The legacy of 50 years of war – Building in Lire in South Sudan, 2002 (Photo: Randall Fegley)

In this issue: A letter from Ismail Abdalla from Khartoum, Remembrance of Prof. Gerald Browne, Diary entry from Robert Collins on the political situation of South Sudan in 1982, Stephanie Beswick’s rebuttal of a book review by Justin Willis, Richard Lobban on the *baqt* treaty between Christian Nubia and Egypt, Jay Spaulding on Darfur history, Announcement of SSA annual meeting August 2006 at Rhode Island College.
our purpose

The Sudan Studies Association (SSA) is an independent professional society founded in the United States in 1981. Membership is open to scholars, teachers, students, and others with interest in the Sudan. The Association exists primarily to promote Sudanese studies and scholarship. It maintains a cooperative relationship with the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum. SSA works to foster closer ties among scholars in the Sudan, North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and other places. Normal activities of the SSA include the publication of this Newsletter, organizing meetings for the exchange of ideas, and recommending research candidates for affiliation with appropriate institutions of higher education in the Sudan. The Association also sponsors panels and programs during the meetings of other academic organizations. It occasionally publishes the proceedings of its annual meetings in book form.

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From the Interim Editors

Dear fellow members of the Sudan Studies Association, and subscribers to the newsletter,

As many of you are aware, the Board of Directors of the Sudan Studies Association recently decided to transition the Newsletter to a new editor and a more collaborative model. Thanks to the efforts of Abdullahi Gallab, the previous editor, the newsletter has evolved into a more professional tool for keeping our members informed of important scholarship in Sudan Studies. We hope that members appreciate how much work goes into producing the newsletter. There is no need to remind you that the Newsletter depends vitally on your contributions and your volunteer efforts. The Board is currently in the process of looking for an Editor who will manage a team of sub-editors. Jay Spaulding and Stephanie Beswick, for example, have already volunteered to be book review editors. Please contact SSA president Ali B. Ali Dinar if you would like to nominate someone, or yourself, as Editor of the Newsletter.

Ali B. Ali Dinar    Michael Kevane

Short notes and contributions

Book publishers seeking quality reviews read by quality audience: Publishers and authors seeking review of their books in the newsletter should please send them to: Prof. Stephanie Beswick., Ball State University, Dept. History, Muncie, IN 47306 USA

SSA Board member Randall Fegley explains the front and back cover photos….Lire Primary School is north of Kajo Keji town. On my visit in 2002 the school was a ruin pockmarked with bullet holes. The metal roof had been stripped off to make bunkers. Despite this, you can see from the photo [at right] that the blackboards were still used (for students to practice math). The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem (Pennsylvania) has a formal companion relationship with the Diocese of Kajo Keji and has provided supplies and scholarship assistance to 28 schools in Kajo Keji County. These include the nursery, primary and secondary schools at Lire. At the beginning of 2005, the school was rebuilt by Jesuit Refugee Services, with UNHCR funding. The back cover photo shows the same building now (January 2006). If anyone is interested in helping Kajo Keji's schools, I am co-ordinator of our diocese's educational efforts (we also have agricultural and clergy support programs). [n.b. Randall’s contact info is on page 2]

Former SSA President Ismail Abdalla sends a greeting from Khartoum…. Khartoum is changing fast, for good or bad. Traffic, which is already bad enough is worse now. The capital adds about 3000 cars every month, and congestion is every where, which calls for new invention in what they call here DRIV-
NG. Once behind the wheel you do what you like, almost literally. There are hundreds of car accidents, most not reported, and one or two deaths every other day. The tragedy is that to pay condolences, relatives and friends come to the aggrieved family, and invariably some die coming or going back, especially if traveling from town to town in the unsafe highways. It is catastrophe and something has to be done, and done very quickly. Maybe the SSA next conference be on how to drive safely, with invitations to many Sudanese drivers to attend.

Dar Fur is in the news every day, but a defiance campaign is on. You hear about men willing to fight with sticks to fend the Sudan against foreign aggression. The Imams in mosques taking the lead, as well as some editors. Not good for the Dar Furians. Culturally Khartoum is also a changed capital, not only for the thousands of new and elegant mosques everywhere, but also for the endless conferences on every topic you may think of. There is a new spirit, I guess. The African Union last conference went all right, though Khartoum could not function normally with the many foreign guests in town. So there was an unofficial three day break, so that congestion disappear from the streets, the delegates from the many African countries could move to their conference place in time.

House construction is in a boom. Higher and higher buildings appear almost over night. Lazy Khartoum is still lazy, except when it comes to new construction and speeding in the newly built wide streets. You may ask where does the millions of dollars needed for importing construction materials come from. Your guess is as good as mine. And construction has a trickle down effect, no doubt. Inflation is the result. But there is cash in peoples hands. Wedding is getting more rather than less expensive, so is the rituals associated with deaths, People spend on these ceremonies as if there is no tomorrow. Southerners are not going back to the South in the numbers anticipated. For one thing, accommodation facilities in the South are yet to be, and construction boom in Khartoum made life easier from most low income southerners, whose main occupation in construction.

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The College of William and Mary

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**In Remembrance: Gerald Michael Browne**

**Talk for the Nubian Language Society**

Khartoum, Nubian Club

2 February 2006

Marcus Jaeger

**Author’s Note:** On 2 February 2006 the Nubian Language Society held an evening in the Nubian Club in order to commemorate the work of the late Gerald M Browne. He really seems to mean a lot to the Nubians. They composed a Nubian song especially for that occasion. Herman Bell gave a message via telephone to the audience. One Sudanese speaker lamented that there is not a single book by Gerald M. Browne in any of the Sudanese libraries. Katherine Mosley represented the US embassy. The final talk was given by Marcus Jaeger which is reprinted here.

Greetings from the European Community of scholars who are researching the Nubian culture and language. We are gathered here to think of the life and work of the late Prof. Gerald Michael Browne. Derek A. Welsby BA, PhD, Chairman of the Nubian Studies Association, and member of the British Museum pays him the highest regard with these words: “Prof. Gerald M. Browne is the acknowledged world expert on Old Nubian.” Through his research Browne has become very important for the Nubian Community in their quest for rediscovering their long and outstanding history.

Let me start with some relevant biographical information. 13 December 1943 born in Detroit, Michigan. In 1968, after finishing his PhD, he obtained his first academic position as Instructor in the Classics, Harvard University. From 1974 onwards he was Assistant, Associate, then full Professorship of Classics at the University of Illinois at Urbana. In
1986 he was Visiting Professor of Egyptology and Sudan Archaeology, Humboldt-University at Berlin, GDR. On 30 August 2004 he died in Urbana, Illinois. Browne did not leave any children.

Browne’s research interests were the Critical editing and textual criticism in Arabic (especially Arabic transmission of Greek texts), Armenian, Blemmyan, Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian, Latin, Lydia, Old Nubian, Sanskrit and Syriac.

In 1979, Browne published his first piece of research on Old Nubian: Notes on Old Nubian (I-III), in the Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists. In the following years he published many Old Nubian texts, including texts (in chronological order) from Qasr Ibrim (Fadidja area) and Serra East (Halfawiyya area), Old Dongola, Kulubnarti, Ab Kanarti. Among all of Browne’s research interests Old Nubian became by far the most important one. He commented on the work of Griffith, especially his work on the Old Nubian Lectionary.

Browne did Linguistic studies of Old Nubian, too, the first one being his 1982 piece, “The Old Nubian Verbal System,” in the Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists. In my opinion the following three publications are the most important ones among Browne’s Old Nubian studies:

1994 The Old Nubian Miracle of Saint Mena (Beiträge zur Sudanforschung, Wien)
1996 Old Nubian Dictionary (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Louvain). In 1997 Browne added Appendices to this work, among them an addenda et corrigenda to M.M. Khalil’s recently published “Wörterbuch der nubischen Sprache” (Fadidja/Mahas dialect) His dictionary is a master piece of scholarship, stating the source of each single entry. Words which are lost in the modern Nubian languages and replaced by loan words can be retrieved using Browne’s dictionary.

2002 Old Nubian Grammar (Lincom Europa, München)

In this final great master piece, Browne extended former research by Griffith, Abel, Zyharz and Hintze, using Old Nubian texts found since the 60s. While extending the results, at the same time he reduced the number of grammatical rules, making them more general. That shows his logical mind.

Basically Old Nubian has the following grammatical structure: Subject Object Verb (as in today’s Dongolawi, as in Modern Standard Arabic)
Diary Entry
19 April 1982

Robert O. Collins
University of California
Santa Barbara

Background: In 1997 I donated my papers and extensive library to the Sudan Archive, University of Durham Library, with the proviso that any duplicates be sent to the Middle East Centre, Bergen University that numbered well over a hundred volumes and are to be found today in the Collins Collection. At the time I retained my very detailed diaries for the years 1956-57, 1968, 1976, 1980-82, and 1990-1991. It is only now after these many years that I have had the time to read through them all bringing back many memories but also an enormous amount of information principally concerned with Southern affairs. Having arrived in Khartoum on 18 April 1982 I met the next afternoon and a long evening with old friends, mostly southerners, but before retiring I wrote the following synopsis of what had transpired that reflects the thinking of the Southern elites. It is a “Note” as in Sudan Notes and Records, recorded here as written that night with a few words of explanation in brackets.

Monday, April 18, 1982

[I was filled in] on the events of last year beginning with the dissolution of the [Southern Regional] government on October 5th [1981] and the appointment of Rassas. [Many regard] Lawrence [Wol Wol] and Philip Obang’s presence in the interim government as those of opportunists. In fact Lawrence was later pushed out for what was alleged to be misfeasance of funds. Then in December in Juba was formed the Committee of 21 to fight Redivision [of the South]—“The Committee for the Unification of the Southern Sudan.” Clement Mboro was Chairman, Samuel Arn Bol (Rumbek) was Deputy Chairman, Joseph Oduho, Secretary General, Martin Majier, Deputy Chairman and Minister for Legal Affairs (Bor Dinka), and Michael Wol, Chairman of Foreign Affairs (Nuer). Samuel Arn Bol was the sinister link in this for he had operated out of Nairobi claiming to be the leader of SANU [Sudan African National Union] and in the pay of the Iraqis. Ambrose Ring was also one of the 21 and was to be a deputy to Michael Wol. Most were released from jail (Khartoum North) in a few days except Samuel who is still in prison.

On February 22nd Numeiri opened the National Assembly in which he called off the referendum and by that Redivision and called for elections in the South. The remaining 5 Southerners, except Samuel, were released on February 24, 1982. The explanation for Numieiri’s erratic behavior is that since the inauguration of the policy of Reconciliation in 1977 elements hostile to him on the Right, particularly Sadiq al-Mahdi, Sharif al-Hindi, who has since died, and the Muslim Brothers quite separate from any association with the Ansar and the Sharif, returned to the Sudan and in the course of the next few years became increasingly close to Numeiri and rose in Byzantine fashion to have greater influence in his councils. They had been to a man opposed to the Adddis Ababa Agreement and sought to reduce the importance of the South in Numeiri’s Government. They were convinced, and not without cause, that Nimeiri’s power base lay in the Army and in the South. Clearly, the dissidents who seek power in the Sudan could not create disaffection in the Army. The next thing to do was to pull the South and the President apart, undercut that political force and isolate it as a factor in modern Sudanese politics. They found their tool in the sudden appearance of Joseph Lagu.
In the elections of 1980 it was abundantly clear that many Southerners had become disenchanted with Abel Alier. His style was rational, low profile, and common sense. To await on events and they would work out ultimately for the best. This had proved true when appointed Vice President in 1969, when he had no influence, to his triumph in 1972 with the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement. Thereafter his handling of Southern Affairs as the President of the High Executive Council was characterized by patience and reason, not rhetoric or confrontation. He thus never captured the Southerners by charisma or as a champion. The President asked him to withdraw his candidature for the High Executive Council in 1980, October, when he was challenged by Lagu who although coming from a small tribe (the Madi), had led the Anya-Nya in the Civil War and was no doubt the only visible military hero the Southerners had. Lagu thus became President of the High Executive Council in 1980. It soon became apparent that he may have been an excellent guerilla fighter but neither much of an administrator nor a politician. Worst of all, it now seems clear that he was using government funds to build ostentatious houses in the Southern Sudan. Cries for investigation and resignation followed, Lagu being saved by Numieri calling in spring 1981 for elections which brought back Abel Alier in a sweeping triumph so strong was the hostile feeling toward Lagu for peculation and inept handling of administration and the Regional Assembly.

Lagu retired to sulk in Khartoum convinced that he, coming from an Equatorian tribe was being ousted by the Dinka mafia representing the overwhelming number of supporters who were Nilotes. He thus fell back on the idea of redividing the South along tribal lines. This idea was not new but had never been taken seriously in the anti-Arab (Northern) feeling of the Civil War. Ten years after Addis Ababa this feeling had not diminished but had been placed in a different perspective with the rise of Dinka domination. Moreover, its ideology did not run counter to the programs of Regionalization which Numieri had approved for the North on the lines of Regional success in the South bringing political stability although Numieri grasping the life-jacket of regionalization in the North was clearly more to spread his ideology although Numieri grasping the life-jacket of regionalization in the North was clearly more to spread his self as the President who will then form a cabinet. The lead-contenders are Bona, Clement, and Peter Gathwok. The Muslim Militants adopted by the Right Wing, Muslim militants who were becoming increasingly influential in Numieri’s government. No Southerners were represented and Numieri himself had become disenchanted when all he received from the Southerners was hostility over the Border Issue and the Kosti Refinery. The Muslim Militants played on these issues to argue that the separatists tendencies of the south were still very much alive, that the South could not be relied upon to support the regime, and therefore its Balkanization would not only make separatism impossible but would reduce what most Northerners would agree was an inordinate degree of influence exerted by the South under its special and autonomous, constitutional status.

Thus Numieri abolished the Regional Government October 5, introduced the Interim Government under Colonel Rassas and those loyal to him but having neither knowledge nor sympathy with the South and declared that a Referendum should be held to determine the wishes of the people under the watchful eye of the Interim Government. The result was the establishment of the Committee of 21, promptly arrested since there could be only one political party—the SSU—and the beginning of violence at the arrest but more important about the larger question that Redivision would change the constitution and the relationship of the North and South to the detriment of the latter.

There were student riots in Wau in January in which the police reacted rather heavily killing four and wounding twenty. More ominous were reports that the Nilotes were preparing for war with the large amounts of weaponry available the scale of violence would be large and destroy the image of peaceful conciliator upon which Numieri had established his national and international reputation.

On February 22, at the Opening of the National Assembly he called off the Referendum and the prospect of Redivision and called for elections in the South for a Regional Government. The Nominations for elections were in March 25-April 4. Polling begins on April 25th and ends on May 6th. Then the various promises or rather provincial branches of the SSU will caucus and decide on the President by which time the Regional assembly will meet about May 20th and elect the President who will then form a cabinet. The leading contenders are Bona, Clement, and Peter Gathwok. Lawrence Wol Wol and Othman Dak as Redivisionists are the dark horses. What are the issues?
Rebuttal of Justin Willis’ Review of Sudan’s Blood Memory

Stephanie Beswick
Ball State University

When I met Justin Willis for tea [along with Jay Spaulding] in Durham during the summer of 2003 he stated to me that although he was now employed as professor of African History at Durham University, a position in the past which had been held by a Sudanist, he was in actuality by training an expert of Kenya. Further, specialized intellectual expertise is important to Willis; he is critical of others who delve into Kenyan history, but who, as he perceives it, are not Kenyan experts (see Justin Willis review of Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders*, *Journal of African History* Vol. 40, No. 2 (1999): pp. 299-301.) It was therefore a surprise to me to discover that Willis had been selected to review my book *Sudan’s Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan* for the *Journal of African History* (46 (2005): pp. 340-341). Willis’ scholarly lack of expertise in Sudan has resulted in a substantive misreading of my book.

At the beginning of the review Willis writes: "Beswick implicitly challenges a considerable scholarship which has emphasized the role played by Egyptian and British colonial rule." As the title of my book states, this is a pre-colonial history. Nevertheless, this book is also the first to suggest that a large number of internal troubles of modern-day South Sudan can be attributed to events predating the Egyptian and British colonial eras. Further, instead of South Sudan's history being one purely directed by external forces (the Egyptians and British) it suggests that there has always been an internal dynamic. It is my argument that it is old, tired and out of date historically to assume that Africa is frozen in a reactive history hugely dependent on European and other foreign external forces; Africans were not waiting for Europeans to arrive so that their history could start. Within the scholarship of South Sudan, regarding the value of oral evidence Dinka scholar Francis Deng notes that it is necessary to counter the denigration of oral literature and the over-emphasis on written, mostly published sources, in order to understand the culture of a predominantly preliterate society. (Francis Mading Deng, *The Man Called Deng Majok* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 8. Further, a close view of South Sudan's recent internal
troubles such as that of the 1991 Bor Massacre which saw a level of destruction and death between the Dinka and Nuer which exceeded that of a similar time period during the more formal north/south civil war (1983-2005) are hardly a factor entirely attributable to foreign colonialism (see *Sudan's Blood Memory*, pages 164-174).

In the reviewing of my book Willis writes that I misinterpret Dinka identity (although he has never studied the Dinka himself) and writes: "There is no attempt here to problematize Dinka identity, or to consider how modern Dinka identity has emerged..." "The occasional brief genuflections to more nuanced understandings of ethnicity only serve to exacerbate the simplicity of the model of Dinka identity offered here..."; and that I argue that "ethnicity is immutable." Willis has failed to comprehend the nuances of my book. I spend numerous pages quoting the Dinka themselves as well as analyzing the meaning and creation of Dinka identity over time; what it means and requires to be identified as "Dinka" today versus yesterday; what it means to be identified as prominent versus non-prominent; insiders versus outsiders and how the Dinka have been a ranked society [pages 134-152; 175-184]. This book contains the only published documented accounts of the Dinka ethnohistorical formation by way of hundreds of oral histories provided in the text; first for the Padang [pages 43-53]; the Bor [54-63], the Southern Bahr el-Ghazal [64-78], and finally for the Northern Bahr el-Ghazal [79-89]. Perhaps Willis is offended by the publication of micro-histories such as these but this is how the Dinka view themselves and the formation of their confederation in South Sudan.

Further, Willis writes: "much use of oral material seems decidedly random" yet nowhere in his review does he note that my interviews numbered approximately three hundred and that methodologically I carried out many of my interviews in a war zone, a Kenyan refugee camp, as well as in Britain and North America. Normally reviewers note such items as places of field research and numbers interviewed. I interviewed Dinka informants from all of the twenty-six major Dinka groupings as well as Bari, Azande, Balanda, Moru, Shilluk, Nuer and Latuka. Many of my interviews appear in textual form, supported by the name of the informant, his clan and sub-clan, and the place and time of the interview. Numbers of informants were cited more than once. I thus regularly cited oral interviews from a variety of peoples and places and crosschecked oral evidence, one against the other in numerous places (as can be seen in the footnotes). Willis' methodology has involved the use of anonymous interviews only; the names of his informants do not appear in his books but are, he informs us, available for consultation "at the British Institute in Nairobi." I have tried to be accountable with my interviews and our methodologies differ greatly here.

Willis writes that my evidence of the Dinka emerging from the Gezira represents "flimsy evidence." Yet, beyond the oral evidence that I have gathered which is vast, and the account of a British District Commissioner who served in South Sudan in the 1950s who heard similar accounts, I have scientific evidence in the form of linguistics [Ehret, Adams, Davidson] [pages 20-21] and archaeological evidence for central and South Sudan [pages 22-23] [see Robertshaw and Siirainen and Davidson.] Along with three hundred oral interviews conducted by the late Dinka historian, Damazo Dut Majak, and the equal number collected by myself it is difficult to ignore so many converging lines of Dinka oral evidence which claim that their forefathers came from a region north of modern-day Southern Sudan in the Gezira. I have more than adequately supported my thesis of an ancient central Sudanese homeland for the forefathers of the Dinka culture of South Sudan today.

Willis writes that I have an "assumption" that zebu cattle and caudatum sorghum were unknown in southern Sudan before 1400 BP. Incorrect -- I cite scholarly evidence [Stemler, Harlan, Dewet; Epstein,
Willis writes that he finds fault with the resemblance between the burial of Dinka priests and that of Meroitic kings. I have an entire chapter devoted to Dinka burials historically as well as those which have taken place in very recent times (the information was acquired by oral interviews as well as consultation of British colonial records). The sacrifice of Dinka women in rivers was also an event which took place among the Funj culture of the Gezira (pp. 108-133). I stand by my assertion; that there is a very close resemblance between Dinka sacrifices (of priests and women) to that of Meroitic (as well as Funj) practices in the Gezira.

Willis incorrectly misquotes my book and writes: "That 'the Dinka' 'came from' the Gezira more or less en-masse [my emphasis] some four centuries ago..." To the contrary, I note that the "forefathers" of the Dinka have been moving in clan groups, some small, some larger, for many centuries out of the Gezira in varying different directions and routes; some migrated into Ethiopia and then headed west, others followed the Nile southwards on its western/eastern banks. Historically the Dinka only tend to move en-masse during severe droughts (and more recently during the latter twentieth-century civil war). A closer and more careful reading of the book would have yielded that it was the Shilluk who recounted in their own oral histories that there were Dinka on both their northeastern as well as southwestern boundaries who were migrating "in hordes" during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [pages 33-36].

Willis has misread other sections of my book and writes: "Beswick calmly (and rather irrelevantly) relays to us the cheerful assertion of one informant that among the Azande iron was smelted in 'ovens like those used for making bread.'" This statement is not only misleading, but a trivialization of an important sub-theme of my book as well as Southern Sudanese history and has been completely taken out of context. The oral text did not actually concern the Azande and breadmaking. The Balanda informant was contributing to a discussion of pre-colonial intra-Southern trade [pages 160-163], (about which little or virtually nothing has been published) and the making of iron implements; a point that Willis missed.

At the heart and soul of our disagreement is that Willis is a postmodernist and I am not. Contrary to my own scholarly methodology, such important factors concerning oral historians and the dilemma of whether events actually happened are apparently not the important issue to Willis; he is more concerned with whether "collective interpretations...are shaped by current structures of power." (See his review of In Pursuit of History, Fieldwork in Africa, in the Journal of African History Vol. 39, No. 2 (1998), pp. 347-348). While this is undoubtedly an important factor in twentieth century history, it can hardly be the whole story. Concerning postmodernism, another major point of disagreement lies in the very validity of "clans;" an important point as my book largely concerns a clan history of South Sudan. Willis believes that clans are an invention of the twentieth century and in his article "Clan and History in Western Uganda: A New Perspective on the Origins of Pastoral Dominance," (International Journal of African Historical Studies Vol. 30, No. 3 (1997): 583-600) he argues that: "a close examination of the evidence simply does not support an attempt to reconstruct the past as a story of "clans," each with a discrete and continuing identity. What are now called clans form just part of a range of overlapping and contested social constructs...the idea that they are clans, and exist in a fixed, widely agreed and hierarchical relationship to other social constructs, is a recent innovation." I disagree with Willis; clans are NOT an invention of the twentieth century. World and African history and particularly American history is replete with examples of long enduring clan entities. For the Dinka of South Sudan the same clans which exist today were identified by some of the earliest nineteenth-century travelers to Southern Sudan; Fathers Beltrame in the mid-nineteenth century [page 19] and Kaufmann [page 56] as well as numerous later nineteenth-century travelers (particularly Petherick) and others.

The most important disagreement that I have with Willis is the subject of methodology and the means of disseminating oral history itself. In his review of my book Willis writes that my "techniques for analysis of my materials [such as those] developed by Vansina, Feierman and others...[are]...based on an understanding of history and ethnicity that has been largely abandoned by scholarship on the rest of Africa." If this methodology has been largely abandoned, it must only be Willis who has abandoned it. It is methodologically irresponsible, when writing history at least, and using oral interviews to ignore all other evidence beyond the oral itself. I have cross-checked all my oral histories where possible to check for converging lines of evidence (as per Vansina) wherein an oral history from one region is cross-checked with that from another region to test for similarities in times and events. Willis prefers to abandon any approach to cross checking his oral histories with any other data and for this has come under fire from his peers in reviews of both of his books. For example, Thomas Spear whose methodological approach has been embraced by myself, and who is also a Mijikenda specialist writes of Willis book...
Relations between Islamic Egypt and Christian Nubia: the Case of the Baqt

Richard Lobban,
Rhode Island College

Paper presented at the Conference on Egypt and the Biblical Countries at the Russian State University for the Humanities, 11-14 October 2004, Moscow, Russia. Co-Sponsored by the Golenisches Egyptianological Centre, the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Russian Academy of Sciences. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the meetings of ISITA, (The Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa), Program of African Studies, at Northwestern University, 23-25 May 2003.

Introduction:
This paper addresses the enigmatic question of the long and complex relationship between Islamic Egypt and Christian Nubia. Once Arabs and Islam reached Egypt in 638 CE, they fairly zoomed across North Africa and into Europe by 711 CE in only seventy-three years. Meanwhile, with a similar intent, Islam rapidly went south in Egypt but Nubian Christians stubbornly halted its spread for almost seven centuries. Following the traditional sources provided by archaeologist Shinnie (1954) or scholar-priest as Father Vantini (1975), this paper addresses some of the factors that gave Christian Nubia such strength to resist Islam. The non-aggression pact or baqt between Muslim Egypt and Christian Nubia is often considered one of the longest treaties in the world. This paper examines the baqt more closely and finds it is a common regional response to Egyptian-Nubian rivalry, resistance, reciprocity, and détente.

Both sides of the politico-religious equation need to be examined to understand it more fully. Indeed, taking the longest span of Egypto-Nubian relations there were commonly various measures and practices established to manage the economic, political and military relations between these two powers on the Nile. A critical and pioneering historiographic account offered by Spaulding (1995) has raised important and stimulating questions about whose interests were being served by this treaty as well as how well it was really observed and variously understood by the parties. Also considered are issues of the nature of the sources that have shaped the common view of the baqt. The investigation and conclusions that follow are gratefully and much inspired by a close reading of Spaulding. Then the paper compiles and reviews the evidence and chronology to the extent that it is presently known. Students of this time and subject are strongly encouraged to review his anti-Orientalist critical examination of the relevant primary sources, especially al-Maqrizi, al-Hakam, Yazid, and al-Masudi (Spaulding, 1995: 579, 582, 583, 588).

Preliminary Questions:
The seventy-three years (638-711 CE) that were needed to bring Islam from eastern Egypt into Western Europe. This contrasts very sharply with the period of 638 years (from 638 CE to 1276 CE) that it took to bring Islam a much shorter distance to arrive at northern Christian Nubia at Dongola. This is not to mention the 866 years (to 1504 CE) when Islam was finally made the state religion of southern Nubia at Soba above the confluence of the two Niles. What accounts for this great difference?

Medieval Muslim tombs on the eastern Dongola plain. The Christian Church and/or Palace of Old Dongola is in the background (photo: Robert Borges).
Other questions include the degree to which the *baqt* was actually observed or abrogated. To what extent was it mutually beneficial? Who did it really serve? At the foundation of these questions is the changeable contextual and circumstantial definition of the *baqt* by the two negotiating parties. Cases could be made at various times that it was alternatively understood in quite different ways by the different and changing parties. These possibilities can include that it was a cease-fire, a peace treaty, a (slave) trade accord, a non-aggression pact, a schedule of tribute payments, a documentary instrument of surrender, or recognition of mutual political autonomy. The *baqt* may also have been perceived as a ‘free pass’ system, a set of regulations for fugitive slaves and rebels, a security truce, or rules for reciprocal gift-giving between the elites of the respective parties. Furthermore there are no surviving original copies of the *baqt*, presuming that it was written down at some point, or was this just a common informal understanding to be renegotiated periodically? The existing records are only second hand reports by the Islamic side and there are no known accounts on the side of Christian Nubia (Spaulding, 1995: 577-578). Moreover, the very long relations between Egyptians and Nubians from Dynastic times and in the Greco-Roman period could also lead observers to see that this was only the latest form of many varied understandings and relationships. One could conclude that the *baqt* was only the categorical name for the relations at a certain historical period. Perhaps it only formally conceptualized this ancient relationship during the medieval period and was thereby not really that new at all. From this hesitating historiographic account, and multiple and changeable interpretations there is no wonder that historians and anthropologists have not been consistent in the appraisal of this significance of this historical political accord.

**Preliminary Observations:** It is generally agreed that the term *baqt* is a corrupted form of *paktum* or *pakton* from the Ptolemaic Greeks and Romans who had been able to settle peace treaties with their southern Nubian neighbors in pre-Christian times (Shinnie 1954:6). To investigate this dimension one needs first to explore some of the past relationships between Egypt and Nubia. For example, the Predynastic and Archaic times the relationship appears to have been largely that of equals. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms the Egyptian relationship with Nubia was a military standoff with a clear demarcation of territory by a program of military Egyptian fortification. In the First and Second Intermediate periods, C-Group or other Nubians recovered major portions of Lower Nubia. Moreover, in the Second Intermediate Period Nubians of Kerma clearly had politi-

cal and military relations with the Hyksos in the common objective to restrict Egyptians to the Theban region and Upper Egypt. In their respective Golden Ages, (five centuries for the Egyptian New Kingdom and about a century for the Nubian Dynasty XXV) both Egypt and Nubia had the capacity to rule each other. Even when the five centuries of Egyptian manorial rule was established in Nubia/Kush a very common theme was Nubian revolts against forced tribute.

Moreover, we can report on clear military demarcation of the border regions by Egyptian fortresses and proclamations in the Old and Middle Kingdom, or Nubian reoccupation in between. While we cannot report on any peace treaties for these periods, we can find that the borders were sharply defined for military and commercial reasons. In Persian-Napatan times and in Ptolemaic-Meroitic times the control of Lower Nubia fluctuated periodically without any major Ptolemaic fortification program. Romans faced similar dilemmas in their relationships with Nubia. They had a major fortification at Qasr Ibrim and at Dush in the western desert. There were also brief attacks and counterattacks into Nubia perhaps as far as Napata. But their were also Nubian raids on Aswan and Philae, and finally a rather sustained peace treaty between Roman Egypt and Meroe negotiated on the Aegean Island of Samos in about 20 BCE. This peace treaty or pact favored Romans to the extent that they won regional peace, but it favored the Blemmyes and Nubians with a reasonable salaried tributary status. This evidence suggests a very long regional theme of ‘rivals on the Nile’ as well as a broad tendency to have the borders generally oscillate between the first and second cataracts with the ‘Golden Age’ exceptions for both being greater territorial extent. Even in the 19th century CE Nubian forces (under the Khalifa *Abdullahi* attacked Egypt as far as Toshka. Various times in the 20th and 21st centuries have found very positive to very negative relations between modern Egypt and Sudan. It is the position of this paper that the famed *baqt* drawn in medieval times was very much a part of this tradition or rivals, irrespective of who was controlling Egypt and Nubian resistance was a far more significant factor in the equation that usually understood from Egypto-centric interpretations.

**The Egyptian Link to Nubian Christianity** Early Egyptian adherents to Christianity remain in secret life during the brutal rule under such as Diocletian and perhaps a few Nubian Christians filtered into their own lands. The Christian population of Egypt is estimated to have reached as many as one million by the 4th century. After the religious vision of Roman Emperor Constantine, as a result of his military victory at Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, he accepted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The lib-
eral Edict of Milan (313 CE) underscored his tolerant views that enabled Christianity to spread more widely in Nubia and elsewhere such as the Donatist church of Numidia. Yet, the way ahead would not be easy. The Church of the Forty Martyrs in Wadi Natrun, Egypt commemorates the test of faith of Christians in 313 CE. The early Christian converts in Armenia were tortured if they would not renounce their new faith. However, the first Christian basilica in Rome was under construction from 313 to 322 CE.

Increased missionary activity from Egypt is recorded for 324 CE in Nubia. This represented a ‘pincer movement’ as this mission was synchronized with the Axumite King Ezana of Ethiopia entering and destroying the remnants of the ‘Noba’ at Meroe; and the ‘Red Noba’ further north. At the same period Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria ordained the Ethiopian church. Thus the collapse of Meroitic polytheism and the rise of state Christendom in Egypt and Ethiopia created a religious vacuum into which the missionary activities could begin to take place throughout the entire Nile and Blue Nile valleys. The X-Group or Ballana and Qustul period in Lower Nubia (or Tanqasi culture of Upper Nubia) was the first to fill this void with a pre-Christian syncretic blend of Egyptian, Kushitic, Meroitic, Greco-Roman, and Nubian beliefs, practices and architecture from about 350 to 550 CE. The presence of this early Christian influence is certainly illustrated in X-Group grave goods including crosses and other icons. This transitional period also featured intense rivalries and military attacks against these settled people in Lower Nubia by the semi-nomadic Blemmyes who were long accustomed to such a role. Ironically the Egyptian Christians were rapidly closing on the end of their relatively brief three centuries of experience in state power in Egypt, while Nubian Christians were only starting to launch almost a millennium of Christianity in parts of Nubia.

The Christian Missionary Period in Nubia. Thus the seeds of the Christian kingdoms of Nubia were germinated in Egypt but were transplanted to Nubia between 350-550 CE with the formation of the kingdoms of Nobatia, Mukkura (Muqcura, Mukuria), and Alwa. At its height Nubian Christianity would connect the Alexandrian church with its Nubian affiliates and finally deep into the heartland of Ethiopia where it still remains, along with the ancient Jewish group, known as Bet Israel or the Falasha. With the Roman Empire in active retreat by 524 CE, a political and religious alliance was established between Copts in Egypt and the Axumites in Ethiopia. Blemmye and Nobatian mercenaries also saw action in Yemen in support of Axumite ambitions there. When Emperor Justinian (527-565 CE) and Empress Theodora came to rule Byzantium, this movement gained even greater force, while taking an odd turn in the royal family. The historian of Nubian Christianity as written by Giovanni Vantini notes that Justinian, as the Emperor, naturally favored the Chalcedonian (Melkite) perspective about this simmering religious debate. Remarkably, his independent-minded Egyptian-born wife Theodora supported the anti-Chalcedonian Monophysite view that was still widespread in Egypt. Jacob Baradai actively proselytized this view in about 530 CE. This earned the anti-Chalcedonians the additional reference as ‘Jacobites’. How their formal marriage held together amidst such deeply held, but divided, religious beliefs one may only speculate. Indeed, one may presume that their marriage was conceived as still another way to recover the lost unity of contemporary Christendom. The struggle continued when the Monophysite Patriarch of Alexandria, Theodosius was forced out of his church and was banished to Thrace for his anti-Chalcedonian position. Since Theodora had supported Theodosius, his death in exile only embittered the ‘marital’ and political relations between Byzantium and Alexandria. After Theodosius died the Justin/Theodora divisions entered new forms. Egyptians consistently rejected the three successive Melkite appointments as patriarch of Alexandria. Not surprisingly the Melkites and Jacobites also sent out rival missionaries to Egypt and Nubia to win recruits for their respective positions. During Justinian’s reign several pivotal events are recorded relative to Nubia. First, he officially closed and suppressed the Isis cult at Philae. It is believed that much of the defacement of this Ptolemaic temple took place it this time.

Secondly, in his alliance with King Silko of Nobatia, the Blemmyes were subjugated. The famed inscription of King Silko written in poor Greek at the Roman temple built by Augustus at Kalabsha records this moment. Here Silko declares his victory was a result of a singular god, thus establishing an official start of Nubian Christianity at about 536 CE. In 542 Silko was approached by an official delegation of Papal authority, but he indicated that he was quite content with the Copts who were already among the Nobatae and he wanted no further intervention from Egypt. During the period of 543-569 CE the first Monophysite Christian kingdoms were formally organized in Nubia, following a flood of Coptic migration that was escaping the troubles in Egypt. The leader of this missionary effort was Julian, a priest deeply loyal to Patriarch Theodosius and who had been with him on his exile. In the memory of Theodosius, Julian was committed to gaining new converts among the ‘Barbari’ Nubians. This religious campaign was secretly backed by Theodora and secretly blocked by Justinian who wished to win the new followers to the Chalcedonian position. If the pro-Jacobite accounts are to be trusted, it appears that Theodora was
the temporary victor as Julian reached the region of Nobatia first. In 543 CE Julian established the town of Faras, at the second cataract, as the capital of Nobatia. It is not unlikely that the declaration of King Silko prevented any effective local opposition. Islam also reached the plain just north of Dongola but they failed to spread quickly southward to Lower Nubia.

By 641 CE the forces of Amr ibn al-As reached the plain just north of Dongola but they failed to capture this Christian capital of Mukkura. Frustrated by this barrier, these earliest Egyptian Muslims tried again in 646 AD to penetrate Nubia, but without further success. At last, in 652 AD a famous baqt (treaty) was established between Nubia and Egypt under ‘Abdallah ibn Sa’ad ibn Abi Sahr. However Aswan and parts of Upper Egypt are periodically in Nubian hands given the effective and strong use of Nubian archers (Welsby, 2002:68). The annual exchange at Qasr near Philae suggests that Nubians controlled south of this point. Apparently the baqt then served as a mutual non-aggression pact between respective elites.

The Melkite patriarch left Egypt at this time. In the areas of Lower Nubia under Muslim control the Nubian populations were expected to pay an annual tribute of 360 slaves and livestock and to promise no aggression against Egypt. Now Muslim Egypt would provide 1,300 kanyr of wine to Nubia in return. Although Christian Nubians were pressurized to accept this tributary status; there were active conflicts between Mukkura and its northern neighbor of Nobatia. Apparently, this détente seemed to be a satisfactory outcome and, amazingly, some of the principles of this baqt were to last, more or less, for some six centuries.

**Eighth Century Relations**

Under the Umayyad dynasty in Egypt (661-750 CE) a renewal of a similar baqt in 720 CE between the Egyptians and the Blemmyes did not fare nearly as well. Under the fear of its Northern Muslim neighbors, and strife between each other, the two Nubian Christian kingdoms of Nobatia and Mukkura were finally merged to form the kingdom of Dongola under King Merkurius (697-707 CE). It may have been at about this time that the existence of a combination of Greek, Arabic and Coptic languages signaled the final end of Meroitic writing, to be succeeded by Old Nubian, especially for religious purposes.

From 723-748 there was a period of cross border raids and counter raids by Egyptians and Nubians suggest that the baqt was not functioning. (Welsby, 2002:73). The Egyptian efforts to project their power did not always fall in their favor at this time. In about 745 CE, Cyriacus, King of Dongola countered the Umayyads, then under Khalifa Marwan, by besieging his capital at Fustat (Old Cairo) in protest of the Muslim imprisonment of the Coptic Pope. Egyptian governor ‘Abd al-Malek ibn Musa subsequently released the patriarch (Shinnie 1954:8). In 758 the ruler complained of no baqt payments from the Dongola king and Blemmye or Beja attack Upper Egypt (Welsby, 2002:71). The period between 750-836 CE can be characterized as one of weak enforcement of the baqt with Nubian political and military offensives against remotely controlled Egypt.

Evidently there was no resolution since the period from 762-770 was one of sustained counter attacks against Dongola (Welsby, 2002:73). Yet, at some
Ninth Century Relations

In 819-822 CE, the Christian king of Dongola (George I, 816-920?) with his Bishop Yoannes III, and the Beja all refused to pay baqt tributes to the Abbasids. Nubians and Beja also mounted joint attacks on Upper Egypt. At his death, Yoannes was entombed at the Faras cathedral. Then from 822-836 CE there was continual warfare between Nubia and Egypt (Shinnie, 1954:8). Yet by 832 Muslims were reported to live in Nubia (Welsby, 2002:107). In 835 George I (816-920) was crowned King of Dongola. The baqt had not been observed for the previous 14 years (Welsby, 2002:73). Indeed the Nubians then claimed that the baqt should only be observed every three years and not annually. The ambiguity of the situation was also seen in an 835-836 report that spoke of Nubians reported living in Egypt (Welsby, 2002:108). In fact, thousands of Nubians later served in the Tulunid army of ‘Amir Ahmed ibn Tulun (868-884) that broke away from the Abbasids. Perhaps this military service was understood as a tax. No doubt some Nubians were converted to Islam at this time and earlier, but still the two religious states co-existed separately.

The relatively relaxed relations at this moment also allowed for King George I of Mukkura (Dongola) to travel to Cairo and Baghdad in 836 following his coronation in the previous year. Yet 854-855 Beja renewed raids against Upper Egypt. Probably many other raids of unknown dates at this time (Welsby, 2002: 74). In this context, in 856 CE a new treaty was written between Egyptians and Beja after previous ones had failed (Shinnie 1954:9). The contradictory complexity of the period is also seen in that from 861-941 CE Muslims were also living in eastern Sudan (Welsby, 2002:107).

Tenth Century Relations

During the time of the Alexandrian Patriarch Gabriel I (909-920 CE) the famed ‘Door of Symbols’ in the Virgin’s Church in Wadi Natrun was constructed in 914 CE with ebony and ivory from Nubia. From 910-915 Abu Mansur from Egypt conducted raids against Nubia presumably to restore the baqt. As early as 913 CE Muslims were living in Nubia (Welsby, 2002:107).

Apparently this was in comparative harmony. When in 920 CE, the Christian King of Dongola, King Zakaria III began his reign in peace. Was it anxiety about the Arab presence that caused Nubians to raids into the Egyptian Oases, and Aswan in 951, 956, and as far as Akhmim and Edfu in Upper Egypt 962 CE? (Welsby, 2002: 75; Shinnie 1954:9)

The ancient pattern of rivals on the Nile resumed in 969 CE when the Shi’ite Fatimids (969-1171) came to power in Egypt and the Arab adventurer al-‘Umari initiated attacks on Nubia. Ironically, this may have been with some Nubian soldiers, since up to 50,000 Nubians also served in Fatimid army. Coming to power at this same time, in 969 CE, King George II of Dongola is reported to have counter attacked Egypt taking advantage of the situation while the Fatimid dynasty came to replace the Tulunids. Muslims were again reported to be living in Nubia in 978 CE (Welsby, 2002:107). Again, it seems that some of the basic provisions of the baqt were more overlooked than observed.

Reports written between 975-996 CE by the Egyptian official Ibn Selim al-Aswani noted that Alwa was a Christian kingdom of splendid buildings, and gold endowed churches. Its economy was built from an extensive fertile land based on agriculture and livestock. The bishop of Alwa was ordained from Alexandria and their books were in Old Nubian. Yet Ibn Selim al-Aswani also reported that there were also some Muslims living in Soba, the capital city of Alwa (Welsby, 2002:106). Certainly Faras in 999 CE was equally splendid in church architecture as we see in the portrait of Bishop Petros.

Eleventh Century Relations

By the mid eleventh century Muslims continued to be secure in Egypt, but sometimes the titled official in Upper Egypt ruled semi-autonomously from Aswan. Such was the case during the reign (1046-1077) of the Kanz ad-Dawla (Welsby, 2002:72). One Kanz ad-Dawla named Nasir raided Nubia in 1066, but instead his forces were routed and plundered by Nubians (Welsby, 2002:75). During this period some 50,000 Nubians serve in Fatimid army and in1061-1063 Muslims reported living in Nubia (Welsby, 2002:106). At least in demographic terms the border was quite permeable, as apparently Dongola was as independent from Aswan as Aswan was from Cairo. This evidence raises the question of the baqt being effectively suspended, or being bilaterally renegotiated?

Twelfth Century Relations

A contemporary footnote to this history appears with the marble tray now found in the Church with a Cave at
Wadi Natrun. This stone was presumably a gift brought by Nubian monks under the reign of King George IV of Nubia (1106-1158 CE) who had been enthroned in 1130 CE. A small Christian kingdom of Dotawo (or Daw) is also reported at this period in the 1140s. In 1171 CE the Ayyubid Dynasty (1171-1250 AD) led by Sultan Saladin replaced the Fatimids. One of his first tasks was to force Nubians to withdraw to Upper Egypt and Lower Nubia then under Christian king George IV. Presumably the Nubians had threatened Lower Egypt during the inter-regnum period between Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt. Playing upon the hope of a Christian alliance, the European Crusaders sought a tactical alliance with Nubian Christians in Upper Egypt in 1163 CE. By 1172 CE Nubian forces attack Aswan (Welsby, 2002: 75). This Nubian-Crusader alliance against Ayyubids actually resulted in clashes in Cairo and Delta towns in 1172, but with subsequent counter-attacks by Shams ad-Dawla Turanshah in Nubia. In the following year, 1173 CE Turanshah attacked Saint Simeon’s monastery in Aswan. Its Coptic bishop and priests were sold in the slave market. He then went on to attack and plundering of Nubians at Qasr Ibrim (Welsby, 2002:75). Pursuing this offensive in 1174-1175 Turanshah raided as far into Nubia as Makkura (Welsby, 2002: 76). In fear, this was also a period of Egyptian Coptic flight to Nubia to escape this turmoil, recalling that Jerusalem had fallen to Saladin during the contemporary crusades.

Thirteenth Century Relations

In 1204 various Nubian and Crusader leaders met in Constantinople, but finally failed in their plans to topple the Ayyubids and in 1235 the last recorded priest was sent from Alexandria to Nubia. Christian Nubia and Islamic Egypt had fought to a standoff with the Fatimids and Ayyubids, but a different fate was in store for them during Mamluke rule. Once the Bahri Mamlukes (1250-1382) replaced the Ayyubids, especially during the reign of Sultan Al-Qahir Baybars (1260-1277) who attacked Nubia and forced them to pay baqt tribute in 1264. Documents from 1268 CE show such tribute again reluctantly paid by Dongola King Dawud. King Dawud II (?) showed his opposition with raids organized against the Mamlukes in Aswan in 1275 CE thus beginning the 1275-1365 episode of periodic warfare between Mamlukes and Nubians. Mamluke Egyptians sacked Dongola and forced broad conversion to Islam in 1276 with King Dawud being captured. Not surprisingly, resistance continued, so in 1289-1290 CE the Mamlukes waged still another major attack upon Dongola. This attack represented the defeat of the last Christian king in Nubia and the first Muslim king ‘Abdullah Barshambu was installed on the throne in Dongola. He promptly re-established the baqt (Welsby, 2002, 246). The first mosque is built at Dongola, thus this could be said to be the ‘official’ beginning of state Islam in Nubia in which the baqt can be enforced. On the other hand if the baqt should be understood to be voluntary and mutual, this date could be said to be the extinction of this endlessly negotiated relationship.

The explicitly coercive nature of the new application of the baqt was seen in1292 when the Mamluke puppet king Shamamun sent baqt tribute of 200 slaves (Spaulding, 1995:592). As in previous and subsequent centuries, Egyptian interest in Sudan was heavily focused on slaves.

Fourteenth Century Relations

The Nubian king Kudanbes (or Kerenbes?) may have first come to power in 1309. But in a shift in power seen in 1312-1313 puppet king sent 1,000 slaves to Egypt (Spaulding, 1995:592), while generally the first decades of the 14th century saw continued skirmishes. The tide was turning against the Christians and in 1317 CE the first mosque was built at Dongola in a former church when Seif ad-Din, the contemporary Kanz ad-Dawla inscribed a still extant tributary stone at the Dongola Church (Welsby, 2002:247). ‘Abdullah Barshambu the contemporary Kanz ad-Dawla was installed as its first Muslim King to replace Kudanbes, who had returned to serve as the last puppet King of Dongola in 1323 (Welsby, 2002, 243).

Baqt payments to the Mamlukes were re-established under Al-’Amir Abu ’Abdallah in 1331. With these events, the formal presence of state Christianity in Nubia was at an end, although Christian symbols and some communities of believers lingered on in Nubia. There is some record in the mid 14th century of the King intervening on behalf of Pope Mark IV who had been jailed by Mamluke king Saleh II. Even as late as 1372 the Alexandrian patriarch officially consecrated the bishop of Faras. Thus the Coptic minority in Egypt still had formal religious ties to Nubia. Even when the Circassian (Burji) Mamluke Dynasty (1382-1517) took over in Egypt the religious ties to Nubia were maintained although much tattered.

A closer look at the provisions of baqt accord

Although there is no surviving original text of the baqt, early Arabic writers began to report about the baqt. Among the Arab scholars are al-Maqrisi and al-Mas’udi (reported by Spaulding, 1995; Vantini, 1975: 132-133; Welsby, 2002: 70-71). ‘Abd al-Hassan ibn Hussein ibn ‘Ali al-Mas’udi was a famed scholar, traveler, and geographer who was born at the end of the 9th century in Abasside Baghdad of a family from the Hedjaz. The renowned khulafa of Baghdad such as Mansur (754-775) and the Baet al-Hikma of Ma’mun (813-833) had already reached celebrated status in scholar-
ship and the sciences. Nonetheless the original baqt document was already lost and the Muslim side of the equation was not inclined to look objectively at the Christian side and there the documents, if there were any in the first place, had also been lost.

As has been reconstructed from the Egyptian side, it was expected that the Nubian king should export 360-365 slaves to the (Muslim) Egyptian treasury. Second, a special allotment of 40 slaves was allocated for the Egyptian emir’s personal use. Third, another allotment of 20 slaves was directed to the Aswan-based, Egyptian overseer of the baqt. Fourth, a group of five slaves was accorded to the Aswan-based Egyptian judge who also regulated the observance of the baqt. Finally, each of the twelve witnesses of the Aswan transaction received a slave for their service. With this all considered, a group of from 437 to 442 exported slaves was expected any time the provisions of the baqt were being observed. Clearly this was a central feature of Muslim Egyptian expectations. In addition to the basic slave exports, some number of exotic goods such as animal hides; wild animal, and likely, ivory and ostrich feathers and eggs were also exchanged but not expressly noted in the inherited record. The ethnicity of these slaves is not noted but they were presumably taken from slave raids in the eastern and southern Sudan such as in the Ethiopian borderlands or in the Nuba Mountains. But without military occupation of Nubia the Egyptians had little capacity to enforce these provisions. Moreover in Abbasid times (750-1258 CE) Egypt was technically subordinate to Baghdad as it had been subordinate to Damascus in the earlier Umayyad times (661-750). Even when Egypt was ruled more directly from medieval Cairo in Fatimid times (969-1171 CE) internal security disorders sometimes resulted in weakness at the borders or heavy recruitment of Nubian soldiers in their armies. Certainly that was not consistent with the provision in the baqt that limited mutual relocation to the others’ lands.

On the side of the Nubian elite, their reciprocal expectation was in foodstuff and cloth. The food goods were itemized as 1000 ardeb of wheat (about 200,000 liters), 300 ardeb (about 60,000 liters) of wheat to those designated by the king of Christian Mukkura), and another 1000 ardeb of barley. The king also received 1,000 jugs (presumably of wine or beer), while his court members received an additional 300 jugs. Loving horses, the Nubian king also received two of the highest quality horses. All of the other regularly designated items were cloth. There were 4 pieces of qabati cloth for the king, 3 pieces of qabaati cloth for his representatives, along with 8 pieces of buqтурiya cloth, 5 pieces of mu’tama cloth, a mantle of velvet or wool mukhala cloth, 10 pieces of Abu Buqtor cloth, and 10 pieces of Ahasi cloth.

The scale and nature of this trade was not only preceded by in a variety of formal and informal relations between Egypt and Nubia, but it is very much parallel to the later Atlantic slave trade in West Africa. In both cases, the slave consuming regions exported food, cloth, spirits and manufactured items for slaves while the slave exporting regions used their exports for pre-capitalist state development and for maintenance of respective kings and sultans and their retinues. Viewed from the point of view of the respective elites the baqt could well have been seen in terms of balanced reciprocity and elite gift giving. When coercion was applied it was more than likely be resisted. In addition, while the items clearly were different, the overall contemporary value of the imports and exports on either side was fairly well balanced in economic terms, if not in human terms. Slavery was an established part of global medieval societies.

Moreover in the early period where the baqt was supposed to function 641-652 it was clearly not observed effectively and only when Nobatia and Mukkura were merged in 697-707 CE did Nubia speak in one voice. Southern Nubia or the kingdom of Alwa at Soba apparently does not ever figure in the understanding or enforcement of then baqt. Thus the first 50 years of the baqt were shaky at best and internal stability between the two lands only weakened the accords however understood.

Nubian Christianity in the Fifteenth Century.
The Synod of Florence was held 1438-39 to try to resolve the schismatic differences between Rome, Alexandria and Ethiopia. It failed, as did the earlier and later attempts. Such divisions in eastern Christendom were very significant in the fall of the Holy Roman Empire of the East to Islam in 1453. It became a matter of time before Muslims would advance further in Nubia, but a passing reference to (King) Joel of Dotawo in 1464 hints that there were still some Christians.

End of Nubian Christianity: The Sixteenth Century
At last, the southernmost Nubian Christian kingdom of Alwa collapsed in 1504 AD during Burji Mamluke rule in Egypt to the north. However Alwa was brought to an end by the rise of the Islamic Funj Sultanes further south at Sennar. Although the Christian kingdoms had been defeated, isolated Christian communities in Nubia were still reported as appealing for religious support from Christian Ethiopia as late as 1520. Such was the case during the visit to Ethiopia of the Portuguese missionary Francisco Alvares. Another visitor, in 1522, was the Jewish traveler, David Reuben, who visited both Soba and Sennar and later met with the Pope and
Spanish king with a plan to resist the Ottomans who had only come to power in Egypt a few years before. For much of the following two centuries, Christians in Ethiopia, backed by the Portuguese sought to avoid Arab control of the Eastern Mediterranean, managed to maintain a rather stable frontier between Funj and Ethiopia. A variety of religious Christian missions and contacts took place during the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1541 there was a mission to neighboring Ethiopia. In 1624 Bishop Christdoulous, an ‘Ethiopian’ monk at the Monastery of the Forty Martyrs died in Egypt, where he was buried. In 1647 a visit to Sennar was undertaken by the Portuguese priests, Giovanni d’Aguila and Antonio da Pescopagano; and in the 1699-1711 period which saw three papal missions to Ethiopia all of which passed through Dongola and Sennar on the way to Ethiopia.

Even after Islam was instituted as the state religion in Nubia there is an interesting case of Christian survival at Dotawo (‘below Do’) that continued as a small Christian principality located in Lower Nubia near the second cataract. It is known from textual references on Old Nubian. Its domain ranged from Qasr Ibrim to Jebel Adda or possibly further south into the Butn al-Hajr. According to William Adams (1977), some eight minor kings, George, Basil, Paul, Simon, David, Siti, Elteit, and Joel are known from the small Christian kingdom of Dotawo from the mid 12th century until its record fades in the 15th century. Based on linguistic and geographical evidence it is probable that Dotawo may be the same as Jebel Adda. Evidently they were often tributary to the king of Mukkura at Dongola. The closing chapter for Christian Dotawo is with the proclamation of the Muslim leader Kanz al-Dawla as king in 1323. His Beni Kanz followers were probably subdued in 1365 as Egyptian Muslims swept into the region and the ruling king of Dongola (Mukkura) took up residence at Dotawo. After the arrival of Islam in the early 14th century it was much weakened but it survived along with that of Alwa until about the late 15th century. Trapped between expanding Islam in Egypt and declining Christianity in Nubia probably explains the confusion about the extent and allegiance of Dotawo. Possibly Dotawo was a refuge for Christians fleeing from Islamic excesses in Egypt. This may be the case for Atiri Island.

Observations
The *baqt* between Muslim and Christians on the medieval Nile was just another common historical effort to adjudicate the regional rivalry that had existed for millennia and still exists to the present in current tensions between Cairo and Khartoum and Sudanese efforts to foment instability in Egypt. This is very much an established Nubian practice to put competitive pressure on Egypt especially in Lower Nubia as well as Nubian interest in alliances with Egyptian enemies, such as the Hyksos (in the Second Intermediate Period) and the Crusaders (in medieval times). Muslim Egyptians certainly sought to expand into Nubia from the 7th century onward. But effective Nubian resistance, alliance building with Crusaders, non-payments of the *baqt*, raids into Egypt, early unification of Nobatia and Mukkura, and isolation of Alwa made it impossible for centuries
and slow even when it took place. Even when Muslims reached Nubia it was mostly due to the complex kinship, language and cultural relations between Muslim Kenzi Nubians and the Kanz ad-Dawla with Christian Danagla Nubians that lubricated this process most importantly. Even when Islam finally reached Dongola in 1317 with the Christian church being transformed into a mosque this was almost 700 years after Islam entered Egypt.

While the baqt was supposedly in effect, the data presented above show that it was often ignored, violently abrogated, or simply unenforceable. Moreover it was still another two centuries before the last Christian kingdom fell as Soba in 1504. Again one might argue about when the baqt came to an end. Some of the new Muslim rulers of Nubia enforced tribute and taxes in the name of the baqt when one might argue that the use of force was in itself a violation of the understanding of mutual reciprocity of earlier times of the baqt. Even then it was not Egyptian Muslims who took over, but it was the start of Sudanese Islam in the form of the Funj and Fur Sultanates. And even then there were some small surviving Christian enclaves such as Dottawo lingering on in Lower Nubia. Thus there are many serious questions and reservations.

**Concluding Points**

In principle the long lasting baqt shows that common resolve and common interests can make a generally workable and lasting peace. On the other hand the length of the observance of the baqt is somewhat mythological since it was neither that unique and it was often violated or ignored. The presentation of its ‘durability’ periodically served the interest of the two, or more, elites of the two nations involved. Was it supposed to last this long? Even the starting and ending dates could be debated as well as very long periods when it was clearly not in effect because of suspended exchange or military or political upheavals.

The asymmetry of the official protocol of the baqt was ‘adjusted’ by Nubians by failing to pay the tribute and periodically attacking Egypt, especially in inter-regnum periods of relative weakness in Egypt. It periodically lapsed and was renewed as could be negotiated or enforced, or ignored by the separate parties at times of their relative strength or weakness. Despite the provisions that Nubians should not reside in Egypt and that Egyptians should not reside in Nubia this was clearly overlooked for much of the time. Indeed the export of slaves from Nubia meant that the provisions of the baqt could not help but be violated.

There are multiple and varied definitional and perceptual differences in the understanding of the baqt. Were the exchanges supposed to be annual or every three years? If this was negotiated by mutual agreement then there could be little provision for enforcement. And if by mutual agreement, then was this mainly an agreement to control the economic terms of the Nile valley slave trade? A case can be made (Welsby, 2002:209) that the baqt was, reality, heavily centered on the ancient and subsequent Nile Valley and Saharan slave trade. In this respect it is very similar to the West African trade in the 16th or 17th centuries in terms of the scale, organization, and the nature of the goods exchanged for slaves. Did the delayed or unilateral record in the Arabic sources truly reflect the original understanding? Was there a corresponding record kept in Old Nubian or Coptic that reflects the same or different understanding of the baqt?

In short, the process of the arrival of Islam into Nubia was longer, more complex, more contentious, more negotiated, and more Nubian than one normally imagines if judging from the Egyptocentric perspective that sees Nubia only as a pale reflection of greater Egypt. Rivalry and cooperation on the Nile was there before, was there then, and apparently is here to stay.

**MAIN SOURCES:**


Conflict in Dar Fur: a View from the Old Sudan

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The following is adapted from remarks presented at a panel entitled “The Crisis in Dar Fur” at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ on 16 February 2006. The other panelists were Jemera Rone (Human Rights Watch), Asma ‘Abd al-Halim (University of Toledo) and Manus Midlarsky (Rutgers University).

Since the perspective I bring to our discussion is that of an historian, I would like to begin by expressing the viewpoint that recent unfortunate events in Dar Fur are not heavily determined by deep historical forces. Rather, I see them primarily as the result of decisions made in quite recent years by individuals presently alive. My worthy colleagues will be explaining this to you in considerable detail. My comments will therefore be general and brief, and confined to a few issues of historical context that may perhaps not be obvious at first glance. I hope to speak in turn about the precolonial and colonial periods.

1. Precolonial Perspectives

Dar Fur has long been an agricultural region, in most of which both crop cultivation and animal husbandry are possible—albeit sometimes under austere conditions. The pastoral vocation is always preferred, because it produces more and better food for less effort. To speak abstractly, in the days before banks the surplus wealth of Dar Fur tended to accumulate in the form of live-stock. To speak concretely, when a prosperous southern Fur-speaking farmer of about 1970 accumulated a dozen head of cattle, he had passed the point of diminishing returns as a farmer, and therefore joined a neighboring pastoral group. He had thus become a Baqara Arab. It follows that from the perspective of deep history, the people of Dar Fur comprise one human community.

Dar Fur, like many other places around the world, at one point in its history experienced the rise to dominance of a state form of government. In Dar Fur, as in neighboring kingdoms to the east and west, a ruling elite claimed to own the land, and on this basis extracted payments in kind and in labor services from the communities of subjects. The subject communities spoke a variety of languages, most members of the Nilo-Saharan family. The state came to Dar Fur at the close of the period Europeans call the Middle Ages, and the new rulers of that era sought justification for their usurpation of ancient lineage society prerogatives by appealing to the traditions and institutions of Islam, influential in the contemporary Mediterranean lands to the north. Among these cultural imports was the Arabic language, which entered Dar Fur as a prestigious and exotic luxury imported by the kings, to be admired and acquired by the Beautiful People of the fashionable elite. A common administrative tongue was also very useful to the lords of an otherwise-polyglot imperial realm; in time much of the governmental structure became bilingual in Arabic, and in due course the Arabophone elite expanded to include some of the more prosperous pastoral communities of subjects. Within the Islamic but polyethnic imperial structure of Dar Fur, several ethnically different elites seized power in turn. An early Daju-speaking regime gave way to a dynasty of Tunjur (whose descendants today speak only Arabic), and they in turn to the Fur-speaking Keira line of kings that dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The defining characteristic of government in a state is its assertion of a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Dar Fur was no exception: I like to cite the example of a Keira king, one of whose royal charters bestowing land as alms upon an immigrant holy man, contains this threat to anyone so foolhardy as to harass in any way the beneficiary of royal largess: “He who splashes him with cold water, I will splash him with warm blood!” Over the broad course of Dar Fur history there were always two key points of inherent social tension where the application of force would be required. Firstly, it was always and eternally the primary task of the government to cut the large, rich and powerful pastoral lineages of subjects down to size politically and militarily, and to ensure the eternal presence of an abundance of humble crop cultivators, by appropriating a sufficient quantity of livestock. In addition to satisfying the tastes of a preferentially meat-eating non-productive elite, appropriated stock was also redistributed as a reward to faithful lesser pastoral or would-be pastoral communities. Secondly, therefore, the state needed to build a standing professional force sufficient to contain the pastoralists. This force was comprised of slaves, the acquisition of which through systematic raids over many generations created a problematic relationship between the central government and its southern slave-suppliers, termed “Fertit.”

The Tunjur regime, though comparatively brief, nevertheless left an important historical legacy. It united both Dar Fur and its neighbors to the west, the communities in eastern Chad subsequently to become the independent kingdom of Wadai. For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Keira dynasty struggled to regain control over this western Tunjur irredenta, while the newly independent rulers of Wadai
resisted. At mid-eighteenth century, however, a détente between the two Tunjur heirs allowed a dramatic expansion by both. Wadai swept west to the shores of Lake Chad, while Dar Fur struck eastward across Kordofan as far as the Nile. In a sense, by the early nineteenth century a gigantic restored “Tunjuriyya” now extended from Nigeria to Aba Island and Dongola. The point is, that Dar Fur and Wadai have a very long history of intimate relationship, while Dar Fur and the Nile valley do not. Further, the rise of the Sanusi brotherhood during the nineteenth century added Libya as an important third partner in regional politics, and in a strategic commerce in what documents from Dar Fur called the “implements of state,” arms and slaves.

I would like to take you now to Kordofan, the area between the Dar Fur heartland and the Nile conquered by the Keira during the eighteenth century. The fairly abundant available literature of historical sources from that time and place allows us to see in late pre-colonial Kordofan what an old Sudanese government will do under conditions of stress and political change. Here, if anywhere, we may begin to find some themes that resonate today. At the moment of the Dar Fur conquest Kordofan was inhabited by crop-raising and pastoral communities hitherto subject to the kingdom of Sinnar, based in the Nile valley. The new Fur regime in Kordofan attacked anyone perceived as hostile; a number of subject communities (e.g. Kaja, Katul) were obliterated through massacre and enslavement. The crop-raising communities of Kordofan were then broken up, sometimes by redrawing the boundaries of the fiefdoms within which the communities had taken shape, and often by the importation of intrusive pioneer settlers from Dar Fur proper and sometimes from points even farther west. In most of these newly created composite communities of subjects Arabic came to replace the older languages of natives and settlers alike. Most of the old Nubian languages of Kordofan were soon extinguished, and the ethnically reorganized subject communities adopted new identities as Arabs.

Dar Fur policy toward the pastoralists of newly-conquered Kordofan merits some special consideration. The key point to bear in mind is, that old Sudanese governments were comparatively weak. During the process of conquest a new government could strengthen its hand by allowing newly-adopted pastoral client groups free rein and unlimited aggrandizement. Once the conquest was complete and power consolidated, of course, the regime would revert to the normal peacetime practice of cutting the nomads down to size by confiscatory taxation. Before the Fur conquest, Sinnar had governed the pastoralists of Kordofan via a group called the Fazara. By the eighteenth century, however, after long peaceful generations of systematic taxation, this co-opted group had been de-fanged, and functioned at only a fraction of the region’s pastoral potential. The first eighteenth-century Fur invaders of Kordofan were an armed dynastic faction called the Musabba’at. To win allies against the Fazara of Sinnar, they extended patronage to a lesser group called the Beni Jerrar, who grew rapidly and soon swept aside all rivals. The second and definitive wave of Fur conquest, in turn, destroyed the power of the Beni Jerrar by the formation of a new elite of pastoral clients, the Kababish. The point, in case it drowned in the details, is that weak governments often find it useful in times of
stress and transition to allow the rise of new and opportunistic pastoral clients.

2. Colonial Perspectives

Through the eyes of a Dar Fur patriot, the colonial age began with the loss of Kordofan to the Turks of Egypt in 1821 and continues to the present day. The chronicle of events from this age is comparatively familiar, and I imagine that my colleagues on the panel will be offering some specifics in due course. My contribution will be simply to point toward the marginalization of Dar Fur within a new Sudanese polity centered in the Nile valley. The colonial age brought to Dar Fur a new private commerce that overthrew traditional royal prerogatives over the administration of exchange. The agents of the new commerce were largely men from the Nile valley, though the presence of some Libyans and westerners may be mentioned. During the nineteenth century towns full of merchants took shape, men who extracted and exported all manner of marketable products and established a wide range of dependencies upon imported consumer goods, best exemplified by cloth and sugar. New elites based in the towns began to build networks of control over rural society, conspicuously through debt, but this process did not advance as far in Dar Fur as in many other parts of colonial Africa. The cultural values of immigrant townsmen began to challenge aspects of traditional culture, leading, for example, to the spread of female genital cutting among communities where the practice had been hitherto unknown. Conspicuously, the urban-based immigrant ethos was strong enough to draw Dar Fur into the Mahdist movement of the late nineteenth century, though the experience also revealed the existence of significant tradition-based resistance to absorption into the affairs of the Nile valley.

Perhaps the most significant single export from Dar Fur has always been labor; the twentieth century saw a transition from the permanent export of enslaved individuals to the more-or-less permanent expatriation of wage workers. An early generation flocked to plantations in the Nile valley, while in later years emigrants also sought out more remote places of employment, including Libya, and urban destinations became increasingly important. The deprived homeland, meanwhile, experienced a significant de-skilling and feminization of agriculture in many quarters, though here again the process did not go as far as in some other colonial situations. At Sudanese political independence, it became theoretically possible for the new nation to reset priorities for the future of Dar Fur and other marginalized communities of the colonial periphery. That did not happen.

Today, an extractive, culturally dominant urban elite of Nile valley origin has retained power over an increasingly impoverished and restive rural community. Sometimes it has used time-honored Sudanese techniques such as the creation of new client pastoral militias, the systematic disruption and resettlement of farming communities accompanied by the rewriting of older ethnicities in favor of Arabic to produce cultural when not also physical genocide. Sometimes the elite has availed itself of other sets of policies specific to our times, concerning which I believe my colleagues will speak. In my view, the results are not attractive.

Recommended video

All About Darfur

From California Newsreel

http://www.newsreel.org/

VHS only
82 minutes, 2005, Sudan and United Kingdom
Producer/Director: Taghreed Elsanhouri in Arabic and English with English subtitles

From the California Newsreel website: Director Taghreed Elsanhouri says that she made this film “out of a passionate belief that I was uniquely qualified to tell a story of race because as a northerner in Sudan I know what it is to belong to a dominant group and as a black woman in Britain living with racism I know what it must be like to live marginalized as a minority in Sudan. It is this double consciousness that informs my story.” She returns to Sudan, having emigrated to Britain as a child, to see how the seemingly racially harmonious country of her memories could have become the scene of not one but two of the worst instances of ethnic cleansing in recent African history. Up until now the perilous situation in Sudan has been seen only from outside the country. All About Darfur offers an opportunity to hear it explained by eloquent, diverse even contradictory voices from within Sudan. The director talks to ordinary Sudanese in outdoor tea shops, markets, refugee camps and living rooms about how deeply rooted prejudices could suddenly burst into a wild fire of ethnic violence. She asks how only two months after peace accords were signed ending a twenty year long civil war between the Christian and animist South and an aggressive Islamic regime in the North, war broke out between the ethnic groups in the West, or Darfur, and the government in Khartoum.
This is an historic event for the SSA and Sudan. This is our 25th annual meeting in the state of Rhode Island where we were, and still are, officially incorporated, AND this is the 50th anniversary of the independence of Sudan. Consequently our “25/50” theme is to have REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORY OF SUDANIST SCHOLARSHIP and on the achievements and failures in the half century of Sudanese post-colonial history. Panels and papers on these themes are most welcomed and encouraged but, as usual, panels and papers on other aspects of Sudan studies in ancient and modern times and across disciplines are most welcome.

The conference will include a Round Table on Current Issues, Banquet and Luncheon Speakers as well as panels on selected topics. There will also be cultural performances, art and book exhibitions.

This Conference Call for Papers is for abstracts of panels and papers. These may be submitted at any time up to: Friday 26 May 2006. After this date proposals may be rejected depending upon our space requirements. Acceptance and our Preliminary Program will be posted in early July if not before.

Pre-Conference Registration Rates:
- SSA Member Rates $30.00
- Non-Member Rates $40.00

Conference, On-Site Registration Rates:
- SSA Members $40.00
- Non-members $50.00
- Single day rates, $20.00 per day

Banquet Cost $40.00; Luncheon cost $30.00 only these with paid tickets allowed admission, but all conference attendees are welcome to attend the post-meal presentations. All checks should be made payable to the Sudan Studies Association. We are non-profit and tax-exempt 501-3-C.

For selected graduate students, who give papers, we have a modest travel grant program to assist in your expenses. Please inquire from the Executive Director

We are in the process of organizing special rates for both on campus and off-campus hotel housing as well as campus food on an a la carte basis or with a meal plan. These arrangements will be forthcoming and will be posted on the SSA website.

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Conference Organizers: Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Stephanie Santos
Program Coordinators: Elias Wakoson and Richard Lobban
Development in South Sudan- Lire building 2006…. (photo: Randall Fegley)

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