories of workers. This relates to the nature of the problem under study and to the different situations of the factory and building site workers, which called for different field work procedures. As the building labourers lived on the same building sites as they worked, it was relatively easy for me to observe them closely both during and after working hours. Moreover, the labour force in the building industry was homogeneous in origins, whereas the factory workers came from a variety of areas in Northern, Western and Southern Sudan, and lived in many different areas in the Three Towns. The task of following informants to their different residential areas, and establishing close

rapport with them, was therefore not possible for a single field worker. The considerable ethnic diversity of the factory workers also made it impossible to investigate different ethnic groups as thoroughly as might have been desirable.

All the above considerations are reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in a relative imbalance in the description of the social organization of the two categories of workers. My description of Nuer social organization is more detailed and comprehensive than the corresponding description for the factory workers. This is regrettable, but unavoidable under the circumstances which prevailed.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. The Nuer are a Nilotic people. They number between 300,000 and 500,000, and they live in Savannah Country between the Upper Nile and its tributaries. As is well known, the Nuer occupy an important place in British social anthropology by virtue of their study by Evans-Pritchard (see, especially, 1940), but they have not so far been studied outside their home areas.
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66. Ibid., 420.
67. S.Stichter, "The Formation of a Working Class in Kenya" in R.Sandbrook and R.Cohen (eds.), (1976), op.cit.
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69. This term was used by Peace (1974) op.cit., and will be used in Chapter IV of this thesis.
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72. Salih el-Arifi, "The Nature and Rate of Urbanization in Sudan", in Urbanization and Urban Life in the Sudan (forthcoming) ed. Valdo Pons.
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75. See Map in Appendix VI.
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78. See map in Appendix.VI.



PART ONE

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SUDAN: BASIC FEATURES, RELATED PROBLEMS  
OF INDUSTRY, MIGRATION AND WAGE-LABOUR

## Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide background information on the nature and extent of industrialization, migration, and the emergence of wage-earning categories in the Sudan. This broad background is needed because, as illustrated in the previous chapter, there has been a growing discontent among sociologists and economists about theories of labour migration that do not take into account the overall political economy of the society. The chapter will document such features of the political, economic and social backgrounds of the Sudan as are necessary for an understanding of what follows. All my field data on migration and on the patterns of urban incorporation and industrial experience of migrant workers will be set in the widest possible historical, demographic and social contexts.

The main topic for discussion is the pattern of the political economy of Sudan established during the period of colonial subjugation. This will include a review of the industrial structure which emerged as a product of colonialism, and particularly of World War II. This structure is characterized by the capital intensive nature of most industries and by their extreme concentration in Greater Khartoum. The discussion will also refer to the development of the urban labour market since the turn of the century, and the consequent concentration of employment opportunities.

The chapter will also dwell on the emergence of two distinct categories of wage-earners and their differential participation in industrial employment. This will be explained by tracing the development of the "modern part"<sup>1</sup> of the economy as a product of colonial capitalism and by dwelling on the unevenness of capitalist penetration in the different regions of the Sudan (especially on the difference between the Southern Sudan and the rest of the country). The chapter will include a discussion on the employment crisis in the Three Towns, a question often neglected by students of migration and urbanization under colonial rule.

All these processes are, of course, not peculiar to the Sudan and have, therefore, to be assessed within the wider historical context of the expansion of Western European mercantile and industrial capitalism and the colonization of the present countries of the Third World by the Western powers. This has been well expressed by Gutkind and Wallerstein in a review of the studies on the presence of colonial capitalism in the African continent,

The contemporary economy and polity of Africa, while its antecedents are indigeneous, must be analysed in the context of the specifics of an evolving world system of economic and political relations starting in the sixteenth century, leading at first to the gradual involvement of Africa with worldwide exchange relations and later, by the middle of the nineteenth century, into more direct incorporation and finally, by the early twentieth century, to the subordination of the continent to the economic and political needs and objectives of the major Western powers. 2

#### The Advent of British colonialism

Certain forms of wage-labour existed to some extent in pre-colonial Sudan, as in other parts of Africa. "Wages" were sometimes paid by chiefs and kings to those who produced weapons, garments, etc.; farmers hired artisans for certain tasks, and traders paid for assistance in the transportation of goods. Such labour consisted basically of the exchange of services for certain goods. Services were offered either within an overall system of social obligations and reciprocities based on kinship relations, or as aspects of permanent agreements based on the mutual consent of the parties involved. But although such exchanges were negotiated, there was no market in which labour power was bought or sold. The creation and development of categories of wage-earners who offer their labour power as a commodity on an open market was initiated by colonial society and the British colonial state.<sup>3</sup>

With the final establishment of the colonial state<sup>4</sup> under British rule in 1898, colonial policy was largely dictated by a concern to provide privileged British access to cheap raw materials, coupled with the aim of developing and protecting markets for commodities produced in

Britain. For ecological and climatic reasons, the exploitation of these resources was not sought through the development of plantations or the imposition of European settler farmers employing local labour as in many other African colonies, notably Kenya, Rhodesia, and some parts of Uganda and Tanzania. Instead, the production of raw materials, cotton especially, was encouraged in Sudan by turning Sudanese cultivators and subsistence farmers into peasants producing for the export market. As expressed by Abdel Muhsin Mustafa:

The colonial policy exerted its farthest reaching impact on the evolving structure of the economy through the link it established between the Sudanese economy and the British economy. The link was effected through assigning to the former the role of supplying the British market, and later, the Western European market, but through Britain, with a very narrow range of primary products in which cotton comprised 80-90% of the total. In exchange the Sudanese economy was opened to products from Britain." 5

In the pursuit of this objective the British embarked, through the colonial state, on a plan for various forms of primitive capital accumulation:

- 1) The imposition of different kinds of taxes, e.g. bull, hut taxes, etc.<sup>6</sup>
2. In certain areas, particularly in the South where many people refused to cooperate, the state used political coercion, through tribal chiefs, to drive people to work in construction activities such as the building of roads and of dams, water carrying, etc. Among certain Nuer clans in Southern Sudan, the Gawer clan, for example, young men were required by the administrative authorities of the Province to labour on public works like roads, banks, and tukls. This was one means of obtaining value from "tribesmen". The practice was described as follows in one document of the period:

The chief or more probably sub-chief would be shown a job of work which is worth, say, £20, and would be told that as he has so many able-bodied men in his section, capable of doing this work in, say, 15 days, he would by employing these men at a nominal wage of 2 Pt. per day. expand the sum of £20. 7

3. Economic pressures on local populations were developed through the importation of consumer goods such as textiles, sugar, and tea that could only be purchased with cash. The cash "needs" thus stimulated became a decisive force in attracting people to wage-employment, even if only on a temporary basis, during the early phases of colonial rule. The aim of developing cash "needs" led to the application of various measures by the colonial regime for recruiting labour in different regions of the Sudan. 8 The Nuer of the Upper Nile

Province, for instance, were in some areas compelled to grow cotton for cash. The introduction of cotton growing stimulated the money economy and thus enabled the collection of tribute in cash from individual able-bodied men instead of collecting dues in the form of animals, fish, or game. In this respect it is interesting to note the following comment made by the Governor of the Upper Nile Province in 1927:

The introduction of money and the means of making money have no doubt had a great effect in bringing these Nuer into line. Their one desire is cattle, and they find that by growing cotton they can buy cows, and so much is in fact appreciated that a chief can and does fine a tribesman who refuses to grow cotton. 9

- 4) The most important type of capital accumulation was developed by inducing subsistence farmers to bring their own land and tools into production for export at prices that did not even cover the costs incurred by the peasants and their families. This is because the latter were expected to satisfy most of their needs through subsistence activities bringing mainly their surplus labour into the production of marketable crops. This point will be illustrated later in the chapter with reference to the Gezira scheme. The establishment of the scheme in 1924 was a basic landmark of British colonial policy.
- 5) Private ownership of land was stimulated and protected by the introduction of land laws such as the Titles to Land Ordinance, 1898, and the Land Settlement Ordinance, 1905. Collins noted that although "these laws did not immediately transfer land tenure, they laid the foundation for the lucrative agricultural schemes that became the basis of the Sudanese colonial economy". 10

The British soon imposed a new orientation through the gearing of productive activity to export/import purposes. A major contribution to this was the introduction of cotton as a cash commodity in the Gezira area. In 1921 the Gezira Land Ordinance was introduced. Through this ordinance, the colonial government acquired the legal right to force the farmers to lease land for 40 years, and each owner was to be paid an annual sum of 29 piastres per feddan.<sup>11</sup> The application of this law meant that the Gezira farmers became tenants growing cotton as a cash crop under the direct control of the Gezira Syndicate. The scheme was created under the management of British commercial companies (the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, and later also the Kassala Cotton Company) with the aid of a large loan guaranteed by the British government.<sup>12</sup> The establishment of the Gezira scheme had numerous and varied effects on the economy of the Sudan and the socio-economic structure of Sudanese society. Firstly

it sealed the bonds of Sudanese dependency on a cotton monoculture. Both during the colonial era and afterwards, uncertain world markets for cotton threw the Sudanese economy into continual crises.<sup>13</sup> Britain's interest in Sudan's cotton made some British members of Parliament ask that the loans should be conditional on the sale of Sudanese cotton to Britain. Although this condition was not accepted, most of Sudan's cotton went to Great Britain or to India when it was a British colony. Between 1945 and 1949 Britain bought 61 per cent of the staple Sakel variety of cotton and British India bought 23 per cent. In 1946 and 1947 Britain bought 54.3 per cent and 58.5 per cent respectively of the total export of Sudan Sakel.<sup>14</sup> Although the trade partners of the Sudan have changed<sup>15</sup> in the last three decades of success with the Gezira scheme,

...the Sudan remains an exporter of primary products and an importer of manufactured products as well as of certain basic food products. The total imports of all foods - wheat, flour, sugar, coffee, tea and others - were valued at £M18.14 in 1970. This was approximately 18 per cent of total imports.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, the introduction of the Gezira scheme drew hundreds of thousands of Sudanese farmers into the system of commodity production. Being alienated from land ownership, the tenants were forced to sell their labour power for the first time in the history of the area. The tenant was now "...almost totally concerned with producing a commodity - cotton - which for him had only exchange value, and his labour was now a commodity".<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, the concentration of over half of the irrigated lands in the Gezira and Managil areas led to a great dependence of all farming on hired labour. In the early 1970s, the 70,000 tenants of the scheme collectively became the biggest single employer of agricultural labour in the country. Twice a year they employ a large number of workers, some 6000, for weeding the fields and picking cotton, and as ginnery workers and attendant labour. The irrigation department gives wage employment to

2000 persons at any one time. Moreover, seasonal labour amounts to over 200,000 people, most of whom are migrants from Western Sudan.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the concentration of cash commodity production in the riverain areas of Central Sudan led to these areas being favoured with various kinds of services. Thus it was here that railway construction and road-building programmes and public social services were concentrated. This concentration continued throughout the colonial period and into the post-independence period. It constitutes the root of the disparity between this area and the rest of the country. The disparity will be referred to later in relation to the particular problems of Southern Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

The acquisition of land by the colonial state, with a view to settling farmers for capitalist production, was accompanied by further measures designed to promote capital accumulation. As the climate of Sudan was considered unsuitable for white settlers, the British administration promoted the development of a class of Sudanese landowners who in effect represented British interests. Extensive areas of land were leased to people, particularly members of the Mahdi family,<sup>19</sup> who proceeded to establish a large number of schemes including the pump schemes of the White Nile and the Blue Nile.

The Blue Nile schemes cover a strip from about 40 km north to 120 km south of Sennar. They comprise 62 schemes of a gross area of 282,000 feddans. In the White Nile area there are 186 schemes covering an area stretching for 380 km south of Jebel Aulia, close to Khartoum with a gross area of 419,000 feddans.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, as early as 1945, large plots of land were allocated to some notables and merchants to start mechanized crop production in the Gadarif area. The area of private mechanized farming was later extended to parts of Western Sudan.

In 1975 three million feddans were set aside for private capitalists in mechanized farming areas. Services and infra-structure for these new areas were to be provided by the government and finance was obtained from the World Bank. 21

Apart from the above, however, the main arena where capitalist activities penetrated pre-colonial structures was the market. At the time of the colonial conquest market relationships played no more than a marginal role in most parts of the Sudan.<sup>22</sup> Despite the long-established trade relations within the Sudan and with the outside world, and despite the connections created by the slave trade since the ninth century, most people in the country were still relatively self sufficient for most of their daily needs.<sup>23</sup> After the imposition of the colonial state, a wider range of consumer goods such as textiles, household utensils, soap and matches, were introduced. To meet these new demands people had to learn how to produce low-priced and labour-intensive export commodities as was then done through the development, on a capitalist basis, of irrigated agriculture and mechanized farming.

The stimulation of capital accumulation by the colonial system thus led to the emergence of classes of landlords, tenants, and agricultural wage-labourers. Furthermore, the development of export/import activities eventually led to the emergence of merchant capitalists trading locally as well as in export commodities such as livestock, meat, oil seeds, cotton, sesame, and dura.

This process of capital accumulation disrupted the former essentially subsistence economies. All those who remained in villages became increasingly dependent on cash earnings to cover their daily needs. In some parts of Northern and Western Sudan it was possible for cultivators to turn themselves into export-producing peasants. However, for those who failed to meet their needs as peasants, wage labour in agricultural schemes and in urban centres became the only viable alternatives.



The emergence of wage-earners and urban growth: Migration to the  
Three Towns since the colonial period

The first major tasks migrants were expected to perform for the colonial government were portage and labour on infra-structural projects. Although labourers received wages for their services, few people were attracted to labouring as the work was considered too arduous, and the "need" for money was not yet widely felt. Since the spontaneous supply of workers was insufficient in some parts of the country, the colonial authorities often resorted to recruitment of labour through political pressures by directing "tribal" chiefs to supply specific numbers of men for certain projects.

The growth of the Three Towns of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman into the country's single largest urban agglomeration has been extensively documented in a wide range of literature on the Sudan.<sup>24</sup> The need for a substantial labour force for various construction projects was felt by the colonial authorities since the earlier years of this century. Up to the Second World War labourers were recruited by several government departments for the construction of large and permanent office buildings, warehouses, and other extensive public works like roads, transportation and the Khartoum river wall built in 1905. As early as 1900 large construction projects had started to rebuild Khartoum. Over 5000 men were directly employed in brick making, quarrying and the burning of lime. El-Sayed El-Bushra has summarized some of these developments:

By 1902 the building boom climaxed with the completion of many government buildings. The rise in employment opportunities in the new capital generated a considerable increase in population. By 1904, the city began to assume its proper shape and character by providing for administrative, commercial and cultural functions. The following year witnessed the installation of water and electric works as well as the planting of thousands of trees. There was already some evidence by 1907 that the price of urban land was beginning to inflate as a consequence of increasing demand stimulated by the rapid increase in population. The site that was completely abandoned in 1898 was already supporting about 25,000 inhabitants. 25

Railway construction and the establishment of the dockyards and of the Mechanical Transport Department in Khartoum North soon called for yet further labour.

Important facts to be noted here concern the composition of the labour force, the nature of recruitment, and the pattern of migration that developed. By far the greater influx to the Three Towns consisted of Northern Sudanese and people of Darfurian origin, especially after the annexation of the Darfur Sultanate in 1916. The majority of migrant labourers in that period were either domestic slaves or runaway ex-slaves.<sup>26</sup> Most of the Northern Sudanese migrants were circulating, rather than permanent, labourers. They moved back and forth between the towns and their farms. This was due to short-period work contracts, to low wages, and to the continuing need for cultivation for the subsistence of members of their household. Many seasonal agricultural workers, particularly in the Gezira scheme, first took employment for some time in the Three Towns before moving to the Gezira area. However, the continued demand for labourers, as the government continued to build up Khartoum as the capital, led the colonial authorities to establish the Labour Bureau in 1907. The main function of this office was to regulate the flow of migrant workers to the town in accordance with demand.

The temporary nature of much migration to the urban areas was reflected in fluctuations in the size of the urban population. According to McLoughlin, the 1903 population was approximately 83,680, but this has dropped to 81,880 in 1904.<sup>27</sup> The general characteristics of this migration remained much the same up to World War II. However, the urban population grew from 81,880 in 1904 to 202,281 in 1931. In that year the world-wide depression hit the economy of the Sudan and the net consequence was a sharp fall in urban employment. By then, the Labour Bureau was involved in trying to reverse the flow of migrants by sending

unemployed persons back to their home areas. By the mid-1930s conditions started to improve again and a fresh demand for labour became acute, especially for the building industry.

An exodus from the Three Towns then developed with World War II as the general demand for food rose. Large numbers of migrants moved to the Gezira area to produce food for the Armed Forces in Sudan, as well as in the Middle East, India and North Africa.<sup>28</sup> Mohamed el-Awad Galal el-Din attributes this migration to the high level of earnings of the unskilled agricultural labourer amounting to 13 piastres per day compared to <sup>3-5</sup> 305 piastres for a worker in the Three Towns.<sup>29</sup> Notwithstanding this outflow the number of migrants to the Three Towns accelerated during, and especially after, the war period. Thus a report of 1950 states:

There is a constant movement from the provinces to the capital caused partly by the attraction of the amenities of the Three Towns, and partly by the demand for labour particularly in the building trade. <sup>30</sup>

The migrants from Northern and Western Sudan grew in number between 1946 and 1950. This inflow of migrants led to, and was reflected in, the extensive building of "3rd class residential" areas in the different parts of the Three Towns, especially the deims of Khartoum.<sup>31</sup> The growing number of urban migrants also led to a considerable unemployment problem in Khartoum. For example, in 1945:

There was some unemployment in Khartoum, at June 1945 - some 750 - 1000 workers were taken by the Forest Department to relieve the situation and employed them at the Gadarif area. Thus relieving the province of numbers of Westerners. <sup>32</sup>

Again, according to the 1950/51 Annual Provincial Report for Khartoum, the influx of migrants, particularly Nubas (of the Nuba mountains in Western Sudan) and Southerners, was increasing in the Three Towns. The rise of the population was particularly noticeable in Khartoum where the numbers grew rapidly in the three years preceding 1950.

Two important facts should be noted here. Firstly, since the

earliest days of colonial development, the largest section of the labour force of the Three Towns has consisted of migrants, largely men who first left their home areas in order to seek employment. Many scholars, official statistics, and reports have pointed to rural-urban migration as the main factor of population growth in the Three Towns.<sup>33</sup> Table I shows the total population, and the average annual growth rate, for each of the Three Towns compared with the population and growth rates of the other 19 major urban centres in the rest of the country (towns of 20,000 and more).

TABLE I: Total Population and Average Annual Growth Rate Between 1955/1973 for 22 Towns (of 20,000 and more)

Town	Population			Average Annual Growth Rate		
	1955/56	1964/65	1973	1955/56- 1964/65	1964/65- 1973	1955/56- 1973
Khartoum	93,103	173,500	333,906	6.0	7.0	5.9
Omdurman	113,551	185,380	299,399	4.8	5.2	4.7
Khartoum North	39,081	80,010	150,989	6.9	6.8	6.2
Port Sudan	47,562	78,940	132,632	5.0	4.7	5.0
Wad Medani	47,677	63,660	106,715	3.0	5.5	4.0
Kassala	40,612	68,130	99,652	5.0	4.4	4.4
El Obeid	52,372	62,560	90,073	2.0	4.4	2.8
Gadarif	17,537	45,090	66,465	8.8	4.3	6.0
Atbara	36,298	48,250	66,116	2.8	3.5	3.1
Kosti	22,688	37,860	65,404	5.0	5.9	5.1
Nyala	12,278	26,160	59,583	7.2	8.7	6.9
Juba	10,660	13,325	56,737	2.2	13.8	7.2
Wau	8,009	10,011	52,750	2.2	15.1	7.7
El Fashir	26,161	40,540	51,932	4.3	2.7	3.5
Geneina	11,817	20,740	35,424	5.7	5.8	5.3
Malakal	9,680	12,100	34,894	2.2	10.8	6.0
Sennar	8,098	17,640	28,546	7.4	5.2	5.9
El Duiem	12,319	15,880	26,257	2.5	5.5	3.8
En Nahud	16,498	19,770	26,005	1.8	3.0	2.4
New Halfa		12,100	24,373	-	7.5	-
Shendi	11,031	16,470	24,161	4.0	4.2	3.9
El Gezira Aba		16,670	22,216	-	3.2	-

Source: Calculated from First Population Census 1955/56 and Preliminary Results 1973 Census and Housing Surveys 1964/65

The table shows that the Three Towns still maintain their position as the country's largest concentration of urban population. The population of Khartoum North is growing at a faster rate than those of Khartoum and Omdurman. This is largely due to the continuous concentration, since the late 1960s, of industrial development in the town. However, towns in the South have tended to show higher growth rates than those in the North. Salih El-Arifi attributes this to the fact that towns were safer and more peaceful than rural areas during the civil war which ended in 1973, and also to the influx of refugees from the neighbouring African countries who have tended to settle in urban rather than rural areas.<sup>34</sup>

The urban population in Khartoum Province increased from 253,000 in 1955/56 to 799,800 in 1973/74. The proportion of the urban population in the province has also gone up, from 50.2 per cent in 1955/56 to 71.9 per cent in 1973/74. The urban population in Greater Khartoum has thus increased by about 215 per cent during this period, or 6.6 per cent per annum, well above the estimated natural rate of growth of 2.5 to 3.0 per cent per annum. The difference between these two figures is attributed to the massive increase in the number of migrants arriving from other rural and urban areas.<sup>35</sup> The annual net migration rate to the Three Towns is thus estimated to have been 3.7 per cent for 1956/1965 and 4.4 per cent for 1965/1973.<sup>36</sup>

The high rate of net migration to Greater Khartoum is a consequence of the increasing employment opportunities in both "tertiary" and "secondary" activities there. The absence of cash earning opportunities in rural areas, coupled with the growing modern capitalist enterprises and service occupations, have stimulated the flow of immigrants. Each province of the Sudan sends at least some representatives to the capital, though the absolute numbers from each region vary considerably. Among the migrants in the labour force of the Three Towns in 1975, those born

in the Northern Province were particularly well represented (24.7 per cent), while at the other end of the scale the Southern provinces contributed few. However, the number of the latter has increased rapidly, especially since the conclusion of the Addis-Ababa Peace Agreement in 1972. Migrants from Kordofan constituted 22.9 per cent of the Three Towns migrants, followed by Darfur and the Blue Nile provinces, each contributing 16.6 per cent. These regions alone account for 91 per cent of the migrants who came to Greater Khartoum.<sup>37</sup> The variations are strongly associated with regional disparities in levels of socio-economic development, and in differences in opportunities for earning cash.

Secondly, in the pre-war period migration to the Three Towns was generally characterized by its temporary nature. The migrants tended to oscillate between urban wage-employment and their home areas, and many were engaged in seasonal movements to agricultural areas, particularly in Gezira, as was previously mentioned. However, in the post-war period the nature of urban migration to the Three Towns started to change and most migrants have become increasingly dependent on wage employment. The "proletarianization" is reflected in the increasingly permanent residence of migrant workers in town, as shown by the migration survey conducted by Mohamed El-Awad Galal El-Din in 1971:

...more than half of the children born within Greater Khartoum belong to migrant parents. This is confirmed by the fact that the majority of adult migrants in Khartoum are married and most of these have their families with them...It is clear, then, that the seasonal nature of labour, i.e. the circulation of labour between Khartoum and the rural areas before the Second World War has changed into a more stable and permanent labour. 38

Thus the pattern of migration now emerging is characterized by increasing commitment to employment and a greater tendency among migrants to bring members of their families to town.<sup>39</sup> However, circular migration still occurs among some categories engaged in occupations characterized by temporary contractual work. (e.g. in the building industry.)

Since the general aim of this thesis is to compare permanent and circulatory migrants in two different employment situations, it is necessary to dwell on the nature of industrial development that has been taking place since the colonial period, and on regional disparities in the level of socio-economic development, particularly those between the North and the South. It is largely these disparities which have led to differential participation of migrant workers in the industrial economy of the Three Towns. The gradual and partial process of the proletarianization of migrant workers has to be viewed in relation to the uneven development of the urban economy itself. Declining income opportunities in the rural areas have increasingly made industrial employment inevitable. Simultaneously, however, the process of proletarianization has been constrained by the uneven penetration of capitalist relations in various rural economies and the particular development of the modern capitalist sector.

#### The pattern of Industrial Development

##### a) The Colonial Period

Industrial development was held back for a long time by the unrestricted entry of manufactured goods from Britain and Western Europe. Traditional handicraft industry has long existed in the form of small rural industries especially in the North and the West of the Sudan, e.g. shoe-making, manual thread making, weaving by locally made machines, pottery and the production of tin by manual means. There were also building material industries (e.g. brick-kilns, tile making, and the trimming of building stones). The inability of handicraft industry to compete with imports limited the development of these industries and hindered the emergence of any new handicraft industry. Abdel-Muhsin Mustafa has summarized the adverse effects of the exposure of the handicraft products to competition with imports:



The existent industries, particularly those in the Riverain Centres, had their earnings and future development into modern capital-intensive industries, ~~WERE~~ drastically checked as a result of the unequal competition with imports. Similarly the prospects of new industries emerging with new lines of production (new commodity lines) were frustrated as a result of the imports capturing what could have been their market. 40

It was only in 1918-19 that the first modern factory - Mukwar Cement Factory - in which machines and equipment were used, was established by the colonial authorities, but this was primarily for the construction of Sennar dam and the factory ceased production after the completion of the dam in 1925-26. This period also witnessed the establishment of some of the government units operating in the sphere of maintenance, and in producing spare parts for the trains and steamers of Sudan Railways. Other industrial units were established in the department of Stores and Equipment to meet the needs of schools and government departments. There were also furniture works in the Departments of Forestry and Prisons. During this period a number of flour mills were established by the Cooperative Societies assisted by the colonial administration which sold them land at a maximum nominal price of 25 m/ms per square metre. There were a number of traditional oil mills and domestic milk products, e.g. native butter oil in the Khartoum area. Some sweet factories were also established, though their operation was seasonal. Yet, up to 1955 there were only 10 small modern industrial establishments, employing a few workers, in the whole country.

During World War II there was an increase in industrial production. As a result of the war, various factors hindered importation. The colonial authorities then encouraged import substitute commodities so that industries such as soap, textiles, oils, leather, and sweets were established. These to some extent alleviated the shortages of the war period and served to keep down the prices of otherwise scarce commodities. For the purpose of organizing and regulating such industries, the War Supply department was established. The Board of Economics and Commerce of this new department recommended setting up a committee to look into, and advise on,

industries that could relieve the country from the need to import various products, in addition to finding what industries could be established through the use of locally produced raw materials. Thus the local Industries Investigation Committee came into being in 1942. But it was abolished in 1945, and most of the industries it had proposed during the war period failed to establish themselves permanently when imports of British and other goods resumed in the post-war period. Among the industries established during this period were oil mills for crushing cotton seeds and soap manufacturing. Again, during the early 1950s a number of industries were established under the Prohibited and Restricted Goods Ordinance, 1939. These were mainly financed by private capital and included shoe-manufacturing, meat, cement, cigarette and beverage factories.

This brief historical survey shows that the colonial administration followed a negative and opportunistic policy for industrial development, and that it did not systematically promote this sector of the economy. Instead, it allowed the economy of the country to become dependent on one cash crop - cotton - making the Sudan an economic satellite, as in the case of colonial territories in general, and providing Britain with raw materials for its own textile factories. Industrial development during the colonial era has been summarized by Fatima Mahmoud as follows:

In the case of the Sudan, capitalists were encouraged to engage in activities that furthered the colonial government's designs. It was these designs that permitted and fostered the growth of merchant capital in foreign trade and implanted agricultural capitalists in the country. On the other hand, the development of handicrafts into full-fledged manufacturing industry was contrary to the colonial regime's desire to keep the Sudanese market open for their own manufactured goods. Consequently, an indigenous industrial capitalist class remained non-existent throughout the colonial period. 41

The point to be stressed is that such modest industrial investment as was made during this period was mainly by private domestic and foreign investors.

b) Industry in the Period of Independence

At Independence the national administration raised the slogan of industrialization as a manifestation of economic liberation. The Approved Enterprises (Concessions) Act of 1956 was passed with a view to establishing new industries. It made a lot of concessions, e.g. the allocation of land at low prices, and the reduction of custom duties on equipment, machines, and raw materials. Though the Act did not specify strategy or objectives for industrial development, the concessions granted tended to attract capital to the industrial sector. Most of the capital invested was owned by foreigners. This period witnessed the establishment of the American Textile factory and the Japanese Textile factory, Haggard Tobacco factory, in addition to some other industries. As a result of the 1956 Act industrial investments rose from £540,000 in 1956 to £52.7 million in 1959.

A feature of that period was the absence of economic planning and, as a result, the industrial sector fell into the hands of private capitalists and was developing only through incentives without any central direction. The Act did not consider establishing industrial priorities or rendering more facilities for the establishment of strategic industries or those dependent on local raw materials.

In 1959 the public sector entered the sphere of industry for the first time. After 1958 there was a considerable decline in cotton prices, and as a result new spheres of investment other than agriculture were sought, particularly in imports-exports and in real estate. Industry did attract some capital, even if relatively little in comparison with other spheres. Hence, the year 1959 represents the beginning of a new phase in industrial development. Until that date the strategy adopted by the government had been to encourage private domestic and foreign capital to invest in industry through various concessions and exemptions and state investment in industry had been kept at a minimum.

The first economic ten year plan was approved in the period 1961/62 - 1971/72. For all its shortcomings, it was the first step taken towards a comprehensive approach to the economy of the country. It became clear at the commencement of the 10-year plan that the contribution of industry, both public and private, did not exceed 2 per cent of the Gross National Product. Hence, in 1967 the public sector completed the establishment of nine industries, two for sugar in El-Geneid and Khashm El-Girba, three canning factories - two in the Northern Province at Karima and the third at Wau, Southern Sudan - a dairy products factory at Babanousa, a tannery in Khartoum, and two factories in Kassala - one for cardboard manufacture at Aroma and another for onion dehydration in Kassala. The remarkable feature of this measure of public industrialization was the distribution of industries all over the country, uncovering the vast potential of the rural areas, and attaching importance to the location of factories despite various difficulties.

This change in strategy was justified on the grounds that these new industries and the investments they required might not attract private funds and would be beyond the capabilities of the private sector. In 1962 a government industrial board was established, and in 1965 it was replaced by the Industrial Development Corporation to manage these industries until such time as they became attractive enough to be sold and turned over to the private sector.

The Industrial Bank of the Sudan (IBS) was also established in 1961 to assist in the establishment, expansion, and modernization of private industrial enterprises. By the end of 1971, the IBS had extended assistance to 128 projects. The Industrial Investment Act was passed in 1967 aiming to increase the concessions given to private industrial capitalists. Therefore, despite the sharp increase in the industrial investments of the public sector, aggregate industrial production must be accounted for primarily by private industrialists. The share of the

private sector in industrial production averaged about 95.5 per cent over a three-year review period in 1966/67/68.

Furthermore, the 1961/62-1967/1971 period opened a new phase in the promotion and encouragement of the private industrial sector. Although this period was dominated by the ten year plan, it included projects for both public and private interests, and explicitly recognized the role of industrial capitalists in the process of economic development.

Despite the growth of state industry after the enactment of the Acquisition Act, and the Companies Nationalization Act of 1970, the government remained committed to its declared policy of encouraging the private sector. Various policy statements and the practical steps taken by the government indicate that there is no inherent political predisposition against private enterprise. The state policy on the role ideally played by the industrial capitalists in economic development, particularly after the denationalization of many enterprises which were initially nationalized in 1970, was reasserted and has continued up to the present day. In 1972 another act was passed, The Development and Promotion of Industrial Investment Act, 1972, giving even more favourable conditions for private investment than the previous acts. And, The Development and Encouragement of Industrial Investment Act, 1974, is the most recent in a series designed to give financial concessions to industrialists. The role of private industrial capital is stressed by Fatima Mahmoud: "The private sector contributed a substantial proportion of industrial investment throughout the period under study (1898-1975)".<sup>42</sup>

Industry and the Development of the Urban Labour Market

From the above account it is evident that most of the industrial development in the Sudan has taken place in the private sector of the economy. According to the 1974 Employment Survey, the private manufacturing sector accounted for 91 per cent of all fixed assets, and 82 per cent of workers earning 76 per cent of all wages were employed in large-scale

industry.

The state policy of spreading industrial enterprises in various parts of the country has been largely off-set by the concentration of private industrial establishments in the capital city. The development of modern capitalist enterprises has taken place largely in Greater Khartoum which accounts for about two-thirds of all employment but only about a half of the investment in this sector. The geographical disparity in the distribution of industrial plants is shown in Table II.<sup>43</sup>

TABLE II: Geographical Dispersion of Manufacturing Industry in Sudan

Province	Establishments		Workers		Total Wages		Total invested capital	
	No.	%	No.	%	£SM	%	£SM	%
Khartoum	153	73.2	27653	64.6	8.7	67.2	48.5	47.2
Blue Nile	18	8.6	8541	19.9	1.9	14.3	24.9	24.3
Kassala	13	6.2	4164	9.7	1.7	13.0	20.7	20.4
Northern	5	2.4	1140	2.7	0.4	2.9	4.6	4.4
Kordofan	16	7.7	928	2.2	0.2	1.6	2.7	2.6
Darfur	3	1.4	134	0.3	0.01	0.1	0.2	0.2
Bahr El Ghazal	1	0.5	263	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.9	0.9
Total	209	100.0	42823	100.0	12.9	100.0	102.4	100.0

Source: Industrial Survey, 1970/71

The pattern of concentration of industrial plants is clearly reflected in the growth of Khartoum North as the major industrial town in the Sudan. Private industrialists have continued to concentrate their industrial investments in the capital city due to the availability of essential services to the presence of large flourishing urban market. The capital city provides the essential prerequisites for private manufacturers and this reinforces the existing pattern of concentration. These facilities include:

...a reliable source of water and power, a pool of skilled and semi-skilled labour, an efficient network of communication, as well as organized educational and training system, an adequate health service, together with banking and insurance facilities. 44.

Moreover, the state facilitated this pattern of concentration when a decree was passed as early as 1960 allocating land for industry in Khartoum North on a 99-year leasehold basis and at the lowest rent in the Three Towns (28Pt. per square metre). Thus, over 73 per cent of manufacturing industries in Sudan, together with about 75 per cent of the labour force employed in industry, are concentrated in the Three Towns. With the rapid growth of industry the population of Khartoum North has also shown, as we saw earlier, the highest rate of increase among the eight major towns of the country. In 1966 it was about 80,000 compared with 155,000 in 1973. The town had only six factories in 1950 with a labour force of 2,000 persons, whereas in 1972 its 30 largest factories employed about 15,000 workers. Moreover, 124 factories of the 270 registered as "large" factories in the country were located there.

The rapid rate of industrial growth has resulted in an increasing demand for skilled and unskilled workers. It was this demand and the increase in income associated with it that have attracted more migrants into the Three Towns. In 1968 Khartoum North, for instance, had the highest family income for wage-earners among the eleven largest towns in the Sudan.<sup>45</sup> The increasing number of migrants coming to the town "...has resulted in immense housing shortages and the emergence of shanty towns on the outskirts of the Three Towns".<sup>46</sup> By the late 1960s, the first industry-oriented "cardboard settlement" was developed in Khartoum North by migrants from Kordofan and Darfur. In 1968, about 20,000 migrants, representing about a quarter of Khartoum North's population, were living in this settlement.

Thus the demand for labour force in the Three Towns initiated by the colonial authorities early in the century has been reinforced by the pattern of industrial concentration in the Khartoum urban area. However, despite the rapid growth of industry in the Three Towns, the number of new jobs created by the modern capitalist enterprises is insufficient to cater for the increased number of migrants who cannot be productively absorbed in the rural areas. The relatively high wage rates in the "modern" sector, further buttressed by labour legislation and trade union pressures (discussed later in this chapter) have made it quite rational for younger people to migrate to the capital city even when the chances of wage employment are not certain. Since wage levels in the "modern" sector are up to two or three times the level of the average income on the small family farm, young people naturally head towards places where they can expect higher incomes.<sup>47</sup>

This situation has created an employment crisis in the Three Towns. In spite of the increasing flow of migrants, their participation in the labour force in regular employment is not rising commensurately.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the growing rate of industrial output is not matched by a corresponding increase in work opportunities. Mohamed El-Awad Galal El-Din comments on this as being a result of the growing trend towards capital intensive technology:

For example, an investment of less than £58 million in the manufacturing industries in the period 1956-60 led to the employment of 4,093 persons while an investment of £23.7 million between 1960-64 absorbed only 8,092. In other words, while the amount invested increased by three times or more, the number employed was less than double.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, an increasing proportion of the urban labour force is relegated either to casual and intermittent employment or to disguised or open unemployment and underemployment.

Table III shows the distribution of the Three Towns labour force according to wage and non-wage earning activities.



TABLE III: Categories of Workers in the Three Towns

Category of Workers	Per Cent
Self-employed/own account workers	38.0
Wage-earners	52.0
Family workers	2.5
Seeking work for first time	7.5
Total	100.0

Source: ILO, p.363 originally: Statistical Year Book, Khartoum, National Planning Commission, Department of Statistics

According to the ILO report, 1975, the majority of the established labour force in Greater Khartoum is employed in small non-government establishments, organized manufacture and large-scale commerce. Out of the category of 52 per cent shown in the table, wage-earners in the larger industrial and parastatal enterprises and in the civil service probably account for under 30 per cent of Greater Khartoum's workers. The category consists of about 33,000 in manufacturing employment and 60,000 in government employment and make up the so-called "modern" sector. A study conducted in 1973 among a group of enterprises in the public industrial sector employing 22,000 workers estimated that as many as 40 per cent were "temporary" workers. Furthermore, the Ministry of Construction, for example, frequently augments its demand for labour by hiring additional workers on a casual basis, and about 31,000 are employed in "temporary" manufacturing employment in the Three Towns.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, these figures on casual or temporary employment may well be severe underestimates because the surveys undertaken hardly included the category of totally casual workers, particularly those working with private building contractors who usually do not register with the labour office, and a majority of these workers pursue a circular pattern of

migration which means that their number fluctuate from time to time. The ILO report attributes this tendency to employ casual labour to two factors. First, employment is greatly influenced by the employer's consideration to meet the variations in the production schedules and, second, this type of employment is an economical way of avoiding the high costs of "permanent" jobs, particularly when the labour legislation assigns 3 months from the day of employment for an employee to be placed in permanent service.

Notwithstanding this kind of explanation, the real reasons must be sought in the way in which these two branches of production activity in the "modern" sector of the economy have evolved. As argued earlier, the expansion of export/import activities was the overriding objective of colonial economic policy, and continued to constitute the major preoccupation of National economic policies after Independence. The private sector flourished in productive fields related to export/imports, servicing activities in agriculture, and trade. The development of export/import activities has stimulated the emergence of new production activities supporting the local market and satisfying people's basic needs. All these activities constitute the "Modern Part" of the economy. This new category of production consists of commercial undertakings and a variety of public services. Such development has been fully discussed by Abdel Mohsin Mustafa, who argues as follows:

The use of modern (imported) capital equipment and technology and the adoption of a modern form of resource organization by these activities was the common denominator between them and the existent export/import activities. It is this common factor which united these two types of activities as members of the "Modern Part". The non-commercial activities were carried out by the government and consisted primarily of economic and social services, public utilities, education, health, and other social services. They were in the main tertiary activities. These activities were very limited in scope and regional spread. 51

On the other hand, the private sector concentrated heavily on the commercial undertakings in different fields. These included manufacturing industry, building construction, transport and distribution services, and a variety of financing and private services.

It is the differential choice of investment by private capitalists in certain selected fields that account for the relative growth of incomes. <sup>el</sup>Abdel Mohsin Mustafa differentiates between manufacturing undertakings and the other commercial activities carried out by the private sector on the basis of the inherent characteristics of the "importability" and "non-importability" of the final products.<sup>52</sup> It is this difference that accounts for the limited scope and development of the latter production activities; only a small proportion of the incomes generated - both by the state and the private sector - from export/import activities has been invested in the production fields whose final products could not be imported. Thus, "this expenditure generated the 'effective demand' which justified and sustained slow rates of expansion of the production activities turning out 'non-importables'."<sup>53</sup>

The above account of the pattern of industrial development shows why there has been a differential growth of incomes and employment in the "modern part" of the economy. These disparities are reflected in the temporary character of much employment, in low wages, in the frequent absence of employment benefits, in under-employment, in the differential application of labour legislation, and in differences in the organization of workers. I have already indicated the reliance of these production activities on casual labour largely avoiding a commitment to an expansive permanent work force. I shall return to this in the second part of the thesis.

In organized employment, public and private, the average wage rates are much higher than in the building industry, for instance. In public enterprises and in large private industrial establishments different

categories of workers receive annual increments according to job classification schemes. Workers in permanent service are also entitled to other allowances and additional payments. These include cost of living allowances, overtime allowances, incentive bonuses, and various fringe benefits such as medical care, social insurance, and travel and holiday expenses, in addition to retirement payments. Moreover, in comparing earnings in the organized employment with other urban earnings, another fact is important. Working in a typical industrial enterprise one seldom covers more than 250 days or 42 weeks per annum, and many workers work less than that because of absenteeism or illness, but provision is made for absence due to illness. The introduction of the Minimum Wage Order in 1974, and its modification in 1978, enabled workers in private enterprises to catch up with the wage levels of the public sector. But these formal wage structures cover only large employers and hence create a minority within the labour force. Workers in private construction, for instance, are employed on a day wage basis, and do not receive any of the above-mentioned fringe benefits and extra payments. Moreover, the inability of "organized" employment to absorb the increasing numbers of migrant job seekers, has in recent years enabled private employers, especially building contractors, to depress the wage levels even further. These facts indicate the limited application of protective labour legislation and the relatively free hand of market forces in determining employment conditions in these activities.

Parallel with these differences there has been unequal and uneven development of workers' organizations and of institutional systems of industrial relations that recognize the bargaining power of the workers. Trade union pressures have played an important role in gaining benefits for some workers, and improving their working conditions, while the absence of non-observance of recognized workers' organizations demand the enforcement of labour legislation and to protect workers' interests has

allowed many smaller private employers and contractors to exploit the work force. The migratory character of workers has, of course, always been a hindrance to the organization of trade unions among workers in temporary employment. Labour disputes in the private building industry, for example, are resolved through the channels of the contractor-"broker"-worker relationship which are largely maintained through ethnic ties between the workers and the "broker". The "broker" is the headman of a gang of labourers employed by one building contractor.<sup>54</sup>

However crude the distinction between "organized" and "non-organized" employment may be, it helps to convey some aspects of the urban working situations and to explain different kinds of employment opportunities. It also sheds some light on the comparative assessment of prospects for stabilization among the factory and the building workers. By "non-organized" employment I refer mainly to workers who can be broadly contrasted with those who enjoy a considerable degree of employment stability and security, namely the factory workers. This type of employment corresponds to the category of "short-term wage work" used by Bromley and Gerry<sup>55</sup> as one category of casual work in the cities of the Third World:

This is paid and contracted by the day, week, month or season (so-called casual labour), or paid or contracted for fixed terms or tasks, with no assurance of continuity of employment....Short-term wage-work is recognized as "wage-work" in law, but does not carry all of the benefits to the worker which are associated with long-term (indefinite period) wage-work. 56

## II) The Disparities between Northern and Southern Sudan

An important issue in this thesis is the differential participation of different categories of migrants, namely the factory workers and building labourers. There is insufficient employment offered by "organized" industry for the growing number of immigrants, most of whom do not, in any case, have the qualifications and educational levels claimed to be necessary for work in technically advanced industry.

Those who are considered deficient in these ways are mostly the recent comers and the migrants from the most depressed regions, of the country, particularly the South, and they are thus relegated to casual or temporary employment.

I have already indicated the uneven penetration of colonial capitalism in the different regions of the Sudan and explained that the pressures for Southerners to seek wage employment can not be abstracted from the overall colonial policies which opened up differential opportunities for people from different regions in the Sudan.

In the early decades of British rule, the Southern peoples were much less affected by the developing colonial economy than were many of the residents of the North, Central and Western Sudan. But the developments in the North and Central regions, were nonetheless to be of crucial importance for the people of the South, and must therefore be mentioned. The riverain areas of North Central Sudan lent themselves most readily to a form of development which linked the two guiding principles of British policy. As put by Fatima Mahmoud:

...The British interest in Sudan was as a supplier of raw materials (mainly cotton) and as a market for its manufactured goods. In the course of this process during the five decades of British colonial rule, areas of production like the Blue Nile and the Gadarif area were subject to direct forms of capitalist transformation. Others like Kordofan and Farfur were increasingly linked to the export market through merchant capital. 57

For geographical, administrative, historical and other reasons, it was relatively easy to stimulate the development of a cotton growing peasantry especially in the Gezira area. The cultivation of cotton which had, even prior to colonial rule, been grown on a limited scale mainly for local consumption, was successfully encouraged, and exports grew rapidly. However, it should be stressed that cotton cultivation in pre- and post-colonial times was based on two different modes of production, the first was "domestic", the other "capitalist", and the first did not enable or facilitate the development of the second. 58

The main areas of cultivation were, thus, comparatively closer to the administrative and commercial capital of the country, while the development of transport and communications in the region was given a high priority, as were the construction of rail links to the sea, and of port facilities, first at Suakin, and subsequently at Port Sudan. This kind of development continued throughout the period of British rule, and has in essence been maintained since Independence. The net result is a marked disparity in the level of economic and social development achieved in different parts of the country. As expressed by Garang,

...the areas where colonialism concentrated its exploitation became more developed than others, and the national groupings and groups in the selected areas achieved more progress over their neighbours, and developed cities, a working class, an intelligentsia, and national capital. 59

For many reasons, the development of the South was not as profitable or rewarding for the colonial power as was the North, and to some extent the West. Not only was the Southern region far from the sea, but transport and communications to many parts of it were also particularly hard to establish because of swamps and forests. In addition, the cultural standards of the people in the South were different from those in the North and the West, and were less likely to lead to the rapid establishment of a demand for manufactured goods. In consequence, no serious effort was made to develop the South.

The North and, to a lesser extent, the West, were occupied mainly by people of Arab origin and where an opposite set of circumstances prevailed. There was easier access to the sea from the North Central region, and there was the possibility, later realised, of rail access to the sea even from the West. In the North Central region, the two Niles greatly facilitated the local transport of both imported goods and raw materials for exports. The culture of the people in the North and the West were also more propitious for the immediate growth of a substantial demand for manufactured consumer goods. The North and the West had

already experienced centuries of trade with the outside world, and both had already known a small but significant measure of urbanization with a money economy. The West had the added advantage of being a potentially very significant producer of gum-Arabic. All these factors led to the concentration of developments in the regions occupied by Arabs. Trading centres flourished, and schools were built which were soon to supply the colonial administration with clerks and junior office workers.

During half a century of colonial rule the British administration took advantage of previously existing differentials in the territory. Thus the North experienced far more rapid rate of development than the South. The history of conflict between the North and the South in the immediate post-colonial period was deeply rooted in this disparity, and the South still lags behind the North in economic and social development. There is great inequality between Northerners and Southerners in occupational status and other achievements, and there are extreme differences between them in social standing, political allegiance, and access to power and influence. Sudanese nationalism was developed in the North and Northerners led the country to its independence. As stressed by Garang, "power fell into the hands of Northern intelligentsia representing the interest of national capital and semi-feudalism. The Northern intelligentsia occupied nearly all the posts in the service."<sup>60</sup>

Nearly all jobs in organized employment - public and private - in road transport firms, in the Sudan Railway and in the few industrial establishments of the time were held by Northerners. Being better educated and more literate, the population of the North (especially so in the case of the Arab majority) became more mobile geographically and socially and achieved a position of overriding economic advantage. They completely dominated the professions, administrative posts, and white collar jobs, and they equally dominated the great majority of all skilled and semi-skilled manual occupations, particularly in organized industry.



One result of these developments is expressed by Fatima Mahmoud as follows:

The uneven development between the North and the South resulted in migration from the South to the North. Migrant workers from Southern Sudan constitute an important proportion of the working force in the North especially in building, industry and domestic service. 61

Moreover, there is a general and widespread antipathy between Northerners and Southerners, an antipathy that has come to be associated with two very distinct identities. Most Northerners, especially those from the towns, look down on migrants from the South as illiterate, ignorant, and lacking in aptitude and cultural refinement. The places where the Northerners and Southerners normally encounter each other are the homes of the Northerners where many Southerners work as domestic servants, and on construction sites where most labourers (Tulab; sing. Tulba) are migrants from the South working under the direction of Northerners.

### Conclusion

The Sudanese economy was structured by political and economic processes essential to the attainment of colonial objectives outlined above. This structure has remained substantially unchanged throughout the post-independence period. The unequal penetration of various forms of capital, and thus of capitalist relations to the different regions of the country has resulted in unequal levels of socio-economic development. In consequence, the incorporation of the rural subsistence economies into the political economy of colonialism has stimulated labour migration to the largest centres of wage-employment.

The expansion of export/import activities has resulted in the emergence of new production fields that involve both public and private investments, and together constitute the "Modern Part" of the economy. The development of these production activities has led to the growth of incomes and factor employment in the public sector and the private

manufacturing industry.

The emerging pattern of industrialization under the hegemony of the private sector, with its concentration in the Three Towns, has added to the limited development of private production activities whose products are "non-importable", (construction, for example) and thus contributed to the employment crisis. Notwithstanding the growth of a permanent labour force in the "organized" sector, a large proportion of urban migrant workers are relegated to temporary and casual employment.

Corresponding to the existence of these two types of employment are disparities in the level of wages, in the differential application of protective labour legislations, in workers' organizations, and in industrial relations procedures. Despite a tendency towards the stabilization of the labour force since World War II, an important category of wage earners in temporary employment still pursues circular migration between town and country. Their incomplete proletarianization is a product of the uneven process of capitalist penetration in the different regions of the country, particularly Southern Sudan, and is buttressed by equally uneven development in the "Modern Part" of the economy.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II:

1. This term, as is explained later, has been used by Abd-El Muhsin Mustafa, (1975), in a paper entitled "The Structural Malformation of the Sudanese Economy: A historical Account of Structural Impact of Colonial Economic Policies on the Sudanese Economy", Part I, Bulletin No.24, Economic and Social Research Council, Khartoum.
2. Gutkind and Wallerstein, (1976) op.cit., 7.
3. For similar discussions on the impact of colonialism on African societies see the works of Amin (1971), (1974), Arrighi and Saul (1973), Gutkind and Wallerstein, (1976), and O'Brien, (1979); on Latin America, see Frank (1969) and Furtado (1974).
4. The Sudan was first exposed to Turco-Egyptian colonial rule between 1821 and 1880. The Khedive's government in Egypt was totally dependent on its European creditors in Britain and France. The impact of this rule on Sudanese life was disastrous. Most of the regions were depopulated as a result of slave raids. The few commercial and industrial ventures which were attempted (an iron foundry in Kordofan, and experimental planting of cotton and sugar) failed because of the unsettled social conditions. In addition to entrenching a foreign group of exploiters, colonial rule fragmented the communal relations of the farming communities which gave way to a system of semi-feudal relations and thus to the creation of new groups of "privileged" and "oppressed" in both urban and rural areas. Such Western intrusion was resisted by the Sudanese but was facilitated by the isolation of a small Sudanese commercial elite after the suppression of slave trade. Turco-Egyptian rule received its final blow in late 1870s when the British and French creditors imposed economic restrictions on Egypt. This weakened its control in Sudan and led to the Mahdist movement and the establishment of the Mahdist State in 1885. This lasted for 14 years, after which Britain again consolidated its colonial control in 1898.
5. Gutkind and Wallerstein (1976), op.cit., 7.
6. There is now a vast literature that dwells on the different policies of taxation adopted by colonial administration in various parts of Africa. See, for example, Gann (1956) on Central Africa, Powesland (1957) on Uganda and Kenya; Hopkins (1973) and Amin (1974) on West Africa, Bertrand as quoted by Pons (1969, p.4) on the Belgian Congo, and also, more generally, Barber (1961), Arrighi and Saul (1973) and Gutkind and Wallerstein (1976).
7. Some Suggestions for the Future: a Report by the Governor, Upper Nile Province, Sudan Archives, Durham, 212/15 (1928) 7.
8. For analysis of similar measures in Southern Central Africa, see Mitchell (1961) op.cit., 205: "Economic incentives have now come to be sufficient to ensure the flow of labour into most industries. Taxation and other administrative measures may have been a necessary stimulant to the flow before the range of wants of Africans had become diversified. Recruiting also is probably a necessary interim stage, but these inducements soon gave way to normal economic incentives".

9. An extract of a letter by the Governor of the Upper Nile Province to the Civil Secretary in Khartoum, Sudan Archives, Durham 212/11, (1927) 2.
10. C.Collins, "Colonialism and Class Struggle in Sudan", in Middle East Research and Information Project Inc., Washington, D.C. No.46(1976).
11. The feddan is equivalent to 1.03 acres.
12. For a detailed analysis of the development of Gezira Scheme and its socio-economic consequences, see T.Barnett, The Gezira Scheme: An Illusion of Development (1977).
13. Collins, (1976) op.cit. 10.
14. Mekki Abbas, The Sudan Question: The Dispute over the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium 1884-1951, (1951), 96.
15. The issue here is that the Sudan economy, like the economies of other underdeveloped countries, exhibits an extreme dependence on the agricultural as opposed to the industrial sector. Another characteristic is the concentration of its trading partners. In 1970, there were four countries which imported a total of 47.68 per cent of all Sudanese exports, USSR (16.29%), India (10.27%), West Germany (16.58%), and Italy (10.74%). In the same year, 20.12 per cent of all Sudanese imports came from the United Kingdom and another 13.29 per cent from India.
16. Barnett (1977), op.cit., 14
17. T.Barnett, "The Gezira Scheme: Production of Cotton and Reproduction of Underdevelopment" in Beyond the Sociology of Development, eds. I.Oxaal, T.Barnett and D.Booth (1975).
18. The Gezira scheme is not the only state agricultural scheme in the irrigated regions. Other government-owned schemes, based on the same principles of state-tenant relationship, include the Khashm El Girba Scheme, the Northern Province Pump Schemes, and the recently established El Rahad Scheme. The State has also run a variety of mechanized agricultural schemes in the Gadarif area since the 1940s. By 1968 mechanized agricultural schemes had spread to Western Sudan under the control of the Mechanized Farming Corporation (MFC).
19. Neutralization of religious-based assistance was a key part of British colonial consolidation. The British sponsored and funded religious leaders who came from Egypt to counteract the nationalistic ambitions of the indigenous religious men like the Mahdists. As a part of this strategy, the Khatmia whose leader accompanied the British as a scout upon the reconquest of Sudan, flourished and grew in wealth and power, while Mahdist lands were confiscated after 1899. However, following on nationalist uprisings in Egypt in 1919 and after, the British feared the Khatmia who had close ties with Egypt, and started to favour the Mahdists as a part of a policy to create a Sudanese landlord class which would support British interests. Lands previously confiscated, including the birthplace of Mahdism in Aba island, were finally returned during the 1920s. The family of the Mahdi re-emerged during this period as a feudal landed aristocracy in Central and Western Sudan living on cotton plantations (see Collins (1976) op.cit., 5-7).

20. Fatima B.Mahmoud, "Origin and Development of a Sudanese Private Capitalist Class" (Hull D.Phil., 1978).
21. Ibid., 112.
22. In this respect, the point to be emphasised is not the existence or non-existence of market relations, but the impact of the new socio-economic processes on the pre-colonial structures. Abd El-Muhsin Mustafa has, for instance, indicated that the development of market relations and a certain measure of differentiation in economic activities had existed in pre-colonial Sudan, but "the colonial state, far from seeking to enhance and complete the process of development of the internal market - or at least pushing it some stages further - imposed an altogether new process, ...an altogether new market to which the productive resources were to be oriented and to the service of which they were to be committed". 1975 op.cit., 9-10.
23. For detailed information on networks of trading activities in Western Sudan, see R.O'Fahey and J.Spaulding, Kingdoms of Sudan, (1974).
24. See for example: K.Barbour, The Republic of the Sudan (1961), P.McLoughlin, "Labour Market Conditions and Wages in the Three Towns", Sudan Notes and Records LI(1970), El-Sayed El-Bushra "The Evolution of the Three Towns" in African Urban Notes, ed. S.Hale, VI(1971) 8-23, Mohamed El-Awad Galal El-Din, "Internal Migration in the Sudan since the Second World War"(London, D.Phil. 1975), "Character, Trends, and Causes of Labour Migration to Khartoum Conurbation", Unpublished paper to Dept. of Economics, Univ. of Khartoum, appearing in V.Pons (forthcoming) op.cit., Salih el-Arifi, op.cit. See also, Urbanization in the Sudan, Proceedings of the 17th Annual Conference of the Philosophical Society of the Sudan, Khartoum (August 1972).
25. El-Sayed El-Bushra, "The Development of Industry in Greater Khartoum, Sudan", East African Geographical Review. No.10(1972) to be reprinted in V.Pons (ed.) (forthcoming) op.cit.
26. See McLoughlin (1970) op.cit., and Galal El-Din (1975) op.cit.
27. McLoughlin (1970) op.cit., 106.
28. For a detailed discussion of workers' movements and the level of wages during this period, see McLoughlin (1970) op.cit., 116-17.
29. Galal el-Din, (1975) op.cit., 4.
30. Annual Report, Khartoum Province (1950).
31. For a discussion of housing problems in the Three Towns, see Saad el-Din Fawzi, "Some Aspects of Urban Housing in Northern Sudan", Sudan Notes and Records, Vol.35, (1954).
32. Annual Report, Khartoum Province, 1945.

33. See for example, F.Rehfishch, "Sudan Urban Profiles", Unpublished paper, Sudan Research Unit Khartoum (197 ), El-Sayed El-Bushra (1971) op.cit., Galal el-Din (1973, 1975) op.cit., Fahima Zahir Al-Sadat, "Political Mobilization in a Western Sudanese Immigrant Group in Khartoum (Manchester D.Phil., 1972). See also, M.E.F.I.T., S.A.P., Consulting Engineers, Regional Plan of Khartoum, and Master Plan for the Three Towns, (1974), and International Labour Office, Growth Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan, (1975).
34. El-Arif, op.cit. El-Arif also attempts to explain the change in position of other urban centres, particularly the high rate of growth of Nyala and Gadarif. He argues that El-Obeid fell in rank because its economy failed to gather any strong momentum when the town lost its favourable position as the "gate to the West" after the extension of the railway to Nyala and that Gadarif improved its rank as it became the administrative and commercial centre of the newly prosperous agricultural region.
35. These figures are obtained from, Growth Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 351. For more detailed analysis of these figures, see also A.Oberai, "An analysis of migration to Greater Khartoum, Sudan" Population and Employment Working Paper No19 (1975) World Employment Programme, ILO, Geneva.
36. According to Census reports, a migrant is defined as a non-native of the town or village in which he was residing at the time when the census was carried out.
37. See Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 352.
38. Galal al-Din (1975) op.cit., 7.
39. This fact will be elaborated in Chapter III on the basis of my field work material on a sample of migrant workers in two industrial plants in Khartoum.
40. Abd-El Muhsin Mustafa, op.cit., 14-15.
41. Mahmoud, op.cit., 119.
42. Ibid., 129.
43. Until 1973, there were nine provinces, Darfur, Kordofan, Northern, Blue Nile, Kassala, Khartoum, Equatoria, Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile. A commission was set up in 1973 to review the province structure. As a result in 1974, the number of provinces was increased to 15 by splitting Darfur and Kordofan provinces into Northern and Southern sections, by splitting Blue Nile Province into Gezira, White Nile, and Blue Nile provinces and by subdividing Kassala into Red Sea and Kassala provinces. In 1977, the Southern provinces were also re-divided into Bahr el Ghazal, El Buheyra, Upper Nile, Junglei, Western Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria. As a result the total number of provinces now amounts to twenty.
44. El-Bushra (1972) op.cit., 29.
45. Household Budget Survey 1967-68, (1970) Khartoum.

46. Al-Sadaty (1972) op.cit., 27.
47. Both Barth and Holland have argued that decision making concerning farm work allocations, and shares of income are the privilege of the elders, a fact which encourages younger people to migrate. See F.Barth (ed.), Economic Spheres in Darfur (1969) and G.Holland, "Labour Input and Consumption Preferences under Family Farm Conditions", Paper for International Livestock Centre for Africa (1977).
48. This experience is in sharp contrast with historical experience in, for example, Britain, Japan, and Russia.
49. Galal el-Din (1975) op.cit., 8.
50. See, Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 363-365.
51. Abd El Muhsin Mustafa (1975) op.cit., 21.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 22.
54. A comparison between the resolution of labour disputes in manufacturing industry and the building industry will be discussed in Chapters IV and VI, respectively.
55. R.Bromley and C.Gerry, "Who are the Casual Poor?" in Casual Work and Poverty in Third World Cities. eds R.Bromley and C.Gerry (1979),7. Bromley and Gerry conceive urban employment in terms of a continuum stretching from "stable wage-work" to "true self-employment", and they contrast the category of "stable wage work" to that of "casual work" which they crudely divide into four broad categories: "short-term wage-work", "disguised wage-work", "dependent work", and "true self-employment". They argue that this categorization is more useful than the conventional "dualist" distinction between wage-work and self-employment, which "obscures the variety of forms of working relationships, and particularly the extent to which individual workers and small enterprises may be harnessed to the needs of large enterprises without a legal employment relationship".
56. Ibid., 5.
57. Mahmoud, op.cit., 73.
58. Barnett (1973, 1977), op.cit.,
59. J.Garang, "On Economics and Regional Autonomy" in The Southern Sudan: The Problem of National Integration , ed. D.Wai (1973) 85.
60. Ibid., 88.
61. Mahmoud, op.cit., 75.

## Introduction

Circulatory migration has been a prominent feature of societies in colonial Africa as well as in other parts of the Third World, though by no means confined to them.<sup>1</sup> Many studies on African rural-urban migration have emphasised its frequently temporary and circular nature. Theoretical models and concepts have been developed, as indicated in the introduction, by sociologists and economists to explain this phenomenon in different parts of Africa.<sup>2</sup> However, a new pattern of migration, characterized by increasing commitment to urban wage employment and a greater tendency toward stabilization in town, has also been observed among different categories of migrants in many parts of Africa. Grillo's study of East African Railway workers demonstrates this other trend towards urbanization and stability.<sup>3</sup> Grillo explains this by "reference to the changing economic needs of the population coupled with the slow growth of rural incomes and the resulting demand for jobs".<sup>4</sup> Parkin's study on migration and settlement in Nairobi also shows how the Luo, among other ethnic groups, have become settled townsmen in secure and relatively well-paid jobs.<sup>5</sup> Parkin introduced the problem of urban unemployment and the resultant competition for jobs into the discussion as reasons for the increasing tendency of labour migrants to look for permanent jobs.

My data on the factory workers of Khartoum North similarly reveal a strong tendency towards stabilization, but this stands in sharp contrast to some other categories of urban workers in Greater Khartoum, such as the Nuer building workers to be discussed in Chapters V, VI and VII. In chapter II I showed how the position of the Nuer can be explained by reference to the functioning of the overall political economy of the country and to political and social processes that have led to the formation of different categories of migrants in the urban population of Greater Khartoum in particular. In this chapter I present data on the stability



PART TWO

CHAPTER III

MIGRANT WORKERS IN AN URBAN SETTING: FACTORY WORKERS

AND URBAN LIFE IN KHARTOUM

of the factory workers. I also dwell on the nature of their social networks and associations in town and on the nature of the relationships they maintain with their rural areas of origin. The socio-economic characteristics of migrants are important in any attempt to explain similarities and differences between different categories of migrants. In this study I am directly concerned with the differences between factory workers and building site labourers. Their characteristics assume particular importance when we attempt to analyse how the relations in which they are involved are mobilized in certain particular situations deriving from, and affected by, the total industrial setting.

The factory workers are largely first-generation migrants. Table IV shows the regions from which they come. The vast majority are either from the Northern or the Western parts of the country, though there is also a small minority who were born in different areas of rural Khartoum, and another small minority from the Southern Sudan. Those from rural Khartoum are mainly school leavers who, in the absence of other employment opportunities, have joined the industrial labour force.

TABLE IV: Province of Origin of 145 Workers from the Match Factory and the Brewery\*

Province	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Northern	6	7.3	31	47.6	37	25.5
Kordofan	40	48.7	13	20.7	53	36.5
Darfur	8	9.8	6	9.5	14	9.7
Blue Nile	5	6.1	3	4.8	8	5.5
White Nile	2	2.4	-	-	2	1.4
Equatoria	2	2.4	1	1.6	3	2.1
Upper Nile	3	3.7	-	-	3	2.1
Bahr el-Ghazal	5	6.1	4	6.3	9	3.2
Khartoum (rural)	11	13.4	5	7.9	16	11.0
Total	82	100.0	63	100.0	145	100.0

\* Kordofan and Darfur Provinces constitute Western Sudan, while Equatoria, Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal provinces represent Southern Sudan.

The first observation to be made is the high percentage of workers from Western Sudan, particularly from Kordofan. The overwhelming majority of these work in the match factory, where, they constitute over a half of the labour force, while in the brewery they make up less than a third of the workforce. A reverse relationship exists in the two factories for workers from Northern Sudan. In the brewery migrants from the North constitute about half of the workforce, while in the match factory they represent 7.3 per cent only. The figures in Table V show a discrepancy compared to those returned by the 1955/56 and 1973 censuses.<sup>6</sup> This can be explained by our knowledge that migration from Northern Sudan to the urban areas of Central Sudan is of long-standing. This is well recognized in the literature of urbanization in Sudan.<sup>7</sup> The dates of the establishment of the match factory and the brewery coincided with the changing trends of migration. The Blue Nile Brewery started production in 1956 when the urban population of the Three Towns was largely made up of Northern Sudanese, and the establishment of the match factory in the early 1960s coincided with the growing flow of migrants from the West.<sup>8</sup>

As I pointed out earlier, the vast majority of the workers I interviewed were unskilled workers who have not received any specific training for the jobs they do.<sup>9</sup> This does not imply that unskilled workers are all uneducated workers. As shown in Table V, an appreciable proportion of workers in both establishments consists of school leavers with primary and intermediate education. The percentage of illiterate workers is, however, as high as 28.3 per cent. Another 20 per cent can only read and write.<sup>10</sup> Thus 51.7 per cent of the workers have had no regular schooling. The remaining 48.3 per cent have left school at different stages as shown in the table, mostly at primary or intermediate levels.<sup>11</sup>

TABLE V : The Educational Levels of the Match Factory and Brewery Workers

Level of Education	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate	22	26.8	19	30.2	41	28.3
Literate	8	9.8	21	33.3	29	20.0
Primary	36	43.9	19	30.2	55	37.9
Intermediate	15	18.3	4	6.3	19	13.1
Secondary	1	1.2	-	-	1	0.7
Total	82	100.0	63	100.0	100	100.0

Two main reasons were given by most of the workers for leaving school: 1) their families could not pay for further education, and 2) they failed in the finals of either their primary or intermediate stages. Some were obliged to leave school to work in cultivation and animal rearing because of their families' needs for labour. In most of these cases the workers were the eldest sons of their parents and they had been compelled to work in their families' fields, often to give their younger brothers the chance to continue their education.<sup>12</sup>

#### Occupational Mobility

I recorded complete life histories for all the workers in the sample in order to examine their occupational experiences and mobility. I also asked for information on their fathers' occupations. These full life histories provide information on periods of unemployment and migration at various stages in the workers' careers. The findings are useful when discussing the question of urban growth and the stability of the urban labour force. They are also important in regard to the influence, if any, of ethnic and family factors on the workers concepts about industrial jobs. Moreover, this account is also important for our general comparison between the factory workers and the building labourers.

As many as 79.7 per cent of all workers who reported places of birth outside Khartoum Province were first-generation migrants (i.e. their fathers had never worked in town.) The occupations of their fathers had been either growing crops or rearing animals, or a combination of the two.

Those whose fathers had migrated from their home areas and themselves experienced any occupational mobility accounted for only 2.3 per cent of the sample. But this percentage in fact represents only three cases and they are all men whose fathers were employed in the "public sector". In two of these cases the fathers had moved from one region to another but had never come to Khartoum. The first one was working in Shendi as a bus driver employed by the Ministry of Education.<sup>13</sup> The other was a worker in the Water and Electricity Public Corporation in Nahud.<sup>14</sup> Both were appointed to their jobs locally. In the third case the worker's father had migrated directly to Khartoum, where he had worked in a textile factory.

The workers whose fathers were farmers had all worked, regularly and intermittently, on their families' farms for varying periods before migrating. Those who had worked on farms regularly had never been to school, but those who had worked intermittently or irregularly had been to school at one stage or another, though they had later participated in farming activities. Since practically all cultivation in rural areas depends on family labour, school boys are often called upon to work on the farm, to look after animals, etc. The high percentage of workers who had, at some stage, been directly involved in farm work is therefore not surprising. In a country where 72.7 per cent of the population is employed in agricultural activities, we must obviously expect farmers' sons to predominate most occupations, and the percentage in the sample roughly matches that for the national population.

Occupational mobility occurs when migrants take their first jobs and may also occur when they change employers. In many cases mobility is closely related to migration from country to town or from one town to another. I collected information on the migration of all workers and asked whether migration to Khartoum had taken place directly from each person's area of origin or if movement had taken place in stages either

within the region of origin or between regions. Table VI summarises the results.

TABLE VI: Movement of Migrant Workers (by Province)

Province	One Direct Move to Khartoum		More than one move on the way to Khartoum		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Upper Nile	3	100.0	-	-	3	100.0
Equatoria	3	100.0	-	-	3	100.0
Khartoum(rural)	16	100.0	-	-	16	100.0
Bahr el-Ghazal	8	88.9	1	11.1	9	100.0
Kordofan	47	88.7	6	11.3	53	100.0
Northern	28	75.7	9	24.3	37	100.0
Darfur	10	71.4	4	28.6	14	100.0
Blue Nile	6	75.0	2	25.0	8	100.0
White Nile	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	100.0
Total	122	84.1	23	15.9	145	100.0

The table shows that the overwhelming majority, about 84.1 per cent of the factory workers, moved directly from their home areas to Khartoum. It was pointed out in Chapter II that the Three Towns are centres of economic activity, and that this is where job opportunities are concentrated. Moreover, migrants always prefer to go to places where they will find their home people and relatives. My coming discussion on how employment is usually sought will explain this. (The percentage in the table of workers coming from the White Nile Province may be disregarded as there were only two persons in this category).

I also collected data on the workers occupational movements between types of employment and employers. Over half the factory workers had experience of some other type of work before taking their present employment. Most of them had started their careers in town either in petty-commodity production or "non-organized employment". Others had worked in "organized employment" as manual workers in one factory or another in the industrial area. Some had experienced both types of employment. This information is shown in Table VII.

TABLE VII: Occupational Mobility of the Factory Workers in Town\*

Date of Arrival in Khartoum	Mobility in Town						Total	
	Non-organized Employment		Organized Employment		Both organized & non-organized employment			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1943-1946	2	10	1	2.9	1	6.3	4	5.7
1947-1950	-	-	-	-	1	6.3	1	1.4
1951-1954	2	10	1	2.9	2	12.4	5	7.1
1955-1958	1	5	4	11.8	1	6.3	6	8.6
1959-1962	1	5	11	32.4	1	6.3	13	18.6
1963-1966	5	25	10	29.4	3	18.7	18	25.7
1967-1970	7	35	4	11.8	6	37.4	17	24.3
1971-1974	2	10	3	8.8	1	6.3	6	8.6
1975 onward	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	20	100.0	34	100.0	16	100.0	70	100.0

\* Based on all workers who had experienced occupational mobility.

It can be seen that nearly a half of the workers (48.3 per cent), had been in some sort of employment before the present one. The jobs held by the workers in "non-organized" employment included working in restaurants and bakeries, and being shopkeepers' assistants, house servants, casual municipal workers, manual workers on building sites, cooks in hotels, and apprentices in skilled building work. Those who had been self-employed were largely petty traders engaged in selling vegetables, fruit, carrier bags or clothes in the Khartoum sug. An interesting point is that the majority of those who had worked in jobs in "non-organized" employment were actually casual wage-earners rather than petty traders. Another 23.4 per cent of the factory workers had held jobs in the modern capitalist enterprises, or in the police and army services, and 11 per cent had held jobs in both types of employment. I give as examples two cases of workers who had experienced occupational mobility. The first example is that of a worker who first came to Khartoum in 1958. He had worked as a building manual labourer for six months before starting to make carrier bags from empty cement sacks. He

used to collect the sacks from building sites and to sell the carrier bags in Khartoum suq. He did this for about two years and then joined a blacksmith as an apprentice for under six months before taking a casual job in a soap factory where he worked for four months only. After saving a little money, he opened a small shop, which he ran with two of his relatives, selling clothes and providing washing and ironing services. He worked in the shop for three years until 1964. His partners then decided to go back home and he had to close the shop. He found a job in the brewery as a Ghaffir (guard) which he kept for six years until 1970 when he transferred to one of the production sections in the brewery.

The second case involves an even greater range of occupational mobility. This man had been in Khartoum for nearly eleven years when I met him. Before coming to Khartoum he had been in Cairo from 1952 to 1956 where he had worked in the police service. He is a Nubian from Northern Sudan. From the early years of this century a considerable number of Nubians had migrated to Egypt to work in the police or as watchmen of buildings in Cairo.<sup>15</sup> He returned to the Sudan in 1957 and worked at a school in Omdurman as a Ghaffir. He worked at the school for one year and then started petty trading in consumption goods between Omdurman and his home area. He was not making adequate profits from his trading so he emigrated to Saudi Arabia where he stayed for three years doing a variety of manual jobs. In 1968 he came back to the Sudan and returned to farm in his home area for two years. Early in 1971 he once again came to Khartoum where he found his present job in the brewery.

Another important fact shown in Table VII is that the number of workers who were occupationally mobile had increased appreciably between 1951 and 1969. Migrants who arrived in town between 1959 and 1969 account for over two-thirds (68.6%) of the occupationally mobile workers. The occupational mobility of migrants who came to town between 1970 and



1977 is, in contrast, low and decreasing. The opportunities for securing work in organized employment increased from 1950 until 1962 when it reached its maximum. By the late 1960s the supply of jobs in organized employment had declined sharply, and opportunities for occupational mobility after 1975 were almost nil. The explanation lies in the employment and urban labour market situations in the period between 1960 and 1967. The early 1960s were a period of industrial boom in Khartoum, particularly in Khartoum North (See Chapter II). Thus my figures on occupational mobility match national figures on migration and industrial employment.

There are a few migrants who had first come to Khartoum and then moved to other labour markets before returning to Khartoum. Most of these had stayed in Khartoum for a transitional period before looking for work in areas of irrigated or rain-fed agricultural schemes in Gezira or Gadarif (see map in Appendix V). They were mainly older migrants who first came to town in the 1950s or early 1960s. In her study of shanty town settlers in Khartoum North, Al-Sadaty found a similar pattern of mobility among the Baggara from Western Sudan. She writes that their

...present proximity to the main cotton and dura (sorghum) cultivation of the Gezira and Gadarif areas respectively partly accounts for the journey they make to those areas in the harvest season. Khartoum is taken as a base from which they participate in both the agricultural and the industrial sectors. 16

In addition to the kinds of mobility referred to above, I came across three cases of workers who had been in wage employment in their home areas, one as a soldier, one as a Ghaffir, and one as a worker in a flour mill.

As shown in Table VII, many workers changed jobs frequently in their careers, then settled down.<sup>17</sup> A total of 40 per cent had changed employment once, 31.4 per cent twice, and the remaining 28.6 per cent had made three or more moves. In other words, over two-thirds of the occupationally mobile workers had two and more occupational moves before their present job. But since the late 1960s, higher educational require-

ments and the increasing rate of unemployment, even among the school leavers, have limited mobility severely. The following cases demonstrate the correspondence between opportunities for upward mobility and both date of arrival in town and level of education. One brewery worker, 60 years old, had come from Southern Kordofan to Khartoum in 1948. In his home area he reared animals and farmed with his family. In Khartoum he first worked in a small factory producing cooking oil for one year. He then joined a foreign company for a year, for the Water and Electricity Public Corporation as a Ghaffir for five years, and in the brewery for another year before returning home late in 1956 to farm for a year. After that he returned to Khartoum and worked for the brewery until the time he was interviewed in August, 1977. He is illiterate and during his first eight years in town, he had no particular commitment to his jobs even though they were in "organized employment". His initial purpose was to accumulate money to invest in farming. However, his permanence in the same job since 1958 reflects his inability to accumulate enough savings and revert to farming. Another worker, also illiterate, first worked in the Khartoum suq selling carrier bags. After two years he worked in a garage for a short while and then as a carpenter apprentice. In 1962/63 he worked in a factory as a Ghaffir for two years. In 1964 he got his present job in the brewery, and has now worked for the same employer for 13 years. The third worker came from Southern Sudan and had a less varied career. He came to Khartoum in 1963 straight from subsistence farming to an apprenticeship with a blacksmith for two years but has not worked as a blacksmith since then. He took employment in the brewery in 1965 and has remained there 12 years.

One important aspect of occupational mobility is the length of time spent in each job. Compared to the building site workers (to be discussed in Part III) the factory workers show a high degree of stability, particularly the brewery workers. This may be partly due to the relatively

good working conditions there and to its early establishment. Increasing unemployment since the late 1960s has led to less stability and this is not something which the workers can control. Table VII shows the length of service of workers in the brewery and the match factory.

TABLE VIII: Length of Employment of the Match Factory and the Brewery Workers

Time spent in the present employment	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6 months-2years	25	30.5	2	3.2	27	18.6
3 - 6 years	16	19.5	13	20.6	29	20.0
7 - 10 years	26	31.7	14	22.2	40	27.6
11 - 14 years	15	18.3	8	12.7	23	15.9
15 - 18 years	-	-	14	22.2	14	9.6
19 - 20 years	-	-	12	19.1	12	8.3
Total	82	100.0	63	100.0	145	100.0

In the brewery over half of the workers, (54 per cent) have served between from 10 to 22 years. In the match factory 50 per cent of the service records are ranging from 7 to 12 years. Since the match factory commenced production in 1965, we could not expect to find anyone who had been there for more than 12 years. The high proportion of workers with less than three years' service is explained by the fact that the most of them joined the factory in 1974 to work in the newly established production section. The figures in Table VIII can be compared with Table IX which gives the length of time spent by the Nuer manual workers on the building sites of Khartoum at the time of their interviews.

The contrast between the factory workers and the building site labourers has to be seen in the light of the differing age structures of the two samples. The age distribution recorded in Table IX is consistent with a relatively high average of length of service. The numbers who had served for less than three years in the match factory can also be explained by their youth as compared to workers in the brewery. (For the ages of the Nuer building workers, see Table XXII.

TABLE IX: Age Distribution of the Factory Workers

Age	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
15-19 years	10	12.2	1	1.6	11	7.6
20-24 years	27	32.9	3	4.8	30	20.7
25-29 years	25	30.5	11	7.5	36	24.8
30-34 years	16	91.5	15	23.8	31	21.4
35-39 years	2	2.4	7	11.1	9	6.2
40-44 years	-	-	9	14.3	9	5.2
45-49 years	1	1.2	9	14.3	10	6.9
50-54 years	1	1.3	4	6.3	5	3.4
55 and over	-	-	4	6.3	4	2.8
Total	82	99.9	63	100.0	145	100.0

While 46.9 per cent of the factory workers were about thirty years of age, over two-thirds of Nuer workers were under thirty. Over three-quarters (76.2 per cent) of the brewery workers were thirty or above, and over a third were forty or more.

The Factory Workers and Domestic Life

I gathered information on the marital status, and the size and household composition of the factory workers. These data are given in Table X. We find that nearly two-thirds (64.1 per cent) of the factory men were married whereas the large majority of Nuer migrants were bachelors.

TABLE X: Household Structure of the Match Factory and Brewery Workers

Household Structure	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Single	48	58.5	4	6.3	52	35.9
Married with wives and children at home	6	7.3	6	9.5	12	8.3
Married with wives and children in town	28	34.1	53	84.1	81	55.8
Total	82	99.9	63	99.9	145	100.0

The percentage of married men in the brewery is high (93.7 per cent). This corresponds to the fact that they are older on average than workers

in the match factory. When we consider the composition of the households and the relationships of the members to the household head, we find that 87.1 per cent of the married workers lived with their immediate families (i.e. wives and children). This percentage includes 12.3 per cent who have some of their relatives living with them permanently. These are mostly dependants (mothers, sisters and brothers, sisters-in-law, or brothers-in-law, and cousins). Except for the older female dependants, the others are largely students in various schools in town. Apart from these members, a large proportion of households have temporary guests at different times of the year. Almost all the workers claimed that "it is rare for a month to pass without having guests who are either relatives or home people". These guests usually come to town looking for jobs, or in search of health services, or on their way to a pilgrimage, or buying consumer articles and simple farming equipment which are not available in rural shops, or just visiting relatives and seeing the town.

The remaining 12.9 per cent consists of the married men who have left their families in their rural homes. The reasons for doing so were usually given as being rising living costs and the absence of reasonable accommodation. However, only one-third of this category had never had their families with them in town. The other two-thirds had brought their families to town for some period or periods before sending them back home. Also, some of these men are match factory workers who have not been in town long enough to have arranged for their families to join them.

#### Urban Residence and Stabilization

Mitchell used two indicators to measure commitment to urban residence in Southern Africa. The first was the presence of wives and children in town, and the second was the proportion of time spent in town since adulthood.<sup>18</sup> The economic policy in Rhodesia and South Africa is geared to a system of labour migration which is further reinforced by government

legislations to restrict labour movement, and to inhibit permanent settlement in town. The position is quite different in the Sudan, but Mitchell's demographic criteria are nonetheless helpful in comparing the levels of stable urbanization among different sections of the Khartoum workers. Table XI shows the length of time spent in town by the match factory and brewery workers.

TABLE XI : Length of Urban Residence for the Match Factory and Brewery Workers

Time Spent in Town	Match Factory		Brewery		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0 - 2 years	16	19.5	-	-	16	11.0
3 - 7 years	18	21.9	7	11.1	25	17.2
8 - 12 years	26	31.7	9	14.3	35	24.1
13 - 17 years	19	23.2	18	28.6	37	25.6
18 - 22 years	3	3.7	14	22.2	17	11.7
23 - 27 years	-	-	10	15.9	10	6.9
28 - 32 years	-	-	3	4.8	3	2.1
33 - 37 years	-	-	2	3.1	2	1.4
Total	82	100.0	63	100.0	145	100.0

Nearly half of the factory workers (47.6 per cent) have spent 13 years or more in town, while the percentage in the brewery is as high as 74.7 per cent. A large proportion, nearly three-quarters of the match factory workers (73.1 per cent) have spent less than 13 years as against only 25.4 per cent for the brewery workers.

The contrast between the match factory and brewery as one category and the building workers as another is, of course, related to their different experiences of migration. Only about 9 per cent of the factory workers (13 out of 145 in the sample) had moved back and forth between town and country during the time of their working careers, and those that had were mainly men who had come to town very early - between the 1940s and early 1960s. Eleven of these workers had moved between town and country once only; one had moved twice and the others four times each. However, ten of these workers had settled down permanently for periods of

ranging from 8 to 17 years, the other two for five years, and one for 29 years. The point to be stressed here is that the periods of moving back and forth constituted only a short time in the migrant's life span.

Al-Sadaty observed that the Baggara migrants in Khartoum North showed a tendency to relinquish their ties with their rural homes and to settle in town with their families, sending their young children to school.<sup>19</sup> She argues that factors leading to such stabilization must be sought both in the rural and urban areas as there are, following Mitchell's<sup>20</sup> contention, several factors that influence workers' decisions. These factors, as listed by Mitchell, include the system of land holding, "tribal" modes of production, marital status, length of residence away from rural home, standard of education, the number of shifts between towns, the number of visits to rural homes, the migrants' attitudes to town life, and whether the migrants were skilled workers or not. Al-Sadaty recognizes that, apart from personality factors, the stabilization of labour in urban centres is mainly determined by economic laws of supply and demand. Yet she places considerable emphasis on the social relations maintained by the migrants with their rural areas as factors discouraging permanent urban residence. Thus accounting for the stabilization of this particular group of migrants, she writes that these social bonds:

...continue to bind individuals to specific 'tribal' systems outside the town and enable them to resume their place in a specific Tribal Community....Yet one can safely state that when this exchange begins to slacken, and ties become weaker, it then becomes certain that migrants will permanently stay in town. 21

I agree with Al-Sadaty that the concept of migrancy implies that both rural and urban dimensions must be taken into account,<sup>22</sup> but the stabilization process can only be put in its correct perspective when the political and economic forces operating in both rural and urban

areas are first assessed. The stability or instability of migrants should be assessed in a "total" context rather than by postulating separate rural and urban socio-economic systems which exert "push" and "pull" pressures on the individual migrants.

#### Accommodation

The immediate problem that faces any migrant on first arrival to town is to find accommodation. The vast majority of the factory workers made their first urban contacts either with relatives and friends or with acquaintances from their respective home areas. Over three-quarters (82.1 per cent) lived with their relatives on first arrival. These relatives included persons related to the migrant kinship or affinity or both. Workers living with one of their close relatives usually specified the relationship (e.g. brother, cousin, uncle, or father-in-law). Those who lived with more distant relatives normally reported staying with "some of their relatives". Another 16.5 per cent had hosts who were not relatives but simply friends or acquaintances from the same home area. I encountered only one migrant who had to find accommodation for himself. He was from Equatoria Province, Southern Sudan, and had been in town since 1960. Upon his arrival in Khartoum, he had no acquaintances or relatives as the number of Southern migrants was at that time not small. He had found work on a building site in Omdurman where he had then come to know some Southerners. There was only one migrant whose housing had been provided by his employer when he first came to town. He was employed by the Ministry of Agriculture and was accommodated in a labour camp on the outskirts of Khartoum.

Relatives and "home-people" thus provided most of the accommodation for new arrivals. Most migrants are single, so they either stay with married relatives and home acquaintances or with other bachelors. Other arrangements, especially sharing with friends and "home people", are often made after some time in town. The majority of single respondents reported that after finding work, they had arranged to share a room or



a house with friends and home acquaintances. Sharing is, however, usually terminated when a worker's family arrives. Two or more married workers sometimes agree to share a house consisting of more than one room.<sup>23</sup> Only a few workers were living in houses of their own at the time of the interview.<sup>24</sup> The details are recorded in Table XII.

TABLE XII: Type and Nature of Accommodation of the Match Factory and Brewery Workers according to Marital Status

Type and Nature of Accommodation	No. and Per Cent of Workers				Total	
	Single		Married		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Owned (separate)	-	-	24	25.8	24	16.6
Separate Lodging	-	-	42	45.2	45	28.9
Shared Lodging	36	69.2	19	20.4	55	37.9
Others	16	30.8	8	8.6	24	16.6
Total	52	100.0	93	100.0	145	100.0

As the table shows, a few workers (16.6 per cent) in the sample have been able to build their own houses. These are for the most part older migrants and all of them are married and employed in the brewery. A substantial proportion of the factory and brewery workers (37.9 per cent) live in hired houses or rooms. This proportion is even higher among the single workers of whom over two-thirds (69.2 per cent) live in shared lodgings. Another 16.6 per cent reported living in "other" types of accommodation. These are largely single migrants who live with married relatives and do not pay rent. About one-third of this category of workers lived with their in-laws who owned houses in one of the Three Towns. In general, the patterns of accommodation correspond to the marital status of the workers. Nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) of the married workers lived separately in nuclear families, either in owned or rented houses. The unmarried workers lived exclusively in shared rooms or houses. Several who were married but without their families also shared accommodation with single workers. In fact, shared accommodation is the only viable option for single workers. My visits

to workers' homes revealed that crowded conditions were common. The average number of workers sharing a room ranged between four and six. The way in which co-tenants are chosen is of interest. We saw earlier that most households constantly receive visitors all round the year, and that over three-quarters of the workers had stayed with relatives and home people when they first arrived in town. Older migrants not only provided accommodation but also helped the new-comers to find rooms or houses of their own. The choice by single workers of co-tenants is usually from among fellow workers from their home areas. In discussing how the migrants cope with urban life in the cities and towns of Latin America, Roberts explains the reasons for migrant preferences<sup>25</sup> for living with, or near, their kin and home-people. In Khartoum, emphasis is placed on kinship and relationships with home people in accommodation arrangements and job seeking as in most urban situations in underdeveloped countries where, "...housing provision is unlikely to be adequate for the needs of the population, mainly because there is no profit incentive to private builders to build working-class housing".<sup>26</sup>

#### The Workers' Relationships and Social Networks

Urban migrants' social relationships and networks of interaction have been the focus of much research in African urban studies.<sup>27</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to examine in detail the workers' <sup>networks</sup> of relations and personal associations, but I tried to collect some data on the workers' interactions outside the work place. My interviews with workers also gave some information on the migrants' choice of, and contacts with, co-tenants, neighbours, relatives, friends, and work-fellows. Workers were asked how they came to find their present job. The answers to this question are given in Table XIII.

TABLE XIII Distribution of the Match Factory and Brewery Workers according to the means through which they found their present jobs

Means Through Which Workers Were Employed	Number	Per Cent
Through a relative or home acquaintance who worked in the same place	57	39.3
Through a relative or home acquaintance who worked in a different work place	23	15.9
Through a friend or urban acquaintance who worked in a different work place	14	6.9
Through "formal" means (at the gate)	51	35.2
Total	145	100.0

Over a half of the factory workers (55.2 per cent) came to find their present jobs through kinsmen and "home people". A large proportion (39.3 per cent) were employed through the help of relatives and home acquaintances who were already working in the match factory or the brewery. However, 9.6 per cent were employed through friends whom they came to know during their stay in the Three Towns, and fairly large numbers (35.2 per cent) were recruited at the factory gate. None had found his present job through the Labour Bureau. Those recruited at the factory gate are mainly the older workers who sought employment during the late 1950s or early 1960s. Notices of "No Vacancies" have been placed on the gates of the brewery and the match factory since the late 1960s, and virtually all recent arrived workers were employed through informal means.<sup>28</sup> The process of finding employment through personal connections naturally leads to concentrations of workers from the same region or home area at each place of work.<sup>29</sup> And there are similar residential concentrations in various neighbourhoods. As we saw earlier, the choice of co-tenants is mostly based on kinship and common rural origins. The total labour force is dispersed in many "Third Class Residential Areas" throughout the Three Towns, but about two-thirds of all

workers live in neighbourhoods in which they have relatives and home people.<sup>30</sup>

The existence of kinsmen and rural acquaintances both at the work place and in residential neighbourhoods does not necessarily imply that the workers associate only with each other. These concentrations of people from the same rural area may be a result of factors in the recruiting processes and the prior existence of home-town networks. Unlike the "work clusters" and "accommodation cells" among the Nuer building workers, to be discussed in Part II of this thesis, such concentrations as there are do not constitute "closed" groups functioning according to well recognised internal mechanisms or sets of norms.<sup>31</sup> Yet their involvement in various sets of interpersonal relations, particularly with home people, is one way of coming to terms with the problems of life in the urban industrial setting. These ties are most important to any migrant in his early days when he is trying to gain a foothold in the urban situation but they are also central to his life especially in regard to staying in employment and in helping him to manage any difficult situations or crises which may develop in his social life generally. To appreciate this fully, the circumstances of uncertainty that often obtain in town must be stressed, but so must the nature of the resources available to the urban poor. In this latter connection, Roberts makes a most relevant comment in writing generally about Latin American Cities:

There is...little to be gained in categorizing behaviour as 'traditional', 'rural' or 'fatalistic'. It is more interesting to examine how, in the face of an economically uncertain environment, individuals use the cultural and social resources available to them and adopt a particular pattern of coping with the difficulties of urban life. The uneven development of the urban economy often implies a diversity of means by which people struggle, culturally and socially, not simply to survive but to better their position. 32

### Urban Contacts and Associations

The maintenance of "traditional" relationships with relatives and home people in the Three Towns does not imply that the migrants have no urban links and associations. Nearly half of the factory workers said that their relations with workmates who were not relatives or home acquaintances extended well beyond the factory walls. In visiting and in interviewing workers, I repeatedly noticed that most of their leisure time was spent with work fellows and urban acquaintances. Thus they go to cinema and football matches with each other, they drink together and habitually discuss wide ranges of topics of common interest.

Elhaj Yousif is one of the new Deims in which many of the factory workers live.<sup>33</sup> In this area there was a widespread set of social contacts between work mates and other urban friends and acquaintances. Mutual visiting was frequent and they also met at one of the social clubs of the Youth Organization and at other urban-based clubs. Over one-third of the factory workers live in neighbourhoods in which none of their kinsmen live. In these neighbourhoods there are highly developed social relations between people who are, for the most part, working in different industrial establishments. Those workers who have few contacts with work mates are often those with families to whom they are highly committed, and some do tend to congregate in areas where many of the inhabitants are from the same rural areas. A factor which sometimes operates to reduce contact between work fellows is the shift basis of much factory work, with some working at nights or doing overtime. All these circumstances made for variations in social patterns. Nevertheless, there is a process of continuous interaction in day-to-day life over and above contacts on special occasions such as death and marriages. Nevertheless, some workers who spend much of their time in the relatively restricted circles of their families and immediate neighbours and often of people who have the same background as themselves. Relatives and old friends who come from

the same rural areas who live in different parts of the Three Towns tend to see each other mainly on rest days.

In a general sense, the urban contacts developed in social life are moulded far more by the urban-industrial situation than by continuing links with home people. Participation in ethnic or regional associations is very low. Only 6.3 per cent of the workers in my sample were members of such associations spending much of their leisure time in related activities.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, only certain groups participated in these organizations, namely Nubians (Danagla and Mahas)<sup>35</sup> from Northern Sudan, who were commonly members of regional associations. Members of these associations also tended to be older than the average working population and were mainly workers in the brewery rather than the match factory. Often, however, regional associations are little more than informal organizations based on cultural affinity and bore little similarity to the organizations of Luo and Luhya described by Parkin as formal associations operating on a pan-East African basis.<sup>36</sup> The associations of Danagla and Mahas are in essence social clubs to which the members come to gossip, to keep in touch with persons travelling back and forth between town and country, and to speak their own vernacular languages. And, there has in recent years, been a slackening of interest in ethnic associations, particularly on the part of young workers. This is partly because their functions are being displaced by urban-based organizations. In particular, all the factory workers are members of their respective trade unions with their own social and welfare committees. And, there is also a Cooperative Society serving the interest of its members in each factory. Money collections from workers were common in both the match factory and the brewery, particularly in small departmental or other units on the occasions of deaths, marriages, and circumcision of children. In addition, factories normally have social clubs and non-ethnic charity associations are common in residential

neighbourhoods. There is thus a relatively dense set of formal and semi-formal social organizations in addition to the trade unions.

#### The Factory Workers and their Home Areas

All the above serve to indicate a marked tendency towards stabilization of migrants in town. A large proportion either regard themselves as permanently settled in town or are planning to stay there for long periods.<sup>37</sup> But this is taking place without the severance of social relations with home areas and home people. The evidence is that most workers have a continuing high involvement with kinsmen and home acquaintances in the Three Towns, in addition to active links with their home areas.

##### a) Home Visiting

It is rare to find workers who cut themselves off from their relatives and home people. We saw earlier that most migrants receive visitors from home areas at different times of the year. The accommodation of visitors, and looking after them, constitutes an essential part of a migrant's social obligations. Failure to meet these demands would severely damage a worker's social standing both in town and in his rural area. It is true that many complain about the expense of entertaining kinsmen and the cost of food, drinks and medical care and the like which they are expected to supply for them. But despite these complaints, most workers feel obliged to fulfil such social obligations and do so. If they did not "people back home would look down upon us", they said. Their relations with their respective home areas are also maintained through occasional return visits by the workers. They are all entitled to annual leave which can be taken in one spell or accumulated over a maximum of three years.<sup>38</sup> Nearly three-quarters (74.5 per cent) reported visiting their home areas and, of these, 83.3 per cent spend their annual holidays there, as shown in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV: Frequency of Home Visits made by the Workers \*

Frequency	No. of Workers	Per Cent
2-4 times a year	7	6.5
Every year	90	83.3
Every two years or less frequently	11	16.2
Total	108	100.0

\* The table refers only to those who reported that they had made visits to their home areas.

About a quarter of the workers reported not having gone home since they first came to town but these were mainly recent arrivals of the past six to 12 months, so there is no reason to suppose that they had cut themselves off from their home areas. The workers visiting home more than once a year were mostly from areas close to Khartoum, either the Gezira region or the White Nile Province, where the system of transport is relatively efficient. Most of those who go home annually are, whether single or married, workers who do not have their families in Khartoum. Those workers who visit home less frequently are mainly older workers who have their families and most of their closest relatives in the Three Towns. Movement between town and country is also common for wives and children. In some cases wives and children are sent back home to keep in touch with relatives, particularly on occasions like death and marriage. Also, wives sometimes go home to give birth. This helps to reduce the expenses and to meet the accompanying social demands and obligations of child bearing more easily than in town.

b) Sending Money Home

The money remittances made by migrants to their rural home are an important acknowledgment of continuing rural ties. Nearly three-quarters of the factory workers send money home. The frequency of remittances, their amount, and the beneficiaries vary according to many factors. The



most regular senders are mainly married workers who do not have their families in Khartoum. But many single workers also send money regularly as they are frequently responsible for parents, brothers and sisters. The majority of all remittances go to the close relatives: parents and siblings or other members of the immediate family. It is very difficult to estimate average monthly remittances because they tend to vary according to fluid and changing circumstances. But, according to the answers at interviews, the majority of workers (81. per cent) sent amounts ranging between £S1 and £S10 and about half of these workers send between £S1 and £S5.5. These are, however, not regular monthly remittances. On the contrary, they have often been accumulated over a long period of time. Table X.V shows the frequency of remittances.

TABLE X.V : Frequency of Sending Money Home by the Match Factory and Brewery Workers \*

Frequency	No. of Workers	Per Cent
Monthly	33	33
Every 2-6 months	7	7
Yearly	0	0
Occasionally	60	60
Total	100	100

\*This table refers only to workers who do send remittances.

It can be seen that nearly two-thirds of the workers who send remittances send them "occasionally", and only 33 per cent send them every month. The latter includes 12 workers who are married but without their families in town and largely bachelors who have definite financial commitment to their old parents and young siblings. The remittances are sometimes sent through persons returning home for a visit or by post, but the most common practice for the workers is to wait until they are

going home on holiday themselves and to then distribute gifts either in cash or kind.

In addition to the above, migrants are commonly expected to contribute to expenses at home on occasions such as death and marriage. Those who do not send regular remittances invariably try to meet these special demands while the others contribute in addition to their normal remittances.

There are, of course, a number of constraints on the workers' ability to send substantial remittances home. The savings possible largely depend on the monthly wage, which is the sole source of income. In spite of the introduction of the Minimum Standard Wage Order in 1974, the rising cost of living expenses bears hard on wage earners.<sup>39</sup> The continuous rise since the late 1960s has caused a sharp decrease in the workers' real wages which scarcely allows for savings. Savings are further limited by the demands made on the urban workers for the fulfilment of various social obligations. As discussed earlier, these social pressures consume a considerable proportion of a worker's incomes: The overwhelming majority of the workers (87 per cent) said they never saved at all, and only 13 per cent managed to make small savings. The latter were mainly bachelors with relatively high wages who were saving for their future marriages.

The limited transfers of money from town to country raises the question as to whether remittances are invested in farming or merely consumed by the recipients. There are different rights of land ownership and of access to land in the different areas from which the workers come. However, the vast majority of the workers do not themselves own land individually. In most cases land holdings are either owned by the workers' fathers or by groups like lineages and extended families who retain traditional rights on State land.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the workers from Northern Sudan whose fathers are still alive, land is usually owned by the fathers who

are in most cases still engaged in farming. Sons of deceased fathers have rights of access or ownership to land but have usually ceded these to uncles, elder brothers or cousins. In no cases do they expect any returns from the land because the holdings are small and can hardly support those who are cultivating them. This is an outcome of inheritance rules of the Sharia Islamic Law having been applied over many generations. This, together with the common shortage of land along the banks of the Nile, has resulted in extreme fragmentation and very small holdings. As expressed by Ali Abdel Gadir, "...The cultivable land for all intents and purposes is fixed in supply. As a result of this fixity, family holdings are small and tend to decrease over time both because of erosion and inheritance practices."<sup>41</sup>

Research on Sudanese traditional agriculture in the Northern Province has revealed that 42 per cent of the population operate on land holdings which are less than 1.5 feddans, and 61 per cent operate on holdings of less than two feddans, with only 19 per cent having holdings in excess of three feddans.<sup>42</sup> As pointed out in Chapter II, the penetration of capitalist relations into the different regions of the Sudan gradually destroyed the domestic relations of production based on communal land utilization and the production of food requirements through family labour. The introduction of pumps and the competition of a few wealthy owners and traders has further led to the development in some areas of share-cropping and the progressive separation of peasants from their means of production. As put by ElHaj Omer in writing about the Northern Sudan:

A set of social conditions was necessary for such transformation. The colonial situation was an important precondition...the first measure was to destroy the values attached to land appropriation and use, and the second was to improve the irrigational techniques. Thus land was more secularized and brought under government control or its local representatives. Private ownership was not totally abolished, yet it has been limited to the narrow strips along the Nile bank, already owned by the extended families. 43

El Haj Omer goes on to argue that "there has also been a further alienation of the peasants from their conditions of labour that is, the productive land and the irrigational equipments which are falling in the hands of individual capitalists or the cooperatives."<sup>44</sup>

In Western Sudan the situation is different in that land is communal and abundant, but cultivation also depends on the supply of family labour. Most of the urban workers from the West come from families engaged in subsistence cultivation with animal rearing, with little by way of cash crops. Despite this, however, the processes and the set of circumstances that have prevailed in the Northern Province are also at work in the West. The integration of the region into the market economy, accompanied by the penetration of capitalist relations, has severely reduced the self-sufficiency of the peasant household. Moreover, the fertility of the soil has been reduced owing to the increasing pressure on land, that ought to have regular fallow periods, owing to more and more appropriation of common or temporarily vacant land by the government <sup>45</sup> and to the allocation of substantial areas to private capitalists for large-scale mechanized agricultural schemes.<sup>46</sup> One result of this is pointed out by O'Brien:

...seasonal migration for wage labour is frequently considered as an alternative to the production of a cash crop; the only advantage to the producer of the latter choice is the limited independence it preserves and the ability it affords for him to remain with his family and friends. 47

All the above account for the fact that many workers expressed little or no interest in farming. A large proportion did, however, say that they would be interested in returning to the land if they could accumulate enough savings to invest in it. But two important factors should be stressed in this respect. First, on the whole, the average earnings from farming are low (in most cases less than £\$150 per annum) compared with those derived from employment, and earnings in town are not high enough to

allow appreciable savings for investment in productive activities. Secondly, Al-Sadat points out in discussing Baggara migrants decisions as to whether they settle in town or go back home "...it is rather difficult for a Baggari<sup>48</sup> to pick up pastoralism after a number of years in wage labour and an ordered life.<sup>49</sup> But I think the main issue here is that owing to the progressive proletarianization, the workers interests in land and agriculture are rapidly decreasing. A negligible number of workers' families practice farming on any large scale, and the most prosperous farmers among them earned no more than £S360 in a good year (the average annual income of a household from farming in Northern Sudan has been calculated as £S228).<sup>50</sup>

Yet, as previously stressed, although few workers show any positive interest in farming themselves, most insist on their legal rights to land. This was particularly true of workers coming from Northern Sudan where all inherit land at some stage of the family developmental cycle. Even though in most cases there is joint ownership of land through the agnatic descent group or the extended family, the individual shares are shown in the Register<sup>51</sup> and El Haj Omer shows that in all court cases in which settlement of land ownership was involved in the Danagla area, those who had the right of access to a fraction of a feddan of infertile land would insist that their names should be included in the list of disputants.<sup>52</sup>

Many studies of African labour migrants have noted this passive or active retention of interest in land.<sup>53</sup> Elkan has in fact argued that this partly accounts for the persistence of circular migration in Uganda,<sup>54</sup> and he claims that the need to retain rights in land for economic reasons affects the stability of the labour force.

The material on the workers presented in this chapter has, however, shown that there is no direct relationship between these two variables. Certainly, the continuing interest of these migrants in land cannot be

explained solely by their viewing it as a source of livelihood and security either in times of insecurity or on retirement.

In his study of East African railway workers, Grillo advanced a more convincing explanation:

Although farming does not usually contribute a direct amount to the family's cash income, the farm may subsidize income in two ways, first, but of least importance, by providing produce for the urban table; secondly, by providing accommodation and food for the families while they are away from the urban areas. 55

As we saw earlier, the workers studied in this thesis are largely first-generation migrants and many of them still have old parents and dependants with whom they exchange visits and, sometimes, material goods. My basic argument here is that most of the workers' remittances were used for consumption purposes which added very little to the rural living standards. Thus economic links between town and country cannot be totally dismissed, but nor should they be exaggerated or directly related to productive activities in the rural areas. Workers' insistence on legal rights to land thus has to be explained by reference to social factors and values attached to land appropriation and to the continuing feelings of "belonging" to "ancestors" of a particular area. In this sense the workers' claims to legal rights in land cannot be separated from the wider context of their total social relations.

Grillo arrived at a similar conclusion in his study of railway men in Kampala:

Without wishing to underrate the significance of retention of an interest in land, I would argue that the retention of rights in land cannot be understood apart from the total set of ties which link the urban worker to his rural home, and that these ties are as important socially as economically. 56

### Conclusions

The above discussion of the match factory and brewery workers' socio-economic characteristics, social life, and of the relations they maintain

with their rural areas of origin may, at first sight seem paradoxical. On the one hand, as recognised in many African studies, the links with home remain strong and are expressed in various social and economic ways. Visits to the rural areas involve gifts, the distribution of cash, and the sharing of consumption articles; remittances to rural areas ensure the fulfilment of social obligations and customary duties; and rural visitors and recent migrants always expect free accommodation and help. The preference by workers to women from their home areas as wives also contributes to maintaining links with the rural areas. On the other hand, however, the workers exhibited high levels of urban stability and of wanting to stay in town. For example, they make great efforts to acquire houses in town, are eager to keep their children at school in town, and tend to form nuclear families of the kind characteristic of permanent urban residents.

In his study of railway workers in East Africa, Grillo encountered the same kind of paradox and posed the same question: "Why the high level of stability and why the continued commitment to rural areas?"<sup>57</sup> The answer he proposes lies in the very causes of rural-urban migration. The needs generated in the rural areas and, in the absence of alternative opportunities for gaining a livelihood, have made wage-employment virtually the only source of cash income. But the limited opportunities outside "organized employment" together with the falling supply of jobs had led the railway workers to take their jobs as lifetime careers. Thus "the reasons for stability...are to be found in the social and economic changes that occur outside industry".<sup>58</sup> But he failed to pursue this analysis through to a study of the mechanisms through which these changes have produced permanent industrial workers. He argues, instead, that the railway men cannot be fitted into any of the categories of urban workers studied by other scholars in East and West Africa.<sup>59</sup> His analysis is highly typological and relies on the pre-existing socio-

economic and cultural differences obtaining between African urban workers.<sup>60</sup> My central interest is not merely to emphasise the differences between different categories of urban workers, but to focus on the processes that have led to the emergence of these categories. Without overlooking the social and cultural variables, the answer to these differences lies mainly in the political economy of the country. Thus any satisfactory attempt to resolve the paradox needs to take into account both the macro-level processes that produced the different categories and micro-level variables that account for differences in behaviour of individuals and small groups of migrants.

The material in this chapter indicates the variety of social contacts and ties recognized by the factory workers with their home areas. Yet, there is negligible participation of migrants in the rural productive activities, and the remittances sent to the rural areas are scarcely invested in land. The emphasis and importance attached by the workers on their legal rights to land is due to social rather than economic factors. The varying degrees of proletarianization over the different regions of the country, together with the diversity of cultures and societies to which the workers belong, have led urban workers to continue to seek status and social standing through the links they maintain with their rural homes. The overall social structure of Sudanese society still exerts pressure on the individual to conform to kinship norms and to maintain social relations with home and "home people". Kinship ideology is reinforced by the functions of social institutions such as the extended family. The main basis of social organization in the rural areas is the extended family through which cooperative production, resource allocation, and the values of the society are regulated and enhanced. The importance of the extended family in business and commercial activities is also recognised in the different urban centres in the Sudan.<sup>61</sup> One can, however, argue that rural-urban migration acts as a



vehicle of change in the social structure. Thus, as we saw earlier, the urban workers exhibit a marked tendency towards the nuclear family organization in the urban areas. This tendency has engendered a process of gradual change within the extended family system. But this should not be overestimated as my data clearly indicate that this change is taking place in economic rather than in social spheres.

The main purpose of this chapter was to explain the structure of urban relations of the factory workers in Khartoum. I have endeavoured to resolve the seeming paradox of the urban and industrial commitment of the workers side by side with their retention of social relations in rural areas and with "home people". I have also tried to show how the factory workers have been undergoing a process of proletarianization in terms of their relationship to the rural economy. It is, however, beyond the scope of the thesis to dwell on the formation of a working class in the structural sense. I refer rather to the general processes that have followed disruption of indigenous economies, the opening up of economic and employment opportunities, and the emergence of various categories of wage-earners. These processes are not confined to the Sudan, but are found in one form or another in nearly all former colonial territories.<sup>62</sup> Industrial workers are becoming solely dependent on wage employment for their livelihood; the constraints of the industrial situation, low incomes, and the inability to accumulate savings can hardly reverse the process of proletarianization. Investment in land is not a viable alternative. The limited movement of cash and material goods between town and country does not betoken any major change in the objective situation of the new proletarians. Nevertheless, some elements of the social structure still persist, like the kinship ideology, and impinge on the way the workers structure their social relationships, especially in regard to "home people" and rural areas.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III

1. See J.Jackson, (1969) op.cit., J.Alvarez, The Return Migration to Puerto Rico (1967), A.Richmond, Post Immigrants in Canada (1967), and A.Ross, Migrants in Europe: Problems of Acceptance and Adjustment. (1969).
2. Mitchell, (1959, 1961, 1969), op.cit., Elkan, (1959, 1960), op.cit., Parkin, (1975) op.cit., Garbett, (1975) op.cit.
3. Grillo, (1973) op.cit.
4. Ibid.,18
5. Ibid., (1975), p.147.
6. The figures of the 1956 and 1973 censuses on the distribution of migrants in Khartoum according to their areas of origin are included in several studies, see especially Mohamed El Awad Galal al Din, El-Sayed El Bushra and Salih el Arifi in Pons, op.cit. (forthcoming)
7. See for example, Mohamed El Awad Galal el Din, (1975) op.cit., and El Sayed El Bushra, (1972) op.cit.,
8. For a detailed discussion of the migration flow from Western Sudan during the Sixties, see Al-Sadat (1972), op.cit.
9. In the brewery there are, however, certain section of production which are labelled as "skilled". Workers in those sections have, however, picked up their "skills" at work over long periods under the direction and supervision of the technical staff.
10. The literate workers are not included in the category of those who left normal schools at one stage or another. They learnt to write and read in "informal" religious institutions, eg. Khalawi, sing. Khalwa.
11. Before 1970, the school system was based on three stages, four years in each stage, with primary, intermediate, and secondary levels coming before higher education. Since 1970 the system has been changed to start with 6 years in a primary school, three years in a general secondary school and another three years in a high secondary school, before entering higher educational institutions.
12. The intake of the students to general secondary and high secondary schools depends on the examination results in competition at the National level. There are insufficient places in state schools for a large number of students who just attained a pass degree. But admission to private schools is very expensive and costs a student's family between £512. and £540,00 for general secondary schooling and £540,00 and £80,00 for high secondary schooling. These estimates include registration fees, clothing expenses, book allowance, transport, etc which have to be paid by the students' families.
13. Shendi is a town in the Northern Province.
14. Nahud is a town in Western Sudan, Kordofan Province.

15. For detailed information on the Nubian immigration to Egypt, see Hassan Dafalla, (1975), The Nubian Exodus, (1975).
16. Al-Sadaty, (1972), op.cit.
17. This can be compared to the British workers in the early 19th century, see Carter, (1960) 137.
18. Mitchell, (1956, 1965), op.cit.
19. Al-Sadaty (1972), op.cit., 59.
20. Mitchell, (1956) op.cit.
21. Ibid., 59.
22. See Mayer, (1961), op.cit.
23. The monthly rent for a room depends on the size and condition of the house. The share paid by each worker is determined by the total rent per room and the number of occupants. The average number of occupants is 4 to 6 per room. Many workers were paying between £53 and £56 per month. The married couples who share two rooms and a veranda pay approximately £57-10 for each room per month. For married workers living separately the monthly rent is higher and comes on average to between £58 and £514.
24. These are largely older migrants who benefitted from the Government Scheme for House Allocation to persons of limited annual income (mainly workers employed in government bodies and private establishments) in a "Third Class Residential Area", El Shaabia in Khartoum North in the early 1960s. Some others were eligible to plots of land, after 10 years of successive residence in the town, in a "native lodging area", Haj Yousif in Khartoum North. Many others are still applying for land in the different parts of the Three Towns.
25. Roberts, (1978) op.cit.
26. Ibid., 145.
27. See for example, J.Mitchell, "Types of Urban Social Relationships" in, R.Apthorpe, (ed.)(1958), op.cit., V.Pons, "Two small groups in Avenue 21: Some Aspects of the System of Social Relationships in a remote corner of Stanleyville, Belgian Congo" in Southall (ed.) (1961), op.cit., A.Epstein, "The Network and Urban Social organization" Rhodes-Livingstone Journal, No.29 (1961), M.Peil, The Ghanaian Factory Worker: Industrial Man in Africa (1972), Grillo (1973), op.cit., Little (1974) op.cit.
28. Soley refers to this method of recruitment at the gate of the cement factory he studied in Northern Nigeria, Soley, (1970), op.cit. However, Soley argues that those who were employed at the gate had already been nominated by their relatives working in the factory. In other words, recruitment at the gate only added to the "personal" channels of employment.

29. Similar situations have been noted by many African urban researchers, see for example, Soley, ibid. (1970), Peil, ibid., (1972), and also on Latin America, for instance, see L.Lomnitz, "Mechanisms of Articulation Between Shanty Town Settlers and the Urban System", Unpublished paper prepared for participation in Burg Wartenstein Symposium No.71, Shanty Towns in Developing Countries(1977).
30. See Appendix VI for the distribution of the factory workers in the different areas of the Three Towns.
31. The structure and organization of the Nuer "clusters" has, rather, been dictated by particular social, economic and political processes operating in Southern Sudan, as well as by the structure of the building industry and its internal organization of work. See Chapter VII.
32. Roberts, (1978) op.cit., 141.
33. A deim, sing., is a native lodging area inhabited mainly by a working class population.
34. The discussion of the urban migrants' ethnic and regional voluntary associations occupies a considerable place in the literature of African urbanization. Some researchers have thought of them as adaptive mechanisms used by the migrants to establish friendship and get to know the norms of the new urban culture. (Little, (1965) op.cit.) Others have looked at their political aspects, e.g. D.Parkin, "Voluntary associations and Institutions of Adaptation", Man, 1.1 (1966) and Grillo saw them as arenas for competition for urban leadership and status. (Grillo, (1973) op.cit.)
35. Danagla and Mahas are originally of a Nubian origin and form two of the largest Nubian groups, together with the Halfawyin, of Northern Sudan. The brewery workers who were members of these associations affiliated to 6 organizations in which membership corresponded to the home areas from which they came. These were Dangla Kodi, Dangla El Urdi, Dar ElAwada, Rabtoat, Mahas Argo, and Artimali Mahas.
36. Parkin argues that during the 1950s and 1960s these unions acted as political parties and pressure groups of a certain kind. They even had headquarters in Kenya and included local branches in Uganda.
37. This has been asserted by Caldwell, J.Caldwell, African Rural-Urban Migration: The Movement to Ghana Towns (1967) 186-90.
38. This means that a worker can go on leave annually for one month or for 3 months after 3 years. After 3 years, the worker is again allowed only one month's leave.
39. The Minimum Standard Wage Order of 1974 stipulated a minimum monthly wage of £S16.50. This was raised to £S28.00 per month by The Minimum Standard Wage Order (Modified) of 1978.
40. For workers from certain parts of Southern and Western Sudan, land is largely "tribal" or lineage property and the individual families have only usufruct rights to small plots while the grazing land is largely communal.

41. Ali Abdel Gader Ali, "Some Aspects of Productivity in Sudanese Traditional Agriculture: The Case of the Northern Province", Economic and Social Research Council Bulletin. No.95, (1977), Khartoum, 3.
42. Ibid., 7.
43. El Haj A. Bilal Omer, "Rural Traders and Socio-Economic Transformation in Dongola Area, Northern Province", Economic and Social Research Council Bulletin, No.47, (1976), Khartoum, pp.14-15.
44. Ibid., 34.
45. J.O'Brien, "How 'Tranditional' is 'Traditional' Agriculture?", Economic and Social Research Council Bulletin, No.62, (1977), Khartoum.
46. The disadvantages of this capitalist expansion at the expense of pastoral and peasant communities, particularly in Western Sudan, is fairly discussed in, Sudan Communist Party: Mechanized Agriculture and the Development of Capitalism in the 'Traditional' Sector, Study Series of the Sudanese Economy, No.4 (1976), Khartoum, (in Arabic).
47. J.O'Brien (1979), The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment: An Introduction, Development Studies, Book Series No.2
48. Singluar of Baggara - cattlemen.
49. Al-Sadaty (1972) op.cit., 58-59.
50. Ali Abdel Gader, op.cit., 8.
52. El Haj A.Bilal Omer, "Local Traders and Agricultural Development in Dongola Area: A Study in Rural Capitalism in Northern Sudan", (Hull D.Phil., 1979).
53. See for example, J.Gugler, "The Impact of labour migration on society and economy in Sub-Saharan Africa: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Considerations", African Social Research, No.6 (1968), Caldwell, (1969) op.cit., Peil (1972) op.cit., and Grillo (1973) op.cit.
54. Elkan (1960) op.cit.
55. Grillo, (1973) op.cit., 48.
56. Ibid., 49.
57. Ibid., 61.
58. Ibid., 62.
59. Among these scholars are Elkan, (1960) op.cit., Gugler (1968) op.cit., Peil, (1972), op.cit.

60. Grillo pointed out the distinction between several types of African Urban workers and listed them into five categories: 1) Circular migrants as studied by Mitchell in Southern Africa, (1959), and Elkan in East Africa, (1960), 2) "Proletarians" who have completely severed their links with the rural areas, 3) Those with life-styles similar to Elkan's "proletarians" who are still to be found in some industries in the city, 4) The type of worker who uses the labour market to enter private enterprise, see Peil (1972) on West Africa, 5) Workers like the railwaymen who are committed to industry, but who retain their rural bases.
61. a) Mohamed El Awad Galal Din, discussing fertility rates among the urban population, has emphasised the importance of big families in the consolidation of business and wealth among its members. "The al is a unit that resembles a minimal patrilineage. It is distinguished by the close-knit ties between its members and its characteristic solidarity. The minimal patrilineage emphasises its unity by the practice of all members using a common family name. This kind of social grouping is usually, but not always, encountered among the economically and politically prominent families. Social solidarity is emphasised among al members who share the same family name..." Mohamed El Awad Galal Din "The Rationality of High Fertility in Urban Sudan" in The Persistence of High Fertility, ed. J.Caldwell (1977).  
b) Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed in his discussion on the extended family in the Sudan, argues that it is illusory to talk about equity and development without reconsidering the extended family system. His argument suggests that the extended family hinders development on both economic and political levels. Firstly, it conceals the exploitative nature of relations in the rural areas under collectivity and cooperation. It also generates situations of inequality, particularly, in Northern Sudan, because it leads to fragmentation of land which creates a state of dependence among the people. Secondly, it has been used politically by traditional, religious and rich families to consolidate positions of authority and economic dominance. See Abdel Ghaffar M.Ahmed, "The Extended Family and Development in the Sudan", Economic and Social Research Council Bulletin No.53, (1977), Khartoum.
62. There is now a wide range of literature on proletarianization and the formation of a working class among the African population. See Chapter I.

PART TWO

CHAPTER IV

ETHNICITY AND THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS IN

THE FACTORY SITUATIONS

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the proletarianization of migrant factory workers in Khartoum. The process is clearly reflected in their tendency to remain in town as permanent residents and in their total dependence on wage labour. However, the data also reveal the workers' attachment to, and continuing involvement in, the field of rural social relationships in a way which does not detract from the significance of the development by the factory workers of new contacts, networks of friendship, and patterns of association in town. In this chapter I shall assess the lives of workers in the two factories in order to see how far their social attachments and involvements in town are relevant to understanding their total industrial situation.

As I pointed out in the introduction, only a few previous industrial studies in Africa have attempted to show the relevance of ethnicity in working situations, in workers' organizations and in industrial conflict. Epstein<sup>1</sup> has employed the concept of "situational selection" to resolve the seeming paradox involved in the development of an African urban community in Zambia and to attempt to account for the behaviour of mine workers in the urban and industrial situations. He showed how the mine workers used two different sets of social relationships, developed in the course of their engagement in two different fields, namely the "industrial" and the "domestic". However, while stressing that Epstein deserves credit as a pioneer among colonial scholars in emphasising the development of an African working class, his definition of social class as a status category blurred the significance of his introduction of the principle of the "situational selection" in his overall analysis.

In his study of industrial relations in Nigeria, Yesufu (1962) has attempted to show the significance of ethnic relations in the development of the workers' trade unions. He attributed the small size of the unions and their multiplicity within single industries to the lack of experience among the Nigerian workers of participation in any organizations beyond



the "tribal" limit. Yesufu saw Nigerian workers as projecting tribal loyalties into the industrial sphere and suggests that this has often led to the disintegration of trade unions. He further argues that conflicts between the trade unions leaders along "tribal" lines have led to the formation of many unions on a "tribal" basis.

A similar argument is pursued by Scott (1966)<sup>3</sup> in his study of the development of workers' trade unions in Uganda. According to him, the continued attachment of workers to their "tribal" groups had important implications for the unions' development and organization. Firstly, there was partial correspondence between "tribe" and occupation which tended to perpetuate "tribal" distinctions and the dominance of particular occupations in union leadership. "Because each tribe believed that it had special interests which it did not share with members of other tribes, there was little attraction in a trade union appealing to the common interests of all workers in the industry concerned".<sup>4</sup> Secondly, in depicting the development of a Railway African Union, Scott suggests that tribal distinctions have provided the basic cleavage in the leadership structure of the union.

Grillo (1969)<sup>5</sup> examined Scott's contention in the light of a study of the same Railway African union in Kampala. According to him, Scott's suggestion that tribal rivalry played a considerable part in the struggle for union leadership implies that the competitors aims were to advance the interests of their respective "tribal" groups. In his opinion, however,

...it is not axiomatic that a desire to bring advantages to a certain sector of the community such as a tribe plays a fundamental part in the motivation of those who compete for office in the (Railway African Union). 6

Secondly, Grillo argues that the workers and their leaders were not only identified with their respective "tribal" groups, but also with other divisions such as departments, units, sections and sub-sections. Thus, by virtue of being a member of a number of groups, the worker has a certain freedom of choice as to whom he supports, and is by no means obliged to

give unconditional allegiance to other members of the "tribe".

In his study of a Cement factory in Nigeria, Soley (1970)<sup>7</sup> has argued along similar lines. He saw the factory as an arena of "negotiated order" in which the workers' positions, deriving from inside and outside the organization, were all resources that were at times used in relation to particular issues and situations. Thus, according to Soley, a worker's membership of a particular "tribe" is a resource which he can use in some situations in the factory, but since positions criss-cross, not all of the resources can necessarily be used in any one situation.

In his study of workers and unions in Ikeja industrial estate in Nigeria, Peace (1974)<sup>8</sup> has also reviewed the argument that "tribal" loyalties and organizations had divisive implications within the Trade Union movement. Commenting on Yesufu's and Scott's contentions, and other similar studies, Peace argues

...that their applicability to workers and unions at Ikeja...is marginal. What these interpretations share is a common failure to ask what workers actually do and what interpretations they give their actions. 9

Although Peace was not specifically concerned with the study of the workers ethnic relations in the industrial framework, his argument touches on the heart of the matter.<sup>10</sup> He examined two disputes that had developed between the workers and the management in a textile company and in a brewery. Peace interpreted these situations of conflict by analysing the events and the issues concerned in the context of the "structured opposition" that characterizes management-worker relationship. In other words, notwithstanding, the membership of the workers in different "tribal" groups, and the changing balance of power observed during the course of conflict between union and management, the workers were able to initiate social action that clearly indicated their acknowledgment of common economic interests.

I found that in order to analyse the responses to the work situation of the factory workers of Khartoum North, I had to distinguish between different kinds of relationships in which they were involved and to assess the implications of the different patterns of behaviour associated with these differing relations. To accomplish this, it is most important to note the differences between the various issues at hand in any particular situation. These issues will be examined in the light of three sets of relations : a) management-labour relations, b) relations between workers, and c) relations between workers and their organizations (i.e. the local trade unions). Basically my data show how the workers articulate relations stemming from their objective situations in the industrial context with their respective ethnic bonds. This will be illustrated by certain conflicts that related to the worker-management relations and to relations between the workers and their organizations. My analysis attempts to accommodate both sets of relations and the way in which the workers handled issues which were defined within or influenced by the "structured opposition" that existed in all worker-management relations. In other words, I found that the workers tended to articulate their ethnic and other social relations differentially according to whether or not the management was involved. The reason for this is that there was always some conflict of interests between the two parties over the differential share of output.

Most of my field work was conducted among workers directly engaged in the production process in the brewery and the match factory. My first set of observations relate to the different ways in which the workers handled particular issues. We may, for example, compare situations of industrial conflict with aspects of competition over the union leadership. Although ethnicity became relevant in both situations, the workers approached the management as an opposed party whose objective situation was defined by the industrial framework. In order to assess these issues

and situations, we have to start with clear statements about the administrative structure of each factory and about the production processes in each. This will help to define the different roles and functions of the workers and their managements, and the different issues raised by the complex organization of labour in both factories. I shall also dwell on the workers' organizations focusing on the relations between the unions and managements, and between unions and workers. This latter dimension is important in showing how the issues were differently defined when the unions were involved, and this is crucial to our understanding of the way in which the workers mobilized their ethnic relations in particular cases. My main task will be to describe and analyze certain events and areas of conflict, and especially to demonstrate how different social relations were manipulated in different situations. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first dealing with the administrative structure, labour force characteristics and workers' organizations' in both the brewery and the match factory, and the second dealing with events that occurred in both factories. The first section on the brewery contains a more detailed description than that on the match factory because most of the issues that arose in the brewery were related to departmental divisions and the production process.

#### SECTION I

##### 1) The Camel Beer Company: The Blue Nile Brewery

The brewery was established in 1956 as a private investment venture, with a capital of £5750,000. £5735,000 was actually paid at the time but later investments came to £5805,682. The main shareholders were the British Courage Company and the Egyptian al-Ahram Brewery. In addition 38 expatriates also invested in the brewery. When the brewery was first established 12 per cent of the annual profits were distributed to shareholders according to the value of their shares. On the 14th June 1970,

the company was nationalized like a number of other private enterprises. A Sudanese board of directors was appointed to take over, and an all Sudanese management was installed in the place of the previous British directors.

#### Administrative Structure and the Organization of Labour

The production of beer is a specialized technical process which demands an elaborate and complex organization of labour. For administrative and technical purposes the brewery is divided into numerous departments and sections. As I said earlier, my field work was done mainly among the production workers who were distributed in the following units:

1) Raw Materials Department: Work in this department marks the start of the production process. There are 15 workers, a foreman and his deputy. The workers are, as a team, responsible for receiving, storing and carrying the raw malt to the grinding machine. The foreman and his deputy are responsible for supervising and instructing the workers, and for directing them to carry out the required amounts of raw malt to the grinding machine.

2) The Brew House: Grinding and mashing processes take place in this department. After two hours in the mashing machine (the mashton), the resultant material (the ward), which has already been filtered, goes to the boilers.<sup>11</sup> After boiling, hops are added to the malt mixture. This is called the hopping process. The labour force in this department consists of 16 workers, two foremen and two deputies. The work is done in two eight-hour shifts, in the morning and the evening. The foremen are responsible for both the supervision of the workers and the direction and control of the mixing operations. From the brew house the mixture goes through pipes to the cooling section.

3) The Laboratory: The work of this department is to analyse and determine the proportions of the malt mix, and to regulate the temperature for the fermentation process. There are three chemical engineers and

two technical analysts in this unit. The department is also responsible for controlling the quality of beer throughout the production process and for detecting deficiencies at various stages of production. (These can be seen in the beer flow diagram No.I). The head of the department is the chemical engineer who is directly responsible to the Assistant Manager (Production). Employees here are classified as staff.

4) The Cooling Section: This section consists of three departments:

a) The Fermentation Department: there are six workers in this department who work on a two-shift basis, three on each shift. There is one foreman and his deputy who are responsible for the supervision of the workers. The work consists of receiving the malt liquid from the pipes and transferring it to the fermentation tanks. There are 30 tanks. This process is directed by the foreman on instructions received from the chemical engineer regarding the number of tanks to be used at any one time. The workers are also responsible for cleaning and sterilizing the tanks whenever they are empty.

b) The Lager Storing Department: This department accommodates 80 storage tanks. There are eight workers, four on each shift, plus a foreman and his deputy. The workers are responsible for: (i) receiving the beer from the fermentation department and storing it in the tanks, (ii) regulating the air pressure (carbon dioxide) in the tanks, (iii) transferring the beer through pipes to the filtration department, and (iv) washing and cleaning the tanks when empty.

c) The Filtration Department: This department takes care of the last stage of the production process in the cooling section. There are eight workers here, four on each shift, and a foreman and his deputy. The workers are responsible for the following: (i) Supervision of the filtration process. The beer goes through pipes, injected with pressurized carbon dioxide, into the filters. It then passes through two stages of filtration, a) through a cotton (pulp) filter, and b) through a sheet

filter; (ii) cleaning and adjusting the filters; and (iii) regulating the air pressure.<sup>12</sup>

5) The Bottling Department: The total labour force of this department is 40 workers, one foreman and one deputy. The bottling is done in several stages. There are two workers to supervise the correct completion of each stage. It is important to note that these workers operate in one-hour shifts. This is because work processes in this department are almost completely automated. The stages are: (i) Washing of empty bottles: the empty bottles are received and washed mechanically. Workers are stationed at the entry point to regulate the intake of the bottles by the washing machine. Similarly there are workers stationed at the exit point of the machine, and working under strong light in order to check that the bottles are clean from the inside, (ii) Filling: the bottles are filled by a machine which receives beer through a pipe from the refinery (the final stage in the cooling section), (iii) Sealing the bottles: the bottles are sealed by another machine connected to the filling machine. Again workers are stationed at the exit point to check for unsealed and defective bottles, (iv) Sterilization: here the bottles, full and sealed, are placed in a large basin to be sterilized. The bottles then come out of the basin at a point facing that where they first entered. As in the other stages, workers here are responsible for cleaning the bottles and removing the rejects, (v) Packing: four workers are employed on this stage, two on each side of the conveyor belt. Two, three, or four workers are engaged in sealing the cartons after they are packed. The full cartons finally go into storage on a moving electric belt.

The specific nature of the foreman's and his deputy's duties have to be discussed as also the working conditions of the workers. The duties of the foreman include the general supervision of the workers in all stages of the bottling process, particularly the reporting of accidents as much of the work involves the handling of glass. A second task for the

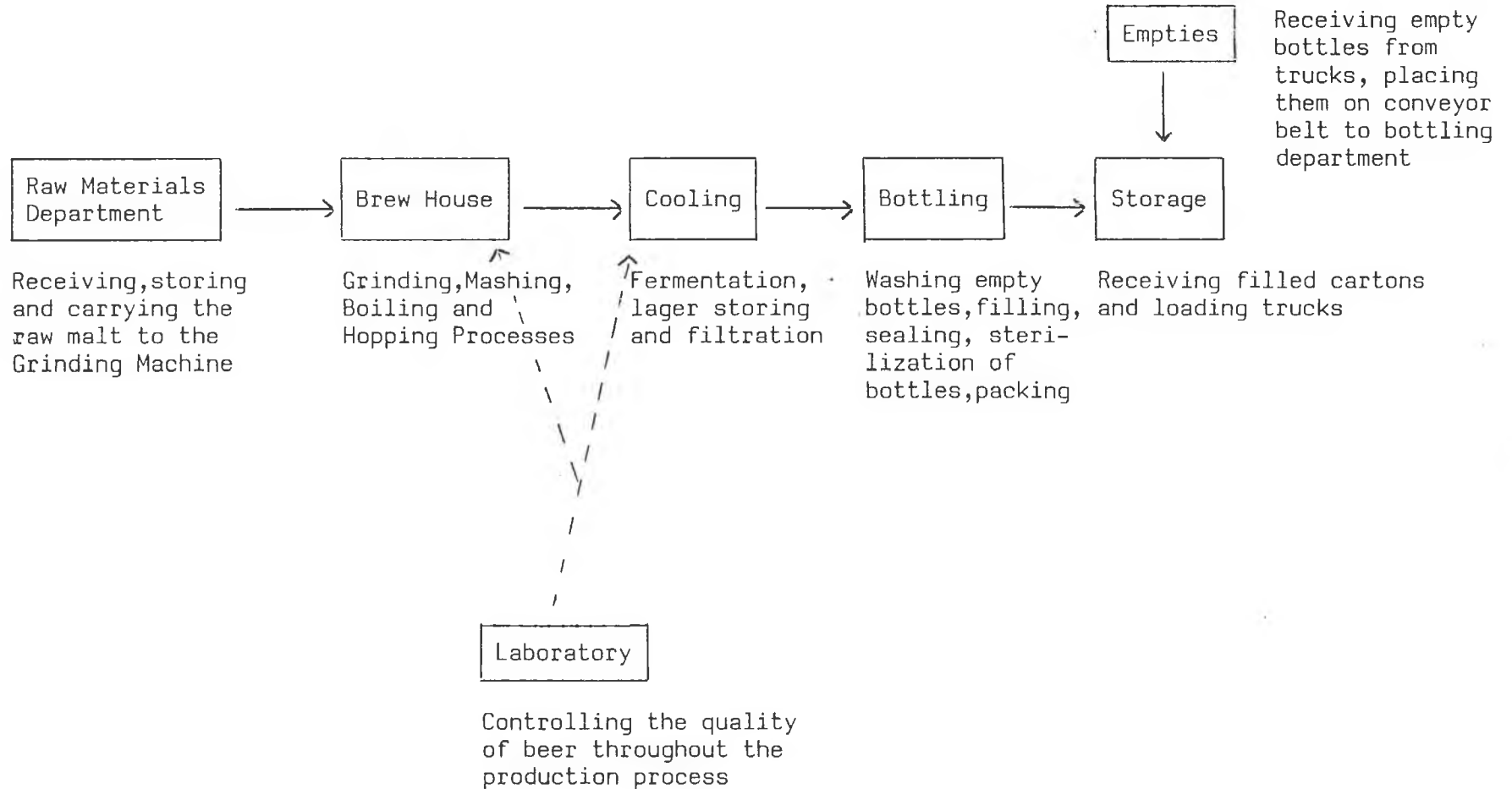
foreman is the recording of overtime work. The foreman is directly responsible to the technical manager, reporting all kinds of accidents and problems to him. The deputy foreman is responsible for cleaning the work place daily before the start of work. He is further charged with recording the total number of bottles coming from the empties department. This number has to be included in the foreman's daily report, which should also include the number of broken bottles and the number of bottles left over on any single day. The total number of workers needed in the bottling process at any one time is 20, but the total work force was 40 to enable one-hour shifts to be maintained.

6) The Empties Department: The work force in this department is 70. Some are responsible for receiving the empty bottles from the trucks and removing the broken ones. The remainder are charged with placing the bottles on the conveyor belt going to the bottling department. Approximately 10 workers, operating on two-hour shifts, are engaged in checking the movement of bottles on the conveyor belt. Some workers place the empty cartons on another conveyor belt going to the packing division of the bottling department. In this department the work of the foreman is primarily administrative, namely the daily allocation of workers to various tasks in the empties department.

7) The Storage Department: The workers in this department are responsible for receiving the cartons filled with bottles, and loading the trucks. The foreman here records the number of full cartons received from the bottling department and those loaded on to the trucks leaving the brewery.



DIAGRAM I: DIAGRAM SHOWING STAGES IN THE PRODUCTION OF BEER



The above departments employ the main production labour force.<sup>13</sup>  
The men in charge of the whole production section are the Assistant Manager (Production) and the Assistant Manager (Technical), (See Diagram No.2).

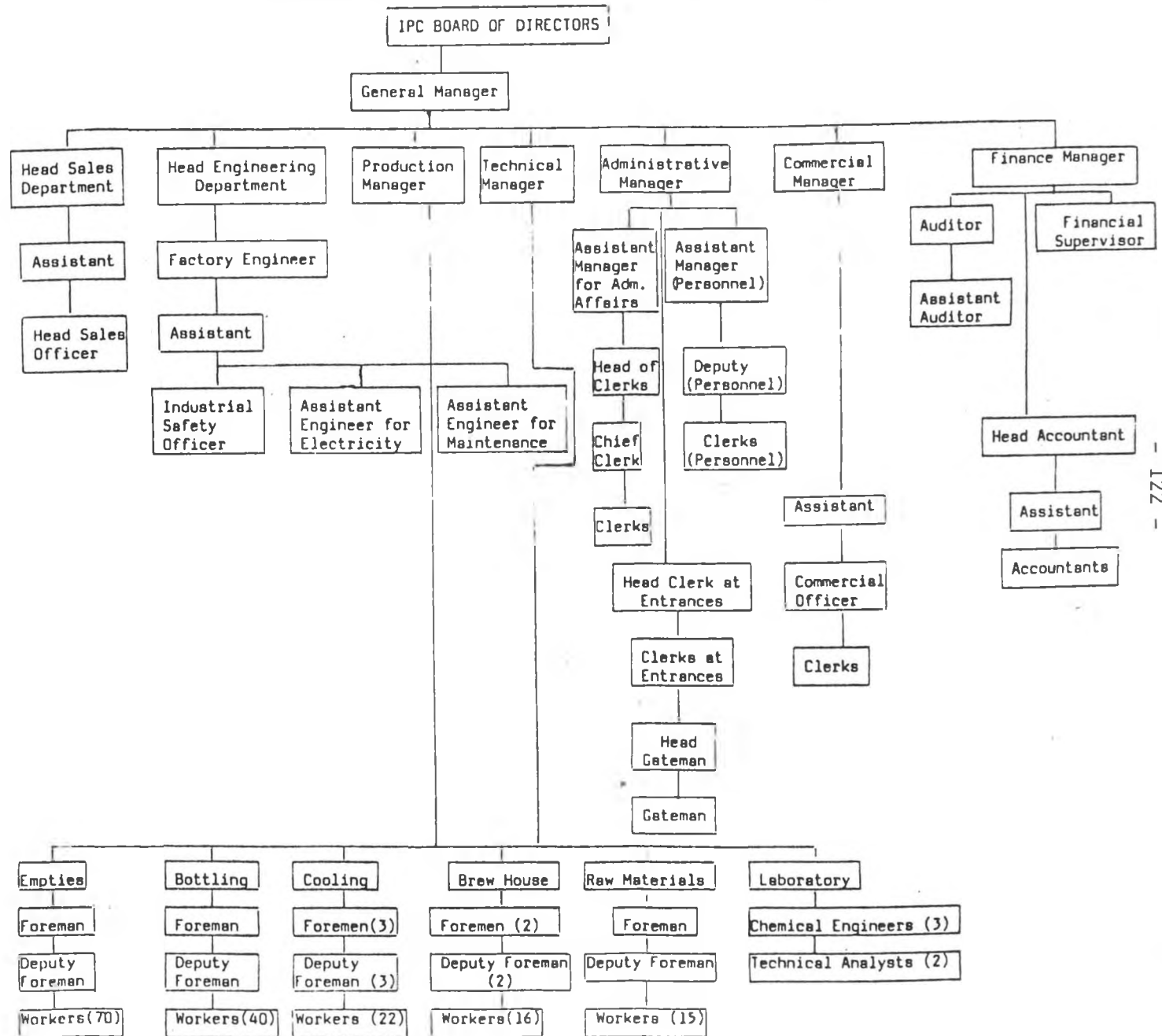
The administrative chart of the factory organization distinguishes between staff employees and workers. This is clearly seen in the records of the Personnel Department and on the pay sheets where two categories are used: a) the staff, foremen and their deputies, b) the labour force of the main production departments and the engineering section, in addition to service workers such as guards, messengers, gardeners, and attendants. The staff, represented by the first category, consists of foremen and all grades above them, in addition to typists, clerks, laboratory technicians, and the engineers and technicians in the engineering section. However, the workers tend to perceive the administration and management as one, for they regard all those who do not actually participate in production (i.e. all office employees) as belonging to management.

The main department of the staff section is that of General Administration. This embraces clerical workers of all grades including a) the general manager of the brewery, b) the office workers in the personnel, financial, administrative, production sections, and the technical managers. These are responsible for all financial matters including the payment of wages, purchases, sales, recruitment of workers, control of production and general supervision of workers. Moreover, in terms of workers' organization, staff and workers belong to two different unions. The workers belong to the Blue Nile Brewery Workers Union, whereas the staff belong to the Blue Nile Brewery Employees Union. The different reward systems of salaries and wages correspond to the division between management and workers. Job classifications, pay structures, and promotion scales are based on entirely

different criteria for staff and workers. Each employee is allocated to one of a number of hierarchical categories which determine his rank, basic salary and annual allowances. For the staff, there are 17 categories known as Groups. Each is divided into grades for whom different allowances are paid annually. These grades are mainly determined by the number of years in service. For the workers, there are four main groups graded according to the number of years served. For our present purpose we are not interested in the absolute levels of pay, but in wage differentials between office employees and other workers. For instance, the basic annual wage for workers in Group 4 (which is the highest grade for workers) was £5.600-840 with an additional £5.30 annual allowance, while for staff in Group 8 (the highest grade for them) basic annual payment was £2400-2550 with an additional annual allowance of £575. (For full scale see Appendix II). However, the workers are also entitled to other allowances for transport, food, overtime, working clothes, etc. On the whole, the brewery workers are better paid than workers in most other industries, and relatively higher, for example, than in the match factory.<sup>14</sup> Except for temporary workers,<sup>15</sup> all employees (whether staff or workers) enjoy the same security of employment. Any factory employee will remain in temporary employment for at least a year, after which he will usually enter permanent service, and be credited as having been permanently employed as from his initial recruitment. After a one-year period of temporary service, both office employees and workers are entitled to the same rights.

The above account of the administrative organization of the brewery and the organization of work in the various departments is essential for an understanding of the relationships between workers. Firstly, it helps to define the situation within which the workers relationships are enacted. Secondly, by showing the kind of demands made on workers in different units, it allows us to assess the issues that bind workers.

DIAGRAM 11: THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE BREWERY



(Diagram provided by Assistant Manager of Personnel)

together in approaching the management. Thirdly, it helps us to compare the work and workers' organization in a factory situation with that prevailing in the building industry discussed in the second part of this thesis. Fourthly, and most importantly, it shows how the social division between manual and "mental" work is maintained within the factory organization.

#### Social characteristics of the workers

In Chapter III I showed how networks of kinsmen and home acquaintances played an important role in the recruitment of workers to the factory. I also described the heterogeneous composition of a sample of the factory workers as regards areas of origin. However, a single category of workers constituted a majority in the brewery. About one third of the brewery workers were Nubian migrants from Northern Sudan. This category comprised Danagla, Mahas, and Halfawiyin. The relatively large proportion of Nubian workers is explained by their earlier recruitment to the factory's labour force, a fact which is also related to the brewery having been established as early as 1956. The migration of Nubians to the towns of Central Sudan is long-standing and well recognized by the people. In the ethnographic literature on the Nubians, some scholars have even suggested that their migration is part of their culture, i.e. a social value.<sup>16</sup> Many of the Nubian workers in the brewery had previously worked as cooks and domestic servants for British expatriates. After national independence in 1956, their employers assisted them to find jobs in the brewery which had, up to 1970, been a British company. Personal connections thus account for the employment of a considerable number of the Nubian workers. Kinship and other affinities between employees in the factory administration and among workers in the production departments also contributed to the development of a relative concentration of Nubians. Such circumstances have given Nubians the opportunity to hold better jobs and positions in the factory. Six Nubian workers succeeded

in becoming foremen. Table XVI illustrates the distribution of Nubian workers and foremen in the production departments in the factory.

TABLE XVI Distribution of Nubian Workers Among Six Production Departments

Units of Production	Total No. of Workers	No. and Per- cent of Nubians	
		No.	Percent
Raw Malt Department	14	2	14.3
Brew House Department	16	8	50.0
Cooling Section	21	11	52.4
Bottling Department	40	16	40.0
Empties Department	70	21	30.0
Storage Department	28	2	7.1
TOTAL	189	60	31.7

The table clearly demonstrates the concentration of Nubian workers in the "technical" units of production, namely the brew house and the cooling departments. Moreover, the majority of the 25 workers classified as "skilled" in the bottling department were Nubians. The table also shows that the Nubians are least represented in the departments where the nature of work is largely manual (e.g. in the raw malt, storage and empties departments). The fact that the Nubian workers were on the whole more skilled and older than other workers means that they were mainly at the top of wage groups and in senior positions.

Nubians<sup>17</sup> consist of three groups - Mahas, Danagla and Halfawiyin - who are hardly distinguishable by those who do not speak their respective languages. They have the same skin colour and physique to the extent that they themselves cannot know the difference if language is not introduced. Each group has a different language which are only distinguishable by those who speak one or the other. However, their accent in Arabic is one of their categorical similarities. Group identification by non-Nubians can only be based on direct knowledge of personal interaction.

Notwithstanding the distinctiveness of each group, the non-Nubian workers and office employees classify them all as Andande. As expressed by Elhaj Omer:

This categorization may at least be valid on historical grounds because the three groups were separated due to many ecological, social, physical, and recently urban factors that worked toward their differentiation. 18

Despite these factors, however, differentiation within the Nubian category has been subsumed in the work situation of the factory, where categorically they occupy the best and most rewarding jobs. The correspondence of cultural and ethnic background with the jobs they perform put them in a privileged social position among the brewery workers. In other words, the Nubians do form a distinct ethnic category.<sup>19</sup> These facts helped the Nubian workers to maintain cooperation and mutual interaction as the events described in the second section of this chapter will show.

## 2) The Modern Company for Production and Distribution of Matches

### The structure and administrative organization of the factory

Despite the fact that the match factory is a private enterprise, its administrative organization is in broad outline much the same as that of the brewery (See Diagram 3). Some similarities, such as pay structure for staff and workers, and the order of salaries and wage categories, will therefore be indicated without full description. The factory is one of the sister companies of the Gulf International Corporation (GIC). The Modern Company for the Production and Distribution of Matches (MCPDM) was established on a partnership basis between the GIC and a Sudanese capitalist, Abdel Atif Abu Riggaila. The factory (MCPDM) has a board of directors headed by the GIC representative in Sudan, Dr. Khalil Osman. The factory also has a General Manager, who is in turn directly responsible to the General Director of the GIC sister companies group in the Sudan.<sup>20</sup>

The match factory started production in January, 1965, with about 160 workers and office employees. The total labour force in 1977 came to 365 made up as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>
Staff employees	35
Production workers (unskilled)	250
Skilled production workers	30
Service workers, e.g. guards, messengers, etc.	<u>50</u>
Total	<u><u>365</u></u>

The staff members may be further divided into the following categories:

- a) Administrative staff: This group, numbering 15, was made up of office employees ranging from clerks, and personnel, sales, and public relations employees, to the Administrative, Sales, Finance, Production and Technical Managers.
- b) Factory Staff: comprising eight supervisors and two store keepers. Production workers are classified as "unskilled" since most parts of the production system is either automated or requires manual labour only. The production labour force is divided into a) old factory workers and b) new factory workers. In 1971 a new factory plant was installed. This plant was highly capital intensive and most of the production process was automated. The total work force in this part was 40 workers who produced as much as 141 workers had done in the old factory. The "skilled" labour force consists of a) the laboratory technicians, mechanics, maintenance workers, carpenters and electricians, b) mechanics in the production section who are responsible for repairing the different parts of the machinery in both plants.

The production process is divided into many operations and the labour force is organized accordingly into five units:

- 1) The Empty Boxes Department
- 2) The Automatic Unit

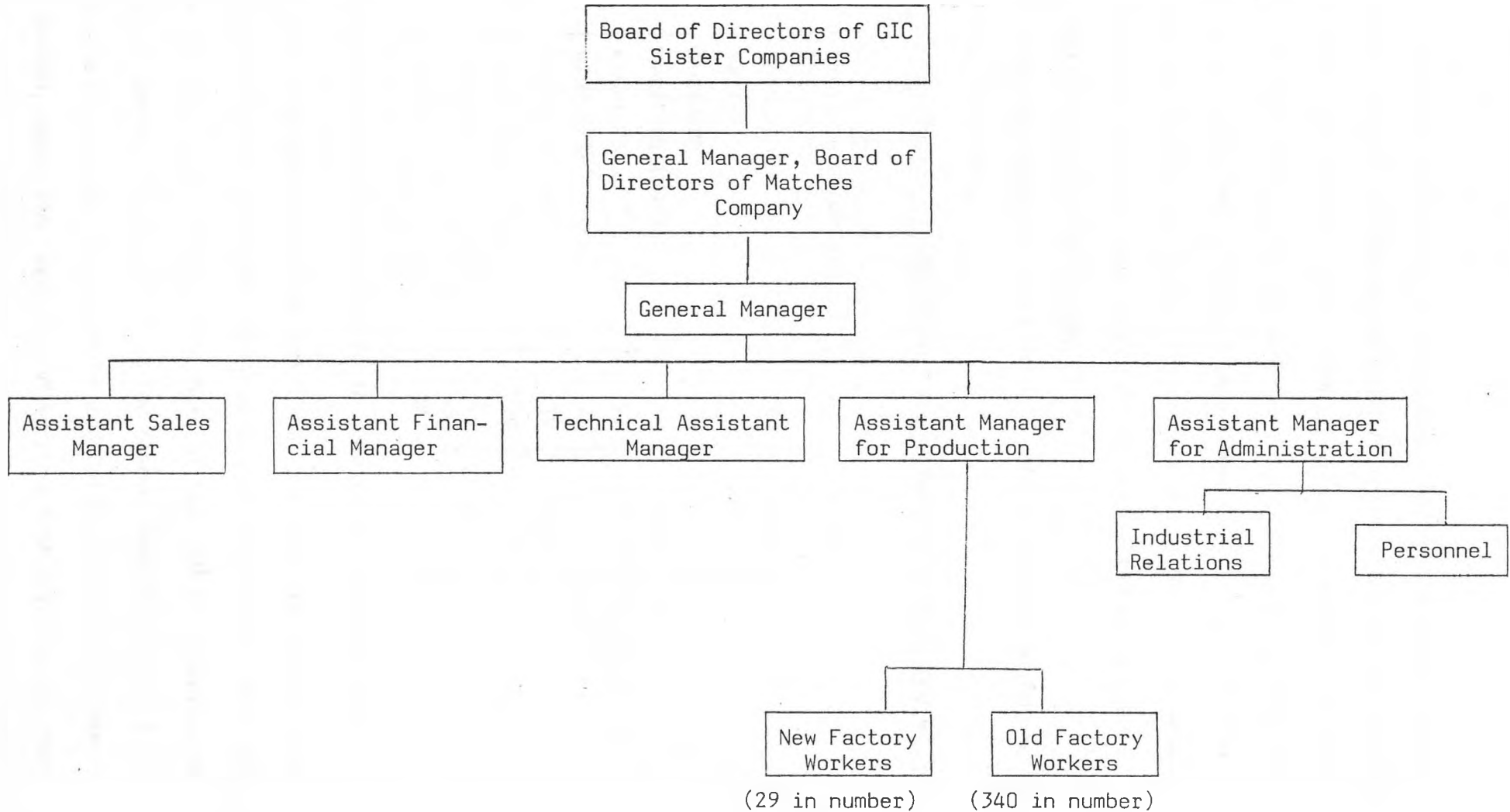
(These two units are characterized by their being highly automated)

- 3) The Labelling Department
- 4) The Filling Department
- 5) The Packing Department

Most of the work in the latter three departments is manual.



DIAGRAM 3: THE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MATCH FACTORY



(Diagram provided by Assistant Manager for Administration)

Two important facts must be noted about the labour force and its organization. First, unlike the situation in the brewery, the workers were not dispersed because each of the two plants constituted a single building in which all operations were performed. Second, 64 per cent of the workers in the labelling department were females. The preference of the management for females was based on the fact that work in this unit needs swift hands and patience which most men are considered not to have.

Salient Features of the Work Force

The areas of origin of the factory's labour force is mixed, as may be seen from Table XVII.

TABLE XVII Distribution of the Match Factory Workers by Province of Origin

Province of Origin	No.	Percent
Kordofan	120	41.8
Darfur	41	14.3
Northern	39	13.6
Khartoum (Rural)	24	8.4
Equatoria	21	7.3
Blue Nile	16	5.6
Bahrel-Ghazal	15	5.2
Upper Nile	10	3.5
Kassala	1	0.3
Total	287	100.0

This table covers production workers in permanent employment only.

To this information must be added the fact that the workers tend to come from a number of different areas within each province. Four general features are important. First, over half of the factory workers come from Western Sudan. "Westerners" is the common term that is used to refer to people who come from Kordofan and Darfur Provinces of Western Sudan. Second, among the "westerners" workers from Kordofan are most numerous. Third, unlike the situation in the brewery, Northern Sudanese constitute only 13.6 per cent of the labour force. I have already

explained in Chapter III the reasons for the large number of westerners in the match factory. The establishment of the company in the mid 1960s coincided with the growing flow of migrants from Western Sudan, together with the industrial expansion experienced in Khartoum North at that time. Moreover, it has often been argued that migration from the West was encouraged by the Umma political party for support in parliamentary elections.<sup>21</sup> Fourth, except for the union leadership there was no consistent association between regional origin and particular departments or skilled jobs in the match factory. The numerical domination of the Westerners can be accounted for entirely by their early recruitment and by the ongoing process of recruiting workers through networks of home acquaintances.

## SECTION II

### Events in the Brewery and the Match Factory

We are now in a position to appreciate how the administrative organization and the day-to-day functioning of the brewery and the match factory determine the status and roles of workers and their managers. The workers in all production units and other departments constitute a single category irrespective of their particular job, wages or skills. This is because they are all subjected to the same system of authority by the administration and their foremen or supervisors. It is this system that largely shapes the actions, reactions and general behaviour of workers in their relationship with the management and between them and their organization.

In this section I analyse events that occurred in both factories, and which touched on different aspects of the relationship between the workers and management, and between the workers and their union. This will be examined in the context of the social framework in which these relationships were set in both the brewery and the match factory. This

may help to show how the workers act, though in different ways, to challenge the organization of the factory. I shall describe and analyse three events, two of which occurred in the brewery, to illustrate how the workers used their social relationships in response to the authority structure of the factory and to certain decisions of the management, particularly in the brewery. One of these involves the manipulation of ethnicity, the other does not.

Event II in the brewery illustrates how the Nubians mobilized support among the workers against the management, and Event III in the match factory shows how the Union leaders who come from Kordofan and Darfur articulated their respective ethnic relations with the workers in order to gain control of the union. In analysing these events I shall treat ethnic categories as ones "...of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus having the characteristic of organizing interaction between people".<sup>22</sup> Ethnic categorization was not a function of the factory situation but a prominent feature of the general urban situation. Mitchell and Southall, for instance, have argued that migrant workers in African urban areas tend to classify themselves and others into social categories and groups that are meaningful to them.<sup>23</sup> Wallerstein has gone even further to suggest that the definition of ethnic groups in town may in some cases derive from a common occupation, or a common way of dressing.<sup>24</sup> In this study I do not limit the definition of ethnicity to groups with political and economic interests. As will be seen, I use "ethnicity" as a varying and changing concept and not as a static one.

Events I and II in the Brewery

Although the two events relate directly to the workers position in the factory organization, they touch on quite different issues. The first event occurred in one particular unit of production, namely the Cooling section, and was related to certain privileges which the workers expected but which were denied them by the management. This event is

used as an illustration of the workers-management conflict in which ethnicity was not relevant. The second event was related to demands that cut across section boundaries, but it was a particular ethnic category, namely the Nubians, which mobilized support among all workers against the management. Both events concerned worker-management relations and in each case the workers articulated two different sets of social relationships according to the central issue.

#### Event I: The workers of the Cooling Section

The problem began early in the 1970s when the factory was nationalized. In March 1971 the Industrial Production Corporation (IPC) was established to control all nationalized companies in the industrial sector of the economy.<sup>25</sup> However, it was not until 1974 that the IPC introduced new conditions of service to be applied uniformly in all the establishments under its control. These were included in an ordinance entitled: The Conditions of Service Order for the Industrial Sector Enterprises Administered by the Industrial Production Corporation, 1974. The application of this Order to the brewery implied some changes in its internal organization. As a result of the new regulations and the new system of internal organization, some workers felt that they were denied privileges that they had previously enjoyed. They formulated demands which would have met their complaints and forwarded them to the management. These demands were backed by the brewery workers' trade union. In order to understand the grievances arising out of the re-organization and the nature of the dispute that followed, it is necessary to recall, a) some of the salient aspects of the production stages, and b) the variables according to which job evaluation and enumeration were made.

The outline of the production process given earlier shows that the brewery is highly capital intensive. In particular, it is important to note that the number of production workers at any one time (176) is small considering the average daily production of over 600 cartons containing

a dozen bottles each.<sup>26</sup> Automation was further increased after the installation of a new packing machine which requires the supervision of only one worker.<sup>27</sup> Generally, automation has many implications in the work situation that bear directly on the issue of the workers' dispute discussed below. Firstly, to break the monotony of work around the conveyor belt in the bottling department a system of one-hour shifts was introduced allowing the workers to alternate. Secondly, this made it possible for the workers to take time off and to chat with friends and work mates outside the department building. No more than 20 workers were employed in bottling at any one time, and the same number of workers are simultaneously idle waiting for their shift to come. Thirdly, the high level of automation makes it difficult to classify the workers' level of skill according to any formal criterion,<sup>28</sup> as jobs in the main production section only call for short periods of training.

While all workers were appointed on the same grounds, some came to be labelled as "skilled" either because of their long service, or because they had acquired particular skills in their respective departments. Thus the 25 workers who worked in the bottling department and who were labelled as "skilled" were largely old workers who had acquired their status by seniority. There was, however, another category of 22 workers who were considered skilled by the management: 18 of these worked in the cooling section and 4 in the brew house department. Most of these had never received any special training for their particular jobs, but had picked up the relevant skills over time through the close contact with the chemical engineers who supervise work in the brew house and the cooling departments. Variations in the levels of skill among workers, and hence the evaluation of different groups by the management, are relevant to the analysis of the dispute initiated by the workers in the cooling section.

The interdependence of work in the brew house and cooling departments

with that of the chemical engineers (the laboratory) led the workers in these units to be considered as "technical". Accordingly the workers in the brew house and in the cooling departments had been allocated more privileged grades on the wage scale. They were further entitled to a number of privileges because of the hazards of their working conditions.<sup>29</sup> These included special clothing and nutrition, and a higher rate of overtime allowances. The latter was a major source of income incentive for workers, particularly those in the cooling section. This is because, as I explained earlier, work in this section requires the continuous supervision of the lager and fermentation tanks for periods of 16 or more hours daily.

In 1974 the production capacity in the cooling section was increased when 14 fermentation tanks were added to the previous 16, making a total of 30. Similarly, the number of lager storing tanks was doubled from 40 to 80. This increase in the production capacity led to increased work pressure on the existing labour force in the cooling departments. To counteract this change, the Assistant Manager (production) transferred 14 workers to work in this section. By then, the total labour force amounted to 36 workers, consisting of two categories: a) 22 pre-1974 workers, and b) 14 newly transferred workers who had previously worked in other units, most of them in the bottling department.

Before application of the new conditions of service order, both the brew house and the cooling departments had been considered "technical" divisions. The workers in the two units had been allocated to the same wage groups for the brewery and this had been approved by the labour bureau.<sup>30</sup> At that time the wage grades of these workers ranged between £533.125 and £551.425 monthly, according to years of service. On the basis of the 1974 order, jobs in the cooling section were evaluated as falling in Group I, the fourth Grade that ranged between £528.600 and £540.700 monthly, while those of the brew house were placed in Group II

ranging from £S37.600 and £S55.000. Then, after the re-evaluation, the jobs in the cooling section were down-graded compared to those in the brew house. The dispute over the evaluation scheme was further complicated by another issue concerning the overtime payments to the old pre-1974 workers and the newly recruited workers to the cooling section,

Before re-evaluation, the payments for overtime work added substantially to the workers' incomes in the brew house and cooling departments. Workers had previously been paid overtime rates that covered eight hours of evening work from 2.30 to 10.30 p.m. and had also been entitled to ordinary overtime payments for work extending beyond these hours. Thus, due to the continuous process of production, workers usually gained extra incomes from both sources of overtime work. The new Order introduced new regulations governing the organization and payment of overtime work. It involved a two-shift system, each for eight hours.<sup>31</sup> This change in the work routine did away with the previous overtime payments.<sup>32</sup> In order to compensate the workers for this material loss, a fixed sum overtime allowance (£S15 per month) was given.

This was the event which triggered the outbreak of the dispute in the cooling section because the compensation for the loss of overtime was to be paid only to the category of the old pre-1974 workers in the section. The 14 newly transferred workers were excluded and only had the right to ordinary overtime work as defined by the Order. The management defended this on the grounds that the "new" workers had had no overtime allowances in their former departments, and that by joining the cooling section they had not lost any part of their incomes. Moreover, work in the cooling section was actually offering them greater opportunities for increasing their incomes because of the continuous demand for ordinary



overtime work.

It can now be seen how the new conditions of service led to grievances arising among the workers in the cooling departments. Firstly, the workers were materially down-graded because the section was no longer recognized as involving "technical" work. Secondly, resentment arose because the difference between the "new" and "old" categories of workers in the section was emphasised by the new arrangements,

When the management communicated the new regulations to the workers through their respective foremen, the workers in the cooling departments immediately expressed their resentment, and their foremen persuaded them to involve the union in the matter. At the same time, the foremen started to re-organize the work in two shifts, one in the morning from 6.30 to 2.30 p.m. and the other in the evening from 2.30 to 10.30 p.m. The labour force was thus, divided into two groups which was in future to rotate between the morning and evening shifts every other week. This system naturally meant that only half of the labour force was present in the brewery at any one time. In view of these circumstances, the workers called a meeting at 2.30 p.m. on the same day they received the new instructions. They had drawn two conclusions, namely that their jobs were no longer considered "technical", a fact which entailed a loss of income, and that some of the workers in the section would be deprived of overtime payment. They all agreed to complain to their union leaders and to ask the management to explain why only the brew house workers should be classified as "technicians" to the exclusion of the cooling section workers. They also wanted their new work mates to have the same overtime payment as the pre-1974 workers since they all worked in the same place.

It is relevant to mention here that the physical location of work in the factory, together with the interchangeable nature of work in this section, helped the workers in arranging small discrete meetings and in readily organizing themselves. This is because the production process

is not continuous and the workers are distributed according to departments and sections, because the production operations are spread over many buildings. While the factory building constitutes a single plant, there are several units within it. In each of these units, a particular operation or set of operations takes place. In each unit the workers do more or less the same kind of job. Though the different stages of production are interdependent, each department's workers are attached to their own units, and there is considerable cohesion within each. Often there is some displacement of workers from one department to the other, but those in the "technical" units never leave their departments. Thus, the physical environment and the nature of the cooperation required between workers facilitated the process of mobilizing the workers in developing their opposition to the management.

The problem was explained to the union leaders who promised to hold an urgent meeting of the Executive Committee to discuss the issue with the management. But the dispute remained unsettled for about a month during which the workers received no response from either the union or management. After five weeks the issue was the subject matter of daily conversation among the workers. The workers considered that the union had "sold them out" and that they should no longer wait for union action. Workers on the two different shifts therefore decided to act/<sup>on</sup> an unofficial basis. One of the older men suggested to his fellow workers on the morning shift that they should draw up a petition to be passed to the workers on the evening shift to collect their signatures. Another worker suggested that, to render the petition much more substantial, they should include other demands concerning working conditions in the section. The petition was drawn up, signed by the 36 workers in the cooling section and handed to the Assistant Manager (Production) through the foremen of the cooling section on 28th November, 1975. The petition was short and precise, and contained a number of demands, including the following:

- 1) To consider the workers in the three cooling departments "technicians" as they used to be, on the same grounds that made the brew house a "technical" unit.
- 2) To equate all workers in the section in regard to overtime pay.
- 3) To increase the food allowance immediately to £520 monthly instead of £57.
- 4) To demand that work uniforms be delivered on their appropriate date. 33
- 5) To demand a monthly physical check for all workers in the cooling section.

The management informed the union about the petition presented by the workers and considered their action as a breach of negotiation procedures on the union's part. The union Executive Committee held a meeting with the workers. The General Secretary of the union, who was himself a worker in the brewery, told them that their demands would be considered, and that it was the union's responsibility to follow the matter up. He further explained that the delay up till then in receiving a response was due to the fact that the issues related directly to the Conditions of Service Order and therefore had to be communicated to I.P.C. headquarters. However, from that date on, the union leaders started negotiations with the management on the basic issues raised by the workers. But it was not until three months had elapsed that the union succeeded in persuading the management to recommend a job re-evaluation in the cooling section. In early March, 1976, the management had agreed to a strong letter drafted by the Union Executive Committee, and directed to the General Director of the I.P.C. This recommended the immediate reconsideration of the workers' demands. It took another three months for the issue to be finally resolved. After much correspondence between the union, the management of the brewery, and the I.P.C. headquarters, in June 1976, the jobs in the cooling section were re-evaluated again and the workers were allocated to the same grade as those in the brew house department.

### Summary

The way in which the issue was handled by the workers clearly indicates their cooperation despite the creation of different categories of workers by the management. Notwithstanding the fact that the grievances directly affected workers in one section only, the conflict which ensued was between workers and their organization (since the union represented all the workers) on the one hand, and the management on the other. Moreover, although the dispute was finally resolved through the establishment procedure of long negotiations between the union and the management, the course of the conflict indicates how the balance of power changed between the workers, the union, and management at different times. This situation is similar to that observed by Peace in his study of an industrial conflict in two industrial plants in Nigeria,

Notwithstanding undercurrents of hostility and the fact this was a crisis situation, there was little in the way of expressions by workers that indicate a vision of an alternative order radically different to the one prevailing at that time. On the contrary, most workers interpreted their action as a variant on the normal process of accommodation to the social order which, during periods of social calm, were expressed through the channel of peaceful bargaining between unions and managements around the negotiating table. 34

Thus, whatever method was followed by the workers to secure their demands, the dispute, which arose because of the management's decisions over job classification, clearly indicates the workers challenge to the organization of the factory.

### Event II: Articulation of Ethnic Relations by the Nubian Workers in the brewery

The first event demonstrated how support was mobilized by workers of one section in order to secure their demands. The workers demonstrated firm solidarity with each other despite the management's attempt to divide them. The incident also showed how the workers reacted to the union's response regarding the presentation of the problem to the management.

The second event, discussed in the following pages, illustrates a conflict that developed because of the management's failure to pay a bonus that had been promised to all workers. I shall show how in this particular situation some workers mobilized opposition by manipulating ethnic relations at one stage of the dispute. I am concerned to show how and why the category of Nubian workers was able to articulate its ethnic relations in order to influence the course of the conflict. In this particular dispute the main issue was to increase the share of output for all, since the bonus was for all workers in the brewery.

From my observations and interviews it is clear that the Nubians led the workers' mobilization against the management. I have already indicated that members of this category formed a large proportion of the skilled and older workers with higher incomes. The explanation of this fact is important in order to appreciate the significance of ethnicity in the mobilization of the workers. Some personnel employees told me that the Nubians played a great role in consolidating the Nubian workers' position in the most rewarding jobs in the factory. They cited the incident of the 14 workers who were transferred to the cooling section, seven of whom turned out to be Nubians. Again as I mentioned in Chapter III the Danagla and Mahas, for example, among other workers were the only participants in regionally formed ethnic associations. At work Nubian workers usually take their breakfast together, sharing their distinctive food which they bring from outside the factory.<sup>35</sup> They also speak their own languages with one another, especially when other workers are not present. All these facts contribute to the "ethnic stereotypes" which other workers hold about the Nubians as being close-knit, well organized and more aware of their ethnic identity.<sup>36</sup>

#### The Course of the Conflict

On the 2nd May, 1974, the management of the brewery issued a leaflet praising the workers for the high level of production that had been

achieved. By that date, production had increased by almost 30 per cent since nationalization. Accordingly, the annual excise duty paid to the state had risen from £\$1.700.000 in 1970 to £\$2.124.962 in 1974.

Moreover, the increase in production was expected to be 90 per cent by the end of 1974 with the installation of new tanks in the cooling section.<sup>37</sup> By the end of that year the management promised all workers a bonus as an income incentive. The bonus was to be paid for 16 months dating from March, 197~~4~~<sup>5</sup>, up to the beginning of the new fiscal year in July 1975. Each worker was to receive 15 per cent of his basic monthly wage covering the entire period.

The payments were not made on the set date, and nothing materialized during the whole fiscal year of 1975. During this period the workers naturally discussed the matter among themselves, and they began to accuse the union leaders of siding with the management. One man claimed that some workers even suspected the leaders had themselves been paid a bonus in order to "shut their mouths". Rumours of this kind spread among the workers and many lost any hope of the union ever pressing the management to pay the bonus. Some workers mentioned the matter informally to the members of the Union's Executive Committee as a way of checking on them. The latter denied accusations against them and promised that the bonus would be paid the following year. It was not until June 1977, the beginning of the new fiscal year, that the workers decided to act. A speech made by the President of the Republic, on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the present Military Regime, had accelerated developments in the factory. In his speech the President announced the government's intention to sell all the plants producing alcohol to the private sector. This gave rise to feelings of insecurity and even panic among the workers, and it certainly promoted them to press for an immediate answer to their demands. They were afraid that the brewery might fall into the hands of a new management who might not know of the promise that had been made to pay

the bonus.

On 1st July 1977, when the new budget for all the enterprises under the I.P.C. was to be implemented, the workers submitted a petition to their union. This was preceded by meetings of workers in each of the departments of the factory, and especially in the production units. I was conducting field work in the brewery at the time and thus had the opportunity to observe developments at first hand. In the course of the meetings, workers in each department chose representatives whom they charged with the task of drafting and signing the petition. This petition later called for a response between the 9th-12th July, following which the workers would only work the official eight hour working day and would do no overtime.

#### Mobilization of Opposition

I shall now show how the mobilization of this opposition and the organization of workers during the course of conflict until its eventual resolution was led by Nubians in different departments of the factory. The Nubian workers, particularly in the bottling department, took the initiative of discussing the issue among themselves. They reasoned that this was necessary because other (non-Nubian) workers might let them down if they started to communicate with them. They said that some non-Nubian workers were inclined to settle the dispute through peaceful bargaining procedures. In the situation of insecurity caused by the Presidential announcement the Nubians thought that such an approach would be too protracted. I heard them suggesting that they should pass the word to "their people" in all departments to decide on action. Sometimes they spoke in their respective languages so that I could not follow their conversations, but later they explained to me what they had been saying. Their basic intention was, first, to organize among themselves as "pioneer" workers, and then/<sup>use,</sup> personal networks of acquaintance and friendship to persuade non-Nubian fellow workers to act. All Nubian

workers in the different departments were informed about the urgency of their organization and to pass on the plan to others. Consequently, separate meetings of workers were called in all units to discuss the issue and work out a plan for mobilizing opposition,

The physical distribution of the units in different areas of the brewery made my field work difficult. The workers were so scattered that it was virtually impossible systematically to observe all the events throughout the brewery. I therefore decided to concentrate on observing the meeting in the bottling department, because it was here that the senior Nubian workers had started to organize themselves, and it was from here that they first communicated with those from other units. I then later also interviewed the workers who had been responsible for establishing links with the Nubian workers in other departments. Inter-departmental contacts were largely conducted by the senior Nubians on an individual basis through their personal friends and acquaintances. These contacts led to an agreement on a plan, other than approaching the union, for the workers to secure the promised bonus. The idea was that the workers in each unit should select at least one representative and that the representatives would draft and sign a petition addressed to the union on behalf of all workers. This course of action was thought to be an indirect threat to strike if a positive response was not received within 12 days. Accordingly, on 29th June, the workers in each department gathered in informal meetings to discuss the issue.

In the bottling department, four of the older Nubian workers addressed the rest. One explained to them the importance of the payment especially since over two years had elapsed since the promise was originally made by the management. He stressed that as the factory was possibly to be transferred to different management the promise might not be upheld. He further explained how the union had disappointed them and "sold them out". He claimed that the union leadership was corrupt, and advocated that it



should be changed at the next election. He continued: "We can no longer rely on the union to get the bonus for us. We cannot afford to let the appropriate time pass without solving our problem. This is because within three days the new budget of the Corporation will be announced and we have to get our share before it goes somewhere else and is embezzled by the management. We have to write a strong letter to the union and tell them that this will be the last chance for them to fulfil their obligations to us, and to sort out the problem. We have to give them a week to reply, otherwise we are not going to work more than the official eight hours". The speaker then asked the workers to agree on representatives to sign the petition on their behalf and to back the latter if the management reacted negatively. The meeting concluded by choosing three workers to represent the bottling department, including the speaker himself. All three representatives were Nubians.

Reports from workers in other departments indicated a similar sequence of events in each unit. The workers then agreed on a list of 12 workers representing seven departments.<sup>38</sup> Seven of these 12 representatives were Nubians distributed over the seven units. There was thus, at least, one Nubian from each department. The petition was drafted, signed, and handed to the union's General Secretary.

The arrangements were made so carefully that although the union leaders suspected that the workers were organizing and that the opposition was mobilized by the Nubian workers, they had no certain knowledge of it. This prompted the President of the union to approach the eldest Nubians to plead with them to be more realistic, and he drew their attention to the serious consequences of their possible action. The petition was considered by the management to be an open threat to strike and was interpreted as a breach of the provisions of the Republican Order, No. I, entitled Trade Union Act, 1971.

It is of interest to note in passing that the union's President,

himself a Nubian, was criticized by the Nubian workers because of his failure to answer the workers' demands. The Nubians conversations with each other indicated their scorn for the union's president. The phrasing of their criticism was significant: "He should be ashamed of himself because no Nubian has ever failed to fulfil his obligations". Three other members of the union's Executive Committee were Nubians, the Vice-President, the Financial Secretary, and the union's Accountant. All three were also criticised for their failure. The Nubian workers attacked the president as being a "traitor", a "conspirator" who collaborated with the management and who preferred "touring the world, by going to conferences in the name of the workers, and the money he received, his nice car, and his concrete-built house, to the cause of the workers he was supposed to represent."

Nubians did thus not refrain from criticizing some of their fellows, but it is the articulation of Nubian ethnic social relations in this dispute that is of prime interest. They used their organizational capabilities to bring all workers together and to consolidate their opposition to management. The management, of course, perceived the situation as having been organized by the Nubians and the Personnel employees believed that the whole dispute was initiated and led by the Andande. The rest of the workers were aware of the course the developments took, but the use of ethnic ties was never openly stated as the cause of the dispute, and the issues it raised, were the concern of all workers.

It would be difficult to find proof of the use of ethnic loyalties by Nubians in other working situations. But it would appear significant that in his study of Nubian immigrants in Karima town, Northern Sudan, Elhaj Omer demonstrated how the three Nubian groups organized themselves in a single category in the municipal elections and mobilized support for a certain candidate. Although Elhaj Omer's work was carried out in a different context - the urban social system of the town - it touches

the heart of the matter, when the Nubians "...tried to counteract a categorical exclusion from house ownership on the basis of being strangers. Thus, they voted for a Nagadi (i.e. a non-Nubian) who himself is labelled as a stranger".<sup>39</sup>

Having explained the way in which ethnic relations were articulated by the Nubian workers, I now record the events that followed the presentation of the petition to show how the workers backed their representatives until the management decided to pay the bonus for all workers. I have already explained that both the management and the union saw the workers' petition as an open threat to strike. This is because overtime work, which the workers had threatened to stop, was essential to ensure continuity of production. The union then informed the police that the content of this petition was a threat to strike and all 12 representatives were arrested and placed in custody. However, after mediation by union members, they were released after 24 hours. Six more were, however, arrested when all the workers met in front of the police station. These also spent 24 hours in custody.

By now it was clear to the union leaders that they were in a weak position and they asked the workers to return to work on the condition that the suspension letters which had been given to 18 workers were withdrawn. The workers returned to the factory, but it was apparent from interviews with workers and from my observations that they did not feel secure and the General Manager insisted in wanting to cross-examine the workers. These feelings of insecurity led the workers to slow down production by common agreement. The resultant loss was estimated at £525,000. The workers also continued to insist that the suspension letters be removed from their files and to back their colleagues who had actually been suspended. A date was set by the management for the cross-examination of workers. However, this never took place, and in late July, 1977, the management announced that the bonus would be paid by 1st August.

### Summary

The above account shows that ethnic affinity was only openly recognized within the Nubian group of workers at a certain stage in the development of the conflict. But the fact that people come from a particular ethnic group with a history and experience of organization, which constitutes an advantage for them in the solution of a problem, does not imply that ethnicity is necessarily important in such a situation. The question is whether ethnicity is made relevant or not in an issue. In the factory situation where relations between workers and management are primarily defined by structured opposition, the manipulation of ethnic affinity may or may not be a relevant factor.

In the situation described above, the articulation of ethnic relations can best be analysed by dwelling on different phases in the development of the conflict. The demarcation of these phases must be based on the relations between the workers (including the Nubian group) and management. Two phases can be delineated which emphasise the relevance ethnicity had. Phase I was when the Nubians were preparing for action among themselves. Here, ethnicity was relevant because it served as a principle of organization. Phase II developed in the course of worker-management negotiation. Ethnicity here was not important because all the workers were mobilized. Ethnic differentiation was not relevant as the Nubians approached the rest of the workers as fellow-workers and not as Nubians.

### Event III: Articulation of Ethnic Relations in a Situation of competition over Union leadership in the Match Factory

I now turn to a case of the articulation of ethnic relations by some workers in relation to another aspect of the overall industrial situation, namely trade unionism. The relevance of ethnicity is examined through a study of the struggle for the union leadership in the match factory.

I deal with one particular event, namely the split in the leadership

of the union in 1972-1973. This conflict had special significance within the overall context of the growth and development of the union because it was the first leadership crisis to occur. The information I use came partly from interviews with workers who had been members of the union since it was first established and partly from records kept in the union office.

The history of the union dates back to 1961 and is an important aspect of the history of M.C.P.D.M. I first trace the history of the union from 1961-67 to highlight problems over the emergence of the leadership which was to last throughout the union's formative years. I describe how the leadership consolidated its position and succeeded in establishing a working relationship with the management. It was a period of constant disputes between the union and the management. The second phase, from 1967 to 1973, and particularly the last part, was characterized both by the emergence of internal conflicts and by tense and strained relations with the management.

#### Phase I: (1961-1967)

Before the establishment of the M.C.P.D.M. in 1965, the only company in Sudan producing matches - The Two Roses Match Company - had been privately owned. The owner was a British expatriate. At that time trade unions activity was banned by the Military Regime of 1958-1964.<sup>40</sup> The first attempt to organize the factory workers formally was made by the end of 1961. This attempt involved four workers from Kordofan Province who claimed to have a "substantial following" among workers. This group was led by F who later became the President of the union during the early phase, and then up to 1977 when I was carrying out my field work. Together with the other three members of his group, he dominated the Union's Executive Committee except in 1971-72.

In December 1961, F and his group formed a preparatory committee to fight for the establishment of the union. They started to collect monthly

contributions from all workers under the name of a charity association so that the management would not suspect them of trade union activity. The second step was a discrete meeting with the 350 factory workers to explain the importance of their organization. In the meantime, F was seeking the advice of the labour bureau and of the leaders of the Railway Workers Trade Union about the formation of the union in the match factory. (The management came to suspect his movements and frequent absences and this led to his suspension from work). F eventually went to the Director of the Labour Bureau to ask for his assistance in registering the factory's union. F's initiatives were seen as illegal political manoeuvring. He was arrested and placed in custody for 24 hours. The Director of the bureau called him to explain that his activities were illegal and to advise him to go back to work and not to resume them. F did not give up and went instead to explain the issue to the Labour Disputes Officer who was directly responsible for work disputes between employers and employees. This officer gave him permission to form the union on condition that the preparatory committee would continue for three months until he (the officer) was able to convince the Director of the Bureau. During that period F's suspension from work remained in force.<sup>41</sup> After the required period had elapsed, a joint meeting was held between the Labour Bureau representative, the manager of the factory, and the union's preparatory committee. At that meeting the union was legally recognized and preparations for elections began.

F was elected as the first President of the union and three of his close followers were members of the Executive Committee which consisted of six workers. Almost the same leadership dominated the union activity for the next four years when there were continuous disputes between the union and the management. During this period the leadership was able to consolidate its position with the workers by persuading the management to agree on basic demands such as permanent service for all workers, an agreed

wage structure, etc. The following are the main examples of the union's success:

- 1) The union leadership initiated the first strike, for three days, in November 1962, and led the management to accept the workers demands. 42
- 2) In early 1967 the factory was bankrupt and it was sold to the G.I.C. company group. This was mainly due to the fact in 1965 the MCPDM had been established and had effectively competed with the old factory. The transfer involved difficult problems concerning employment benefits that had accrued to the workers over the previous seven years. The union handed a petition to the Labour Bureau seeking a solution to the problem. Before the transfer was made, the Labour Bureau had asked for a meeting between all the parties concerned: the union, the management, and the new owner. The meeting was presided over by the Labour Dispute's Officer; and the new owner agreed to observe the workers' rights for past service and to employ them with new contracts.
- 3) By mid-1967, after six months service, the new management decided to close down the factory and transfer its machinery to the MCPDM, and the problem concerning rights of workers arose anew. The management had to dismiss the workers who were to be paid for the six months service under the new management as well as for the past seven years as had already been agreed. In addition to this, they were to receive payment of four months' wages for each worker as compensation. 43 The union argued firmly that the workers should have the choice of either accepting their full rights and leaving or of continuing to work in the new factory (the MCPDM). After lengthy negotiations with the union and correspondence with the Labour Bureau, the management decided to distribute the willing workers among the sister companies of the GIC. About 170 out of a total labour force of 310, agreed to continue in their jobs after settling their former rights. The 170 workers were then to be distributed among other companies according to the capacity of each, <sup>44</sup> and 25 were transferred to work in the MCPDM.

This incident represented the end of the first phase in the history of the union and its leadership. The important points arising out of it are a) the consolidation of the leadership, b) the proof of the leadership's ability to challenge the management, c) the popularity gained by the union leaders among the workers, especially F, the President who also benefited a lot from his close contacts with the Labour Bureau and with leaders of the older trade unions (especially the Railway Workers' Trade Unions). This was particularly important between 1961-1964 when trade union activities were officially banned.

When the question of workers' redistribution was raised, F was involved in a direct argument with the manager of the old factory who was to become the new manager of the MCPDM in 1967. The latter suggested that he should himself select the workers for the MCPDM. F disagreed and suggested that the choice be made by the union. The manager argued that he would accept any 25 workers except F, who was alleged to be the cause of all the past troubles. The Director of the Labour Bureau rejected the manager's request, and F and 24 workers selected duly joined the labour force of the MCPDM. From my interviews with the workers and Personnel employees, I discovered that a majority of the 24 workers transferred were from Kordofan and they constituted a substantial part of the following of F and the three other founders of the union.

#### Phase II (1967-1973)

The first trade union in the MCPDM was founded in the last quarter of 1965. F and his fellow workers had joined the factory in mid-1967. The union annual elections for the new session were due six months later. F and his three main supporters, were well known to the workers and easily won the elections. F became the President of the union for another four years. The first session of his presidency (1967-1968) was seen by him and his associates as a continuation of the past and as a time for further consolidation of their position. By this time, the workers had been employed according to personal contracts and the union firmly demanded well-defined terms of employment and a grading system for the determination of wages. These demands led to a series of events which resulted in the suspension of 12 workers who were alleged to have had a hand in spreading discontent. The union then threatened to strike and asked for: a) the immediate release of the suspended workers and b) the dismissal of the Assistant Manager (Production) and the head supervisor of workers accused of conspiracy against the workers. The problem was presented to the Labour Bureau and the management accepted



the union's demands.

The composition of the leadership had throughout been dominated by workers coming from one regional area, namely Kordofan. The Kordofanians were over-represented among the members of the Executive Committee (F and his main supporters out of a total of seven). But it is difficult to interpret this as the relevance of ethnicity without considering other factors and looking at certain incidents in the later history of the union.

#### The Competition for Leadership

In 1971 F was not nominated for the election to the union's committee because he was away on a course organized by the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation (S.W.T.U.F.) However, his three fellow leaders were elected. The period that followed was marked by constant conflict within the union's leadership. The other four members of the committee were also Westerners from Darfur. F's fellow leaders noticed that the Darfurians were well prepared and organized for the election. This was apparent in the internal voting of the Executive Committee. The Darfurian workers voted for each other and the three old leaders (from Kordofan) were excluded from the important positions they had previously occupied. (President, General Secretary and Financial Secretary). These positions were now occupied by the Darfurians. The President of the union, K, in that session was a woman who had secured the votes of the female workers in the labelling department. Later, the female worker told me that they had voted for her because, as a woman, she was regarded as "one of us".

The new faction of Darfurians in the union began voicing criticisms of the way in which the former leadership (F's committee) had handled the union's affairs. K argued that F had pursued a "moderate" line and that the union's leadership should be "militant" and "political". F was informed about these developments and of the criticisms being mounted by K's faction, and private meetings were held in F's house to organize a campaign against K's faction for the next elections.

The results of the new elections for 1972-73 brought a measure of success to both factions which had to combine to form the Executive Committee of the union. K, won the majority of the workers' votes and her faction in the union (three members including herself) was planning to make her the President for the second time. However, the balance of power between the two factions was changed by the results of the internal voting of the Executive Committee's members, and F became the President of the union for 1972-73, with K as Vice-President.

At that time allegations were made by F and his faction that K had mobilized her ethnic ties among workers from Darfur to win the majority of votes.<sup>45</sup> Two old informants claimed that a large proportion of the workers came from K's area of origin in Darfur. F's supporters had also made other serious allegations in their elections campaign. In particular, K's Executive Committee of 1971-72 was accused of embezzlement of the union funds. F and his faction revived the issue in the first meeting of the Executive Committee in 1972-73 and demanded a re-examination of the financial records. After investigation K and her supporters were held responsible and were dismissed from the committee.

At this juncture K alleged that F's committee was dominated by his "home-fellows" and accused him of removing her and her supporters from the Executive Committee to give their positions to his "own people". These allegations were countered by F's faction that K and her followers were Darfurians trying themselves to gain control of the union. By then, K had started to organize opposition to F among the workers, and she emphasised that the union was now under the domination of Kordofanians.

However, despite the composition of the two factions and despite accusations of ethnic interests, the conflict can also be seen in straightforward political and ideological terms. Thus the split in the union leadership can be interpreted as being between conflicting ideologies within the industrial framework. K was a High Secondary School Graduate

and a member of the Sudan Communist Party (S.C.P.). Terms such as "moderate", "militant" and "political" had often been used in the Executive Committee meetings in a way which indicated differences between K's and that of her faction on the one hand, and F's position on the other. The current political events of that period had reinforced the development of a confrontation between "moderates" and "militants". The Military Regime had banned political parties in May 1969. In 1970 the Umma Conservative Party had received its final blow in the Gezira Abba massacre. In July 1971, the S.C.P. was condemned after an attempted coup d'etat. Thus, the struggle for the union leadership can be seen as an expression of a wider struggle between supporters of different political parties for the control with workers' organizations as the only potential form of opposition to the regime. F was alleged to be a strong supporter of the Umma Party, even though he never admitted this, It could be argued that mobilization of workers by each faction made ethnicity relevant in the conflict over the leadership of the union. To clarify this, I examine what happened in three situations arising out of the conflict:

- 1) After the expulsion of K and one of her supporters from the Executive Committee of the union, she appealed to the S.W.T.U.F. The latter accepted her appeal on condition that she should succeed in calling a meeting of over two-thirds of the workers at the headquarters of the S.W.T.U.F. 46 F's faction again alleged that K appealed to ethnic affinity by approaching the workers who came from Darfur. Whatever the case, K was able to attract the required number of workers to the meeting, and she formed a new Executive Committee, of 11 members this time, without any of F's supporters. She became the President of the union with a committee of 11 Darfurians. F's faction commented on this incident as a case of, in their own words, "Pure ethnicity". Their allegations were supported by the fact that all the committee members were new recruits, inexperienced in trade union activities. The average length of their industrial career ranged between one and three years only. By then, therefore, there were in effect two unions, each one claiming to be legitimate. F's committee was dominated by Kordofanians and the whole membership of K's faction was Darfurian.

- 2) F's faction then appealed to the High Court<sup>47</sup> claiming for recognition on the grounds that K's committee had been fraudulently formed. F's faction refused to recognize K's committee or to disband its own. The confrontation involved considerable aggression and physical violence. The affair was described by one of the Personnel employees as "an ideological and ethnic" conflict between two factions of union leaders.
- 3) K's faction then mobilized their support among the workers, who at that time constituted the majority, to stage a strike. Their main demand was the dismissal from work of F and his fellow leaders, the General Manager, and the Assistant Managers of Production and Administration. K claimed that F was using ethnic relations to create divisions among the workers and that the management was supporting him. F's faction did not, of course, join the strike. In the event, the strike action failed and the management reported the case to the Labour Bureau. F's union was then recognized by the management and, on the initiative of the Labour Bureau's Director, F's Executive Committee was requested to report on the event and to examine the workers' files. As a result, 137 workers were dismissed including K and her supporters. A large proportion of the dismissed workers were Darfurians. This fact is reflected in the figures given in Table XVII which shows that the majority of workers were of Kordofanian origin. Yet my informants, including F, maintained that Darfurians were in a majority in the labour force. It is difficult to come to a firm conclusion about the effect of the dismissals on the ethnic composition of the workers. It is also difficult to be clear, on the information available to me, of the full implications of the above developments for my main arguments.

### Summary

As pointed out earlier, in his study of the Railway African Union in Uganda, Scott argued that "tribalism" played an important role in the leadership competition in the union leadership.<sup>48</sup> He interpreted the conflict as a rivalry between two tribal groups, the basic motivation of each being the furtherance of its members' economic interests. In a later analysis of the same union, Grillo criticised the way in which Scott saw the conflict as being grounded on a "basically tribal rivalry".<sup>49</sup> I would tend to agree with Grillo's conclusion that in such situations:

...the tribal factor may play an important part as one, but only one, of the weapons that leaders use for the struggle for power. What is basic here is not "tribal rivalry" so much as a system in which competition is fundamentally important and which provides a multiplicity of sources from which the competitors can draw support. 50

The above account of the leadership conflict in the union of the match factory workers, certainly indicates that ethnic relations were

manipulated by the workers at certain phases in the union's history. The earlier phase, 1961-67, was characterized primarily by conflict between the union and the management. During that period the union, under the leadership of F, was able to strengthen its position and to mobilize the workers vis-a-vis the management. Notwithstanding the composition of the leadership which was dominated by Kordofanians, and although workers from Darfur were well represented in the factory's labour force, the issues current during that phase seem to have rendered ethnic relations irrelevant. However, during the latter part of the second phase, political issues derived from a wider context, resulted in an ideological conflict between two factions of union leaders, who used their respective ethnic ties to mobilize support. (Allegations of the use of ethnicity were made by both factions, but no one admitted that his or her faction did so).

My basic argument is that ethnic appeals were certainly made and ethnic links were manipulated but that this was done as part of a wider political and ideological battle rather than in any attempt to bring advantage to a particular group of workers or to a section of the community based on its area of origin, whether Darfur or Kordofan.<sup>51</sup> I thus maintain that in order to analyse this situation, it is necessary to look at related issues. In this way I should differentiate the various issues at hand in order to find the principle which was made relevant in any one situation. This can be achieved by depicting two phases, the first refers to union-management relationship, and the second refers to workers-union relationship. As we already saw, the first phase of the union history was characterized by the strained union-management relationship. The issues then raised were workers' demands which had been denied by the management. During that phase the conflict was thus clearly identified on the basis of opposed interests. Here ethnicity seems to be irrelevant to understand the conflict of interests.

However, during the second phase, particularly the later part of the union history, the main issue to emerge was the political mobilization among the competitors for union leadership. Here, the mobilization of workers by each faction of union leaders was structured by the social differentiation of workers, i.e. into ethnic categories, mainly Kordofanians and Darfurians. Support was then mobilized for particular candidates by the appeal to ethnic identities. In this case, ethnicity is relevant to understand the situation.

### Conclusions

The above events that had occurred in the brewery and the match factory demonstrate the way in which ethnicity was made relevant in certain situations derived from the industrial framework. In his study of a cement factory in Nigeria, Soley, arguing on similar lines to Grillo, indicated that ethnic identity was a "resource", among other resources, that the workers could use in particular situations.<sup>52</sup> He conceived the factory as an "arena" where workers bargained for the use or non-use of the resources they derived from the multiplicity of "positions" they occupied both inside and outside the factory. In this sense, it seems to me that Soley only conceives the worker as defined by the sum of resources, in relation to the number of positions he occupies, both in the factory and the community. This complete divorce between the workers' position inside and outside the factory points to Soley's failure to see the workers as defined by their objective situation in the totality of the social system of differentiation as reinforced by their position in the organizational structure of the factory. Accordingly, he argues that conflict is endemic in the factory situation not because of the existence of two opposed categories, workers and management, but because the workers are placed in different positions derived, for instance, from "tribal" membership, particular wage groups, or particular sections in the factory. But, as Grillo argues, there are "other possible

lines of differentiation which derived (in his case study) from the East African Railways and Harbours framework, especially the departmental structure. Since each sub-unit of a department has a specific organizational function, its members are united by a common work interest".<sup>53</sup> Such a "common work interest" was, for instance, very marked among the cooling section workers in the brewery when they voiced their grievances to the union and mobilized opposition vis-a-vis the management. This incident could not be adequately analysed in terms of the cooling section workers' positions as being in conflict with that of the brew house workers, which would seem to be the way Soley would suggest. The conflict can best be analysed by conceiving both departments workers in one objective position in the industrial framework as defined by "structured opposition".

I have used the notion of "structured opposition" to illustrate the way in which articulation of ethnic relations is made relevant in the industrial context. My argument is that by virtue of their position in the authority system of the industrial framework, it is more useful to view the workers' positions as basically opposed to that of management. In this context, it is possible to delineate the issues which make ethnicity relevant in some, but not all, situations in the factory. This was illustrated in the first event in the brewery when the workers in the cooling section mobilized their "sectional" rather than their ethnic relations

Moreover, ethnicity should not be viewed as a static phenomenon. In the urban situation ethnic boundaries can potentially expand or contract to accommodate different circumstances. In the second event in the brewery, we saw how the three Nubian groups were subsumed in one category for organizational purposes. And in the match factory, the two rival union leaders mobilized support respectively from Kordofanians and Darfurians, who in most other situations are commonly jointly categorized as "Westerners". In both cases, ethnic relations were not articulated

to protect specific economic interests, either for the cooling section workers or the Nubian workers. However, workers did take advantage of ethnicity as a relatively easy way of mobilizing support for their common situation and common aim of protesting against the authority system to which they were all subjected.

Yesufu has argued, like Scott, that "tribal" organization was carried over into class institutions and proved divisive within the trade unions in Nigeria and Uganda.<sup>54</sup> Such conclusions imply that conflict in the industrial situation is structured by the workers membership of different ethnic groups. But we have seen that the conflict between the two factions of union leaders in the match factory was rooted in different political ideologies about the roles and functions which they considered appropriate for workers' organizations to play in the industrial situation at large. Ethnic relations were articulated only so that one faction or the other would be able to adopt a different strategy to mobilize workers' opposition against the management. Thus, on the structural level, the domination of the union leadership by one ethnic group or another does not necessarily imply conflicting interests between these groups or between them and their organization. In another situation, Oganova argues similarly:

For example, Trade Union membership of the Mombasa, Kenya, dock workers are organized in a form that bears a class character, but approximately 90 per cent of the Union membership is from the Luo cultural group. Thus, this Trade Union has a partly ethnic character which evidently is the result of evolution of an organization of members of the same cultural group into an organization based on common class interests. 55



FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER IV

1. Epstein, (1958) op.cit.
2. T. Yesufu, (1962), op.cit., 81-82.
3. R. Scott, (1966), op.cit.
4. Ibid., 30.
5. R. Grillo, (1969), op.cit., 297-321.
6. Ibid., 317.
7. O. Soleye, (1970), op.cit.,
8. A. Peace, (1974), op.cit.
9. Ibid., 142
10. Peace was particularly interested in showing how the workers' actions can be interpreted as expressions of class consciousness.
11. The waste of the mashing process is taken out through a machine and usually sold as fodder.
12. The production process in the cooling section should normally take about three months, but because of the increasing demands for beer since the late 1960s, this process has been reduced to four-six weeks.
13. Another essential department for the production process is the Engineering section. The total labour force in this unit is 118, of whom 22 are considered to be "staff". This category ranges from mechanical and electrical engineers to clerks and foremen. The remaining personnel are predominantly skilled workers. An important department of this section is responsible for all repairs and makes some instruments used in the factory.
14. The average salaries and wages for all who work in nationalized public corporations tend to be appreciably higher than in the private sector.
15. There are temporary workers who are employed on a casual basis and paid per day. They are not officially registered in the Personnel Department and are not entitled to any of the privileges enjoyed by "permanent" workers. They have no right to join the workers' trade union. Upgrading of casual workers to permanent status is by no means guaranteed, and temporary employment may at times extend to years. Until such time as they are given permanent status, they are liable to be sacked at a moment's notice on the grounds that their employment was based on temporary requirements which no longer exist. Their situation is thus comparable to that of the building workers, discussed in the second part of this thesis.
16. See Hale, (1971), op.cit., and Hassan Dafalla, (1975), op.cit.

17. Here I take the Nubians to include those who "...live along the Nile, in Egyptian territory from Aswan to Halfa and in the Sudan to Halfa district and Dongola as far south as el-Debba where the river swings northward", J. Trimmingham, Islam in the Sudan, (1949), 7.
18. El Haj Omer, "Nubian Immigrants in Karima Town", a B.Sc. Honours Dissertation, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Khartoum, (1973), 9.
19. See Hale, (1971), op.cit., Hassan Dafalla, (1975), op.cit., and Lobban, (1978) op.cit.
20. This group consists of five different enterprises. Dr. Khalil Osman, who is the GIC representative in Sudan, is the General Director of the group as well as the Chairman of each company's Board of Directors.
21. This point has been fully discussed by Al-Sadaty, (1972), op.cit.
22. F. Barth, (ed.) (1969) "Introduction" in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social organization of Culture Difference, (1969) 10.
23. Mitchell, (1957), op.cit., Southall, (1961), op.cit.
24. I. Wallerstein, "Ethnicity and National Integration in West Africa", Cahiers D'Etudes Africaines, I, 3 (1960).
25. In 1965 the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) was formed to control the industrial enterprises which were owned by the State at that time. In March 1971 the I.P.C. was formed to succeed the I.D.C. in the administration of the enlarged public sector. The I.P.C. was, however, still created as a part of a larger body comprising six public corporations headed by a unifying council as provided for by The Public Sector Corporations Act, 1971.
26. The average gross sales in each day amount to over £525,000.
27. I mentioned earlier that the packing process had needed at least eight workers. This change led to the re-allocation of the packing workers to other departments.
28. This is apart from the workers in the engineering section who had largely received training for their particular jobs.
28. These workers are exposed to many occupational hazards; a) the very low temperatures in the cooling section and the high temperatures of the boilers in the brew house, b) they treat the tanks with sodium oxide which has dangerous effects on the skin, c) the beer is injected with carbon dioxide which has adverse effects on breathing, d) in the filtration department, the filters and pipes are washed with water vapour which is dangerous.
30. The Labour Bureau is one of the departments of the Ministry of Service and Administrative Reform. Its main job was to approve conditions of service, to register workers' unions, and to resolve industrial conflicts that occurred between employers and the trade unions. However, after the concentration of the nationalized industrial enterprises under the control of the I.P.C., such issues were to be resolved within the administrative structure of the Corporation. The Bureau still performs the same functions as regards all private establishments.

31. The two shifts were: a) the morning shift, from 6.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and b) the evening shift, from 2.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.
32. This was in accordance with Clause 4, in Section II of the Order, which says: "Overtime rates may be paid for extra hours that extend beyond the working day (which was 8 hours). Each hour of overtime work will be enumerated as equivalent to 1½ hours of ordinary work on week days, and 2 hours on rest days and at night (after 10.30 p.m.)"
33. A woollen uniform composed of a shirt and trousers were to be supplied because of the low temperatures in the unit.
34. Peace, (1974) op.cit., 158.
35. This is a kind of thick pancake, Gurasa mixed with dry meat sauce.
36. This stereotype matches the characteristics of the Nubians social organization in the town, especially the Halfawiyin. This is reflected in their relative social and residential segregation in some areas, their particular voluntary associations, and in their endogamous marriages.
37. The details and implications of this change have already been discussed in Section I of this chapter.
38. These are as follows:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>
Cooling section	2
Engineering section	2
Brew house department	2
Bottling department	3
Empties department	1
Raw materials department	1
Storage department	1

39. El Haj A. Bilal Omer (1973), op.cit., 9.
40. The first labour union, the Workers' Affairs Association (W.A.A.) was organized by the workers of the Sudan Railways during 1946-47. Following the promulgation of the Trade Union Ordinance in 1949, workers started to organize in large numbers. However, the creation of a labour federation did not come until 1950 when the Sudan Workers' Trade Union Federation (S.W.T.U.F.) was constituted. From then until its dissolution in 1971, the Federation came to play a recognized role in national politics. Its close alliance with the Sudanese Communist Party led the S.W.T.U.F. and the labour movement to a confrontation with successive national governments. Thus, all labour organizations were dissolved and their leaders prosecuted by the Military Regime of 1958. It was not until late 1960, when a new Trade Union Ordinance was passed, that workers were allowed to form trade unions. However, under the new act the processes of forming and registering unions in the labour bureau were deliberately prolonged and subjected to the approval of the authorities in the bureau. This was clearly reflected in the drop of the total union membership from 86,355 workers organized in 135 unions in 1958 to 61,959 members organized in 70 unions in 1960. (See, Abdel Rahman E. Ali Taha, 1970). For a detailed account

of the trade union activities see Saad ed Din Fawzi, The Labour Movement in the Sudan: 1946-1955, (1957) also Abdel Rahman E Ali Taha, (1970) The Sudanese Labour Movement: A Study of Labour Unionism in a Developing Society, (University of California, Ph.D. 1970).

41. By then, the workers agreed that half of their monthly contributions would go to F and his family to support them during the suspension period.
42. Strike action was forbidden by the military regime but the union was granted a permission from the Labour Bureau's Director on the grounds that it was a labour dispute and didnot entail any political motivations.
43. These payments were made in accordance with Clause 10, Item 2/D of The Employees and Employers Ordinance (Modified) 1968.
44. These workers were distributed among the five G.I.C. sister companies as follows:

<u>Company</u>	<u>No. of workers</u>
Textiles	108
Marches	25
Chemical products	15
Glass production	12
Medical products	<u>10</u>
Total	107

45. As mentioned earlier, K was able to secure the women's votes in the labelling department, a fact which may partially explain her overwhelming victory over other competitors.
46. According to clause 31 of the Trade Unions Act 1971, p.10, "The Trustee General (of Trade Union) may order the dissolution of any Trade Union on proof to his satisfaction that the trade union or Federation has failed to achieve the objectives set out in its basic constitution".
47. Clause 3, Section 2, p.10, in the Trade Unions Act 1971, states that "Any party aggrieved by the said order of dissolution, may within 30 days, thereof, appeal to the High Court whose decision shall be final".
48. Scott, 1966) op.cit.
49. Grillo, (1969) op.cit.
50. Ibid., 320.
51. This was basically Yesufu's and Scott's argument in interpreting the conflict between leaders of Nigerian workers and East African railwaymen respectively.
52. Soley, (1970) op.cit.
53. Grillo, (1969) op.cit., 318.

54. Yesufu, (1962) op.cit., and Scott, (1966) op.cit.
55. A.Oganova, "The Development of Awareness of Class Interests among the Urban Proletariat in the Countries of Tropical Africa", International Journal of Sociology, Summer 1977.

PART THREE

CHAPTER V

The Building Industry in Sudan: Problems of Employment,  
of Work, of Workers' Organization, and of the Constraints  
the Industry Imposes on its Workers

## Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to give background information on construction activities in the Sudan; to study the dynamics, mechanisms, and constraints of the small building enterprise; and to discuss the problems of employment in this industry and the kind of workers' organization that has developed in response. Closely related to these issues is the question of labour relations. The discussion of these issues will allow us later to compare the nature of problems encountered in this particular work context with those experienced by factory workers in the wider industrial and urban context. These questions are crucial to our understanding of the employment opportunities open to particular groups of migrant workers; namely, those with little or no education or specialised training, and those with great advantages in these respects. The data will enable us to shed light on the relative stabilization of the second category of workers as compared to the relative instability of the first. We shall also be able to see how the employers exploit the fluid situation in the building industry, particularly in regard to labour recruitment, wages, labour disputes, and related matters. Most importantly, too, the data show how and why certain migrants have regular access to jobs in the building industry, why the Nuer are overwhelmingly concentrated in this occupation, and how they have developed their own sound organization within it.

In chapter I, I have discussed the problems emanating from the uneven development of the "modern" part of the Sudanese economy regarding employment opportunities. The limited growth of production activities outside the manufacturing sector, which is itself very restricted, and the consequent meagre employment opportunities on the labour market, have compelled a considerable part of the urban labour force to habitually resort to casual employment. A large number of migrants are thus relegated to temporary employment on building sites and in other enterprises

characterized by "non-organized" employment.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the building workers' earnings are actually below the minimum wage. They are also unprotected regarding government actions or trade unions' pressures, or both.

Despite the importance of construction activities in the economy of any country, little information is available on the labour force employed in the building industry in the Sudan, and some of the difficulties encountered in conducting this study of workers in private building firms are by no means peculiar to the Sudan. In a study of labour in the building industry in Mexico, Germidis attributes these difficulties to

the fact that in the construction sector in general, the undertaking is not treated as a 'production unit' since work is effected wholly or partly outside it, while the number of workers maintaining relatively permanent relations with the undertaking represents only a part of the total work force...the proportion of the work force enjoying permanent status in building firms is very low, while the firms themselves are often short-lived; they are often set up simply to complete a specific public contract. 2

Similar features will be revealed throughout my discussion of the characteristics of a small building enterprise in Khartoum.

#### The Structure and Organization of the Building Industry in the Sudan

The main characteristics of construction activities in the Sudan are their dependence on private entrepreneurship and on a casual labour force. The permanent labour force in the industry is confined to public works and government schemes. Most of the latter activities are carried out by the Ministry of Construction and Public Works and the Roads and Bridges Public Corporation. This "direct" labour constitutes not 30 to 40% of the total labour force of these departments. This fact indicates that even here there is still heavy reliance on casual labour and there is no classification of contractors or private construction enterprises. In other words; there are no official grades according to criteria such as financial position, professional and other skills or experience, though these factors are taken into consideration in awarding individual contracts.



There are comparatively large building contractors with substantial working capital. According to the ILO report of 1975, the majority of the local contractors are poorly organized and without any serious commitment to the industry.<sup>3</sup> Many of them are general traders without proper plant or equipment, or a permanent labour force who recruit local staff and employees if they obtain a contract, but break up their enterprises immediately if no other possible profitable work is at hand. This reflects the fact that construction is a casual undertaking on the level of both employers and employees.

All these facts indicate the lack of systematic information on the structure and functioning of the construction industry. The only available published sources are, a) The Symposium on Reduction of Building Costs by the National Council of Research, Khartoum 1974, and b) The International Labour Office Report on Employment in the Sudan, 1975. I will therefore rely primarily on the information gathered during the course of my fieldwork on a number of building sites in Khartoum.

Work in the construction sector is characterized by the discontinuity of building contracts. This is because the conclusion of contracts is subject to fluctuations in general economic conditions, to the availability of capital (cash) in the clients (plot owners) hands, to seasonal variations in climatic conditions, to the distribution and allocation of land plots to individuals and to the availability of building materials. In view of this, a contractor does not normally employ a permanent staff and labour force. Instead, he devotes all his efforts to maximizing his returns out of contracts at hand, "so as to tide him over slack periods", as put by the ILO report.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is not surprising to find that a number of contractors with very low levels of formal education and relevant training have managed to take the lead in this industry.<sup>5</sup> What is basically needed to achieve a modicum of success is the kind of shrewdness that enables one to obtain and execute simple contracts.<sup>6</sup>

### Employment: A Characterization of the Labour Force

As noted earlier, the nature of discontinuities embodied in building contracts has mitigated against the growth and establishment of a permanent labour force. A first important point that follows from this is that the level of skills achieved by the workers is on the whole very low. There is little opportunity or motivation for any steady accumulation of experience that might induce the labourers to plan their careers. Secondly, the working conditions are poor: wages are low, safety procedures are slack, and there is an almost complete lack of benefits or welfare facilities. Above all, there are no protective measures provided for by trade unions. Some contractors "apply financial incentives in the form of a crude piece-work system, but there is a general lack of positive motivation to increase skills."<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, and most significantly from a sociological point of view, is the way in which these labourers have come to define their situation as a response to the contractors' short run maximization of profits.

My field study shows that most construction workers define any building operation as a short term undertaking from which to gain a sum of money rather than a permanent job or career. This gives rise to three modes of response among the building labour force:

- a) For the skilled category of workers (builders, plasterers, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc.), they see any such situation as transitional and only worth joining while they await the opportunity to enter a public enterprise or to emigrate. The flow of skilled workers to the rich Arab countries such as Libya, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, has been studied as has the resultant shortage of such skills in the construction sector. <sup>8</sup>
- b) Unskilled workers are constantly on the lookout for employment opportunities in more regular and better paid jobs in manufacturing industry.
- c) Those who cannot find other employment remain with their employers as long as possible while oscillating between this precarious situation in town and their areas of origin. <sup>9</sup>

The following quotation from the ILO report sums up the main points made above:

It is difficult to assess the current level of employment in this (the building) industry. Even the public sector relies heavily on locally recruited casual labour, and the overwhelming proportion of private contractors' labour force are "hired and fired" according to short-term requirements. Furthermore, it appears that much of the labour force changes continuously as young unskilled workers tend to spend a few months or years in the industry, moving from firm to firm and job to job, as a prelude to returning home to pursue subsistence agriculture or in the hope of obtaining better paid and more secure employment in manufacturing industry. About half of the total construction labour force in the Khartoum areas is stated to be composed of Southern migrants with no firm commitment to the building industry and only a limited range of basic skills. The problem has been aggravated by the flow of skilled workers, such as plant operators, carpenters, plasterers to neighbouring countries particularly Libya and Saudi Arabia, where considerably higher wages can be obtained. 10

#### Work Organisation: A Building-Site View

The information here presented was gathered during my field study among a group of building workers on nine building sites,<sup>11</sup> and is intended to explain the internal organization of site-work, the processes of labour recruitment, and the relationship between the different participants in the overall production system. Stress is laid on the unemployment threat engendered in the industry, on labour conflicts and on the procedures employed for the resolution of disputes. All these features of the industry will later be compared with situations of manufacturing industry.

#### Factors and Processes of Production

The erection of a building involves the use of land, capital and labour.

- a) Land: The land is paid for by the client after he has received the right of use or purchased a certain plot, including all natural elements and services available in that area.
- b) Capital: (i) The cost of materials, raw or manufactured, is usually paid by the client to the contractor, (ii) Plant and equipment are supplied by the contractor. The latter are either purchased or hired and the contractor also bears the running costs and the transportation of the equipment from site to site, or from the market place to site. Building materials and equipment are usually kept in the same building site under the guard of a watchman (Ghaffir) paid by the contractor.

- c) Labour: This includes the labour force either producing components and elements or performing services. It also includes consultation fees paid to the designer or architect. On the site itself, labour includes skilled labourers, builders, carpenters, and the like, as well as unskilled manual workers (Tulab). 12

The processes involved in the production of a building normally are as follows:

- 1) Professional consultation and local authority approval. This is a pre-building stage and is usually conducted or negotiated by the client. Consultation is mainly with an architect who draws the plans usually according to the client's specifications in regard to number of rooms, storeys, etc.
- 2) Estimates of the total costs are drawn by the designer and the contractor. In most cases the estimates are made by the contractor according to his experience of building material costs and his familiarity with the labour market. The client then supplies the contractor with capital in the form of liquid assets. It is unusual for the client to pay the full costs at one time; more commonly, they are paid in instalments - the method of payment depends on the client's financial situation and his acquaintance with the contractor. This also determines the building time-span.
- 3) The third phase marks the practical start on site-work. It includes the preparatory work of clearing and marking the plot. This is usually carried out by the contractor himself with the help of one or two manual workers.

At the plant level, the participants are the following:

- 1) The designer, whose job it is to design the building on paper. He is seldom present at the building-site.
- 2) The contractor, who is the sole employer and the person responsible for all the building processes and operations, for recruitment of labour, for the direct finance of all operations and for paying the labour force. The basic work equipment is either owned or hired by him. Builders and other skilled workers usually have their own simple tools. On the other hand, equipment and tools used by the manual workers, the Tulab are provided by the contractor. (These include pick-axes, mixing machines, scaffolding, vibrators, shovels, spades, trowels, etc.). Purchase of most building materials is done by the contractor. In the last few years, there has been a severe shortage of building materials, particularly cement. The normal practice now is that the client supplies the contractor with cement, leaving the purchase of bricks, timber, tiles, aggregate, sand, etc. to the contractor. Site-work is directly supervised by the contractor himself, who is in face-to-face relationship with practically all his workers, especially the builders and Tulab because they are the most regular attendants throughout the production process. When the contractor is engaged in more than one contract, he works out his own schedule to transfer workers from one site to another.
- 3) The Skilled Labour: This category includes builders, black-smiths, carpenters, renderers, plasterers, and painters. Except for the builders, none of these is present during all phases of building. Hence they are employed on the basis of a piece-work system and are

paid daily; they in turn employ their own manual labourers.

4) Unskilled Labour: (the subject of the study). The unskilled workers, or Iulab, do the bulk of manual work involved in the various building operations. They are hired on a day-wage basis, and are mainly responsible for: a) mixing cement, sand, and aggregate with water to make concrete, b) handling the mortar (the resultant mixture) with trowels (Gudaha), 13 c) digging the foundation trenches, d) fixing the concrete columns into the trenches by pouring the concrete into the steel plates in the trenches, e) installing the building framework and shuttering done by a carpenter. In addition, the manual workers perform various other tasks like transporting building materials and equipment from one site to another.

#### The Building Processes and Labour Requirements

Every contractor has a gang<sup>14</sup> of "semi-stable" workers. The number of workers varies according to the number of contracts undertaken by the individual contractor. I refer to them as "semi-stable" because, while they usually stay with one employer during their stay in town, they are not permanently employed and can be fired without notice. This happens according to the immediate labour requirements of the contractor. Employment thus depends on the contractor's own strategy, as will be described later.

Builders are employed on the same basis. Their skills are subject to the personal evaluation of the contractor. The pace of work depends on cooperation between the builders and the Iulab. Other things being equal, this determines the time taken to complete any building, and it is because of this that contractors normally prefer to employ groups of builders and Iulab that have previously worked together. The degree and nature of cooperation are often affected by the relations maintained between the different participants who have worked together for considerable periods. I observed that builders generally prefer manual workers who have worked with them before. One builder spoke to me in the following terms:

I like John, Shawish, and Kuku to work with me. They have been doing this job with me for more than six months. They now know the rules of the game. They do the mortar efficiently by mixing the right amounts of each component without any help or need for my directions. They handle the mortar for me in the proper time and at a good pace. They accept harsh remarks when I have to make them. But I encounter difficulties with newly recruited labourers which delay and obstruct the building process.

Staying with one contractor or builder does not, however, imply deep or permanent relationships. A builder may well quit work at any time if it suits him and the Tulab are then likely to move as well. Sometimes the contractor may fail to find a substitute, at least for a couple of days. Again the contract may expire or work may stop on one site for many reasons, e.g. shortage of building materials or finance. In such cases the Tulab will be unemployed until such time as the work is resumed. The threat of unemployment is ever present, as we shall see later.

Tulab work is essential to all phases of the building process, but the actual labourer requirements vary from one stage to another. The contractor's employment strategy determines the number of workers required at any time and the way the latter are transferred from one site to another. After outlining the various building phases and the labour requirements of each, I shall examine one particular contractor's strategy in using his workers.

- 1) Preparatory work on the site: This consists mainly of marking the site and is usually carried out by the contractor according to the designer's plan. A "senior worker" 15 and sometimes one other, assist the contractor. These workers are not paid for this as they will be given the job of digging after the marking is done.
- 2) Digging the foundation trenches: Work at this stage offers some income incentives because it is contracted on a piece-rate system. Sixty piastres, which is the average day-wage for a Tulba, is paid for each square metre dug. 16 The digging is exceptionally arduous. 17 Men with the requisite physique for such heavy work are scarce and this explains why they are paid relatively well. The "senior worker" usually undertakes the work himself with the help of a few others. In some cases some Westerners 18 come to the building sites looking for such piece-work jobs, even though they are not normally engaged in the ordinary Tulab work which they regard as degrading. Instead they look for jobs as Ghaffins or making tea and coffee to sell to the other workers.
- 3) After the foundation trenches have been dug they are ready for the concrete aggregate. At this stage either the contractor or builder supervises from 4 to 6 Tulab. The contractor's strategy is normally to reduce the number of workers to a minimum and to supervise the work himself rather than hiring a builder.

- 4) Fixing the steel bars into the trenches is usually done by a black-smith, who normally employs his own manual workers. In a few cases the blacksmith may need one or two Nuer Tulab to handle the steel bars for him. The blacksmith is hired by the employer on piece-work rates. The employment of Nuer Tulab at this stage is thus limited.
- 5) The next stage is to fix the steel columns into the trenches and then pouring the concrete into them. The enforcement of steel bars and concrete columns is usually a job for one builder with four manual workers. The Tulab are responsible for mixing the concrete and pouring it into the steel columns for the builder. This is considered to be a job for six workers, four to make the mixture and two to handle it, but the contractor told me that he could not afford to hire more than four. "If four men work hard they can do the job of six". His aim was, of course, to reduce the working labour force to a minimum.
- 6) The next stage marks the start of the actual building operations. The number of builders and workers varies in accordance with the strategy of the contractor. Usually two Tulab are assigned to each builder, one for making the mortar and the other for handing the bricks to the builder. The time taken to complete a contract depends on two main factors, (a) the availability of builders: since the early 1970s, the shortage of skilled workers has become relatively severe because of outmigration to rich neighbouring Arab countries, (b) the availability of building materials, particularly cement. The shortage of building materials has also affected operations markedly in the last few years.
- 7) The building operations outlined above continue until the ceiling is reached. Building will then cease for a while to allow the carpenters and blacksmiths to install the shutterings. This phase consists of fixing the wood framework and the steel plates by the carpenters and blacksmiths respectively. The latter normally have their own apprentices and manual workers and Nuer Tulab are seldom employed.
- 8) The next stage depends heavily on Tulab work as it is one of the most arduous and hardest operations throughout the production process. It involves concrete enforcement on the ceiling and relatively large numbers of workers are needed for this. The pay for this is either on a piece-rate system or on a daily basis. In the latter case, the wage is rather higher than in other unskilled work. This constitutes one of a few incentives for the Tulab in the industry. I was present on one occasion when eight additional workers were recruited over and above the fourteen "semi-stable" manual workers. The Tulab must at this stage work at high speed to keep up with the builders' pace in levelling the concrete on the ceiling. They perform the work under the direct supervision of the contractor and harsh pressure from their "senior worker". The "senior-worker" is responsible for running the concrete mixing machine. Other manual workers are engaged in filling the machine, two working on one of the four concrete components; cement, aggregate, sand and water; two in passing the trowels (Gudaha) of mixture along a queue of standing handlers who complete the chain leading up to those standing on the scaffolding and who in turn pass the trowels to others on the roof who pour the mixture on the ceiling floor for the buildings to level.

The operation described proceeds continuously from 6.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The labourers are then usually allowed a short interval of half an hour to take their breakfast. After work in this stage is finished, the contractor feels no obligation to extend employment, especially of the newly recruited Tulab, who are usually fired as soon as the work comes to an end.

The enforcement of concrete on the ceiling marks the end of phase I in the building process. In the case of a building of two or more storeys, phase II starts with the blacksmiths coming back to elongate the steel bars in preparation for the enforcement of new concrete columns and for the whole process to be repeated.

Some other operations involved in the production process may sometimes call for the employment of a few Tulab - these include rendering, plastering, electrical installation, fixing of tiles, and carpentry. But these operations are mainly done by the respective skilled workers who seldom employ Nuer Tulab. The industry also offers a few intermittent opportunities for Tulab as, for example, in aggregate vibration and on the removal of soil from the foundation trenches. But only one Tulba is usually employed on each of these jobs at a time. Contractors are reluctant to employ more than one worker for such jobs because they regard them as "interval" work to be carried out in a leisurely way, when there is no pressure on a building site.

#### Instability of Employment and the Absence of Trade Unionism

The above account is intended to explain why building sites offer only casual and intermittent employment for manual workers. Each enterprise recruits labour according to the number of contracts at hand. The contractor is not obliged to offer permanent employment so that labourers are hired and fired in response to the immediate situation. The haphazard growth of the industry in the past is the main reason underlying these problems.



The discontinuities that characterize the industry adversely affect the contractors' policies. A contractor's strategy of employment fluctuates greatly to match his quest for profit maximization. Firstly, the demand for buildings in the private sector leads to small contracts carried out with very small sums of money. For instance, one building operation of which I know stopped for more than 6 months because the client was short of money. Secondly, the industry suffers from a drastic shortage of building materials.<sup>19</sup> One contractor with whom I worked attributed this to government policy. Imports of building materials were freely permitted until the late 1960s, but in the early 1970s private imports were restricted in keeping with the political emphasis on local industrial protection. The supply of building materials is now controlled by the Ministry of Construction and Public Works and the related government departments. Priority is given to development projects and public works and about a half of construction is for the government. The problem of materials can be illustrated by reference to cement which is manufactured at two State-owned factories at Atbara and Rabak. Between them they have an output capacity of 320,000 tons per annum, but production is below capacity in both. Each produces an annual output of about 150,000 tons, whereas the estimated national requirement is at least 500,000 tons per annum. During the course of my field study, work was interrupted, and even completely stopped for several days and months on end, at many sites because of the shortage of building materials. Table XIX shows the periods of unemployment experienced by workers as a result of shortages of materials. Thirdly, the disorganization of the industry and the poor employment conditions have led to the steady flow of skilled labour to the rich Arab countries where wages are much higher, and the shortage of skilled workers directly affects the employment opportunities for manual workers. Fourthly, the organization of work in this industry, as I have already shown, is solely based on the individual contractor. His

immediate presence at the site bears on the problem of unemployment. This is because labourers are recruited for him, he finances the building operations, supervises and directs the work by himself. It is rare to find a contractor running such a small business who can afford to employ a "supervisor" or "manager" to run the work on his behalf. The contractor is the sole director and manager of his own business. Thus, his absence from the site for a while may cause a pause in the building processes. The contractor I encountered, for instance, comes from the Northern part of the country. When he goes back to his village in Eids<sup>20</sup> for holidays, or for other social occasions such as the death of a relative, work completely stops until he returns. Hence, the workers split to seek work with other contractors or go back home instead of consuming their savings in town. In view of the difficult employment situation in this industry, outlined above, many of them will remain unemployed over such special slack periods.

Building operations of the kind described scarcely amount to an "industry". In a modern factory work is performed according to set policies and procedures. Employment and recruitment policies are regularly assessed, as are the overall policies of the firm. But operations in the Sudanese building industry are

...more like different groups of actors, each doing an act in a play performed for one show only in an open air theatre where the scene was set by an entirely different group... The show is run for one group of spectators according to his or their own wish. Thus the spectator outlines the main lines of the play and each group director tries to play in harmony with the previous act as well as to make use of the existing scene under the mercy of the uncontrolled outdoor conditions. 21

Under these circumstances, for a contractor to maximize his returns he tends to work out a strategy of employment that enables him to reduce the number of employees to a minimum. I will give two more examples. The first is of an incident that followed an argument between a contractor and a client over slow progress at one site. The argument touched on the contractor's strategy of employment. When the building was at the

stage of concrete enforcement on the ceiling more labourers ought ideally to have been recruited. The client wanted the contractor to do this, but the contractor was reluctant. The total number of Tulab employed at that stage was 20 and they were intended to finish the work in three days. The client's argument was that the work could be finished in two days or less if the number of Tulab was doubled. But the contractor might have lost £S27 had he complied with the client's wishes. Table XVII explains this. It examines the two courses of action open to the contractor. Estimates of the total costs for each alternative are given to illustrate the difference. The total labour force would have been 22 in the first case and 42 in the second. This was because in each case not more than two builders would have been employed. The day-wage for the builder was £S2.50 and for a tulba is £S1.25. With 20 tulab the work would have been accomplished by the use of one mixing machine, but if the number had been doubled, two mixing machines would have been required.

TABLE XVIII Alternative Courses of Action Open to Contractors to Maximize Profits at a Certain Building Phase (Concrete enforcement)

Cours of Action	No. of expected days to finish	Costs in £S			Total Costs
		Hiring a Machine	Builders	<u>Tulab</u>	
The 1st case	3	21	15	75	£S111
The 2nd case	2	28	10	100	£S138

The table shows that if the contractor had employed more labour in a profitable way he would have needed 20 tulab (1st case in the table). However, in this way, he will use one more working day, which will be a loss for the client, but not for him since he will actually gain £S27. From another dimension, the contractor, by choosing the first course of action, was actually adding 20 to the number of unemployed tulab in that day.

Secondly, transferring of workers from one site to another also

clearly reflects the employment strategy followed by one contractor. Table XIX presents information on the transfer of tulab between seven sites being operated simultaneously by one contractor. The table is based on data gathered over a period of 30 days.<sup>22</sup>

TABLE XIX Employment of Day Labourers by one Building Contractor and the Transference of Workers Between 7 Sites over a Period of 30 Consecutive Days

Day	Number of Workers on different Sites							Total No. of Labourers
	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	
1	6	-	-	1	2	-	1	10
2	6	-	-	1	2	-	1	10
3	4	-	2	1	2	-	1	10
4	2	-	2	1	2	-	1	8
5	-	-	2	1	2	-	1	6
6	2	-	4	1	2	-	1	10
7	1	7	-	1	-	-	1	10
8	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	23
9	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	23
10	-	-	-	23	-	-	-	23
11	4	-	2	3	2	-	1	12
12	4	-	1	1	2	-	1	9
13	2	2	1	1	-	-	1	7
14	2	2	1	2	-	2	1	10
15	2	2	-	3	-	4	1	12
16	-	2	-	2	-	4	-	8
17	-	2	5	2	-	4	1	14
18	-	6	-	3	-	4	-	13
19	4	2	-	2	1	2	-	11
20	3	-	-	2	2	4	1	12
21	3	-	-	2	2	4	1	12
23	-	-	-	2	-	4	1	7
24	-	2	5	-	-	4	-	11
25	4	2	-	2	1	4	-	13
26	3	-	-	2	1	4	-	10
27	2	-	7	2	-	-	-	11
28	4	-	2	2	-	5	-	13
29	4	-	2	2	-	5	-	13
30	4	-	4	2	-	1	-	11

The table shows some of the fluctuations in the work force of a single employer, and on his deployment of workers on seven different building sites, over a period of 30 consecutive days. The table illustrates how discontinuities in building operators are interconnected with the number of manual workers employed at any one time. It also reflects the threat of unemployment that continuously faces the tulab in what is a "feast

or famine" type of situation. It is clear that the workers are used by the contractor according to the demands of the day. It can be seen that work never took place on all sites on any single day, and that the total number of workers taken on daily varied a great deal from the low total of six on one day to the high total of 23 on three days. On these three days work on site 4 was at the stage of concrete enforcement on the ceiling and this accounts for the fact that all available workers were employed. Over the 30 consecutive days there was constant chopping and changing of building operations between different sites. The employer transferred workers from one site to another at short notice and most were never guaranteed a day's work or a day's wage.

The absence of unionization or any sort of "formal" workers' organization in the industry aggravates the employment situation. The constitution of the Sudanese General Federation of Workers Trade Unions gives the workers the right to organize themselves in unions that cater for their common interests. However, the migratory character of the building workers has always been an obstacle <sup>to</sup> effective trade union organization.

The history of trade unionism in Sudan is one of success for some workers in public and private employment particularly in matters concerning minimum wages, allowances and other sorts of employment benefits.<sup>23</sup>

The Employers and Employed Persons Ordinance (1948) defines the relationship, rights and obligations of both parties. The Department of Labour was established to apply all labour legislation to improve employment conditions and to mediate in labour conflicts.<sup>24</sup> But not of these benefits and advantages apply to the building industry.

#### The Constraints of the Industry on the Workers' Occupational Mobility

In addition to the threat of unemployment, the workers in the industry are further constrained by the very poor chances of upward occupational mobility. Almost every Tulba remains a Tulba throughout

his occupational life in the industry. He cannot expect any wage incentive or any pay increments. Any wage increase that may come his way is a function of the general Tulab wages changes all over the Sudan in response to inflationary economic conditions. The only opportunity for a Tulba to upgrade himself is to learn one of the skilled occupations of builder, blacksmith, plasterer, or the like.<sup>25</sup> But the insecure nature of employment in the industry together with the continuous oscillation of migrants make it difficult for him even to aspire to this. Some informants told me of the difficulties they had encountered in their struggle to become builders; and my own observations suggest that builders are not willing to help the tulab to acquire any skill. The former call such skills the "secret" of the occupation. In the absence of any training institute or organization to teach building skills, they are only obtainable through experience, through contact with established builders and through personal observation.

One exceptional builder told me a long story about how he changed from being a Tulba to a builder. He comes from Kordofan in Western Sudan and started to work as a tulba in 1967. His ultimate aim was to be a builder. He worked as such for four years and then began to ask builders with whom he was working to teach him the job. He worked as a builder's assistant for six months while being paid as a tulba. He then bought the simple equipment needed for the job and started to look for work which he found with several contractors for periods ranging from two to seven days. This lasted intermittently for almost three years, but he was invariably laid off because of the poor quality of his work. In the end, however, he was accepted by one contractor on a relatively secure basis.

#### Workers' Organization

The sole organization of workers in this situation is based on "clusters" of "home fellows".<sup>26</sup> The migrant workers who come from the same

area recognize kinship relations of different degrees and tend to group themselves accordingly. Every "cluster" works with a single contractor. Each "cluster" is a closed grouping that caters for the common interests of its members and members of different "clusters" tend to avoid inter-mixing with others. The way in which labour is recruited by each contractor determines the formation of the "clusters". Each newcomer goes straight to his own "home fellows". The process by which "clusters" are formed is matched by organization into accommodation "cells". The essence of the overall system of organization is that it mitigates against the hardships of the employment and town life in general. The members of a "cluster" recognize the obligation to assist the newcomers in finding jobs and accommodation and in feeding them.

#### The "Senior Worker"

The key figure in this organization is the "senior worker". Seniority is achieved through<sup>a</sup>/relatively long period<sup>of</sup>/working in town for a particular contractor. The "senior worker" I came to know best had come to town eight years earlier and had worked with his present contractor for more than seven years. He first attached himself to the contractor when the latter was engaged in a contract outside Khartoum. He had never been back home.

The "senior worker" performs many functions that are essential to the enterprise. He does not have a "formal" position recognized by contractual or organizational roles, but his roles are conventionally recognized by both the contractor and the rest of the manual workers. It is very difficult to define the "senior worker" position precisely. His role is "intercalary" and is accepted by all participants in the enterprise.<sup>27</sup> This unstructured position and status he derives from experience gives him a particular status.

The role played by the "senior worker" in recruitment of labour is straightforward and he invariably asks his contractor to employ "home fellows". It is also a part of his normal duties to place newcomers in

jobs, and the latter expect him to persuade the contractor to give preference to "home fellows". Almost 95% of the workers I interviewed got their jobs through the present "senior worker". This is particularly evident at the peak stage of building, concrete enforcement. This manner of recruitment suits the contractors very well because members of a "cluster" readily fall under the supervision of their "senior worker". This reduces labour disputes and conflicts between the workers, and makes for "good" working relations.

The contractor on the site I studied told me about his experiences of employing Iulab from different "tribal" backgrounds in the following terms:

I used to employ a number of Dinka and Nuer tulab but not a single day passed without a fight. The members of the two groups had quarrels about trivial matters that in most cases had nothing to do with work. They used to bring their own personal conflicts to the workplace. The job of supervision was immensely difficult. A Nuer did not like to be directed by a Dinka and the opposite was also true. You can see from your stay with us here how the Nuer workers tend to accept the directions and remarks of Gamous.

Some disputes between individual workers from different "tribal" origins may of course be due simply to personal reasons. However, the history of conflict between the Nuer and the Dinka may very well contribute to hostile attitudes between them and one might expect these to be carried over into the work situation. (The conflicting attitudes of Nuer and Dinka towards what they regard as acceptable work is discussed in chapter VII).

Secondly, an informal personal relationship usually develops between a "senior worker" and his contractor. The contractor normally assigns to the "senior worker" certain tasks that lie beyond the actual site-work and the "senior worker" is seldom engaged in the ordinary Iulab work. The "senior worker" is normally the first to accompany a contractor to a new site, and we have been that he is usually asked to assist in the preparatory work of marking the plot. Another informal job done by the



"senior worker" is to maintain the building equipment. During my field work, Gamous frequently asked me to take him to the nearest market place to find a blacksmith to sharpen pick-axes and the like. The "senior worker" is not paid for such jobs. His only formal rewards are for marking a new site in the preliminary stage and for the initial digging which he controls.

Thirdly, on the building site the "senior worker" does work that marks him off from the other tulab. He only joins the "cluster" of workers at the stage of concrete enforcement, and we have seen that this phase is one of the most rewarding because pay is either based on a piece-work rate system or is higher than the average day wage.<sup>28</sup> The difficult nature of work in this stage necessitates the presence of the contractor and the "senior worker" for the close supervision of labourers. The latter is rarely himself engaged in the concrete mixing operations or in ordinary manual work. Instead he is usually occupied in relatively refined and less physically exacting work. He is held responsible for operating the concrete mixing machine while keeping a close eye on the performance of tulab. He directs and gives advice to those who do not cope with the fast work-pace. Somewhat paradoxically, however, he does engage in other work that does demand extra physical strength. Taking into consideration the harsh climate and the primitive equipment used, digging the foundation trenches is exceptionally arduous. But this contributes to giving the "senior worker" special status and recognition among his "home-fellows" who always say "this is man's work". The "senior worker" also draws additional regular income from his responsibilities as Ghaffir on one of the sites. Gamous was paid a monthly wage varying between £\$10.00 and £\$15.00 per month for this alone.

Fourthly, because employment is not based on a contractual relationship and because there is no recognized formal organization for workers in the private building industry, disputes often arise over wages and job

specifications, and it is the role of the "senior worker" to mediate in such situations. His special position makes his mediation acceptable to both parties. Appreciating the contractor's general employment strategy, the "senior worker" relies on persuasion "to put things right" and to please his "home-fellows" at the same time. I give two examples of cases in which the "senior worker" was able to reconcile employer and employees.

The first concerns an issue between the contractor and a tulba, John, over his transfer from one site to another on a day when the majority of workers were engaged in concrete enforcement (the most rewarding phase) at Site 6. After two hours of work at that site, the contractor asked John to join one of the builders on Site 3. John was reluctant to miss the extra pay he was due to receive on Site 6. He argued with the employer, especially at being told to transfer after he had already started work on Site 6. At this point, Gamous, the "senior worker", intervened in the argument and persuaded the contractor to allow John to remain on Site 6. The contractor acquiesced and accommodated by calling on the builder from Site 3 to join the group on Site 6.

The second case concerns a dispute between a number of workers and their employer that eventually led to the firing of one man. As explained earlier, work at the state of concrete enforcement moves fast and it is arduous. The only equipment used to facilitate the job is a concrete mixing machine. In the absence of a machine, the workers have to do all the work manually, using their bare hands and shovels. Using a machine, the preliminary phase of concrete enforcement would have been completed in one day, but a machine costs £57 per day to hire. In this case five tulab would be employed and their total wages would be £53 per day, 60 piastres for each worker. Thus the total costs for finishing in one day would have been £110. The contractor wanted to avoid hiring a machine and he wanted instead to hire seven at a total

cost of £54.20 only. Starting the day with seven workers he tried to bully them to speed up their work pace. He did not even allow them the usual break for the morning meal, instead, he sent one worker to the shops to buy food to be eaten at the work place. The workers became reluctant to do the work at the speed he wanted and began to slow down their rate deliberately. What encouraged them to take this action was the fact that the contractor had already promised an increase in their wages which they never received. They told me he was taking advantage of them because they had worked with him for periods ranging from 1 to 3 years. They talked of changing their employer, but were, of course, constrained by the limited opportunities open to them in finding alternative work. Furthermore, they felt they could not split immediately without discussing the matter with their "senior fellow". By then, the latter was called in and he tried to calm the workers, promising to talk to the contractor about their complaints. Meanwhile, Taarif, one of the tulab, was involved in a direct argument with the contractor demanding an increase in pay, especially as no machine was being used. The contractor was afraid that the argument might spread and he fired Taarif on the spot, telling him to collect his pay for past work<sup>29</sup> from the "senior worker". Gamous was, however, reluctant to act because Taarif had not heeded his advice and had become directly involved with the contractor. Taarif left and found temporary work at the airport construction works. After three days there, he was fired and was again looking for a job. He failed to find another place and had to start drawing on his savings. At that stage, he came back to Gamous who succeeded in persuading the employer to allow Taarif to resume work with the "cluster" of his "home-fellows".

Another point concerning the position of the "senior worker" needs to be stressed. This concerns his part in reconciling arguments between the tulab themselves. Because of his status, his influence, and the respect in which he is held, the workers tend to approach him whenever

they have disagreements or misunderstandings among themselves. They normally accept his advice even any reprimands he may make. They recognise his long experience of town life and consider often his advice valuable because <sup>he is</sup> the most culturally urbanized among them. In this connection, it is relevant to note that a "senior worker" can usually be detected quite early. He is often impressive in physical appearance, strong and well-built. But, in addition to this, he may be distinguished by his clothes and manner. He buys relatively more expensive shirts, trousers, and shoes, and looks more elegant than the others. He also invariably has more personal belongings. For example, Gamous owned a radio, an iron bed, a sleeping mattress, cushions, and sheets, all items that are rarely owned by other Nuer. While these items are his personal property, other workers may benefit from some of them. Because the "senior worker" normally lives with his "cluster", an item like a radio is in fact shared by all. His position in work context can, therefore, not be separated from his social status within the overall social organization of "home-fellows".

### Conclusion

From the discussion in this chapter it will be clear that employment problems and labour relations in the industry are rather haphazardly organized. The government's neglect of the industry has left it in the hands of small private entrepreneurs ~~for~~ who maximize ~~the~~ profits through cheap labour and ad hoc work practices. The contractors themselves conceive of the industry as "disorganized" and "informal" and most of them are not fully committed to it. Many are no more than small traders ready to turn their attention to any undertaking yielding quick and easy profits. Employment is characterized by "feast or famine" features and the contractors exploit the situation to their best advantage. The ready supply of abundant unskilled labour is a key factor in their calculations. These tulab come mainly from Southern Sudan because

it is the most depressed region in the country where the demand for wage employment is very low. As migrants from afar the Southerners are considered to have a low commitment to wage employment. Being illiterate and unskilled Southerners, they are expected to accept temporary work with no prospects and at almost any wage-rate. The contractors build their employment strategy in the light of these assumptions and seek maximum profits out of the situation. The threat of unemployment for the migrants is ever present, and the absence of unionization and collective bargaining gives the employer the upper hand in labour relations. The Nuer's response of social organization into "clusters" and "cells", their concentration in this industry, and their circulatory migration can thus only be adequately explained by looking at the problem as part and parcel of the total setting. This will be the aim of the Chapters VI and VII.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER V

1. For the use of the terms "organised" and "non-organised" employment, see, Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 12,6.
2. D.A.Germidis, "Labour conditions and Industrial Relations in the Building Industry in Mexico", Development Centre Studies Employment Series, No.11, (1974) 25.
3. Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 297.
4. Ibid., 298.
5. The majority of these contractors are Northern Sudanese, who are either traders or untrained small businessmen.
6. Most of the information in the above section comes from Growth Employment and Equity: A comprehensive strategy for the Sudan. (1975) op.cit.
7. Ibid., 300.
8. See Mohamed El Awad Galal El Din, A report on Migration, part I: The Emigration of Sudanese, Council of Economic and Social Research (June 1978).
9. The persistence of this pattern of circulation will be discussed in Chapter VII.
10. Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 76-77.
11. See the section on the methods of field work outlined in the introduction in Chapter I.
12. Singular: Tulba.
13. Singular: Gadah.
14. This term has already been used by Elkan, (1960) op.cit., 88. He used it to designate bands of clay diggers, working for brick manufacturers in Uganda where each band was composed of workers who came from one tribal group. This is similar to Nuer Tulab "clusters" to be discussed later in this chapter.
15. A "senior worker" is the longest-serving manual labourer with a particular contractor and the man with the longest residence in town. The position and functions of the "senior worker" in the building enterprise and in the workers' organization is examined later in this chapter.
16. The value of one Sudanese pound is 100 piastres.
17. This is particularly difficult under the conditions of hot weather in Sudan where the average temperature during the day is about 35°C. Because of this, digging work is usually done in intervals, in the early morning between 6 and 9 a.m. and in the afternoon between 4 and 6 p.m.

18. "Westerners" is a category of people from the Western part of the country, namely Kordofan and Darfur Provinces.
19. See: Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 300 and papers presented to the Symposium on Reduction of Building Costs (1974) Khartoum.
20. Eid is the singular. It is a religious occasion like Christmas and is a public holiday. It is celebrated twice a year and the contractor may be absent for approximately two weeks.
21. Mohamed Mahmoud Hamdi, "Cost Generations of Control in the building industry in the Sudan" for the Symposium on Reduction of Building costs, (1974) op.cit.
22. This period extended from 7th April to the 6th May 1977.
23. For a detailed account of these aspects, see Saad el Din Fawzi, (1957), op.cit., Abdel-Rahman E. Ali Taha (1970) op.cit., and also in An Introduction to the Sudan Economy, ed. Ali Mohamed El-Hassan (ed.), (1976) 183-99.
24. See Chapter I.
25. A Nuer Tulba always aspires to be a builder. This is because tulab work is closely associated with building rather than with the other skilled work on the building site.
26. The formation, organization and social and economic functions of these "clusters" is more fully discussed in Chapters VI and VII.
27. This term was used by Gluckman, Mitchell and Barnes to describe the position occupied by the village headman and the tribal chief in relation to the Colonial Government. See M.Gluckman, J.C.Mitchell, and J.A.Barnes, "The village Headman in British Central Africa", Africa, xix, 2 (1940). It has also been used by Epstein to illustrate the contradictory and problematic position of Tribal Elders who in one set of relationships were themselves workers, while in another set of relations they were at the bottom of the hierarchy of the mine authority and represented Management to the rest of the African workers. See A.Epstein, (1958) op.cit., 65. See also, L.Fallers, "The predicament of the Modern African Chief: An instance from Uganda", American Anthropologist, vii (1955), 290-305.
28. See my earlier discussion on building stages, pp.169 and 171-173
29. As previously explained, the employment of tulab, is on a daily basis, but the wages are collected weekly, every Thursday.

PART THREE

CHAPTER VI

Nuer migrants in the Building Industry in Khartoum:

A pattern of concentration and circular migration.



## Introduction

In chapters I and II I explained my reasons for maintaining that migration processes must be studied in the context of the overall political economy of the country. I also indicated that this calls for an analysis of the political economy at local, regional and national levels. I further attempted to depict the uneven penetration of colonial capitalism in the different regions of Sudan as dictated by the ultimate objective of expanding exports and imports. In this connection, I pointed out the Southern region has generally remained much less affected by the developing economy and society of the Sudan than were the North Central and Western regions. Thus, despite the observed tendency toward stabilization among the labour migrants from the latter regions, a category of wage earners, who come largely from Southern Sudan, remain in temporary employment and are still pursuing circular migration between town and country. Their incomplete process of proletarianization is, in part, a product of the unevenness of capitalist penetration in different regions of the country and particularly of less complete penetration in Southern Sudan.

The aim of this chapter is to explain the circulatory pattern of migration pursued by Nuer migrants, from Southern Sudan, and in particular their concentration on the building sites of Khartoum. In the first part of the chapter, I will attempt to give a brief account of the main characteristics of Nuer domestic economy and of recent developments in their socio-economic situation. This is important because one of the basic assumptions underlying current "explanations" of casual employment in the building industry rests on the belief that the migrants' costs of social reproduction of their families are paid by their respective subsistence economies. This is reflected in the low levels of wages of the building workers that would only be enough to maintain the individual migrant. This will further enable me to illustrate the constraints of the Nuer village economy and its inability to cope with the new requirements

induced by the incorporation of the Nuer peoples into the market economy since the late 1920s. The purpose of this part of the chapter is to examine the causes of Nuer labour migration. The absence of recent writings or published material on the Nuer obliges me to depend on, a) the writings of Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer dating back to 1936, 1938, 1947, 1953,<sup>1</sup> b) personal sources, including talks with some Nuer university students and interviews conducted with Nuer informants in the course of my field study. The second part of the chapter will deal with the Nuer migrants in Khartoum, the nature of their migration, and their pattern of concentration in the building industry. I shall relate their overall situation to their employment as unskilled migrants of the kind discussed in the previous chapter. Information on this comes from my field study and especially from interviews with, and life histories of, migrants in my sample.

#### Nuer Village Economy and Capitalist Penetration

The basic economic activities of the Nuer at home are animal husbandry (cattle and subsistence farming, together with fishing and hunting). Their practice of such a mixed economy has from time immemorial stemmed from ecological circumstances. The Nuer have two different modes of livelihood corresponding to climatic variations. In summer, from June to November, there is a lot of rain and all land is flooded except for scattered elevated places where the Nuer build their permanent villages. People and cattle are then distributed over the scattered mounds and ridges and they live in isolated communities. In this season they cultivate dura, maize, beans, tobacco, etc. In the dry season, from late November to May, the absence of water and pastures on these higher lands forces them to move. During this time they cannot subsist solely on the products of their cattle. They thus supplement their milk and meat diet with grain and fish; they then move with their cattle and establish camps near the rivers and water spots. Their ecological relation to their environment thus largely determines their mode of

existence. The threat of "rinder pest prevents complete dependence on milkfoods, climatic conditions prevent complete dependence on grain, and hydrological variations prevent complete dependence on fish".<sup>2</sup> These are the main factors affecting their socio-economic structure, their way of life and their organization of production.

Before the subjection of the Nuer to British rule in 1927, their socio-economic organization was maintained on a purely subsistence level. Cattle ranked first in their economic and social life. It was the medium of every transaction, especially in regard to marriage, blood compensation, rituals, and the like. The number of cattle a Nuer had was the primary criterion determining his wealth and status. But in material terms their cattle were used mainly for milk to subsidise their diet. Herds were not raised for slaughter though the sacrifice of cattle was a prominent part of their religious ceremonies. Cultivation is mainly practiced during the dry season when the milk supply fell off and fishing became extremely difficult. The staple crop was millet and they often sowed some maize and a few beans near their huts. In addition to these food plants, they cultivated a little tobacco. The millet was consumed as porridge mixed with milk or as beer. The maize was mainly roasted and beans often were stewed or cooked with porridge. They cultivated only enough grain for the consumption of their households and stored some for the dry season. Under these environmental conditions, and using only a simple technology, they made no attempt to increase or multiply their farm products.

I now describe how the Nuer's system of production for livelihood has been altered since pre-colonial times. These changes will be assessed by surveying new trends in the Nuer's socio-economic organization. It will be seen that the introduction of money was the most important immediate factor making for change in their pattern of subsistence.

The introduction of a money economy in Nuer land dates from the time of their subjection to the colonial rule in 1927.<sup>3</sup> After that date

the colonial power imposed severe taxes including head taxes, poll taxes, and cattle fines,<sup>4</sup> and this initially compelled them to earn and deal in money. It was much more advantageous for a man to pay his taxes in cash than in kind. Arab shopkeepers and traders soon began to penetrate the area. These Jellaba brought with them spears, hoes, fish hooks, ornaments, grindstones, and other similar articles for sale. Another category of imported goods consisted of clothes, sugar, salt, tea, etc. Trade and exchange had previously been unimportant in the economy of the Nuer. They seem to have had some engagement in trade, but to a very limited extent. Thus according to Evans-Pritchard:

"The Eastern Gaa Jak traded iron for ivory with the Galla of Ethiopia...At the beginning of this century there was some trading of ivory from Nuer land to the Ethiopian markets at Gore and Sayo, and this went till recently.... People from Eastern Gaa Jak country in the dry season, at any rate in some seasons, took cattle, tobacco, and spear-heads to the Zeraf and returned with ivory....There was some ivory trading on the Zeraf between Nuer and Arabs from the middle of the nineteenth century". 5

This, briefly, was the situation on the eve of the British occupation and the introduction of money. But most of this trade later ceased because it was forbidden by the British Authorities (and afterwards also, by succeeding national Sudanese governments). However, some degree of exchange of animals for grain in bad years continued to take place between persons and families in the same areas.

When I asked my Nuer informants why they wanted money they would first say that it enabled them to buy cattle in order to build up their herds for marriage. On further questioning, however, they mentioned the need to pay taxes and the desire to buy clothes and goods available in the shops. They see money as a commodity which can be transferred into cattle, and which is required for the exchange of certain goods that cannot be manufactured in their subsistence economy. Questions as to why

food crops and other articles are now being sold in their local markets, and why people are working for wages, were inevitably answered in terms of the need to buy imported goods and cattle. However, despite this preoccupation with money, the wages received by Nuer migrants satisfy only a limited part of the total needs of their families. Their subsistence economy is still extremely important and the productive activities of the household have not changed much in relation to the profound changes in the overall political economy. The continuing importance of subsistence farming is immediately obvious when one considers that the ordinary Nuer almost never buys any food, with the exception of salt, tea and sugar which are not even consumed by many of them.

The Nuer's cash needs are thus limited, yet the drive behind their long-distance migration can only be understood if one examines the equally limited internal cash opportunities of their subsistence economy. The relations of production in the Nuer villages are largely inner relations between parents and children and between husbands and wives, modified in certain situations by relations within and between lineages and between local community members. The family in the Nuer economy is the central production institution,

"One cannot treat Nuer economic relations by themselves, for they always form part of direct social relations of a general kind". 6

Production in the Nuer economy is a domestic function. The family is always directly engaged in the economic processes and fully in control of it. Decisions concerning cattle movements, cultivation and fishing operations, and labour allocation are based on domestic prerequisites. In other words, production is primarily geared to satisfy familial needs and requirements. It would, however, be misleading to say that the family is self-sufficient as an economic unit even though they consume most of what they produce. Sometimes production is used in a limited range of exchanges as noted earlier, but more generally it is their needs that govern output and their interest in exchange is as "consumers" rather than

as "capitalists". And in meeting their consumer needs, the families can hardly be defined as self-contained units. As stressed by Evans-Pritchard,

"...the active participation of a wider group is often necessary, e.g. in building, fishing and hunting. It is also clear that a single family cannot herd its cattle in distant pastures...co-operation is found among neighbours who are also kinsmen...the obligation to assist being part of a general kinship relationship." 7

The above account explains how the Nuer village economy functions mainly to supply the family with its immediate needs of food. Thus the incentives within their own society for surplus production are lacking or at least very restricted. Besides, Nuer agriculture holds little possibility of surplus production, or of any sort of appreciable development, without massive water control schemes. This is because farming is restricted to small and infertile strips of high land in which sufficiently long fallow periods are not possible to allow for other than meagre yields. Furthermore, wage labour opportunities are severely limited and wages are extremely lower because virtually no development was initiated during colonial times. Nor has there been any effective development since then.

The civil war that broke out immediately after independence in 1956, and which lasted for 17 years, naturally in itself made any development impossible. But the cash requirements originally generated by the introduction of money through the imposition of taxes, and the trade relations pioneered by early Arab merchants have continued to foster some local outlets to meet the new wants.

Summing up, we have seen that cattle are the main assets of the Nuer, and that it is around these that their social and economic organization is built. They cannot for various reasons afford to lose or decrease the number of their cattle appreciably. But, in view of their new cash needs, there can be little doubt that considerable numbers

of cattle were exchanged with Jellaba between the late 1930s and the 1950s. Moreover, a disastrous flood in the early 1960s caused the loss of large numbers of cattle which have not fully rebuilt even now. Thus exchange of cattle for money is only practiced by a few of the richer men who can afford to do so.

As regards food crops, we have noted that these are mainly for consumption. However, some of those who have not accumulated any cattle through inheritance, marriage, or any other way, are compelled to try to produce a surplus that can be exchanged for money. But under the present constraints of the village economy, surplus produce is negligible.

Fishing is, as we have seen, one of the subsistence activities that supplements the diet of the Nuer during the dry season. Evans-Pritchard<sup>8</sup> noted that some poor Nuer who have only two or three cows lived on fish alone for many weekson end. But, after the introduction of money and the establishment of Arab merchants, fish acquired some commercial value for trade, and also for more direct sale in the nearby towns of the Upper Nile Province. Indeed, some of the Central Nuer go as far as Juba in Equatoria Province to sell dry fish there. However, Evans-Pritchard argues that "no Nuer would live without cattle if he could help it, and they are despised as persons of Anuak or Balak Dinka descent".<sup>9</sup> In any case, the extent of fishing naturally depends to some extent on differential access to water courses and is limited to the dry seasons. Thus, the Lou country, for example, is less favourable than Eastern Jikany where there are a lot of waterways. Again, the Arab merchants and traders have started to establish their own large-scale fishing camps. Some of them have been able to extract large profits by using comparatively advanced technology while using Nuer as wage-labourers.

There has been little education and training among Nuer and very few could be labelled as professionals. There has been a little exchange

in the products of the specialist craftsmen making pots, baskets, and bracelets, and also in millet. And, a few Nuer are now considered as "professionals" in building huts for which they are rewarded either in the form of dura or money. There are also some specialists such as blacksmiths who make spears, axes, and ornaments. They sell their products in Malakal, the Provincial capital, or barter them for dura, dry meat and fish. Furthermore, there are female specialists who make pots. These women exchange their pots for dura or sell them for money in the villages and in nearby towns. The selling of reed mats has developed into a limited trade among the Adok Nuer. Petty Traders buy these reed mats and they in turn take them to Kosti (on the White Nile) and sometimes even as far as Khartoum. In Waat and Bentieu Districts some Nuer burn charcoal and take it to Malakal in floating rafts. They also take firewood to sell in Malakal. This trade is assuming some importance so that the authorities in Malakal have started to tax these petty traders.

The important fact to note is, however, that none of these specialists and fishermen is entirely dependent on their respective trade. Most are also engaged in the other economic fields, such as animal husbandry and cultivation, but they usually have a few cattle and very small farms compared to others. The ultimate purpose behind these exchanges is to accumulate money to buy cows. But considering the precarious nature of these activities, the incomes derived from them do not enable anyone to reinvest in cattle on any large scale.

The only other source for acquiring money is tobacco. Tobacco is cultivated in the wet season. It is used mainly for smoking, as snuff and for chewing, but it has begun to assume some commercial importance and is thought of as a significant source of cash. In towns, like Bor (in Dinka-land), and in Malakal and Juba, a bag of good tobacco is sold for £57 to £510.



From the above account it is evident that the opportunities for cash accumulation are few and exist only in the context of the functioning of the village economy. In Nuer domestic economy cattle are the sole product that can be reproduced to regulate economic and social processes. Social relationships are organized and regulated through the payment of cattle. In the past, before the British occupation, situations of crisis among the Nuer were handled through their own institutions. In cases of severe floods or drought, for instance, the ultimate objective of re-raising herds was accomplished through raids on neighbouring tribes. As recorded by Evans-Pritchard,

"Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed toward appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds." 10

Now the only alternative, whether to rebuild herds or to pay taxes and buy consumer goods, is to seek wage employment.

The limited cash opportunities provided by the changing subsistence economy have made it necessary for those who do not have enough cattle to try to cope with the new situation by other means. Thus participation in the market economy and wage employment have become inevitable, a fact which the Nuer regard as a tragedy. The inadequate opportunities offered by the Nuer domestic economy in the absence of any planned development constitute the roots of Nuer labour migration. Later discussions on the nature of Nuer migration and on their participation in a certain form of wage employment will show the extent of deprivation suffered by them in their pursuit of an irksome oscillation. Their incomes as migrant workers and their savings from their wages are not sufficient to effect any substantial change in, or improvement of, their subsistence farming at home. At best, their incomes and the few local opportunities to make money as outlined above, can only help to overcome temporary shortages of food, to purchase household utensils, small goods, and clothes.

"But only negligible sums are invested productively in farming, livestock or other lines of activities. This is not interpreted

as a form of lack of interest on behalf of the respondents. It is rather a reflection of the institutional and infra-structural barriers that obstruct initiatives to overcome the present situation." 11

In this connection it is pertinent to note that it is the particular system of production based on kinship organisation, referred to earlier, that enables the migrants to maintain and augment herds at home while away working. My interviews with the Nuer building workers in Khartoum revealed that the migrants often paid the taxes in fairly large groups of kinsmen.

To sum up: the participation of Nuer in labour migration, as of many other peoples in the Sudan, was directly induced by colonialism. In pre-colonial times the Nuer gained their livelihoods from lands and tools belonging to them. In practising a subsistence economy, men would agree, or be obliged, to perform certain tasks together, but there was no "market" in which labour power was bought or sold. Men, their labour power, and the tasks they performed, constituted a unity which could not be separated from the overall web of social relationships in which they were involved as members of a small scale society. Thus, in order to understand how and why some Nuer find themselves travelling back and forth between their homes and the building sites of Khartoum, we need to recall the development over time of various aspects of the political and economic organization of the Sudan as a whole. I have already outlined the basic elements of the latter in Chapter II of the thesis. Here, one of the first matters calling for attention is the way in which colonialism impinged upon the Nuer in the early days of British rule. The colonial presence made increasing demands on them especially after 1927. Up to that time the Nuer had put up fierce resistance to British attempts to subjugate them, but after 1927 the insistent pressures and demands of the colonial authority came to be seen by the Nuer as unavoidable. This in effect guaranteed that the "choices" made by the Nuer would meet the requirements of the administration. I indicated in Chapter II that, as in

many other parts of Africa, the colonial government imposed taxes to stimulate the supply of labour from peoples who were initially reluctant to migrate in search of work. The second factor which, as elsewhere, was ultimately to stimulate the Nuer's "need" for wages was the introduction of manufactured goods through the so-called Jellaba<sup>12</sup> trade. In the course of time local populations began to perceive these goods as indispensable and their availability effectively created new and different standards of consumption which the Nuer, like many other colonial subjects, could not resist. The net result was that they began to see whatever wage employment was available under whatever circumstances prevailed. Thus, the pressures for the Nuer to seek wage employment cannot, of course, be abstracted from the overall policies of the colonial system which opened up differential opportunities for differently placed peoples in the Sudan. I have already touched on the latter aspects in my discussion of the disparities between the North and the South of the Sudan.

#### The Inception of Nuer Labour Migration to Khartoum

Despite the rich anthropological literature on several peoples from the South,<sup>13</sup> there are virtually no studies of the migration of southerners from country to town or from South to North.<sup>14</sup> Such occasional references to migration from the South as can be found usually refer to the smallness of the numbers involved. Thus, for example, the I.L.O. Report states blandly that,

"the three provinces in the South, namely Bahr-el-Ghazal, Equatoria, and Upper Nile contribute few migrants to the three towns".<sup>15</sup>

But, though persons from the South may constitute only a small proportion of the total number of migrants in the towns of the North, there is no doubt that their absolute number has increased very substantially in the past few decades. Writing in 1973, Galal-al-Din claimed that

"the rates of migration from the regions of Darfur and the South of Sudan to the capital city have increased considerably, particularly during the past few years, and are likely to accelerate in the coming years." 16

It is difficult to establish precisely when migration from the South assumed significant proportions. Rehfisch<sup>17</sup> refers to the presence of southerners in Omdruman in the 1930s, but it is likely that small numbers, other than slaves, were present in the northern towns even earlier than that. Most accounts of migration in the personal histories I gathered in the course of the present study refer to the early 1960s, and the oldest Nuer migrant I met had first come to Khartoum in 1960. But this is clearly not the period when the Nuer first began to migrate. Because they circulate between town and country and almost invariably end up by returning to their rural homes, the personal histories of those in Khartoum at any particular period can give no indication of the timing of the first waves of substantial migration, and there can be no doubt that regular migration and circulation was already well established in the 1950s. Nuer on the building sites of the Three Towns in the 1950s are well remembered by many people in Khartoum, and today unskilled manual work on these sites is done almost exclusively by Nuer.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of Nuer in Greater Khartoum as tribal origins are not recorded in any official statistics. But the continuing relative lack of employment opportunities in the South has certainly led to increasing and substantial migration to the North, especially since the conclusion of the Peace Agreement in 1973. Despite the absence of firm figures, the general fact that migration from the South is increasing certainly means that the absolute number of Nuer in Greater Khartoum is rising. The number of Nuer in the capital at any one time is, however, very different from the number who visit it from time to time as many commonly stay there for relatively short periods.

That migration to town affects many parts of the Nuer homeland is evident from the fact that the seventy men whom I interviewed came from no fewer than forty different villages.

#### The Circulation of migrants

The circulatory pattern of migration pursued by Nuer migrants must be seen in the context of the nature of the building industry, discussed in Chapter V. For the purpose of the coming discussion, we may briefly recall the basic features and characteristics of that industry. In Khartoum, as in most Sudanese towns, it is characterized by small-scale contractors whose principal immediate aim is to make quick profits. They recruit unskilled labour to work on their sites when contracts are readily available and they dismiss these workers just as rapidly when there is any fall in demand. Thus a great deal of work is done on a casual basis by the cheapest unskilled labour available. All wages are calculated on a daily basis. Not surprisingly, many observers have come to believe that tulab are, in the words of the I.L.O. report, "Southern migrants with no firm commitments to the building industry".<sup>18</sup> Beliefs and attitudes of this kind have helped employers to keep wages low, and the casual basis of all employment has helped them to conceal the fact that the wages paid are often below the minimum prescribed by law. Other possible emoluments such as family allowances, payments during illness, and old age pensions are not paid. Such limited social security as the workers have derives from their home economies rather than from wage employment. There is no legislation governing extra emoluments and virtually no effective trade unionism. There are thus no checks on unfair dismissals or any other arbitrary actions on the part of an employer. Labour supply and demand tend to swing back and forth and contractors naturally exploit "feasts" and "famines" to their own best advantages. Table XIX clearly illustrates the latter basic feature of the industry.

The majority of Nuer migrants in Khartoum spend between six and eighteen months away from home on any one trip. Their usual pattern of

work - year in and year out - is first to participate in cultivation in their home villages, and then, either before the harvest or immediately after it, to leave in search of wage labour. The timing of a man's decision to return home will depend on his overall employment situation. His major preoccupation when away from home is to save enough to return for a period of some length. The time he spends in town will thus depend partly on his assessment of his earning prospects once he is there and partly on his assessment of the cost of living in town. His savings, small though they may be, are his only asset, and he has to balance the cost of staying in town for a particular time against the probability of effectively increasing his savings. If he has an element of choice in timing his movements he will return home during the dry season, but there are endless variations in these calculations and each man acts in the light of his particular circumstances and personal inclinations. The propensity to save among Nuer migrants is high and all try to avoid drawing from their savings as much as they can. Therefore, whenever a migrant has experienced a long period of unemployment likely to seriously affect his savings, he immediately thinks of returning home. Periods of less than six months in Khartoum are uncommon for it is seldom worthwhile for a man to undertake the long trip from his home area for a few months only. But poor times in the building industry, and the hazards of an individual on the labour market, sometimes result in shorter trips. Thus I encountered several unfortunate individuals leaving for home earlier than they would ideally have wished. Periods of continuous unemployment for four weeks are normally regarded as too heavy a cost to bear and will usually cause a recent migrant to reconsider his position. Three men who had been in town for three months only reported not having found continuous work for more than two weeks at a time. They had shared their earnings, but could not have survived without help from kinsmen and home-fellows. They were already beginning to think of returning home.

The number of trips to town during a working life also varies a good deal, and variation in this respect contributes to appreciable differences in the life experience and general outlook of migrants. Moreover, the duration of any trip for each migrant varies according to the employment variable. Thus it is difficult to estimate with any accuracy the number of journeys made by informants in relation to their individual total lengths of working in town.

To illustrate the pattern, however, we may examine the number of trips made by the migrants in the sample according to their dates of first arrival in Khartoum. Table XX summarizes my data in this respect.

TABLE XX : Number of trips made by seventy Nuer tulab

Date of first Arrival	Number of Migrants	Number of Trips made	Average number of trips per person
1960 - 1969	12	75	6.3
1970 - 1972	9	35	3.9
1973 - 1975	22	71	3.2
1976 - onward	27	33	1.2
Total	70	214	3.1

The figures in the table indicate the continuous oscillation of migrants between town and country. The average number of trips made by the seventy migrants was 3.1. Variations in the number of trips shown are of course partly explained by different dates of first arrival, by different lengths of stay in town, and by the different number of persons in the four categories in the table, and the small number of thirty-three trips made by the largest number of migrants is because these workers were the most recent arrivals.

Table XXI shows the periods in town of the seventy men at the time of encounter. It can be seen that only a few had been in town continuously for more than three years. There is one case only of a man who never

returned home for seven years; his was the longest continuous stay in town. The next longest absence from home was four years, experienced by two migrants only.

TABLE XXI Length of Stay in Town for Seventy Nuer Tulab at the time of the interview

Length in Years	Number	Percent
Under 1	47	67.1
Approx. 1	14	20.0
1½ to 3	4	5.7
4	3	4.3
5	-	-
6	-	-
7	1	1.4
8	1	1.4
Total	70	99.9

Only four men had stayed continuously for between 1½ and 3 years, and they accounted for less than 6% of the sample. Another fourteen migrants, constituting about 20% of the sample, had stayed for approximately one year. The majority of the migrants in the sample (67%) had only come recently, between January and March 1977. My field work among them was conducted between March and August, 1977. Thus the number of men who have been away for a fairly long time is very small. Only five migrants, about 7%, had been staying in town continuously for over three years. The table also shows the increase in the flow of migrants from the second half of the 1970s onwards. This may be due to the ending of fighting in the Southern region, which came into effect with the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1972. It may also be related to the fact that none of the proposed development projects for the South has yet materialized.



In the light of the overall circumstances discussed earlier, it is difficult to guess whether the later migrants will, or will not, return home in the same way as earlier migrants. However, the life histories of the small number of longer-term migrants shows that they had succeeded in establishing social situations which afforded them some opportunity to manipulate their relations with their employers and to occupy semi-stable positions in their respective employments. They were all men who, after some time with one employer, had become leaders of labour gangs and who commanded somewhat higher than average wages.

Gamous, for example, had been in Khartoum for eight years and had become the "senior worker" of a gang. He had been with the same employers during most of his period in town and performed the three special functions of broker, mediator, and guard. As a broker, he recruited new workers for his employer and most of these were either kinsmen or home-fellows. As a mediator, he intervened in disputes between labourers and their employer. Finally, he was responsible for the security of equipment and building materials on one of his employer's largest building sites. He was paid a monthly wage varying between £\$10 and £\$15. He was also paid piece rates for additional work such as the digging of foundation trenches for which he received 60 piastres per square metre. When on this particular work he was able to dig two or more metres per day bringing him roughly double the average daily rate of 60 piastres for an ordinary tulba

Another migrant who was thirty years old had also been in town for a fairly long time. He had ceased to move back and forth between town and country since 1971. He had first come to town in 1961, and had made four trips to and fro until 1970 when he was able to get married. His wife and two children were staying with him in Khartoum at the time of the interview. He was working as a tulba and a Ghaffir on one of the sites. He joined his current employer in 1971. This contractor was engaged in several large contracts and paid wages slightly above

the average paid by others. The average monthly earnings of this migrant, from his two joint jobs, ranged between £39 and £54. Even in such cases, however, the relations with home areas are still preserved. The men concerned used to send money to their parents and to their young brothers to help in paying taxes, and in buying clothes and food.

The youth of most migrants can be seen from the figures on the age distribution of the seventy men given in Table XXII. Over two-thirds of the men were under thirty. As they get older, most cease to migrate back and forth. Just over 70 percent first migrated before the age of 22 years and all before the age of 34 years. In the cases of 29 percent of the migrants there seem to have been some particular socio-economic pressures which delayed their migration. With one or two exceptions all the men in the sample had first migrated before marriage. By about 40 years of age and sometimes earlier, they would say that it was no longer possible for them to be away from home for long periods because of their family obligations.

TABLE XXII The Ages of Seventy Nuer Tulab at the Time of the Interview

Years	Number	Per cent
15-19	7	10.0
20-24	24	34.3
25-29	20	28.6
30-34	7	10.0
35-39	8	11.3
40-44	3	4.3
45 and over	1	1.4
Total	70	99.9

Taken together, the figures show that the normal pattern of migration is as follows. The individual starts his migratory career when he is less than 22 years old. At this stage he usually oscillates between town and

country in response to the employment situation. When he reaches his late twenties, he begins to think of marrying and settling down. His periods in town, and the savings accumulated, are necessary to accomplish this objective. This is one reason why Nuer migrants are so eager to save money which may be transferred into cattle necessary for marriage payments and the like. At this age a migrant who has not found a semi-stable job still normally opts to stay in town to look for intermittent jobs or piece rate work with other contractors. Some of the migrants may work as cotton pickers in the White Nile schemes or in sesame harvesting in the Blue Nile Province. One of my informants, for instance, first worked with a contractor for four months and, when this expired, he changed to another contractor for three months. When that job ended, he left for the Gadarif area where he worked in one of the mechanized schemes, clearing weeds and grass. He then came back and joined a building contractor for a short while, but because the wage was low, he shifted to his employer as a Ghaffir.

Though many migrants are "trapped" as tulab, pursuing circular migration, a few do "escape" from the structural constraints which compel most of their fellows to remain unskilled building workers. The case of Gamous given above is an example of a partial "escape". The case of James given below illustrates an even greater degree of "liberation".

James had been in Khartoum for nearly four years when I met him, having first arrived in 1974 at the age of 17 years. He had worked on building sites with fair regularity for about a year before returning home. In 1975 he had come back to Khartoum and worked on a building site for one month only before finding an apprenticeship to a blacksmith with whom he had worked for 16 months when I interviewed him. He was clearly committed to learning the skills of his trade. He had also enrolled in an evening class. He stated that he now had no intention of returning home other than for visits. Unlike most Nuer in Khartoum, he expected

to find sufficiently well paid jobs in the future to settle in town permanently. For the majority of Nuer migrants, however, opportunities to abandon labouring are very limited.

We have seen that most of the migrants are under 35 years of age. This is partly because long distance travelling and the nature of the work on building sites calls for considerable strength and stamina. It is also partly, as I have already argued, that tulab have no security other than that offered by their rural homes. Of the few men I encountered who were over 40 years of age, four in addition to Gamous were working as guards on building sites rather than as ordinary labourers. A guard's job does not demand physical strength, but calls mainly for responsibility in watching and looking after building materials and equipment at a site. Such cases serve to show that Nuer migrants are not ipso facto averse to urban life and urban careers. Apart from exceptional cases, however, the usual migratory career seldom continues longer than about 25 years and for a substantial proportion of men there is little question of going away after their late 30s, thus, further reducing the length of their careers.

Other factors bearing on the Nuer migrants' lives in town, and on their attitudes to the limited options before them, are that most of them eventually marry Nuer women whom they usually leave at home. About 95 percent of the migrants in my sample were bachelors on their first trips. The vast majority of those who are married leave their wives at home. It even seems that there is a general tendency for the total number of single migrants to increase because of the severe economic conditions at home that have caused some to migrating relatively late in life. My informants claimed that the decrease in the number of cattle required for bride wealth was evidence of this.

In Chapter II I discussed how, as a result of a series of politico-economic processes since the turn of the century, Southerners entered labour migration later and how this curtailed their access to better jobs. The I.L.O. report established an inverse relationship between, for instance, the level of education attained by migrants and their access to employment in the urban labour market.<sup>19</sup> There is a low degree of

literacy among the Nuer and virtually all those in my sample (about 95%) were illiterate. Furthermore, most of them have not acquired any particular occupational skills. Their life histories reveal a low rate of occupational mobility in urban areas and this stands in strong contrast to factory workers who come mainly from other parts of the country. The illiteracy of the Southerners and their almost complete lack of occupational skills naturally condemn all but a few not only to unskilled jobs but also temporary ones in the "non-organized" sectors of employment.

Of all Southern migrants, the Nuer are the ones who predominate as Tulab in the private sector of the building industry. Those whom I studied saw little or no opportunities on improving their situations and who, with no education, were equipped only for jobs like manual labour on building sites. Their concentration in the building industry is therefore directly linked to their circulatory pattern of migration. They do not "enjoy" or seek to move back and forth between town and country for its own sake; nor does this circulation adequately reconcile their needs and obligations at both ends. Thus, one of my informants spoke to me of the problems of employment in the building industry and his aspiration for a permanent job in town in the following terms.

I really do not like to take these journeys from the village to the town and back again. The single journey is very long and the money I managed to save will be wasted in transport, food and drinks on my way in both directions. A difficult problem in working as a tulba is that, when you work for a certain period of time, the contractor suddenly fires you. I do not intend to go back home if this work continues. My problem in town is unemployment, because even if you get a job, you do not stay in it long, and you will be stopped for no

reason. If I got a job in a factory, I would work there for ever. There is no problem about staying in town permanently if you have got a job.

The overwhelming majority of my informants confirmed this in response to my question: "Would you settle in town if you were offered a permanent job?" This point is further confirmed by the Nuer's initial choice of wage employment in town over cotton picking or sesame and dura harvesting in Gezira, in the White Nile area and in the Blue Nile mechanized schemes. Most of them expressed a preference for longer-term employment rather than in the seasonal work opportunities offered by the irrigated and mechanized agricultural schemes.

The concentration of Nuer migrants in manual jobs in the building industry is thus not a mere coincidence. However, what is not immediately explained by the evidence so far reviewed is why Nuer migrants are concentrated in the building industries and not in other unskilled jobs. I therefore now turn to factors which shed light on this, as well as on their residential "clustering". These two elements form the basis of Nuer social organization in town and the processes involved in the formation and organization of their residential arrangements calls for close analysis.

#### Concentration on the Building Sites

Ethnic "clustering" in urban residential areas has been noted in numerous studies of migration and town life all over the world." Price and others have referred to such "clustering" as an aspect of the process of "chain migration".<sup>21</sup> It appears in most cases to be a natural outcome of the efforts of rural migrants to seek out kinsmen, fellow-villagers, fellow-tribesmen, and other ethnically similar people as neighbours and friends in the process of adjusting to city life. As such, "clustering" calls for evaluation in the wider contexts of ethnicity in town, of the nature of rural-urban linages, and of general political, economic and social processes in urban life. Somewhat similarly, tendencies to ethnic

concentration in particular occupations have repeatedly been reported.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of the Nuer in Khartoum we find considerable measures of both residential and occupational concentration. Moreover, residential arrangements are often on the basis of what I shall call "accommodation cells". The typical building site labourer lives as a squatter with his fellow-workers on one of the building sites on which one or more of them are engaged. On one site where I conducted regular inquiries there was a resident population of nineteen. We shall see in the next chapter that the way of life on these sites is closely related to the migrant organization for work. As many are not married and as most of those who are married leave their wives at home, the majority of the members of a squatting group are male, and most aspects of group life among the almost exclusively male company are little affected by the few women present. Thus it is usual for men from one group or "accommodation cell" to share meals prepared by one of their own number rather than by the women.

The solidarity of both "work clusters" and "accommodation cells", and co-operation between members of the "clusters" and "cells", stems to a large extent from close-knit relationships which usually existed prior to the arrival of migrants in town. But these are reinforced by, and in important ways re-defined through their communal existence of utmost frugality. Pre-existing relationships are common because recruitment to any site is based largely on kinship, or common village origins, or on other "traditional" bonds. An important result of this is that there is commonly a high degree of overlap between work and residential or accommodation groups.

A key figure in the organization of social life on any building site is the "senior worker" who, as we noted earlier, acts as a broker and mediator between employers and employees. He is also largely responsible for social control in both work and residential groups which are in any case made up mainly of relatives and home-fellows from the "senior worker's"

village, or at least from his own home area. The building contractors rely on "senior workers" to recruit their labour, and the "senior workers" tend to regard those whom they have recruited as their sons or younger brothers whether or not they are real kinsmen. The workers tend in turn to reciprocate the relationship and to regard their "senior workers" as fathers and elder brothers. When a "senior worker's" position falls vacant it is automatically filled by a home-fellow.<sup>23</sup>

Nuer migrants leave their home villages with the intention and expectation of joining kinsmen and home-fellows in town. They have a good idea of where they will go before they leave and in many cases they have made fairly precise advance arrangements. The natural consequence is that "work clusters" and "accommodation cells" tend to reproduce themselves. This takes place on the basis of networks of social relationships, and these networks are in turn maintained and developed in the process.

Elkan proffers two explanations for the concentration of Luo in specific arduous occupations in Uganda. The first is that the Luo have a good physique and hence the necessary physical strength for strenuous work.

"That is why the Nilotic Luo, for instance, are heavily represented in building and construction, in the petrol depots, the brewery and the railway goods yard".<sup>24</sup>

An explanation which relies on the assumption that occupational selection is wholly or largely determined by physique is, however, suspect.<sup>25</sup> In the Sudan, for example, the Dinka of the South and many Northerners are perfectly capable of doing heavy work, and many were indeed engaged in the building industry in earlier days. But now most Northerners, and numerous Dinka, have found their way to more stable, more permanent, and more lucrative jobs, and many are skilled or at least semi-skilled workers. They are manifestly better equipped to compete for these "better" jobs than are the Nuer because of better education, or earlier



migration to town, or better access to occupants of key positions in government and other organisations, or other reasons of a similar kind, and usually by a combination of two or more of these.<sup>26</sup>

Elkan's second explanation rests on evidence of "restrictive practices" on ethnic grounds.

"The brick manufacturers, for instance, claim that the reason why they have to employ Luo or Acholi, as clay diggers, is either that their headmen who are themselves Luo or Acholi refuse to have others in their gan or that the members of the gan themselves refuse to work with men who are not from their own tribe".<sup>27</sup>

Such explanations do not, however, adequately explain the Nuer "work clusters" on the building sites of Khartoum. Although these "clusters" exist as ethnic enclaves, there is no evidence that they were formed through ethnic or tribal competition or rivalry or restriction. Moreover, the acceptance of the explanations put forward by Elkan would undermine the significance of the specific mechanisms that I maintain are responsible for having generated these "clusters" in the first place. These are, first, the process of labour recruitment through networks of kinsmen and home-fellows, and, second, the existence and persistence of contractor-broker relations between the employers, the "senior workers" and the employees.

If it is agreed that the Nuer "work clusters" and "accommodation cells" owe their existence and their continuation to pre-existing social networks and to the operation of the contractor-broker relations, two significant questions remain. Firstly, what attracted Nuer to the building industry in the first place? Secondly, why do the Nuer continue to work as builders' labourers instead of joining other manual occupations in any large numbers? Why, for example, do they not become house servants like so many Dinka migrants?

The first question is difficult to answer because we know so little about the historical development of the wage-earning labour force and about the differential participation of various ethnic groups in the

urban labour market in the past. However, from many oral accounts it is beyond doubt that Northerners habitually worked on building sites during the two or three decades preceding the 1950s, and that they were later joined by different groups of migrants from the South, particularly Dinka. One of my oldest Nuer informants told me that he had heard "that the Jellaba used to work as tulab but that when people from the South joined them, they ceased to take such jobs". He further pointed to the fact "that all the Jellaba now working in the building industry are contractors, supervisors, or skilled workers such as plasterers, builders, and blacksmiths".

Such statements have to be assessed in the light of two inter-related historical processes. Firstly, over time, the Northern Sudanese began to withdraw from Tulab work, or not to join the ranks of tulab at all, or perhaps simply to progressively refrain from such work. This was, in part at least, because of subjective reasons such as that stigma was attached to this type of unskilled work. Secondly, there was the gradual acquisition by Northerners, as a consequence of their economic and occupational mobility and of their differential access to urban opportunities, of abilities which put them in direct line for careers in skilled occupations in the "organized" employment sector.

It is a matter of common knowledge that social, political, educational and economic developments have over time greatly favoured Northerners. Even in the South, merchants, business managers, civil servants, professionals and skilled and semi-skilled workers are largely from the North. Their better access to state bureaucrats and to private entrepreneurs and businessmen have placed them in favourable circumstances in almost every respect. An extension of the same line of argument would explain why the Dinka also have relatively better occupations than the Nuer and other Southerners. Compared to other Southern groups, the Dinka are better educated and more mobile, having benefitted from their

contacts with the Arabs from the North even before the advent of the British. Moreover, while the Nuer resisted the British fiercely up to 1927, the Dinka tended to collaborate with the British, partly at least as a means of overcoming the Nuer's former dominance over them. Furthermore, most of the Dinka speak Arabic as a result of their proximity to the North and to their greater exposure to an active colonial administration. Also, as is explained below, the history of conflict between the Nuer and the Dinka is important in understanding their respective attitudes as to what they consider acceptable and appropriate work. All these differences between the Dinka and the Nuer may be evoked in explaining why the Dinka are better represented than the Nuer in the civil service and in the army. Although the actual figures are not known, there is no doubt that the percentage of "successful" Dinka is much higher than for the Nuer. Similarly, there are more Dinka than Nuer and other Southerners working as tailors, or in public or private enterprise, or in government construction projects. In all respects which depend on education, skills, or social connections and, at a few degrees removed, on the factors discussed above, the Nuer are at a disadvantage. They are severely handicapped as compared to the Dinka and, a fortiori, as compared to Northerners.

However, we have still not answered the second question as to why the Nuer refrain from working as domestic servants, or why Western Sudanese, to take the case of another relatively, though less deprived, category, never work on building sites as tulab though they are to be found there as ghaffirs. The answer to this would seem to lie in the fact that inequality in the general economic and employment opportunities enjoyed by different groups has led to the social and cultural stigmatization of jobs normally done by the "lower" groups. This is an outcome of attachment to various jobs of values determined by the culture and ideology of the dominant group, namely, in the case of Sudan, the Arabs of the North. The ideology is based on the social division between mental

and manual work. The attribution of prestige to some grades and types of work and stigma to others is a standard feature in various cultures throughout the world. Thus, for example, Berger and Mohr have written as follows of labour migrants in Western Europe:

What determines a person's position in the social hierarchy is the sum of his abilities as required in that particular social and economic system. He is no longer seen as a man... he is seen as a complex of functions within a social system." 28

This does not, of course, imply that an "inferior" in a certain field or occupation may not see himself as "superior" in the same field or another. Thus a Nuer building worker may well see himself as "better" than, and "superior" to, say, a Dinka house servant, for the Nuer have recourse in a general way to their own system of social ranking. According to Howel,<sup>29</sup> the Nuer consider that they "are the people of the people", an attitude which reveals itself in their own feelings of superiority over others, including "the less fortunate" people who have ruled them. Up to 1927 when the Nuer succumbed to British rule, and to some extent after that, the Nuer scorned the Dinka whom they raided and subjugated whenever they could. Indeed, in the language of the Nuer, the term "Dinka" means a slave.

The Nuer scorn for the Dinka has to some extent been carried over into the urban situation. Thus the Nuer whom I studied commonly expressed views such as that "the Dinka cannot do the hard work that the Nuer do", and that "unlike the Dinka, who work as servants in the houses of Jellaba, and who wash women's clothes and men's underwear, and who have to obey orders, the Nuer do not submit themselves to others". Howel<sup>30</sup> goes so far as to argue that there is in the Nuer language no way of expressing the word "order" as in "obey the orders of a master". The Nuer are highly conscious of their cultural identity and will proudly compare themselves with "foreigners", whether these be Arabs, Dinka, Shilluk, or people of any other identity, and they see themselves as strangers in the Arab towns

of the North. It is true that the Dinka have also a similarly independent and warrior-oriented ideology, but in the course of their longer and more complex history of incorporation into the labour markets of the North some have accommodated to the circumstances of domestic work. Moreover, in partial contrast to the ~~Nuer~~<sup>Dinka</sup>, the Nuer have succeeded in incorporating certain aspects of their traditional ideology into their conception of urban work. This crystallization is an interesting product of the way in which they have rationalized their position in the occupational structure of the towns and cities of the North.

### Conclusions

We may now compare the kind of analysis attempted in this chapter with earlier studies of labour migration. In Chapter I, I discussed Mitchell's "push" and "pull" model of circular migration in Rhodesia based on a distinction drawn between the social and the economic needs of the migrants.<sup>31</sup> According to this view, there are different combinations of these forces that determine the pattern of migration. Mitchell's argument is well summarised by Parkin:<sup>32</sup>

When the absence of rural economic opportunities prompts urban labour migration but does not result in the satisfaction of "social needs" in the town of employment, economic needs pull the migrants to town, but social needs pull them back to the rural areas, resulting in "circulatory" or "recurrent" labour migration.

Somewhat similarly, Elkan and others have introduced the concept of "target worker" into the discussion to accommodate labour circulation within the "push=pull" model. Elkan<sup>33</sup> suggests that circulatory migrants have fixed ideas of the purpose for which they need particular sums of money. The thrust of this kind of argument is that participation in circulatory migration satisfies two sets of needs which cannot, for whatever reason, be satisfied in the same place. In the case of the Nuer, it is certainly true to say that the conditions of their life in the countryside have been an important factor leading them to seek better opportunities in town. But the circular or recurrent nature of Nuer

migration cannot be explained solely in terms of the economic pull of the town and of the social counter-pull of the countryside. Many other migrants in Sudan have readily become permanent and settled urban residents as, for example, the factory workers studied in the first part of the thesis, who have found stable jobs, plots of land for housing, and a relatively wide range of opportunities for themselves and their families in town. And in most cases they maintain strong kinship and other social links with the countryside. Why do the Nuer not do the same? No one would suggest that the Nuer enjoy their recurrent migrations or are in any way attached to movement back and forth as a way of life.

The kind of "explanations" developed by writers like Mitchell and Elkan are unsatisfactory in that they do not dwell on the political economy of the colonial situation as a whole. They have failed to question the patterns of uneven development that were characteristic of capitalist expansion under colonialism. I have referred in Chapter I to criticisms of this failure that have been developed by, for example, Amin (1972) and Magubane and O'Brien (1974). These scholars have argued strongly that conventional studies of migration "took the colonial situation for granted" and were inevitably limited by that.

I have tried to show that it is the uneven development of Sudan under British colonial rule - and the continuation of this process since Independence - and other central features of the situation which surround the Nuer domestic economy, that lead them to behave as they do. The Nuer and other Southerners are manifestly unequal participants in the political economy of their country. The policies pursued under colonialism, and after it, are responsible for the overwhelming concentration of migrants from deprived groups and regions in manual occupations and in "non-organized" employment. Looked at from this point of view, the concentration of the Nuer in tulab work on the building sites of Khartoum is no "accident of history". On the contrary, it can be shown quite objectively

that their pattern of migration, circulation, and concentration results from very narrowly restricted alternatives formulated by the social, economic and political structure of the country.

In this connection it is of particular interest to draw attention to similar outcomes in other countries under comparable conditions. Thus Lomnitz<sup>34</sup> says that the characteristic features of "marginal" groups of workers in Mexico are precisely (a) their "lack of formal articulation or insertion in the urban industrial process of production", and (b) their "chronic insecurity of employment". Lomnitz refers to the sector of the economy characterized by such features as "marginal". In the "marginal sector", in terms of the concepts she uses, there is a different logic from that which obtains in modern capitalist enterprises. In particular, the workforce does not consist of permanent regular workers, and this is precisely what we find among the Nuer. Their concentration on building sites is thus an essential feature of their irregular participation in the labour force as day labourers and as circulating migrants.

At the same time, however, but at a conceptually different level of analysis, the Nuer concentration on the building sites of Khartoum is also clearly an outcome or a natural consequence of their social organization on the basis of kinship, home-fellowship, and a distinctive ethnic identity. And this organization has, as I have stressed, developed a degree of permanence and, indeed, a powerful dynamism. This again is comparable to the findings of Lomnitz in Mexico:<sup>35</sup>

Once organized, the action set based on natural membership may acquire a degree of permanence through repeated work together"

or, one might add in the case of Nuer, of living together in their "accommodation cells".

My main general conclusion about the Nuer in Khartoum can also be broadly compared to that of another Mexican study, namely Eckstein's on urban poverty

...the occupational opportunities of the poor and the inter and intra-generational occupational mobility they experience generally are limited by class forces that discriminate against them. Their occupational "fate" is not primarily determined by their cultural predispositions or by their sociophysical environmental conditions. (Eckstein, 1977) 36



FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER VI

1. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Daily Life of the Nuer in the Dry Season Camps", in Custom in King (1936).  
\_\_\_\_\_, "Economic Life of the Nuer: Cattle", Sudan Notes and Records, 21 (1938).  
\_\_\_\_\_, The Nuer (1940).  
\_\_\_\_\_, Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer (1951).  
\_\_\_\_\_, "The Sacrificial Role of Cattle among the Nuer", Africa, 22 (1953).
2. Evans-Pritchard, (1940), op.cit., 92.
3. The initial resistance of the Nuer to colonial domination is well documented in the Provincial Reports of the Upper Nile Province, in Reports of the District Commissioner, and in correspondence between the Governor of the Province and the Civil Secretary of the Sudan in the early 1920s (Sudan Archives, Durham and The Public Record Office, London). The assassination of a District Commissioner, Captain Fergusson, by Dok Nuer in 1927, and other associated incidents, led the colonial government to adopt a concentrated policy towards the Nuer. This policy, commonly referred to as the "Nuer Settlement", involved the removal of local leaders who opposed the government (See Howel, 1975, and Winder, 1978).
4. See Chapter II in this thesis for a discussion on the measures aimed to incorporate the Nuer, as well as other Southerners in the colonial economy.
5. Evans-Pritchard, (1940) op.cit., 88.
6. Ibid., 90.
7. Ibid., 91.
8. Ibid., 70.
9. Ibid., 70
10. Ibid., 48.
11. Abdel Bagi M. Suba' i, L. Olsson and Siddik Nasir Osman, "Labour Migration and the Jonglei Area", Occasional Paper, Economic and Social Research Council, Khartoum, (1976).
12. The term Jellaba refers specifically to Arab traders who operated in the Southern Sudan, but the Nuer and other Southerners also use the term more generally to refer to all Arabs from Northern and Central Sudan.
13. See, especially, Evans-Pritchard (1937) on the Azande; 1940, on the Nuer; 1940 on the Anuak, and 1948 on the Shilluk; Lienhardt 1961, on the Dinka; and Buxton, 1963, on the Mundari.
14. Rehfish (1962) is a striking exception.
15. Growth, Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan (1975) op.cit., 352.
16. Galal al Din (1973) op.cit., 15.

17. Farnham Rehfisch, "A Study of Some Southern Migrants in Omdurman" Sudan Notes and Records, XLII (1962) 50-104.
18. Growth Employment and Equity: A Comprehensive Strategy for the Sudan, (1975) op.cit., 78.
19. Ibid.
20. See for a few examples, Elkan, 1960; MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964, Pons, 1969; Price, 1969; Grillo, 1973; and Lomnitz, 1977.
21. See C.Price "The Study of Assimilation", in J.Jackson, (1969) op.cit. 210., and J.S.MacDonald and L.P.MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighbourhood Formation and Social Networks", Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, Vol.XLII, No.1, (1964) 90.
22. See, for example, the Luo and Acholi in Kampala according to Elkan, 1960, and the Babua, Topoke, and Lokele in Stanleyville according to Pons, 1969.
23. The "senior worker" of the "cluster" I studied had recently replaced another who had held the position since 1969.
24. Elkan, (1960) op.cit., 86.
25. In fairness to Elkan, he later doubts the credibility of his own suggestion, ibid.,87.
26. This situation is comparable; for example, with the markedly better opportunities of the Lokele than say the Topoke in Stanleyville in the 1950s as described by Pons, (1969), op.cit.
27. Elkan (1960) op.cit., 88.
28. J.Berger, and J.Mohr, (1975), A Seventh Man: A Book of Images and Words about the Experience of Migrant Workers in Europe. (1975), 141.
29. P.Howel, "Colonial Rule and Nuer Response", a paper for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, (1975) 1.
30. Ibid., 4.
31. Mitchell, (1969) op.cit., 117.
32. Parkin, (1975) op.cit., 146.
33. Elkan, (1960) op.cit., 36.
34. L.Lomnitz, (1977), op.cit.
35. Ibid., 8.
36. S.Eckstein, The Poverty of Revolution: The State and the Urban poor in Mexico, (1977).

PART THREE  
CHAPTER VII

NUER SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN KHARTOUM

## Introduction

Chapters V and VI have shown that the salient characteristics of Nuer migrants in Khartoum are a) their relative homogeneity in their individual attributes and origins; b) their concentration into "work clusters" and "accommodation cells" on the building sites, and c) their organizational manipulation of social relationships on the basis of ethnic and kinship ties.

In this chapter I shall further examine the way in which groupings dictated by a particular kind of work situation have led to the development of particular forms of social organization in response to the demands of life in Khartoum. The patterns of accommodation into "cells" and of working cooperation in "clusters" based on the principle of "home-fellowship" are the pivot of Nuer social organization in town. This general type of organization can only be appreciated if it is viewed in the context of social, economic and cultural processes which have led Southerners to develop a distinctive identity and to distinguish themselves from the rest of the population of the Sudan, particularly from the Arabs of the North.

## Domestic Relations

A migrant arriving in Khartoum is faced with many problems, particularly if he is a first-time migrant. An immediate difficulty is with language for a Southern migrant soon finds that his pidgin Arabic is not understood in his new social and cultural setting. His first practical need will be to find a way of locating his kinsmen if he has any, or his fellow tribesmen. In some cases he may, of course, be accompanied by an experienced Nuer migrant. If not, he will simply make his way as best he can to one of the concentrations of Nuer on a building site, a fact about which he would be well aware. Indeed, in most cases a new migrant will have been supplied with the necessary information to put him in touch with the nearest group of Nuer Tulab.

The source of information will normally have been returning migrants from the same village or simply an acquaintance from the same home area. Information about migrants in town is usually transmitted through social networks based on kinship relations to wide circles of home people.<sup>1</sup> As soon as a new migrant has found any Nuer in town he will have no difficulty in identifying his own "home-fellows". There are, however, some social factors operating in the urban situation which help to minimize the difficulties encountered by migrants. Firstly, colonization and colonial policies<sup>2</sup> stimulate the Southerners to believe themselves as having a distinct identity, and their self-awareness has continued to develop under the conditions of disparity between North and South to which I referred in Chapter II. Secondly, cultural factors and distinctive physical features tend to mark off the Southern Sudanese from the rest of the heterogeneous population of the Three Towns. The most visible identifying characteristics are their Negroid physical features and very dark pigmentation. These combine with cultural traits to create striking contrasts with other Sudanese groups in the urban community. The Southerners are known and recognized by Northerners as Junubiyin (or "Southerners"). When these facts are placed in correct historical context they help us to appreciate how migrants from the South occupy a particular position in the urban milieu, and it also helps us to understand how and why new Nuer migrants are able to find their own folk in the town without much difficulty. Being very conscious of differences between themselves and various categories of Northern Sudanese, they approach all Southerners with relative ease and they distinguish between different categories from the South. Although there are no striking differences in dress or personal appearance between members of different Southern groups, a new migrant from the South will still easily find and be recognized by people of his own group. This is largely as a result of differential perception of cultural

variations among the multi-ethnic Southern population. In some cases, however, distinctive facial markings<sup>3</sup> contribute to identification and recognition. Most Northern Sudanese cannot, and do not, distinguish members of the different Southern groups - whether through cultural or physical features - unless they have prior personal acquaintance with them. All Southerners are collectively referred to as Junubiyin, a term which does not reflect or admit subdivisions. In summary, it is easy for a new Nuer migrant to discover his own home-fellows in town despite the continuous coming and going of many people, but it is more difficult and less common for Nuer to be recognized as such by Northerners.

The large number of villages from which the migrants interviewed came, shows that the practice of migration is common over extensive areas of Nuer land. Thus, the information collected by prospective migrants before leaving home will cover him against many contingencies. Once a new migrant has arrived in town and traced home-fellows - whether kinsmen, mere acquaintances, a member from the same village - they facilitate all manner of practical problems for him including the most crucial ones of accommodation and work.

#### Establishing work contacts and relations

Nuer migrants always try during their stay in town to establish some relatively stable working bond with their respective employers, whom they attempt to impress by hard work and good manners. Under the circumstances I have described, such qualities are essential for tulab work as special skills are not involved. An established bond between a worker and an employer is, of course, likely to help the former to secure a job when he returns from a trip home. And we have already seen how the employers themselves prefer to keep semi-stable groups of workers, and therefore tend to respond to the workers' efforts to establish "special relationships" with them, and how they use the

"senior worker" to this end. While permanent jobs are by no means guaranteed, links through "home-fellows" working for the same contractor helps to give some continuity. Though the dynamics of this process are not formally planned, they do function with considerable effectiveness. This will be apparent when I come to discuss the actual formation of "work clusters". This link established between the workers and their former employers is further reinforced by the presence of the Nuer "senior worker". The latter's status in the context of the work situation puts him in a favourable position with the contractor. This predicament is advantageous for the Nuer migrant labourers because, as we saw earlier, it is usually the "senior worker" who persuades the contractor to employ his kinsmen. Two important points must be noted here. First, every "cluster" of workers have been able to keep this mutual relationship with contractor for a fairly long time by enjoying a semi-stable position in the enterprise. Second, whenever a "senior worker" leaves, for whatever reason, his position is occupied by another of the older and more experienced men in his particular "cluster" of workers. Gamous, the "senior worker" of the group I studied, told me that another Nuer had occupied his present position. "He had been working with this contractor for six years before I joined him. We then worked together until he left for home last year, and I found myself occupying his position. If I were to leave, there would be Tumsah, who has been here for more than three years. He takes my place". This method of replacing a "senior worker" workers informally and is readily accepted by both the employer and the Nuer tulab. It means, of course, that any future recruitment of additional workers will be made through the same networks and channels as before, and the arrangement is an important element in maintaining and reproducing "work clusters" of "home-fellows".

The movement of Nuer tulab between town and country ensures the efficient communication of information on jobs and of news about home-people in town. Some of the migrants referred to particular incidents which caused them to think of going back home and of allowing a brother or close relative to come to town to earn money for a while. Any journey undertaken by a Nuer migrant from any part of Nuer Land may introduce him to some of the old migrants on their way back to Khartoum. The probability of meeting, at least, one old migrant who had been to Khartoum before, is quite fair. No doubt the latter will guide the newcomer to the building sites where his own home-people concentrate. The Nuer migrants I studied have to travel more than 600 miles from their home areas to Khartoum. They first have to make their way from their villages over 80 miles to Malakal the capital of the Upper Nile Province. They usually walk the first 35 miles as far as Okobo, the nearest small town to their home area. This journey takes a day or so. They then take a lorry from Okobo to Malakal at a cost per year of £1.50, and another lorry trip to Khartoum costs £2 per head. The journey altogether takes two days. The total costs of a round journey to and from Khartoum will amount to £10, if we allow an average of £3 for food and drink during the journey. Travelling long distances, the migrants keep their baggage of personal belongings to a minimum. They usually carry two essentials, a sleeping mat and a stick. Indeed a migrant arriving in Khartoum is easily recognized as he carries his mat folded around his stick, both usually hanging over his shoulder.

#### Accommodation

We have seen that a new Nuer migrant may be confronted with many problems. He is thrown into a heterogeneous society of which he has had no previous personal experience even if he has heard a great deal about it.

As soon as the new migrant contacts his home-fellows, he will be



provided with free accommodation and free meals until he is able to find a job himself. The nature of the Nuer Tulab accommodation is peculiar. They actually live on the building sites on which they work. They are basically squatters for they do not pay rent either to the plot owner or the contractor. When a site is not suitable for accommodation as, for example, when it is still in the early stages of building, the workers usually stay in a semi-finished house under the control of the same contractor. In other cases, the workers split into smaller groups of two or three persons and distribute themselves among sites where accommodation is possible. Alternatively, they may erect a tent or a cardboard hut near their building site. The choice of partners in splitting up into small groups is usually based on kinship. In this respect, the kinship values that regulate social relation in Nuer society at home are largely carried over into the urban situation.

Kinship among the Nuer is markedly affected by rules of exogamy which, Evans-Pritchard explains, tend to "...break down the exclusiveness of agnatic groups by compelling their members to marry outside them, and thereby to create new kinship ties. As the rules also forbid marriage between near agnates, a small local community like a village rapidly becomes a network of kinship ties and its members are compelled to find mates outside it."<sup>4</sup> Hence networks of kinship stretch over a whole district and members of different villages are commonly related, whether by paternal, maternal or affinal ties. In a community where all members are related residential patterns are dominated by kinship, different kinship relations carry different significances. The Nuer attach special importance to paternal kin whom they call "real" (pany) as distinct from maternal or more distant kin.

Among the Nuer men I encountered in town, most preferred to stay with their closest paternal relatives whenever that was possible. For example, during my stay among this group of Nuer Tulab, Shawish was .

selected by the "senior worker", and approved by the contractor, to do watch-work at a new building site. Shawish had up till then been staying with his maternal uncle, Malakal, at another building site that belonged to the same employer. At about the same time, Peter, Shawish's paternal cousin, arrived from home and Shawish now preferred to live with his cousin.

Most of the members of the group of workers I studied intensively were living together in a house that was nearly completed, but where work had stopped for more than six months because the client was short of money. We have seen that work "clusters" are formed through new migrants joining their "home-fellows" and trying to find places with them. In some cases, however, difficult employment circumstances may oblige a worker to seek work outside a "cluster" of his "home-fellows". In such cases accommodation "cells" furnishes the basis for links with home contacts to be maintained.

Although the accommodation on building sites may seem intolerable in terms of crowdedness and lack of basic amenities, it seems simply accepted by Nuer Tulab because they have no option. Their concentration in work on the building sites, their lack of social connections in other better-paid occupations, and their low and irregular incomes, render this type of free accommodation welcome to them. Sanitation services and electricity are usually lacking because the latter are installed at the final building stage when the tulab have to move out to another site. The sites do, however, have water taps as these are essential for building operations. The tulab residential quarters normally consist of a living room (or rooms), a sitting room and verandhas. The occupants cook in the unfinished kitchen or in the shade of any wall. They usually share their evening meal, but their breakfast, for which they are allowed half an hour during working time is usually bought from the nearest shop.

Another type of accommodation is sometimes encountered when a Nuer

is employed as a qhaffir at a site where building operations have not started. A tent made of mats, cloth and pieces of wood may be erected in front of the building site. The qhaffir and one or more of his closest relatives will then share this accommodation. I commonly found occupants of a main residential site moving out to join their respective relatives working as Ghaffirs in new sites.

In these living conditions the Nuer tulab have little property, and their few personal belongings are easy to transport. Such belongings usually consist only of bedding (a mat that is unfolded on the floor), clothes, and a trunk in which to keep objects bought to be taken home.

Low and irregular monthly earnings make it difficult to seek rented accommodation elsewhere, especially due to the housing crisis in Khartoum where rents are continually rising and where landlords are only interested in tenants with regular incomes. This kind of accommodation "cell" gives the migrants a measure of social security in the city. They can through it give expression to "home-fellowship" and kinship relations while the absence of their wives in Khartoum and the fact that a large percentage are unmarried men gives this type of accommodation additional appeal as a way of adjusting to the housing and employment crises.

The migrants in these residential "cells" usually say that they live with each other because they are relatives and friends and because they are happy together. Their statements represent an overall set of attitudes developed to help them endure this type of urban experience. The harsh employment conditions in the building industry and the generally hostile social environment have to be realised in order to appreciate the advantages of this type of communal living. When a man finds employment in a different area of the Three Towns, he usually manages to associate himself with another group of home people in that area. But when this is not possible, he would tend to remain attached to his residential

"cell" and to come straight back there after working hours.

The above and associated reasons account for the processes of both "cluster" and "cell". In other words, each group living in a house or a tent constitute a "cell" of "home-fellows" who maintain close relations between themselves as well as links with other "cells" of home people. Kinship relations, as shown earlier, determine the composition of each "cell". This is mainly the result of the migrants choices and preferences to live with their closest relatives and "home-fellows". This kind of associative grouping provides the framework of the Nuer social organization in town. The migrants' oscillation between town and country and the embodied fact of their short stay in town rationalize the Nuer social organization to be based on the principles of kinship and home-fellowship.

#### Networks of Social Relationships

The members of any accommodation "cell" know the locations of other "home-fellows" and close relatives in different parts of the Three Towns, and there is constant visiting between members of different "cells" from the various building sites. During my field work I observed many incidents that indicated the closeness of social relations between kinsmen and "home-fellows". On one occasion when I had been shopping with three informants in Omdurman, one of them told me that he was not going back with us because he wanted to visit some of his maternal relatives working on a building site near the Omdurman suq or the market place.

On another occasion I was asked by Suliman, one of my closest informants, to accompany him to see his brother in Khartoum North. Suliman's brother had come to town before Suliman himself and had joined his former employer who was currently engaged on a contract in Khartoum North. When Suliman had later come to Khartoum, he had joined his brother in Khartoum North and worked there for a month before the contract expired. He was not able to secure another job for some time. Suliman's "home-fellows" in Garden City, where I conducted my research, then found him a job with

them. Suliman was a kinsman of Gamous, the "senior worker" at the Garden City site and this had facilitated the change. But Suliman's brother had visited him a week ago before this incident took place and told him that he would be moving to a new building site. Thus, when I accompanied Suliman to Khartoum North, he did not know exactly where his brother was living, but he told me that he could locate him by approaching other Nuer tulab from his home area whom he knew he would find together in the evening. Suliman then took me to a coffee shop in the vicinity of a new residential area where he expected his brother to be working. Here he met several Nuer who immediately directed him to the building site where his brother was living. Such examples illustrate how Nuer social organization operates in town.

During my period among the group of Nuer Iulab who lived in the semi-finished house where I conducted most of my field work, there was a stream of other Nuer visitors. Later I came to know most of these visitors were working and living at a building site in the nearby location of Manshia,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of Garden City. The members of these two "cells" were related by affinal ties, the "senior worker" of the Manshia "cluster" being married to Gamous' sister. Virtually all members of any "cell" are related either by blood or affinity to their "senior worker". As expressed by Evans-Pritchard, it is the wide recognition of kinship that allows a man to bring "in some degree his whole personal society, all those with whom he has dealings, into the circle of relationships in which attitudes and behaviour are shaped by sentiments of kinship".<sup>5</sup> The point I am making is that kinship relations to a large extent continue to set the pattern of life in town as well. Thus, accommodation is based on, and behaviour between home-fellows is conducted according to, kinship values. The importance of kinship and other social networks based on it must not, however, be attributed solely or even primarily to the strength of kinship relations between particular persons.

The significance of such relations between Nuer tulab has to be appreciated in the context of the hostile social environment they encounter in the urban situation, of difficult employment situations in the building industry, and of the uncertainties of oscillating between town and country. Kinship relations are the main available resource in the migrant's hands for dealing with all these contingencies.<sup>6</sup> Thus, kinship relations must be seen as part of Nuer ethnic identification and as a means of adapting to the severe socio-economic circumstances of the urban situation.

The process of finding a job for a "home-fellow" similarly sheds light on Nuer social organization. It is part of the more experienced migrants' social obligations to help their kinsfolk. The "senior worker" spares no effort in persuading his contractor to find work for a newcomer. But, when this is not possible, the new migrant usually wanders about the different building sites looking for employment. This often lasts as long as two weeks to a month. Difficulties in finding places outside the "system" are due to the way in which work "clusters" are formed, maintained and reproduced. This is because, as I pointed out earlier, each contractor's labour force usually consists of a "cluster" of "home-fellows". Thus, recruitment is basically dependent on the social networks of the Nuer workers in each "cluster". New labourers are usually employed through the "senior worker" of a particular "cluster" who always recruits his "home-fellows" rather than distant Nuer. Moreover, in most cases the contractors prefer to employ returnee migrants rather than the new arrivals. The contractors and builders always stick to older migrants who have, at least, developed some experience in tulab work. Taking all these factors into consideration, the new migrant has a slim chance in finding a job outside the "cluster" of his "home-fellows". There are two ways in which the problem may be partially overcome: a) In my discussion of the work organization and building operations I explained that at

certain building stages there is a demand for additional labour. This is particularly true at the stage of concrete enforcement on the ceiling, when more labourers are usually recruited for two or three days. At such times a new migrant may have the opportunity to join the "cluster" of his "home-fellows", and this may lead to chances of finding similar short-time employment on other building sites. b) Whenever a contractor is engaged on a new contract, opportunities may arise for the newcomer to join the gan of semi-stable workers which is initially composed of his own "home-fellows".

However, the main ways for finding jobs is by always keeping in touch with all "clusters" of "home-fellows" in all parts of the town through an elaborate web of reciprocal visits. The continuous flow of migrants between town and country also functions to keep all of them in touch with each other. In any case, a new Nuer migrant was not able to find a job for more than two weeks. A short while after that, he was called by a "home fellow" working on a building site in Omdurman who was his maternal uncle. After settling in Omdurman this new migrant continued to visit the building site in Garden City every Friday (a public holiday). His relationship with his closest "home fellows" with whom he had both paternal and maternal links, was never allowed to lapse by the fact that he was working in Omdurman.

#### Urban contacts, recreation and sociability

The foregoing discussion on the nature of the accommodation and social networks of Nuer tulab show that their places of residence form the main arena for informal social interaction. The main expectations of a new migrant are met by being accommodated, fed and found a job. This sense of obligation derives from a common recognition of kinship and "home-fellowship" relations and is further sanctioned and reinforced by the migrants' continuing involvements in social relationships at home. The circulation of migrants with all it entails - the sending of money

and presents home and eternal gossip - function to keep communications open. The sharing of accommodation simply reinforces other ways in which the migrants are bound together. The relationships that develop between them in town as a response to their immediate situation must be seen in the perspective of their mutual relations at home. The two sets of circumstances combine to create a sense of "community" on the building sites of Khartoum. Their places of residence are the arenas where work mates and non-work mates, the employed and the unemployed, and visitors from home meet and further develop their inter-connections. They spend most of their free time together, and when they go out to the nearby town area for an evening meal or to buy tumback (tobacco snuff), it is always in small groups of two or three. In the evenings they go to visit their relatives and "home-fellows" in other accommodation "cells" in Garden City and Manshia. On Fridays, when there is no work, they exchange visits with their close relatives and "home-fellows" in various areas of the Three Towns.

Of central importance to the Southern migrants' recreational life is marisa drinking (white stuff beer). Marisa houses are the places in which migrants from different "tribal" groups and home areas meet. They are not confined to any social group, but members of different groups usually come to these places in small parties of two or more. Many Southern migrants spend nearly all their free time at marisa houses, particularly on Fridays. The association of each person with a group of "home people" may be partly explained by their fear of outbreaks of fighting. Violent quarrels are not uncommon in these places, and a fight between two individuals from different groups may turn out to be the concern of the whole groups to which they belong. It is in marisa drinking that social relationships between "home-fellows" and work mates are extended and find convivial expression. Paying for drinks is reciprocal, but those for whom it is the main recreational activities



payments sometimes take up all their earnings, and indebtedness is also incurred. The majority of the Nuer workers are, however, not regular attendants of marisa houses. Though many do not object to drinking marisa, and indeed do so, they are not as regular drinkers as many other Southern migrants (e.g. Dinka, Bari, the Acholi). The main reasons they give for not drinking as much as others is their expressed fear of becoming involved in fights with other people. But this should not be taken at face value as the sole explanation. It certainly expresses something about Nuer attitudes but, as I explained in Chapter VI the desire to save money is the main motive of most Nuer in town. Their preoccupation with saving is a theme that recurred constantly in my interviews and is fully in keeping with my own observations. It is also in keeping with what we know of their irregular and low incomes and their urgent need for cash. One of my informants said: "Why should I spend my dear money on drinking marisa when I can get it free when I go home? I drink a lot of marisa there, but I am not majnoon - crazy - to do it here. I prefer to save my money to buy clothes for myself and my family, and beads and necklaces for my girl". Excessive spending on marisa is a common subject of gossip among the group. Lemon used to go out every evening to drink marisa. I was staying with the group one evening when Lemon came back drunk. Those who were there began to tease him saying "Hi! Lemon, you are wasting your money on marisa and prostitutes. What are you going to do tomorrow when the contractor kicks you out of work?"

This argument can be extended to explain the virtual absence of Nuer wives in town. There are a few women who have come to town as wives of migrants, and there are equally a few unattached women, invariably widows or divorcees. All of these are usually engaged in brewing marisa which they sell to Nuer men living on the same or other building sites, and also to other Southerners who may visit these sites

looking for drink. The unattached women are generally assumed to be prostitutes and some of them certainly do supplement profit from the marisa trade with casual prostitution. The men resent the fact that Nuer women should engage in prostitution, but this is merely one aspect of life in town which circumstances compel them to accept.

The above are, however, not the only reasons accounting for the small number of Nuer women in town. A major part of the explanation lies in the part played by women in the Nuer domestic economy at home, especially when most of the men are away. Another important factor hindering the migration to town of Nuer women is the urban employment situation, discussed in Chapter V. Moreover, the living conditions of Nuer tulab on building sites would be very difficult for families.

The only situation in which the Nuer migrants find themselves interacting with non-Nuer is at work. As I pointed out earlier, most of the skilled workers on building sites are Northern Sudanese, and it is through them that the Nuer migrants come to learn and improve their Arabic. Such relations with non-Nuer are, however, limited to work. Relations between the builders, for instance, and their Nuer tulab, are seldom extended beyond the building site. I encountered no inter-ethnic association or friendship. I have already argued that as a result of colonization and subsequent historical developments, the Southerners have been led to maintain and even emphasise their ethnic identity. However, generally speaking, it is culture and consciousness of racial differences that have led to the social categorizations of "Northerners" and "Southerners". These social categories are not, of course, wholly homogeneous. Nuer men refer to migrants from Western Sudan and Chad whom they encounter in the building sites in the same way as other Sudanese (i.e. as Jellaba, or Jilass in their own local language.) Similarly the people of the North perceive other categories, particularly Nubians from Northern Sudan, and those who come from the Western Provinces

of the country whom they label as "westerners" or Awlad El Garib. With a similar comprehension of different social categories from the South, the Nuer migrants approach their own "home people" to the exclusion of the other groups of Southern migrants with whom they maintain minimal social interaction.

There are among particular groups of Northern Sudanese voluntary associations and organizations which are associated with migrants from particular home areas. In Chapter III I have already indicated the participation of the factory workers in some of these associations which are based on membership of particular ethnic groups, especially the Nubians and some migrants from Western Sudan. But there are a few such associations or organizations among the Southern migrants in Khartoum. For the Nuer, for instance, the functions and roles of these associations are well performed by the "work clusters" and "accommodation cells". In particular, financial hardships during periods of unemployment are well catered for. I encountered a number of incidents that showed the frequent borrowing and lending of money between Nuer migrants. Also, it is the obligation of the old migrants to introduce the newcomers to the market place and show them how to conduct their transactions. One day Taarif asked me to take him to the suq to buy a shirt for himself and to help another fellow to buy a few articles. He explained that his companion "had recently arrived from home and was not familiar with buying and selling transactions. He does not know the prices, or how to bargain, and if he goes alone, he will be cheated by the Jellaba shop keepers".

The social interaction of Nuer migrants in town is, thus, limited to their "home-fellows" and home people. Work "clusters" and the accommodation "cells" constitute the basis of the tulab social and economic organization in Khartoum. Their movement in the city is largely associated with the geographical location of these "clusters" and "cells"

in the various parts of the Three Towns. Apart from this interaction, their contacts in the urban milieu are mainly tied up with the spheres of savings and the consumption of material objects they need in town and for home. The normal practice of a Nuer migrant is to keep his savings with a shopkeeper. The Nuer are not familiar with institutions such as banks or savings deposit accounts at the post office. The new arrivals are usually introduced to a shopkeeper with whom the "senior worker" or any other old migrant keeps his money. The shopkeepers exploit their relationship with Nuer clients to their own best advantages. Though they do not pay, or charge, any rate of interest, they invest the sums of money they keep for migrants as part of their own working capital. They are largely small retail traders who need such cash deposits to supplement their meagre capital. They also benefit from the fact that the migrants often feel an obligation to buy most of the things they need from the same retailer, particularly when they are leaving for home. Moreover, two factors work to maintain this relationship over a fairly long period of time. First when an individual migrant has saved a substantial sum of money he tries to avoid drawing from the deposit kept at the shop. One of my informants explained his situation as follows: "I have been taking this job for more than four months now. I managed to save about thirty pounds. I will never draw from this money which I keep in the shop unless I am leaving for home or I come to be unemployed for some time. This money I saved for buying nice new clothes, paints for my dancing at home, beads, a fishing net, a big cooking pot, and medicines for my father's cows". Second, the migrants mobility tends to safeguard the continuity of the relationship established between them and retail merchants. This is because a migrant usually sticks to the same retailer whenever he is in town, and new migrants are in turn introduced to the same shop. Most of the members of the group I studied kept their savings with the same retailer in Omdurman town.

Despite the distance between the two towns - 8 miles - they preferred to leave their money with him. While it is difficult to be certain about it, this would seem to indicate that a kind of mutual trust and confidence had developed between the two parties. One interesting aspect of such relationships lies in their continuity. Gamous, the "senior worker" of the group I studied, for example, happened to know a certain tailor from Western Sudan in Omdurman. Gamous introduced most of his "home-fellows" to the same tailor and since then many have become regular customers.

### Conclusion

From the above account it is clear that Nuer social organization in Khartoum is maintained and reproduced through ethnic linkages and social networks of kinship and "home-fellowship". However, the formation of "work clusters" and "accommodation cells" along the lines of these principles cannot be seen as a simple "tribal" effort to preserve and assert "tribal" identity. It is, rather, a product of the conditions of work and a defence against the hostile social environment of the urban situation. I have already discussed, in the previous chapters, the employment situation of the building industry and the politico-economic and social developments that have shaped the history of, and the conflict that ensued between Northern and Southern Sudanese since the early days of Independence in 1956. One result of these developments is a general and widespread antipathy between Northerners and Southerners, an antipathy that has come to be associated with two very distinct identities.<sup>7</sup> Most Northerners, especially those from the towns, look down on migrants from the South as illiterate, ignorant, and lacking in aptitude and cultural refinement.<sup>8</sup> The places where Northerners and Southerners normally encounter each other are the homes of the Northerners, where many Southerners work as domestic servants and the construction sites where most labourers (tulab) are migrants from the South, as we saw,

working under the directions of Northerners. In the streets of the cities of the North, the Southerners are easily distinguished, as I mentioned earlier, by their clothing, their physical features, and their pidgin Arabic. They are commonly regarded as having come "straight from the bush" to earn money in order to buy cattle and to enable them to pay bridewealth for one or more wives on their return home. The antipathy between the two populations is, as I have indicated, a function of the South's history of limited development and unequal opportunities. The racial differences between peoples of the two regions were emphasised under colonial rule. The Southerners were commonly reminded of the slave trade.<sup>9</sup> They also came under the direct influence of Christian missionaries and this in itself contributed to setting them apart from the predominantly Muslim population of the North. The use of English as the medium of instruction, and other differences, were reflected and underlined in the Closed Districts Order (1922) which prohibited the free movement of people between the two regions.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the sort of social organization developed and maintained by Nuer migrants in Khartoum can only be understood in the light of these factors and constraints.

My study of the networks of the migrants clearly showed how an individual's "choice" in joining a particular "work cluster" or a particular "accommodation cell" was influenced and guided by his particular set of pre-existing relationships. In this connection, it is relevant to recall another study, namely Mayer's of the "Red" and "school" Xhosa migrants in the South African town of East London.<sup>11</sup> Mayer conceives the urban system on two levels, the "structural" and the "cultural". By the structural he refers to the network of social relationships that a migrant establishes in town, and by the "cultural" he means the migrant's behavioural pattern in regard to urban institutions, habits, values, etc. He sees the total set of social relationships in which an individual is involved as setting limits and constraints on his choice of associates

and he draws a contrast between the "Red" and "school" Xhosa in this respect. The "school" Xhosa tend to have loose-knit networks, single-stranded relations, and inconsistent or variable pressures on an individual. In contrast, the "Red" Xhosa tend to have close-knit networks, multi-stranded relations, and highly consistent moral pressures on the individual. Mayer thus saw the "Red" Xhosa as having far less freedom of "choice" between various courses of action than had the "School" Xhosa. In this respect, the position of the Nuer on the building sites of Khartoum resembles that of the "Red" Xhosa for their choices of action are strongly influenced by their continuing relations in town and country with kinsmen and "home-fellows".

The Nuer are not divided into two "camps" or "strands" as are the Xhosa according to Mayer, but the use of Mayer's conceptualization is helpful in explaining contrasts between the Nuer and non-Nuer. But while I find aspects of Mayer's conceptualization helpful, I would stress that I do not agree with what appears to be his final conclusion, namely that the cultural differences between "Red" and "School" Xhosa are in themselves sufficient to account for their different behaviour. Mayer's analysis completely ignores the whole political and economic system, particularly the apartheid regime in South Africa and the inherent White/Black cleavage.<sup>12</sup> The shares of the African population in this setting, and their participation in the urban economy, are already predetermined by the policies of the South African regime. The differential access of members of different groups to occupational and educational opportunities has to be assessed in the context of the total political economy. The "Red" Xhosa non-participation in "School" activities, as observed by Mayer, or the exclusiveness of the Nuer social organization in town, should not be thought of merely as cultural resistance to urbanization. The issue is rather that, given their educational and occupational status and the constraints of the situation, the "Red"

Xhosa do not see any point in competing with the "school" Xhosa. In this sense, Mayer's analysis on the "freedom of choice" in town is obscured by his cultural argument. In my view, cultural factors can be seen as an integral part of a general ideology developed by migrants to adapt to, and come to terms with, the hostile urban situation. It is Mayer's neglect of these facts and of their relation to the wider economic and political setting that led him to explain "Red" Xhosa social organization in terms of cultural tendencies. I do not think that the group consciousness displayed by the Nuer migrants (and presumably the "Red" Xhosa), is necessarily "traditional" or that it helps to label it as "tribalism" or "conservatism".

To sum up: In my view Mayer's final analyses are vitiated by his failure to set his analysis in the broader context of the limitations of actions imposed on all Xhosa (but on the "Red" Xhosa in particular) by the political and economic processes operating in South African society as a whole. Whether the Xhosa are themselves aware of the nature of these processes is irrelevant. Similarly, it is irrelevant whether the Nuer are aware of the historical conditions and developments which have shaped the very limited opportunities open to them. What is clear is that the Nuer (and presumably the "Red" Xhosa), perceive the limitations that bear on them whether or not they understand their origins and dynamics.



FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER VII

1. The importance of social networks and kinship relations and their role in transmitting information about employment and residential opportunities in town, and in dissemination of gossip has been fully discussed in the African literature on urbanization. For a few examples, see R.Prothero, "Migratory labour from North-Western Nigeria", Africa, XXXVII (1957) 251-61, P.Mayer (1961) op.cit., A.Epstein, "The Network and Urban Social Organization", Rhodes-Livingstone Journal 29 (1961), 29-62, V.Pons, "Two Small Groups in Avenue 21: Some aspects of the System of Social Relationships in a Remote Corner of Stanleyville, Belgian Congo" in A.Southall (ed.) (1961) op.cit., 205-16, P.Gutkind, "African Urbanism, mobility, and social network", International Journal of Comparative Sociology, VI (1965) especially 54-5, and K.Little (1974) op.cit., especially 80-81. Also, see Australian Sociological work depicting "chain migration", Macdonald (1964) op.cit., 90 and Price in Jackson (ed.), (1969) op.cit.
2. The Closed Districts Ordinance (1922) was mainly promulgated to prohibit movement of persons between the North and South of the Sudan. This was one element of the Colonial policy that aimed at separating the South from the North. A memorandum submitted by Sudan Government to the Milner Mission suggested that, "...the possibility of the Southern (Black) portion of the Sudan being eventually cut off from the Northern (Arab) area and linked up with some central African system should be borne in mind", see Mohamed Omer Beshir, The Southern Sudan: Background to Conflict, (1968) 40-41.
3. The Nuer are marked by seven horizontal parallel lines straight on the forehead, and sometimes some marks on both cheeks. The Dinka have six scars on the forehead. The Shilluk are marked by scars in the shape of small balls on the forehead.
4. Evans-Pritchard, (1940) op.cit., 225.
5. Evans-Pritchard, (1951) op.cit., 156.
6. The term "resource" was used by Soley in his study of social relationships in a cement factory in Nigeria (1970) op.cit. Soley argues that the positions occupied by the workers both in the factory and in the community are resources that can be used in particular situations in the factory according to the issues involved. Thus, kinship relations between a group of persons are a "resource" that can be used even in the work situation where these relations are not directly related to the requirements of the work situation.
7. For a discussion on the conflict of identities between the North and the South of the Sudan, see Francis Mading Deng, Dynamics of Identification: A Basis for National Integration in the Sudan, (1973), especially pp.27-46.
8. For a general reference to the attitudes of Northern Sudanese toward the Southerners see O.Albino, The Sudan: A Southern Viewpoint (1973).

9. On the way in which the British used to evoke the feelings of Southerners against the Arabs of the North, see Sudan Communist Party, "On the Problem of the South", (in Arabic) Khartoum (1977) 10.
10. For a discussion of this order and other similar measures that were issued by the British which reflected their intentions to separate the two regions, see Muddather Abdel Rahim, The Development of British Policy in the Southern Sudan, (19 ) also Mekki Abbas, The Sudan Question (1952) and P.M.Holt, A Modern History of the Sudan: From the Funj Sultanate to the present day, (1961).
11. Holt, (1961) op.cit.
12. Although Epstein's study on an African Urban Community in Northern Rhodesia was carried out during the colonial times, for instance, and despite my criticism of his work in the introduction to this thesis, he recognized the Whites-Blacks cleavage as a basic element that greatly influenced the behaviour of the Africans in a copperbelt town. Epstein (1958), op.cit., especially see p.234.

## CONCLUSIONS

## Conclusions

In this conclusion I will summarize briefly the major findings of the study and relate them to some of the current debates on migration and urbanization in the Third World. I set out to analyse the social organization of two categories of urban migrant workers in two very different situations of wage employment, their different patterns of participation in the industrial framework and of incorporation into the total industrial-urban setting. These patterns are very different as each category pursues quite different migratory courses and each consists of people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The match factory and brewery workers, who come mainly from Northern and Western Sudan, tend to spend most of their working careers in town and they exhibit a marked tendency towards urban settlement with their families. In contrast, the building site labourers, all Nuer of Southern Sudan, only stay in town for limited periods and are constantly engaged in circular migration. Factory employment is stable and provides the workers with relatively high wages and a number of other benefits, particularly a measure of after-service security. The emergence of trade unionism in the industrial and public sectors of employment has greatly contributed to the stability and security enjoyed by the factory workers. In contrast, building in the private sector is a precarious undertaking and only offers temporary and intermittent employment to the labourers. Wages are paid on a daily basis and in most cases are below the minimum standard wage. Employment in the building industry is characterized by its instability and insecurity, particularly in the absence of trade unionism. Furthermore, the contractors exploit the whole situation to their own best advantage.

To cope with the hazards of employment and urban life in the towns and cities of the North, the Nuer, like other Southern migrants, have developed an elaborate system of informal social organization based on ethnic and kinship ties. The pattern of social organization of the

Nuer Tulab on the building sites of the Three Towns can only be interpreted as a response to the difficult working conditions they endure and to the general social, political and economic circumstances and pressures which they encounter in the urban situation. We have, however, seen that despite the increasing stabilization of the factory workers, most of them continue to maintain important social relations with individuals outside the industrial establishments where they work, notably relations with their home acquaintances in the town and with their families and friends in their home areas. Moreover, I have shown that in some situations these workers use their ethnic relations at work and in the industrial context generally.

#### Migration Patterns: Some Conceptual Problems

Numerous references have been made to various studies of labour migration in Africa. We saw, for example, that one of the earliest detailed arguments about the circulation, rather than the migration, of labour was developed by Mitchell in the 1950s and 1960s in essays on wage labour and African population movements in South Central Africa. Mitchell drew comparisons and contrasts between the distribution and migration of labour in Central Africa in the twentieth century and in England in the nineteenth century. He noted in particular that whereas in England the growth of industrial towns took place by what may be pictured as a series of concentric migratory contractions of rural population into the large industrial centres, in South and Central Africa the process was essentially different, in that the largest sections of the new labour force were drawn into the urban and industrial system segmentally in a "plural" society. In such societies there were, as Mitchell and others saw it, two different modes of life, one "urban" and "industrial", the other "rural" and "tribal". Africans were seen as alternately playing disparate, yet reconcilable roles as they circulated back and forth between (European) towns and their "tribal" areas. We have also seen how this type

of analysis has been extensively used and developed by sociologists and economists like Parkin, Garbett, Elkan, Houghton and Baldwin. In Southern and Central Africa circulating labour was, and in parts remains, the preponderant type of migration. In other areas, permanent migrants and circulating migrants have co-existed side by side as major population elements in the same town or region, as, for example, in Stanleyville and Nairobi according to Pons and Parkin's studies, respectively.

Some general comparison of the findings of these studies with my own is appropriate. We have seen that in Greater Khartoum circulating labourers constitute a small proportion of all migrants, and that a comparison of their particular situation and pattern of life with that of the permanent migrants yields valuable insights into the whole problem of rural-urban migration.

The emergence of categories of wage-earners and their differential participation in industrial employment

The basic underlying assumption of the conventional studies cited in this thesis is that the labour migration system took place in a "neutral" arena in which both the Africans and the European colonizers were able to satisfy their respective interests. The causes of labour migration are sought in individual "preferences" in regard to going or not going to town and "needs" for cash that could be earned over short periods in order to satisfy limited wants. But these studies failed to see that the labour migratory system in colonial Africa was rooted in the different ways in which the capitalist system had been extended to engulf African subsistence economies to the extent that these were often no longer viable or seldom self-sufficient; thus the studies failed to explain how and why Africans were forced to seek cash incomes in the growing money economy. As stressed by Magubane and O'Brien, migrant labour:

substituted for the products of household industries cheap manufactured goods produced in metropolitan industries. It created a situation in which the African was turned into "his own slave driver" through the "inner compulsion" which anthropologists describe as the need for money. 1

We have seen how, in the case of the Sudan, uneven penetration of capitalist relations affected different areas in different ways, but with the same general result of compelling people to seek wage employment of one kind or another. The differential participation of migrants in wage employment in the Sudanese Urban labour market is due to combinations of circumstances which led capitalist penetration to take slightly different forms which were, however, all essential parts of the same process. As in the case of Tanzania analysed by Van Freyhold, so in the Sudan:

The final divorce between the workers and their pre-colonial heritage of land, tools and skills has proceeded slowly and selectively and will still take a long time to be completed but in the meanwhile most have been taught the need to gain some of their means of subsistence through exchanges on a capitalist commodity market or on the labour market and some have already become unable to gain their livelihood from the land. 2

There has also been the particular development of Sudanese industry, and thus of employment opportunities in Khartoum, the fact of uneven development in the "Modern Part" of the economy based on the export-import activities. Much industrialization has been capital-intensive yielding very limited job opportunities in "organized" employment which is relatively stable compared with "non-organized" employment, especially in services and construction industry, which has absorbed large numbers of workers and in rather unstable, and temporary kind of jobs.

Throughout the thesis I have tried to show how these general circumstances have produced very different work situations and urban-industrial experiences for different categories of workers, and particularly for the factory workers in contrast to the building site labourers. I have shown in particular how uneven penetration of capitalist relations

has produced a quite different situation in Southern Sudan, as compared with the Northern Central Sudan which was more closely integrated into the colonial capitalist system. This last point, of course, accounts for the concentration of industry, employment and high incomes in the cities and towns of the North. I have also explained how factory workers, from the North and West came to the Three Towns at a time when permanent industrial employment was easier to obtain, whereas Southern migrants, particularly the Nuer, were late entrants into the urban labour market and consequently were almost wholly relegated to less rewarding casual employment. As a result, the factory workers enjoy a relatively stable work status and show a tendency for permanent urban residence, while the Nuer tulab experience periods of unemployment and great uncertainties in their work situation; thus it is that they tend to oscillate between the town and the country. In a study of the building industry in Greater Manila area in the Philippines, Stretton has also reported circular migration as one mechanism, among others, adopted by the labourers to cope with similar uncertainties. He argues:

Some of the labourers have been using a circular migration pattern for over ten years. There are two main economic benefits accruing from a circular migration pattern. First, it maximizes the goods and services which can be purchased as a result of the employment in the industry. The labourer's income is maximized by working in the city, while the family's living costs are minimized by staying in the village. As the labourer is able to sleep on the building sites, his expenses in the city are kept to a minimum. 3

While I agree with Stretton that incomes and savings can be maximized by circular migration in response to an immediate objective situation, his study does not examine these responses in the wider context of constraints on the workers' choices and the particular development of the urban labour market in Manila. Thus, his analysis contains a "dualistic" element and gives the impression that by participating in circular migration the building workers reconcile their own interests with those of the contractors and employers. My argument is that the strategy of employment



of the building enterprises in Khartoum relies on the common belief that the subsistence economies from which the workers come, contributes to their material well-being, and that this is used to justify the low wages paid by contractors. This is similar to the logic of the system of labour migration implanted in the early stages of colonial development in order to convert a limited number of Africans into wage employment.

As put by O'Brien:

...the "traditional" sector was made to bear the costs of maintaining the worker's family, providing for their social services, e.g., education, medicine, social security, etc., providing a replacement for him when he retired, and absorbing and supporting him when he became unemployed or retired. These costs could then be deducted from the wages colonial employers had to pay their employees, reducing wages to what was required for the worker's subsistence alone while actually working, plus enough to cover his tax assessment. 4

My analysis of the differential participation of migrant workers in urban wage employment has, I believe, some implications in relation to current discussion by economists, sociologists, and others on urban labour markets in the cities of the underdeveloped world. The supposedly "dualistic" nature of the urban economy of the Third World has been recognized by many researchers for many years now and has been referred to in various terms such as "modern" and "traditional", "urban" and "rural", "advanced" and "backward".<sup>5</sup> In this debate special attention has been paid to the economic activities and employment that offer particular problems or special opportunities. particularly after the introduction of a new two-sector terminology, ("formal" and "informal") in the early 1970s by Hart in a study of urban employment in Ghana.<sup>6</sup> The important point in all these discussions is that the "informal" sector is able to absorb large proportions of migrants who are not able to break through the barrier to permanent "formal" wage employment.

This characterization of the urban economies of the Third World countries has been recently reviewed by Bromley (1979),<sup>7</sup> and by Bromley

and Gerry (1979)<sup>8</sup> in two edited works. Bromley points out the simplicity and subjectivity of this "dualistic" classification and suggests that:

A division into a large number of categories would give each category considerably more internal coherence. A particularly attractive approach is to classify enterprises on a continuum between two extreme opposite poles, so as to emphasise intermediate categories and the process of transition along the overall continuum. 9

Other writers, like Moser (1979), question the very logic of the "dualistic" division of the urban economic activities and have presented alternative models based on petty commodity production which has a subordinate relationship to the capitalist sector.<sup>10</sup> Somewhat similarly, O'Brien (1979) has criticised the theoretical inadequacy of "dualist" formulations and pointed to their ideological character stemming from the doctrine of "harmony of interests".<sup>11</sup> He argues that the co-existence of different kinds of forms of production, and therefore variant employment situations, can only be understood in terms of "a process of mediation of capitalist relations of production by pre-capitalist forms of subjection of labour."<sup>12</sup>

But the different sizes and types of the building enterprises, ranging from public to private, and from large and public to small and independent, constitutes a problem for the characterization of urban construction activities into "formal" and "informal". Thus, Stretton, for instance, takes large firms as part of the urban "formal" sector, but small building enterprises as "informal" sector.

In this debate, I agree with Moser and O'Brien in their analyses of the different forms of production and urban wage employment, but my attempt to characterize "organized" and "non-organized" labour, "stable" and "casual" employment, and my reference to the "Modern Part" of the economy are not central to my analysis. They are merely rough conceptual devices that help to convey some aspects of the general comparison between working situations of the factory workers and the manual building labourers.

Social Organization of Migrants in Town and the Relevance of Ethnicity

We saw that despite the increasing proletarianization and stabilization of factory workers in town, ethnic ties have continued to be significant in some situations. Among the Nuer migrants ethnic and kinship bonds were constantly used and even strengthened by their pursuit of circular migration and by their social interaction on the building sites where they both work and live. We also saw, more generally, that socio-cultural factors have some influence on the distribution and concentration of migrants in certain occupations and that ethnic relations are on occasion manipulated in the other quite different work contexts.

The basic assumptions of the conventional studies of social change in colonial Africa led to an emphasis being laid on discontinuity between town and country and to the conceptualization of rural and urban as two distinct social fields. In that kind of model the migrants are conceived of as individuals who move between two relatively closed social systems and try to make the necessary adjustments as they move between the two. We noted, however, that there is a growing body of critical literature which emphasises the "dependent" nature of urbanization in the Third World, and which suggests that "external" political and economic processes should be analysed as possible determinants of the behaviour of the urban population. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the implications of laying a greater emphasis on political economy for the study of urban economies and the urbanization process in the Third World. My main concern has been to point out and illustrate the importance of studying socio-cultural factors at the micro-level but within the context of wider frameworks, and neither to reduce them to mere idiosyncracies nor to ignore them. My central contention is that the relevance of ethnicity must be examined within the totality of economic and social constraints in which social life is being enacted.

The thesis has attempted to explore aspects of the urban-industrial

situation of a kind that is common in the Third World. It is hoped that it may provide ideas and stimulation for further research on some of the specific problems that have emerged. The thesis first outlined the major economic and political processes that have created different migration patterns and shaped the differential participation of migrant workers in the particular industrial framework that resulted from these processes, and which consequently affected the employment options open to the migrants. At this level of analysis the thesis has touched on the different kinds of pressures and constraints on urban migrant workers. The thesis then moved to a second level of analysis concerned with the individual behaviour and small-group formations of different categories of migrants within the overall urban-industrial situation. My main purpose has been to seek explanations of the inter-connections between identifiable processes at both the micro and macro levels of analysis.

FOOTNOTES: CONCLUSIONS

1. Magubane and O'Brien, (1974) op.cit., 3-4.
2. M.Von Frehold, "On Colonial Modes of Production", unpublished paper presented to the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam (1977) 2-3.
3. A. Stretton, "Instability of Employment Among Building Industry Labourers in Manila", in R.Bromley and C.Gerry (eds.), (1979), 278.
4. O'Brien (1979) op.cit., 114.
5. S.McGee, for example, argues that "most cities of the Third World can be seen as consisting of two juxtaposed systems of production and the other from the peasant system of production", see G.McGee, "Peasants in Cities: A Paradox: A most Ingenious Paradox", Human Organization, (1973), 138. Similarly, Geertz describes this dichotomy as "firm-centred economy", and "bazaar-type economy", see C.Geertz, Pedlars and Princes: Social Change and Economic Modernization in two Indonesian Towns, (1963) Chapter 3. Singer has further gone on to envisage a new source of dualism in the Third World economies, a dualism which is directly related to the employment crisis and the operation of urban labour market as between "the men with work", and "the men without work".
6. K.Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana, Journal of Modern African Studies (1973) 61-84.
7. See, especially R.Bromley, "Introduction: The Urban Informal Sector: Why Is It Worth Discussing", The Urban Informal Sector: Critical Perspective on Employment and Housing Policies, Ed. by R.Bromley (1979).
8. Bromley and Gerry (eds.) (1979) op.cit.
9. Bromley (1979) op.cit., 1034.
10. C.Moser, "Informal Sector or Petty Commodity Production: Dualism or Dependence in Urban Development", in R.Bromley (ed.) (1979) op.cit.
11. O'Brien, (1979) op.cit., 172-182.
12. Ibid., 180.

APPENDIX I: Wage Structure of Office Employees of the Public Sector Corporations (Modified) of 1974

Group	Ranges of Salary(LS)		Grading of Jobs according to years of serve										
			Number of years										
			1 LS,000	2 LS,000	3 LS,000	4 LS,000	5 LS,000	6 LS,000	7 LS,000	8 LS,000	9 LS,000		
First(A)	3400												
First(B)	3300												
Second	3200												
Third	3100												
Fourth	3000												
Fifth	2900												
Sixth	2800												
Seventh	2700												
Eighth	2400/2550	Annually	2400,000	2475,000	2550,000								
		Monthly	200,000	206,250	212,500								
Ninth	2250/2400	Annually	2250,000	2325,000	2400,000								
		Monthly	187,500	193,750	200,000								
Tenth	1940/2230	Annually	1940,000	2005,000	2080,000	2155,000	2230,000						
		Monthly	161,666	167,083	173,333	179,583	185,333						
Eleventh	1790/2050	Annually	1790,000	1855,000	1920,000	1985,000	2050,000						
		Monthly	149,166	154,583	160,000	165,416	170,833						
Twelfth	1626/1886	Annually	1626,000	1678,000	1730,000	1782,000	1834,000	1886,000					
		Monthly	135,500	139,833	144,166	148,500	152,833	157,166					
Thirteenth	1465/1725	Annually	1465,000	1517,000	1569,000	1621,000	1673,000	1725,000					
		Monthly	122,083	126,416	130,750	135,083	139,416	143,750					
Fourteenth	1304/1544	Annually	1304,000	1344,000	1384,000	1424,000	1464,000	1504,000	1544,000				
		Monthly	108,666	112,000	115,333	118,666	122,000	125,333	128,666				
Fifteenth	1148/1388	Annually	1148,000	1188,000	1228,000	1268,000	1308,000	1348,000	1388,000				
		Monthly	95,666	99,000	102,333	105,666	109,000	112,333	115,666				
Fifteenth(A)	908/1268	Annually	908,000	948,000	988,000	1028,000	1068,000	1108,000	1148,000	1188,000			1228,000
		Monthly	75,666	79,000	82,333	85,666	88,999	92,333	95,666	99,000			102,333
Sixteenth	882/700	Annually	700,000	726,000	752,000	778,000	804,000	830,000	856,000	882,000			
		Monthly	58,333	60,500	62,666	64,833	67,000	69,166	71,333	73,555			
	<u>Grading Limit</u>												
	832/1072	Annually	832,000	872,000	912,000	952,000	992,000	1032,000	1072,000				
		Monthly	69,333	72,666	76,000	79,333	82,666	86,000	89,333				
	<u>Grading Limit</u>												
	990/1230	Annually	990,000	1030,000	1070,000	1110,000	1150,000	1190,000	1230,000				
		Monthly	82,500	85,833	89,166	92,500	95,833	99,166	102,500				
Seventeenth	350/510	Annually	350,000	370,000	390,000	410,000	430,000	450,000	470,000	490,000			510,000
		Monthly	29,166	30,833	32,500	34,166	35,833	37,500	39,166	40,833			42,500
	<u>Grading Limit</u>												
	470/646	Annually	470,000	492,000	514,000	536,000	558,000	580,000	602,000	624,000			646,000
		Monthly	39,166	41,000	42,833	44,666	46,500	48,330	50,166	52,000			53,833
	<u>Grading Limit</u>												
	590/772	Annually	590,000	616,000	642,000	668,000	694,000	720,000	746,000	772,000			
		Monthly	49,166	51,333	53,500	55,666	57,833	60,000	62,166	64,333			

APPENDIX II: Scale of Wage Groups for The Workers of the Modern Company  
for Production and Distribution of Matches (MCPDM) (Monthly)

<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>	<u>Group 4</u>	<u>Group 5</u>	<u>Group 6</u>	<u>Group 7</u>
27,660	30,990	34,650	38,845	43,550	48,785	54,670
26,420	29,600	33,100	37,105	41,600	46,600	52,220
25,180	28,210	31,550	35,365	39,650	44,415	49,770
23,940	26,820	30,000	33,625	37,700	42,230	47,320
22,700	25,430	28,450	31,885	35,750	40,045	44,870
21,461	24,040	29,900	30,145	33,800	37,860	42,420
20,220	22,650	25,350	28,405	31,850	35,675	39,970
18,980	21,260	23,800	26,665	29,900	33,490	37,520
17,740	19,870	22,250	24,925	27,950	31,305	35,070
16,500	18,480	20,700	23,185	26,000	29,126	32,620

Monthly Allowance is 7.5% and calculated according to the following figures based on the bottom of the scale in each Group:

1,240	1,390	1,550	1,740	1,950	2,185	2,450
-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------

APPENDIX III: Wage Scale for the Brewery Workers

Group	Annual Wage (LS)	Allowances
One	180/264	7 allowances amounting to LS12 annually
	<u>Grading Limit</u>	
	216/300	7 allowances amounting to LS12 annually
	<u>Grading Limit</u>	
One	264/384	8 allowances amounting to LS15 annually
	<u>Grading Limit</u>	
	312/444	6 allowances amounting to LS8 annually + one allowance amounting to LS24 annually
Two	432/600	7 allowances amounting to LS24 annually
Three	504/696	8 allowances amounting to LS24 annually
Four	600/840	8 allowances amounting to LS30 annually



APPENDIX IV

A RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

(1) Background Information about the Migrant and his Family

1.1 Name or Case No.

2.1 Sex

Male	1
Female	2

3.1 Age

Less than 11 years	1
11 - 15	2
16 - 20	3
21 - 25	4
26 - 30	5
31 - 40	6
41 - 60	7
61 and over	8

4.1 Education

Illiterate	1
Literate	2
Intermediate	3
Secondary	4
University	5

5.1 Marital Status

Single	1
Married	2
Divorced	3
Widowed	4

6.1 Relations of the Migrant

The Migrant	1
His wife	2
His bairns	3
Other children	4
Relations	5
Friends from the <u>balad</u>	6
His father	7
His mother	8
Brothers	9

7.1 Income

Less than 11 pounds	1
11-15	2
16-20	3
21-25	4
26-30	5
31 and over	6

(2) The Migrant in Town

1.2 What is your place of Birth?

Northern Province	1
Kordofan "	2
Darfur "	3
Kassala "	4
Upper Nile "	5
Bahr AlGhazal "	6
Equatoria "	7
Blue Nile "	8

2.2 When did you first arrive in town?

Before 1940	1
1941 - 45	2
1946 - 50	3
1951 - 54	4
1955 - 59	5
1960 - 64	6
1965 - 68	7
1969 - 73	8
1974 onward	9

3.2 Was it your first time to come to town?

Yes 1            No 2

4.2 How many times did you come?

Once	1
2 - 3 times	2
3 - 5 "	3
More than 5 times	4
Q. not applicable	5

5.2 With whom did you come?

Alone	1
With somebody	2
With many people	3

6.2 What is your relationship to those people?

His parents	1
Brothers and sisters	2
A friend	3
A relative	4
His neighbour in <u>Balad</u>	5
Not applicable	6

7.2 Are they or he or she still in town?

Still in town	1
Gone back	2
Not applicable	3

8.2 Why did they, he, or she go back?

Because he or they came on a visit	1
He or they didn't find a job	2
They or he came for medical care	3
Other reasons (mention)	4
Not applicable	5

- 9.2 Why did you come to town?  
 Looking for a job and regular income 1  
 Fed up with life in Balad 2  
 For raising living standards 3  
 Presence of parents in town 4  
 Presence of friends and relations 5  
 Other reasons (mention) 6
- 10.2 Do you send some money back home?  
 Yes 1 No 2
- 11.2 How much if yes?  
 1-5 pounds 1  
 6-10 " 2  
 11-15 " 3  
 16-20 " 4  
 More than 20 pounds 5  
 Not applicable 6
- 12.2 How often?  
 Monthly 1  
 Yearly 2  
 According to circumstances 3  
 Not applicable 4
- 13.2 If you don't send money, why?  
 My family has sufficient income 1  
 My income is too low 2  
 Somebody else does it instead 3  
 Other reasons (mention) 4  
 Not applicable 5
- 14.2 Do you visit your home area?  
 Yes 1 No 2
- 15.2 If yes, how often?  
 Once a year 1  
 Two times 2  
 Three " 3  
 More than 3 4  
 Not applicable 5
- 16.2 Why do you go back?  
 To see my family 1  
 To look after my property and land 2  
 To look after my animals 3  
 To assess my annual production 4  
 Other reasons (mention) 5  
 Not applicable 6
- 17.2 Are you used to being visited by your relations?  
 Yes 1 No 2
- 18.2 Why do they visit you?  
 To see me 1  
 Looking for medical care 2  
 For educational purposes 3  
 Looking for a job 4  
 To see the town 5  
 Not applicable 6
- 19.2 Have you ever thought of leaving town finally?  
 Yes 1 No 2
- 20.2 If yes, why?  
 Fed up with town life 1  
 The job is seasonal 2  
 I saved enough money 3  
 Wage too small 4  
 To look after old parents 5  
 To look after inherited wealth after parents' death 6  
 I like to stay for some time in balad and come back again 7  
 Other reasons (mention) 8  
 Not applicable 9
- 21.2 If No, why?  
 The job is worthy 1  
 I like town life 2  
 The presence of all amenities 3  
 The future is secured here 4  
 Other reasons (mention) 5  
 Not applicable 6

(3) Social and Economic Problems facing the Migrant

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1.3 <u>Is the wage sufficient to meet your needs?</u><br/>                 Yes      1      No      2</p>  | <p>9.3 <u>Why did you change?</u><br/>                 Far from place of work      1<br/>                 House not convenient      2<br/>                 I have relations here      3<br/>                 Many people from <u>Balad</u> are here      4<br/>                 Not applicable      5</p>               |
| <p>2.3 <u>If No how could you balance the deficit?</u><br/>                 Through borrowing      1<br/>                 Asking for support from <u>balad</u>      2<br/>                 Through overtime work      3</p>  | <p>10.3 <u>With whom did you stay when you stay when you first came?</u><br/>                 Father and mother      1<br/>                 A relation      2<br/>                 A friend      3<br/>                 Another person (mention)      4<br/>                 Not applicable      5</p>                  |
| <p>3.3 <u>Do you save part of your wage?</u><br/>                 Yes      1      No      2</p>  | <p>11.3 <u>For how long have you been staying in this area?</u><br/>                 Less than one year      1<br/>                 1 - 3 years      2<br/>                 4 - 6 years      3<br/>                 7 - 9 years      4<br/>                 10 and more      5</p>                                      |
| <p>4.3 <u>How do you save it?</u><br/>                 Monthly      1<br/>                 Yearly      2<br/>                 According to circum-<br/>                    stances      3<br/>                 Not applicable      4</p>   | <p>12.3 <u>Do you own this house or rent it?</u><br/>                 Ownership      1<br/>                 Rent      2</p>   |
| <p>5.3 <u>How much do you save monthly?</u><br/>                 Less than a pound      1<br/>                 1 - 2 pounds      2<br/>                 3 - 5 pounds      3<br/>                 6 - 8 pounds      4<br/>                 9 and over      5<br/>                 Not applicable      6</p>   | <p>13.3 <u>In what way is your house built?</u><br/>                 Building (mud, brick, etc.)      1<br/>                 Cardboard      2<br/>                 Other (mention)      3</p>   |
| <p>6.3 <u>How do you invest your savings?</u><br/>                 Buying cattle      1<br/>                 To buy a house in Khartoum      2<br/>                 To establish a business      3<br/>                 To buy or build a house in <u>the balad</u>      4<br/>                 Others (mention)      5<br/>                 Not applicable      6</p> | <p>14.3 <u>Is it comfortable to stay in this house?</u><br/>                 Yes      1      No      2</p>  |
| <p>7.3 <u>Have you been living in this house since you came?</u><br/>                 Yes      1      No      2</p>  | <p>15.3 <u>If yes, why?</u><br/>                 Near to place of work      1<br/>                 I don't pay any rent      2<br/>                 It is quiet      3<br/>                 I am living among my people      4<br/>                 Other reasons      5<br/>                 Not applicable      6</p> |
| <p>8.3 <u>Where have you been living before?</u><br/>                 Khartoum      1<br/>                 Khartoum North      2<br/>                 Ondurman      3</p>  |   |

16.3 If no why?

It is too small	1
The area is not healthy	2
It is noisy	3
Social environment is not good	4
Rent is high	5
No service amenities	6
Not applicable	7

17.3 How do you spend your  
leisure time?

I have no leisure time	1
In a cafe	2
Social clubs	3
At home	4
In a religious organ- ization	5
At a union club	6
Others (mention)	7

18.3 Are you engaged in any  
social activity?

Yes	1	No	1
-----	---	----	---

19.3 What sort of social activity?

Member in the Trade Union	1
Member in a Tribal Assoc.	2
Belonging to a religious group	3
Member in athletic, cultural and social club	4
Others	5
Not applicable	6

(4) The Worker on the Shop Floor: Satisfaction and Attachment to Job

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1.4 <u>Do you prefer the present job to others previously held?</u></p> <p>Prefer present job 1<br/>Do not prefer 2</p> <p>2.4 <u>If yes, why?</u></p> <p>Greater opportunity for use of skill 1<br/>Greater autonomy 2<br/>Greater variety in work tasks 3<br/>Better physical conditions 4<br/>Better supervision 5<br/>Better pay 6<br/>Not applicable 7</p> <p>3.4 <u>Do you prefer other jobs in the same factory?</u></p> <p>Prefer another job(yes) 1<br/>Prefer the present one 2</p> <p>4.4 <u>If yes, why?</u></p> <p>Greater opportunity for use of skill 1<br/>Greater autonomy 2<br/>Greater variety in work tasks 3<br/>Better physical conditions 4<br/>Better supervision 5<br/>Better pay 6<br/>Not applicable 7</p> <p>5.4 <u>Do you like any sort of change in your present job?</u></p> <p>Yes 1 No 2</p> <p>6.4 <u>If yes what kind of change?</u></p> <p>Better physical conditions 1<br/>Different organization of work 2<br/>Better supervisory methods 3<br/>Better tools and equipment 4<br/>Different method of payment 5<br/>Not applicable 6</p> | <p>7.4 <u>Have you ever thought of leaving your present job?</u></p> <p>Yes 1 No 2</p> <p>8.4 <u>If yes, what degree of action have you taken?</u></p> <p>Have thought of leaving but have taken no action 1<br/>Have thought of leaving and have taken some action 2<br/>Not applicable 3</p> <p>9.4 <u>If No, why?</u></p> <p>Nature of work 1<br/>Unsatisfactory management 2<br/>Poor physical conditions 3<br/>Poor promotion chances 4<br/>Poor level of pay 5<br/>Poor security 6<br/>Others (mention) 7</p> |
|--|---|

(5) Participation in Work Group

1.5 What do you think of the firm?

Better than most	1
Average	2
Worse than most	3

2.5 What do you think of the management-workers relations?

On harmonistic terms	1
Conflicting	2

3.5 If harmonistic why?

Management not willing to solve problems	1
No effective methods of consultation and negotiation	2
The trade union is irresponsible	3
Bad pay and security	4
Bad welfare benefits	5

4.5 If conflicting why?

Readiness of management to solve problems	1
Effective methods of consultation and negotiation	2
Responsible trade union	3
Good pay and security	4
Good welfare benefits	5

5.5 Do you think that the firm could pay you more?

Yes	1	No	2
-----	---	----	---

6.5 Do you go to the union clubs?

Yes	1
No	2
Not applicable	3

7.5 If yes how often?

Daily	1
Weekly	2
Monthly	3



(6) The Worker and the Union

1.6 Were you a trade union member before joining this firm?

Yes      1      No      2

2.6 Why did you join?

To share union advantages  
(wages, services, etc.)      1

As a principle of a  
working duty      2

Because all work mates  
are members      3

Pressed by supervisors,  
stewards and work mates      4

3.6 How often do you attend the Branch meetings?

Regularly      1

Occasionally      2

Rarely      3

Never      4

4.6 How often do you participate in Branch elections?

Regularly      1

Occasionally      2

Rarely      3

Never      4

5.6 What do you think of the union power now compared with the past?

Have much power      1

Disagree      2

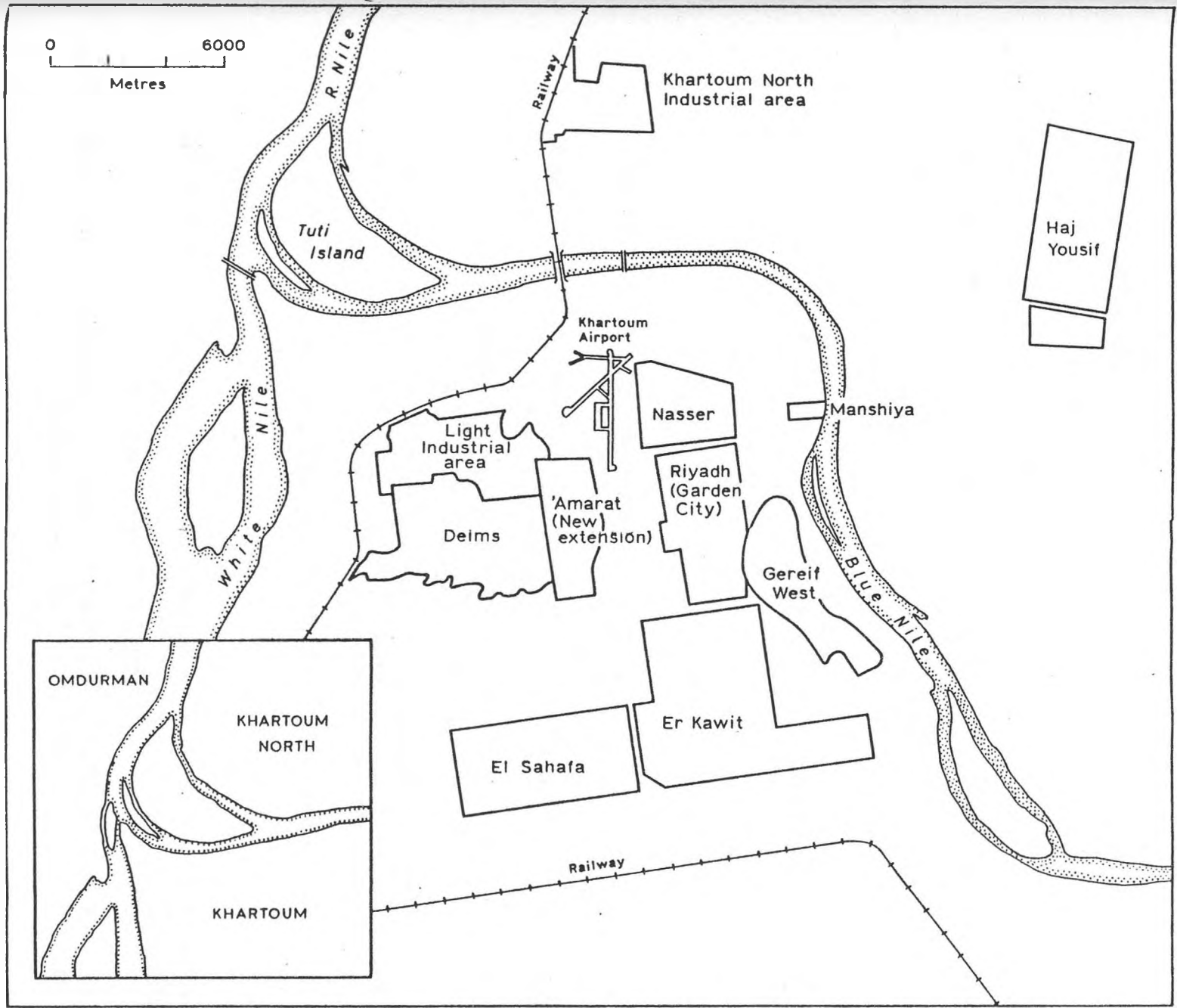
6.6 How do you think that the union should behave?

Just be concerned with  
getting higher pay,  
better conditions etc.      1

Have a say about the  
position and problems  
of labour force in  
general      2

MAP I: Provinces and Areas of the Sudan





MAP II: Location Map of Some Areas of the Three Towns

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