

# EASTERN SUDAN INDIGENOUS CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

## *Effectiveness, Continuity and Change*

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### **Introduction**

Of all the regions of the world, Africa is one of those most devastated by violence. In one sense Africa's bloody conflicts could be viewed as outbursts of accumulated grievances generated, but not accommodated, by socio-economic and political change. They are expressions of unsettling tensions brewing beneath the surface, only to erupt in sudden upheavals that shake fragile African nation states to their foundations. The resultant violent ruptures signify not only moments in the continuing process of socio-economic and political change, but also the loosening of cultural traditions, values, customs and norms that for so long have maintained the coherence, harmony and stability of Africa's local communities.

In some cases, cultural values seem to have survived socio-economic changes and, despite the disruption of Africa's socio-economic and political structures, the continent remains home to powerful values, norms and traditions that support effective mechanisms which preserve, promote and restore harmony and social tranquillity. The persistence of norms and values that support indigenous conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution mechanisms in eastern Sudan provides an example of how indigenous African cultures and institutions may be more effective than, and even superior to, modern state institu-

tions in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts of all types.

As the following cases from Eastern Sudan show, conflict itself, when it occurs, and its containment and settlement are seen as a collective responsibility, drawing the participation of leaders and members of the community participate. Most importantly, the resolution of conflict may take the form of forgiveness and reconciliation instead of punishment.

This paper deals with the conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms the Beja have adopted to resolve different forms of disputes and conflicts. The main thrust of the argument is that, despite socio-economic and political changes, traditional conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms among the Beja peoples of eastern Sudan have not only shown resilience but have also proved more effective than those provided by the modern state.

Available sources on the Beja are meagre and, though some use of these is made for the main theme of the paper – cases of conflict, procedures and norms and values – resource persons from the area, who have worked there for a long time are the principal source of information.

In the first section a brief background to the Beja and their region is given, followed by a discussion of the Rashaida-Hadandawa conflict and how this was dealt with using tradi-

tional and government conflict management mechanisms. The third section is devoted to inter-Beja conflicts, their most common causes and the manner in which they are dealt with using indigenous mechanisms. In turn, the fourth section is devoted to Beja intra-tribal conflicts and the mechanisms used to deal with them. In all instances there is a brief description of the case or procedure, followed by a brief analysis. Finally a number of conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

### Eastern Sudan: Background and context

Eastern Sudan is inhabited principally by the Beja, one of the most ancient of Sudan's population groups. They occupy the area of the Red Sea Hills and the eastern desert that extends northwards from the Eritrean and Ethiopian borders to that of Egypt; to the east the area flanks the Red Sea and to the west the Atbara and Nile Rivers.

Sources differ as to the origin and tribal composition of the Beja, and the categories of tribes and sub-tribes that comprise this ethnic group. However, the Beja of the Red Sea Hills may be grouped into four main tribes, each with a *nazara*<sup>1</sup> of its own: Basharin, Bani Amir, Hadandawa and Amar'ar. A *nazir* heads each of the four tribes, which are subdivided into a number of hierarchical sub-divisions. Below the apex of the tribe are sub-divisions of *khat*s, each of which is headed by a *sheikh elkhat*. Each *khat*, in turn, is divided into a number of *omodyyas*, each headed by an *omda*. The *omodyya* is further sub-divided into smaller sub-sections composed of a village or number of villages each headed by a *sheikh*. These sub-tribal political offices constitute a systematic hierarchy of power structures, labelled in Arabic in descending order, *nazara*, *khat*, *omodyya*, and *mashaykha*. In addition there are smaller tribes that have the independent office of *omodyya*: Urtega; Ashraf; Mihieliktab and Habab.

Tribal divisions among the Beja are very blurred, and sometimes smaller sub-tribes are referred to as tribes and there may be separate

*mashaykhas* for such small tribes not belonging to a tribal *nazara*. Prior to the erosion of the formal administrative power of local leaders these divisions represented geographic units as well as administrative ones. In the Red Sea area of eastern Sudan, and with the exception of the Rashaida who are relative newcomers and of almost pure Arab origin, the entire population is ethnically virtually homogenous. All tribes belonging to the Beja group claim a common ancestry with both Arab and Hamitic blood. Also, with the exception of the Rashaida, all Beja tribes speak different versions of the same language, TuBedawiye, which functions as a common denominator holding together the different Beja tribal groups.<sup>2</sup> These similarities and differences are significant when considering the Hadandawa-Rashaida issue.

The main economic activity among the Beja is the rearing of camels, sheep and goats. Although dura (sorghum) farming is practised on some wadi land, settled peasant farming communities with agriculture as their main economic activity are rare among the Beja; most Beja are nomads and animal rearing is the principal economic activity. The homogeneity of livelihoods is an additional factor that minimises the incidence of violent conflict, which would be more likely to arise from friction between pastoralists and peasant farmers. Although conflicts may be fairly frequent, the similarities of economic existence, combined with the potency of conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms, contribute to the infrequency and low intensity of these conflicts.

### The origin of conflict in eastern Sudan

Before entering into a discussion of the causes of local conflicts, and the mechanisms designed to prevent, manage and resolve them, two important observations must be made about the situation in the area of the Red Sea compared with that in Darfur. Inter-tribal conflicts in the Red Sea area are rare, and when they occur they are not as severe in terms of scale, weaponry used and loss of

human life or property. The reasons for this have to do with demographic factors, patterns of economic activity, ethnic homogeneity, the traditional approaches applied to deal with conflicts and the extent to which the latter have remained effective.

Because the Beja are predominantly pastoralist, competition over natural resources, chiefly land and water, is the major cause for virtually all forms of inter-group, inter-communal and intra-communal conflict. Land use and claims to its ownership are governed by certain customary rules, the violation of which also brings about the eruption of conflict.

As in Darfur, claim to the right of land ownership is vested in the tribe. Tribal subdivisions (branches of the tribes: lineage groups or clans) claim the right of ownership to specific areas of tribal land. Clan, lineage and household use of communal land is regulated by customary rules (*salif*) overseen by the traditional tribal leadership. Tribal leadership is hierarchically structured, with the *nazir* of the tribe at the apex assisted by a number of *khats sheikhs*; each of the latter supervises a number of *omdas*. Each of these, in turn, supervises a number of *sheikhs*: each *omda* is responsible for the supervision of a lineage or a clan occupying a number of villages. This hierarchy is based on the native administration system instituted by the British during the 1920s, which, despite modifications during the post-colonial period, has remained very effective in some parts of the Sudan, particularly in the east. The British empowered traditional tribal leaders with an administrative, economic and judicial authority they enjoyed till the early 1970s when the Nimeri regime abolished the native administration system.

Lands under communal ownership at different levels (*nazara*, *omodyya* and *mashyakha*) are vaguely demarcated. Customary rules governing the right of access to land and water resources by community members and outsiders (non-community members) emphasise the communality of land ownership. Members of the tribe and outsiders have the right of free access to pasture and water

sources, but not to the construction of permanent installations such as wells. The construction of wells and other fixed installations by members of the tribe or outsiders is considered an attempt to establish exclusive ownership claims to communally owned and used land. The lineage group claiming the communal ownership of land usually resists such attempts to establish exclusive ownership and use of rights, and this can lead to conflict.

The differentiation in access to land and other resources according to customary rules is related to tribal and lineage communal claims to land ownership and whether the user is a member of the group. The group collectively maintains ownership over land, but there are cases in which individual ownership rights to certain lands and wells are also recognised. Land and trees in the vicinity of villages called *damar* are collectively owned and thus the group also collectively uses pasture and firewood in the proximity of villages.<sup>3</sup>

Although, according to custom, outsiders could have free access to land and water, they have to follow tradition in certain circumstances, as an acknowledgement that they do not claim the ownership of the land they use. There are certain symbolic gestures outsiders must perform in accordance with tradition to demonstrate recognition of the right of ownership of the group or household claiming this. In the case of land being cultivated or wells used by outsiders or non-group members, the latter have to pay a small amount of produce or money to those claiming the ownership of land; this is called *gudab*.<sup>4</sup> Normally the amount is very small and is a symbol of recognition of ownership rather than tribute or rent. The importance assigned to the recognition of land ownership is such that if a camel or a goat is slaughtered in a particular place, part of the meat is given in *gudab* to the individual or group claiming ownership of the land. There are also customary rules that organise access to water. According to custom (*urf*) individuals (tribesmen and outsiders), riding camels and passers-by may have access to water from any well. However, camel herds may have access only to wells owned by the

tribe or sub-tribe, and only by arrangement to wells owned by other tribes.

Forms of conflict in eastern Sudan can be subdivided into three main categories:

- Inter-tribal conflicts; between Beja tribes and tribes other than Beja; principally the Rashaida.
- Inter-tribal conflicts among the Beja tribes.
- Intra-tribal conflict: conflicts that occur within the tribe between clans and lineage groups belonging to the same tribe.

With certain exceptions, these three forms of conflict are usually associated with land ownership, land use, land borders and conformity to the rules governing access to land and its use. In the inter-tribal conflict between the Beja and Rashaida, between the different Beja tribes and within the Beja tribes, land is the major factor. Inter-tribal conflict between the Rashaida and the Beja has arisen principally over tribal land ownership and the political office of *nazara* associated with it. Land ownership and the political position of the tribe are intimately interrelated and the tribe that owns or has established claim to land has its recognised political position relative to other tribes reflected in the political office of *nazara*.

### **The inter-tribal conflict of the Rashaida and Hadandawa**

Claims to tribal land ownership date back centuries among the Beja tribes. Historically speaking, the Rashaida are recent migrants to the Red Sea Hills who entered Sudan from Hejaz (Saudi Arabia at present) by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> They are ethnically distinct from the Beja and have maintained a different culture, traditions and values and so remained somewhat isolated, having little interaction with the Beja. Although as pastoralists they graze on the land of other Beja tribes, the Rashaida live mainly among the Hadandawa.

The Rashaida, however, are considered outsiders who do not have land. But as pastoralists, and in line with the customary rules governing land use, they have continued to enjoy the right of land usage and access to water, with other Beja tribes. Politically, the

Rashaida have only the lesser ranking traditional tribal political offices of *omodyya* and *mashyakha* to solve problems among them. Because they do not have tribal lands (one vast land area said to be communally the whole tribe) of their own, the Rashaida do not have the office of *nazara* and their political position is subordinate to that of the Beja tribes in whose land they move.<sup>6</sup> Their *omdas* fall administratively under the jurisdiction of the *nazir* of the Hadandawa.<sup>7</sup>

Conflict between the Hadandawa and the Rashaida who live among them has usually been about pasture and water.<sup>8</sup> In recent years this has become a political conflict over the Rashaida's demand for the independent tribal political office of *nazara*. Until now, however, there has never been a major outbreak of violence between the Rashaida and other Beja tribes, including the Hadandawa. So far, and partly this could be attributed to the mechanisms adopted to prevent conflict and the respect for values and norms governing conflict prevention, management and resolution, despite tension between the Rashaida and other Beja tribes, friction has been resolved peacefully and has not turned into large scale violence.

#### *Tribal Conference and the 1933 agreement*

Peaceful coexistence between the Rashaida and Hadandawa was confirmed by an agreement between the two tribes signed in 1933.<sup>9</sup> The aim of the agreement, which was negotiated and signed by both the Hadandawa and Rashaida leaders and notables, was to safeguard the interests of the two tribes and maintain peace and security between them. Although more than half a century has passed since the agreement was signed, it is worth discussing in some detail for three reasons. First, the principal terms set out by the 1933 agreement have constituted the basis for the relationship between the Hadandawa and Rashaida to the present day.<sup>10</sup> Second, commitment to abide by its terms has led to the preservation of peace between the two tribes for almost half a century; and, third, the 1933 agreement is highly relevant to the present potential for conflict, and is essential to

understanding the situation.

The Rashaida agreed to the following terms of the agreement:

- They recognise Hadandawa ownership of the land and water the Rashaida use and that have no objection to this arrangement.
- They concede that they have access to water only from certain wells.
- They agree to graze their livestock only on certain pasturelands.
- They accept that if they are allowed to cultivate the rain-fed lands of the Hadandawa they must pay to the owner (be it a sub-tribe or an individual) a specified amount of money and a certain amount of produce according to custom (*gudab*).
- They agree to abide by the instructions of the Hadandawa tribal leaders with regard to wadi cultivation. They must obtain permission from the owner of the land, the tribal leader in the area or the deputies of the *nazir*.
- The Rashaida have no right to pasturage, arable land or water in times of drought.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of this agreement the Rashaida accepted that the Hadandawa tribe owns the land and conceded any land ownership claims of their own. In addition to other restrictions, which emphasise the Hadandawa's dominance and land ownership rights, the Rashaida resigned themselves to the fact that during droughts, when land and water are scarcer, they enjoyed rights neither to pasturage nor to water. For the Hadandawa, the agreement emphasised and reaffirmed what they regarded as their indisputable land ownership rights. For the Rashaida the signing of the agreement was a recognition of the *de facto* situation that they have no permanent rights in land and that the right of access to land and water they enjoy is permitted only by the generosity of the Hadandawa.<sup>12</sup>

In 1950 the Rashaida asked permission to extend their grazing areas and to dig some wells because they were unable to graze their livestock in Eritrea as a result of the deterioration of the latter's internal political situation. That same year an agreement was negotiated and signed by the leaders of the two tribes together with government representatives.<sup>13</sup>

The 1950 agreement modified that of 1933, to allow the Rashaida a measure of flexibility in terms of their access to land and water. The key stipulations of the 1933 agreement remained intact, however, including the emphasis on the Rashaida's lack of land ownership rights, and the general restrictions maintained in terms of access to pasture and water and the conditions attached to cultivation. Nonetheless, the 1933 agreement and the modifications of 1950, which gave the Rashaida a little more flexibility in accessing water and pasturage, remained the basis that has governed the Rashaida-Hadandawa relationship until today.

Occasional tension and minor clashes occurred between individuals from both tribes, and the *nazir* of the Hadandawa complained that the Rashaida violated the agreement. In 1959 pressures increased and two meetings were held between the *nazir* and the *khat sheikhs* of the Hadandawa on the one hand and the *omdas* and *sheikhs* of the Rashaida on the other.<sup>14</sup> The complaints and arguments of both sides were heard in the presence of a district commissioner and an administrative officer. *Wagab* (postponement of the dispute for a specified period of time) was agreed and another meeting scheduled for May 1960 to discuss Hadandawa complaints, the reasons for clashes and to finalise solutions to outstanding issues.

The meeting of the leaders of both tribes was held in Aroma on the date specified by the *wagab*, one year after the previous meeting. The district commissioner and the *agaweed* attended the meeting; the *agaweed* included the *nazir* of the Bani Amir, the *nazir* of the Amara'ar, the *nazir* of the Shukryya, the *nazir* of Dar Bakr and several other notables. The meeting, which was based on the *agaweed* principle, was a small tribal conference, in which the Rashaida expressed dissatisfaction for the first time with their position in relation to the fundamental issue of land. This was one of the issues that had led to tension prior to the 1959 meeting when the Rashaida had refused to pay *gudab* in recognition of Hadandawa land ownership rights. Land ownership and the extent of the Rashaida's adher-

ence to the 1933 agreement were the main issues discussed in the meeting. The Rashaida wanted to be granted *nazara* and land rights. In the words of one of their leaders, "If the country is for certain people the government has to transfer them to where there are no people."<sup>15</sup>

By focusing on maintaining stability and avoiding conflict, the *agaweed* worked to preserve affirmed tradition and customary rules. Apart from various measures agreed upon to reduce tension and prevent clashes between the two parties, the major decision of the mediators was to reaffirm support for the 1933 agreement, emphasising Hadandawa land ownership rights and treating the Rashaida as guests<sup>16</sup>. The Rashaida's recent persistent challenge to this principle, which was incorporated as the first clause of the 1933 agreement, could have led to violent conflict between the two tribes. In reaffirming the existing principle, the *agaweed* demanded that the Rashaida pay *gudab* according to custom.

The resurgence of the conflict in recent years, which has taken a political form, began in the 1980s, when the Rashaida demanded a *nazara* for their tribe. During that period, the Rashaida's political position improved considerably as a result of their association with Saudi Arabia and their involvement in smuggling.<sup>17</sup> The Rashaida made huge efforts to match their growing economic power with a parallel improvement in their relative political power. This was reflected in their attempt to obtain the appointment of a *nazara* of their own, independent of the Hadandawa.

The Hadandawa and Bani Amir objected to the Rashaida's claim, arguing that the latter did not own land, a precondition for them being allowed an independent *nazara*. In other words, for the Hadandawa, if the Rashaida were to be allowed a *nazara* it would imply a claim to land. For the tribe and other sub-tribal entities, ownership of, or claim to, land involves more than just the productive use of land. For the tribe, tribal land ownership is strongly associated with the recognition of the position of the tribe as an independent entity. Land ownership symbolises cultural identity, history and the myths

that its members are descended from the same ancestor. Tribal land, which has been passed from one generation to the next, has to be protected and preserved according to culture and tradition. This also applies to sub-tribal units, which are as jealous as the tribe itself in protecting the land they claim to have inherited as their own from their forefathers. Thus claim to land ownership, even to unused land, is jealously maintained by tribes and sub-tribal divisions and clans. Although outsiders may enjoy the right of use as much as the members of the tribe, rules that distinguish between land ownership and the right of use have to be observed, including the payment of *gudab* and claims to *nazara*, both of which are closely associated with land ownership.

The Rashaida's attempt to have *nazara* or a tribal *dar* of their own, which intensified after independence in 1956, could not be settled by the traditional mechanisms for dealing with disputes. The Rashaida were keen to get the government's support for their demands for equal treatment with other Sudanese.<sup>18</sup> The effect of government intervention, however, raised regional tensions without resolving the root cause of the problem.

Shortly before it was overthrown in a coup at the end of June 1989, Sadiq el-Mahdi's government declared the creation of *nazara* for the Rashaida in the eastern region in May that year.<sup>19</sup> The declaration of the creation of *nazara* for the Rashaida further aggravated relations with the Hadandawa. Clashes in Kassala and the surrounding areas were averted when the government rescinded this decision and announced the creation of the Rashaida Administration as a separate administrative entity, but without land ownership. Political parties became involved in the conflict between the Rashaida and Hadandawa, with the two major parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Umma, ranged themselves behind the opposing groups. The vacillation in government policy partly reflected these opposing positions. All Beja tribes fiercely resisted the creation of a Rashaida Administration and a large demonstration was planned for June the 30<sup>th</sup>, 1989. That same day, however, the military seized

power in Khartoum, a move that eclipsed local differences for the time being.<sup>20</sup>

Over the following decade, local and national power politics interacted closely over the dispute as to whether *nazara* should be appointed for the Rashaida. In 1990, the new regime partly retained the power of the traditional tribal leaders and the Rashaida Administration was re-established following negotiations between the government and tribal leaders. The new Rashaida Administration has a structure similar to that of the *nazara*. During the period 1992-1996, however, a West Kassala Local Council for the Rashaida, with demarcated borders, started to take shape on land the ownership of which is claimed by other Beja tribes including the Hadandawa and Bani Amir.<sup>21</sup> While this process virtually created a *de facto nazara* for the Rashaida (an administrative body independent of the Hadandawa having powers over a territory with demarcated borders), it also created a situation of potential conflict. The issue must still be finally resolved with the consent of all tribes concerned, and without undue pressure from the government, if conflict is to be avoided.

The Rashaida have been partially successful in drawing government intervention on their behalf. Khartoum granted them administrative independence from the Hadandawa and certain territorial rights, creating a political office in effect equivalent to *nazara*: the Rashaida Administration and West Kassala Rural Council.

There were a number of reasons for this. Sudan's military governments, dominated as they were by a modern elite, particularly under Nimeri's rule, tended to try to weaken traditional tribal leadership. This favoured the attempt of the Rashaida to loosen its bonds to the Hadandawa. Democratic governments controlled by the *Khatmiyya* and the DUP supported the Rashaida, who were seen as loyal *Khatmiyya* supporters. The emergence of a small but vocal Rashaida educated elite also publicly articulated Rashaida demands at regional and national levels. In recent years, the growing economic power of the Rashaida has been used in support of the National

Islamic Front (NIF) war effort, particularly in the east. The NIF government has reciprocated by recognising the role of the Rashaida and created West Kassala Local Council as a reward.

*The Rashaida-Hadandawa conflict: Functioning conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms:*

In contrast with the stresses experienced in recent years, the mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution functioned effectively prior to the 1970s in dealing with disputes between the Rashaida and Hadandawa. The earlier success was largely the result of the Rashaida accepting traditions relating to tribal land ownership and the associated tribal political authority: the office of the *nazir* (**nazara**). The Rashaida's acceptance of tradition, and their respect for the outcome of indigenous conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms based on those traditions, enabled them to share economic resources with the host tribe harmoniously. In short, the Rashaida's general conformity to tradition since they entered Sudan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to their acceptance among the Beja, and the avoidance of significant conflict. The Rashaida's ability to adapt to the limitations set on their access to land and water resources contributed to their willingness to adhere to traditions and conform to the 1933 agreement.

In more recent years, however, the traditional mechanisms preventing conflict between the two tribes have come under severe stress. This tension has been aggravated by the Rashaida's renewed attempt to demand the tribal political office of *nazara* separate from, and independent of, the Hadandawa. A partial explanation for this development was the increase in the Rashaida's economic power, which promoted their aspirations to the tribal political office of *nazara* in violation of tradition and the 1933 agreement. The interrelationship between tribal land ownership and the tribal political office of *nazara*, led the Hadandawa resolutely to resist the Rashaida's attempts.

Contributing to the growing stress on local

conflict prevention mechanisms in recent times was the heavy involvement of the central government in the Rashaida-Hadandawa dispute. State involvement brought with it the adoption of a top-down approach to conflict resolution in place of the bottom-up approach that had proved so successful in the past. The Rashaida exploited the struggle for power at the centre of the state to win the support of Khartoum for their cause. Subsequent government intervention, although it may have brought apparent gains to the Rashaida, also exacerbated the mistrust between them and their Hadandawa and Bani Amir hosts. In consequence, friction and mistrust have replaced the peaceful coexistence based on respect for tradition that had regulated harmonious relations between both tribes for so long. Government concessions to the Rashaida's demands for the creation of the independent tribal political office of *nazir* (*nazir* is the one who occupies the office, what the Rashaida demanded is the affirmation of the office for the tribe. Who occupies the office from amongst them may well be an issue over which competition and conflict might arise amongst the Rashaida themselves.) and the grant of certain tribal land ownership rights without consulting the other concerned Beja tribes have led to a situation of potential discord which could erupt into violence at any time.

The top-down approach adopted by various Sudanese governments in the case of the Rashaida, bypassed local tradition and custom. Consultation, consent and even informing concerned tribes of government moves and intentions were neglected. This situation created suspicion on the part of the Hadandawa and other Beja tribes and violence could be the result in the future if the situation is not handled carefully and the conflict resolved through the engagement, participation and the consent of all the parties concerned.

## Inter-tribal conflict between the Beja tribes

### *Conflict over land borders*

The principal causes of conflict between the Beja tribes are also related to land and competition over resources, though this does not amount to the denial of the right to land ownership, as in the case of the Rashaida. Since each of the four main Beja tribes has its own land and *nazara*, inter-Beja tribal conflicts arise over land borders. As borders between the four tribes and sub-tribal units within them are vaguely defined and not clearly demarcated, the point where land owned by one tribe ends and that of another begins is a matter for dispute and occasional conflict. Such disputes among tribes frequently occur between two neighbouring sub-tribal divisions belonging to two different tribes. Often, this is also the cause of conflict within one tribe, between its own smaller sub-divisions. Thus, the issue of land borders between Beja tribes and within these tribes is the most prevalent cause for conflict.<sup>22</sup>

Such border disputes could easily escalate into major inter-tribal conflict and therefore constitute a potential threat to peace. In 1999 violent conflict nearly resulted between two sub-tribes belonging to two different tribes. The Hannar, a sub-tribe of the Basharin, and the Keilab, a sub-tribe of the Amara'ar, each claimed a piece of land situated in the Halaib area of north-eastern Sudan. The *sheikhs* were unable to solve the problem of conflicting claims and both sides stuck to their positions.

The normal preventive procedure was followed after the intervention of *omdas* and *mashaykhs* to avoid violent conflict. The procedure included giving *gullad* not to use force or resort to violence and *wagab* (truce) to freeze the problem until a peaceful solution could be reached at some future date. *Taiweg* (commitment) has to be respected according to *salif* tradition, and in the event of it being violated, this is seen as the responsibility of the *sheikh*. *Wagab*, which is the deferment of the problem, helps to calm feelings and give time to create the appropriate conditions for the mediators to negotiate a settlement

acceptable to both parties.

For the *majlis* held on the *wagab* (the fixed postponed date) a religious leader called *sharif* in the area west of Port Sudan was called in to help with mediation effort. Because of his religious position, he was held in great respect by both sub-tribes. After listening to the respective arguments he took action and demarcated borders. Both sub-tribes accepted his judgement and the problem was peacefully resolved.

In the resolution of this conflict the respect of the sub-tribes for both the tribal tradition of *salif* and religious beliefs played a significant role. The *gullad*, *wagab* and *taiweg* values of *salif* and respect for tribal leaders helped manage conflict between the two tribes and prevented violence. The intervention of an influential religious figure contributed, with the weight of the traditional tribal leaders, to the resolution of a potentially dangerous border dispute.

#### *Murder and tribal security*

Another major cause of inter-tribal conflict is the case of a member of the tribe being murdered by somebody from a different tribe. This sometimes results from disputes about camels, personal honour or land borders. Regardless of the conditions underlying a murder, if the consequences are not contained in time this act may lead to a pattern of revenge and counter-revenge and descend into a tribal affair involving more general conflict. This makes the act of murder and the effort to settle it a tribal responsibility, because the tribe functions to protect the individual member. When harm is done to the individual it is the tribe whose support is sought and the tribe that comes to the aid of the individual. According to tradition if an individual member of the tribe is killed, his close kin and fellow tribesmen have to take revenge. Revenge is also a tribal matter and any member of murderer's tribe, particularly his close kin, may be killed. Once the cycle of mutual revenge has begun, it is difficult to halt the process, for the conception of individual honour is extended to the tribe and dictates that the latter has to stand by the indi-

vidual and itself take revenge. Until revenge is taken, tradition dictates that women refrain from mourning the dead. These concepts of honour and revenge are common to all Beja tribes.

It is important for the collective security of the tribe's members that those intending to commit such a crime, or any lesser one that might lead to it, realise the grave consequences of their actions. Preventing an individual act from developing into an inter-tribal conflict is one important mechanism among the Beja for containing violence.

What helps in making this mechanism successful is the grassroots' attendance of the *majlis* normally formed to resolve the dispute. Although parties to the dispute do not participate in the discussion themselves – the presentation of arguments and positions, suggestions and consideration of solutions – those concerned with the matter of the dispute are informed and indirectly involved at all stages of the resolution process. When a resolution is reached it is through agreement by the parties, represented indirectly to the *majlis* through negotiations with their *sheikh*. This form of participation of the grassroots facilitates understanding and respect for the decision being reached.

Other ordinary members of the tribe are informed of circulating news and information through traditional mechanisms called *sakanab*, which conveys news of the solution reached to other concerned tribesmen. As part of a long greeting ritual when two or more individuals meet, news of issues of importance is communicated. This may include news about rain, animal diseases, grain prices, major problems of inter-tribal disputes, disputes or conflicts that have been resolved and the details of the agreement.<sup>23</sup> A tradition of honesty in reciting and retelling news ensures the credibility of the information communicated.

#### *Beja inter-tribal conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms:*

##### *Traditional leaders' majlis mediation*

In the event of a member of one tribe murdering a member of another, the tribe to

which the killer belongs immediately acts to calm the situation and prevent further escalation. It intervenes through *sheikhs* and *omdas* to apologise and the *omdas*, *sheikhs* and probably the *nazir* or *nazirs* mediate to first get *gullad* (word of honour) from the tribe of the deceased that it will not take revenge and will abide by a truce (*wagab*). Until such undertakings are received, the *omdas* and *sheikhs* would insist that the burial of the murdered tribesman would not take place. According to custom it is considered inappropriate and socially unacceptable to refuse the solutions put forward by tribal leaders mediating the conflict.

The mediation of *sheikhs*, *omdas* and *nazirs* of other tribes conducted immediately after the case, is tantamount to the recognition of the right of the injured tribe to an apology and a demonstration of respect, to which the injured tribe normally responds positively. The injured tribe usually gives *gullad* and accepts the truce, thus averting the danger of further violence. The issue of murder is contained and kept as between individuals.<sup>24</sup>

Subsequently the crime may be either submitted to court or be resolved through traditional tribal mechanisms of dispute resolution. The resolution of the dispute may end by the relatives and close kin of the murdered person accepting compensation (*dyya*) and in many cases the traditional mechanisms of tribal leaders' mediation results in forgiveness being granted by the relatives of the victim. This is considered *salif* for the forgiving tribe, which in return receives forgiveness in the event of one of its tribesmen committing murder against the same tribe or sub-tribe in the future.

In most cases, even if the case is submitted to court, time is accorded to traditional tribal leaders to resolve the conflict. Even in cases when the court has passed a death sentence, traditional mechanisms can still attempt to resolve the case according to custom, and if forgiveness is granted by the victim's tribe the court normally endorses the settlement and cancels the formal case.

In the traditional settlement of such a dispute, a *majlis* (conference) is convened to look

into the case. The *majlis* is composed of *omda*, *mashaykh* and a wise elder from each tribe or sub-tribe called *sorknab*, together with the parties to the dispute and other interested members of the tribe. The *sorknab* is normally experienced in dispute and conflict resolution and has the ability to cite wise sayings and verses to remind the conflicting parties of the virtues of reconciliation, tolerance and forgiveness. He is also well-versed in precedents, *salif* and the details of tradition and custom.

In addition, notables, neutral parties and men known for their wisdom who enjoy the respect of all parties, attend the *majlis*. The presence of a *nazir*, *sheikh* or *omda* from another tribe is especially valued and helps parties to the dispute come to a solution and adhere to it. The first issue the *majlis* considers is whether *gullad* has been respected. Although all parties concerned attend the *majlis*, their *omda* or *sheikh* presents their case and arguments. The process of reconciliation starts and dialogue between the two disputant parties is conducted indirectly through their *omdas* and *sheikhs*. Parallel talks outside the *majlis* chamber are normally conducted between the parties to the dispute and their tribal leaders on the one hand and the mediators on the other. Then each party's arguments are presented indirectly to the *majlis* through their tribal leaders who act as representatives, and modify the positions originally held, in accordance with the broader interests of the tribe and sub-tribe relative to other groups. The process continues until compromise and a resolution acceptable to all parties is reached. Cases usually end with reconciliation and forgiveness, which is the aim of the tribal leaders.

Such a successful outcome demonstrates the tribal leader's influence among his community and also enhances his position among other tribal leaders. It also enhances his reputation and ability to mediate successfully in future, at all levels of Beja society. The granting of forgiveness in one instance would also involve reciprocal obligations in future cases (the tradition of *salif*).<sup>25</sup>

Thus, there are factors related to objective conditions, traditions, identity and culture that may lead on the one hand to the escala-

tion of conflict and on the other hand provide for conflict prevention and resolution outside the jurisdiction of a modern state. In a modern state system, the act of murder is considered an individual act punishable by law, and only the individual who commits the crime is held responsible. However, under conditions in which tribal loyalty and identity take precedence, such a crime is considered an act committed against the tribe and revenge may be exacted accordingly. Thus, while the act of murder is considered a tribal responsibility, the punishment for which may be extended to all other tribal members, the settlement of the conflict arising from it is also a tribal responsibility which has to be shouldered and resolved by the tribe whose member has committed the crime.

Actions and responses by the tribe to which the murdered individual belongs are shaped, oriented and conditioned by intense feelings and perceptions of identity and honour, which, if not swiftly contained, may lead to major inter-tribal conflict. Thus tribal identity and feelings, perceptions and the actions that follow from them are rooted in objective conditions that give the tribe and loyalty to it primacy over individual considerations. In the absence of effective modern state bodies, for reasons of geography, ecology or socio-economic factors, the tribe is the most viable entity providing security to its members. The individual act of murder is thus considered a violation of one tribe's security and through the anticipated act of revenge the security of the tribe to which the murderer belongs is also threatened. Because of this mutual threat, actions of murder and revenge involving two different tribes or sub-tribes become subjects of intense inter-tribal diplomacy to prevent escalation and achieve a settlement that serves the interest of the two contending tribes in restoring peace.

Tribal mechanisms designed to maintain peace and security and handle inter-tribal cases of murder and revenge, thus extend even further than modern state law to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation.

## Beja intra-tribal conflicts: Causes

### *The violation of rules governing communal land use*

The violation of *salif* rules governing the use of communal land owned by the tribe may also be a cause for conflict within the tribe or sub-tribe. Among the Beja, customary rules ensure equal right of use of communally owned land among members of the tribes as well as outsiders. Households' or individuals' attempts to erect permanent installations or construct wells on tribal or sub-tribal communal land without seeking permission and consent of the group claiming ownership are resisted even by close kin. The construction of fixed installations such as water wells is understood to establish exclusive land ownership and use rights. If those intending to construct fixed installations are not from the same lineage or sub-tribal group, permission and the commitment to pay *gudab* have to be agreed upon between the two groups. The violation of such rules often gives rise to disputes that could develop into violent conflict.

### *The violation of land use customary rules: The Guraieb-Henseilab conflict*

One such dispute caused by the violation of rules governing land use, was that which developed between the Guraieb and Henseilab sub-tribes. During the 1980s when the Khartoum-Port Sudan road was constructed, some Guraieb tribesmen started to erect huts near the road at a rocky place called Agaba, to rent as guesthouses to travellers and truck drivers. But the Henseilab claimed ownership of the land on which the huts were to be constructed and strongly objected to this move. According to custom *salif*, the Guraieb violated tradition by not obtaining the Henseilab's permission prior to the construction of the huts. According to custom this amounted to the denial of land ownership rights claimed by the Henseilab. Violent conflict seemed a possible result.

The indigenous mechanism of conflict prevention started to function to contain the situation at an early stage, before matters could get out of hand. *Nazirs*, *omdas* and

*sheikhs* intervened and involved tradition to prevent, manage and resolve the conflict. *Gullad* and *taiweg* (word of honour and commitment) were secured from the Guraeib not to proceed with the construction of the huts. A *wagab* not take any action was also obtained from both sub-tribes until a *majlis* could be convened (freezing and postponing the problem to a fixed future date) to discuss the problem and reach a peaceful solution. The *majlis* was held and both parties presented their arguments. At the conclusion of its deliberations the *majlis*, composed of tribal leaders and wise men, passed a verdict that the land was the Henseilab's and that the Guraieib tribesmen had no right to erect the huts. Both parties accepted this verdict and the dispute was peacefully settled.

In all the steps taken, respect for *salif* tradition by the two parties to the dispute was decisive. This is part of the culture, values and traditions that are inseparable from the rest of Beja social, economic and political life as it has evolved to deal with an inhospitable and difficult environment.

### **Beja intra-tribal conflict over power** *Competition for tribal political office*

Conflicts also arise from within the tribe or the sub-tribe as a result of competition for various tribal political offices. The most frequent is that for tribal political office of a lesser rank, such as *omodyya* and *mashaykha*. According to custom, succession to all tribal political offices (*nazara*, *omodyya* and *mashaykha*) is hereditary. On the death of a father who holds office, the eldest son succeeds to the position. There are cases, however, in which the *omda* or the *sheikh* appoints a cousin or nephew as his deputy (*wakil*) even if he has eligible sons. The *wakil* exercises such powers as political office has bestowed on him, while the *sheikh* or the *omda* is still alive, in cases in which the latter are absent, sick or aged.

When the tribal leader dies there are cases in which the son traditionally entitled to the office, claims it and the *wakil* who has experienced the power of office also extends his claim to continue occupying the post. In such

a situation, conflict over the tribal political office of *omdyya* or *mashaykha*, arises between the two close relatives, each claiming the office for himself, and the group (the sub-tribal unit) divides its support between the two contenders.

One such conflict began in Tokar in the 1990s after the *omda* of the Shaayab sub-tribe of the Hadandawa died. During his life as the *omda*, he had appointed his cousin as his *wakil*. Upon his death his cousin claimed himself to be the *omda* unless the sub-tribe disputed this. The late *omda*'s son, who also claimed to be the *omda*, challenged him. This could have led to a dangerous confrontation between the two factions of the divided sub-tribe giving support to each of the two contenders- making more clearer the likely intra sub-tribal confrontation.

According to tradition a meeting for the sub-tribe was held to settle the dispute. The *nazir* of the Hadandawa attended the meeting in addition to *omdas*, *sheikhs* and wise men and other members of the sub-tribe, which had divided their support equally behind the two contenders. According to *salif* tradition, and as the office is hereditary, the issue could have easily been settled with a judgement in favour of the *omda*'s son. The *wakil*, however, confident in the support he had built up over the years, insisted on putting the matter to the sub-tribe. The meeting ended without reaching a final resolution.

As the divided sub-tribe was gathering in the Mahalyya headquarters, in Aroma, and was unable to reach an agreement on who was to be their *omda*, the Tokar Administrative Officer issued a decree appointing the *wakil* as the *omda*. Conflict erupted and the two groups of supporters clashed inside the Mahalyya using traditional weapons. The police were called in and, although they managed to contain the situation, tension between the two groups remained high and conflict could have resumed at any time had it not been for the intervention of other tribes to settle the dispute according to *salif*.

Other tribes including the Amar'ar, Bani Amir, and Urtega joined the Hadandawa to intervene through their *nazirs*, *omdas* and

*mashaykh* to contain the situation. They first got *gullad* and *wagab* from both sides pending the convening of a *majlis*. The *majlis* issued a ruling according to custom (*urf* and *salif*) for the *omda's* son. This was approved by other tribal leaders attending the *majlis*, for they were also as keen to maintain the tradition that keeps office for their sons in turn.

Although the violent conflict has been avoided, the issue is not completely resolved, for the *wakil* still enjoys considerable popular support. There are attempts to appoint the latter as *wakil* for Port Sudan as a compromise, in an attempt at a final resolution of the problem.

Despite the fact that the traditional mechanisms of resolving disputes have not been wholly successful in putting an end to this conflict as in all similar intra-tribal disputes, they have been effective in containing the conflict. It has not erupted into large-scale violence and despite the potential for violence, the competition between the two contenders remained peaceful. The conflict involves tradition and adherence to it. But when tradition, generally strictly adhered to, is violated and supported by almost half of the sub-tribe's members, as is the case of the support for the Omda's cousin, there must be good reasons for this. The questions of why the Omda did not appoint his son as his deputy and why there has been much support for the Omda's cousin, meaning less support for the Omda's son despite his hereditary right are questions not in favour of the Omda's son. All these questions indicate that the Omda's son has only his hereditary right of succession to qualify him for the office. The Omda's cousin seem to possess the leadership qualities that gained him the support of his uncle (the late Omda) and half of his tribesmen.

There are two forms of intervention to resolve this conflict. One form is government intervention represented by the administrator's decision to condone the Omda's cousin as Omda. Although it looks appropriate despite its break with tradition, this form of government intervention did not work because it was not based on consultation and

negotiations and is an example of a top-down approach. The support the Omda's cousin commanded would have made it possible to accept the break with tradition and get the cousin appointed as Omda had tradition been somewhat observed.

The second form of intervention is that of the traditional tribal leadership. The underlying principle of conformity to tradition and respect is on the side of the traditional tribal leadership, however, their interest in this case is to get the son appointed, which has implications for the succession process of their sons. Subsequently the weight of the other half of the tribe and the judgement of the former Omda were neglected and so the traditional tribal leadership also failed. Government intervention failed to put an end to the conflict, as had the traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention, management and resolution. It is a rare case of stalemate or deadlock, where tradition which is widely respected has not been adjusted to take account of changing conditions. However, large-scale violence was prevented using both modern (the use of the police) and traditional mechanisms (Gullad, Wagab and Salif).

Despite the limited success of traditional mechanisms in resolving this issue, they have been effective in containing the conflict. There must be underlying reasons why the traditional succession is contested, and why the late *omda* appoint his cousin rather than his eldest son as *wakil*. This would suggest that though the son enjoys the hereditary claim, the cousin has leadership qualities that are valued by some of the tribe.

Central government intervention will not be effective in such a case, because it fails to involve the consultation and negotiation inherent in traditional attempts at resolution. This is a rare case of stalemate or deadlock, where tradition that is widely respected has not been adjusted to take account of changing conditions.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Inter-tribal conflicts among the Beja rarely escalate into violence, unlike the situation in Darfur. There are various reasons for this.

Although the Beja have potent forms of conflict management and resolution, tradition assigns greater importance and emphasis to conflict prevention mechanisms. The point is not that preventive mechanisms exist, but that they are effective because popular culture, norms and values support them. The cultural conceptions of *gullad* (word of honour), *wagab* (truce and waiting until the situation calms down and sufficient consultations and negotiations are conducted) and *taiweg* (commitment) all help to keep conflict at manageable proportions and prevent escalation. Respect for and adherence to these values facilitate the role of wise men and tribal leaders to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and reinforce the effective functioning of conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms. Ample time is given for consultation, dialogue and mediation to reach consensus. Forgiveness, which is often the outcome of conflict resolution, is superior to the results of modern law not only because the latter emphasises punishment but also because through forgiveness the seed of resolving possible future conflict according to the *salif* tradition is sown.

Despite the reduction of the powers of traditional tribal leaders, who were once the state's only symbols in Sudan's countryside, since the 1960s, in the Red Sea Hills area their position at all levels among the Beja has remained generally strong. Certainly there have been some socio-economic and political changes, including the emergence of a new Beja educated elite, but traditional tribal leadership has retained great power and influence in the daily lives of the Beja; this is particularly true of tribal leaders at the lower levels (*omdas* and *sheikhs*). The main reasons for this strong traditional leaders' influence is the geography and the natural environment of the Beja. Living in a very inhospitable environment and thinly spread, Beja pastoralists are scattered over a wide geographic area and the presence of state bodies and personnel, partic-

ularly those responsible for keeping the peace, is very weak. Consequently, *sheikhs* and *omdas* still play a very important role in tackling petty crime, solving community problems and representing community interests to higher state bodies. Moreover tribal leaders are more accessible to the Beja at grassroots levels, making it easier to handle problems in time.

The low population density of the Red Sea Hills means that competition over resources (land and water) is less fierce here than in other parts of the Sudan where the population density is higher as in the case of Darfur in western Sudan.

Almost all Beja tribes are pastoralists and there are very few settled peasant-farming communities. The presence of large settled farming communities would have presented an acute problem of conflict of interests between pastoralists and peasant farmers which is a major source of violent conflicts in Darfur region.

Despite the heterogeneity of the Beja tribes, the similarity of their language, culture and values, resulting from similarity of origin and strict adherence to both Islamic principles and indigenous cultural values (*salif*) all serve as elements of unity in diversity rather than friction

## Recommendations

The traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention have been very effective and successful in eastern Sudan and in Darfur in the past, though not in Darfur at present. To preserve the functioning of these preventive mechanisms in eastern Sudan and avoid future intra and inter-tribal violence, a number of general measures need to be considered

- Support for tribal traditional leadership at all levels, even if this leadership is not officially retained within formal state administrative structures. Financial and material support would enhance its ability to handle conflicts in accordance with tradition (truce-wagab, word of honour-gullad) and in close collaboration, consultation and negotiation with the grassroots
- The state should continue allowing tribes

in the eastern region to resolve their disputes by themselves according to tradition and employ state bodies only as observers and guarantors. With the exception of a few conflicts, this is what the state has so far done and also this has contributed to the effectiveness of traditional conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms.

- If the state has to intervene, intervention needs to be bottom-up to be effective in restoring peace rather disrupting it. Consultation and negotiations with the grassroots and their leaders at all levels must be conducted and consensus reached before decisions are taken.

Specific measures have to be taken to prevent the Hadandawa-Rashaida conflict from erupting into violence in the future. These measures have to include:

- Encouraging the Hadandawa and Rashaida to engage in a dialogue to negotiate, develop mutual understanding and reach an agreement on the Rashaida's independent administrative body, according to tradition but taking into account changing circumstances.
- Securing the agreement of all tribes affected by the creation of West Kassala Rural Council, including the Hadandawa, to agree to resolve the issue of land for the Council according to tradition.
- Both the above issues could be handled according to tradition through consultation and negotiation. The Rashaida could pay *gudab* in recognition of the Hadandawa and other Beja tribes' ownership of the land and retain the land for Kassala Rural Council. Given the disparity in access to financial resources between the two parties this, which is also a measure of resource reallocation, could reduce tension and create mutual interests. The resources from *gudab* could be used to improve social services in the drought and poverty-ridden Beja area. Alternatively these resources could be used to improve food security for the Beja, by using it to purchase food reserves from the neighbouring food surplus Gadaref area to guarantee food availability and sta-

bilise food prices during droughts.

Conflict management mechanisms among the Beja tribes are interrelated to actions and procedures intended to prevent and resolve conflict. In all cases it must be emphasised that a bottom-up approach is likely to be more efficacious than measures imposed from above or outside.

## Notes

1. *Nazara* is a tribal political office originally instituted by the British administration. It is the highest tribal political office, heading a tribal hierarchy of junior political offices. *Nazara* is also a symbol of the recognition of the tribe as political entity and in most cases *nazara* corresponds to a real but vague territorial entity for the tribe.
2. S Pantuliano, Changing livelihoods: Urban adaptation of the Beja pastoralists of Halaib Province (NE Sudan) and NGO planning approaches, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2000, pp. 33-35.
3. Ibid, p. 90-91.
4. Ibid, p. 91
5. M Suliman Sudan: Wars Over Resources and Identity, (in Arabic), Cambridge Academic press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 279.
6. Notice the similarity to the position of Arab tribes among the Masaliet, Fur and other indigenous African tribes.
7. The Rashaida have three sub-tribes; Zneimat, Bra'asa and Brateikh, with one omda heading each sub-tribe). See Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar, The Tribal Conflict in Kassala between El Beja and El Rashaida; 1985-1995, (in Arabic), Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, The Institute of Disaster Management, 1998, p. 40-43 and also see A Suliman. op cit, p. 280.
8. Although there are cases of friction between the Rashaida and Hadandawa over murder cases and the theft of camels, these are minor and are normally handled and contained according to *urf* and traditional conflict prevention mechanisms so as not to escalate into major inter-tribal conflict.
9. Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar, op cit, p. 68.
10. Some issues included in the agreement have been contended since the 1970s by the Rashaida and have thus become a source for the current covert unsettled conflict between the Rashaida and Hadandawa.
11. Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar op cit.p. 68.
12. The Rashaida have adapted themselves to the restrictions on access to land and water imposed on them by the 1933 Agreement. Some of these adaptations include entry into Eritrea to have access to more pastureland. Water is bought from the Hadandawa when the wells they have been allowed access to are insufficient to water their

- animals. The Rashaida also purchased dura from the market to supplement the grain shortage resulting from the restrictions placed on cultivation.
13. Quoted Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar, op cit, p. 70.
  14. Ibid.p. 72.
  15. Ibid.p. 75.
  16. Ibid.p. 75
  17. In their appearance the Rashaida are not very different from Saudis and they receive special treatment by the Saudi authorities when they enter Saudi Arabia. This has facilitated Rashaida access to jobs in Arabia and accordingly they have been able to build up wealth and camel herds, buying Beja camels.
  18. It is important to notice here that the British allowed the traditional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms to function and settle disputes, including the Hadandawa-Rashaida conflict, with minimal or no government intervention. This resulted in the 1933 Agreement, which has provided peace between the two tribes to the present day. But instability started after independence in the late 1950s. Although the 1933 Agreement has not been abolished, both the Rashaida and the government have violated it.
  19. The Governor of Kassala issued a Decree in April 1989 appointing a *nazir* for El Rashaida. See Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar, op cit, p.84.
  20. Notice that this was taking place during the same period the Fur-Arab conflict in Darfur was being dealt with. While preparation were going ahead for convening a tribal conference to resolve Fur-Arab conflict was scheduled for 30 June 1989, the Hadandawa demonstration was planned for the same day objecting to the creation of *nazara* for the Rashaida.
  21. See Abdel Rahman Badawi Abu Al Bashar, op cit, pp. 92-95. Informal Personal Interview with Idris Ibrahim, Local Leader, The Legislative Council, June 2001.
  22. Information on cases of conflict among the Beja tribes and sub-tribes and on procedures to prevent, manage and resolve them are lacking. The main source for the following sections is personal communication with resource persons. Unless otherwise cited all the information on cases of conflict and procedures pursued to deal with them following traditional conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms, is extracted from information provided in a lengthy discussion with a group made up of officials most of whom are from amongst the Beja tribe. This group of Beja officials who also worked for a long time in different parts of the Beja area as local government or development officers and they are well-informed resource persons. The group includes, Mohamed Ahmed Osman, Local Government Officer, Halaib; Abdella Littab Local Government Officer; Haseina Hag Ali, Development Officer, Kassala; Alawia El Hadi Ahmed, Adil Mahagar, Local Government officer, Port Sudan; Omyma Ahmed, Local Government Officer, Port Sudan; Amal Suliman Development Officer, Port Sudan.
  23. Group discussion and also S Pantuliano, op cit, p. 61.
  24. Actually this may not be exactly the case. Being an individual matter, in cases of murder, as a result of maglis mediation, is actually relevant only in as far as containing the case from escalating into further inter-tribal violence. The tribe is still involved in the proceeding resolution stages, which it can end it by forgiveness or by supporting its member through the judicial process.
  25. Getting forgiveness from his tribesmen the tribal leader gets salif obligation from the tribe granted forgiveness. This, in turn, enables him to settle future murder disputes with other tribes; particularly the one granted forgiveness, by reciprocating by giving forgiveness. This tradition is one major factor halting murder cases from developing into inter-tribal conflict through revenge and counter revenge.