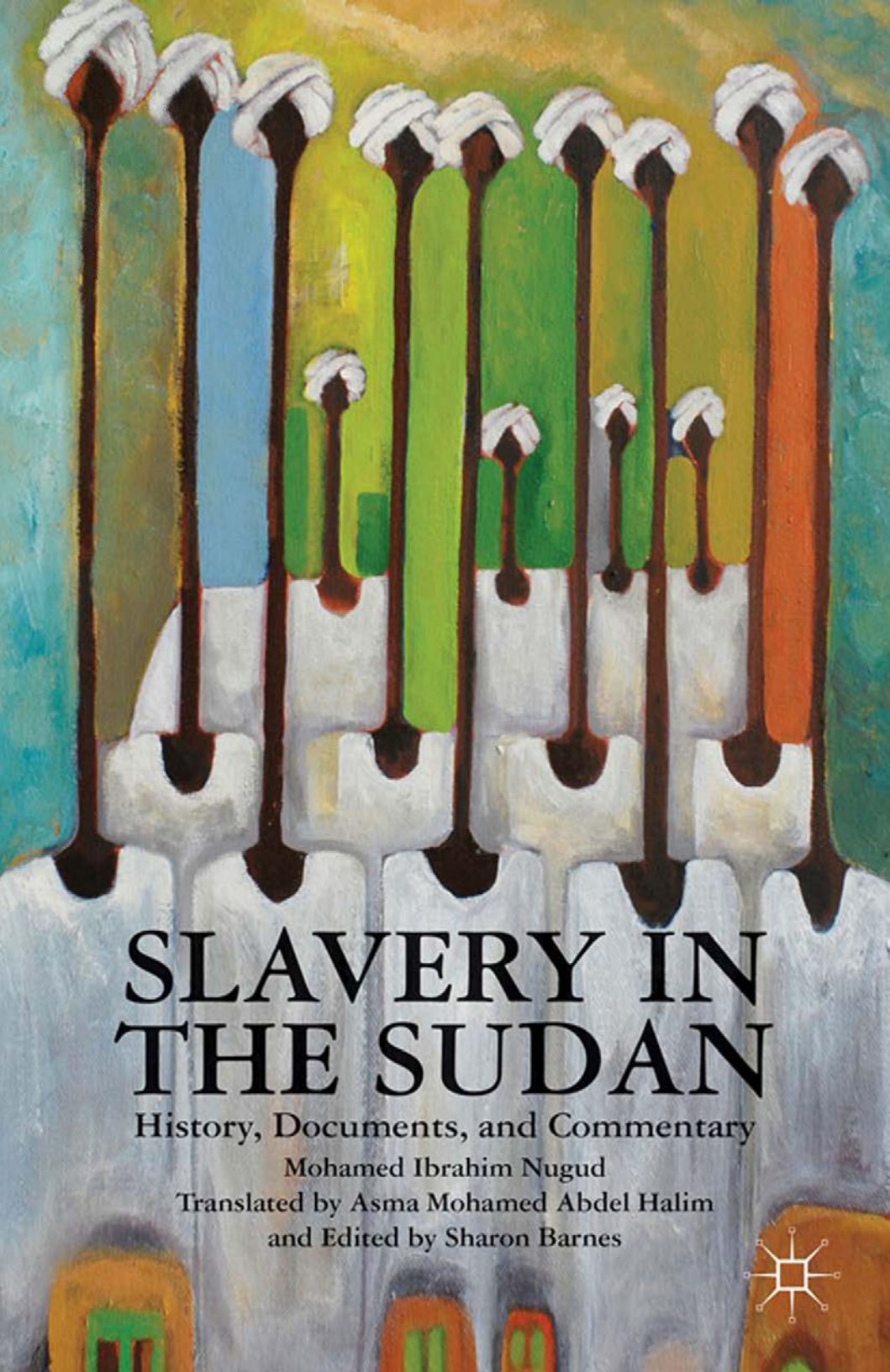

SLAVERY IN THE SUDAN

History, Documents, and Commentary

Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud
Translated by Asma Mohamed Abdel Halim
and Edited by Sharon Barnes

Slavery in the Sudan

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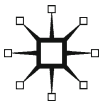

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This translation is dedicated to the memory of
Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud
who dared to bring slavery to a wider Sudanese audience

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Contents

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Tables

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Preface

Any job of translation or editing a translation is, by its very nature, fraught with opportunities for misunderstanding, not only of the intent of the original author, whose language the editor does not understand, but also between the translator and the editor, who, while both are working toward the same goal, are attempting to bridge gaps of linguistic, social, historical, and cultural traditions. In the case of this book, *Slavery Relations in the Sudan,* we as translator and editor had to address many questions, since the book was written mainly for a Sudanese audience. While the translation is intended to include English speakers from different parts of the world, our primary target audience is university students. We had to work through the significant problems of presenting terminology and history that are largely unknown to our target audience. In doing so, we sought to produce a translation that answers questions without invasive changes to the text; the only alterations are reorganization of minor sections without any change to the meaning.

We have, to the best of our ability, preserved not only the unique language and flavor of the voice of the author, Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, with its occasional biting sarcasm or humorous rebuttal, but also the structure of his thought and arguments, with a few, mostly minor exceptions, for the sake of clarity, where we felt the gap between the original document and the expectations or knowledge of the intended audience might be too wide. Only one of these exceptions is worthy of mention. In chapter 1, the introduction and critique of four documents of the Meroetic government were merged, instead of treating them separately, so as to move the critiques of each document closer to the description of the document itself, expressly for the purpose of ease of understanding the critiques.

Parts of the original book that are not included in this translation include the extra material annexed as further explanation. Four examples from correspondence regarding slavery during the Mahdiyya era were also not included as they were a repetition to prove the same

point. Most of the material in the annexes is already available in English in the Encyclopedia Brittanica, parts of this book, and other historical publications. We hope that we have been successful in providing a clear translation in our effort to bring this important book to a wider readership.

SHARON L. BARNES
Toledo, Ohio

Glossary

Adamiyya	Female human being
Ahl albeit	Relatives of the Prophet Mohamed
Al-abb	Father
Al-ubouah	Fatherhood
Aqd	Indenture or contract
Awadim	Human beings
Awlad al-Arab	Men of Arab origin
Bait almal	Treasury
Bait alnnar	Kitchen
Bandaga	Soldiers carrying guns
Bawaboon	Door guards
Daftar sadir	Dispatch ledger, correspondence is filed in dispatch or received ledgers
Daim	Neighborhoods for discharged and sometimes active soldiers' residence
Dobait	Short poem couplet, sung in a melancholic tone
Dongolawi	Pertaining to the city of province of Dongola
Durrah	Sorgum; Grain that is the staple food in the Sudan
Fallata	West African people in the Sudan
Faqih plural f*uqaha*	Jurist, Muslim scholar
Farkha plural *farkhat*	Female slave
Fatwa	Religious opinion
Fay'	Property gained other than in war
Fidya	Amount of money paid by a slave to get his/her freedom
Futra	Zakat, given after Ramadan
Gazwa, plural *ghazwat*	Raid
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Mecca
Hoshe	Courtyard

Hujja	Charter
Hujja shar`aiyya	Legal charter of ownership
I`alam shara`ai	A document issued by the court stating the heirs and their shares in the inheritance
Jihadiyya	Slave soldiers
Kara	Living quarters for active *jihadiyya*
Khadim	Arabic for servant, in the Sudan it is a female slave
Khalwa, plural *Khalawi*	Qura'nic school
Khut	An area of a province presided over by a sheikh
Kisra	Sudanese thin bread made out of sorghum flour
Madhab	A school of Islamic interpretation and jurisprudence
Madhun	Court officer who presides over marriage contracts and divorce. Sometimes spelled mazun
Malaki	Royal
Mamaleek	Plural of Mamluk
Maqtou`iyya	A certain amount of work to be done in a day
Markaz	Police station
Mulazmeen	Free soldiers
Murhaka	An instrument for milling or grinding grain. It is made of two pieces of stone, a long, oval, stationary piece that holds the grain and a small, oval one to grind it
Nazir	Overseer, the title of a tribal chief or leader
Quntar	One hundred pounds
Radeef	Discharged soldiers' neighborhoods
Rahat	A skirt-like garment made of leather strips
Raqeeq al`aayan	Slaves of the elite
Raya	Flag or banner, each battalion had a flag of a certain color and referred to as a Raya
Ruba`eya	A slave girl of four *shibrs* of height, a *shibir* is 20 centimeters
Sa`aidi	A person from upper Egypt

Saqia	Water wheel operated by oxen used for irrigation
Sawaqi	Plural of *saqia*
shadouf	An ancient tool to lift water from the Nile into the irrigation system. It is one container tied to a rope unlike the *saqia* that has many containers around the wheel.
Sidag	*Mahr*, amount paid to the wife at the conclusion of a marriage contract
Sit	A title given to an upper-class woman or a teacher
Tekaki	Singular *tekiyya,* a long piece of cotton cloth.
Tukul	Hut, in some areas it is a kitchen
Turuq	Plural of *tariqa*, literally path, Sufi sects follow a *tariqa* of a sheikh
Umda	Mayor
Umodiyya	Part of a district presided over by an *Umda*
Waqf	Trust of property arranged to benefit a certain person or entity
Wazeer	Minister, for example, minister of finance
Zakat	Alms paid by Muslims
Zariba	A fence or paling, made of thorny branches to keep animals; it also refers to a fortified camp where slaves are kept. Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as, "an improvised stockade constructed in parts of Africa especially of thorny bushes."

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Translator's Note

Reading and translating this book has been an intensely valuable educational experience. It has also been an emotional experience, both personally and professionally. The narratives I have read and the sad stories and anecdotes I have encountered here have made me angry at the kind of history taught in schools in the Sudan, bitter at how human beings were treated as chattel for centuries, and frustrated at the slow pace of change in Sudanese society in breaking away from that ugly history. At a personal level, this book has brought back childhood memories of people I loved as relatives, only to find out the shameful truth of how those close bonds were created. Professionally, I have found that most of the Sudanese writings on slavery are historical in nature. Perhaps the exception to this general observation is the research and writings of Ahmed Sikainga. His book, *Slaves into Workers*, is in a league by itself, and will remain a classic among the strong references on the subject. This is not to discount the works of the Sudanists on the subject.

Two personal encounters with those who once were slaves occurred when I was a child. The first was when I knew Mustoura, a disabled old woman who lived in my grandmother's house. My grandmother would take food to her, and would tell all of us children to give her water whenever she asked for it. I pitied Mustoura; I would sit by her side for hours listening to the horrifying stories about *Katlat* al-Metamma (the battle of Metamma) when she was attacked with the spears that left her disabled.[1] She told me, "*Sitti* [my mistress] came and collected me." How did she end up at my grandmother's house? I asked. "*Sitti* gave me as a gift to your great grandmother." I asked her the only question I could think of, "to do what?" "To serve her family," she said.

I remember leaving her thinking not about her ordeal, bad as it certainly was, but about the possibility that people could so easily be given away as gifts. What would prevent my parents from giving me

away to serve others? I lived with that fear for days. One day I asked her if it were possible that girls like me could be given away. She smiled and said, "No, not you; only a *khadim* (Sudanese word for a female slave) could be given away. Besides, people have stopped giving away people as gifts to others." Her assurance that people were no longer given away as gifts left me still unsatisfied, so I turned to my grandmother and begged her not to give poor Mustoura away. She was amused. So were other members of my family, especially when they saw how persistent I was. However, grandmother put me at ease, assuring me that Mustoura was not going anywhere; she would surely be staying with her for old time's sake. "She served your great grandmother faithfully when she was young," she noted. "Besides, she has nowhere to go," grandmother added. Mustoura appeared to be satisfied with her situation. She never complained to me about anything.

The other encounter was at school. I was in the second grade. One day, after a fierce fight between two older girls, the headmistress asked all of the students to stand and be silent as she ordered one girl to step to the front of the class and apologize to the girl she had offended. Meanwhile, the ruffled girl was sitting next to one of the teachers crying. The offending girl apologized as ordered and promised, "Never again." The headmistress then turned to us and said that the girl standing in front of class had called the crying one a "*khadim,*" an offensive word that meant slave. I was confused. Unlike Mustoura, the girl who was abused in class was neither old nor disabled. So why was she given the same attribute? I discovered when I grew up that the answer was because she was a descendent of slaves. Since then, I have learned to tell if a person or his or her descendent was once a *khadim* and why should such a designation make a difference. Remembering these encounters brought to chilling reality the fact that slavery as described and discussed in this book is not old or forgotten history.

As an adult I have come to know more about slavery and its importance as an indicator of one's class in contemporary Sudanese society. Slavery was as brutal among the Sudanese as it was elsewhere. Slaves were to serve their masters, be mercilessly separated from their own children and the homes they knew, and sold like other goods, while their descendants were condemned to the status of second-class citizens even if they live as free citizens who are educated and may hold any job. Not only that, but it is clear how color and ethnicity became a mark of slavery. In this book I have come face to face with receipts and bills of sale of humans counted in ledgers as part of the revenue of the state. It has become clear to me that the often-cited difference

between slavery in America and Europe and in Africa is a myth. I believe that anthropologists who made such claims were trying to sugar the pill; perhaps the paradigm of black slaves and white masters was not that easy to shatter. Not being analytically able to accept an all-black slavery institution, some scholars have tried to explain it as a different institution in which African enslavers are seen as "different" masters. Indeed, that was how some Sudanese notables talked about slavery in their correspondence with the colonial government of the Sudan.[2] That way of thinking earned them a sarcastic remark from Mr. Nugud, the author of this book.

To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, slavery *is* slavery *is* slavery. In bondage, one human being's suffering is the same as that of any other. Differences may be seen after the slaves attained freedom. In some areas, they could return to their place of birth and be accepted as human beings. In other places, such as northern Sudan, Egypt, or Arabia, slaves were removed to faraway places and could not return to their places of birth, as indeed was the case of slaves taken to the Ottoman Empire, America, Britain, and other countries. It is amazing how the legacy of slavery persists and endures throughout time.

In doing research for writing this book, the author, Mohamed Ibrahim Nugud, strove to find original and official documents on the subject. He also found many other written accounts of slavery. Clearly, he was frustrated by the lack of documents from certain eras of the history of the Sudan, but he was even more frustrated by the unjustified censorship practiced by the Egyptian authorities regarding Ottoman documents about the Sudan. However, denial of access to critical documents on slavery is not limited to Egyptian authorities. Mr. Nugud would perhaps be utterly shocked to know that the National Records Office (NRO) in Khartoum is now not only staffed by historians and other professionals conversant in the history of their country, it is also staffed by security monitors who may deny researchers access to documents. While the staff was willing and accepting of my application for documents, they came back to tell me that for security reasons it was not possible to peruse documents dealing with the subject of slavery in the Sudan.

Slavery and the State

Slavery in different eras of the history of the Sudan was a state affair, whether it was the ancient kingdoms, the nineteenth-century Turco-Egyptian, or the national government of Mahdiyya that succeeded the Turco-Egyptian rule in 1885. The Anglo-Egyptian government (the Condominium) that was established in 1899 by an agreement

between Britain and Egypt, which left the British the de facto rulers of the Sudan, danced around the issue of slavery for a long time.[3] Although it was private individuals who raided innocent villagers in the Nuba Mountains, South Sudan, and Southern Darfur to capture slaves, the sultans and kings of ancient and medieval kingdoms invariably got the lion's share of the hunt. Slaves were sought to fulfill gender roles, men for the army and women for domestic labor and sexual pleasure. The Turco-Egyptian invaders eyed the Sudan for strong men to serve in the empire's army and embarked on state-funded raids to get them. Robert S. Kramer wrote,

> The Turco-Egyptian conquest of Nilotic Sudan (1820–1822) had its express purpose the acquisition of slaves to serve as soldiers in the new modern army envisioned by the Egyptian ruler, Muhammad Ali. An exceptionally high mortality rate among the slaves doomed this enterprise to failure: perhaps most died en route to Egypt as a consequence of arduous marches and harsh treatment, and those who did reach Cairo quickly succumbed to disease.[4]

Mohammed Ali Pasha of Egypt had to abandon his dream of building an army of Sudanese slaves after only two years because of the high mortality rate among the slaves, due to harsh treatment during the long trip to Egypt. His appointed government in Khartoum, however, continued to recruit slaves into the local army for many years. Historian Kramer states, "His [the Pasha] provincial administration at Khartoum continued to acquire slaves to serve the Turco-Egyptian regime in the Sudan. Branded with the Arabic letter *Jim* (for *Jihadiyya*), these slaves were organized into regular military units and garrisoned throughout the state, which by 1874 covered most of the territory of present day Sudan."[5]

Though prevalent during the Mahdiyya where, as slave soldiers, they played an important military role, the *jihadiyya* as a military group were created and named by the Turco-Egyptian government. They were used both as soldiers and laborers. As they grew old, they would be replaced. The government, for this reason, continued to confiscate young, able-bodied male slaves from slave raiders and enlist them, while discharging others to work at various government departments or in farms belonging to senior officers. The Mahdiyya continued the practice of enlisting slaves into the military. Both the Turkiyya and the Mahdiyya left these slaves in a precarious legal status. They were neither slaves nor free men. As soldiers, they were paid salaries regularly and allowed to have their own slave-servants.