Islamic encroachments
The Funj
The spread of Islam

Egyptian-Ottoman rule
Muhammad 'Ali and his successors
Ismail Pasha and the growth of European influence

The Mahdiyyah
The reign of the Khalifah
The British conquest

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium
The early years of British rule
The growth of national consciousness

The Republic of The Sudan
The 'Abbud government
The Sudan since 1964
The early Nimeiri regime
The Addis Ababa Agreement
Economic development
The rise of Muslim fundamentalism
Civil war
Nimeiri's overthrow and its aftermath
The emergence of the National Islamic Front

Additional Reading
General works
Physical and human geography

Year in Review Links
Related Articles
External Web sites
Citations

ARTICLE from Britannica World Data

**Official name**
Jumhuriyat as-Sudan (Republic of the Sudan)

**Form of government**
military-backed interim regime with Council of States (50); National Assembly (450)²

**Head of state and government**
President assisted by Vice Presidents²

**Capital**
Khartoum³

**Official language**
Arabic⁴; English⁴

**Official religion**
5

**Monetary unit**
Sudanese pound (SDG)

**Population**
(2010 est.) 43,940,000

**Total area (sq mi)**
967,499

**Total area (sq km)**
2,505,810

¹All appointed.
Comprehensive peace agreement ending 21-year-long war in southern Sudan signed Jan. 9, 2005; interim constitution from July 9, 2005, to be effective for 6 years.

Council of States meets in Khartoum; National Assembly meets in Omdurman; Juba is an alternating seat of “the interim power-sharing government.”

Official working language per 2005 interim constitution.

Islamic law and custom are applicable to Muslims only.

Sudan, Country, northeastern Africa.

Area: 967,499 sq mi (2,505,810 sq km). Population: (2010 est.) 43,940,000. Capitals: Khartoum (executive), Omdurman (legislative). Muslim Arab and other ethnic groups live in the northern and central two-thirds of the country, while non-Muslim Dinka, Nuer, and Zande peoples live in the south. Languages: Arabic (official), Dinka, Nubian languages, Beja, Zande, English. Religions: Islam (official; predominantly Sunni); also Christianity, traditional beliefs. Currency: Sudanese dinar. The largest country in Africa, it encompasses an immense plain with the Sahara Desert in the north, sand dunes in the west, semiarid shrub lands in the south-central belt, and enormous swamps and tropical rainforests in the south. The Nile River flows through the entire length of the country. Wildlife includes lions, leopards, elephants, giraffes, and zebras. Sudan has a developing mixed economy based largely on agriculture. One of the largest irrigation projects in the world provides water to farms between the White Nile and the Blue Nile. Chief cash crops are cotton, peanuts, and sesame; livestock is also important. Major industries include food processing and cotton ginning, and petroleum is the main export. The country is ruled by a military regime; the head of state and government is the president, assisted by vice presidents. Evidence of human habitation dates back tens of thousands of years. From the end of the 4th millennium BCE, Nubia (now northern Sudan) periodically came under Egyptian rule, and it was part of the kingdom of Kush from the 11th century BCE to the 4th century CE. Christian missionaries converted the area’s three principal kingdoms during the 6th century CE; those black Christian kingdoms coexisted with their Muslim Arab neighbours in Egypt for centuries, until the influx of Arab immigrants brought about their collapse in the 13th–15th centuries. Egypt had conquered all of the Sudan region by 1874 and encouraged British interference there; this aroused Muslim opposition and led to the revolt of the Mahdi, who captured Khartoum in 1885 and established a Muslim theocracy in the Sudan that lasted until 1898, when his forces were defeated by the British. The British ruled, generally in partnership with Egypt, until the region achieved independence in 1956. Since then the country has fluctuated between ineffective parliamentary government and unstable military rule. The non-Muslim population of the south began rebellion against the Muslim-controlled government of the north in the early 1980s, leading to famines and the displacement of millions of people; a peace agreement was signed in 2005. Meanwhile, fighting broke out in 2003 between non-Arab Muslims in the Darfur region of western Sudan and government-backed Arab militias; tens of thousands of people were killed and hundreds of thousands were displaced. In a referendum held in 2011, the southern Sudanese population voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence from the north.

The Sudan, country located in northeastern Africa. It is bounded on the north by Egypt; on the east by the Red Sea, Eritrea, and Ethiopia; on the south by Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; on the west by the Central African Republic and Chad; and on the northwest by Libya. The largest African country, The Sudan has an area that represents more than 8 percent of the African continent and almost 2
percent of the world’s total land area. Khartoum, the national capital, is located in the northern half of the country at the junction of the Blue and White Nile rivers. The name Sudan derives from the Arabic expression bilād as-Sūdan (“land of the blacks”), by which medieval Arab geographers referred to the settled African countries that began at the southern edge of the Sahara.

Mohy el Din Sabr

Jay L. Spaulding

Since ancient times the Sudan has been an arena for interaction between the cultural traditions of Africa and those of the Mediterranean world. In recent centuries Islām and the Arabic language have achieved ascendancy in many northern parts of the country, while older African languages and cultures predominate in the south. Large parts of the country continue to rely on an agricultural and pastoral subsistence economy, but commercial agriculture—together with more limited mining and industrial development—plays a central role in the northern districts and in the national economy as a whole.

The country has had numerous changes in government since independence in 1956. Successive regimes found it difficult to win general acceptance from the country’s diverse political constituencies, a situation symbolized by the lack of a formal constitution until 1973. An early conflict arose between those northern leaders who hoped to impose unity upon the nation through the vigorous extension of Islāmic law and culture to all parts of the country and those who opposed this policy; the latter included the majority of southerners and those northerners who favoured a secular government.

From independence until 1972 there prevailed a costly and divisive civil war, fought largely in the south but punctuated by violent incidents in the capital. The Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 ended the conflict only temporarily, and in 1983 the civil war resumed. By this time the comparative lack of economic development in the south had become a new source of regional grievance, and northern leaders’ continuing attempts to Islāmize the Sudanese legal system proved an even more potent source of discord. The failure in the 1970s of an array of costly development projects in commercial agriculture left the national economy stagnant and debt-ridden. As a result, many Sudanese began to experience a significant decline in living standards in the late 1970s that persisted for many years.

Attempts to end the civil war, which included numerous discussions, cease-fires, and agreements, yielded very little success until 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended warfare and generated an outline of new measures to share power, distribute wealth, and provide security. It also granted southern Sudan semiautonomous status and stipulated that a referendum on independence for the region would be held in six years. The results of the vote, held in January 2011, were overwhelmingly in favour of independence.

Jay L. Spaulding

Ed.

The land

Relief

The Sudan is mainly composed of vast plains and plateaus that are drained by the middle and upper Nile River and its tributaries. This river system runs from south to north across the entire length of the east-central part of the country. The immense plain of which The Sudan is composed is bounded on the west by the Nile-Congo watershed and the highlands of Darfur and on the east by the Ethiopian Plateau and the Red Sea Hills (‘Atby). This plain can be divided into a northern area of rock desert that is part of the Sahara; the western Qawz, an area of undulating sand dunes that merges northward into the rock desert; and a central and southern clay plain, the centre of which is occupied by an enormous swampy region known as As-Sudd (the Sudd).

Most of the northern Sudan is a sand- or gravel-covered desert, diversified by flat-topped mesas of Nubian sandstone and
islandlike steep-sided granite hills. In the central Sudan the clay plain is marked by inselbergs (isolated hills rising abruptly from the plains), the largest group of which forms the Nuba Mountains (Jibāl An-Nūbah). The western plain is composed primarily of Nubian sandstones, which form a dissected plateau region with flat-topped mesas and buttes. The volcanic highlands of the Marra Mountains rise out of the Darfur Plateau farther west to altitudes of between approximately 3,000 and 10,000 feet (900 and 3,000 metres) above sea level. These mountains form the Nile-Congo watershed and the western boundary of the central plain.

In the northeastern Sudan, the Red Sea Hills region is an uplifted escarpment. The scarp slope facing the Red Sea forms rugged hills that are deeply incised by streams. The escarpment overlooks a narrow coastal plain that is 10 to 25 miles (16 to 40 kilometres) wide and festooned with dunes and coral reefs. Farther south the eastern uplands constitute the foothills of the Ethiopian highland massif.

In the southern Sudan there are two contrasting upland areas. The Ironstone Plateau lies between the Nile-Congo watershed and the southern clay plain; its level country is marked with inselbergs. On the Uganda border there are massive ranges with peaks rising to more than 10,000 feet. The Imatong Mountains contain Mount Kinyeti (10,456 feet), the highest in The Sudan.

**Drainage and soils**

The Nile River system is the dominant physical feature, and all streams and rivers of The Sudan drain either into or toward the Nile. The White Nile (Bahr Al-Abyad) enters the country as the Mountain Nile (Bahr Al-Jabal) from the south through rapids at Nimule on the Uganda border. After its confluence with the left- (west-) bank tributary known as the Bahr Al-Ghazāl, the Mountain Nile becomes the White Nile. A little farther north along its course, the White Nile receives much of its water from the right-bank Sobat River, which flows from the Ethiopian Plateau to join the Nile near Malakāl. The White Nile then loses much of its water in the swampy As-Sudd region as it flows northward to Khartoum. The White Nile continues to maintain an extremely low gradient until it is joined by the Blue Nile (Bahr Al-Azraq) at Khartoum. The Blue Nile, which, like the Sobat, rises in the Ethiopian Plateau, contributes much of the floodwaters of the White Nile. After the confluence of the White and Blue Niles at Khartoum, the river flows in a great, curving northward course and is known simply as the Nile (Nahr An-Nīl).

Throughout much of the country drainage does not reach the Nile rivers; the rivers of the southwest infrequently reach the Bahr Al-Ghazāl system, and to the north most hill groups initiate seasonal watercourses that are lost in the surrounding plains.

The surface of the deserts in the north and northeast are either bare rock, a mantle of bare waste, or sandy expanses of mobile dunes known as ergs. In the semiarid zone of the north-central Sudan, the layer of rock waste is slightly modified to form immature soils; in the Qawz region, soils are brownish red and of low fertility. Alluvial soils occur at the desert deltas of Al-Qāsh (the Gash) and Barakah rivers, along the White and Blue Niles, and in the alluvial plains of the many small rivers radiating from the Marra Mountains.

The alkaline soils of the central and southern plains are heavy cracking clays. The soil of the Gezira (Al-Jazīrah) plain south of Khartoum is deep-cracking, uniform clay that has been deposited during the annual inundations of the Blue Nile, while the clays of As-Sudd were deposited in the area of impeded drainage.

**Climate**

In the northernmost Sudan northerly winds prevail for most of the year, and rainfall is rare; to the south of this the seasons are characterized by the oscillation, north and south, of the boundary between moist southerly air and dry northerly air. The latter phenomenon, more specifically, involves the seasonal migration and pulsation of the northern tropical continental air mass and the southern maritime continental air mass, which are divided by the Intertropical Convergence Zone. In winter the north winds of the tropical air mass blow across The Sudan toward the front, which may be as far south as the Tropic of Capricorn. These winds are relatively cool and dry and usually bring no rain. By April the front begins to move northward across the country, and moist southerly air of the maritime air mass is drawn in from the South Atlantic Ocean. Because of this, the central and southern Sudan have rainy seasons, the total lengths of which vary according to their latitude.
The Sudan is a hot country, for temperatures are little mitigated by altitude. The central region has the highest mean annual temperatures; at Khartoum temperatures of more than 100° F (38° C) can be recorded during any month of the year. The highest temperatures normally occur just before the rainy season.

Rainfall varies from almost nothing in the north to more than 47 inches (1,200 millimetres) annually in the extreme south. Along the Red Sea the climate is alleviated by sea breezes, and most of the rain falls during winter. In the central and southern Sudan, precipitation usually occurs during the summer months. Dust storms are common in the north, while the rainy season lasts for eight to nine months a year in the south.

Plant and animal life

The Sudan has five main vegetational belts in succession from north to south, more or less in coincidence with rainfall patterns. The desert region in the north forms about one-fourth of the total area. It is followed southeastward by semidesert, low-rainfall and high-rainfall savanna (grassland) with inland floodplains, and mountain vegetation regions.

The desert region, with less than 3 inches of rainfall, supports permanent vegetation only near watercourses. The semidesert, with 3–11 inches of rainfall, supports a mixture of grasses and acacia scrub. Farther south, low-rainfall savannas appear that consist of grasses, thorny trees, and baobab trees. Acacia trees dominate these savannas, with one species, *A. senegal*, yielding the gum arabic which was long one of The Sudan’s principal exports. With an annual precipitation of more than 30 inches, the high-rainfall savannas of the south-central Sudan are more lush, with rich grasses along the Nile that support a large number of cattle. The intermittent woodlands dotting this belt gradually merge southward with the true rain forest that is now found in only remnants of the southernmost portions of the country.

Large areas of The Sudan’s natural vegetation have disappeared because of the effects of centuries of cultivation and because of grass fires that annually may sweep across more than half the country. Further dangers to plant life are the effects of overstocking, soil erosion, the lowering of the water table, and the advance of the desert into the central region.

The country’s wildlife includes the lion, leopard, and cheetah, as well as the elephant, giraffe, zebra, wild ass, rhinoceros, buffalo, hippopotamus, ibex, wild sheep, and numerous varieties of antelope. The chimpanzee, baboon, and colobus monkey are found in the forests. Resident birds include bustards, guinea fowl, several kinds of partridge, geese, cranes, Egyptian vultures, storks, pelicans, plover, weaverbirds, shrikes, and starlings. Reptiles include crocodiles and various lizards. Insect life is abundant; mosquitoes infest the riverbanks and swamps, and seroot flies (large bloodsucking houseflies) are a scourge during the wet months. The tsetse fly is found south of latitude 12° N whenever suitable conditions occur.

Settlement patterns

Rural settlements in The Sudan are usually clustered along watercourses because of problems of water supply, especially during the dry months. In the north, villages are often strung out along the rivers. The types of houses built vary from north to south. In the north houses are made of sun-dried bricks and have flat-topped roofs, while in the central and southern portions of the country the people build round huts with thatched conical roofs made out of grass, millet stalks, and wooden poles. In the central Sudan walls constructed of millet stalks often surround building compounds.

Though towns are few and widely scattered, about one-fifth of The Sudan’s population can be considered urban. The southern Sudan was the least urbanized region in 1956 but has since experienced a high rate of urban growth. Urbanization has also been relatively rapid in the states of Kurdufān and Dārfūr, respectively in the west-central and western Sudan, where trade is more highly developed. The high urban proportion of the population of Aʿalī An-Nīl (Upper Nile) state is attributable to ʿAṭbarah, the administrative centre that contains the main workshops of Sudan Railways. The high proportion of urban population in Ash-Sharqīyah (Eastern) state is due to Port Sudan, The Sudan’s major outlet to the sea, and the numerous towns in the cotton-growing deltas of the Al-Qāsh and Barakah rivers. With few exceptions, all major towns in The Sudan lie along one of the Niles.
Mohy el Din Sabr

Jay L. Spaulding

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

Khartoum, the smallest of the states, contains the Three Towns of Khartoum: Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North. By the early 1980s the population of the Khartoum metropolitan area had grown to about one-twelfth of the country’s population. The easily defended site of Khartoum was adopted by the Egyptian-Ottoman government as the colonial capital of the Sudan in the 1830s. Today it is firmly established as the centre of both government and commerce in the country. Omdurman, formerly the capital of the Mahdist state in the Sudan, retains a more traditional atmosphere, while Khartoum North is a new, industrially oriented town.

The people

Ethnic structure

One of the most striking characteristics of The Sudan is the diversity of its people. The Sudanese are divided among 19 major ethnic groups and about 597 subgroups and speak more than 100 languages and dialects.

Languages

There are more than 100 languages spoken as mother tongues in The Sudan. Arabic is the primary language of one-half of the population, with Dinka that of about one-tenth. Arabic is the official national language and is the most common medium for the conduct of government, commerce, and urban life throughout the country. English has been acknowledged as the principal language in the south since 1972. The languages spoken in The Sudan belong to three families of African languages: Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, and Niger-Congo. The most important Afro-Asiatic languages are Arabic and the Bedawi language of the Beja. The Nilo-Saharan languages, including Dinka, Nuba, Nuer, and Shilluk, account for the next largest number of speakers. The Niger-Congo family is represented by the Banda, Sere, Zande, and many other smaller ethnic groups. To surmount these language barriers, the vast majority of Sudanese have become multilingual, with Arabic and, to a lesser extent, English as second languages.

Religions

It is estimated that more than one-half of the population of The Sudan is Muslim. Ninety percent of these people live in the northern two-thirds of the country.

The Muslims of The Sudan belong overwhelmingly to the Sunnite (Sunnī) sect. Sunnite Islam in The Sudan, as in much of the rest of Africa, has been characterized by the formation of tariqas, or Muslim religious brotherhoods. The oldest of these tariqas is the Qādiriyā, which was introduced to the Sudan from the Middle East in the 16th century. Another major tariqa is the Khātimiyā, or Mīrghāniyyā, which was founded by Muhammad Uthmān al-Mīrghāni in the early 19th century. Perhaps the most powerful and best organized tariqa is the Mahdīyyah; its followers led a successful revolt against the Turco-Egyptian regime (1821–85) and established an independent state in the Sudan that lasted from 1884 to 1898. The Mahdīyyah and Khātimiyā tariqas formed the basis for the political parties that emerged in the Sudan in the 1940s and have continued to play a dominant role in the nation’s politics in the postindependence period.

At least one-third of The Sudan’s population follow traditional animist religions, particularly in the south and in the Nuba Mountains. Although these animists share some common elements of religious belief, each ethnic group has its own indigenous religion. Virtually all The Sudan’s traditional African religions share the conception of a high spirit or divinity, usually a creator god. There exist two conceptions of the universe: the earthly and the heavenly, or the visible and the invisible. The heavenly world is seen as being populated by spiritual beings whose function is to serve as intermediaries or messengers of God; in the case of the Nilotes,
these spirits are identified with their ancestors. The supreme deity is the object of rituals using music and dance.

Christians account for between 4 and 10 percent of the population. Christianity first came to the Sudan about the 6th century AD, and for centuries thereafter Christian churches flourished in the ancient kingdom of Nubia. But, after the establishment of Muslim rule in Egypt and later Arab migrations into the Sudan, Christianity declined in Nubia and was gradually replaced by Islam; the process was complete by the end of the 15th century. Christianity in the present-day Sudan is a product of European missionary efforts that began in the second half of the 19th century. Most of these efforts were concentrated in the south and in the Nuba Mountains, rather than among the Muslims of the north.

Demographic trends

In 1955–56, when the first census was taken, The Sudan's population was 10.3 million. The 1973 census gave a total population of almost 15 million, which rose to 20 million in the census of 1983. Despite the ravages of civil war and natural disasters, the country's population growth rate has averaged about 3 percent a year, bringing the total to an estimated 34.5 million in 1999. This figure leaves The Sudan with a rather low population density as a whole, but, owing to the lack of adequate water supplies in many parts of the country, half of the population lives on just over 15 percent of the land. The greatest population densities are found along the Nile rivers and their tributaries, where water is available for irrigated farming. By contrast, one-quarter of The Sudan is virtually uninhabited, including the deserts of the north and northwest.

There has been considerable rural-to-urban migration in The Sudan in the decades since independence; the urban population increased from 8.3 to 18 percent of the total between 1956 and 1972, and the fraction of the population that is urban is probably more than one-third today. It is estimated that almost five million people, more than 15 percent of the population, may now live in the capital city—i.e., the Three Towns of Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North. Recurrent famine and a continuing civil war have brought more than three million southern and western Sudanese to the capital since 1983; many of these people live in shantytowns on the outskirts of the Three Towns.

Owing to the prevalence of pastoral livelihoods, the Sudanese population is highly mobile, and about 10 percent of the population still follows a totally nomadic life-style. In addition, before the civil war, almost one million herdsmen practiced transhumance, following the northward movement of the summer rains in search of new pastures for their livestock. There are also about 500,000 seasonal labourers who move among the country's major irrigated agricultural projects.

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

The economy

The Sudan is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with most of its inhabitants dependent on farming and animal husbandry for their livelihoods. Though its role in the economy has declined in the decades since independence, agriculture still accounts for one-third of The Sudan's gross domestic product (GDP) and more than nine-tenths of its exports, while providing the livelihood of two-thirds of the population. The economy has steadily declined since the late 1970s, when the failure of an ambitious development program left the country with both stagnating agricultural production and a large foreign debt.

Agriculture

The Sudan’s main crops are cotton, peanuts (groundnuts), sesame, gum arabic, durra (a type of sorghum), sugarcane, coffee, and dates. The main subsistence crops are durra and millet, with smaller amounts of wheat, corn, and barley. There are four distinct subsectors in Sudanese agriculture: modern irrigated farming, most of which is carried out with mechanized equipment on a large scale with the help of government investment; mechanized rain-fed crop production; traditional rain-fed farming; and livestock raising.

Mechanized agriculture
Irrigated areas along the White and Blue Niles produce the bulk of the country’s commercial crops. These areas are centred on the Gezira Scheme (Al-Jazīrah)—with its Mangil extension—between the Blue and White Niles south of Khartoum. Other major farming areas are watered by the Khashm Al-Qirbah Dam on the Ṭabbarah River and by the Ar-Ruṣayrīs Dam, which provides irrigation water for the Rahad Scheme.

The Sudan’s irrigated agriculture is thus dependent on abundant supplies of water from the two main branches of the Nile. The future growth of Sudanese agriculture, however, continues to depend on mechanized rain-fed farming in a broad belt running from Ash-Sharqīyah state in the east to southern Kurdufan state in the west. One of the major disadvantages of this type of agriculture, however, is that rich farmers practice a sophisticated version of traditional shifting cultivation—they farm an area intensively with government-financed equipment for a few years but then move on to more attractive virgin land when yields decline. This practice has led to soil erosion and even to desertification in some areas.

Because of the relative anarchy of the mechanized rain-fed sector in agriculture, planners in The Sudan have tended to concentrate their efforts on irrigation schemes, under which cotton is the dominant crop. The bulk of the cotton crop is grown on the Gezira Scheme, situated on a fertile, wedge-shaped clay plain lying between the White and Blue Niles south of Khartoum. The scheme, which was begun by the British in 1925 to provide cotton for the textile mills of Lancashire, Eng., is one of the largest irrigation projects for agriculture in the world. It covers an area of 2.5 million acres (1 million hectares) and provides water for more than 100,000 tenant farmers. The tenants farm the land in cooperation with the government and The Sudan Gezira Board, which oversees administration, credit, and marketing. Although The Sudan’s total output accounts for only a tiny percentage of world production, its importance in the cotton market results from supplying a large part of the extra-long-staple cotton grown in the world. In the mid-1970s there was a short-lived experiment to turn the Gezira’s production away from cotton into wheat, peanuts, and other cash crops that could be used to satisfy The Sudan’s domestic demand for food. This led to a dramatic fall in cotton production and export revenues, however, and in 1978 it was decided to halt this venture and return to concentration on cotton production.

The Sudan has great agricultural potential, with an estimated 210 million acres of arable land, of which less than 15 percent is under cultivation. The remainder is unused owing to inadequate water sources and transport difficulties. The Sudanese government tried to tap this potential in the 1970s, when vast projects financed by oil-rich Arab countries were undertaken in an effort to transform The Sudan into a major food producer for the Middle East. The resulting capital-intensive projects, including the building of new sugar refineries and a trunk road system, foundered owing to poor planning and government inefficiency and corruption. By the early 1980s The Sudan found itself saddled with a large foreign debt, declining agricultural production, and little capital left to invest in the country’s traditional irrigated infrastructure and its network of railways, which transported its cotton and other exports. The government has since continued to try to diversify its export-based agriculture with some success, however, encouraging the production of gum arabic and sesame in an effort to reduce reliance on cotton alone.

Mechanized rain-fed farming was begun in the fertile clay plains of the eastern Sudan in the mid-1940s and has since greatly expanded. Despite the problems of irresponsible use and soil depletion mentioned previously, the broad belt of mechanized farms stretching from the Ṭabbarah River in Ash-Sharqīyah state west to the Blue Nile is now the granary of the country, with sorghum, sesame, and cereal grains its main crops.

Subsistence farming and livestock raising

There is little development of commercial agriculture in the southern Sudan, where subsistence farming still predominates. Indeed, about two-thirds of the country’s population is still engaged in subsistence farming. Besides the south, many such farmers live in the low-rainfall savannas of the central and western Sudan, growing crops of sorghum and millet.

One of The Sudan’s most underestimated resources is its livestock, the commercial exploitation of which only truly began in the 1970s. The Nilotic peoples keep millions of head of cattle, while the Baqqārah and other Arabs raise similar numbers of sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. Inadequate transport facilities hinder the export of much of this livestock for sale abroad, however, and
the Nilotes tend to accumulate cattle rather than sell them, viewing their herds as sources of social prestige and status rather than as disposable economic assets.

Other cash crops

Projects for the cultivation of such tropical crops as coffee, tea, and tobacco have begun in the south. Fruits grown include dates, mangoes, guavas, oranges, and bananas, while onions are the most widespread vegetable.

The Sudan is the world’s largest producer of gum arabic, a water-soluble gum obtained from acacia trees and used in the production of adhesives, candy, and pharmaceuticals. The southern forests yield hardwood timber such as mahogany and sant (a type of acacia) and softwoods. The northern woodlands have been deforested by the extraction of wood for fuel and charcoal.

The Nile rivers are the main source of fish, especially Nile perch. Most of the catch is consumed locally, although attempts have been made to export fish to Europe and the Middle East. Significant quantities of fish and shellfish are produced from the Red Sea.

Industry

The Sudan’s manufacturing sector remains relatively small; manufacturing and mining combined contribute less than one-tenth of the GDP and employ only 4 percent of the country’s labour force. The Sudan faces severe shortages of trained manpower and raw materials, as well as of the foreign exchange that is vitally needed to import intermediate goods for its industrial sector to process. The country’s industrial base is dominated by the processing of food, beverage, and tobacco products. Sugar refining is a major activity, as are the production of vegetable oil and of soap. The ginning of cotton and the production of cotton textiles also remain a major sector, though textile production has plummeted since the country’s debt crisis began in the late 1970s. Other industries include the production of shoes, chemical fertilizers, and cement. Falling production elsewhere, particularly in the food-processing and textile industries, have encouraged a breaking off of state-owned factories to private interests. Such measures have had little positive effect, however, and many factories in the country operate at a mere fraction of their capacity. There are other serious problems, one of which has been a loss of trained manpower through emigration to the oil-rich countries of Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Remittances by Sudanese émigrés form an important source of income for some parts of the country, but the loss of skills has produced chronic personnel crises in a number of programs and projects.

One area of continuing optimism for the economy as a whole is that of oil. Oil was first discovered in the southwestern Sudan in 1977, and a commercially viable find was made in 1980. The Sudan’s recoverable oil reserves totaled 500 million barrels in the early 1990s, though the actual total may be substantially higher. The continuing civil war in the south has prevented any exploitation of the oil deposits, however.

About one-half of The Sudan’s electricity is produced by hydroelectric plants and one-half by thermal power plants. The Sennar Dam on the Blue Nile supplies electricity to the Gezira and to Khartoum, and hydroelectric dams have also been built at Khashm Al-Qirbah on the "A$ $barah River and Ar-Ru$ $ayri on the Blue Nile.

Finance and trade

All banks operating in The Sudan were nationalized in 1970, but foreign banks were again allowed to operate after 1975. The Bank of Sudan issues all currency and acts as banker to the government. The banking system is geared primarily to the finance of foreign trade and especially the cotton trade. Most banks are concentrated in Khartoum and the surrounding area. Under the current government, banks using IslÀmic banking principles have rapidly achieved a dominant position within the finance sector and a large degree of control over the country’s trade. In 1990 the Bank of Sudan announced its intention to IslÀmize the country’s entire banking system.

The foundering of the large-scale development projects undertaken in the 1970s left The Sudan unable to pay off its loans to its Arab and other foreign creditors. The national debt more than quadrupled in the 1980s to reach about $13 billion by 1990. Merely
servicing this debt takes most of the foreign exchange earned by exports, thus depriving The Sudan of much-needed capital with which to maintain its infrastructure and industries.

The Sudan suffers from an unfavourable balance of trade. Its chief exports are cotton, gum arabic, millet, sorghum, and sesame, while its chief imports consist of oil and petroleum products, motor vehicles and machinery, and wheat. Saudi Arabia has become the leading market for Sudanese exports, consuming livestock, cereal grains, and other foodstuffs. Japan, Thailand, and Italy are among the major purchasers of Sudanese cotton. The Sudan in turn receives the bulk of its petroleum from Saudi Arabia, while importing much of its machinery from members of the European Union as well as from the United States.

**Administration of the economy**

Government control of the economy has been gradually relaxed since the mid-1970s. This has resulted in the liberalization of exchange controls, encouragement of private and foreign investment, payment of market prices to farmers, and a number of other measures designed to cause the economy to be regulated more by the market rather than by the government.

Since 1978 The Sudan has been operating under an austerity program designed to improve the balance of payments and cut back development spending. Negotiations have periodically been undertaken to reschedule debts to external creditors, but by the early 1990s The Sudan was unable to meet even the interest payments on its burdensome foreign debt.

Little government revenue is raised by direct taxation, while indirect taxes, such as those on imports and excise and consumption duties, provide more than half the revenue. Other revenue has traditionally been derived from government monopoly profits on sugar, tea, coffee, and salt and proprietary receipts from agricultural and other schemes.

The smallness of the industrial sector and the predominance of rural life have tended to constrain the development of workers’ and employers’ associations. In 1989 all trade unions were dissolved by the new government headed by the Revolutionary Command Council.

**Economist Intelligence Unit**

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

**Transportation**

The transport system is underdeveloped and is a serious constraint on economic growth. The country’s vast area and the availability of only one major outlet to the sea place a heavy burden on the limited facilities, especially on the government-owned Sudan Railways and on the country’s growing road network. The railways had traditionally hauled most of The Sudan’s freight, but heavy investments in roads (and accompanying neglect of the rail infrastructure) in the 1970s and ’80s encouraged a growing reliance on trucks and other motor vehicles to haul the nation’s raw materials. The road system now handles more than 60 percent of the nation’s freight traffic.

There were fewer than 240 miles of paved roads in The Sudan in 1969, but by the mid-1980s this total had increased to more than 1,240 miles. By far the most important road is the all-weather highway running for 744 miles from Port Sudan to Khartoum, which was completed in 1980.

The main railway line runs north from Al-Ubayyid (El-Obeid) via Khartoum to Lake Nasser and the submerged terminal of Wadi Halfa, with branch lines from Sannār and ‘Aţbarah to Port Sudan and from Sannār to Ar-Ruṣayrīs. There is also a westward extension from Al-Ubayyid to Nyala, with a branch line south to Wāw.

For centuries the Nile was the riverine highway of the Sudan, and the White Nile is still an important link with the southern region. The White Nile and the Bahr Al-Ghazāl are navigable throughout the year, but the Blue Nile is not navigable, and the Nile below Khartoum is navigable only in short stretches. The government operates steamer services on the White and the main Nile.
Sudan, 850 miles south of Suez, Egypt, is the country’s main port on the Red Sea.

The government-owned Sudan Airways operates domestic and international services from the main airport at Khartoum. There are several subsidiary airports, the most important of which are those at Al-Ubayyid and Port Sudan.

Mohy el Din Sabr

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

Administration and social conditions

Government

Since independence in 1956, The Sudan has witnessed several constitutions and regime changes, including military coups in 1985 and 1989. On seizing power in 1989, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) for National Salvation abolished the transitional constitution of 1985, the National Assembly, and all political parties and trade unions and ruled by decree.

The RCC disbanded in 1993, after appointing ‘Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir to the position of president in the new “civilian” administration; he later retained that position by winning elections in 1996 and 2000. A new constitution, promulgated in 1998, called for Islamic law (Sharī‘ah) to be the basis for the country’s laws and regulations. Under the constitution, the president is popularly elected to serve a five-year term and appoints the members of the Council of Ministers. Legislative power is unicameral, vested in the National Assembly. Members serve four-year terms; the majority are directly elected, and the remaining members are elected by specific interest groups. For administrative purposes, The Sudan is divided into 25 states, each administered by a governor.

Civil justice is administered through the Supreme Court, appeals courts, and courts of first instance. There is also a Constitutional Court. Muslims remain subject to Islamic law, as do constituents in northern states of the country regardless of their religious belief. Southern states—with a primarily animist-Christian population—are exempt from much, but not all, of Islamic law.

Multiparty politics, banned after the 1989 coup, were reintroduced in 1999. The National Congress party (formerly the Islamic National Front; NIF), long the only legal party, continued to dominate the political scene in the years immediately following. Other political associations active in The Sudan include the Ummah Party (UP), the Alliance of the People’s Working Forces (APWF), the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), an association of several opposition movements.

The Sudan’s armed forces have been greatly expanded since 1969, mainly to cope with the continuing rebellion in the south. By the early 1980s the forces consisted of an army, a navy, and an air force. In 1990–91 the government began to establish a militia and also instituted a military draft to furnish recruits to conduct the war.

Education

A modern educational system was established in The Sudan in the 1970s when the government reorganized a haphazard system of schools inherited from the British colonial government. In the Muslim areas of the north, boys were long instructed in religious subjects according to traditional methods. Primary education was begun by the British in the northern Sudan after 1898, and secondary education began in 1913. The University of Khartoum was formally established in 1956 from the University College of Khartoum, which itself dated from the merger in 1951 of two smaller colleges founded by the British.

Christian missionaries assumed responsibility for formal education in the south prior to independence. Southern education suffered during the subsequent civil war; the national authorities curtailed missionary activities, attempted to Arabize the southern schools, and, failing that, closed them in 1962. The southern partisans operated schools in the areas they controlled, but their resources were extremely limited.
After being extensively reorganized in 1969 and in the 1970s, the Sudanese educational system was reorganized yet again in 1992. Under the new system, eight years of primary education (later made compulsory in 1998) begin at age six. Three years of secondary education—either academic or vocational in nature—then follow. The primary language of instruction in the nation's primary schools is Arabic.

In addition to the University of Khartoum, higher education is provided by several universities, including Omdurman Islamic University, which trains Muslim clerics and scholars, and Ahfad University for Women, also in Omdurman. National universities that emphasize scientific and technical training were opened in the 1970s at Wad Madani and at Juba. Between 1990 and 1995, the number of universities in The Sudan more than doubled—the result of government efforts to expand opportunities for higher education. English was formerly the medium of instruction in the nation's universities and secondary schools but has now been largely replaced by Arabic. The south, ravaged by decades of civil war, remains the most educationally deprived region of the country. Literacy rates in The Sudan, although showing improvement since independence, are still relatively low when compared with the rest of the world: about three-fifths of adults are able to read.

Health

Varying ecological conditions in The Sudan, poor hygiene, and widespread malnutrition result in a high incidence of fatal infectious diseases. The most common illnesses are malaria, measles, and tuberculosis. Cerebrospinal meningitis, whooping cough, and infectious hepatitis are not uncommon. Schistosomiasis (bilharzia), leishmaniasis, dracunculiasis (Guinea worm disease), and African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) are endemic in the southern part of the country.

Many Sudanese in rural areas suffer from temporary undernourishment on a seasonal basis. Malnutrition is prevalent year-round in Darfur and in the south, especially among children, because of the disruptive effects of the civil war. Life expectancy for both men and women in The Sudan is below the average for North Africa, and the infant mortality rate is significantly higher.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Health initiated a national program intended to provide primary health care throughout the country, with an emphasis on preventive medicine. A lack of funds severely affected the plan's implementation, as it would the government's establishment in the early 1990s of three tiers of health care at the federal, state, and local levels.

At the beginning of the 21st century, roughly half of all Sudanese had access to health services, but accessibility greatly depended upon geographic location. Most of the country's small number of physicians are concentrated in the urban areas of the north, as are the major hospitals. Medical assistants, who can diagnose common endemic diseases and provide simple treatment and vaccination, are in short supply and tend to work in the north, as do most trained nurses and midwives. International relief agencies have made efforts to expand health care access in the non-government-controlled areas in the south.

Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

Ed.

Traditional cultures

Because of The Sudan's great cultural diversity, it is difficult to classify the traditional cultures of the various peoples. These traditional societies have diverse linguistic, ethnic, social, cultural, and religious characteristics. And, although improved communications, increased social and economic mobility, and the spread of a money economy have led to a general loosening of the social ties, customs, relationships, and modes of organization in traditional cultures, much from the past still remains intact. The selection of four cultures that follows merely suggests some rather prominent cultural patterns that are illustrative of the wide range present. These four cultures are those of the Azande, African animists of the southwestern Sudan; the Fur, Muslim Africans in the far western part of the country; the Humr tribe of the Baqqarah Arabs, of the west-central Sudan; and the Otoro tribe of the Nuba, in the east-central Sudan.
Social organization

Political and territorial organization

Broadly speaking, the traditional societies of The Sudan exhibited two types of political organization: the hierarchical systems of the Azande and Fur and the segmentary systems of the Humr Baqqārah and Otoro. Zandeland, for example, was divided into a number of autonomous chiefdoms. The structure of authority within each chiefdom was pyramidal, with chiefs (previously kings) at the apex of the hierarchy, followed by subchiefs, deputies, and finally homestead heads. The homestead was the basic political, social, and economic unit. Absolute authority lay with the aristocratic Avongara clan, and commoners could reach only the positions of deputy or homestead head. Local groupings, in which descent was reckoned in the male line, were not associated with clans or sections of clans; they were political and administrative units. Clans had little corporate life, and genealogical links between clansmen were seldom known.

A centralized political and administrative structure also existed among the Fur. There was a sultan at the head of the state, which was divided into four regions in turn divided into districts, subdistricts, and villages. Each village had a council of elders who decided minor cultivation disputes and enforced their decisions by advice and warning. The rights of the village were vested in its inhabitants jointly. Ultimate authority lay with the sultan, who could depose officials beneath him when their power became a threat to his dominance.

In contrast, the Humr Baqqārah had a political system based on a segmentary lineage organization. The tribe was divided into two sections, each of which was divided into a further five sections, each comprising major lineages, camps, and extended families. All these groups had potential leaders. The significant residential and herding unit was the camp, the composition of which changed with the seasons. Within each tribe and at every level, there was a process of splitting, migration, and resettling that resulted in a continuous change of alliance among groups and individuals. Blood feuds occurred between segments and were settled by payment of blood money. Power among the Humr Baqqārah stemmed from wealth and strength of personality.

The Otoro political system consisted of a number of territorial segments that did not coincide with kinship groupings. Clan members were scattered in different localities; the basic political unit was the hill community, whose members shared a tract of land and a common code of morality. Feuding between hill communities was constant, but members of the same hill community could not kill one another. The Otoro recognized tribal boundaries defined by periodically renewed intertribal treaties. Because of the continual raids and wars between segments, a chieftainship, with the power to use force to maintain peace, was established.

Family and kinship patterns

In all the societies descent was reckoned in the male line, but the significance of such agnatic ties among kin groups differed from one society to another. Among the Azande there were exogamous clans that functioned primarily as political and administrative units. Clan members were expected to join together to celebrate births, marriages, and funerals. The Azande recognized obligations to the kin of both parents, but greater importance attached to the paternal connection. Until an Azande male married, he had not achieved a man’s full status. Marriage was a series of events, each of which was marked by the transfer of goods from one group of kin to the other. Wives of a dead man were inherited by his sons or brothers. Polygyny was also practiced and was regarded as a means of extending affinal (in-law) relationships and acquiring support. Although divorce is now common, a broken marriage was considered a shameful thing because it destroyed the network of relationships.

The Fur also reckoned descent patrilineally, but residence was customarily with or near the wife’s parents. However, if a husband disagreed with his in-laws, he could take his wife to live with his own group. Cousin marriage, sororate (customary marriage with a deceased wife’s sister), levirate (customary marriage to an elder brother’s widow), and polygyny were practiced.

Among the Humr Baqqārah, members of the smallest lineage (sūra), together with their dependents, formed a single camp. The organization of a sūra depended on the number of cattle and the distribution of their ownership among its members. Each sūra
had a leader who was wealthy but who had no administrative functions unless he was already a member of the local government. Whereas members of a camp formed the basic unit of cooperation over herding, the household was the main unit of cooperation in agriculture, although some activities connected with agriculture involved a wider group. Preferred marriage within the *surra* was with a parallel cousin. Many first marriages, contracted to conform to the expectation of elders, ended in divorce, but in subsequent marriages partners could be freely chosen.

Among the Otoro there were patrilineal clans of various size. With the exception of the Chungur clan, which was the traditional holder of the hereditary chieftainship, all clans were socially of equal order. Clan members intermarried with each other, although clan exogamy was formerly the rule. In the economic and religious spheres the clan did not exercise influence, but it did impose upon its members the collective duty of blood feud in the case of homicide between clans. Patrilineal descent was important in determining the social identity of a person, inheritance, and rights and duties concerning marriage and bridewealth (gifts from the groom and his kinsmen to the father of the bride and his kinsmen). Although the Otoro were patrilineal, matrilineal ties were also important. Polygyny and leviratic marriages were practiced, and bridewealth payments established wider contact between social groups. Divorce was negotiated and settled by the families concerned. The marriage was usually dissolved by the total refund of the bridewealth to the former husband.

**Social stratification**

All the groups had some form of class distinction. The Azande’s Avongara clan recognized rigid distinctions between chiefs and commoners, and, generally, among the Azande there were distinctions between conquering and conquered groups and slaves. Political, economic, and social status depended exclusively on birth, but the politically superior group, the Avongara, had to maintain their position by organized political and military means.

The highest political office among the Fur was that of the sultan, who was surrounded by a body of councillors dependent on royal patronage. Locally, there was a descending hierarchy of hereditary fief stewards, village heads, and, lastly, heads of households. Ironworkers were a despised class not allowed to intermarry with ordinary Fur.

Among the Humr Baqqārah, the main distinction was between persons of Arab descent (who held the positions of power) and non-Arabs. In other respects, a person’s wealth and personality determined his successful bid for leadership.

Traditionally, among the Otoro there were no political offices, only a special hereditary ritual office—that of “chief of the Path,” who acted as intermediary in peace negotiations between conflicting parties. Today, however, there are chiefs selected by the local government from among persons of local wealth and importance. In addition there were age-grades; membership in each of the five grades lasted three years, after which all the members were promoted together to the next higher grade. Promotion was marked with festivities, and members of each age-grade lived separately. This system marked the development of a person from an ordinary youth to that of a “big man.” Girls also formed age-grade groups.

**Socialization and education**

In all societies under comparison, there were ritual and ceremonial practices marking the stages in the life cycle of the individual—birth, circumcision, puberty, marriage, and death. Circumcision distinguished boyhood from manhood. It was a recent introduction among the Azande, having spread from the south despite being opposed by the Avongara. Among the Otoro, an individual achieved higher status as he was promoted from one age-grade to another. There was also an association of cicatrization (scarring) with a test of manhood: killing an enemy entitled a person to have a small pattern of scars on his back. Similar patterns were also made on the upper arms of successful hunters. Men took part in wrestling and fighting as part of their training for manhood.

There was little formal education among the Azande, Otoro, Humr Baqqārah, and Fur. Among the Azande and Nuba, there were very few schools at the elementary level established by missions. Education made little headway among the Humr Baqqārah
because it came into conflict with their way of life—people were reluctant to send their children to schools because livestock and cattle herding would suffer. There were a few Qur’anic schools among the Fur, in which elementary Arabic, arithmetic, and the Qur’an were taught.

Economic organization

Settlement patterns

The societies exhibited three different patterns of settlement. The Otoro and Azande lived in scattered groups. Otoro homesteads were scattered irregularly over hilltops and valleys, a number of homesteads constituting a village, villages combining to form hill communities, a number of which made up the tribe. Similarly, the Azande lived in family groups in scattered homesteads separated by strips of bush. Among the Otoro and the Azande, the homesteads were the basic social and economic unit. In contrast, the Fur had more compact settlements. The Fur lived in homesteads, a number of which constituted a village. The third type of settlement pattern was that of the Humr Baqqarah, who lived in tent camps. Their nomadic existence did not permit the formation of permanent settlements.

Production and technology

The economy of most of the peoples of The Sudan was and still is dependent on cultivation, with animal husbandry, and sometimes hunting and fishing, providing an important supplement to agriculture. A wide variety of crops are grown, including grain, sesame, vegetables, sorghum, corn (maize), peanuts (groundnuts), and cotton, the latter two sometimes as cash crops. Among the Humr Baqqarah cultivation is a subsidiary occupation. They move in a regular seasonal cycle according to the availability of water and grass. In winter, or at the end of the rains, they move south, and in spring, or during the rains, they move north. Some cultivation of millet and of cotton as a cash crop is undertaken. Throughout their territory the Humr Baqqarah have communal grazing rights, whereas cultivable plots of land are owned individually and handed down from father to son.

The technology of these societies was formerly simple. Among the Otoro the making of bedsteads, mat weaving, and pottery were undertaken. The Azande, on the other hand, were prominent as craftsmen and artists. Their superior material culture, particularly their knives, spears, and shields, was one of the factors by which they dominated their neighbours and brought about the spread of their culture. Basketry, net weaving, pottery, smelting, metalworking, and ivory and wood carving also were undertaken. There were ironworkers in every Fur village; other Fur crafts included tanning and weaving of cloth and basketry. The Humr Baqqarah produced leather goods and basketry to meet their own needs.

Property and exchange systems

Land among the Otoro, Azande, and Fur was the principal economic asset. Among the Otoro, land could be acquired through inheritance, purchase, and lease and by clearing and cultivating new areas. The Otoro and the rest of the Nuba tribes converted nearly their whole agricultural surplus into livestock. Although livestock were used for clan sacrifices, they were not sold for money, and neither were they slaughtered for meat. Among the Nuba tribes, however, people used livestock for certain standardized payments such as bridewealth or gifts to kin relations. Iron, because of its rarity and its use in weapons and tools, became the standard medium of exchange. Handicraft products were purchased with such goods as grain, sesame, hoes, spears, goats, and axheads, and, nowadays, with money.

Whereas livestock is a secondary source of wealth to the Otoro, cattle are the primary source of wealth, prestige, and political position for the Humr Baqqarah. Cattle were once the medium of exchange, but during the 20th century cash became significant.

Before the introduction of cotton and money, wealth among the Azande was primarily in the form of perishable agricultural produce, and it was customary to destroy the property of a man after his death. Only chiefs were able to accumulate wealth, since they received tribute and prisoners of war as perquisites. There was little exchange between households, although iron tools and spears
were used in bridewealth payments.

Among the Fur, property consists of houses, domestic articles, rolls of cloth, and cattle kept mainly for resale. Rights over land are held jointly by descent groups and are vested in a titleholder. There are organized marketplaces in which the medium of exchange has been, and still is, money. Previously, cloth may have served as a medium of exchange. Agricultural products are exchanged for tools and utensils, cloth, and other commodities. Labour is exchanged for beer.

Religious practices

The Humr Baqqārah and Fur peoples adhere to Islamic beliefs and practices, which came to them through Arab influence, and traditional local practices coexist with Islamic beliefs. Among the Fur, for example, the splashing of sanctuaries with a flour-and-water paste is carried out to ensure fertility. There are also rain cults thought to have been introduced from farther west. Sacrifices are made at shrines and at ancestral tombs when the rains are likely to fall. The office of rainmaker is hereditary.

The Otoro and Azande have their own local beliefs and practices, which are significant as a means of social control, and Islam and Christianity have very little influence. Among the Otoro there is a widespread belief in oracles and witchcraft as a means of punishing offenders and establishing justice. Charms bought from Arab or West African charm sellers, diviners, grain priests, and rainmakers are used to find and punish evildoers. Leprosy, imagined to be caused by supernatural powers, is believed to be connected with offenses such as sexual intercourse in forbidden kinship degrees and homicide. Witchcraft, a magic at the disposal of any individual, is effective only if directed against a person guilty of a crime.

Among the Azande the power of witchcraft is inherited. Diviners, oracles, vengeance magic, and the use of leeches are means of counteracting it. The Avongara clan may not be accused of witchcraft because the chief and his oracle are considered infallible.

Ahmed S. Al-Shahi
Ed.

Cultural life

The key to an understanding of contemporary Sudanese culture is diversity. Each major ethnic group and historical region has its own special forms of cultural expression, and the linguistic diversity of the country provides the basis for a richly varied written and oral literature.

One of the most important forms of cultural expression among nonliterate groups is oral tradition. The major language with a written literature in traditional Sudanese society is Arabic. The most widely known Sudanese literary works in this language are associated with Islām and its scholarship and include a large body of literature describing the lives and virtue of holy men. These works are best known through recitations on special anniversaries associated with pious persons. In the 20th century, the combination of oral and written literature remains of major importance to both traditional and Westernized segments of Sudanese society. Perhaps the best-known Sudanese novelist is aṭ-Ṭayyib Šāliḥ, whose books Season of Migration to the North and The Wedding of Zein have been translated into foreign languages.

Poetry is another important form of literary expression. Modern Sudanese poetry reflects the mixed African and Arab cultural heritage of the country, as expressed in the works of Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Majdūb and many others.

In such arts as painting, weaving, and pottery making, each locality has developed unique forms and styles. However, in the 20th century, more unified national styles have emerged under the influence of artists in the cities. The College of Fine and Applied Arts within the Khartoum Polytechnic has served as the home of graphic arts in The Sudan, and a number of Sudanese printmakers, calligraphers, and photographers have achieved international recognition. Ibrāhīm aṣ-Ṣalāḥī, who is proficient in all three mediums, is perhaps the most widely known such artist.
Song plays an important role in all the cultural traditions of The Sudan and ranges from the unique cosmopolitan traditions of Qur’anic recitation in a melodramatic manner to tribal songs. A characteristically national style of music is emerging out of this diversity, as reflected in the music heard in Khartoum.

The Sudan is one of the richest African countries in terms of archaeological sites. The Sudan Antiquities Service manages the National Museum, a magnificent Khartoum landmark, and smaller archaeological exhibits in Marawi and Al-Ubayi. The Ethnographical Museum and the Sudan Natural History Museum are affiliated with the University of Khartoum. Drama flourishes at the National Theatre and elsewhere in Khartoum.

In view of its religious diversity, The Sudan observes both Muslim and Christian holidays. One of the most popular religious festivals is that of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday.

Perhaps the most popular form of sports is football (soccer), and a number of clubs exist all over the country.

There are two broadcasting stations: the oldest is in Omdurman, and the other was established in Juba, the capital of the southern region, after the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. Between 1986 and 1989 The Sudan had one of the freest presses in Africa, with more than 40 independent newspapers, but, after the June 1989 military takeover, civilian newspapers were banned, and today there are only a few state-controlled papers.


Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

History

Ancient Nubia

The earliest inhabitants of what is now The Sudan can be traced to African peoples who lived in the vicinity of Khartoum in Mesolithic times (Middle Stone Age; 30,000–20,000 bc). They were hunters and gatherers who made pottery and (later) objects of ground sandstone. Toward the end of the Neolithic Period (New Stone Age; 10,000–3,000 bc) they had domesticated animals. These Africans were clearly in contact with predynastic civilizations (before c. 2925 bc) to the north in Egypt, but the arid uplands separating Egypt from Nubia appear to have discouraged the predynastic Egyptians from settling there.

Christian and Islamic influence

Medieval Christian kingdoms

The 200 years from the fall of Kush to the middle of the 6th century is an unknown age in the Sudan. Nubia was inhabited by a people called the Nobatae by the ancient geographers and the X-Group by modern archaeologists, who are still at a loss to explain their origins. The X-Group were clearly, however, the heirs of Kush, for their whole cultural life was dominated by Meroitic crafts and customs, and occasionally they even felt themselves sufficiently strong, in alliance with the nomadic Blemmyes (the Beja of the eastern Sudan), to attack the Romans in Upper Egypt. When this happened, the Romans retaliated, defeating the Nobatae and Blemmyes and driving them into obscurity once again.

When the Sudan was once more brought into the orbit of the Mediterranean world by the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 6th century ad, the middle course of the Nile was divided into three kingdoms: Nobatia, with its capital at Pachoras (modern Faras); Maqurrah, with its capital at Dunqulah (Old Dongola); and the kingdom of ‘Alwah in the south, with its capital at Subah (Soba) near what is now Khartoum. Between 543 and 575 these three kingdoms were converted to Christianity by the work of Julian, a missionary who proselytized in Nobatia (543–545), and his successor Longinus, who between 569 and 575 consolidated the work of Julian in Nobatia and even carried Christianity to ‘Alwah in the south. The new religion appears to have been adopted with considerable enthusiasm. Christian churches sprang up along the Nile, and ancient temples were refurbished to accommodate Christian worshippers. After the retirement of Longinus, however, the Sudan once again receded into a period about which little is
known, and it did not reemerge into the stream of recorded history until the coming of the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century.

After the death of the Prophet Muhammad in ad 632, the Arabs erupted from the desert steppes of Arabia and overran the lands to the east and west. Egypt was invaded in 639, and small groups of Arab raiders penetrated up the Nile and pillaged along the frontier of the kingdom of Maqurrah, which by the 7th century had absorbed the state of Nobatia. Raid and counterraid between the Arabs and the Nubians followed until a well-equipped Arab expedition under ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Sarḥ was sent south to punish the Nubians. The Arabs marched as far as Dunqulah, laid siege to the town, and destroyed the Christian cathedral. They suffered heavy casualties, however, so that, when the king of Maqurrah sought an armistice, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Saʿd agreed to peace, happy to extricate his battered forces from a precarious position. Arab-Nubian relations were subsequently regularized by an annual exchange of gifts, by trade relations, and by the mutual understanding that no Muslims were to settle in Nubia and no Nubians were to take up residence in Egypt. With but few interruptions, this peaceful, commercial relationship lasted nearly six centuries, its very success undoubtedly the result of the mutual advantage that both the Arabs and the Nubians derived from it. The Arabs had a stable frontier; they appear to have had no designs to occupy the Sudan and were probably discouraged from doing so by the arid plains south of Aswān. Peace on the frontier was their object, and this the treaty guaranteed. In return, the kingdom of Maqurrah gained another 600 years of life.

**Islamic encroachments**

When non-Arab Muslims acquired control of the Nile delta, friction arose in Upper Egypt. In the 9th century the Turkish Tūlūnid rulers of Egypt, wishing to rid themselves of the unruly nomadic Arab tribes in their domain, encouraged them to migrate southward. Lured by the prospects of gold in the Nubian Desert, the nomads pressed into Nubia, raiding and pillaging along the borders, but the heartland of Maqurrah remained free from direct hostilities until the Mamlūks established their control over Egypt (1250). In the late 13th and early 14th centuries, the Mamlūk sultans sent regular military expeditions against Maqurrah, as much to rid Egypt of uncontrollable Arab Bedouin as to capture Nubia. The Mamlūk sultan never succeeded in actually occupying Maqurrah, but they devastated the country, draining its political and economic vitality and plunging it into chaos and depression. By the 15th century Dunqulah was no longer strong enough to withstand Arab encroachment, and the country was open to Arab immigration. Once the Arab nomads, particularly the Juhaynah people, learned that the land beyond the Aswān reach could support their herds and that no political authority had the power to turn them back, they began to migrate southward, intermarrying with the Nubians and introducing Arab Muslim culture to the Christian inhabitants. The Arabs, who inherited through the male line, soon acquired control from the Nubians, who inherited through the female line, intermarriage resulting in Nubian inheritances passing from Nubian women to their half-Arab sons, but the Arabs replaced political authority in Maqurrah only with their own nomadic institutions. From Dunqulah the Juhaynah and others wandered east and west of the Nile with their herds; in the south the kingdom of ʿAlwah stood as the last indigenous Christian barrier to Arab occupation of the Sudan.

ʿAlwah extended from Kabūshiyyah as far south as Sennar (Sannār). Beyond, from the Ethiopian escarpment to the White Nile, lived peoples about which little is known. ʿAlwah appears to have been much more prosperous and stronger than Maqurrah. It preserved the ironworking techniques of Kush, and its capital at Sūbah possessed many impressive buildings, churches, and gardens. Christianity remained the state religion, but ʿAlwah’s long isolation from the Christian world had probably resulted in bizarre and syncretistic accretions to liturgy and ritual. ʿAlwah was able to maintain its integrity so long as the Arabs failed to combine against it, but the continuous and corrosive raids of the Bedouin throughout the 15th century clearly weakened its power to resist. Thus, when an Arab confederation led by ʿAbd Allāh Jammā was at last brought together to assault the Christian kingdom, ʿAlwah collapsed (c. 1500). Sūbah and the Blue Nile region were abandoned, left to the Funj, who suddenly appeared, seemingly from nowhere, to establish their authority from Sennar to the main Nile.

**The Funj**

The Funj were a strange and mysterious people. They were neither Arabs nor Muslims, and their homeland was probably on the upper Blue Nile in the borderlands between Ethiopia and the Sudan. Under their leader
The Sudan -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia

By the mid-17th century the Funj dynasty had reached its golden age under one of its greatest kings, Bâdî II Abû Daqn (reigned 1644/45–80), who extended Funj authority across the White Nile into Kordofan and reduced the tribal chieftaincies scattered northward along the main Nile to tribute-paying feudatories. But as Bâdî II expanded Funj power, he also planted the seeds of its decline. During his conquests, slaves were captured and taken to Sennar, where, as they grew in numbers and influence, they formed a military caste. Loyal to the monarch alone, the slaves soon came to compete with the Funj aristocracy for control of the offices of state. Intrigue and hostility between these two rival groups soon led to open rebellion that undermined the position of the traditional ruling class.

Under Bâdî IV Abû Shulûk (reigned 1724–62), the ruling aristocracy was finally broken, and the king assumed arbitrary power, supported by his slave troops. So long as Bâdî IV could command the loyalty of his army, his position was secure and the kingdom enjoyed respite from internal strife, but at the end of his long reign he could no longer control the army. Under the leadership of his viceroy in Kordofan, Abû Likaylik, the military turned against the king and exiled him to Sûbah. Abû Likaylik probably represented a resurgence of older indigenous elements who had been Arabized and Islamized but were neither Arab nor Funj. Thenceforward the Funj kings were but puppets of their viziers (chief ministers), whose struggles to win and to keep control precipitated the kingdom's steady decline, interrupted by only infrequent periods of peace and stability established by a strong vizier who was able to overcome his rivals. During its last half century the Funj kingdom was a spent state, kept intact only through want of a rival but gradually disintegrating through wars, intrigue, and conspiracy, until the Egyptians advanced on Sennar in 1821 and pushed the Funj dynasty into oblivion.

The spread of Islam

The Funj were originally non-Muslims, but the aristocracy soon adopted Islam and, although they retained many traditional African customs, remained nominal Muslims. The conversion was largely the work of a handful of Islamic missionaries who came to the Sudan from the larger Muslim world. The great success of these missionaries, however, was not among the Funj themselves but among the Arabized Nubian population settled along the Nile. Among these villagers the missionaries instilled a deep devotion to Islam that appears to have been conspicuously absent among the nomadic Arabs who had first reached the Sudan after the collapse of the kingdom of Maqurrah. One early missionary was Ghulâm Allâh ibn ʿĀid from Yemen, who settled at Dunqulah in the 14th century. He was followed in the 15th century by Ḥamad Abû Danana, who appears to have emphasized the way to God through mystical exercises rather than through the more orthodox interpretations of the Qurʾān taught by Ghulâm Allâh.

The spread of Islam was advanced in the 16th century when the hegemony of the Funj enhanced security. In the 16th and 17th centuries, numerous schools of religious learning were founded along the White Nile, and the Shâyqiyyah confederacy was converted. Many of the more famous Sudanese missionaries who followed them were Sufi holy men, members of influential religious brotherhoods who sought the way to God through mystical contemplation. The Sufi brotherhoods played a vital role in linking the Sudan to the larger world of Islam beyond the Nile valley. Although the fervour of Sudanese Islam waned after 1700, the great reform movements that shook the Muslim world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries produced a revivalist spirit among the Sufi brotherhoods, giving rise to a new order, the Mîrghâniyyah or Khatmiyyah, later one of the strongest in the modern Sudan.

The "missionaries" were faqīhs (Islamic jurists) who attracted a following through their teachings and piety and laid the foundations for a long line of indigenous Sudanese holy men. They passed on the way to God taught them by their masters or founded their own religious schools or, if extraordinarily successful, gathered their own following into a religious order. The faqīhs played a vital role in educating their followers and helped place them in the highest positions of government, which allowed them to spread Islam and the influence of their respective brotherhoods. The faqīhs held a religious monopoly until the introduction, under Egyptian-Ottoman rule (see below), of an official hierarchy of jurists and scholars—the ‘ulâma’, whose orthodox legalistic conception of Islam was as alien to the Sudanese as were their origins. This disparity between the mystical, traditional faqīhs (close to the

http://0-www.britannica.com.opac.sfsu.edu/EBchecked/topic/571417/Th...17yblinks,571417rellinks,571417websites,571417Citations&view=print Page 20 of 38
Sudanese, if not of them) and the orthodox `ulamā` (aloof, if not actually part of the government bureaucracy) created a rivalry that produced open hostility in times of trouble and sullen suspicion in times of peace. This schism has since diminished; the faqīhs continue their customary practices unmolested, while the Sudanese have acknowledged the position of the `ulamā` in society.

**Egyptian-Ottoman rule**

**Muḥammad `Alī and his successors**

In July 1820, Muhammad `Alī, viceroy of Egypt under the Ottoman Empire, sent an army under his son Ismā’il to conquer the Sudan. Muḥammad `Alī was interested in the gold and slaves that the Sudan could provide and wished to control the vast hinterland south of Egypt. By 1821 the Funj and the sultan of Darfur had surrendered, and the Nilotic Sudan from Nubia to the Ethiopian foothills and from the ‘Abqarah River to Darfur became part of Muḥammad `Alī’s expanding empire.

The collection of taxes under Muḥammad `Alī’s regime amounted to virtual confiscation of gold, livestock, and slaves, and opposition to his rule became intense, eventually erupting into rebellion and the murder of Ismā’il and his bodyguard. But the rebels lacked leadership and coordination, and their revolt was brutally suppressed. A sullen hostility in the Sudanese was met by continued repression until the appointment of `Alī Khūrshīd Āghā as governor-general in 1826. His administration marked a new era in Egyptian-Sudanese relations. He reduced taxes and consulted the Sudanese through the respected Sudanese leader `Abd al-Qādir wad al-Zayn. Letters of amnesty were granted to fugitives. A more equitable system of taxation was implemented, and the support of the powerful class of holy men and sheikhs (tribal chiefs) for the administration was obtained by exempting them from taxation. But `Alī Khūrshīd was not content merely to restore the Sudan to its previous condition. Under his initiative, trade routes were protected and expanded, Khartoum was developed as the administrative capital, and a host of agricultural and technical improvements were undertaken. When he retired to Cairo in 1838, he left a prosperous and contented country behind him.

His successor, Aḥmad Pasha Abū Widān, continued his policies with but few exceptions and made it his primary concern to root out official corruption. Abū Widān dealt ruthlessly with offenders or those who sought to thwart his schemes to reorganize taxation. He was particularly fond of the army, which reaped the benefits of regular pay and tolerable conditions in return for bearing the brunt of the expansion and consolidation of Egyptian administration in Kassālā and among the Baqqārah Arabs of southern Kordofan. Muḥammad `Alī, suspecting Abū Widān of disloyalty, recalled him to Cairo in the autumn of 1843, but he died mysteriously, many believed of poison, before he left the Sudan.

During the next two decades the country stagnated because of ineffective government at Khartoum and vacillation by the viceroys at Cairo. If the successors of Abū Widān possessed administrative talent, they were seldom able to demonstrate it. No governor-general held office long enough to introduce his own plans, let alone carry on those of his predecessor. New schemes were never begun, and old projects were allowed to languish. Without direction the army and the bureaucracy became demoralized and indifferent, while the Sudanese became disgruntled with the government. In 1856 the viceroy Sa`d Pasha visited the Sudan and, shocked by what he saw, contemplated abandoning it altogether. Instead, he abolished the office of governor-general and had each Sudanese province report directly to the viceregal authority in Cairo. This state of affairs persisted until Sa`d’s death in 1863.

During these quiescent decades, however, two ominous developments began that presaged future problems. Reacting to pressure from the Western powers, particularly Great Britain, the governor-general of the Sudan was ordered to halt the slave trade. But not even the viceroy himself could overcome established custom with the stroke of a pen and the erection of a few police posts. If the restriction of the slave trade precipitated resistance among the Sudanese, the appointment of Christian officials to the administration and the expansion of the European Christian community in the Sudan caused open resentment. European merchants, mostly of Mediterranean origin, were either ignored or tolerated by the Sudanese and confined their contacts to compatriots within their own community and to the Turko-Egyptian officials whose manners and dress they frequently adopted. They became a powerful and influential group, whose lasting contribution to the Sudan was to take the lead in opening the White Nile and the southern Sudan to navigation and commerce after Muḥammad `Alī had abolished state trading monopolies in the Sudan in 1838 under pressure from the European powers.
Ismā‘īl Pasha and the growth of European influence

After Sa‘īd’s death in 1863, Ismā‘īl Pasha became viceroy of Egypt. Educated in Egypt, Vienna, and Paris, Ismā‘īl had absorbed the European interest in overseas adventures as well as Muḥammad ‘Alī’s desire for imperial expansion and had imaginative schemes for transforming Egypt and the Sudan into a modern state by employing Western technology. First he hoped to acquire the rest of the Nile basin, including the southern Sudan and the Bantu states by the Great Lakes of east-central Africa. To finance this vast undertaking and his projects for the modernization of Egypt itself, Ismā‘īl turned to the capital-rich nations of western Europe, where investors were willing to risk their savings at high rates of interest in the cause of Egyptian and African development. But such funds would be attracted only as long as Ismā‘īl demonstrated his interest in reform by intensifying the campaign against the slave trade in the Sudan. Ismā‘īl needed no encouragement, for he required the diplomatic and financial support of the European powers in his efforts to modernize Egypt and expand his empire. Thus, these two major themes of Ismā‘īl’s rule of the Nilotic Sudan—imperial expansion and the suppression of the slave trade—became intertwined, culminating in a third major development, the introduction of an ever-increasing number of European Christians to carry out the task of modernization.

In 1869 Ismā‘īl commissioned the Englishman Samuel White Baker to lead an expedition up the White Nile to establish Egyptian hegemony over the equatorial regions of central Africa and to curtail the slave trade on the upper Nile. Baker remained in equatorial Africa until 1873, when he established the Equatoria province as part of the Egyptian Sudan. He had extended Egyptian power and curbed the slave traders on the Nile, but he had also alienated certain African tribes and, being a rather tactless Christian, Ismā‘īl’s Muslim administrators as well. Moreover, Baker had struck only at the Nilotic slave trade. To the west, on the vast plains of the Baḥr al-Ghazāl (now a state of the Republic of The Sudan), slave merchants had established enormous empires with stations garrisoned by slave soldiers. From these stations the long lines of human chattels were sent overland through Darfur and Kordofan to the slave markets of the northern Sudan, Egypt, and Arabia. Not only did the firearms of the Khartoumers (as the traders were called) establish their supremacy over the peoples of the interior but also those merchants with the strongest resources gradually swallowed up lesser traders until virtually the whole of the Baḥr al-Ghazāl was controlled by the greatest slaver of them all, al-Zubayr Ṭāḥmah Manṣūr, more commonly known as Zubayr (or Zobeir) Pasha. So powerful had he become that in 1873, the year Baker retired from the Sudan, the Egyptian viceroy (now called the khedive) appointed Zubayr governor of the Baḥr al-Ghazāl. Ismā‘īl’s officials had failed to destroy Zubayr as Baker had crushed the slavers east of the Nile, and to elevate Zubayr to the governorship appeared the only way to establish at least the nominal sovereignty of Cairo over that enormous province. Thus, the agents of Zubayr continued to pillage the Baḥr al-Ghazāl under the Egyptian flag, while officially Egypt extended its dominion to the tropical rainforests of the Congo region. Zubayr remained in detention in Cairo after going there in 1876 to press his claims for a new title.

Ismā‘īl next offered the governorship of the Equatoria province to another Englishman, Charles George Gordon, who in China had won fame and the sobriquet Chinese Gordon. Gordon arrived in Equatoria in 1874. His object was the same as Baker’s—to consolidate Egyptian authority in Equatoria and to establish Egyptian sovereignty over the kingdoms of the great East African lakes. He achieved some success in Equatoria but none in the lakes region. When Gordon retired from Equatoria, the lake kingdoms remained stubbornly independent.

In 1877 Ismā‘īl appointed Gordon governor-general of the Sudan. He returned to the Sudan to lead a crusade against the slave trade and, to assist him in this humanitarian enterprise, surrounded himself with a cadre of European and American Christian officials. In 1877 Ismā‘īl had signed the Anglo-Egyptian Slave Trade Convention, which provided for the termination of the sale and purchase of slaves in the Sudan by 1880. Gordon set out to fulfill the terms of this treaty, and, in whirlwind tours through the country, he broke up the markets and imprisoned the traders. His European subordinates did the same in the provinces.

Gordon’s crusading zeal blinded him to his invidious position as a Christian in a Muslim land and obscured from him the social and economic effects of arbitrary repression. Not only did his campaign create a crisis in the Sudan’s economy but the Sudanese soon came to believe that the crusade, led by European Christians, violated the principles and traditions of Islam. By 1879 a strong current of reaction against Gordon’s reforms was running through the country. The powerful slave-trading interests had, of course,
turned against the administration, while the ordinary villagers and nomads, who habitually blamed the government for any
difficulties, were quick to associate economic depression with Gordon’s Christianity. And then suddenly, in the middle of rising
discontent in the Sudan, Ismāʿīl’s financial position collapsed. In difficulties for years, he could no longer pay the interest on the
Egyptian debt, and an international commission was appointed by the European powers to oversee Egyptian finances. After 16
years of glorious spending, Ismāʿīl sailed away into exile. Gordon resigned.

Gordon left a perilous situation in the Sudan. The Sudanese were confused and dissatisfied. Many of the ablest senior officials,
both European and Egyptian, had been dismissed by Gordon, departed with him, or died in his service. Castigated and ignored by
Gordon, the bureaucracy had lapsed into apathy. Moreover, the office of governor-general, on which the administration was so
dependent, devolved upon Muhammad Raʿūf Pasha, a mild man ill-suited to stem the current of discontent or to shore up the
structure of Egyptian rule, particularly when he could no longer count on Egyptian resources. Such then was the Sudan in June of
1881 when Muḥammad ʿAḥmad declared himself to be the Mahdī (the “Divinely Guided”).

The Mahdiyyah

Muḥammad ʿAḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh was the son of a Dunqulahwi boatbuilder who claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad.
Deeply religious from his youth, he was educated in one of the Sufi orders, the Sammānīyyah, but he later secluded himself on ʿĀbā
Island in the White Nile to practice religious asceticism. In 1880 he toured Kordofan, where he learned of the discontent of the
people and observed those actions of the government that he could not reconcile with his own religious beliefs. Upon his return to
ʿĀbā Island, he clearly viewed himself as a mujaddid, a “renewer” of the Muslim faith, his mission to reform Islam and return it to the
pristine form practiced by the Prophet. To Muḥammad ʿAḥmad the orthodox ʿulamāʾ who supported the administration were no less
infidels than Christians, and, when he later lashed out against misgovernment, he was referring as much to the theological heresy
as to secular maladministration. Once he had proclaimed himself Mahdī, Muḥammad ʿAḥmad was regarded by the Sudanese as an
eschatological figure who foreshadowed the end of an age of darkness (his arrival coincided with the end of a century—in this
case, the 13th—of the Islamic calendar, a period traditionally associated with religious renewal) and heralded the beginnings of a
new era of light and righteousness. Thus, as a divinely guided reformer and symbol, Muḥammad ʿAḥmad fulfilled the requirements of
mahdī in the eyes of his supporters.

Surrounding the Mahdī were his followers, the anṣar (“helpers,” a Qurʿānic term referring to one group of Muhammad’s early
followers), and foremost among them was ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muhammad, who came from the Taʿāʾishah tribe of the Baqqārah Arabs
and, as caliph (khālīfah, “successor”), assumed the leadership of the Mahdist state upon the death of Muḥammad ʿAḥmad. The holy
men, the faqīḥs who had long lamented the sorry state of religion in the Sudan brought on by the legalistic and unappealing
orthodoxy of the Egyptians, looked to the Mahdī to purge the Sudan of the faithless ones. Also in his following, more numerous and
powerful than the holy men, were the merchants formerly connected with the slave trade. All had suffered from Gordon’s campaign
against the trade, and all now hoped to reassert their economic position under the banner of religious war. Neither of these groups,
however, could have carried out a revolution by themselves. The third and vital participants were the Baqqārah Arabs, the cattle
nomads of Kordofan and Darfur who hated taxes and despised government. They formed the shock troops of the Mahdist
revolutionary army, whose enthusiasm and numbers made up for its primitive technology. Moreover, the government itself only
managed to enhance the prestige of the Mahdī by its fumbling attempts to arrest him and proscribe his movement. By September
1882 the Mahdists controlled all of Kordofan, and at Shaykān on November 5, 1883, they destroyed an Egyptian army of 10,000
men under the command of a British colonel. After Shaykān, the Sudan was lost, and not even the heroic leadership of Gordon,
who was hastily sent to Khartoum, could save the Sudan for Egypt. On January 26, 1885, the Mahdists captured Khartoum and
massacred Gordon and the defenders.

The reign of the Khalīfah

Five months after the fall of Khartoum, the Mahdi died suddenly on June 22, 1885. He was succeeded by the Khalífah 'Abd Allāh. The Khalífah’s first task was to secure his own precarious position among the competing factions in the Mahdist state. He frustrated a conspiracy by the Mahdi’s relatives and disarmed the personal retinues of his leading rivals in Omdurman, the Mahdist capital of the Sudan.

Having curtailed the threats to his rule, the Khalífah sought to accomplish the Mahdi’s dream of a universal jihad (holy war) to reform Islam throughout the Muslim world. With a zeal compounded from a genuine wish to carry out religious reform, a desire for military victory and personal power, and an appalling ignorance of the world beyond the Sudan, the Khalífah sent his forces to the four points of the compass to spread Mahdism and extend the domains of the Mahdist state. By 1889 this expansionist drive was spent. In the west the Mahdist armies had achieved only an unstable occupation of Darfur. In the east they had defeated the Ethiopians, but the victory produced no permanent gain. In the southern Sudan the Mahdists had scored some initial successes but were driven from the upper Nile in 1897 by the forces of the Congo Free State of Leopold II of Belgium. On the Egyptian frontier in the north the jihad met its worst defeat, at Tūshkī in August 1889, when an Anglo-Egyptian army under General F.W. (later Baron) Grenfell destroyed a Mahdist army led by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Nujūmī.

The Mahdist state had squandered its resources on the jihad, and a period of consolidation and contraction followed, necessitated by a sequence of bad harvests resulting in famine, epidemic, and death. Between 1889 and 1892 the Sudan suffered its most devastating and terrible years, as the Sudanese sought to survive on their shriveled crops and emaciated herds. After 1892 the harvests improved, and food was no longer in short supply. Moreover, the autocracy of the Khalífah had become increasingly acceptable to most Sudanese, and, having tempered his own despotism and eliminated the gross defects of his administration, he, too, received the widespread acceptance, if not devotion, that the Sudanese had accorded the Mahdi.

In spite of its many defects, the Khalífah’s administration served the Sudan better than its many detractors would admit. Certainly the Khalífah’s government was autocratic, but, while autocracy may be repugnant to European democrats, it not only was understandable to the Sudanese but appealed to their deepest feelings and attitudes formed by tribe, religion, and past experience with the centralized authoritarianism of the Ottomans. For them the Khalífah was equal to the task of governing bequeathed him by the Mahdi. Only when confronted by new forces from the outside world, of which he was ignorant, did 'Abd Allāh’s abilities fail him. His belief in Mahdism, his reliance on the superb courage and military skill of the ānṣar, and his own ability to rally them against an alien invader were simply insufficient to preserve his independent Islamic state against the overwhelming technological superiority of Britain. And, as the 19th century drew to a close, the rival imperialisms of the European powers brought the full force of this technological supremacy against the Mahdist state.

**The British conquest**

British forces invaded and occupied Egypt in 1882 to put down a nationalist revolution hostile to foreign interests and remained there to prevent any further threat to the khedive’s government or the possible intervention of another European power. The consequences of this were far-reaching. A permanent British occupation of Egypt required the inviolability of the Nile waters—without which Egypt could not survive—not from any African state, which did not possess the technical resources to interfere with it, but from rival European powers, which could. Consequently, the British government, by diplomacy and military maneuvers, negotiated agreements with the Italians and the Germans to keep them out of the Nile valley. They were less successful with the French, who wanted them to withdraw from Egypt.

Once it became apparent that the British were determined to remain, the French cast about for means to force the British from the Nile valley. In 1893 an elaborate plan was concocted by which a French expedition would march across Africa from the west coast to Fashoda (Kodok) on the upper Nile, where it was believed a dam could be constructed to obstruct the flow of the Nile waters. After inordinate delays, the French Nile expedition set out for Africa in June 1896, under the command of Captain Jean-Baptiste Marchand.

As reports reached London during 1896 and 1897 of Marchand’s march to Fashoda, Britain’s inability to insulate the Nile valley
became embarrassingly exposed. British officials desperately tried one scheme after another to beat the French to Fashoda. They all failed, and by the autumn of 1897 British authorities had come to the reluctant conclusion that the conquest of the Sudan was necessary to protect the Nile waters from French encroachment. In October an Anglo-Egyptian army under the command of General Sir (later Lord) Horatio Herbert Kitchener was ordered to invade the Sudan. Kitchener pushed steadily but cautiously up the Nile. His Anglo-Egyptian forces defeated a large Mahdist army at the Abarah River on April 8, 1898. Then, after spending four months preparing for the final advance to Omdurman, Kitchener's army of about 25,000 troops met the massed 60,000-man army of the Khalifah outside the city on September 2, 1898. By midday the Battle of Omdurman was over. The Mahdists were decisively defeated with heavy losses, and the Khalifah fled, to be killed nearly a year later.

Kitchener did not long remain at Omdurman but pressed up the Nile to Fashoda with a small flotilla. There, on September 18, 1898, he met Captain Marchand, who declined to withdraw: the long-expected Fashoda crisis had begun. Both the French and British governments prepared for war. Neither the French army nor the navy was in any condition to fight, however, and the French were forced to give way. An Anglo-French agreement of March 1899 stipulated that French expansion eastward in Africa would stop at the Nile watershed. (See Fashoda Incident.)

The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium

The early years of British rule

Having conquered the Sudan, the British now had to govern it. But the administration of this vast land was complicated by the legal and diplomatic problems that had accompanied the conquest. The Sudan campaigns had been undertaken by the British to protect their imperial position as well as the Nile waters, yet the Egyptian treasury had borne the greater part of the expense, and Egyptian troops had far outnumbered those of Britain in the Anglo-Egyptian army. The British, however, did not simply want to hand the Sudan over to Egyptian rule; most Englishmen were convinced that the Mahdiyyah was the result of 60 years of Egyptian oppression. To resolve this dilemma, the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was declared in 1899, whereby the Sudan was given separate political status under which sovereignty was jointly shared by the khedive and the British crown, and the Egyptian and the British flags were flown side by side. The military and civil government of the Sudan was invested in a governor-general appointed by the khedive of Egypt but nominated by the British government. In reality, there was no equal partnership between Britain and Egypt in the Sudan. From the first the British dominated the condominium and set about pacifying the countryside and suppressing local religious uprisings, which created insecurity among British officials but never posed a major threat to their rule. The north was quickly pacified and modern improvements were introduced under the aegis of civilian administrators, who began to replace the military as early as 1900. In the south, resistance to British rule was more prolonged; administration there was confined to keeping the peace rather than making any serious attempts at modernization.

The first governor-general was Lord Kitchener himself, but in 1899 his former aide, Sir Reginald Wingate, was appointed to succeed him. Wingate knew the Sudan well and, during his long tenure as governor-general (1899–1916), became devoted to its people and their prosperity. His tolerance and trust in the Sudanese resulted in policies that did much to establish confidence in Christian British rule by a devoutly Muslim, Arab-oriented people.

Modernization was slow at first. Taxes were purposely kept light, and the government consequently had few funds available for development. In fact, the Sudan remained dependent on Egyptian subsidies for many years. Nevertheless, railway, telegraph, and steamer services were expanded, particularly in Al-Jazirah, in order to launch the great cotton-growing scheme that remains today the backbone of The Sudan's economy. In addition, technical and primary schools were established, including the Gordon Memorial College, which opened in 1902 and soon began to produce a Western-educated elite that was gradually drawn away from the traditional political and social framework. Scorned by the British officials (who preferred the illiterate but contented fathers to the ill-educated, rebellious sons) and adrift from their own customary tribal and religious affiliations, these Sudanese turned for encouragement to Egyptian nationalists; from that association 20th-century Sudanese nationalism was born.

Its first manifestations occurred in 1921, when 'Ali Abd al-Latif founded the United Tribes Society and was arrested for nationalist...
Agitation. In 1924 he formed the White Flag League, dedicated to driving the British from the Sudan. Demonstrations followed in Khartoum in June and August and were suppressed. When the governor-general, Sir Lee Stack, was assassinated in Cairo on November 19, 1924, the British forced the Egyptians to withdraw from the Sudan and annihilated a Sudanese battalion that mutinied in support of the Egyptians. The Sudanese revolt was ended, and British rule remained unchallenged until after World War II.

**The growth of national consciousness**

In 1936 Britain and Egypt had reached a partial accord in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that enabled Egyptian officials to return to the Sudan. Although the traditional Sudanese sheikhs and chiefs remained indifferent to the fact that they had not been consulted in the negotiations over this treaty, the educated Sudanese elite were resentful that neither Britain nor Egypt had bothered to solicit their opinions. Thus, they began to express their grievances through the Graduates’ General Congress, which had been established as an alumni association of Gordon Memorial College and soon embraced all educated Sudanese.

At first the Graduates’ General Congress confined its interests to social and educational activities, but, with Egyptian support, the organization demanded recognition by the British to act as the spokesman for Sudanese nationalism. The Sudanese government refused, and the Congress split into two groups: a moderate majority, prepared to accept the good faith of the government, and a radical minority, led by Ismā’īl al-Azharī, which turned to Egypt. By 1943 Azharī and his supporters had won control of the Congress and organized the Ashiqqā’ (Brothers), the first genuine political party in the Sudan. Seeing the initiative pass to the militants, the moderates formed the Ummah (Nation) Party under the patronage of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mahdī, the posthumous son of the Mahdī, with the intention of cooperating with the British toward independence.

Sayyid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān had inherited the allegiance of the thousands of Sudanese who had followed his father. He now sought to combine to his own advantage this power and influence with the ideology of the Ummah. His principal rival was Sayyid ʿAlī al-Mirghānī, the leader of the Khātmiyyah brotherhood. Although he personally remained aloof from politics, Sayyid ʿAlī threw his support to Azharī. The competition between the Azharī-Khātmiyyah faction—remodeled in 1951 as the National Unionist Party (NUP)—and the Ummah-Mahdist group quickly rekindled old suspicions and deep-seated hatreds that soured Sudanese politics for years and eventually strangled parliamentary government. These sectarian religious elites virtually controlled The Sudan’s political parties until the last decade of the 20th century, stultifying any attempt to democratize the country or to include the millions of Sudanese remote from Khartoum in the political process.

Although the Sudanese government had crushed the initial hopes of the Congress, the British officials were well aware of the pervasive power of nationalism among the elite and sought to introduce new institutions to associate the Sudanese more closely with the task of governing. An advisory council was established for the northern Sudan consisting of the governor-general and 28 Sudanese, but Sudanese nationalists soon began to agitate to transform the advisory council into a legislative one that would include the southern Sudan. The British had facilitated their control of the Sudan by segregating the animist or Christian Africans who predominated in the south from the Muslim Arabs who were predominant in the north. The decision to establish a legislative council forced the British to abandon this policy; in 1947 they instituted southern participation in the legislative council.

The creation of this council produced a strong reaction on the part of the Egyptian government, which in October 1951 unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 and proclaimed Egyptian rule over the Sudan. These hasty and ill-considered actions only managed to alienate the Sudanese from Egypt until the revolution in July 1952 led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and Muḥammad Naguib placed men with more understanding of Sudanese aspirations in power in Cairo. On February 12, 1953, the Egyptian government signed an agreement with Britain granting self-government for the Sudan and self-determination within three years for the Sudanese. Elections for a representative parliament to rule the Sudan followed in November and December 1953. The Egyptians threw their support behind Ismā’īl al-Azharī, the leader of the NUP, who campaigned on the slogan “Unity of the Nile Valley.” This position was opposed by the Ummah Party, which had the less-vocal but pervasive support of British officials. To the
shock of many British officials and to the chagrin of the Ummah, which had enjoyed power in the legislative council for nearly six years, Azhari’s NUP won an overwhelming victory. Although Azhari had campaigned to unite the Sudan with Egypt, the realities of disturbances in the southern Sudan and the responsibilities of political power and authority ultimately led him to disown his own campaign promises and to declare The Sudan an independent republic with an elected representative parliament on January 1, 1956.

The Republic of The Sudan

The triumph of liberal democracy in The Sudan was short-lived. Compared with the strength of tradition, which still shaped the life of the Sudanese, the liberalism imported from the West was a weak force, disseminated through British education and adopted by the Sudanese intelligentsia. At first parliamentary government had been held in high esteem as the symbol of nationalism and independence. But, at best, the parliament was a superficial instrument. It had been introduced into The Sudan at precisely the time parliamentary forms were rapidly disappearing from other countries in the Middle East. Political parties were not well-organized groups with distinct objectives but loose alliances motivated primarily by personal interests and loyalty to the various religious factions. When the tactics of party management were exhausted, parliament became debased, benefiting only those politicians who reaped the rewards of power and patronage. Disillusioned with their experiment in liberal democracy, the Sudanese turned once again to authoritarianism.

The ʿAbbūd government

On the night of November 16–17, 1958, the commander in chief of the Sudanese army, General Ibrāhīm ʿAbbūd, carried out a bloodless coup d’état, dissolving all political parties, prohibiting assemblies, and temporarily suspending newspapers. A Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, consisting of 12 senior officers, was set up, and army rule brought rapid economic improvements. The ʿAbbūd government at once abolished the fixed price on cotton and sold all the Sudanese cotton, rebuilding the nation’s foreign reserves. On November 8, 1959, the government concluded an agreement with Egypt on the Nile waters, by which Egypt not only recognized but also appeared to be reconciled to an independent Sudan. In the southern Sudan, ʿAbbūd’s policies were less successful. In the name of national unity, the army officers introduced many measures designed to facilitate the spread of Islam and the Arabic language. Important positions in the administration and police were staffed by northern Sudanese. Education was shifted from the English curriculum of the Christian missionaries, who had long been solely responsible for education in the south, to an Arabic, Islamic orientation. Foreign Christian missionaries were expelled between 1962 and 1964.

In the southern Sudan itself, the measures of the central government met ever-increasing resistance. In October 1962 a widespread strike in southern schools resulted in antigovernment demonstrations followed by a general flight of students and others over the border. In September 1963 rebellion erupted in eastern Al-Istiwā’iyyah (Equatoria) and in the A’āfī al-Nīl (Upper Nile) province, led by the Anya Nya, a southern Sudanese guerrilla organization that believed that only violent resistance would make the government of General ʿAbbūd seek a solution acceptable to the southerners. In return the generals in Khartoum increased repression.

Although the northern Sudanese had little sympathy for their countrymen in the south, the intelligentsia was able to use the government’s failure there to assail authoritarian rule in the north and to revive demands for democratic government. By 1962, numerous urban elements, including the intelligentsia, the trade unions, and the civil service, as well as the powerful religious brotherhoods, had become alienated from the military regime. Moreover, the tribal masses and growing proletariat had become increasingly apathetic toward the government. In the end the regime was overwhelmed by boredom and overthrown by the reaction to its lassitude. The means of its overthrow was the southern problem.

In October 1964, students at the University of Khartoum held a meeting, in defiance of a government prohibition, in order to condemn government action in the southern Sudan and to denounce the regime. Demonstrations followed, and, with most of its forces committed in the southern Sudan, the military regime was unable to maintain control. The disorders soon spread, and General ʿAbbūd resigned as head of state; a transitional government was appointed to serve under the provisional constitution of
1956.

The Sudan since 1964

Under the leadership of Sirr al-Khâtim al-Khalîfah, the transitional government held elections in April and May 1965 to form a representative government. A coalition government headed by a leading Ummah politician, Muḥammad Aḥmad Mahjûb, was formed in June 1965. As before, parliamentary government was characterized by factional disputes. On the one hand Mahjûb enjoyed the support of the traditionalists within the Ummah Party, represented by the Imâm al-Hâdî, the spiritual successor to the Mahdî, while on the other hand he was challenged by Sayyîd Şâdîq al-Mahdî, the young great-grandson of the Mahdî, who led the more progressive forces within the Ummah. Unable to find common objectives, parliament failed to deal with the economic, social, and constitutional problems in The Sudan. Moreover, the earlier hopes expressed by the transitional government of cooperation with the southerners soon vanished. Conflict continued in the south, with little hope of resolution. A group of young officers led by Colonel Gaafar Mohamed el-Nimeiri (Jaʿfar Muḥammad Numayrî)—tired of having no workable constitution, a stagnant economy, a political system torn by sectarian interests, and a continuing civil conflict in the south—seized the government on May 25, 1969.

The early Nimeiri regime

When Nimeiri and his young officers assumed power, they were confronted by threats from communists on the left and the Ummah on the right. Nimeiri disbanded the Sudanese Communist Party, which went underground; its leader, Imâm al-Hâdî, was killed and his supporters dispersed. An abortive coup by the resilient communists in July 1971 collapsed after popular and foreign support held steadfast for the reinstallation of Nimeiri. The abortive coup had a profound effect on Nimeiri. He promised a permanent constitution and National Assembly, established himself as president of the state, and instituted the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) as the country’s only party. The affair also produced the incentive to press for a resolution to the southern rebellion.

The Addis Ababa Agreement

In 1971 the southern Sudanese rebels, who had theretofore consisted of several independent commands, were united under General Joseph Lagu, who combined under his authority both the fighting units of the Anya Nya and its political wing, the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). Thereafter throughout 1971 the SSLM, representing General Lagu, maintained a dialogue with the Sudanese government over proposals for regional autonomy and the ending of hostilities. These talks culminated in the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement on February 27, 1972. The agreement ended the 17-year conflict between the Anya Nya and the Sudanese army and ushered in autonomy for the southern region, which would no longer be divided into the three provinces of Al-Istiwâ’iyyah (Equatoria), Bahr al-Ghazāl, and A’ālī al-Nil (Upper Nile). The region’s affairs would be controlled by a separate legislature and executive body, and the soldiers of the Anya Nya would be integrated into the Sudanese army and police. The Addis Ababa Agreement brought Nimeiri both prestige abroad and popularity at home.

Economic development

The signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement enabled economic development in The Sudan to proceed using funds that had previously been allocated for the civil war. This redirection of government resources to peaceful projects coincided with the dramatic growth of petroleum revenues in the Persian Gulf, and the Arab states there began investing large sums in The Sudan in order to transform it into the “breadbasket” of the Arab world. The resulting spate of development projects in the 1970s was followed by investments from private multinational corporations and generous loans from the International Monetary Fund. The highest priority was placed on expanding The Sudan’s production of sugar, wheat, and cotton in order to provide foreign exchange. The new projects were accompanied by efforts to expand the national infrastructure and to construct the Junqal (Jonglei) Canal through the great swamps of Al-Sudd.

Though these projects were laudable in conception, their flawed implementation plunged The Sudan into a severe economic crisis by 1980. Few projects were completed on time, and those that were never met their production targets. The steady decline of The
Sudan’s gross domestic output from 1977 left the country in a cycle of increasing debt, severe inflation, and ever-diminishing standard of living.

There were two fundamental causes for the failure of The Sudan’s economic development. First, planning was deficient, and decisions were increasingly precipitous and mercurial. There was no overall control, so individual ministries negotiated external loans for projects without the approval of the central planning authority. The result was not only incompetent management but also innumerable opportunities for corruption. The second cause of economic failure lay in external events over which The Sudan had no control. Rising oil prices dramatically increased The Sudan’s bill for petroleum products, while the concomitant development projects in the Persian Gulf siphoned off from The Sudan its best professional and skilled workers, who were lured by high wages abroad only to create a “brain drain” at home. The Nimeiri regime did not prove successful in breaking this cycle of persistent economic decline.

The rise of Muslim fundamentalism

In the elections of 1965, the Islamic Charter Front, a political party that espoused the principles of the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwān al-Muslimīn), received only an insignificant portion of the popular vote. But the election roughly coincided with the return from France of Hasan al-Turābī, who assumed the leadership of the party, renamed the Islamic National Front (NIF). Turābī methodically charted the Brotherhood and the NIF on a course of action designed to seize control of the Sudanese government despite the Muslim fundamentalists’ lack of popularity with the majority of the Sudanese people. Tightly disciplined, superbly organized, and inspired by the resurgence of Islam in the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood consciously sought to recruit disciples from the country’s youth. It was relentlessly successful, and by the 1980s the Muslim Brotherhood and the NIF had successfully infiltrated the country’s officer corps, the civil service, and the ranks of secondary-school teachers.

Despite its relatively small size, the Muslim Brotherhood began to exert its influence, which did not go unnoticed by President Nimeiri, whose SSU had failed to galvanize popular support. In the face of deteriorating relations with both the southern Sudanese and the traditionalists of the Ummah-Mahdi grouping, Nimeiri turned increasingly to the Muslim Brotherhood for support. He appointed Turābī attorney general and did not object to the latter’s designs for a new constitution based partly on Islamic law, the Shari‘ah. In September 1983 Nimeiri modified the nation’s legal codes to bring them into accord with Islamic law. This measure was bound to be resisted by the Christians and animists of the southern Sudan. Moreover, Nimeiri was coming to accept the arguments of the Muslim Brotherhood and other northern political groups that the Addis Ababa Agreement had been a mistake. In June 1983 Nimeiri unilaterally divided the southern region again into three provinces, thereby effectively abrogating the Addis Ababa Agreement.

Civil war

Even before the official demise of the agreement, the civil war between the African Christians of the south and the Muslim Arabs of the north had resumed with even greater ferocity than before. There had been sporadic uprisings in the south since the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972, but they had been quickly suppressed. In May 1983, however, an army battalion stationed at Bor mutinied and fled into the bush under the leadership of Colonel John Garang de Mabior. The rebels had become disenchanted with Nimeiri and his government, which was riddled with corruption and was contemptuous of southerners. Led by Garang, the ranks of the Bor garrison, which had taken up sanctuary in Ethiopia, were soon swollen by discontented southerners determined to redress their grievances by force of arms under the banner of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political wing, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM).

Nimeiri’s overthrow and its aftermath

Although Nimeiri at first sought to crush the rebels by military force, his deployment of the Sudanese army only succeeded in disrupting the distribution of food, which, when coupled with drought and diminished harvests, created widespread famine in the southern Sudan. Without popular support, Nimeiri found himself facing a successful armed rebellion in the south and growing
criticism in the north over the rigour with which he sought to carry out the corporal punishments prescribed under Islamic law. In response, Nimeiri softened his hard-line policies: he annulled the state of emergency that he had invoked five months earlier, he rescinded the tripartite division of the south, and he suspended the more brutal aspects of the Islamic courts. But these futile gestures were too late. Nimeiri was overthrown in a bloodless coup in April 1985 by his chief of staff, General 'Abd al-Rahmān Siwar al-Dahab. Although the new military government held elections in 1986 that returned Ṣādiq al-Mahdī as prime minister, the next three years were characterized by political instability, indecisive leadership, party manipulations resulting in short-lived coalitions, and abortive attempts to reach a peaceful settlement with the SPLA. These years of indecision came to an end on June 30, 1989, when a Revolutionary Command Council for National Salvation led by Lieutenant General Omar Ḥasan ʿAḥmad al-Bashir seized power.

The emergence of the National Islamic Front

The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was in fact the vehicle for the NIF. Bashir and his colleagues realized that, as a minority with little popular support, they would have to resort to harsh measures to curtail the educated elites who had been instrumental in organizing populist revolutions in the past. With a ruthlessness to which the Sudanese were unaccustomed, the RCC imprisoned hundreds of political opponents, banned trade unions and political parties, silenced the press, and dismantled the judiciary. It sought to prosecute the war in the south with vigour, inhibited only by the deterioration of the national economy. With the support of the NIF, the Muslim Brotherhood, and a ruthless and efficient security system, the most unpopular government in the modern history of The Sudan remained firmly in power as the country entered the last decade of the 20th century.

The confidence of the RCC and its supporters in the Muslim Brotherhood enabled Bashir to reintroduce Islamic law, including corporal punishment, in March 1991 and emboldened the government to support Iraq in the Persian Gulf War. Both these acts isolated The Sudan not only from the West but from its Arab neighbours as well (although the Libyan government was supportive). The economy continued to deteriorate, precipitated by this isolation and also by civil war in the south, fallen productivity, and rampant inflation. There were widespread shortages of basic commodities, particularly in the sensitive urban areas, creating disturbances which were ruthlessly suppressed. In the south the army continued to lose towns to the SPLA, but it managed to hold the three provincial capitals of Malakāl, Wāw, and Juba. Unable to defeat the SPLA on the field of battle, the government armed and unleashed an Arab militia against their traditional African rivals, principally the Dinka. Moreover, it consistently ignored pleas for food and obstructed the efforts of Western humanitarian relief agencies to provide food aid. Caught between two armies, plundered by the Arab militia, and scourged by a persistent drought, countless Africans fled to northern towns and cities or sought sanctuary in Ethiopia. Thousands perished fleeing the endemic East African famine or in the camps for the displaced, where they received no relief from the RCC-led government, which was determined to crush the SPLA as the initial step in a policy to Islamize the non-Muslims of the southern Sudan.

Robert O. Collins

The RCC ruled until 1993; that year it oversaw the transition from military rule to a civilian government. Nonetheless, it was a civilian government in which the NIF was securely in power, as the RCC appointed Bashir to the presidency of the new government before disbanding. The first presidential and legislative elections since the 1989 coup were held in 1996; Bashir won the presidency and was also reelected in 2000. The ostensible transformation of the government continued with a 1998 referendum in which a new constitution was overwhelmingly approved. The introduction of multiparty politics in 1999, although viewed with pessimism by many, also seemed to support the transition to a more democratic approach to government. The partial suspension of the new constitution later that year, however, tempered optimism, as it appeared The Sudan was clinging to an authoritarian regime. Also that year, The Sudan began to export oil, providing the opportunity to bring in much-needed revenue to the country’s blighted economy.

Meanwhile, the civil war continued to rage. Numerous cease-fires, agreements, and peace discussions occurred during the 1990s and in the early years of the 21st century but yielded very little success. The government of The Sudan and rebels eventually signed a peace agreement in January 2005, giving hope that the conflict that had ravaged the country since the early 1980s was finally over. The peace agreement provided for a new constitution and outlined new measures for sharing power, distributing
wealth, and providing security in the country. It also allowed for a separate administration for southern Sudan and stipulated that a referendum on independence for that region would be held in six years—key issues for the rebels.

A separate conflict that remained unresolved centred on the Darfur region in western Sudan. The conflict began in 2003 when rebels launched an insurrection to protest what they contended was the Sudanese government’s disregard for the western region and its non-Arab population. In response, the government equipped and supported Arab militias—which came to be known as Janjaweed (also Jingaweit or Janjawid)—to fight against the rebels in Darfur. The militias, however, also terrorized the civilians in the region and prevented international aid organizations from delivering much-needed food and medical supplies. Despite a 2004 cease-fire and the presence of African Union (AU) troops that followed, by 2007 the conflict and resulting humanitarian crisis had left hundreds of thousands of people dead and more than two million displaced, internally as well as externally, as they were forced to flee from the fighting. On July 31, 2007, the United Nations Security Council authorized a joint UN-AU peacekeeping mission (UNAMID) to replace the AU mission, although UNAMID troop deployment did not begin until 2008.

In July 2008 an International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor alleged that Bashir, as president of The Sudan, bore criminal responsibility for the crisis in Darfur. The prosecutor accused Bashir of orchestrating genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in the region and sought a warrant for his arrest; the Sudanese government denied the charges and proclaimed Bashir’s innocence. On March 4, 2009, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity but not genocide. The warrant marked the first time that the ICC sought the arrest of a sitting head of state.

The ICC warrant seemed to have little bearing on Bashir’s popularity in The Sudan, and in April 2010 he was reelected as president with some 68 percent of the vote in the country’s first multiparty elections in more than 20 years. Salva Kiir, who had been serving as national first vice president under Bashir and as president of the semi-autonomous government in southern Sudan since the death of John Garang in 2005, received almost 93 percent of the vote to continue serving in that capacity. The election results were clouded by the withdrawal of Bashir’s two main opposition candidates prior to the contest, who alleged that there were already indications of fraudulent practices, and by the declaration by some international observers that the elections fell short of international standards.

Per the terms of the 2005 peace agreement, southern Sudanese citizens voted Jan. 9–15, 2011, in the eagerly awaited referendum on southern independence. Other than a few isolated incidents of violence, the referendum transpired peacefully, and international observers declared the vote to be credible and largely free and fair. Another referendum was initially scheduled to occur at the same time for the inhabitants of the Abyei region, regarding whether that region would be part of the north or the south in the instance that the latter opted for independence. It was postponed indefinitely, however, because of disagreements over voter eligibility in the region.

Preliminary results in the southern independence referendum, released at the end of January, indicated that almost 99 percent of voters opted in favour of seceding from the north; this was confirmed with the announcement of the final results in February. The country then looked toward the final preparations for the south’s secession, scheduled for July 9, 2011.

Ed.

**Additional Reading**

**General works**

Diversity in a Multicultural State (1985), provide basic information on the land, people, economy, and history. John Mack and Peter Robertshaw, Culture History in the Southern Sudan (1982), is a collection of articles on history, archaeology, language, and culture. Further sources on all aspects of the country may be found in M.W. Daly (comp.), Sudan (1983), an annotated bibliography.

Physical and human geography


Ahmad Alawad Sikainga

LINKS Year in Review

Britannica provides coverage of "The Sudan" in the following Year in Review articles.

- Sudan
  (in Sudan: Year In Review 2010)
    - Chad (in Chad: Year In Review 2010)
    - military affairs (in Military Affairs: Year In Review 2010)
    - multinational and regional organizations (in Multinational and Regional Organizations: Year In Review 2010)
    - postcolonial Africa (in Freedom from Empire: An Assessment of Postcolonial Africa: Year In Review 2010 (Africa)
    - Uganda (in Uganda: Year In Review 2010)
Sudan, The

(in The Sudan: Year In Review 2009)
- Burkina Faso (in Burkina Faso: Year In Review 2009)
- Chad (in Chad: Year In Review 2009)
- military affairs (in Military Affairs: Year In Review 2009)
- multinational and regional organizations (in Multinational and Regional Organizations: Year In Review 2009)
- polio (in Health and Disease: Year In Review 2009)
- Uganda (in Uganda: Year In Review 2009)

Sudan, The

(in The Sudan: Year In Review 2008)
- Chad (in Chad: Year In Review 2008)
- Darfur crisis (in Combating the Crisis in Darfur: Year In Review 2008 (Darfur))
- military affairs (in Military Affairs: Year In Review 2008)

Sudan, The

(in The Sudan: Year In Review 2007)
- China (in China: Year In Review 2007)
- military affairs (in Military Affairs: Year In Review 2007)
- multinational and regional organizations (in Multinational and Regional Organizations: Year In Review 2007)
- religion (in Religion: Year In Review 2007)
- wildlife conservation (in The Environment: Year In Review 2007)

Sudan, The

(in The Sudan: Year In Review 2006)
- Burundi (in Burundi: Year In Review 2006)
- Chad (in Chad: Year In Review 2006)
- international law (in Law: Year In Review 2006 (law))
- military affairs (in Military Affairs: Year In Review 2006)
- multinational and regional organizations (in Multinational and Regional Organizations: Year In Review 2006)
- Uganda (in Uganda: Year In Review 2006)
- United States (in United States: Year In Review 2006)

Sudan, The

(in The Sudan: Year In Review 2005)
- Chad (in Chad: Year In Review 2005)
- Ethiopia (in Ethiopia: Year In Review 2005)
- genocide (in Social Protection: Year In Review 2005)
- international law (in Law, Crime, and Law Enforcement: Year In Review 2005 (law))
The Sudan

Aspects of the topic The Sudan are discussed in the following places at Britannica.

Assorted References

- coinage (in coin: North Africa)
- flag history (in Sudan, flag of The)
- history (in Sudan, history of the)
- population and demography (in The Sudan: The people)

agriculture

- irrigational use of Nile River (in Nile River (river, Africa): Irrigation)

art

- African arts (in African art (visual arts): Southern Republic of The Sudan)
- jewelry (in jewelry: African)
- telum figures (in telum figure (devotional image))

physical geography
The following are some people associated with "The Sudan"

- ʿAbd Allāh (Sudanese religious leader)
- al-Mahdī (Sudanese religious leader)
- Anthony John Arkell (British Egyptologist)
- Auguste Mariette (French archaeologist)
- C.G. Seligman (British anthropologist)
- Christian Gottfried Ehrenberg (German biologist)
- Eduard Rüppell (German explorer)
- Gaafar Mohamed el-Nimeiri (president of The Sudan)
- Garnet Wolseley, 1st Viscount Wolseley (British field marshal)
- Ismāʿīl al-Azharī (prime minister of The Sudan)
- John Petherick (British explorer)
- Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir (president of The Sudan)
- Richard Lepsius (German Egyptologist)
- Romolo Gessi (Italian explorer and soldier)
- Rudolf Karl, baron von Slatin (governor of The Sudan)
- Sir James Ronald Leslie Macdonald (British soldier, engineer, and explorer)
- Sir Reginald Wingate, 1st Baronet (British general)

The following are some places associated with "The Sudan"

- Ad-Damazin (Sudan)
- Africa
- Al-Dāmīr (Sudan)
- Al-Duwaym (Sudan)
- Al-Fāshir (Sudan)
- Al-Istiwāʿiyah (region, The Sudan)
- al-Junaynah (Sudan)
- Al-Qaḍārīf (Sudan)
- Al-Sudd (swamp, The Sudan)
- al-Ubayyid (Sudan)
The following is a selection of items (artistic styles or groups, constructions, events, fictional characters, organizations, publications) associated with "The Sudan"

- Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (British-Egyptian history)
- Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDA) (international finance)
Sudan is the largest country in Africa. It is divided into northern and southern regions. Different groups of people live in the two regions, and this has led to long periods of fighting. A peace treaty signed in 2005 set up plans for the two regions to share power. It also called for the people in southern Sudan to vote on whether or not they wanted to create a separate country. That vote took place in 2011, but the results were not announced immediately. The capital of Sudan is Khartoum.

Covering 967,499 square miles (2,505,810 square kilometers), the Republic of the Sudan is the largest country in Africa. The Sudan is located in the northeastern part of the continent, where it has many neighbors. It is bordered by Egypt on the north and Libya on the northwest. Chad lies along the western border and the Central African Republic lies to the southwest. The Democratic Republic of the Congo shares the southwestern boundary with Uganda and Kenya. Ethiopia and Eritrea extend along the eastern border, and the Red Sea stretches along the northeastern corner. The Sudan has two capital cities-Khartoum, where the executive branch is based, and Omdurman, the site of the national legislature.
The African Cookbook

Official Site of the Embassy of Sudan in Berlin, Germany

Citations

MLA Style:


APA Style: