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# KHABIR 'ALI AT HOME IN KUBAYH:
# A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF A DAR FUR CARAVAN LEADER*

By G. Michael La Rue

Khabir 'Ali b. Ibrahim was the foremost caravan leader of mid-nineteenth century Dar Fur, an important land-owner and slaveowner in the Kubayh region and a member of Dar Fur's ruling elite. Examining his life in some detail provides a rare opportunity to study the nexus between long distance trade, changing control over land and social stratification, as they were manifested in the life of a single individual.

Details of his life have been gathered from a variety of sources: from the accounts of travellers, and other published material; from Condominium and British archives; from surviving local written records found in Dar Fur and Asyut; and from his descendants and other informants.[1] He was best known as a caravan leader, but his personal accomplishments in the commercial field can not be readily reconstructed, even though he was khabir through one of Dar Fur's greatest commercial booms, ca 1850-1873.

Rather than describing his travels and his trading career, most of the sources portray Khabir 'Ali at home in Kubayh. They tell primarily of his marriages and children, his house in Kubayh and his lands nearby. Just as his commercial wealth has all disappeared, so apparently has much of his commercial biography. In reality and biography alike, his family and social ties, and his lands have proved to be more enduring.

In the period 1785-1875, a new set of principles for allocating land and labor came to dominate the economy and society of northern Dar Fur. The pre-existing system of land tenure, based on communal holdings by various local sedentary groups, was gradually replaced by the hakura system, based on sultanic land grants.[2] The spread of the hakura system particularly in the area around Kubayh and al-Fashir, the sultanate's political capital, was paralleled by an increase in the local use of agricultural slaves. The most immediate reasons for this transformation were the establishment of a permanent capital at Rahad Tandalti, and the expansion of trade along the darb al-arba 'in, Dar Fur's trans-saharan trade route which ran from Kubayh to Asyut in Upper Egypt. Both these developments followed hard on the conquest of Kordofan by Sultan Muhammad Tayrab in 1785-1786.[3]

Here, the workings of Dar Fur's society and economy will be seen through the lens of Khabir 'Ali's life in Kubayh. The town will be introduced before the man. In the first section of the paper Kubayh will be described from several angles: its location and configuration; its commercial role; and its boom town ethical values. 'Ali b. Ibrahim's life before he became khabir will constitute the second section. There he will be seen primarily as a protege of his paternal uncle, Khabir Muhammad Kannun. When 'Ali b. Ibrahim became a khabir himself, Dar Fur was on the threshold of a new commercial boom. In the third section of the paper, the reasons behind the boom as well as Khabir Ali's possible role in it will be presented before taking up the effects his new status and the good will of the sultan had on his personal life.

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Khabir 'Ali's place in Kubayh will be the subject of the fourth section of the paper, and the topic will be treated literally as well as metaphorically. His house, his lands and his central role in the town will be treated to show that he was part of a class which benefitted from their control of the society and economy.

No biography is complete without a crisis and test of strength. In the fifth section, things fall apart for Khabir 'Ali. First the economic position of Kubayh was threatened by the bahhari traders in the Bahr al-Ghazal, and Dar Fur finally fell to the forces of Zubayr Rahma in 1874. After a brief period of Egyptian rule under various lieutenants of Gordon, the Mahdist tide reached Kubayh and scattered its inhabitants- some to the west, some to the east.[4] Khabir 'Ali ended up in Omdurman, where as one descendant put it, "He sat and did not trade."[5] After the fall of the Mahdist state the sultanate was restored in Dar Fur by 'Ali Dinar, a scion of the royal family. Khabir 'Ali b. Ibrahim returned to the restored sultanate before he died.

## I The town and Plain of Kubayh

Kubayh lies on the eastern edge of a sandy plain marked by the slight roll of the stabilized sand dunes (goz) which cover it, and sloping generally downward from north west to south east.[6] The plain of goz land is encircled by a ring of rocky hills pierced only by a few passes and the course of two large wadis. The larger is Wadi Kubayh, which in the rainy season flows along the eastern edge of the plain, passing between the old site of Kubayh and the eastern mountains. The smaller wadi flows essentially from west to east, joining Wadi Kubayh a few miles south of the former town. Other wadis originating in Jabal Marra further to the south-south west join the combined flow to form Wadi al-Ku' which passes west of al-Fashir before flowing (seasonally) into the sands south east of the capital.[7]

The two wadis of the Kubayh plain also mark the two major trade routes which pass through Kubayh. The first, the darb al-arba'in (the Forty Day Route) runs north from Kubayh up the Wadi Kubayh, quickly passing Kafot and Toma, to al Atrun, across the desert to the Kharja Oasis and on to Asyut on the Nile. The other route traces up the bed of the lesser wadi, up and to the west, cuts through the pass between Jabal Marra and Jabal Si near Kabkabiyya and runs on into Waday. From Kubayh eastward, it follows the combined wadis toward al-Fashir and from there several routes lead eastward to al 'Ubayyid, and to Omdurman on the Nile.[8]

A village called Kubayh had existed on the site at least since the time of Ahmad Bukr.[9] But it was not a town until Sultan Muhammad Tayrab's reign, or more likely, not until that of Sultan 'Abd al-Rahman, for it was in the latter's reign that the Dar Fur caravans surpassed those of Sinnar in size for the first time, and it was he who settled the political capital near Kubayh at Rahad Tendelti, now known as al-Fashir.[10]

The town grew quickly. Browne who lived primarily in Kubayh during his visit to Dar Fur in 1793-1796 thought its total population to be about six thousand persons. Perron, relying on information from al-Tunisi, put Kubayh's male population capable of bearing arms at eight thousand and indicated the total population would be more than four times as large, though this may have been for the Kubayh region. In 1873, Nachtigal estimated that there were two thousand hearths of jallaba in Kubayh, which again implied a much larger total population. The growth of such a town had serious implication for the food and water supply of the region, and had an impact on the value of agricultural land in the area as well.[11]

In contrast with al-Fashir, which had originally had the Sultan's residence as its central focus and was consequently compact, Kubayh was a long

thin town. It extended for about two miles along the banks of Wadi Kubayh, but was comparatively narrow.[12] Browne described the placement of houses of houses as follows:

> The houses are separated from each other by wide intervals as each man chooses for building the spot nearest to the ground he cultivates; so that in an extent of about two miles on a line, not much more than one hundred distinct inclosures properly to be termed houses are visible. The number of villages is considerable; but a few hundred souls form the sum of the largest.[13]

Nachtigal, who visited Kubayh some eighty years later, had similar comments:

> Kobe is quite irregularly constructed, and has grown without any initial plan. The reason for this is partly that the immigration of the "Children of the River" took place very gradually, and partly that it was carried out according to the original tribes and sections of tribes. At the beginning the members of one tribe stayed together in one zariba. As they grew in wealth and numbers, and the settlement became more permanent, the zariba was replaced by a clay wall, and the man who was outstanding because of his wealth and the number of his followers became head of the zariba. As their wealth increased, people finally built for themselves spacious houses, taking into them weaker poor men or members of other tribes. The occupants of a zariba are usually determined according to their original home, but this is by no means always the case. From this development of the village, with houses being built before there were any roads between them, came its lack of orderly arrangement. Even now there is scarcely anything that can be called a street. Everywhere straw huts are to be found alongside clay dwellings.[14]

As will be seen in the description of Khabir 'Ali's house, the brick houses belonged to the more important residents, and it is only these which Browne described as houses.

There were two big mosques in town, one of red baked brick and the other 'green' unbaked brick. At the time of Browne's visit, the red brick mosque was under construction, at the expense of Sultan 'Abd al-Rahman, who is also credited with building a number of brick mosques elsewhere in Dar Fur.[15] The red brick mosque was undoubtedly the most impressive edifice in Kubayh in its day. The building was a square in form approximately fifty feet on a side with walls over a foot thick, and there were a number of internal pillars. It was probably about thirty feet high. Individual bricks were all of large dimensions, approximately 14 x 6 x 4 inches. There was a graveyard about 25 yards away to the south east, where at least two important residents of Kubayh were buried, the Khabir Imam b. 'Abd al-Hafiz and Shaykh Kakom, a renowned holy man.[16]

The smaller green brick mosque was about thirty five to forty feet on a side, and it also had a graveyard nearby. It was known as jama' al-'ilm and had a khalwa (koranic school) associated with it.[17]

These two brick mosques and a number of khalwas made Kubayh quite a religious center. Nearby in Hilla Fuqara', the Juwama' ran a khalwa which attracted not only local boys but some of the sultans' children as well.[18]

Commercial activity took place on two levels in Kubayh. The first level was the provisioning of the town which animated a considerable market in stuffs and other necessities. It was held twice weekly on a large scale, but a smaller market was open every day. The daily market had "firewood, corn, radishes, cords and other trifles" for sale, while the larger market was well supplied with everything.[19] Browne reported on the sale of foodstuffs in his day:

> In the market held at Cobbé, there are slaughtered ordinarily from 10 to 15 oxen, and from forty to 60 sheep; but all the villages, 6 or 8 miles round, are thence supplied. It is usual for the people of the town to lay in their annual stock of grain when cheapest, which is commonly about the month of December...[20]

A number of lesser foodstuffs such as onions, tomatoes, hot peppers, lemons, melons, sugar cane, okra and other fruits and vegetables were also sold as well as salt from Jabal Marra or the desert, and local cotton goods.[21]

The second level of commercial activity was that of the long distance trade. This tended to be conducted in the household compounds of the large traders, though some of the imported goods from Egypt such as beads and cloth which were intended for the retail trade were bought and sold in the open market. Browne reports that slaves were a different matter:

> Slaves ... though sometimes brought to the market, are now commonly sold privately, which is not unfrequently complained of as an evil, inasmuch as it facilitates the sale of such as have been stolen from other quarters.[22]

The buying and selling of ivory and ostrich feathers for export was similarly conducted within the compounds of the larger traders asa was the trade in imported luxury goods.

Particularly in the early days, Kubayh had a seamy side which was typical of a boom town. Allusion has already been made to the practice of stealing slaves, and virtually all the major sources mention the enslavement of free Muslims which was contrary to Muslim law.[23] This disregard for the law is particularly flagrant in the reports of jallaba who would snatch young boys as they made their way home in the evening after attending a khalwa to learn the Qur'an.[24] Slaves would flee or be stolen from merchants in Kubayh, and sometimes they were recovered from other merchants as far away as Cairo.[25]

Kubayh also had a reputation for drinking and violence. Browne blamed this primarily on jallaba from the east:

> The people of Barabra and Kordofan cannot relinquish their favorite liquor, and as all who drink persist in drinking till they are completely inebriated the violent nature of their temper is increased, and gives occasion to continual disputes which frequently are not decided without blows, and occasionally terminate in blood shed.[26]

Another source was alarmed not only at the number of drunks but at the probability of being attacked after dark:

> Once night has come, it is impossible to cross a small stretch of Kubayh, in any section of town, without risk of being murdered. Towards evening the residents of Kubayh

> begin to drink merissa, soon a number of drunken individuals are wandering in every direction for the pleasure of killing those they encounter. Not a day passes but one hears: so-and-so was killed last night; or so many were murdered.[27]

Prostitution is not mentioned explicitly in reference to Kubayh, but it was commonly found in association with alcohol in the Sudan of the time, and was very likely present in Kubayh.

Kubayh's economic role as the starting point of the north-bound caravans can not be underestimated. Each caravan was a major undertaking involving thousands each of camels, slaves and traders.[28] To supply even their equipment must have generated a number of ancillary activities. The caravans needed thousands of large waterskins, each made from a whole cowhide, and waterproofed with gotran; thousands of baggage saddles, saddle pads, saddle bags, reins, bits, rope and so on.[29] Much of the preparation of this material was undoubtedly in the hands of individual merchants, who brought their supplies from their own villages, but there were many foreign merchants without a private local source of supply, and even those from Dar Fur must have made last minute purchases. Food was required for man and beast for the often lengthy period while the caravan assembled, and for the trip; and much of this must have been acquired locally. The final preparations for departure took place in Toma, a village four hours north of Kubayh, along the Wadi Kubayh. Toma was used as the final point of departure to relieve Kubayh of the heavy demand the caravaneers, their beasts and slaves made on Kubayh's water supply.[30]

## II 'Ali b. Ibrahim

'Ali b. Ibrahim was probably born in the early to mid-1820s. Not much is known about his father, Ibrahim b. 'Ali, except that he was of the Tirayfiyya, born in the east, presumably in Kordofan, and later migrated to Kubayh.[31] Many of the immigrants from Kordofan in Dar Fur came in the train of Muhammad Tayrab's victorious army in 1785-1786, but the exact details of the immigration of the Tirayfiyya are not known. The Juwama', a related group apparently arrived in the Kubayh region (Hilla Fuqara') during Muhammad Tayrab's reign, and their presence may have encouraged the Tirayfiyya to join them.[32]

In Kubayh, virtually all the Tirayfiyya were merchants, and as a child and young man, 'Ali b. Ibrahim was certainly exposed to mercantile life rather early. Besides training in hospitality and bargaining, he must have been taught the special skills necessary to survive the desert crossing, and to guide a caravan.[33]

In 1838 'Ali b. Ibrahim was in Egypt when he heard of the death of the Dar Fur sultan, Muhammad Fadl, allegedly from the "Sultan of Egypt," that is Muhammad 'Ali Pasha.[34] 'Ali b. Ibrahim had made the trip to Egypt along the darb al-arba'in, perhaps under the leadership of his paternal uncle, Khabir Muhammad Kannun or one of the other Tirayfi khabirs such as 'Isa Harish.[35] It is not known whether this was his first trip across the desert, and in view of the practice of taking even children along, he may already have been an experienced traveller by this time.[36]

'Ali b. Ibrahim was the protegé of his paternal uncle, khabir Muhammad Kannun, who trained him to be his successor, and gave him one of his daughters to marry.[37] Though even the approximate dates of 5 of his 6 known marriages remain undetermined, it is likely that he married his cousin 'Aisha bint Muhammad Kannun during his uncle's life, and she may have been either the

first or one of his early wives. This marriage followed a typical pattern of cross-cousin marriages (preferably to father's brother's child) and would have fulfilled the expectations of the family.[38] It was a golden opportunity for young 'Ali to solidify his ties to his wealthy and influential uncle, who was both one of the most important merchants in Kubayh and an estate-holder.[39]

A series of documents dealing with the landholdings of Muhammad Kannun also sheds light on the life of 'Ali b. Ibrahim. The first surviving document dated 20 Jumada al Awwal 1256 AH/ 20 July 1840 is a confirmation by the recently installed Sultan Muhammad Husayn (1838-1873) of an estate granted by his father and predecessor Muhammad Fadl (1803-1838) to khabir Muhammad Kannun. The land, located south east of the town of Kubayh, had formerly belonged to Khayr Abu Khadimallah.[40] A second document, from 18 Rabi'a II 1262/ 15 April 1846 is a sijill of a court case between khabir Muhammad Kannun and Abdallah w. Dani over whether or not the latter's farm lay within the khabir's hakura. Muhammad Kannun won the case by producing the above-mentioned charter and nine witnesses to support his claim.[41] But is impossible to tell at this remove whether Muhammad Kannun was encroaching on his neighbor's land or rightfully regaining a portion of his hakura.

Ali b. Ibrahim's interest in this land dispute must have been considerable if he were already married to 'Aisha b. Muhammad Kannun. In Dar Fur women were not excluded from owning land, nor did they receive only half the inheritance of a male sibling. Women could and did inherit a fullshare in their fathers' estates. In practice all the heirs of an estate holder would normally designate one of their number, the eldest or most influential to represent them in court, and to run the estate. Each of the heirs might have his or her own fields within the hakura, and would share in the income collected from the other residents of the hakura.[42] Within a large hakura sections which had been cleared for cultivation were called fisan ('the local Arabic plural for fas in this sense.) Those who cultivated the fas were responsible to one of their number who was called the sid al-fas.[43] 'Aisha stood to inherit land from her father, but 'Ali b. Ibrahim was the one who was likely to actually be the effective sid al-hakura. He was older than Muhammad Kannun's oldest son, and would soon eclipse all his cousins as his uncle's commercial successor.

Although 'Aisha is not mentioned by name in the third document dealing with Muhammad Kannun's land, she was certainly among the unnamed sons and daughters to whom it alluded as beneficiaries. After the death of Muhammad Kannun, his senior children went to Sultan Muhammad Husayn and asked that his hakura might be confirmed for them. This was done in 1267/ 1850-51: "Now, following the Khabir Kannun's death, I have confirmed this aforementioned land with its recorded boundaries to his children referred to in the body of the charter."[44]

For the biographer, this confirmation is important not only because it clarifies one advantage which 'Ali b. Ibrahim gained by marrying his cousin 'Aisha, but also because it gives the approximate date of Muhammad Kannun's death.

## III Khabir 'Ali

From oral sources, it is known that Khabir Muhammad Kannun died of an illness while with a caravan in Egypt. Prior to his death he chose 'Ali b. Ibrahim to serve as khabir for the return trip. Knowing that Muhammad Kannun was dead by 1267 AH/ 1850-51, it is reasonable to assume that 'Ali B. Ibrahim had begun his career six months or a year earlier.[45]

A contemporary view of the importance and duties of the Dar Fur caravan leaders can be found in the writings of Charles Cuny.[46] Cuny noted that a sultanic letter of office was received by the khabir prior to the departure of

the caravan, couched in terms which varied with the esteem in which the particular khabir was held and confiding more or less power in him accordingly.[47] The khabir was also entrusted with a drum which was used to control the march and to signal the caravan's arrival. The khabir's reputation also attracted a greater or lesser number of merchants to accompany the caravan, and there were some merchants who refused to travel with particular khabirs.[48] The khabir acknowledged the confidence placed in him by giving the sultan presents. His authority ended with the return of the caravan to Dar Fur, but if he had fulfilled his duties well, he could reasonably expect to be asked to serve again. One important basis for judging his success was the amount of revenue he provided for the government. He had to manage judiciously in order not to place inordinately high demands on the merchants of the caravan, while still collecting enough to please the sultan.[49]

The khabir hd to be fair, and a good trader. During the crossing he had virtually the authority of a general in wartime. He chose the route, the daily schedule and the camps. He mediated disputes, acting as a judge even when the case involved his own aides or relatives.[50] At the time Cuny wrote, the khabir was also responsible for selling all the merchandise of the caravan: the sultan's, his own and that of all the other traders.[51]

'Ali b. Ibrahim as a new khabir could build on his uncle's reputation, connections and wealth to make his own fortune. Every clue suggests that he quickly became one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Dar Fur. It is not currently possible to determine what if any role khabir 'Ali played in changing some of the commercial practices of the Dar Fur traders, but several observers noted changes around 1850, the date of his installation as khabir.[52] The Dar Fur merchants improved their position in the trans-saharan trade by taking advantage of alterntive markets and buyers, and by increasing their awareness of the real value of their goods:

> ... depuis une dizaine d'années, les khabirs et les djellabs sont devenus beaucoup plus clairvoyants, par suite de la grande concurrence que se font entre eux les negociants qui se présentent pour achèter les marchandises de la caravane, et quoique l'on fasse avec eux des gains encore très considerables, cependant il n'est plus possible de les tromper, comme cela avait lieu autrefois, sur la qualité, le prix et le poids des marchandises qu'ils livrent ni sur la qualité et la valeur de celles qu'ils reçoivent en échange de leurs produits bruts...[53]

They bypassed the middlemen in Asyut by going to Cairo and even to Alexandria to buy the goods they desired for the return trip. This was made easier by the growing practice of insisting on payment in cash, rather than trading by barter: "A few years ago, ignorant of the value of money, Darfour merchants bartered their raw commodities for the manufactured goods of Europe and the East; but like the Kordofanese, they have now learned to estimate its worth, and to dispose of their goods for ready money. With this they purchase other articles, often driving hard bargains...."[54]
This evidence of the improvement of the Dar Fur merchants' terms of trade is supported by other information which indicates the size and frequency of Dar Fur caravans through the 1850s and into the 1860s and 1870s.[55]

As a new khabir, possibly an architect and certainly a beneficiary of the commercial boom, khabir 'Ali began to come out of his uncle's shadow. This is best illustrated by his next important marriage - to a mayram, the sister of the current sultan, Muhammad Husayn.

The ruling elite of Dar Fur had long made strategic marriages to seal political alliances, and the Fur sultans had used this practice well. For example, the Zaghawa had been drawn into an alliance with Sultan Muhammad Tayrab which had been sealed by his marriage to a Zaghawa woman. Their son Ishaq had opposedf 'Abd al-Rahman's accession to the throne, and he was able to count on his Zaghawa maternal relatives for backing.[56] Some mayrams had married holy men, but khabir 'Ali was the first merchant known to have married a royal woman in Dar Fur.[57]

Marriage to a mayram was clearly a great honor and might make a man very wealthy and influential, but it was not without its risks. As will be seen the sultan often granted land to his sisters and daughters on the occasion of their marriages, and he could readily give other presents as well. A mayram's estate was technically given to her husband, but would return to her after a divorce or on his death.[58] The royal brother - or son-in-law gained access to the sultanic ear, became known to all the powerful and wealthy of the court and had access to the elite of Dar Fur. But marriage to a mayram was risky because they were the freest women in Dar Fur: they rode horses astride, they seemed to have a high divorce rate, and there were rumors of their lovers.[59] They often remained more loyal to their family of origin than to their husband, and could in effect spy on him for the sultan.

Browne summed up the position of a mayram's husband quite well:

> Whoever, impelled by vanity, (for no profit attends it) receives to his bed the daughter of a king or powerful Melek, (women of this rank are called Miram) finds her the sole moderatrix of his family, and himself reduced to a cipher. Of his real or reputed offspring he has no voice in the disposal, government or instruction. The princess, who has honoured him with the limited right over her person, becomes not the partner, but the sole proprietor, of all that he possessed; and her moist extravagant caprices must not be thwarted, lest her displeasure should be succeeded by that of the monarch.
>
> The man can not take another wife with the same ceremonies or dowry; and if any dispute arise concerning inheritance, the right is always decided in favour of the Miram. Finally, he is almost a prisoner in the country, which he cannot leave, however distressed, and however he may be inclined to retrieve his fortune by trade, without special permission from the Sultan, and the immediate and unqualified forfeiture not only of the dowry he gave, but of all the valuables he received in consequence of the honourable alliance.[60]

Though Browne probably errs on the pessimistic side, marriage to a mayram was at best a calculated risk, and at worst, folly.

From oral sources, it is known that khabir 'Ali b. Ibrahim married two mayrams at different times. The first was mayram Fatima Umm Dirays, the previous sultan's daughter.[61] Logic suggests that this marriage would have occurred after he became khabir around 1850 but the story is complicated by the mayram's involvement in a previous marriage to al-hajj Ahmad b. Isa. Fortunately, it is possible to compare and interweave oral information with that gleaned from a number of documents pertaining to land and other dealings of the mayram, Ahmad b. 'Isa and khabir 'Ali.[62] By lining up all the known

facts in chronological order, and keeping in mind that khabir 'Ali did marry Mayram Fatima Umm Dirays, a plausible narrative can be constructed.

It begins with the mayram's earlier marriage to hajj Ahmad b. Isa. In 1263/ 1846-1847 Sultan Muhammad Husayn granted hajj Ahmad b. 'Isa a hakura known as Ni'ama. The hakura was not a new one but had already had a series of owners.[63] In this document the sultan refers to hajj Ahmad as his son-in-law. Without any additional evidence, it is likely that his gift was made in honor of the marriage of mayram Fatima Umm Dirays and hajj Ahmad b. 'Isa.

Circumstantial evidence lends credence to the theory that hajj Ahmad and Mayram Fatima Umm Dirays were divorced shortly after the birth of their daughter Zahra, and the mayram was then free to marry khabir 'Ali in late 1852 or in 1853. Four more documents help to flesh out this theory. In 1268/ 1851-1852 Sultan Muhammad Husayn issued a document confirming the gift of ten nomads by hajj Ahmad to Zahra (his daughter by Mayram Umm Dirays) on the occasion of "the shaving of her hair" on the fortieth day after birth.[64] This sultanic confirmation was apparently necessary because the nomads had originally been granted by the Sultan to hajj Ahmad on an earlier occasion.[65]

If the theory holds, the joyous occasion of the birth soon gave way to divorce, and remarriage to khabir 'Ali. On 8 September 1852/ 8 Dhu-l-hijja 1268, not long after 'Ali b. Ibrahim had become khabir on his uncle's death, Sultan Husayn granted khabir 'Ali a piece of land of land called n.q.r (since the Arabic text contains only the consonants and long vowels) probably to be identified with a place which Nachtigal called Ungorei, which lies south-south-east of the town of Kubayh on one of the short cut routes to al-Fashir.[66] This hakura n.q.r adjoined land owned by Mayram Umm Dirays. This could have been part of the mayram's dowry, or in anticipation of their marriage.

The possibility of divorce is strengthened by the evidence of yet another document. On May 15, 1853/ 12 Shaban 1269, Sultan Husayn confirmed Hajj Ahmad's gift of the hakura Ni'ama to mayram Umm Dirays.[67] This matches nicely with the reports already cited of Browne, and of oral informants that on divorcing a mayram one had to return "...all the valuables ... received in consequence of the honourable alliance." Hajj Ahmad may have "voluntarily" returned her father's gift to the mayram.

But there is one hitch to the theory: in the document dated May 15, 1853/ 12 Shaban 1269 hajj Ahmad and mayram Umm Dirays are still referred to as "husband" and "wife."[68] By 1857 no mention of any husband of Mayram Umm Dirays is made in yet another sultanic land charter granting her land elsewhere.[69] Only additional oral or documentary evidence will demonstrate the validity of this postulated explanation for the known sequence of events and the related facts.

Khabir 'Ali married a second royal woman at an unknown but later date. She was the Mayram 'Arafa bint Sultan Muhammad Husayn. The mayram was to accompany him across the desert to Egypt, possibly with the intention of making the pilgrimage to Mecca from there.[70] It was not at all uncommon for women and children to cross the desert, because as Cuny reports they were necessary to help provide expected of the khabir, even en route:

> I never saw a khabir who was not accompanied by his family, and it is essential to him, for he is nearly always occupied with business, either on his own account, or for that of the caravan. He must receive some one or other at his table daily, offer coffee at nearly every moment to the numerous visitors who come at all hours to greet him or to discuss business with him.[71]

So Mayram 'Arafa was by no means unusual in her desire to cross the desert.

Prior to the departure of a caravan, merchants would spend up to six months in Toma (a village a short day's journey north of Kubayh along the wadi) collecting merchandise and equipment, and taking advantage of the water supply which if not plentiful at least had a smaller population to support than the wells of Kubayh. Mayram 'Arafa went with khabir 'Ali to Toma, became ill and died there. He was heartbroken and returned to al-Fashir putting aside all his plans for the journey. After the funeral, Sultan Muhammad Husayn, father of the deceased, insisted that he should go on to Egypt, and he did.[72] It is unclear whether it was on this or another occasion that he performed the hajj from Egypt.[73]

Khabir 'Ali's business dealings and marriages show that he was quite a successful man. In each domain he captured the highest prize: in trade he became a khabir, and in marriage he married two mayrams. In the next section, it will be seen that his success had several more facets.

## IV Khabir 'Ali's place in Kubayh

A chronology of khabir 'Ali's life has been reconstructed, but some of his most important achievements remain undated, though they are known to have occurred in the period of his greatest success and prominence ca. 1850-1873. To recapitulate he used his family ties to Muhammad Kannun to become khabir, and by marrying his cousin 'Aisha bint Muhammad Kannun, while eclipsing his male cousins first with his commercial success and later through royal marriages, gained an effective if not legal claim to part of Muhammad Kannun's hakura. His position as khabir made him a suitable marriage partner for royal women. He was granted the hakura n.q.r in his own right, and through marriage gained some degree of control over the land of Mayram Umm Dirays. It will be seen later that he also acquired another hakura, Nabaru, immediately north of Kubayh.

It is no exaggeration to call khabir 'Ali central to the economy of Kubayh and Dar Fur. His position as a caravan leader was unquestioned. What is remarkable is the extent to which he managed to convert his commercial success into more permanent forms of social status, access to political power, and into control over land. Khabir 'Ali's landholdings, mercantile wealth and political influence made him the most powerful man in Kubayh, particularly of land along wadi Kubayh.

In general land granted as a hakura was chosen for its agricultural potential, which compared favorably to the surrounding area; for its plentiful water supply; for its proximity to Kubayh or al-Fashir; or for its location along a trade route. The early hakuras were particularly well-placed. For example in the great drought of 1913, Fata Borno - one of the earliest hakuras - was one of the few places in northern Dar Fur which was not depopulated for lack of water.[74] The early hakuras often became focii for the granting of additional hakuras, as their success attracted further immigrants, or their holders requested more land for their children. Near Kubayh the hakura of Hilla Fuqara', which is believed to have predated that of Kubayh, may have fulfilled that role.[75] Still within the plain of Kubayh but five or six miles to the north along the wadi, 'Ali Ramli's early hakura at Kafot appears to have served a similar purpose of providing a nucleus for further settlement.[76]

The establishment of adjacent hakuras strengthened the claims of both parties since their common boundary was mentioned in both sets of documents, and the hakura-holders would testify for each other in the face of any threat to their lands. They could also stand together in any physical fracas which arose between the new settlers and the earlier occupants, or even against sultanic relatives or state officials.[77]

The occupants of land adjacent to a hakura frequently found it prudent to reinforce their claim to the land - whether based on ethnicity, occupation, or both - by establishing it as a hakura, with all the advantages of sultanic backing, and documentary proof of ownership.[78] Both patterns can be found near Kubayh and Kafot where new jallaba immigrants and their descendants asked for adjacent pieces of the best agricultural land along the wadi, while the indigenous ethnic groups, notably the Tunjur, sought to defend their holdings (which adjoined the jallaba hakuras but were above the flood plain on slightly higher and less fertile lands) by having them recognized as hakuras as well.[79]

The conflicts between the jallaba an the local populations had several aspects. The jallaba remained newcomers in the eyes of the local populations, and their encroachment on the best lands was resented.[80] There was also a fear of the jallaba, for an individual found alone, especially a child, might be kidnapped and sold into slavery.[81] If even students studying at the khalwa run by the Juwama' of Hilla Fuqara' could be snatched, who was safe? There were of course marriages between the jallaba and local women, which may have served to lessen the hostility. But older jallaba descendants can still be heard to refer to their indigenous neighbors as slaves ('abid), thinking perhaps of their commercial potential.[82] It is not surprising that most of the Tunjur villages along the northern and eastern edge of the Kubayh plain have their backs against the protective hills.[83]

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, much of the land in the plain of Kubayh was owned by merchants involved in the trans-saharan trade, or by other immigrants to Dar Fur. Few if any of the other caravan leaders owned land near Kubayh.[84] All the merchants would have houses in Kubayh, as well as in agricultural villages on their hakuras in the plain of Kubayh. They lived in town except at certain key periods of the agricultural year, leaving the hakura in the hands of an agent (wakil), their asyad al-fisan (holders of a fas, or cultivable subdivision of a hakura) and their slaves, only making visits to the land from time to time.[85] This pattern was dictated not only by the demands of their mercantile profession where availability and information were keys to success, but also by the practicalities of water supply which was even scarcer in the goz than in Kubayh.

Even within the jallaba community which dominated the best agricultural land in the plain of Kubayh, khabir 'Ali held a favored position. Goz land, quitable for growing millet was comparatively abundant in northern Dar Fur. In the plain of Kubayh, goz land was valuable because of its proximity to Kubayh where demand for food was high. But bottom land along the wadi which was flooded annually was in much shorter supply, and even that varied considerably in quality according to the depth of the water table, and the presence or absence of a thin layer of sand which acted as a water retaining and weed-inhibiting mulch.[86] Because he held much of the best wadi land near Kubayh, where the water table was relatively near the surface, those who wished to grow onions, tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers, okra, cotton and other cash crops, had to ask khabir 'Ali for fields and plots. Ideally each farmer wanted to have land in the goz for millet and land in the wadi for vegetables and cotton.[87] At Nabaru, north of town, khabir 'Ali's slaves cultivated and irrigated wheat which was very much in demand among the jallaba community but could only be grown in a few spots in Dar Fur.[88]

Khabir 'Ali's control of several large and centrally located pieces of land meant that many of the other landholders were his neighbors, and thus they were dependent on each other in any land disputes with third parties. Hakura-holders had common interests and problems which created a bond, regardless of other possible sources of conflict.[89]

Court cases over land were heard before centrally appointed judges, often in the presence of numerous agricultural hakura-holders as well as fuqara' and state officials. This association in court, was also paralleled by other social links, including marriages among the various elements of this elite group.[90]

Within the town of Kubayh, khabir 'Ali also had a central position both geographically and socially. His household compound, one of the largest in the town, was surrounded by an unbaked brick wall, and was near the center of town. At the south facing gate of his house, was a dihlis or large, roofed brick entry hall, with a bench and a storage area for a few large water jugs (zirs), which was guarded by a slave (bawwab or ghafir).[91] Within there would have been a wall separating the men and women's sections. On the men's side there were several rooms: probably a large receiving room of baked brick, perhaps with a veranda, some other rooms for storage of trade goods, and a few sleeping rooms for khabir 'Ali and his oldest sons. On the women's side, there would have been a separate house and courtyard (hosh) for each wife, a large kitchen area staffed by slaves, and further back the stables and slave quarters.[92] Outside but nearby the front gate, there was a small seasonal pond, rahad, which the slaves had made while gathering clay for the bricks. It is not known when khabir 'Ali's house was built, nor how it was related to the residence of his uncle, Muhammad Kannun.[93]

Nearby would be the houses of relatives and other dependents. Further on were similar large compounds of other khabirs, lesser establishments of ordinary jallaba, artisans and fuqara'. Each large compound contained a well which was used after the rains until it ran dry. After that water had to be brought from wells in the wadi bed.[94]

A constant stream of visitors would have called on the khabir at home just as they did on the desert crossing, to give him their greetings, to enjoy his hospitality and to consult him on matters of business and politics. Some would be content to view the goods he had for sale. Others would seek his personal attention and would be served coffee while they talked with him. Meals and a place to sleep would be provided for still others who had important business to transact with the khabir or with others in Kubayh. A contemporary description of the responsibilities and burdens of an important man in Kordofan might also apply to the khabir:

> ... a great amount of grain was necessary to supply the wants of his numerous guests ... it was no unfrequent occurrence for him to provide a night's accommodation for a couple of dozen travellers and their cattle; and it was as much as half-a-dozen sturdy slave girls could do to grind sufficient grain for their supper.[95]

The burdens of hospitality broke some less wealthy men.[96] But khabir 'Ali was in a position to provide a full range of assistance to those who sought it, from a cup of coffee to a word with the sultan, and from testimony in a land dispute, or access to a plot in the wadi, to a special purchase or sale in Egypt. A surviving document indicates that khabir 'Ali may also have served as a legal guardian for the children of a Shingiti merchant who died in Kubayh.[97]

A sijil from Dar Fur (found in Asyut by T. Walz) dated 11 Shawwal 1279/ 12 April 1863 shows khabir 'Ali hard at work.[98] A dispute arose between one of the jallaba, al-hajj Salim Abu Sab'a and a Coptic merchant Shinuda al-Jawhari over the repayment of a loan the latter had made him in Asyut. At the time repayment was made there, Shinuda claimed to have mislaid the promissory note.

Later the lender's son appeared with it, demanding payment from an associate of the debtor. Eventually the case ended up in a court in Kubayh. As usual the names of the most important witnesses to the proceedings appear at the end of the sijil. Foremost among them in this case was khabir 'Ali, and he was accompanied by several other men to whom he was related by marriage or blood.[99] His presence in court reflects the importance of the successful resolution of the case to the Kubayh merchant community.

The sultan's role in consolidating khabir 'Ali's social and economic position has already been partially illustrated by describing the lands he received and his marriages to royal women. The sultan aided him in the commercial realm, not only by appointing khabir for several caravans, but through his gifts. Khabir 'Ali recounted the following episode to Na 'um Shucair "I went one day to the sultan to greet him, taking with me a valuable present of Egyptian goods worth 9,000 piastres and he presented me with 200 of the finest camels."[100] It was this sultanic largesse, combined with his own commercial acumen which enabled khabir 'Ali to maintain such a high level of hospitality and to support a local khalwa as well as the imam of the large red brick mosque in Kubayh.

In the end it was his social status and landholdings which sustained khabir 'Ali and his descendants, after external events brought an end to the caravan trade and the sultanate, and after time eroded the wealth he had accumulated in his commercial ventures.

## V "Ad-dunya khiribit" : Things Fall Apart [101]

At the time of Nachtigal's visit in 1874, Kubayh was already not what it had once been:

> Many houses were empty and in ruins, so that even a superficial observer formed the impression that the place must have been much more populated in earlier years. The population has in fact sharply declined during the last fifteen years, because of the extraordinary practices and weakness of King Hasin, for with all his natural goodwill he was himself very avaricious, and moreover, abandoned the country to the inroads of his slave favourites. To illustrate this Shems ed-Din and Hajj Ahmed could at once give me the names of some eighty well-known families who during that period had been victims of the dulm, the illegal extortions, of the government, and had, more or less without means, moved eastward, or, poverty-stricken, had simply been ruined and died out. A small section had finally settled in el-Fasher, where under the eyes of the king they found themselves less exposed to the extortions of his slaves.[102]

Kubayh's decline appears to have had multiple causes. First, Sultan Muhammad Husayn's loss of control over his sultanate appears to be associated with his loss of eyesight (ca. 1854), and his reign is widely remembered for the greed of his underlings.[103]

Given Kubayh's mercantile wealth, it is not surprising that it attracted the envious eye of unscrupulous government officials. Second, the efforts of the Egyptian government to suppress the slave trade may have rendered the trans-saharan trade riskier and consequently less profitable. Third the growth of the bahhari settlements in the Bahr al Ghazal region, may have drawn off

the more adventurous young jallaba who were eager to seek their fortunes closer to the sources of supply of slaves and ivory. As yet it is impossible to determine which of these factors had the greatest effect on Kubayh.[104]

Kubayh did not collapse entirely because it still was the home of the khubara who had the contacts, the capital and the experience needed to arrange the desert caravans. Camels and ostrich feathers were unavailable in the south, and it was more practical to assemble all the northbound goods in one place just before the desert crossing. The darb al arba'in was used routinely up to 1874.[105]

Little is known of khabir 'Ali's life in this period. Nachtigal says frustratingly little about the khabir even though his traveling companions on the journey from Waday, Ahmad Tangatanga and Shems ed-Din, brother of Hajj Kerar were both close to the khabir, and Nachtigal spoke to him in Kubayh.[106] Zubayr and his men passed through Kubayh several times subsequent to their taking of al-Fashir. It appears that the last sultan before the conquest, Sultan Ibrahim b. Sultan Husayn who reigned briefly following his father's death, favored another khabir over 'Ali b. Ibrahim, but in any case he had very little time to exert his influence.[107]

In the early years of the Turkiyya (in Dar Fur, 1874-1883) at least some of the khabirs managed to get along well with the Egyptian authorities.[108] An archival source from the Condominium period suggests that Khabir 'Ali bought land in the area of Kubayh; several oral sources state that he bought the land at Nabaru just north of town.[109] This land apparently passed through the hands of several merchants during the Turkiyya, and khabir 'Ali managed to keep it.[110] Nabaru has remained in his family ever since, and is widely associated with khabir 'Ali. It was there that he raised wheat, by damming up a khor which fed into Wadi Kubayh during the rains to ensure that the soil was thoroughly saturated, and then continuing to irrigate the fields using slave labor.[111]

Khabir 'Ali is remembered as one of the largest slave owners in Kubayh, with estimates ranging up to "thousands" of slaves.[112] More credibly, and specifically at Nabaru, khabir 'Ali is said to have had eighty slaves who lived in a village separate from Kubayh "with their wives." They threshed and winnowed the wheat on a rise above the khor, before storing it in storage pits (matamir, s. matmora) there.[113] It is possible that more information on life in Kubayh and on khabir 'Ali in this period will emerge. Emiliani Danziger, one of Gordon's lieutenants, spent some time in Kubayh, where a brick fort was built on a slight rise just a few hundred yards to the west of the old brick mosque.[114]

In 1880, the Egyptian government, tipped off by a young Swiss teacher at the American mission school in Asyut, and prodded by the British consul captured a caravan from Dar Fur in Asyut which was transporting a number of slaves. It turned out to be part of a much larger caravan, most of which escaped. Unconfirmed rumors circulated that it was led by the "infamous" Khabir 'Ali.[115]

The coming of the Mahdiyya put an end to Kubayh's role as a commercial center. Although some of the merchant community managed to flee to Waday, in 1304/1886 Muhammad Khalid Zugl rounded up the remaining population of the town (but not apparently the outlying villages) and took them off to join the Khalifa 'Abdullahi, the Mahdi's successor. They were to populate Abu Rof, a section of Omdurman. Khabir 'Ali was among those who went.[116]

Although he was no longer a merchant, his status remained quite high with the khalifa and his government. He managed to acquire a substantial house, slaves, and according to one source some farmland on Tuti Island near the junction of the White and Blue Niles.[117] While on the hajj from Abu Rof, he

met Na'um Shucair in Egypt.[118] In Abu Rof, khabir 'Ali was also in contact with the exiled members of the Fur royal family, notably the future sultan, 'Ali Dinar. It is said that he was not particularly close to 'Ali Dinar, partly because his avuncular advice rubbed the energetic younger man the wrong way.[119]

After the battle of Omdurman in 1898, 'Ali Dinar set out for Dar Fur with numerous retainers who would form the nucleus of the administration of the restored sultanate. Once some initial opposition was overcome, he proceeded to set things right. In part this was accomplished by issuing confirmatory charters to those hakura-holders who came forward to support him.[120] Something of 'Ali Dinar's haste can be seen in their language; unlike the documents issued by the earlier sultans which carefully described the boundaries of the land, proceeding from landmark to landmark, 'Ali Dinar's scribes often wrote simply, "within their known boundaries."[121]

Khabir 'Ali, like the rest of the former population of Dar Fur who were in Omdurman, must have been watching to see how well 'Ali Dinar would do, since so many other candidates had failed to impose themselves as sultan during the Turkiyya and the Mahdiyya.[122] He was by now into his seventies, and he had been away from home a long time. The British knew that khabir 'Ali still had good ties with Dar Fur and sought him out in Omdurman in 1902.[123] 'Ali Dinar was rumored to be quite ill at the time, and khabir 'Ali was quite cooperative in explaining the relative merits of various other claimants to the throne to the British intelligence officer who spoke with him.[124]

By December of 1902, khabir 'Ali was asking permission to return to al-Fashir. In a letter from khabir 'Ali b. Ibrahim to al-hajj 'Abdullah al-Kahhal, he explains that he is still waiting to hear, "I have asked H.E. the Sirdar to permit me to proceed to Fasher and H.E. has sent a letter to Ali Dinar, asking if he wishes me to proceed there. No answer has yet been received."[125] Whether there is a connection between khabir 'Ali's conversation with a British intelligence officer and his petition for permission to return home, remains open to speculation.

It appears that khabir 'Ali did return to al-Fashir shortly thereafter. Nothing is currently known about his homecoming, although it is probable tht he was well received.

Khabir 'Ali b. Ibrahim died in El Fasher in 1326/ 1908-9, and was buried near Umm Dafasu, one of several markets there.[126] His commercial wealth is long gone, but his memory lives on among his descendants who still benefit from his reflected status. His family still holds his lands near Kubayh, and collect a share of the crop of those who work it.[127]

## Conclusions

The growth of the hakura sytem, internal slavery and longdistance trade increased the degree of social stratification in Dar Fur. Kubayh and al-Fashir only a day's donkey ride apart, became urban centres. Al-Fashir filled quickly with the sultan and his court; Kubayh attracted traders from the northern riverain Sudan, Egypt and beyond.[128] Holy men came to instruct the children of the sultan, of the noblemen and of the merchants; and slaves were imported from the pagan lands to the south to draw water, haul firewood, grind the millet and hoe the fields.[129]

The presence of a large body of outsiders in a pre-colonial African society, whether as rulers, traders, holy men or slaves, necessarily caused a shift in the principles which that society had previously used for allocating resources and status. The Fur sultans had been recognized earlier as rulers of northern Dar Fur, but their physical presence in the area required some more

practical accommodations. By their presence, the sultan and his court displaced some of the former residents of the land, diminished the power of the local ethnic leaders, and made the area a new focus for settlement.[130] Similarly in Kubayh the merchants needed a place to live, and a reliable means of obtaining food.

Social status had always been measured on several scales - age, sex, ethnicity, occupation, religious piety and political power among them. But by the height of Khabir 'Ali's career in the period 1850-1874, the boundaries of the ruling elite could be traced by noting the intersection of the group of hakura-holders, slave-owners, and large consumers of imported goods. All major state officials, important sultanic relatives, major religious leaders and traders had agricultural hakuras, and frequently had multiple holdings.

The hakura-holders were, in essence, a new class. They made common cause against the sultan and threats from others who challenged their control over the land. Even those who only had their land declared a hakura as a defensive measure against the encroachment of others, were taking the first step toward a full embracing of the class interests. Hakura-owners were known to the sultan and his court, and they and his household formed the pool from which he made political appointments. Hakura-holders had frequent political and social dealings with each other, but not with slaves or with ordinary people (masakin) of other locales, except in the case of kinsmen.[131] Hakura-holders made marriage alliances among themselves, and consequently were eventually related to each other, the regional nobility and to the sultans.[132]

The hakura-holders had numerous followers, and slaves who did much or all of their manual labor for them.[133] They lived in better houses, entertained more guests, and ate, drank and dressed better than the masakin or slaves, although the elite slaves of the sultan and of other high state officials might also live well.[134] They were distinct from the commoners, and from those with some social stature but without land or slaves. They knew who they were, and worked together for their common interests. Finally they controlled the two principal factors of production in the local economy: land and labor.

Khabir 'Ali was the epitome of success. He rated high on all the scales. He was a male of respectable age, ethnicity and deportment. He had reached the pinnacle of his mercantile profession but tempered his considerable wealth by diverting some of it to the support of worthy religious institutions, the local khalwa and mosque. He had direct access to the sultan, as a khabir and as a son-in-law. The sultan favored him with position, land, women and riches. His land was clearly the best in Kubayh. It was well-located, had a good water supply and put him in a position to dominate the local agricultural economy. His status was so secure that it survived the threat posed by Zubayr, the shocks of the Turkiyya and his deportation to Omdurman.

Khabir 'Ali's extraordinary success serves as a measure of the changes which had transformed northern Dar Fur since the last decade of the eighteenth century. The institutions and capacities in which he served had existed only in rudimentary form there before the conquest of Kordofan.

NOTES

[1]Most of these sources will be detailed as they are used. Here I gratefully acknowledge the pioneering work of Dr. R.S. O'Fahey, who discovered that many documents were still in private hands in Dar Fur and set out to make a photographic collection of them. He graciously permitted me access to them in August 1979 in Bergen, and facilitated my entry into Dar Fur in many ways. Those documents which refer to Mayram Fatima Umm Dirays, Hajj Ahmad Isa, Khabir Muhammad Kannun and of course Khabir Ali b. Ibrahim have been particularly useful in preparing the present paper. They have been published in English translation in R.S. O'Fahey and M.I. Abu Salim, Land in Dar Fur: Charters and Related Documents from the Dar Fur Sultanate (Cambridge, 1983).

During my fieldwork in Dar Fur which covered 14 months between October 1979 and December 1980, I photographed additional local documents in Dar Fur and rephotographed all but one of those which O'Fahey had found relating to Khabir Muhammad Kannun and Khabir Ali b. Ibrahim.

I also conducted interviews, first with an assistant who turned out to be a descendant of Muhammad Kannun, and then alone. My assistant's father, Abd al-Rahman b. Abd al Majid was very helpful in tracking down informants, and suggesting who might have documents. It was he who introduced me to the current shaykh of Kubayh, Hamad Muhammad Tahir, better known as Hamad al-Fur. The shaykh, in his 70s, gamely agreed to take my wife and me to Kubayh in December 1979, and spent four days showing me the sites. My wife and I returned to Kubayh twice in the fall of 1980, and visited a number of the neighboring villages, conducting interviews.

In January 1980 we moved into Hayy Tirayfiyya in El Fasher and there we lived until December 1980. I spoke to 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abd al-Majid almost daily, sometimes only greeting, sometimes longer talks. I also became a friend of Hamad al-Fur, though I saw him less often. These two introduced me to their cousin Muhammad Khudr, better known as Shomaym, who also proved to be a knowledgeable source, and they suggested other possible informants. It is from these men that I learned the major details of Khabir 'Ali's life in Kubayh, and I cannot thank them sufficiently.

The full details of the documents I photographed and the interviews I conducted will be given in my eventual Ph.D thesis on the social and economic history of Dar Fur, ca. 1785-1875.

[2]For an introduction to the hakura system, see R.S. O'Fahey, State and Society in Dar Fur (London: 1980) 49-68; for more details see O'Fahey and Abu Salim, Land in Dar Fur. For Jay Spaulding's stimulating description of a parallel dual transformation see his "Slavery, Land Tenure and Social Class in the Northern Turkish Sudan," International Journal of African Historical Studies, 15, 1 (1982), 1-20.

[3]For a fuller explanation of the spread of the hakura system see G. Michael La Rue, "Slavery, Land and Social Class in Dar Fur: Trans-Saharan Links with the Northern Riverain Sudan and Egypt," presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, December 1983. For a brief history of the conquest of Kordofan see R.S. O'Fahey and J.L. Spaulding, Kingdoms of the Sudan (London, 1974) 134-140.

[4]OIL/Hasab al-Nabi Yusif/January 24, 1980. G. Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, vol IV: Wadai and Dar Fur, translated and edited by H.J. and A.G.B. Fisher (London, 1971), 255-256.

[5]OI/Hamad al-Fur/Dec. 17-20.

[6]This paragraph is based on personal observation, and passages in Browne and Nachtigal. W. G. Browne, Travels in Egypt, Syria, and Africa, 2nd ed. (London, 1806), 267-268; Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV 250-252; 256-257.

[7]As in 6 above and J.H.G. Lebon, Land Use in Sudan (1965), 14.

[8]O'Fahey, State and Society, 139.

[9]OI/ Adam Daw al-Bayt, (Adam Sagadali)/June 2, 1980.

[10]See notes 5 and 6 above.

[11]al-Tunisi, Voyage au Darfour 154 n1; Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 353.

[12]Browne, Travels, 325 and personal observation December 1979.

[13]Browne, Travels 325.

[14]Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 255.

[15]O'Fahey, State and Society, 113.

[16]OI/Hamad al-Fur/ Dec 17-20, 1979, and personal observations.

[17]OI/ Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17-20, 1979.

[18]OI/Ahmad Bosh Ahmad with Uthman Fadlallah/ Oct. 12, 1980.

[19]Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 253.

[20]Browne, Travels, 274n.

[21]OI/Muhammad Tamim Darir/ Oct 14, 1980.

[22]Browne, Travels 274.

[23]al-Tunisi, Voyage au Darfour, 40.

[24]See for example OI/ Ibrahim Hassan Sharif/ March 13, 1980.

[25]Terence Walz, "Black Slavery in Egypt During the Nineteenth Century As Reflected in the Mahkama Archives of Cairo," 16-17.

[26]Browne, Travels, 274-275.

[27]al-Tunisi, Voyage au Darfour, 295 Note BB (on p. 453), Perron quoting Abou-Madian, in my translation from the French. al-Tunisi, Voyage au Darfour, 297.

[28]For a chronological list of caravans with the numbers of camels, slaves and traders (as possible) see G. Michael La Rue, "The Export Trade of Dar Fur, ca. 1785-1875," Table I. Paper presented in January 1983 at the "Symposium on the Quantification and Structure of the Import and Export and Long-Distance Trade of Africa in the Nineteenth Century," sponsored by the Institut Fur Afrikanistik der Universitat zu Koln, Koln, West Germany. The

revised conference papers will be published in a volume edited by Dr. Gerhard Liesegang. See also Terence Walz, The Trade Between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan, 1700-1820 (Cairo, 1978), 30.

[29]Walz, Trade, 30ff.

[30]On the shortage of water in Kubayh, Nachtigal IV, 254. On Toma see OI/ Imam 'Ali Zayn al'Abdin and 'Ali Badawi Zayn al'Abdin/May 31, 1980.

[31]OI/Tirayfi joint interview: Hamad al-Fur; 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Majid; Muhammad Khadr(Shomaym)/ Dec. 11, 1979. Many of the points discussed were confirmed in later separate interviews.

[32]OI/Ahmad Bosh Ahmad/ Dec. 18, 1979 and Oct. 1980. OI/ Abboh Hamad Hasaballah/ January 30, 1980.

[33]For skills taught to the children of another khabir see Charles Cuny, Journal de Siout à El Obeid, edited by M.V.A. Malte-Brun (Paris, 1863), 56-57.

[34]OI/ Joint Tirayfi interview/ Dec. 11, 1979.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid.

[37]OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/Dec. 11, 1979 and subsequent interviews with each of the three on genealogical questions.

[38]Cross-cousin marriages are still common, and considerable pressure is applied by the families involved on their children. Personal observations in El Fasher. OI/Tirayfi joint interview/ Dec. 11, 1979.

[39]O'Fahey, Land, 106-107; State and Society, 45-46.

[40]O'Fahey, Land, Doc. XLII, 108-109.

[41]O'Fahey, Land, Doc. XLIII, 110-112.

[42]Hamza Mohamed Nour el Zoubeir, Fur Customary Land Law in Southern Dar Fur (Khartoum, 1979).

[43]OI/ Ali Hasabo/ March 12, 1980, and the documents in his possession, which I photographed: collection 12. Confirmed in other interviews.

[44]O'Fahey, Land, Doc. XLIV, 113-114.

[45]Based on O'Fahey, Land, Doc XLIV, 113-114 and OI/Tirayfi joint interview/Dec. 11, 1979.

[46]Charles Cuny, "Notice sur le Darfour," BSG 4e. Ser, viii(1854).

[47]Ibid., 101 n2.

[48]Ibid., 99, 101. OI/ Majdub Abd al-Qadir Ahmad Jalis/ Oct. 11, 1980.

[49]Ibid., 102.

[50]Ibid., 102-103.

[51]Ibid., 103-104.

[52]For date of installation see note 45 above.

[53]Ibid., 103.

[54]John Petherick, Egypt, the Soudan and Central Africa (London, 1861), 305.

[55]LaRue, "Export Trade," 11-19.

[56]O'Fahey and Spaulding, Kingdoms, 139; Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 290.

[57]Compare O'Fahey, Land, 100, 107.

[58]OI/ Shayhu Salih Jalis/ November 4, 1979. Browne, Travels, 339-340.

[59]al-Tunisi, Voyage ay Darfour, 115; O'Fahey and Spaulding, Kingdoms, 150-151.

[60]Browne, Travels, 339-340.

[61]OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/ Dec. 11, 1979.

[62]See O'Fahey Land, 99-118, Docs. XXXVIII-XLVII. For the oral sources OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/ Dec. 11, 1979, and subsequent interviews.

[63]O'Fahey Land, Doc XXXVIII, 101-102.

[64]Ibid., Doc XL, 103-104.

[65]Ibid., 102.

[66]Ibid., Land, Doc XLV, 115-117 survey report; Doc XLVI, 117-118 for the actual grant. For the vocalization "Ungorei" see O'Fahey State and Society, 142. Nachtigal IV, 257 wrote Ngure. The location given is based on my understanding of Nachtigal.

[67]O'Fahey, Land, Doc XXXIX, 102.

[68]Ibid., Doc.XXXIX, 102; M.I. Abu Salim, al-fur wa al-ard (Khartoum, 1975) 138 doc. 26 for Arabic text.

[69]O'Fahey, Land, Doc XLI, 104-106.

[70]OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/ Dec. 11, 1979.

[71]Cuny, "Notice," 106. The translation is mine.

[72]On Toma: OI/Hamad al-Fur/ June 12, 1980; OI/al-hajja Asha Ahmad Tahir/ June 16, 1980; OI/Muhammadayn Baasi/Oct. 3, 1980; OI/Imam Ali Zayn al-Abdin and Ali Badawi Zayn al-Abdin, May 31, '80.

[73]OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/Dec. 11, 1979.

[74]Personal observation and distillation of interviews, esp. OI/Umar Ali Umar/May 16, 1980; OI/Nine interviews in Fata Borno/Oct. 22-23, 1980; OI/Ahmad Bosh Ahmad/Oct. 12, 1980.

[75]OI/ Ahmad Bosh Ahmad/ Oct. 12, 1980.

[76]OI/ Hasan Ahmad Nur/ June 1, 1980 and subsequent interviews.

[77]al-Tunisi Voyage à Darfour, 118-119. See O'Fahey Land 61ff for the cases of Aqrab and Muhammad Hud.

[78]OI/Muhammad Tamim Darir/Oct. 14, 1980; Hasan Husayn Hamad/Oct. 15, 1980; Muhammad Ahmad Khatim/Oct. 12, 1980; Muhammad Ahmad Habib/Oct. 16, 1980; Ali Muhammad Harir/Oct. 16, 1980; Sulayman Isa Sulayman/Oct. 16, 1980; and personal observation.

[79]As in 78.

[80]OI/ Adam Ibrahim Adam/October 17, 1980; Tahir Adam Abd al-Jalil/OCt. 23, 1980.

[81]OI/Abd al-Rahman Juma' Bahr/Oct. 13, 1980; 'Ali Ibrahm Hasan/OCt. 16, 1980.

[82]See note 78.

[83]Personal observations Oct. 1980. There were of course exceptions to the rule.

[84]OI/ Isma'il Khabir Mahmud ash-Shafia/ Nov. 20, 1979. But O'Fahey's documentary evidence suggests that some other khabirs had owned land.

[85]OI/Ali Hasabo/March 12, 1980 for fisan; pattern deduced from oral interviews in the Kubayh region.

[86]OI/ Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17-20, 1979.

[87]OI/ Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17-20, 1979.

[88]OI/ Sayf an-Nur Harun/ October 12, 1980; Ismail Khabir Mahmud/Nov. 20, 1979.

[89]On other possible sources of conflict see LaRue, "The Hakura System," 8-9.

[90]OI/ Hasan Ahmad Nur/June 1, 1980; Adam Bashir Ibrahim/31 Oct. 80.

[91]OI/ Hamad al Fur/Dec. 17-20, 1979. We visited the house site together. It was still possible to trace the lines of the exterior wall of the compound

and some interior walls. No part of the ruins stood more that an inch or so above the surrounding land.

92Based on visits to many houses in Dar Fur; Browne, Travels, 326ff describes the various kinds of buildings in Dar Fur. I drew particularly on visits to the house of Uthman Ahmad Muhammad Uthman/April 7, 1980 (and 4 other interviews) and on a conversation with Abboh Hamad Hasaballah.

93OI/Hamad al Fur/Dec 27-30, 1979.

94Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 254.

95Petherick, Egypt, Soudan and Central Africa, 254-255.

96Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 245 for the case of Ahmad Tangatanga.

97My thanks to R.S. O'Fahey who drew my attention to this document, his DF 212.22/8 and provided me with a copy of it with his rough translation.

98For a summary see O'Fahey, State and Society, 142-143. The document was photographed by Terence Walz in Asyut, and passed on to me by R.S. O'Fahey. I thank them both.

99OI/Hasab al-Nabi Yusif/January 24, 1980.

100O'Fahey, Land, 114 for this translation.

101The phrase "ad-dunya khiribit" was frequently used by oral informants, lamenting the glories of former days.

102Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 255-256.

103OI/Adam Ibrahim Adam/Oct. 17, 1980; Ahmad Adam Abakr/Sept. 22, 1980.

104La Rue "Export Trade," 12-17 for a more detailed discussion.

105Gabriel Baer, "Slavery in Nineteenth Century Egypt," Journal of African History, VIII, 3 (1967), 436.

106Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV 252, 254.

107Nachtigal, Sahara and Sudan, IV, 257-8, 329.

108Georges Douin, Histoire du Règne du Khedive Ismail (Cairo, 1938) III/ 3B, 1149.

109OI/Ibrahim Ahmad Khabir Ali/ Oct. 13, 1980; Muhammad Khadr/May 5, 1980.

110Ibrahim Ahmad Khabir Ali/Oct. 13, 1980; Ab Som/ June 13, 1980.

111OI/ Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17, 1980.

112OI/ Adam abu Tishaykha/ March 11, 1980.

[113]OI/ Ismail Khabir Mahmud/January 7, 1980. OI/Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17-20, 1980.

[114]OI/ Hamad al-Fur/ Dec. 17-20, 1980.

[115]Baer, "Slavery," 436. PRO/FO 1597, f. 170.

[116]OI/ Tirayfi joint interview/Dec. 11, 1979. See Kapteijns, "Mahdist Faith" 90-91 on return of Muhammad Khalid Zogl to Omdurman.

[117]OI/ Fatima b. qadi Husayn wad Jizzu/ December 11, 1980 in Abu Rof. I was shown the house on Sharia khabir Ali.

[118]As in 117; [119]As in 117.

[120]O'Fahey, Land, 19.

[121]Ibid., 21.

[122]See Lidwien Kapteijns, "Mahdist Faith and Sudanic Tradition: History of Dar Masalit, 1870-1930," unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Amsterdam, 1982; forthcoming - Routledge and Kegan Paul), on the shadow sultans, xv, and text passim.

[123]CRO/Intelligence 2.4.17. Report of Morant ADI to HE Sirdar Khartoum 27 January 1902.

[124]As in note 123.

[125]File as in note 123, item "Extract of a letter from El Khabir Ali to Hajj Abdulla El Kahhal" 9 Dec. 1902. English only.

[126]OI/ Fadl Musa/ Oct. 13, 1979.

[127]OI/ Hamad al-Fur Dec. 17-20, 1979.

[128]O'Fahey, State and Society, 140.

[129]On the holy men, see O'Fahey State and Society 115-130. On the slaves, See R. S. O'Fahey, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Dar Fur," Journal of African History, xiv, 1, 29-43.
The remarks on slavery more generally are based on my fieldwork. See also Lidwien Kapteijns, "Mahdist Faith and Sudanic Tradition," 60-75.

[130]For details of the displacement of the Isirra see oral interview (OI)/ Shayhu Salih Jalis/ Oct 27, 1979: OI/Fadl Musa/ Oct 13, 1979 For the larger picture, see La Rue, "Slavery, Land and Social Class," passim.

[131]Based on numerous interviews.

[132]See note 90.

[133]OI/Abbakr Muhammad Uthman/May 21, 1980.

[134]OI/'Abd al Rahman Nimayr, 'Abd al Rahman Ahmad Nimayr, Muhammad Adam Mansur/Dec. 3, 1979.