

Tribal gatherings:

colonial spectacle, native administration, and local government in

Condominium Sudan¹

In March 1952, the monthly summary circulated to senior members of the Sudan Government contained an enthusiastic description of an event in the western province of Kordofan, among the Kababish tribe of camel-owning Arab nomads.

In Northern Kordofan a very big Tribal Gathering was held at Soderi on the 15th and 16th on the occasion of the opening of the new Kababish R[ural] D[istrict] C[ouncil] building . . . It was attended by the Civil Secretary and many other British and Sudanese officials and guests. Three aeroplanes helped in bringing the guests from various parts of the Sudan. . . In the afternoon a programme of sports and horse and camel races was held. At 6 pm a tea party was given during which a broadcast describing the events of the day was heard from Omdurman.¹

During the course of his packed two-day programme the Civil Secretary, James Robertson, found time to present a medal to one Ahmed Mohammad Tingal, recently retired from the rank of Bash-Shawish (Company Sergeant-Major) after thirty-two years in the Sudan Police. Waiting to receive his decoration, Tingal may perhaps have reflected

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on the changes in Soderi, and in spectacles of government, during his years of service. Almost thirty years before, right at the start of his career, he had probably witnessed the arrival at Soderi in 1923 of the Governor of Kordofan, E.G. Sarsfield-Hall, on a tour of inspection.² Sarsfield-Hall had arrived on horseback, and while his reception by ‘a party of officers and officials and shaykhs variously mounted on camels, horses and donkeys’ had no doubt been picturesque, it was decidedly modest by comparison with the parades and bands which greeted Robertson in 1952. Sarsfield-Hall had to ride on several days north and west of Soderi to meet the nazir, the recognized leader, of the Kababish and his people. Robertson, on the other hand, found them waiting for him at the airstrip. And while Robertson was led on a tour of the various buildings of the new ‘local government’ of the Kababish, the only building of note which Sarsfield-Hall found was the combined house and office of the British Assistant District Commissioner responsible for the vast swathe of territory known as Dar Kababish, ‘the land of the Kababish’.³

If Tingal had known the area before he joined the police, he would have been aware that even the Soderi of 1923 was something of novelty: only fourteen years before, Soderi had been just one of several well-fields at which touring officials of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium might stop to meet with their new subjects.⁴ A photograph reveals that the only structure then was a hastily erected thatch booth, which provided just enough shade for a touring British officer, his Egyptian subordinate and eight local sheikhs (the term nazir had not yet come into Condominium usage to distinguish ‘paramount’ sheikhs) to pose for a photograph beneath the flags of the co-domini, Britain and Egypt. The Briton

and Egyptian - uniformed and helmeted - stared at the camera, while their subjects looked fixedly at the ground.⁵

The transformation of Soderi from a remote outpost to a local-governmental centre of progress, where officials could watch a 'Tribal Gathering' before enjoying the self-referential indulgence of listening to a radio broadcast about their own activities, is in itself a striking reminder of the consequences of colonial rule; as too is the transformation of the local sheikhs from sullen subjects to fellow tea-drinkers. On one level, it seems to provide ready evidence for the success of a grand colonial project of 'enframing', as Timothy Mitchell would put it, through which people were herded into processes of representing power which enfolded them within the logic of state authority.⁶ Robertson's visit, in this analysis, appears as a culminating moment in the 'euphemizing' of the coercive power of the colonial state – the practices through which the colonial state, possessed of the capacity for overwhelming violence, effectively economized on the use of that violence.

Spectacular power

Yet this begs the question of why so many 'tribesmen' – 7,000, according to the descriptions of the 1952 event – turned out to watch and ride, and of whether their perspective on the event was really that of the obedient subject. The spectacular display of colonial power has attracted a good deal of scholarly attention, and much of this has – if not always sharing the particular analytical model offered by Mitchell – suggested that

display was a key tool of colonial power (and of post-colonial power, in the case of Lisa Wedeen's study of the rule of spectacle in 'habituating' the people of Syria into compliance with President Asad's rule).⁷ While Cannadine has located the incontinent colonial urge to ornamentalize as a product of Britain's very particular class dynamics, a wider body of work has tended to support Terry Ranger's argument that the colonial enthusiasm for spectacle may be understood as part of the endeavour of the colonial state – chronically short of resources, and always preferring to avoid the expense of punitive violence - to make its own authority seem 'legitimate and natural rather than alien and oppressive'. Parades and shows were part of the creation of what Helen Callaway, writing of Nigeria, has called the 'symbolic order' of colonialism, within which ritual authorizes certain ways of seeing.⁸ But, like Bernard Cohn's seminal description of the 'Imperial Assemblage' celebrating Victoria's installation as Empress of India – which, with 84,000 participants, was surely the largest such imperial performance - such analyses privilege the colonialist as the author of exhibitions and reduce the non-British participants to 'spectators to the British acting on her [the Empress'] behalf'.⁹ While they may help us understand British motivations, they do not explain how other ideas of representing – and debating – authority were involved in at least some of these performances. Andrew Apter's discussion of the durbars of colonial Nigeria, by contrast, has sought to explore the 'limits of colonial spectacle', presenting such spectacles as a field of negotiation, with many 'sight lines' and with multiple actors, and has shown how an African elite were able to use these events to reposition themselves as spectators; more recently Richard Fardon's work on Lela, in Cameroon, has taken a quite different

approach, seeing this not as an ‘imperial spectacle’ but as a ‘baroque ceremonial, made up of numerous parts’, in which European authorship has been decidedly limited.¹⁰

In the context of this wider literature on colonial spectacle, the transformation of the performance of authority at Soderi offers a means to explore the role of such spectacles in the particular circumstances of Condominium Sudan – a territory which (like India) drew on more than one imperial tradition, but which was distinguished from much of colonial Africa by the importance of non-British administrators (initially Egyptians and, as time went on, Sudanese). This paper will show - through a brief discussion of the many forms which displays of authority took in Condominium Sudan – that British officials did explicitly see spectacular display as an effective tool of power. It will then suggest that the ‘tribal gathering’ developed as a particular genre, which drew on a combination of Sudanese, Egyptian and British ideas, and was itself a product of constant renegotiation. The ‘gathering’ was the form of display which rural Sudanese were most likely to experience, and it derived both its vigour and its effectiveness as a tool of power from that multiple authorship. Finally, the paper suggests that while spectacular display helped an emergent Sudanese elite define their position within the state, it also played a part in creating a practice of government which reduced a larger populace to the status of reluctant, if generally compliant, subjects.

The history of display which led up to the 1952 gathering at Soderi is a particular one, but while Sudan was exceptional in some ways (and Northern Kordofan was exceptional even within Sudan), these events offer insight on both how and why colonial subjects

became involved in these spectacles. It is impossible to offer an analysis of these spectacles which entirely escapes the limitations imposed by the sources, mostly English-language accounts written by men whose presence as observers was in itself part of the process. But it is possible to see something of how other ideas of representing – and debating – authority were involved in ways that drew people into performances which helped remake people's ideas of their relationship to power in ways which many of the 'authors' of these sometimes unruly events would not have foreseen.

This multiple and contested authorship also helps to locate the consequence of these spectacles of authority in the context of the changing rhetoric of a colonial state which developed new technologies of power, and in its final years, swapped the mantra of 'native administration' for that of 'local government' with surprising ease. The tribal gatherings of northern Kordofan suggest that there was a substantial continuity of process beneath this apparent shift in policy, from the rough and ready bluster of the early state to the overtly bureaucratized forms of a late colonialism. Despite the distinctive new late-colonial language of representation and development, the nature of these spectacles offer a reminder that in terms of the processes through which state power was made, this period was one of progression, rather than a change of course.

Parades and uniforms

'The colonialist', as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, 'is an exhibitionist'.¹¹ Sudan was a regime of pomp, and exhibition took many forms. At its heart, where the colonial state

was strongest in terms of resources, architecture and uniforms were a priority from the creation of the Condominium in 1899, with the rebuilding of the old Turco-Egyptian capital at Khartoum on a grand scale providing physical assertion of the strength and permanence of the conquerors of Mahdism.¹² Northern Sudanese men who were perceived to hold social influence were brought to Khartoum to be awed by the massive architecture; so too were chiefs from southern Sudan, ‘to enlarge their minds’.¹³ One official description of such a visit recorded with satisfaction that ‘They seemed to be most struck by the large buildings and well laid-out gardens, which made it clear to them that the Government had come to stay’.¹⁴ Accounts of these events often provided detailed lists of the names and positions of the Sudanese who had been so impressed, in a comforting recitation of hierarchy.¹⁵

Both space and time were demarcated by one genre of performance, which had the replication of uniforms and space as a central theme; the grounds of the Palace in Khartoum saw regular parades; and across the territory every provincial and district headquarters had its parade ground and flag. The Sudan Almanac listed –alongside weights and measures, ranks and titles – the correct way to construct a temporary mastaba, or saluting base.¹⁶ Having two colonial powers, Britain and Egypt, the Condominium was particularly well-provided with flags, and every important government building – as well as every touring administrator – flew both.¹⁷ During Reginald Wingate’s long tenure as Governor-general, from 1899 to 1916, his morning exercise ride became in itself a minor parade; inspections of police and army units across the country offered multiple quotidian reenactments of order.¹⁸ On special days –

Ramadhan, the birthday of the Prophet, the Haj festival – the Governor-general in Khartoum, and each provincial governor in his headquarters, would hold levees. In these displays, military power offered a backdrop to the show of order and hierarchy, with lines of robed Sudanese waiting their turn to greet the British official, receive awards, and ‘repeat their expressions of loyalty’.¹⁹

Deprived by political circumstance of the opportunity to celebrate Empire day (since Sudan was a Condominium, and not part of the formal empire), the Britons of Sudan created their own imperial anniversary, ‘King’s Day’, which marked the extraordinarily brief visit paid to Sudan by George V in 1912.²⁰ On the first anniversary, ‘[t]he events of the day at the headquarters of the Government included a march of the Sudanese Brigade through Omdurman, “Founders Day” and athletic sports at the Gordon College, an industrial fair and in the evening a torchlight tattoo and display of fireworks’.²¹ In 1924 an ‘aerial display’ by the Royal Air Force was added to this display; twenty years later, officials were still reporting – somewhat improbably - that King’s Day was being widely celebrated with ‘spontaneity and enjoyment’.²² Again and again, flags, uniforms and weapons marked particular places as the domain of the state, and imprinted the state’s logic on the passage of time. Descriptions of such events in the last years of the Condominium suggest that the forms established in the early years endured, with guards of honour being inspected and notables presented at levees.²³

Many of these events – like the King’s 1912 visit, when he stepped off his boat for a few hours – were as carefully scripted by British officials as the ‘imperial assemblage’

described by Cohn. Up to 1924, an arriving or returning Governor-general was always greeted at the railway station by the Egyptian Army garrison; then escorted by notables and officials to the Palace, where a second Guard of Honour was mounted by the British garrison.²⁴ In November 1924 the Egyptian Army units were expelled from Sudan by the British, in the wake of a political movement in favour of Sudanese union with Egypt; the ritual routine was promptly changed in a symbolic display of the reduced Egyptian presence. In January 1925 the new Governor-general travelled by steamer, direct to the Palace, to be greeted by a guard of honour of British troops and the Sudanese who were being formed into the new Sudan Defence Force. The Sudanese notables were then summoned to the Palace for a King's Day audience.²⁵

But there were many spectacles of authority in Sudan and – partly because of the long wrangle between Britain and Egypt over control of the Sudan – these drew on Sudanese and Egyptian, as well as British, imaginings of performed authority. Successor to the Turco-Egyptian state of the nineteenth century, the Condominium inherited part of its pageantry from that political culture, itself a hybrid of Ottoman practice and European influence, where uniforms and parades displayed the continuity between military organisation and state power, and Sudanese soldiers in remote stations – veterans who had served with Bazaine's soldiers in Mexico - embellished their uniforms with French medals.²⁶ And even in the Turco-Egyptian period, display had by no means always been straightforwardly 'colonial'. In 1875 an American soldier in Egyptian service had encountered a striking welcoming party:

We met the Governor of Dongola, coming with his escort to meet us. There was quite a spectacle at the head of the column. There were several Bedouins mounted on dromedaries; but above all, two Howara Arabs, mounted on fine horses of the country, whose feats of horsemanship were something marvellous.²⁷

Evidently, then, the subjects could steal the show. Such events involved a kind of ordering, and an acknowledgement of authority, but not quite in the same way as military parades.

The collapse of the Turco-Egyptian state in the face of the Mahdist movement of the early 1880s temporarily drove ornate uniforms from much of Sudan, but the Mahdist state was also much concerned with spectacle. The great prayer-ground at Omdurman, beside which was built the domed tomb of the Mahdi, became the venue for a weekly display of power, piety and obedience – and so, became in turn the focus for a ritual display of the destructive power of the Anglo-Egyptian forces in 1898, when the Mahdi's tomb was first shelled and then razed with explosives.

And under Condominium rule, it was not only the state which staged dramatic performances. Famously, the visit in 1926 of Governor-general Archer to Abdel Rahman al Mahdi, the son of Britain's old enemy, was turned by Abdel Rahman into a display of his wealth and the size of his following, and both Abdel Rahman and his principal political/religious rival, Sayyid Ali Mirghani, competed in public performances, or ʿarda, throughout the Condominium.²⁸ Flags and mounted followers were key elements in their

competition; but so too was the sheer number of pedestrian followers who would turn out to stand, chant, and break out into enthusiastic demonstrations of adulation. The tone of these displays emphasised wealth and size of following, rather than uniformity and the fixed regulation of space and time; but they did assert order and hierarchy. They offer a colourful reminder that Sudanese, like Britons and Egyptians, saw public displays as a means to assert, and debate, the nature of authority: these were ‘publics’, to borrow a term from the later work of Habermas, spheres of debate to which many had access – if not all on equal terms.²⁹

The spectacles of authority at Soderi must be seen in the context of this wider culture of authoritative display which – as will be noted below – had its local forms in northern Kordofan. The significance of this is two-fold: the cultural familiarity of display may help explain why people were willing to take part in colonial performances of power. Yet at the same time the ability to read such events as part of established culture may have meant that while officials – British, Egyptian, or Sudanese - congratulated themselves on displays which enacted the ordering logic of government, other participants may have understood the implications of that ordering rather differently.

From native administration to local government

Any consideration of those possible multiple meanings is complicated by uncertainties amongst British officials themselves about what kind of ‘symbolic order’ such spectacles of authority actually represented. The Civil Secretary’s visit to Soderi in 1952 brought

together in dramatic performance two apparently contrasting ideas of the relationship between the state and local institutions of authority. From its inception, the Condominium had relied on an accommodation with ‘notables’, who dominated the social landscape seen by officials; the exact definition of ‘notables’ had been a little hazy, embracing a combination of the more tractable religious scholars and Sufi leaders of northern Sudan, and prominent tribal leaders. From the early 1920s, this accommodation had been formalized and theorized on a more explicitly ethnic basis, as the local expression of the wider British belief in indirect rule. ‘Native administration’ as it was usually called in the Sudan, rested on the assumption that ethnicity in itself generated locally legitimate forms of authority which the state could use and subordinate. British observers identified the political unrest of 1924 as the work of a dissatisfied, educated group of Sudanese who worked largely as lower-ranking employees of the government. Drawing on experience and terminology from Egypt, the British dismissively called this group the effendiyya, and, driven by suspicion of them, elevated ‘native administration’ to an almost obsessive creed, the local counterpart of the wider suspicion of the ‘man in trousers’ which was a feature of British territories across Africa.³⁰ In Sudan, this creed generated a body of vividly-phrased documentation and a system of local administration, in rural areas in particular, in which recognized tribal leaders controlled their own courts, collected taxes for the government, and assumed multiple (often extra-legal) executive roles.³¹ This has provided ample evidence for those wishing to see Sudan as one more example of the colonial invention of tradition which, across Africa, generated the ‘decentralized despotism’ which Mahmood Mamdani has identified as the principal political legacy of ‘late colonialism’.³²

The very richness of this record of prejudice has tended to divert scholarship from questioning how wide the divide between the ‘traditional leaders’ and the effendiyya actually was, or from exploring how we can understand this divide in the context of the rather different governmental rhetoric of the final decades of ‘late colonialism’. In Sudan, as elsewhere in British Africa, the language of the last two decades of colonial rule revolved around local government – not ‘native administration’.³³ This shift has attracted little scholarly attention – writing of Ghana, Richard Rathbone has, only half-jokingly, suggested that the term ‘local government’ itself is so boring as to repel academic interest – and in Sudan, opinion has been divided as to the significance of this change in terminology.³⁴ Daly has described it as a ‘major theoretical reorientation’, but Gaafar Bakheit – Sudanese academic-cum-politician, writing from a perspective which identified tribal leaders as the reactionary long-term opponents of a governmental project of social and economic transformation – has argued that this was merely a shift in rhetoric: ‘Local government was not in reality the grave of native administration but the waiting room in which she finished her make-up and reappeared more lively and fascinating.’³⁵

The debate over this results partly from the ambivalence of British attitudes towards the Sudanese effendiyya – or the ‘graduates’, as such Sudanese came to call themselves, in reference to the experience of secondary school education which many of them shared. As has been widely noted – and is apparent from almost any document of the period – British distrust for this group was profound.³⁶ But British officials also believed in the inherent superiority of the political culture which they shared with the graduates, in

which the administrative state played a central role as the guarantor of stability and progress; and as Heather Sharkey's work has shown, the graduates' confidence in their mastery of this culture was profoundly bound up with their commitment to nationalism.³⁷

Given this ambivalence, it seems unsurprising that British officials had multiple, changing and partly contradictory expectations of local government. It had been conceived partly as a means to distract the graduates from larger political ambitions, or at least to delay the realization of such ambitions: 'preparation for the practice of political self-government', as Lord Hailey said of Africa more generally; 'an excellent training ground and testing ground for Sudanese administrators', as a Sudan Government memo put it. But local government was also seen by British officials as a means to spread more widely the administrative practices which they believed were inseparable from progress: a way for the 'progressive classes' to challenge 'native opinion in general (often conservative, suspicious and narrow)'.³⁸ This uncertainty over purpose was matched by an uncertainty over how local government should be created: elections might offer a new legitimacy and ensure the involvement of the educated, but they might also produce local government bodies whose members lacked the necessary modern competencies.

As wider political circumstances – notably Anglo-Egyptian rivalry – rapidly accelerated progress towards self-government after 1945, some Britons seized on the idea that a new kind of local government might offer a local check on any 'irresponsible minority' who might seize control of the central state.³⁹ But when Arthur Marshall, Town Clerk of Coventry, was brought to Sudan to advise on local government, he viewed local

government not as a check on the central state, but rather as the arm of the progressive central state. The real task of local government was ‘persuading the people to accept [the] services’ offered by the ‘technical central departments’ of the government.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Marshall saw the entanglement of local government with ‘native administration’ as deeply problematic, and he urged the need to separate them out, and to restrict the role of native administration to limited judicial functions.

The vision of local government as an arm of a progressive central state was one which the graduates shared. But while Marshall had seen electoral representation as an important element in local government, British officials and their Sudanese subordinates – soon to be colleagues, and then successors – rapidly became sceptical of the value of this. As they raced to create new structures of local government in the last few years of the Condominium, administrators found that elected councils did not necessarily ensure a new commitment to technocratic progress in local government, and they began to emphasise the need for the government in Khartoum to have ‘powers of inspection and direction’ or even to ‘have control over the activities of the local government authorities’.⁴¹ It was decided that the ‘Executive Officers’ of councils should be administrators trained centrally, who would wear semi-military uniforms with shoulder badges to show rank and khaki helmets and that elected councillors - who were not always possessed of the kind of skills needed to run local government – should work alongside appointed members, who might include ‘traditional’ rulers as well as educated Sudanese. And councils should be chaired by district commissioners, representatives of the superior political culture of the central state.⁴² As Patricia Stamp has observed of

similar processes in neighbouring Kenya, the rhetoric of late-colonial local government emphasized local democracy; but the practice enhanced institutions of central control.⁴³

Despite the confusions and uncertainties in policy and the changes in language, therefore, the progression from native administration to local government represented a continuity in the processes of state authority, not a disjuncture. This was not a dramatic shift from ‘tradition’ to ‘modernity’; nor a story of the continuing devolvement of state power to neo-traditional local despots. Native administration and local government were stages in a sustained process through which the agents of the central state – British, and increasingly Sudanese - sought to incorporate and remake local forms of authority, extending their control over everyday life as they did so. The more officials talked of decentralization, the more they established systems to scrutinize and control from the centre.

Gathering the tribe

The 1952 gathering at Soderi must, then, be seen in these two contexts: on the one hand, the existence of multiple cultures of authoritative performance, and on the other hand a wider process of extending scrutiny and control in which – despite its rhetoric – the colonial state steadily sought to subordinate local forms of authority. As will be suggested below, the changing nature of authoritative spectacles in Kordofan show how the ambitions for control and the sense of superiority possessed by officials of the central

state worked to bring together a Sudanese elite which combined graduates and traditional leaders, and which was increasingly remote from the rural subjects of the late-colonial state.

Sarsfield-Hall's 1923 trip was not his first encounter with Ali el Tom, then nazir of the Kababish. Like the other sheikhs and nazirs of Kordofan, Ali el Tom was by this time being called into the provincial capital at El Obeid at least once a year to meet with British officials. That was a meeting which was in the early 1920s acquiring its own routine: dressed in the official 'robes of honour' which marked their status, the notables would be photographed and would join officials in forming the audience for spectacles which were performed by their subjects.⁴⁴ In itself, this routine marked a change from the early years of the Condominium: in 1906, the Governor-general, visiting El Obeid, had been met outside the town by a number of nazirs and sheikhs and their followers, who put on a display which hinted at the possibility of defiance as much as it expressed loyalty. The Governor-general was riding (there being no railway to El Obeid at this time): he 'was met two miles outside the town by 1,500 horsemen' who 'formed up behind and accompanied him to the Town, making repeated charges on each flank en route.'⁴⁵ The Governor-general chose to interpret this as a picturesque display of loyalty in his formal reports, while privately drawing the more disquieting message that this 'enormous crowd' had revealed the inadequacy of the government's forces in Kordofan.⁴⁶ But within a few years, there were no more such displays at the provincial capital. The crucial moment was, perhaps the opening of the railway to El Obeid in 1912, which was marked rather differently, after the Governor-general's arrival by train:

A levee was held on the morning of the 27th instant which was attended by the officials and native sheikhs and notables of the province. Their Excellencies [the Governor-general was accompanied by Earl Kitchener] subsequently visited the town and markets. On the following morning there was a parade of troops . . . At the conclusion of the native sports in the afternoon, the assembled native horsemen and camelmen were inspected and subsequently, to the number of 2,500, galloped past their Excellencies.⁴⁷

El Obeid was now the territory of the government, where horsemen were subjected to the authoritative gaze of officials.

In 1923 at Soderi there were no 'native horsemen'. Assembled at this 'outpost of empire' - as Sarsfield-Hall called it - was '[a] very smart guard of honour . . . mounted outside the ADC's house, which I inspected'.⁴⁸ It was only when Sarsfield-Hall had left Soderi, and passed beyond the space of the government, that he was met by an escort drawn from members of Ali el Tom's family. They rode with him for three days until he encountered the nazir himself and 'a large party of people on camels and horses' which enveloped his little travelling column of order, 'galloping about brandishing their whips and bucking their horses.' Sarsfield-Hall evidently thought this a rather chaotic scene: 'Just as we got to the outskirts of Sheikh Ali Tom's encampment there was a terrible collision between one of his young sons and his uncle, an elderly man of over sixty'.⁴⁹ There was no 'inspection' here.

It is tempting to view Ali el Tom as the real author of these events; he had had ample opportunity to observe the British fondness for display, having been present at the King's visit, and many other occasions (including a delegation to the United Kingdom in 1919, to congratulate the King on victory in the First World War).⁵⁰ Certainly, the Governor left with entirely the right impression, from Ali el Tom's perspective: 'Sheikh Ali Tom and his people are most attractive unspoilt Arabs'.⁵¹ At the same time, Ali el Tom was able to demonstrate to his own people his intimacy with the government – the hakuma, as it was widely called - perceived by ordinary Sudanese as a generally remote but potent force. The whole event, then, emphasised Ali el Tom's position as intermediary; master of the bucking horsemen and friend of the uniformed official.

But to understand the behaviour of the riders solely in terms of Ali el Tom's interests is to elide the motives of other actors. While Sarsfield-Hall and other Britons liked to imagine Ali el Tom as the manifestation of an unquestioned traditional authority, the nazir was actually engaged in a prolonged and determined effort to assert and extend his control over 'his' people. He had inherited an uncertain role from his nineteenth century forebears, and his personal position had been weak in the early years of the Condominium; but he had transformed the role of Kababish leader – and, in effect, recreated Kababish identity - largely through a relationship with the British officials of the Condominium which gave him formidable powers of patronage and punishment, through his role in the tax system and his effective control of an extra-legal court system.⁵² The riders had good cause to try and please him, and no doubt many of them

were drawn from his own lineage and section of the tribe, the Awlad Fadlallah of the Nurab, the size of which had grown considerably as individuals attached themselves as subordinates to seek his favour.⁵³

But their tumultuous display may have been more than that, again. Displays of riding were part of a culture of individual bravado and masculinity, a vigorous assertion of personal potency, reminding the nazir of his subjects' potential ungovernability and of the conditionality of his position, which rested on the ability to quell disputes among them and to defend their interests – grazing, water, livestock – against other tribes, or against excessive state imposts. Daring public displays of riding were a part of Kababish culture from the mid-nineteenth century, as individualistic displays at funerals or on religious feast days.⁵⁴ The admiring account of Kababish life in the early 1930s offered by Hasan Nagila – a schoolteacher from central Sudan – shows how Ali el Tom effectively acted as the patron for the prayers held at his dry-season encampment on religious festivals, and then himself led the displays of riding - which Nagila called 'arda, though he noted the Kababish called them ghalb - which followed the prayers. These were displays for which the only audience were the Kababish themselves.⁵⁵ The spectacles which greeted Sarsfield-Hall were part of the prolonged negotiation of the relationship between nazir and people.

And there was another aspect to the performances of welcome noted by official travellers in northern Kordofan. Up to the early 1930s, there are repeated mentions of dancing and singing by groups of women – mostly of slave origin - who thus noisily and visibly

asserted their existence.⁵⁶ Like the displays of riding, these were not performed solely for such visitors, but drew on established practice on feast-days.⁵⁷ And, it might be argued, these performances too were double-edged: the songs of these women largely described the generosity and bravery of the nazir and his family, but such praise was also an assertion of the duties of a master.⁵⁸

Impressive as they were, the displays encountered by Sarsfield-Hall and others in Dar Kababish were small in terms of the numbers involved. In this question of size, and location, they were strikingly different from another kind of display which was developing elsewhere in Kordofan at this time, as the domain of inspection grew. The first references by British officials to ‘horse shows’ come from the second decade of the Condominium, at a time when horses and camels were still essential to the mobility of administrators, police and army; the ‘horse shows’ were an opportunity for the government to buy remounts.⁵⁹ But in the few years after the First World War, as the ideology of native administration was developed, the horse show turned into the ‘Tribal Gathering’.⁶⁰ This was an event which made physical the articulation between the hakuma and its collective subject, ‘the tribe’, and in British eyes it was an assertion of the centrality of ‘tribal’ identity and traditional authority:

The horse show at Abu Zabad combines a demonstration of allegiance to the Government with a horse show, a race meeting and an occasion for general jollity. It is an event of some political importance and it is being reproduced in other parts of the country. The procedure has grown up by custom

There was an ostentatious element of ordering to this; British officials (in this case including the Governor-general) rode round inspecting the horsemen, and then took up position on the saluting base while the horsemen rode past in fours.⁶¹ Evidently proud of this new ‘custom’, British officials were condescendingly rude about French attempts to organize similar events in their neighbouring territory.⁶²

There was still an element of challenge in this, however. In 1921, events around the Homr gathering (in the south of Kordofan) revealed how officials saw the gathering as potentially dangerous, but also as an event which they could rescript to affirm their authority. With seditious letters from Egypt being circulated among the Homr, the DC ‘decided that it would be unwise to assemble the tribe for the annual horse show unless he had the support of troops’. But neither did he wish to cancel the show, particularly since the Homr had not yet paid their tax; and so he delayed the show on a pretext and sent for reinforcements. The arrival of ‘the motorized machine gun unit’ reassured him, and led to ‘an exceptionally successful horse show.’ Meanwhile, in the background of the gathering, the DC dismissed a suspect headman and arrested his supporters.⁶³

By the early 1930s, tribal gatherings were being budgeted and planned at provincial level, and the holding of a successful tribal gathering was offered as ‘evidence of the stability and progress of the native administration’.⁶⁴ For these performances, a cast of thousands was required, and officials routinely reported – or boasted of - the number who

attended.⁶⁵ In 1937 the Governor-general worked the tribal gathering into a casual teleology of the rituals of government:

In the outlying districts local Administrations endeavour to substitute for warlike preparation and the glamour of the foray the excitement of tribal assemblies, with the valuable opportunities they offer for sifting grievances and adjusting inter-tribal affairs. In more developed areas popular gatherings are also a feature but take the form of horse and agricultural shows which can combine incentive to improvements with the fun of the fair.⁶⁶

The description was historically misleading – horse shows predated ‘tribal assemblies’ – but the vision of progress implicit in this passage was clear. Picturesque as they were, these events were destined to turn slowly into a new kind of display more suited to the state’s vision of progress, and they were themselves an important tool of transformation; and so, in October 1939, administrators were encouraged to go ahead with tribal gatherings in spite of what was rather primly described as the ‘international situation’.⁶⁷

The ‘gathering’ took some time to reach Dar Kababish; when it did, it marked a new level of government supervision. Administrators who, like Sarsfield-Hall, made their way deep into Dar Kababish, were routinely welcomed with displays of riding bravado.⁶⁸ But it was not until 1945 that there was a Kababish ‘gathering’ of the kind graced by the presence of British officials, when El Tom Ali (Ali El Tom’s successor) hosted a gathering which offered a quite different vision of order to the tumultuous greeting given

to Sarsfield-Hall. The central moment was the presentation to El Tom by the Governor of a ‘Special Robe of Honour’. After this, following a ‘short formal ride’, El Tom ‘sat on a sheepskin in front of his [British] guests and held a levee’.⁶⁹

By this time, new practices of bureaucratic scrutiny had spread to Dar Kababish; officials from the central government now pored over the details of a written Kababish annual budget which set out everything from El Tom’s wages to the amounts spent on veterinary and mail services and tents for the mobile Kababish school.⁷⁰ Elsewhere in Kordofan, official scripting of gatherings – in which Sudanese administrators were playing a growing role, alongside their British superiors – was increasingly foregrounding civic modernity, rather than traditional bravado. In 1945, in asking for the programme of gatherings, the Civil Secretary specifically mentioned that these should be ‘of concrete benefit . . . to the development of Local Government’.⁷¹ One DC from Eastern Kordofan had already reported earlier that year that for the Gawamaa tribal gathering he had planned some ‘innovations’, and the subsequent report of the gathering also highlighted these

The exhibits prepared for the Gathering included a model house, and a not-so-model house which unfortunately seemed much more attractive to popular fancy, a propaganda photo exhibit from the Information Office, an exhibit of handwork by the Central Prison El Obeid and a stall of handwork by the two girls’ schools of Rahad and Umm Ruwaba⁷²

There were also nightly cinema shows; and, for official guests only, a ‘tea party’ hosted by the nazir of the tribe.

These were large events: ‘15,000 camel-men’ attended the Dar Hamid gathering in 1946 and their planning seems to have become ever more precise.⁷³ Displays of riding were still part of these plans: once the members of the tribe had observed the exhibition of progress, they could ride under the inspecting eyes of officials and nazirs.⁷⁴ But the spectacles of bravado, with their complex message of potential turbulence contained by conditional acknowledgement of authority, had moved to the margins of an exhibition of progress – in official eyes at least. And women’s involvement had changed completely; they now had a presence only through their role in institutions of formal learning, and singers and dancers had disappeared in favour of ‘handwork’.

In Dar Kababish, the event at Soderi in 1952 followed this new script of civic progress. In 1946, a departing DC had suggested that there was a need for a ‘modification’ to the system of government for the Kababish which would maintain ‘the Nurab system’ but also embrace ‘new forms of Committee government’.⁷⁵ Dar Kababish quickly took on the new language of local government; at meetings of ‘representatives of the tribes’ of the Kababish Confederation in 1947 and 1948, ‘useful discussions were held on water supplies, medical facilities, veterinary services and education . . . The budget for 1949 was also discussed’.⁷⁶ A similar meeting the following year ‘agreed to create a new ‘executive machinery’ at Soderi, the administrative headquarters, to bring ‘real progress’.⁷⁷

The ‘machinery’ thus created was the Kababish Rural District Council, whose building the Civil Secretary came to open in 1952. The composition of this suggests the increasing closeness between the graduates and the traditional leaders, and between native administration and local government. The Council – all of whose members were appointed - drew heavily on the educated members of Ali el Tom’s family, who had benefited from the old nazir’s decision to create what was in effect a private family school at his encampment, and to send some of his children to secondary school elsewhere in Sudan.⁷⁸ It was chaired by the District Commissioner, now metamorphosed into the Inspector of Local Government; the nazir became the assistant chair, and the Assistant District Commissioner was restyled the ‘Executive Officer’.⁷⁹ In keeping with the official culture of technocratic guidance, one of the first acts of the Council was to adopt a ‘five-year development plan’.⁸⁰

In the official account of the 1952 events, this culture of ordered development was foregrounded. The Civil Secretary

officially opened the new Council buildings. While he inspected the offices, members took their seats and important guests assembled in the Visitor’s Gallery. The Civil Secretary then re-entered the Council Chamber and a speech of welcome and thanks was made . . . The Civil Secretary then inspected the Elementary School, Merkaz offices, Veterinary Dispensary, the S[udan] M[edical] S[ervice] Dispensary..

The invitation list emphasized the exhibitionary aspect of the opening: alongside the Civil Secretary, the Governor and Deputy Governor of Kordofan and various other administrators and technical staff, there was a 'Films Officer' from the Public Relations Office of the Sudan Government and two representatives of the British Central Information Office.⁸¹

The 'show' of riding was relegated to the second day of the event; and in both location and style this was most definitely an inspection, held on a 'parade ground' before a 'saluting base'. This performance completed, the Civil Secretary retired for a 'private meeting with the Kababish tribal leaders', before flying back to Khartoum; the programme of races was completed after he had left.⁸² From a state perspective, then, displays of men's riding prowess were now a minor part of the 'Gathering', the riders had become marginal to a dramatic performance which manifested the triumph of a central culture of government. And, as Apter has suggested of Nigerian durbars, a local elite - which in this case included both traditional rulers and the educated Sudanese staff of this local governmental centre - were 'assuming the viewpoint of privileged spectatorship'.⁸³ This was a viewpoint in which the state was seen as potentially a Sudanese, not a British possession: strikingly, for one self-consciously political Sudanese journalist, the gathering provided a moment when he realized that 'tribal chiefs' could share his vision of nationalism, looking forward to the end of the British presence.⁸⁴

But the continued, if marginal, presence of displays of riding suggests that the performance was not simply the triumph of the ordering state, nor solely a manifestation of the complex relationship between the British, the graduates and traditional leaders. Why did ‘7,000 camelmen’ appear to ride at the gathering? Some may have come grudgingly, viewing the tribal gathering as another impost made by the nazir and his allies (as one assistant district commissioner had suggested was the case with tribal gatherings elsewhere in Kordofan).⁸⁵ But off the main stage, the races and riding may have been rather less disciplined, and more fun, than the written account implies; and personal bravado, competition and displays of eye-catching daring evoked a relationship between a nazir and his people based on a compact between powerful, autonomous subjects and a leader whose authority rested on his ability to represent them in dealing with other tribes or with government. It was a compact which colonial rule had already broken, but which the ‘camelmen’ were still seeking to perform.

Conclusion

Wedeen’s study of the cult of presidential power in modern Syria has argued that spectacular performances ‘produce political power’ even though they also ‘invite transgressions.’⁸⁶ The massed rallies and choreographed performances of Asad’s Syria were in many ways remote from the ‘gatherings’ of Condominium Sudan. They were more tightly scripted and choreographed, and offered much less room for multiple authorship; and, perhaps because they lacked any obvious resonance with local cultures of authoritative spectacle, attendance was much more clearly enforced than was the case

in Sudan. Yet Wedeen's argument is persuasive in showing how, while people mock these events, and reject the ideas of those who organize them, by taking part they nonetheless submit themselves to a kind of disciplinary process - in the Foucauldian sense - which teaches them 'compliance'.

Compliance, however, is not quite the same as a surrender to the logic of the state, and the story of Dar Kababish is illustrative both of the limits of spectacle and the limits of a state which uses spectacle to economize on the use of its limited coercive resources. The 'baroque' spectacle of the tribal gathering was not drawn solely from the imagination of officials, and offered space for 'transgressions' which were pleasurable and culturally familiar. For an elite, it provided the opportunity to become spectators, while it beguiled subjects into performances of compliance by disguising these as enactments of the relationship between a sheikh and his people. But while acting out the role of subject might habituate people to compliance, the simultaneous acting out of defiance constantly reminded all involved that the hakuma, the government, was essentially part of an alien order. The gathering was the tool of a government which sought constantly to extend its control; but it also allowed - indeed, relied on - an expression of the cultural distance between government and people.

The consequences of this were profound, for the 'symbolic order' that such spectacles reproduced was one which divided the tea-drinking elite from their subjects; and it was this order which the post-colonial state inherited. In Dar Kababish, the continued distance between people and government was very apparent. As one of Talal Asad's informants rather memorably put it in the 1960s: '[t]he hakuma is the hakuma and we are like

cattle.⁸⁷ And some twenty years after that, the ‘traditional authorities’ continued to play the role of agents of the developmental state, despite popular rejection of the projects of that state.⁸⁸

More widely in Sudan, by the 1960s it was already clear that the experiment in local government had secured neither popular support nor significant progress in state projects of development.⁸⁹ Twenty years after the Marshall report, one Sudanese local government expert was still hopeful that – despite the apparent failures of the system so far - representative local government would ‘associate the citizenry with the immediate ends of local development and encourage them to participate with enthusiasm in the physical tasks of development’ and would ‘produce and legitimize modern leaders to substitute for the traditional leaders of the decaying tribal society’.⁹⁰ Shortly after he outlined this vision the existing councils were swept away by Nimeiri, to be replaced by ‘People’s Local Government Councils’; only for these too to be denounced as a failure, and for Sudan to return, under the Islamist military regime which took power in 1989, to a partial reliance on ‘traditional’.⁹¹ None of these systems has been a success, in terms of local legitimacy or ‘development’; in Sudan, as elsewhere in Africa, local government has in practice been neither ‘local’ nor ‘government’, and has disappointed all of the contradictory expectations placed upon it by late-colonial and post-colonial enthusiasts.⁹² The legacy of the weak colonial state, and its reliance on authoritative spectacle, was a population which, while it might have learned compliance, had not learned to share the ordering logic of government.

¹ Kordofan Monthly Diary, Mar. 1952, National Record Office, Khartoum (NRO), CS 30/4/9.

² E.G. Sarsfield-Hall, 'Diary of a trip in northern Kordofan', entry for 13-23 Feb. 1923, Sudan Archive Durham (SAD), 680/8/1-15. Lest the assumption that Tingal spent all his service in Soderi seem a piece of unjustified romanticism in my part, it should be noted that in 1931 Tingal was mentioned as a long-serving local police officer: Diaries of C. Lea, entries of 22 and 27 Mar. 1931, SAD 676/9/1-102; see also P. Hogg, 'Memoir of Soderi', p. 10, SAD 815/11/7-21.

³ Sarsfield-Hall, 'Diary of a trip in northern Kordofan', 21 Feb. 1923, SAD, 680/8/1-15.

⁴ Intelligence Department, Kordofan and the Region to the West of the White Nile (Khartoum, 1912), 46-47.

⁵ The photograph is at SAD A17/28

⁶ Timothy Mitchell, Colonizing Egypt (Cambridge, 1982), esp. 34-62

⁷ Lisa Wedeen, Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria (Chicago, 1999).

⁸ David Cannadine, Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire (London, 2001), esp. 58-70; T.O. Ranger, 'Making Northern Rhodesia Imperial: Variations on a Royal Theme', African Affairs, 79 (1980); Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks, 'Hegemony in a Colonial Context', 3, in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds.), Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India (London, 1994); Helen Callaway, Gender, Culture and Empire. European Women in Colonial Nigeria (London and Basingstoke, 1987); see also Jan-Georg Deutsch, 'Celebrating Power in Everyday Life:

the Administration of Law and the Public Sphere in Colonial Tanzania, 1890-1914',
Journal of African Cultural Studies, 15, (2002).

⁹ Bernard Cohn, 'Representing authority in colonial India' in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge, 1983), 202.

¹⁰ Andrew Apter, 'On Imperial Spectacle: the Dialectics of Seeing in Colonial Nigeria', Comparative Studies in Society and History, 44 (2002); Richard Fardon, Lela in Bali. History through Ceremony in Cameroon (New York/Oxford, 2006), 144.

¹¹ Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (Oxford and New York, 1994), 166

¹² M.W. Daly, Empire on the Nile. The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934 (Cambridge, 2003 (first 1986)), 26.

¹³ Sudan Intelligence Report (Khartoum) (SIR), No. 121, Aug. 194, TNA WO 106/226; No. 186, Jan. 1910, TNA WO 106/234; No. 291, Oct. 1918, TNA FO 371/3199.

¹⁴ SIR, No. 165, Apr. 1908, TNA WO 106/231

¹⁵ SIR, No. 333, Apr. 1922, TNA WO 33/997.

¹⁶ See for example Sudan Government, *Sudan Almanac, 1937* (Khartoum, 1937), 51.

¹⁷ See for example, Hogg, 'Memoir of Soderi', p. 14, SAD 815/11/7-21

¹⁸ Daly, Empire on the Nile, 96

¹⁹ SIR, No. 113, Dec. 1903, TNA WO 106/225; No. 253, Aug. 1915 and No. 255 Oct. 1915, TNA FO 371/2349; No. 299, June 1919; No. 311, June 1920; No. 323, June 1921, TNA WO 33/997.

²⁰ SIR, No. 210, Jan. 1912, WO/106 6224; Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Dec. 1945, NRO CIVSEC 57/23/88; A. Clarkson, 'Pomp, Circumstance and Wild Arabs: the 1912

Royal Visit to Sudan’, Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 34 (2006); Hogg, ‘Memoir of Soderi’, 19, SAD 815/11/7-21.

²¹ SIR, No. 222, Jan. 1913, TNA FO 371/1636.

²² SIR, No. 330, Jan. 1922, TNA WO 33/997; No. 354, Jan. 1924, TNA WO/399; Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Dec. 1945, NRO CIVSEC 57/23/88.

²³ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Oct. 1948, NRO Kordofan 1/18/87.

²⁴ SIR, No. 328, Nov. 1921 and No. 337, Aug. 1922, TNA WO 33/997.

²⁵ SIR, No. 366, Jan. 1925, TNA WO 33/999.

²⁶ C. Chaille-Long, Central Africa. Naked Truths of Naked People (London, 1968 (first 1876), 16, 67.

²⁷ R.E. Colston, Report on Northern and Central Kordofan (Cairo, 1875), 16.

²⁸ Daly, Empire on the Nile, pp. 336-37; SIR, No. 288, July 1918, TNA FO 371/3199; Sudan Monthly Record, No. 86, Feb-Mar. 1936, SAD; Sudan Monthly Intelligence Summary, 43, Aug. 1937, TNA FO 141 534/3; Margery Perham, Sudan Diaries, 29 Dec. 1937 -17 Jan. 1938, p.6, MSS Perham 50, Rhodes House Oxford.

²⁹ Craig Calhoun, ‘Habermas and the Public Sphere’, p. 7, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge, MA, 1992); while Habermas’ original work was really concerned with written (and largely printed) debate, the notion of a performative ‘public’ is suggested in Jurgen Habermas, Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discursive Theory of Law and Democracy (trans W. Rehg)(Cambridge, MA, 1996), 374

³⁰ Daly, Empire on the Nile, 360; Bruce Berman, ‘Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence: Colonial Administration and the Origins of the Mau Mau Emergency’, in Bruce Berman

and John Lonsdale, Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa

(London/Nairobi/Athens, Ohio, 1992).

³¹ There is a useful published collection of such documentation in A.I. Abushouk and A. Bjorkelo (eds.), The Principles of Native Administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1956 (Omdurman, 2004).

³² Mahmood Mamdani, Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism (Oxford, 1996)

³³ See for example Audrey Richards, The Multicultural States of East Africa (Montreal and London, 1969), 32.

³⁴ Richard Rathbone, Nkrumah and the Chiefs. The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-60 (Oxford, 2000), 8.

³⁵ M. W. Daly, Imperial Sudan. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1934-56 (Cambridge, 2003 (first 1991)), 37; Gaafar Mohammed Ali Bakheit, 'The Condominium and Indirect Rule', 31, in John Howell (ed.) Local Government and Politics in the Sudan (Khartoum, 1974); for a similar view, see Salih Abdalla el-Arifi, Local Government and Local Participation in the Sudan (Khartoum, 1978), 13.

³⁶ See, for one example among many, Macmichael, Ag. Civil Secretary, to Huddleston, Ag. Governor, 11 Oct. 1924, NRO CIVSEC 50/2/10.

³⁷ Heather Sharkey, Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Berkeley, 2003).

³⁸ 'Aspects of local government'; undated memo, but c.1945, apparently prepared for the Northern Advisory Council, SAD; Lord Hailey, Native Administration in the British

African Territories (4 vols.)(London, 1951), IV, p. 6; Lawrence Buchanan, Lecture to School of Administration, 1941, 3-4, SAD 797/9/1-28

³⁹ Minutes of DCs meeting, El Obeid, 23, 24 and 27 Dec. 1946, National Records Office, Khartoum (NRO) CIVSEC 32/2/12

⁴⁰ A.H. Marshall, Report on Local Government in Sudan (Khartoum, 1949), para. 2. This was very similar to the vision of local administration offered more than decade earlier by Stewart Symes, the Governor-general who introduced the term 'local government' to Sudan: 'Monograph on Some Outstanding Features and General Purposes in the Administration of the Sudan', Appendix IV, Report on the Finances, Administration and Condition of the Sudan, 1937 (Khartoum, 1938), 134-39.

⁴¹ T.H.B. Mynors, 'Local Government in the Sudan', Review of the International Union of Local Authorities, 5 (1953), 31-32; the commitment to representation and the contrary insistence on control are even more clear in an information booklet prepared at independence, in 1956: Republic of the Sudan, This is Our Way to Build a Strong Nation: Local Government (Khartoum, 1956)

⁴² T.H.B. Mynors, 'A school of administration in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan', Journal of African Administration, 2 (1950), 24-26; 'Local government terms of service committee', Minutes of first meeting, 10 July 1951, SAD 797/1/7-8; R. McComas, 'A suggestion for temporarily modifying Local Government policy', nd, 1953, SAD 798/1/4-7; Director of Local Government to all Governors, 11 Jan. 1954, SAD 798/1/1-3.

⁴³ Patricia Stamp, 'Local Government in Kenya: Ideology and Political Practice, 1895-1974', African Studies Review, 29 (1986), 22.

⁴⁴ SIR, No. 353, Dec 1923, TNA WO 33/999.

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- ⁴⁵ SIR, No. 148, Nov. 1906, TNA WO 106/228; ‘Diary of the Governor-general’s inspection of White Nile and Kordofan Provinces’, SAD 279/5/51-61.
- ⁴⁶ Wingate to Cromer, 12 Dec. 1906, SAD 279/6/28-36
- ⁴⁷ SIR, No. 211, Feb. 1912, TNA WO 106/235.
- ⁴⁸ Sarsfield-Hall, ‘Diary of a trip in Northern Kordofan’, 21 Feb. 1923, SAD 680/8/1-15.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ ‘Biography of Sh. Ali el Tom of Kababish’, in M. Perham, ‘Notes on Kordofan Province’, p. 125, MSS Perham 131, Rhodes House, Oxford
- ⁵¹ Sarsfield-Hall, ‘Diary of a trip in Northern Kordofan’, 28 Feb. 1923, SAD 680/8/1-15.
- ⁵² Talal Asad, The Kababish Arabs: Power, Authority and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe (London, 1970), pp. 161-69; Justin Willis, ‘Hukm. The Creolization of Authority in Condominium Sudan’, Journal of African History, 46 (2005).
- ⁵³ C. and B. Seligman, ‘The Kababish: a Sudan Arab Tribe’, p. 113, 115, Harvard African Studies, 2 (1918); Asad, The Kababish, pp. 180-83.
- ⁵⁴ Mansfield Parkyns, ‘The Kubbabish Arabs between Dongola and Kordofan’, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, 20 (1851), 273-74; Seligman and Seligman, ‘The Kababish’, 133-34.
- ⁵⁵ Hasan Nagila, Dhikrayati fi’l Badiyya (Beirut, 1964), 40.
- ⁵⁶ R. Savile, Diary, entries for 16, 18, 19 Jan. 1910, SAD 427/7/1-150; Lea, Journal, 26 March 1931, SAD 676/9/1-102.
- ⁵⁷ Nagila, Dhikrayati, 39-41.
- ⁵⁸ Seligman and Seligman, ‘The Kababish’, 155-56.
- ⁵⁹ SIR, No. 246, Jan. 1915, TNA FO 371/2349.

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- ⁶⁰ SIR, No. 317, Dec. 1920, TNA WO 337/997
- ⁶¹ SIR, No. 341, Dec. 1922, TNA WO 33/997.
- ⁶² SIR, No. 318, Jan. 1921, TNA WO 33/997.
- ⁶³ SIR, No. 328, Nov. 1921, TNA WO 33/997
- ⁶⁴ Mayall, Ag Governor Kordofan to all DCs, 24 Aug. 1932, NRO 2K1 Obeid 42/2/4; Minutes of Kordofan DCs' meeting, 15 Dec. 1931, NRO Kordofan 1/20/97; Sudan Monthly Record, No. 49, Jan-Feb. 1933, SAD.
- ⁶⁵ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Jan. 1939, NRO CIVSEC 57/11/41; Feb. 1945, NRO CIVSEC 57/23/88; Jan. 1946, NRO Kordofan 1/18/86.
- ⁶⁶ 'Monograph on some outstanding features'.
- ⁶⁷ Ag. Civil Secretary to all Governors, 15 Oct 1939, NRO 2K1 Obeid 42/2/4.
- ⁶⁸ Nagila, Dhikrayati, p.48
- ⁶⁹ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, June 1945, NRO CIVSEC 57/23/88.
- ⁷⁰ Governor, Kordofan to Civil Secretary, 30 Sep. 1944, NRO CIVSEC 20/12/61
- ⁷¹ Civil Secretary to all Governors, 4 Sep. 1945, NRO 2K 1 Obeid 42/2/4.
- ⁷² DC, Eastern Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 6 Jan. 1945, NRO 2 K1 Obeid 42/2/4; Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Feb. 1945, NRO 1CIVSEC 57/23/88
- ⁷³ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Jan. 1946, NRO Kordofan 1/18/86.
- ⁷⁴ Ag. DC Western Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 25 Nov. 1946; DC Western Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 14 Jan. 1947, NRO 2 K1 Obeid 42/2/4
- ⁷⁵ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Aug. 1945, NRO CIVSEC 57/23/88; Asad, The Kababish, 211-13; A. Penn, 'Northern Kordofan District Handing-over Notes', Oct. 1946, SAD 722/12/1-79.

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- ⁷⁷ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, June 1949, NRO Kordofan 1/18/87.
- ⁷⁸ The 'Kababish nomad school' is recorded in NRO CIVSEC 17/6/28; there is mention of Ali el Tom's children's secondary school study in Hogg, 'Memoir of Soderi', p. 20, SAD 815/11/7-21.
- ⁷⁹ Asad, The Kababish, 214.
- ⁸⁰ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Jan. 1952, NRO CIVSEC 30/4/9.
- ⁸¹ Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Mar. 1952, NRO CIVSEC 30/4/9.
- ⁸² Kordofan Province Monthly Diary, Mar. 1952, NRO CIVSEC 30/4/9.
- ⁸³ Apter, 'On imperial spectacle', 582.
- ⁸⁴ See the summary of the article 'Our duty towards the rural areas', Kordofan, 21 Mar. 1952, in TNA FO 371/96850.
- ⁸⁵ Assistant District Commissioner, Western Kordofan to Governor Kordofan, 29 Nov. 1941 and 2 Oct. 1943, NRO 2 K1 Obeid 42/2/4.
- ⁸⁶ Wedeen, Ambiguities of Domination, 4-5.
- ⁸⁷ Talal Asad, 'Political Inequality in the Kababish Tribe', in Ian Cunnison and Wendy James (eds.), Essays in Sudan Ethnography (London, 1972), 141.
- ⁸⁸ Michael Asher, A Desert Dies (London, 1986), 62, 97, 127-9; 132, 153; also Asad, The Kababish, 218.
- ⁸⁹ John Howell, 'Local government and politics', in Howell, Local Government and Politics.
- ⁹⁰ Galobawi Mohamed Salih, Patterns of Decentralization in the Sudan (Origin-Characteristics-Prospects) (Khartoum, 1970), 86

⁹¹ Michael Kevane and Leslie Gray, 'Local Politics in the Time of Turabi's Revolution: Gender, Class and Ethnicity in Western Sudan', Africa, 65 (1995); Mahdi Sheikh Idris, 'Local Government at Work', in Al-Agab Ahmed al-Teraifi (ed), Decentralization in Sudan (Khartoum, 1987), 67.

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