

SUDANWORKINGPAPER

The Politics of Local Boundaries
and Conflict in Sudan

The South Darfur Case

Yousif Takana

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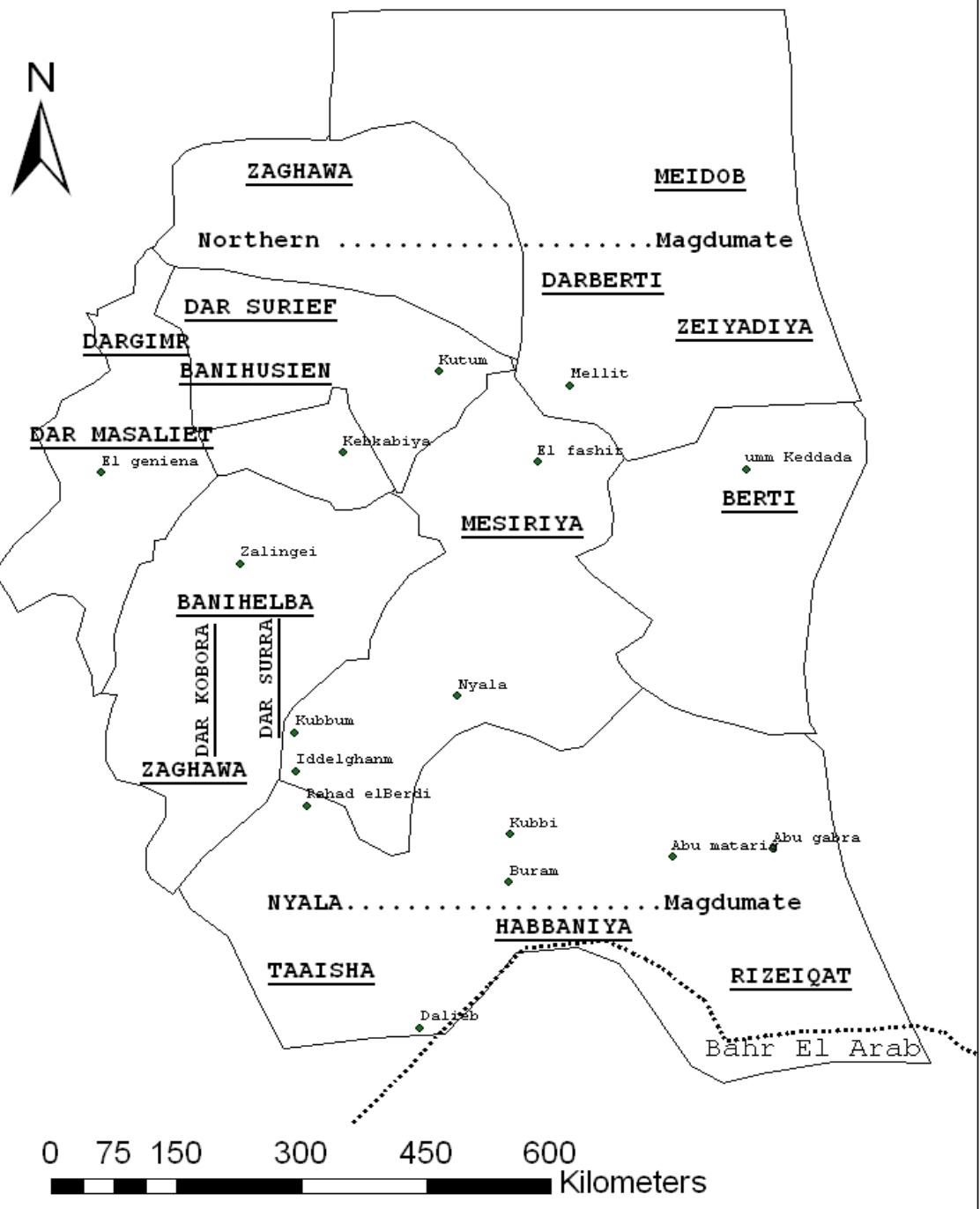
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Map of Darfur Province



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1. Administrative development in South Darfur

History of administrative formation

Up to 1994, Darfur region (the present three states of Darfur) had remained a single integrated political and administrative unit since the establishment of the Kaira Kingdom in the 17th century. Historically, the Kaira Sultanate started at the top of Jebel Merra in Dar¹ Turra in 1605 and then expanded to the North and East. In 1730 the capital of the Kingdom was moved from Kabkabia at the top of the northern hills into the eastern lowland plains of el Fashir. Since that time, el Fashir has remained the seat of political power in Darfur. In 1874, the German traveler Gustav Nachtigal, who arrived at the town from Wadai, was the first to tell us about the administrative organization of the Kingdom. According to him, the country was divided into five administrative areas. These were the Northern Province, Dar Tokunyawi, the southern, Dar Uma, the southwestern, Dar Dima, the eastern Dar Dali and the western province, Dar-el-Ghorb. Each of these provinces, with the exception of Dar el-Ghorb, had a governor with the title of Abo attached to the name of the province.² The focus of this study is the southern province of Dar Uma, which was later known as the southern ‘Magdomate’ of Nyala.

As territorial administrative units, Magdum and Magdomate are obscure. As described by O’Fahey, the title, Magdum, first appeared in about 1800 as a new official, who functioned outside the old titled hierarchy. A commissioner or viceroy appointed for a specific task, to govern a particular area or to lead a campaign, the Magdum “in some measure represented the person of the king”, symbolized by granting him on appointment royal insignia, the Quran, carpet kukur or tools and lances, but not nehas. The appointee could be either servile or free, and on the completion of his assignment he reverted to his old rank.³

Though the Magdomate started as an ad hoc administrative measure for coercion and tax collection, it had developed into an important political and administrative institution by the 18th century. In the whole kingdom two areas witnessed the development of the Magdomate institution, namely Dar Tugungawi in the northern parts around Fata Borno and Kutum and Dar Uma in the South around Dara and later Nyala.⁴

In the southern Magdomate the main objective in establishing this institution was to bring the Bagarra tribes within the bounds of the political authority of the Sultan in el Fashir. The Bagarra

¹. Dar means homeland.

² . Gustaf Nachtigal. Sahara and Sudan. Volume four. Wadai and Darfur. 1971. p.324.

³ . R.S. O’Fahey. State and society in Darfur. 1980. p.89.

⁴ . Other areas in the kingdom that witnessed the establishment of Magdomates are Dar el Ghorb around Kabkabia, Dar Dima and Dar Kerne around Jebel Merra.

were numerous and possessed their own slave troops in Mandala, slaves or serfs tied to settlements within the named territories who grew food and fought for their masters; the Bagarra also controlled the routes to the South. The Sultanate's southwards march brought it increasingly into contact with the nomads.⁵ Most of the military campaigns against the Bagarra were led by the Magdums of the South but in its later development the institution became more and more administrative in nature. During the regime of Sultan Ali Dinar (1899–1916), five Magdums took office in South Darfur. The last two were Tibn Saad el Nur a Konyunga Fur and Mohamed Kebkebe, a Sultan of Beigo tribe.

With the advent of British colonial administration in Darfur in 1916, three main developments were adopted in the southern Magdomate. Firstly, they converted the Magdomate into a 'merkez' or a district, with a British officer as a commissioner at the top of the hierarchy endowed with all political, military, judicial and administrative powers.

Secondly, a policy was declared initially to adopt the old traditional system of Kaira Kingdom, albeit with necessary modifications that could serve the interests of the new colonial administration. In this regard, the Magdomate was divided in two territorial administrative units. A Fur Magdum was appointed in 1923 but confined to the amalgam of the sedentary native tribes around Nyala. A well demarcated boundary for this new creation was drawn. The other division, which was South of the new Magdomate, was a Bagarra nomads domain. Here, tribal administrative units were created closely following the tribal structures of this group, which was composed of Reziegat, Habania, Felatta, Beni Helba and Taasha. An assistant district commissioner for the Bagarra was posted at Nyala as a new capital. In the process of reorganization of the Southern Magdomate, it is interesting to note that while the sedentary native groups in the North were kept together under one tribal chieftain, the Fur Magdum, the Bagarra to the South were divided into five separate administrations. These parallel arrangements had far-reaching consequences, as later developments will show when this study analyzes the present situation.

The third device of the colonial administration was the demarcation of the tribal Dars. Looking at the colonial literature concerning Darfur since the inception of so-called native administration in the 1920s, when the whole of Darfur province was divided into five districts and one commissionerate, one is struck by the huge efforts that colonial officers put into the demarcation of tribal boundaries. The final outcome of this process of tribal lands demarcation in the late 1920s was a rigid tribal boundary with detailed maps fixing tribal identities in complete isolation from each other. Again, this policy of "tribal fixation" within recognized territorial lands created conflict-prone ethnic communities when the whole system began cracking under pressure in recent years.

To conclude this introduction one can say that Darfur region and the southern Darfur state system in particular was a British colonial creation that retarded smooth socio-political development and crippled social integration through the device of native and tribal administration and the encapsulation of local communities within rigidly demarcated tribal territories that closely identified with tribalism.

Having said that, it is the different national political regimes that have mismanaged this situation into a state of crisis where tribal conflict is now mushrooming in an alarming manner in South Darfur state as well as in other states. This will be discussed later in the study.

⁵. R.S.O'Fahey. State and Society 1980 p.89

2. The phenomena and scale of tribal conflict in South Darfur state

The following illustrative table, covering the period from October 2004 to December 2006, attempts to capture the magnitude of tribal conflict in South Darfur state over just less than two years.

Table (1) Conferences of Reconciliation held in South Darfur state in 2005-2006⁶

	Reconciliation Date	The Locality	The Admin. Unit	The Conflict Tribes
1.	Oct. 2004	Dien	Abu Jabra & Adila	Reziegat & Maalia
2.	Jan. 2005	Dien, Sheiria	Asalaya & Yasin	Reziegat & Birgid
3.	Feb. 2005	Niyala	El Malam Unit	Beni Munsoor, Saada, Awlad-Munsoor, Fur
4.	Feb. 2005	Sheira	Nitega & Sheiria	Messeria & Birgid
5.	Feb. 2005	Sheiria, Niyala	Nitega & Niyala	Dajo & Messeria
6.	March 2005	Buram	Buram & Gereida	Habania & Reziegat
7.	March 2005	Reheid el Badri	Umdafog & Central Africa	Taasha, Felatta, Gula
8.	March 2005	Niyala	Niyala	Fur, Birgid, Saada, Reziegat, Borno
9.	Feb. 2005	Niyala	Abu Ajora	Dajo, Fur, Zagawa, Targm, Hotia, Taalba
10.	May 2005	Buram	Buram, Gereida	Habania & Masalat
11.	May 2005	Niyala	Niyala	Fur, Dajo, Abu Darag, Targum, Hotia
12.	April 2005	Kas	Kas	Fur, Arab
13.	Dec. 2005	Kas	Shataya, Umlabasa	Fur, Beni Helba
14.	Dec. 2005	Sheiria	Sheiria, Nitega, Yasin	Birgid, Meseria, Musabaat, Dajo
15.	Jan. 2006	Niyala, Sheiria	Niyala, Nitega	Birgid, Targum, Reziegat
16.	Jan. 2006	Buram, Tulus	Gereida, Buram, Tulus	Felatta, Habania, Masalat, Mahadi, Reziegat
17.	Feb. 2006	Niyala	Belale	Zagawa, Umkamatti, Dinka
18.	April 2006	Kas	Kas	Fur, Targum, Zagawa, Taalba
19.	April 2006	Buram, Tulus	Tulus	Habania, Felatta
20.	Jun. 2006	Niyala	Niyala	Reziegat, Targum
21.	Jun. 2006	Buram, Tulus	Buram, Tulus	Habania, Felatta
22.	Jun. 2006	Niyala	Niyala	Fur, Umkamatti, Kenana
23.	Jun. 2006	Niyala, Tulus	Niyala, Tulus	Felatta, Mahria, Sharafa
24.	Jun. 2006	Niyala	Niyala	Fur, Beni Helba
25.	Jun. 2006	Niyala, id el Fursan	Niyala, id el Fursan	Fur, Beni Helba, Gimir
26.	Aug. 2006	Id el Fursan, Tulus	Katila, Tulus	Felatta, Gimir
27.	Aug. 2006	Buram, Dien	Sunta, Fardus	Habania, Reziegat
28.	Aug. 2006	Niyala, Tulus	Niyala, Tulus	Felatta, Mahria
29.	Aug. 2006	Niyala	Niyala	Awlad Hnana, Reziegat, Awlad Um Ahmed Reziegat
30.	Sep. 2006	Niyala	Niyala	A group of different tribes
31.	Oct. 2006	Niyala	Abu Ajora	Fur, Targum, Reziegat, Felatta
32.	Dec. 2006	Buram	Radom	Binga, Kara
33.	Dec. 2006	Niyala	Towal	Beni Helba, Mararit, Sharafa, Fur

⁶. Source: Reconciliation Fund. South Darfur State. Niyala 17.12.2006

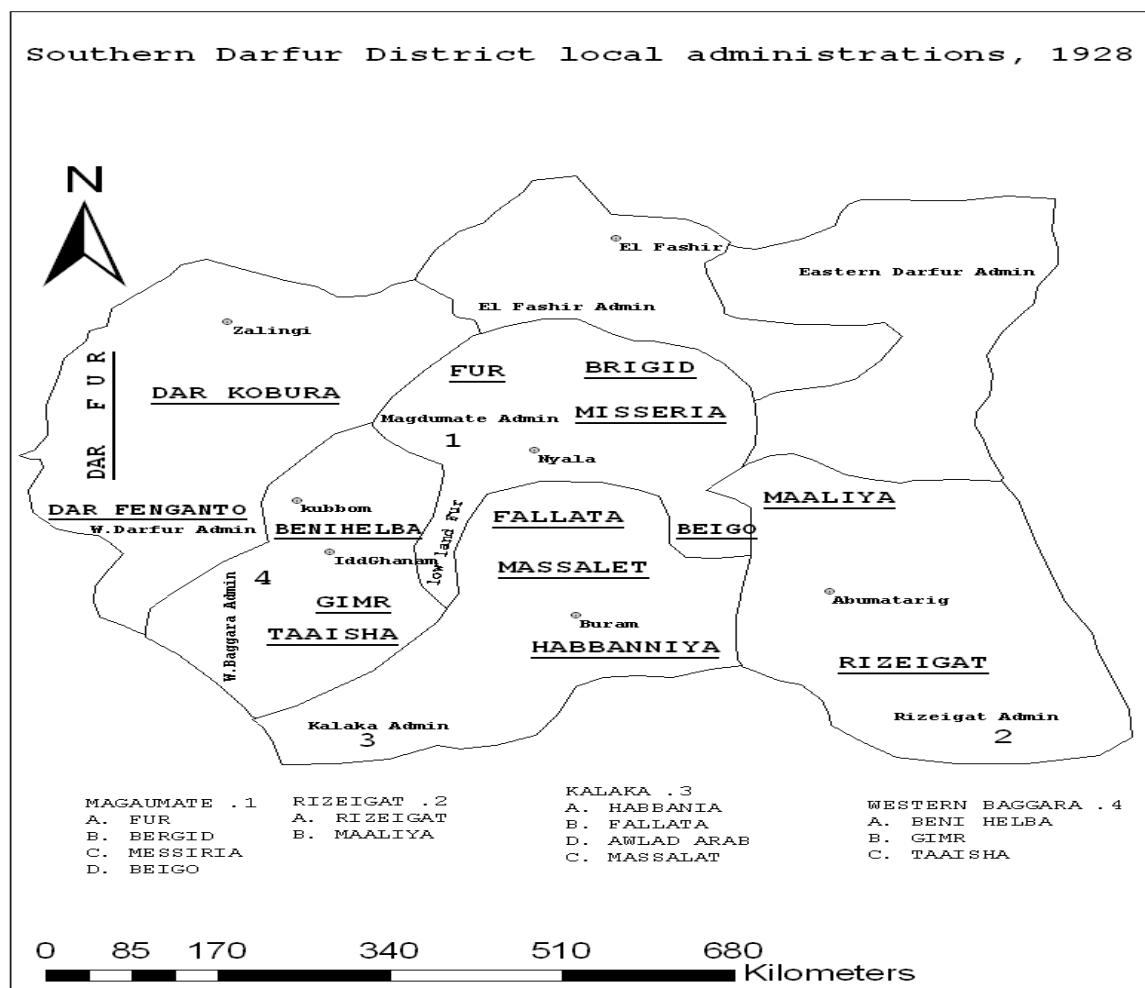
From a quick glance at the above table, one can tell that not a single tribe in the state of South Darfur is not engaged in a bloody conflict with its neighbors from other tribes. It is equally evident that the conflicts are more intensified in Magdomate localities than amongst the Bagarra groups to the South.

In all these conflicts the core issues are either tribal Dars that is either land or its resources or local boundaries within which the group can move. Over these two factors all tribes and ethnic groups in South Darfur state have been at war with each other for the last two decades and will continue to be, as will be explained later.

3. Causes of conflicts in South Darfur

The causes of conflict in South Darfur as well as other states in the region are complex and cover a wide range of aspects that engulf the human life of most Darfuran citizens. With no regard to those causes of a political nature such as underdevelopment, marginalization and poverty, it is important in this section of the study to identify some major root causes that have triggered massive conflicts in South Darfur which are closely related to the issues of land and tribal boundaries.

Map (2)



a. Land and natural resource disputes

Though the land issue will be dealt with later on, in close reference to some particular areas of South Darfur, natural resource disputes as a direct cause of conflict are important to mention here in a precise manner. It is noticeable that with the occurrence of the severe Sahelian drought and desertification in northern parts of Darfur in the early 1970s, massive human and animal movements to South Darfur occurred. With the new influx to the South, tribal conflicts over grazing lands intensified and spread all over the Bagarra homelands or Dars. These conflicts engaged the Zagawa and the camel nomads, mainly the Reziegat coming from the North and the Bagarra groups in South Darfur, comprising the southern Reziegat, the Habania, Felatta, Beni Helba and Taasha.

At the same time the same phenomena were witnessed in areas around Jebel Merra between the new migrants and sedentary sub-sections of Fur tribe. In most of these early conflicts in the mid-1980s, water and grazing lands were at the heart of the fighting. The most important of these wars was that between the Fur tribe and some nomadic Arabs in 1986-1990.

At this stage, conflicts were tribal. That is to say, a conflict was usually between individual tribes and dealt with as such according to customary tradition. At a later stage, this kind of conflict developed into a complex ethnic context. Now, though this resource-based conflict still lingers on in South Darfur, it is giving way to other conflict triggers.

b. Blocking of animal routes and seasonal group migration

To organize the animal routes and seasonal migration of nomads, the British administration in Darfur demarcated eleven animal routes (Marahil) throughout Darfur. These routes stretch from North to South. All nomadic movements were strictly confined and organized by native administrators of both sedentary farmers and nomadic tribes. To give an example of such administrative control and organization I quote from one report from the el Ghali papers⁷ concerning an agreement reached by the Habania and Felatta tribes in 1951. Both tribes held a meeting at Abu Salaa on 18 December 1951, headed by J.M.T. Alison, then Bagarra A.D. Commissioner. Ali el Ghali and Issa Sammani, the tribal chiefs of the Habania and Felatta respectively, agreed on the following arrangements: "It was agreed that Felatta on returning from the North in the 'Darat' not proceed to Dar Habania beyond Abu Salaa, Mugrana, Dikeir, and Musanad on the east of Abu Salaa, Umbalola west of Abu Salaa etc".⁸ This organization of the nomads' North-South movements proved to be very effective up to the late 1960s. Since that time, some drastic changes have taken place on the ground that have affected smooth nomadic movement along the 'Marahil'. The increase in the animal and human population led to more demands for land to cultivate and more range lands to graze. With the expansion of both activities, the system of 'Marahil' collapsed. The blockage of animal routes by the expansion of subsistence and commercial farming has created conflicts between the two major occupants, i.e. farmers and pastoralists, in South Darfur state in recent years.

A conflict mechanism is now one process for expanding the traditional territorial lands, acquiring new Dars or fixing the old demarcated ones. Disputes over boundaries for the newly established localities or for the tribal Dars are the new conflict mechanism and will be discussed later in more detail.

⁷. The el Ghali papers are a copy of reports handed over to me by the late Omer Ali el Ghali, then deputy tribal chief of Habania at Buram in 1997.

⁸. Abu Salaa, Mugrana, Dikeir, Musanad etc. are places well known in Dar Habania.

c. Deterioration of customary dispute resolution and reconciliation

Darfur tradition is very rich in dispute resolution and reconciliation. This goes back to the history of Kaira Kingdom, which flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries, when a customary law institution was established. Under this institution, all customary laws were collected. Through the system of inheritance of the office as one of the dignitaries of the royal family, customary law remained a very important source of jurisdiction till last days of the Kingdom in 1916. The role of this institution was a mechanism for dispute resolution and reconciliation. The tools for implementing these mechanisms were either traditional title-holders such as Dimlig⁹ or native administrators. The native administration was abolished by a central presidential decree in 1971. This created a vacuum amongst the grassroots local communities in all Darfur, including the South. When the system was later reestablished, it had already lost its glory and became less effective. Equally, the Dimlig system was neglected and left behind. So traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution and reconciliation are deteriorating and losing respect in the eyes of the new social forces, especially in urban centers and among the educated elite.

d. Increased competition between traditional and emerging leadership

The October 1964 uprising in the Sudan was a milestone in modern Darfur history. With the revolutionary slogans of freedom, pluralism modernization of rural Sudan, emancipation of rural Sudan from feudal native administration, etc., Darfur's educated elite was awakened as a new political force. A Darfur front for rebirth and development¹⁰ was formed in Khartoum and established its branches in most major cities and towns, including Niyala in South Darfur state.

The members of the new radical organization were school graduates from all levels. The program of the organization was drawn from the slogans of the October 1964 uprising. In such a political environment, most of the Darfur tribal educated elite began to contest the traditional role of the native administration. All Darfur tribal and ethnic communities were divided over the leadership of tribal chiefs. With new political opportunities in the regional and national assemblies, the new elites contested the elections for representation in such forums. This consolidated the new roles of the new elite. In 1970, when the native administration system was abolished all over North Sudan, it was considered a triumph for the new leadership. But the traditional leaders did not give up. They even moved forward to contest for new roles and established new political alliances, especially with the forces of traditional parties.¹¹ In such a dynamics of socio-political competition, Darfur communities were fissured and polarized in a way that was very conducive to conflict.

e. Increased ethnic polarization

Nowadays in Darfur, ethnic identity is becoming crucial to the playing of politics at all levels – local, state and national – and in joining with or against a war party. This phenomenon of polarization started in the mid-1980s. With the cycles of drought that hit most parts of North Darfur hard, massive movements of groups (Zagawa Reziegat nomads and Berti) headed for the South Darfur and Jebel Merra areas. In 1984, the savannah project documents from Bagarra areas account

⁹. Dimlig is a traditional office-holder who acts as a referee between the disputants according to customary laws and traditions. During the Kaira Kingdom (1605-1916), it was a very important office and was adopted by almost all tribes within the Kingdom. With the conquest of the Kingdom, the British administration liquidated this office and replaced it by the Omda as a medium-level office in the native administration.

¹⁰. The Darfur front for rebirth and development was a political organization formed in 1964 by some of the Darfur educated elite in Khartoum. The founding members included Ahmed Drieg, Dr. Ali el Haj, Mohamed Abdu el Manan, Dr. Ali Hassan Taj el Din and others.

¹¹. In Sudanese politics the term traditional parties means both mass parties of Umma and social unionist ones, in comparison with communists and Islamists.

for the following numbers: in Niyala 180,976, in Dien 72,849, in Buram 95,240 and in Id el Fursan 64,593 immigrants.

Such movements continued up to 2003.¹² With these movements from North to South Darfur, conflicts between the newcomers and the hosting communities began to increase. With the intensification of these conflicts, which were often confined to individual tribes, new trends of spillover dynamics began to develop towards ethnic polarization. In 1986, a major conflict broke out between some Bagarra Arab tribes and Fur in the Jebel Merra area. Camel Arab tribes (usually coming from the North) joined that conflict, siding with the Bagarra. In such a process an ethnic dimension was born when the conflict was regarded as “Arabs” against “non-Arabs”. Politics and the mass media fueled the issue to include the whole of Darfur.

In 1995, with the new system of native administration in West Darfur, that is the homeland of Fur and Masalit, new “emirate” posts were established for Arab nomads. These were imposed without prior consultation with the original holders of the long established systems. Because of these administrative arrangements, a bloody conflict between Masalit and the Arab nomads was intensified. With the Fur equally affected by the measures, the conflict developed into a full ethnic war. With the armed movement fighting the government since 2003, ethnic polarization reached its apex. The armed movements were dominated by non-Arab tribes and the Arabs joined the government. The ongoing conflict in Darfur is now becoming an ethnic sorting out process that is damaging the social fabric of coexistence amongst Darfur’s ethnic multitude. Such a conflict-ridden environment also overshadowed tribal relationships in South Darfur.¹³

4. Politics of local boundaries and “retribalization” in South Darfur

With the coming of the Ingaz regime in 1989, a committee was formed by the revolutionary command council on 9 September 1990 to look into a redivision of provinces. The declared purpose of redivision was to enhance efficiency and secure greater popular participation. In just two months’ time, the committee submitted its report in November 1990. In its report the committee cited 15 objectives as justification for new administrative units that doubled the old ones. Out of the 15 justifications, security and political objectives are emphasized with very little regard to administrative convenience and efficiency. These justifications include the following:

- 1- To minimize the provincial unit to a size that allows the state (Dawla) to intensify its political, security and developmental activities.
- 2- To enable these small administrative units to “control” all their affairs more easily.
- 3- To enable these small units to achieve higher efficiency in ongoing political mobilization and to ensure popular participation and security through linkages with the decision-making centers in the country.
- 4- These small units will enable citizens to achieve a feeling of national belonging through their participation in provincial duties.
- 5- These small units will satisfy the needs of citizens in respect of services and of individual, community and national security.

¹². This is the date when armed groups (SLM and JEM) launched their war against the Khartoum government. Since that date, human and animal movements have been drastically changed by the war.

¹³. These and other general causes of conflict were identified by the writer and other cluster groups during Darfur J.A.M between September and October 2005. The identification was a result of wide-ranging consultations in all three Darfur states.

- 6- These small units will enable the citizen to own the decisions, especially during the coming meetings of political congresses that will establish a comprehensive political system. This will ensure a broad base for political participation through contacts at the different levels.
- 7- The committee concluded that we were not looking to minimize the sizes of these new units to a degree that would hamper them from carrying out their duties but only to the extent that they would achieve the above-mentioned objectives – that is to say, the optimum level.¹⁴

From the above-mentioned objectives of the report, it is clear that these were to be politically tailored units to enhance strict political and security control.¹⁵ At the time of the committee's report, the whole of Darfur region comprised only two provinces, North and South Darfur provinces with 6 to 8 local area councils.¹⁶ In the whole country the committee, in accordance with the new doctrine, recommended an increase of the 19 provinces at that time to 74, plus 6 if possible, according to the recommendations of the report. For Darfur, the share was 14 provinces instead of the 2 that had been established in 1974.

Again looking for further redivisions, the head of state established another committee chaired by his deputy on 15 August 1993. The clear mandate of the committee was to look into the geography of the present states and recommend their redivision so as to be in tune with the new policy of federalism that the regime was planning to implement. This time the composition of the committee was very telling. It was chaired by the deputy head of state and included prominent activists of the political regime at the center as well as the provinces. The general principles followed by this new committee were similar to those for the first one. It emphasized security and political objectives, but one of the principles was noteworthy. It stated that 'the new regime came as a national call for salvation in all spheres of politics, economy and society. It equally came to address peace, justice and security in all its shapes. It also emphasizes self sufficiency, political independence from hegemony and to originate Sudanese identity. Because of all these above mentioned objectives, the revolution rejected all political, economic, social and administrative systems and organization that came before it and announced its plan in January 1991 to establish its federal system guided by Islam'.¹⁷

Interestingly enough, the committee reported that most of the Darfurians consulted were against the redivision of Darfur into more states and stated the following reasons for keeping Darfur as one state:

- 1- The creation of provinces was still new and had not yet been assessed, so the creation of new states would confuse the whole development and bring new financial obligations.
- 2- In Darfur there are about 18 tribes, which only recently came out of war. *Their wounds are still healing. Any new divisions might instigate a new war amongst them* Most of the Darfur tribes depend on livestock, especially those in the northern parts which used to move seasonally to the South. This North-South movement is one of the main causes of conflicts and wars. In such an environment, *the redivision of the state may further renew the conflict over water and range lands.*
- 3- Tribal security is the major problem for the administration in Darfur. *The management of tribal security would be more efficient under one administration.*
- 4- The cost of establishing new states would be better spent on education and health, since these are the priorities of Darfur.

¹⁴. The report of the provinces redivision committee, Nov. 1990 pp. 15 & 16.

¹⁵. In such redivision arrangements the term security is usually manipulated to regime security rather than the common understanding of national or state security.

¹⁶. The writer was a commissioner of North Darfur province up to 1989. The administrative area councils of this province were: 1- Geneina 2- Kutum 3- Kabkabia 4- Alfasher 5- Malit 6- Umkadada.

¹⁷. The final report of the committee of redivision of the states. Dec. 1993 Khartoum p.17.

- 5- The poor infrastructure in Darfur would make contacts and coordination difficult.
- 6- The provinces were increased from 2 to more than 10, which are a real burden on the available poor resources. There is no need for more division of the same poor resources.
- 7- The poor human resources were already distributed among the new provinces. If Darfur were redivided and new states created, there would be no trained personal to run them.
- 8- The Local Councils Act 1991 gave full powers to these councils that will allow them not to seek the consent of the state authorities in all local affairs.
- 9- The representative councils of the states had not yet been formed, so it would be premature to think about new ones.¹⁸

All these reasons were advanced by Darfurians to justify their anti-redivision approach, yet Darfur was divided into three states in 1994. South Darfur became one of the three states.

These two redivision reports, for provinces in 1990 and states in 1993, are important to cherish as a background to the politics of boundaries in South Darfur states. The recommendations of these two redivision committee explain how the policies of the ruling elites in Khartoum are at the core of the conflicts in Darfur. The second point to mention here is that the skeptic views that Darfurians had expressed to the committee in 1993 came to be true all over Darfur when it was too late.

5. South Darfur State: a multitude of tribal and ethnic divisions

When Darfur was first divided into two provinces (North and South) in 1974, the whole of South Darfur was formed of two districts. These were South Darfur district, which include the Magdomate and the Bagarra area, and the western district of Zalingi embodying the Fur heartland confederate of Dars (See Map 2). After independence, the two districts were converted into rural councils to show the difference between the two administrations, national versus colonial. South Darfur rural council, our case study, was divided in 1983 into 4 area councils according to the Local Government Act 1981. These were (1) the central area council (Magdomate), (2) the eastern area council, (3) the southwestern area council, and (4) the western area council around Zalingi. It was said at the time that these divisions were for administrative convenience and because of that, they included an amalgam of ethnic and tribal groups. To give examples of this, the Magdomate remained as a central council with all its traditional ethnic groups, e.g. Fur, Birgid, Dajo, Messeria, Targum, Beigo and Umkamalti. On the other hand, the southwestern area council included the Habania, Felatta, Gimir, Beni Helba, Masalat and Taasha. Till this time (1983), the euphoria of tribalism and ethnicity had not yet been awakened. That was in part because at that time area councils were formed on principles of territorial, geographical and economic viability. Beside that, professional career local administrators were still running the show as executives. These territorial administrative units under the 1981 Act were in fact continued up to 1989.

If ideas were drivers of policies,¹⁹ then the winds of change came with the spirit of the two redivision reports of 1990 and 1993 mentioned above. In South Darfur, a number of provinces were established and South Darfur State was created. Without going into detail on the administrative history of South Darfur, one can state that in 1995, during Dr. Kabalo's governorate, the administrative units proliferated up to 38 local and sub-local units (see Map 2).

¹⁸. The final report of the committee of redivision of states. Dec. 1993 Khartoum. p.42.

¹⁹ Francis Fukuyama. After the Neocons. America at the crossroads. P. Profile books 2006. p.4.

During this era, administrative units were politicized along tribal and ethnic lines. Economic and territorial principles were abandoned for the sake of political convenience. To establish an administrative unit, e.g. a locality or sub-locality, political allegiance was a vital factor. The mechanisms for such political loyalty and support were either ethnic or tribal. The rewards for the supposedly loyal tribes were warranted legal provinces. Strikingly enough, South Darfur state was divided into 9 provinces according to the Dars (homeland) of the “big” tribes. Traditional Magdomia around Niyala was divided into (1) Niyala province (Fur), (2) Kas province (Fur) and (3) Sheiria province (Birgid and Zagawa). For the Bagarra, every tribe got its province. To start from east to west accordingly, the following provinces were established: (1) Adilaa province for Maalia tribe, (2) Dien province for Reziegat tribe, (3) Buram province for Habania tribe, (4) Tulus province for Felatta tribe, (5) id el Fursan province for Beni Helba tribe, and (6) Reheid el Berdi province for Taasha tribe.²⁰ That is to say, the traditional tribal Dars were converted into legal warranted administrative bodies, with all the modern bureaucratic devices of a budget, a legislature and executive. The most crucial factor here is that such a process gave the structure of the tribe a legal entity, with all the consequences that entailed. Furthermore, to emphasize the tribalistic nature of the new creations, a native tribal administration was revived and incorporated into the whole political and administrative set-up. In such an environment, retribalization is the final result because tribalism has its own dynamic that was not considered by the planners of the regime. To elaborate on the dynamics of tribalism created by the above-mentioned administrative divisions will help explain the devastating conflicts amongst all tribes in South Darfur over the boundaries of these new units. Looking at tables 1 and 2, not a single tribe in South Darfur is not engaged with its neighbors in the boundary issue. Dars, or tribal homelands, are the core issue of almost all these conflicts. As mentioned before, the colonial administration’s policies of demarcation and fixing the Dars retarded the smooth integration of these tribes through the development of citizenship and equal rights. Under such policies, it created among the tribal communities what could be termed the haves and have-nots. It gave legitimacy to some tribes over certain pieces of land that were well demarcated and gave authority to the native chiefs over these lands. Those procedures kept a number of small tribes out of this right. These were small tribes at that time. But tribes change as equally the lands change through migration, population and animal herd growth, drought and degradation, etc.

The present policy of fixing the administrative boundaries along the tribal Dars has created land-grabbing symptoms among all tribes. Every single tribe in south Darfur should know every inch of its lands or should acquire by all means new lands that could give it its identity among other tribes. That is very simple, for land as Dar is symbolic to (1) native administration, (2) to having a local council or sub-council, (3) to achieving political recognition and representation, and (4) to enhancing tribal prestige and identity amongst other tribes. This process of administrative retribalization resulted in the following tribal conflicts over boundaries in the last 5 years.

²⁰ During the data collection for this study two tribes in South Darfur state were fighting their cases in local politics to have their own provinces. These are the Masalat of Gereida and the Gimir of Katila.

Table (2) Conflicts over boundaries²¹

No.	Localities in dispute	The conflicting tribes
1.	Tulus against Fursan (Majabi area)	Felatta, Gimir, Beni Helba
2.	Tulus against Buram (Saad area)	Felatta, Habania, Masalat
3.	Tulus against Niyala (Dito area)	Felatta, Mahadi
4.	Tulus against Niyala (AbuSalaa area)	Felatta, Fur, Mararit
5.	Tulus against Niyala (Dimso area)	Felatta, Gimir, Beni Helba
6.	Zalingi against Niyala	Fur Jebel Merra, Fur Magdomia
7.	Sunta against Joghana (Mograna area)	Masalat Nehas, Habania
8.	Eldien against Yasin	Reziegat, Birgid
9.	Niyala against Timbisko	Fur- Targum
10.	Mokgar against Reheid el Badri	Fur – Taasha, Salamat
11.	Greida against Abu Ajora	Masalat, Mahadi
12.	Dien against North Sika Hadid	Reziegat, Maalia
13.	Tiboon against Adila	Maalia
14.	Adila against Dien	Maalia, Reziegat
15.	AbuJabra against Abu Matarig	Reziegat, Reziegat
16.	Sheiria localities	Birgid, Zagawa Messeria
17.	Kas against E. Jebel Merra	Fur, Fur, Saada, Awlad Mansur etc.
18.	Greida against Joghana	Masalat Nehas, Masalat Dingir
19.	Tulus against Intakaina	Felatta, Gimir

Conflict over the boundaries of these tribal localities goes beyond the tribes to include the sub-sections of the same tribe. This is for the simple reason that the localities even divided one tribe into sub-sections of the same tribes as administrative units. In this case, these sub-units reflect the internal politics of the tribe over the native administration and political leadership of the tribe at different levels, whether local or at state level.

To give an example of these tribal localities and how they create more divisions among tribes, Buram locality was divided among the Habania tribe into the following sub-units:

- a. Wad Hajam locality for Awlad Abu Ali section of the tribe.
- b. Tagriba locality for Rayafa section of the tribe
- c. AlKalaka locality for Ganayat section of the tribe.
- d. AlSunta locality for Shabaa section of the tribe.
- e. ARadom locality for Awlad Arab section of the tribe.
- f. Buram Town locality for Nas Khair Alla section of the tribe

Those are the main branches of Habania tribe, each one empowered by territorial boundaries to separate and compete with other branches. Another example is Dien locality, which is Reziegat homeland. Similar divisions into tribal subsections created the following administrative sub-units.

- a. Asalaya locality for Mahamid section of the tribe
- b. Abu karinka locality for Maalia Malia section of the tribe
- c. Abu Jabra locality for Awlad Mohamed section of the tribe
- d. Abu Matarig locality for Ummahamad section of the tribe
- e. Fardos locality for Nawaiba section of the tribe.
- f. North Sika Hadid for Maalia section of the tribe.

²¹ File 9/D/52/B/18M. Tribal Conflicts. South Darfur State (closed 2005).

Looking at all South Darfur localities, similar tribalization processes not only engendered competition and conflict concerning the tribe's different fertile grounds but were looked at as an official legal policy that gave legitimacy to all disputes among the different tribes.

The planners of the tribal administrative units completely ignored the financial aspects of that policy. The economic and human resources of localities in South Darfur were fragmented and distributed among these small tribal units. The end result was that none of these units was capable of maintaining itself financially. Moreover, they became a burden on the citizens, who began to complain about huge and numerous new taxes.²²

In 1999 it became evident that the revenue of most of the localities in South Darfur was short of paying the salaries of the staff who were running them, such as the clerks, accountants and executive officers. In March 2001 a presidential decree was promulgated to decrease all the localities in the Sudan by 30%.²³ Accordingly, a state committee was formed in South Darfur. The committee recommended a reduction of localities according to the following table.

Table (3)²⁴

No.	The Province	Present localities	Proposed to be liquidated	The remaining councils
1.	Niyala	6 localities	1	5
2.	Sheira	5 localities	2	3
3.	Kas	3 localities	1	2
4.	Id el Fursan	6 localities	1	5
5.	Reheid el Birdi	3 localities	1	2
6.	Tulus	3 localities	1	2
7.	Buram	9 localities	2	7
8.	Dien	5 localities	1	4
9.	Adila	3 localities	1	2
	9	42	11	31

The localities recommended for reduction by the state committee included the following:

- 1- East Jebel Merra Locality (Fur)
- 2- Mershing Locality (Fur)
- 3- Yassin Locality (Birgid)
- 4- South Jebel Merra Locality (a group of tribes)
- 5- Umlabasa Locality (Beni Helba)
- 6- Towal Locality (Gimir)
- 7- Sirgaila Locality (Felatta)
- 8- Kalaka Locality (Habania Ganayat)
- 9- Tagriba Locality (Habania Rayafa)
- 10- Abu Jabra Locality (Reziegat)
- 11- North Sika Hadid Locality (Maalia)

In the same report the committee recommended that the following localities adjust their financial conditions, that is, to give them a further chance. There is no doubt that this recommendation was a

²² For Buram locality sub-units there were more than 20 taxes, which included animals, crops and royalties. Even wild fruits such as Aradeb, gideb, jogan, kereep etc., which were collected by poor people from wild forest trees, were taxed.

²³ Financial factors were the sole reason behind this decree.

²⁴ Report of the state committee formed to reconsider the localities on March 2001. South State, June 2001.

compromise because of the strong pressure exerted on the committee by the concerned tribes. These compromise localities included:

- 1- Malam Locality
- 2- Abu Ajora Locality
- 3- Wad Hajam Locality
- 4- El Ghoz Locality
- 5- Sunta Locality
- 6- Belel Locality
- 7- Netega Locality
- 8- Shataya Locality
- 9- Merkondi Locality
- 10- Sheiria Locality

In total, 22 councils were supposed to be reduced according to the recommendations of the committee. Those which were definitely recommended for liquidation included 11 councils. The financial burden of these 11 councils, as stated by the committee, was the following:

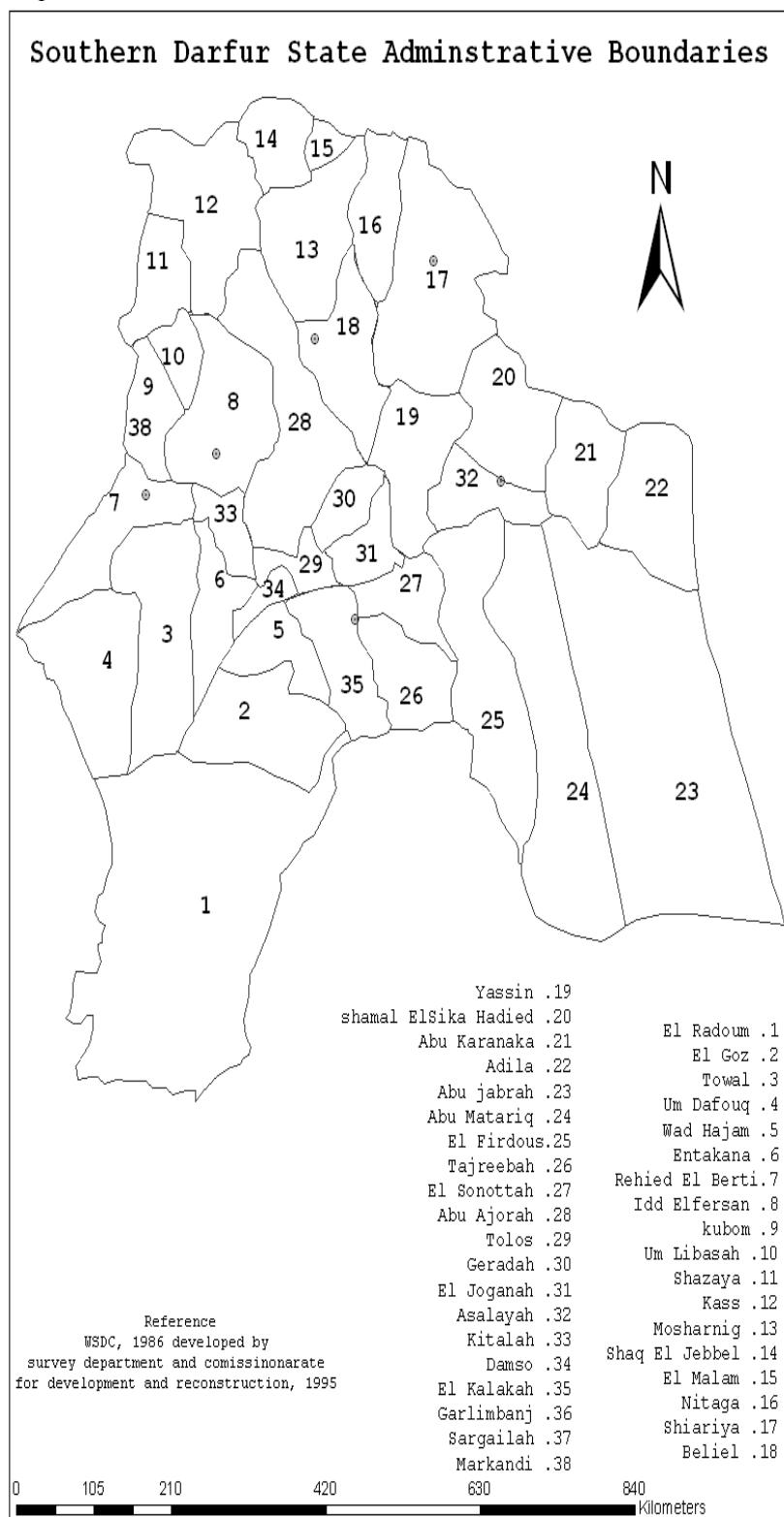
Table (4) the financial cost of the proposed localities to be liquidated in 2001 in S. Dinar²⁵

No.	No. of staff	Cost of salaries	Cost of services	The total cost
1-	201	35,938,482	18,740,000	54,678,482
2-	185	23,215,745	13,101,898	45,317,643
3-	231	34,693,546	17,871,931	52,565,477
4-	112	22,659,423	10,010,143	32,669,566
5-	161	22,459,929	12,883,406	35,343,335
6-	119	22,192,693	15,558,211	37,750,904
7-	78	17,389,083	14,199,021	31,588,103
8-	225	37,147,481	7,600,000	44,747,481
9-	204	28,767,672	9,970,000	38,737,672
10-	126	30,233,926	12,350,000	42,583,926
11-	97	31,549,636	6,815,929	39,365,565
	1739	31,524,7615	140,100,539	455,348,154

Though it is a high cost in financial and human resources, tribal political resistance to such administrative and financial adjustment was mounting since most of the sections of tribes considered these localities as acquired rights and any policy to liquidate them as a tribal conspiracy. Beside those recommendations and financial difficulties, new localities were established (see Map 3).

²⁵ Report of the State committee 2001.

Map 3



6. The steps towards acquiring new Dars and instigating new wars

With the end of British colonial administration in 1955, the demarcation and fixing of tribal Dars in Darfur was over. A tribe either had a Dar or did not.²⁶ For the tribes which were not lucky enough to have Dars, the struggle continued in different directions. For these have-not tribes, conflicts at all levels to have Dars allocated for them became a prime policy and objective. Political support for Khartoum regimes from these tribes was conditioned by the willingness of the regime to negotiate and consider the issue of Dar allocation. Through much bargaining over five decades, a compromise was reached as the first step towards Dar acquisition. This first step was to recognize the tribe by establishing a native administration for it. For this magic first step, Khartoum regimes could manipulate the political support of the tribes.

In South Darfur State, the native administration mechanism was maximized in the 1990s to secure the political support of the tribes. In 1990 an act to organize the native administration system was issued. The act gave the Wali (governor) absolute discretionary powers to dismiss or establish a native administration. Using those powers, the successive “Walies” of South Darfur multiplied the number of native administrators as a political reward, to an extent that was beyond the traditional capacity of the old native system. Most of the new native administrators were emigrants who had no Dars in South Darfur. They were either from camel nomad Arabs or Zaghawa from the North. Most of this newly established administration is in Fur and Birgid Dars around Niyala Magdomate. For these two original Magdomate tribes, the new administration is a violation of traditions and customs and the first step towards fragmenting their Dars and administrative systems. Tensions between the two groups, old and new, were rising and conflicts were widespread all around the Magdomate. In 2002 the tribal situation was chaotic; in 2003 the Wali formed a committee, chaired by Magdum Adam Rigal as a paramount chief for the Fur tribe, to look into a reorganization of native administration. The committee reported that the increase of native administrators in the level of Shartay was about 33% while the Omdas had increased by 300%. In some areas, instead of one Omda 14 new ones had been added without good justification and without prior consultation with the chief tribal administrator.²⁷

For the new native administrations, looking for Dar rights is the prime concern. The techniques to achieve that end are numerous. Past examples in this respect showed that when a native tribal administration acquires an official administrative unit like a province or commissionerate, then a tribal Dar is the final reward.

Four cases in South Darfur that will be narrated at the end of this study will qualify the above conclusion. These are the Felatta, Maalia, Targum and Hamdania cases.

a. Felatta Dar case

In recent years, as table 2 shows, Felatta is the only tribe engaged in bloody conflicts with all its neighbors, Habania, Fur, Masalat, Gimir and Beni Helba. In all these conflicts Felatta has claimed lands while other tribes have denied these claims. The explanation of this phenomenon is that the

²⁶ Since independence in 1956 no tribe has been allocated a new tribal Dar, except that in 1995 the Reziegat Hamdania branch was demarcated a land in South Darfur.

²⁷ The final report. The committee for reorganization of native administration South Darfur State. February 2003.

Felatta Dar is still in the process of formation since it is one of the recent Dars that came into being in South Darfur.

Going back to the history of administration in South Darfur, it is clear that Felatta had no separate administration but were part of Habania Nazirate in Kalaka area. Equally, Mr M. Pamphrey, Southern Darfur district commissioner in 1945, stated in a letter dated 18 August 1945 that “Felatta have no real Dar”.²⁸ Nazir Ali el Ghali of Kalaka stated to a commission in 1984 that Felatta nomads were concentrated around Jidad area. The area of present Tulus, the present headquarters of Felatta, belonged to Magdom Rigal in Niyala, while the Mahadi of Abu Ajora and Thania Daleba were under the responsibility of el Ghali’s administration in el Kalaka.

The two tribal leaders in the 1940s agreed between themselves to exchange the two areas for administrative convenience. From that time, Abu Ajora and Thania Daleba became part of Niyala Magdomate and Tulus part of Kalaka administration under el Ghali Taj eldin. This deal was said to have given Felatta more space for their animals.²⁹ In 1946, a local authority for Felatta first appeared under the personality sheet of el Sammani el Bashar Nazir of Felatta nomads.³⁰ Before that date, the process of “Dar demarcation” of Felatta Dar as a separate entity had started. In 1928, a dispute between Nazir Abu Hemera of Felatta and Magdom Adam Rigal over the following of Mararit and Zagawa natives of Abu Salala village was considered by the Darfur governor. The dispute, as reported by the South Darfur district commissioner, was that in 1920 the natives of Abu Salala rebelled against the Magdom administration and followed Abu Hemera administration for a short time and then returned back again to Magdom Adam Rigal. When Abu Hemera claimed their following, the district commissioner gave them the option to follow either of the two native administrators. They confirmed they were following the Magdom of Fur.³¹ In 1983, when Buram area council was established according to the 1981 Local Government Act, Tulus, as the Felatta administrative capital, was considered to be a sub-council of Buram, but without a separate budget. Later, Tulus became a warranted council and in 2002 it was established as a province. Through all these administrative procedures, Dar Felatta took its legitimacy. More conflicts are expected to take place before Dar Felatta takes its final shape. That is because Dar Felatta is very small and with the increase in its human and animal population more lands are needed for grazing and cultivation.

From the Felatta case it is evident that the traditional Dar system is cracking. This is no doubt due to the huge socio-economic pressures and continuing influx of migration from northern and eastern parts of Darfur.³² Again, Dar concepts have changed in recent years among some of the political elite who are now holding power for ideological and political reasons.

b. Hamdania Reziegat case

Hamdania is a sub-section of Reziegat of North Darfur. They are camel nomads and not Bagarra. Hamdania were in conflict with the administration of their tribe, the Mahria Reziegat of North Darfur. Because of that dispute and the 1980s drought, they migrated to South Darfur in 1989. They settled in Umdowan Ban village, South of Niyala Magdomate, and kept roaming with their camels. During their presence in South Darfur many conflicts occurred between them and other tribal leaders, Fur, Habania, etc. In 1993 a native administration was established for them under Omda

²⁸ File S.D.D/SCR/COO.A5. Southern Darfur District.

²⁹ 1984 report. Jamal committee for the problem of boundaries between Felatta and Gimir. South Darfur Province. p.4.

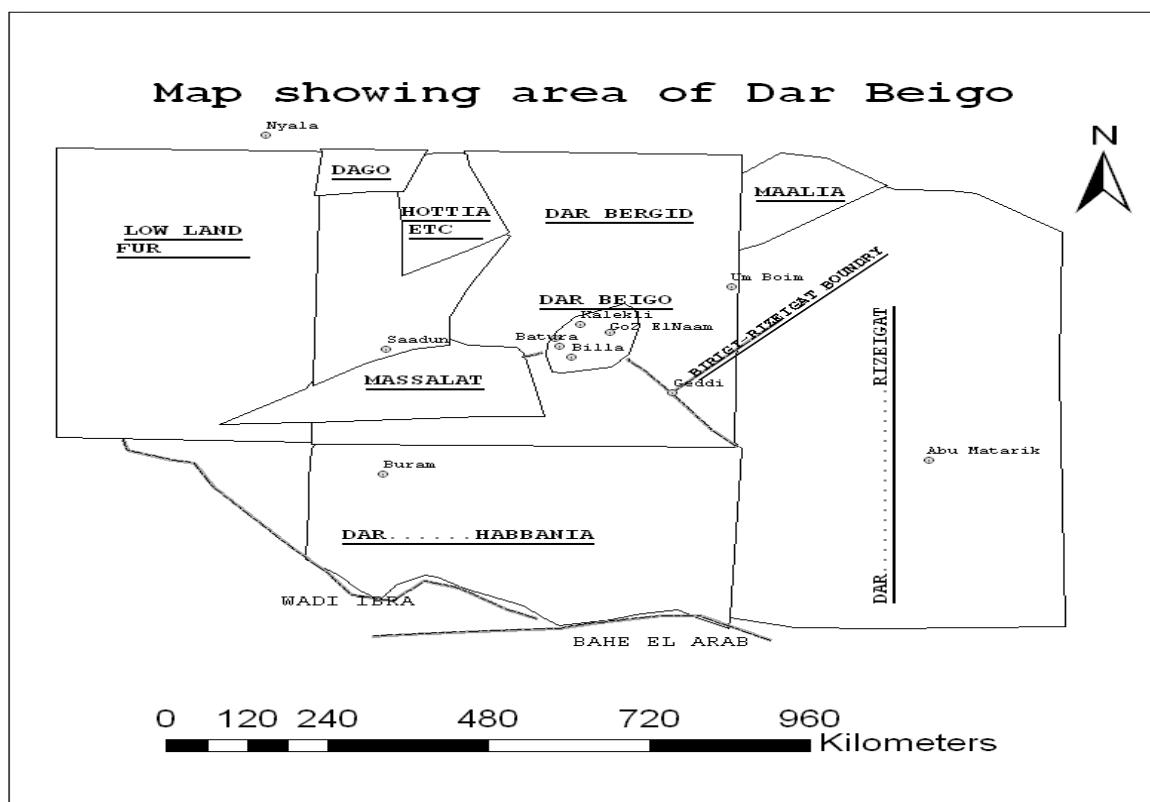
³⁰ Darfur Province. Information book. S.D.D. Bagarra and Kalaka.

³¹ Report of El Safi commission on boundaries, dispute among Felatta, Masalat, and Mahadi and Habania and Masalat Nehas dispute over Mograna 1998, South Darfur State.

³² While writing this study it was reported in Sahafa newspaper (8 Jan. 2007) that a tribal conflict between Reziegat Abala and Targum took place in which 68 people were killed. In Sudani newspaper (14 Jan. 2007) it was reported through the minister of justice that on 7 January a conflict between Felatta and Habania took place in which 230 people were killed.

Abdalla Abu Nuba. In the same year the commissioner of Nyala granted them a Dar.³³ The commissioner and Abu Nuba consider it to be government reserve land, while the Fur consider it Fur tribal lands as part of the Magdomate. The conflict over land has mounted over the last decade as the first Hamdania Omda administration developed to include 7 more Omdas. These new ones included different sub-sections of North Reziegat 'Arabs' such as Awlad Agel, Ereigat, Awlad Gaid, Awlad Tako, Awlad Mansur, Awlad Balila and Mahria. With such an influx of new tribes and new native administrators, the first Omda, Abu Noba, developed the power and prestige of a tribal chief in less than a decade. The problem is that this small, newly created Dar is located in the heart of other indigenous tribes who are cultivators, while the Hamdania are nomads. This situation will bring the conflict between the two groups in land usage. The other hazard of this Dar is that it has become an example for other emigrant tribes from North Darfur to follow. In this case, more conflicts are expected. It is a new government policy that nomads should settle, yet its social and political consequences for the local environment are yet to be seen (see Map 4).

Map 4



³³. Omda Abu Noba. 2/8/2006. Nyala Town.

c. Maalia Dar case

For Maalia, the struggle for a Dar like Felatta started in colonial times. The conflict between them and Reziegat, who denied them Dar rights, broke into violence in 1968. The echo of that conflict was felt over Darfur and in other parts of Sudan. To contain the conflict, the central government delegated the ministers of both the interior and local government to settle the issues between the two tribes. It was the first time that firearms had been used in tribal armed conflict. Because of this, the numbers of deaths alarmed the region. After a lengthy reconciliation process, the following conditions were agreed between the two parties:

- a. Maalia were to remain within Reziegat Dar administration.
- b. Maalia should be granted a deputy Nazir (wakil) office in Reziegat native administration. A.H. El Basha was appointed to the office.
- c. A branch of the native court should be granted for the Maalia tribe, but the jurisdiction of appeals remained in the hands of Reziegat native court.
- d. Compensation or blood money must be paid by the two conflicting parties.³⁴

Though the Maalia achieved a semi-independent native administration at the 1968 reconciliation meeting, they kept up their protracted struggle, maneuvering with all Khartoum regimes.

In 2004, a violent conflict between the two tribes broke out again in which 70 persons were killed. A committee was formed and a reconciliation meeting was held in Niyala in October 2004. The dispute among the parties was resolved in the following conditions, which were considered very special according to customary law:³⁵

- a. For Maalia tribe to pardon and forgive all those Reziegat who committed the incidents in Tabat area.
- b. For Reziegat tribe to pay double ‘dia’ blood money for all those killed in Tabat area.
- c. For Reziegat to pardon and forgive those who committed incidents in Adila market and Abdalla Agani who killed a Reziegat in Maafrat.
- d. For Maalia to pay double ‘dia’ for the two Reziegat in Adila and Bakhet village.
- e. For both parties to return looted money and assets to each other.
- f. The central and state authorities should pay attention and rehabilitate the affected areas.

These are the declared conditions for reconciliation but behind-the-scene negotiations for a separate entity continued. In the same year 2004, Maalia were granted a separate native administration under the headmanship of Nazir A.H. El Basha. Adila, the headquarters of Maalia tribe, was already a province and later a commissionerate like el Dien. Now the Dar for Maalia is a matter of fact.

d. Targum case

The Dar of Targum is still in the making but the first step has already been taken. They were cultivators West of Niyala around Bulbul Wadi and Dalal elAngra. Up to 1971, they were part of Magdomate Fur administration. In that year the native administration was liquidated all over North Sudan. In 1986, when the native administration was re-established again, most of the Magdomate tribes rejected being part of the Magdomate system. These tribes were Birgid, Dajo, Messeria, Mararit, Saada, Umkamalti, Bego, Musabaat and Targum, who had only one Omda in the Magdomate. All these tribes rebelled against the Fur Magdom and haggled for independence.

³⁴. Omda Adam sharif. Abu Karinka 1997.

³⁵. Documents of reconciliation conferences between tribes in South Darfur 2004-2006. General secretariat office. South Darfur State.

In 1990, a bloody conflict between the Targum and Fur tribes was reported. It was a dispute over the right of Targum to have a separate native administration. Targum petitioned their case to the Darfur governor, arguing that in 1952 they had 3 Omdas, Adam Dawai, Taj sir Omer and Mohamed Zoreeg. On the other hand, the Fur rejected all these claims since Targum had no Dar and were part of the Magdomate. For Targum, the land is for Almighty God and not the private ownership of Fur. In June 1992, a reconciliation meeting between the two tribes was held. The conditions put by the Targum tribe to be reconciled with Fur were the following:

- a. To release the Targum tribal leader Mohamed Yagoub, the Omda,³⁶ and other Targum members from custody.
- b. Fur tribe should recognize the Targum as Sudanese citizens who are entitled to every right on these lands which belong only to God Almighty.
- c. The Fur must drop the claim that Targum are to follow them and agree that the Targum should have a ‘Nazirate’ independent administration of their own.
- d. To cancel all cases against all persons who were engaged in this tribal war.
- e. All roads should be opened and access to drinking water spots should be allowed.³⁷

After this reconciliation meeting in 1991, Targum achieved their first step towards a tribal Dar. They had been granted a native administration under the title Nazir and their Omdas increased from one to 10 in 2003 to include the following sub-section of the tribe:

1. Omda for sub-section of Hanash Rakhsa
2. Omda for sub-section of Basharia
3. Omda for sub-section of Zawabda
4. Omda for sub-section of Malaha
5. Omda for sub-section of Awlad Mehemed
6. Omda for sub-section of Awlad Jumaa
7. Omda for sub-section of Awlad elshiekh and Belel
8. Omda for sub-section of Khashmia
9. Omda for sub-section of Hawazma (minority)
10. Omda for sub-section of Mima (minority)
11. Omda for sub-section of Kajamra (minority)³⁸

In the last three years more Omdas have been added to Targum Nazirate to match other big administrations. For Targum to consolidate their tribal position sufficiently to entitle them to a tribal Dar, more conflicts are expected. During this study a clash between them and Reziegat Mahria in East Niyala has broken out with the end result of 26 deaths.

With these four new Dars not finally fixed up and recognized, conflicts are expected to continue. Again, with such examples more tribes in South Darfur will follow the example of Felatta, Hamdania, Maalia and Targum. In that case, South Darfur is expected to plunge into more chaos. Radical administrative and political reforms are of vital importance to address what is going on in South Darfur. As mentioned before, the concept of tribal Dars is now cracking under socio-economic pressures and new concepts. Because of this, the Dar system is now becoming the main trigger of conflicts among South Darfur communities. Though there is no ready-made formula for reform, still the first step must be the revision of the administrative units in a way that can transcend

³⁶ M. Yagoub is well known as a political activist in South Darfur.

³⁷ The addressing letter of a Targum delegate in the reconciliation meeting. 21.5.1991.

³⁸ Decree No. 2. For reorganization of Native administration 2003. The secretariat of the government. South Darfur State. p. 3.

tribal considerations and stick to the principles of geography, economy and administration. Detribalization is the golden rule for that reform policy. For such a reform to be put into action, strong political will has to be the cornerstone.

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