Farmers versus Pastoralists: Contested Land Rights
and Ethnic Conflicts in Dar Masalit, West Darfur State

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DEDICATION

To the soul of my father, Musa Abdal-Kareem, the person from whom I truly understood that: “Where there’s a will there’s a way.”
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Zahir Musa Abdal-Kareem,
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Abstract

Name: Zahir Musa Abdal-Kareem

This study sheds light on the issue of land-based conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Dar Masalit, West Darfur State. The general argument of this study could be stated as follow: there are specific factors, mostly at the grass-root level, that have triggered the conflict between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists in Dar Masalit since the mid of 1990s and beyond. These factors are connected to the latest economic, environmental and political changes that have been witnessed in Darfur as well as Dar Masalit in the last three decades. However, it is important to indicate that the argument of this study also assumes that the root causes of this conflict are basically related to the role that is played by the Sudanese government at the macro level. Here, factors such as lack of development; coupled with the nature of the interference of the Sudanese central state in the customary land tenure system in Dar Masalit are considered to be the root causes of the conflict in this area.

The study employed a ‘holistic approach’ to investigate its main questions. This approach comprises historical as well the descriptive methods. As to the means of data collection, observations, in-depth interviews and focused group discussions were the main tools used in this study. Besides, I consulted books, papers, documents, reports, internet websites, newspapers, relevant administrative reports and maps on the relevant issues.
One of the major results emphasized by this study is that there is no equality between farmers and pastoralists to maintain the same rights to secure access of land for cultivation and pasture in Dar Masalit, especially in times of severe hardship. In this regards, customary land tenure system of Dar Masalit has enabled farmers (especially, the Masalit, the Fur and the Daju) to claim and enjoy acknowledged rights over tenure and usage in this area. Conversely, pastoralists have begun to raise the claim that they have the right to access the land in this area as long as it belongs to the Sudanese state.

When it comes to the direct causes behind the conflicts at the grass-roots level, the study found that the recent huge influxes of human and livestock to Dar Masalit, together with the new changes in the subsistence economy of the farmers are the main causes of the conflicts in Dar Masalit.

The study demonstrated that lack of development as well as the intervention of the central state in the local arena through some land legislations is the root causes of the conflicts in Dar Masalit.

As to the issue of ethnicity, the study showed that ethnic or tribal diversities are not the causes behind the conflicts in this area, rather, land-based conflicts (together with other factors) have contributed to the creation of ethnic divisions, especially that based on tribalism.
مستخلص

الاسم: زاهر موسى عبد الكريم داوود

ركزت هذه الدراسة على موضوع الصراع حول الأرض بين المزارعين والرعاية في منطقة دار مساليت التي تقع في أقصى الجزء الغربي لولاية غرب دارفور.

الحجة الأساسية التي تتبعها هذه الدراسة ترى أن هناك عوامل مباشرة لها ارتباط بالتغيرات الاقتصادية والبيئية والسياسية التي حدثت في الثلاثة عقود الأخيرة على مستوى دارفور ودار مساليت أدت إلى نشوب الصراع بين المزارعين المستقرين والرعاية الرحل في منطقة دار مساليت منذ منتصف التسعينات من القرن الماضي وحتى الآن. ولكن بالإضافة إلى ذلك تفترض الدراسة أن الأسباب الجوهرية للنزاع ترتبط بالدور الذي تقوم به الدولة السودانية على مستوى السياسات الكلية.

فيما يتعلق بالمنهج، استخدمت الدراسة منهجاً شاملاً ينسجم من المنهج التاريخي بالإضافة إلى الوصف التحليلي للإجابة على أسئلتها الرئيسية. أما فيما يتعلق بوسائل جمع البيانات فقد استخدمت الدراسة كل من الملاحظة البسيطة، المقابلات المعمقة وجماعات النقاش المركزية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك اعتمدت الدراسة على عدد كبير من المصادر الثانوية ذات الصلة بموضوع البحث. هذه المصادر تتكون من الكتب، الأوراق العلمية، التقارير، شبكة الإنترنت، الصحف، التقارير الإدارية والخرائط.

أهم النتائج التي توصلت إليها هذه الدراسة هي أن أوضاع المزارعين والرعاية لم تعد متساوية فيما يتعلق بموضوع الحصول على الأرض من أجل الزراعة والرعاية في منطقة دار مساليت، خصوصاً في الأوقات الصعبة. في هذا الخصوص نجد أن القانون العرفي للأرض بالمنطقة قد مكن المزارعين المستقرين (خصوصاً المساليت، الغور والدجو) من التمتع بحقوق ملكية واستخدام الأرض بالمنطقة. في المقابل نجد أن الرعاة (خصوصا الرعيات الشمالية) بدأوا بروجوم للنظرية التي تقول طالما أن الأرض في دار مساليت أصبحت ملكاً للدولة إذا فان للجميع الحق بالتمتع بالأرض في المنطقة.
فيما يتعلق بالأسباب المباشرة للصراع بالمنطقة، توصلت الدراسة أن الحركة الواسعة لأعداد كبيرة من البشر والحيوانات من شمال دارفور مصحوبة بالتغيرات الأخيرة التي طرأت على الاقتصاد المعيشي للمزارعين هي من الأسباب المباشرة التي أدت للصراع في منطقة دار مساليت.

من ناحية أخرى قدمت الدراسة بيانات أولية وثانوية توضح أن مسألة غياب التنمية بالإضافة إلى تدخل الدولة المركزية عبر سن التشريعات التي تتعلق بالأرض في المنطقة هي من بين أهم الأسباب الجوهرية التي أدت إلى نشوب الصراع.

أما فيما يتعلق بموضوع الأثنيّة فقد توصلت الدراسة إلى أن وجود التعددية الإثنية بالمنطقة ليس هو السبب الذي أدى إلى حدوث صراعات، بل على العكس نجد أن الصراع حول الأرض (الإضافة إلى عوامل أخرى) هو الذي أدى إلى تبلور ظاهرة التقسيمات الأثنيّة بالمنطقة، خصوصا القائمة على أساس القبليّة.
List of abbreviations

CMI: Christian Michelson Institute.

CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

DLC: Darfur Land Commission.

FGDs: Focused Groups Discussion

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons.

KIs: Key Informants

JEM: Justice and Equality Movement.

NCP: National Congress Party.

SLA/M: Sudan Liberation Army/ Movement.

ULA: Unregistered Land Act

WFP: World Food Program.
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1. General Background

According to many researchers dealings with conflicts, emergence and escalation of grass-roots conflicts all over the world is considered one of the most noticeable events that have been emerging since the end of the cold war, particularly in the second half of 1990s (Porto, 2002). On the other hand, one notices that these above-mentioned conflicts have been given different terminologies, e.g. ‘internal conflicts’, ‘new wars’, ‘small wars’, ‘civil wars’, ‘ethnic conflicts’, ‘conflicts in post colonial states’ ‘grass-roots conflicts and so on (ibid). However, for the purposes of this study, the two terms ethnic conflict and grass-roots conflicts will be mostly employed.

These new wars compelled scholars to reexamine their former classical conflict theories (Richards, 2005). According to these “classical perspectives”, ‘global polarization’ and/or the ‘ideological conflict’ between USA and the former Soviet Union is the main factor that underlies conflicts all over the world (ibid). However, the recent conflict theories have started to analyze conflicts through new standpoints, among which, the natural resource question (land in particular) has occupied a significant place.

Despite the fact that there have been global concentrations on the land-based conflicts studies in the last three decades, a number of researchers argue that these studies “remain fragmented between disciplinary boundaries, which produce conflicting and often mutually exclusive theories. Most importantly, there is a disturbing lack of integrative knowledge on the subject” (Porto, 2002).
When it comes to the situation in Africa, one could say that natural resource issue occupies a central place in the recent literature tackling the conflict’s question in the continent (Bigagaza et al, 2002; Manger, 2005; Porto, 2002). In this respect, one researcher stated that: “The access to and control of valuable natural resources, including minerals, oil, timber, productive pastures and farming land, have been crucial factors in the occurrence of violence conflicts across the continent.” (Porto, 2002: 2).

Anthropologically speaking, although, grass-root level analysis -which investigates the role played by local actors- is so important to understand the conflicts phenomena, Manger (2005) argues that to fully comprehend the conflict in the African communities we need to put more emphasis on “…the state and on the concept of ‘governance…This suggests a need to look at people’s use of, and control over, resources at many different levels, thus permitting a consideration of processes of power and authority.” (Manger, 2005: 135). For the purposes of this study, Manger’s above-mentioned perspective should be expanded. Thus, the notion that is adopted in this study could be stated as follows: apart from focusing on issues of natural resources management, land in our case study, an equivalent attention should be paid to the issue of conflict management. This study envisages that land-based conflicts are triggered by environmental as well as political factors.

As regards the Sudan, a number of Sudanese anthropologists stressed the role played by competition over resources in the onset of the different conflicts in the country (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Assal, 2006; Babiker, 2008; Suliman, 1999 &2007). For example, one of them stated “…the cause of many conflicts we see today in the Sudan is related to resource access and usage…” (Assal, 2006: 102). On the other hand, some of them also
stressed the inclusion of the role played by the state when studying the conflict discourse (Assal, 2006; Suliman, 1999 & 2007).

As to Darfur region, the wider context of our case study, a number of views have been provided to interpret its recent disturbing grass-roots conflicts. For example, Mohamed argues that most of the conflicts that we have seen recently in Darfur could be basically attributed to the crisis of development in the region (Mohamed et al 2003). Here, Mohamed reminds us to give more attention to the role played by the Sudanese state. Similarly, De Wall also goes along the same line of Mohamed’s argument. More specifically, he ascribes Darfur’s conflict to the crisis of the Sudanese state (De Wall, 2007). At this point, he emphasized that “The war in Darfur should compel us to attend more closely to the ways in which identity conflicts are, in significant ways, a by product of the political structure of the Sudanese polity.” (Ibid: 3).

Conversely, other researchers consider these conflicts as fundamentally triggered by competition over natural resources, land in particular (Abdul-Jalil, 2006; Suliman, 2007; Tubiana, 2007). For Abdul-Jalil, droughts and desertification, resource competition (mainly over land), competition by local and educated elites, legal disputes between customary and statuary land tenure systems coupled with lack of development and lack of development are the main elements of Darfur grass-roots conflicts (Abdul-Jalil, 2006). As for Tubiana, both the Sudanese central government and the Darfur rebel groups have employed land issues to accomplish their political ends in the region. In his article *Darfur: a conflict for land?*, Tubiana (2007: 90) concluded that “Khartoum has used land not only to mobilize proxies among land less Arabs who saw an opportunity to renegotiate the terms of their access to
tenure, but also to rekindle standing local conflicts from which it stood to gain. At the same time, the rebel groups played on the fears non-Arab’s had about their land in order to attract support from those communities. This explains the new fracture that has appeared between landless Arabs, who want new land, and non-Arabs, who fears losing theirs.” Regarding Suliman, he clarified that ethnic based armed conflicts in Darfur could be classified in two types. (A) Small disputes and skirmishes that have been witnessed between, and among, Darfur different tribes during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s; and, (B) large scale bloody, mostly couched in tribal terms, conflicts that have erupted since the 1980s. However, Suliman adopts the argument that ascribes the eruptions of conflicts to the competition over land resources that has been instigated by environmental degradation, massive influxes of population movements in, and outside, Darfur. Then, he concluded that the recent land scarcity together with the negative role played by the Sudanese state are the main reasons of Darfur grass-root conflicts.

Contrary to what has been usually portrayed by many recent western media commentators (Bradol, 2004; De Wall, 2004), this study has its reservation on the perspective that considers the conflicts in the area as basically that of farmers versus pastoralists, old-timers versus newcomers and Zurga versus Arabs. The refutation of this simplistic perspective is crucial, since it, at one extreme, reduces the conflict in the area to a “final product” of the environmental crisis and ecological stress that affected the area since the 1970s and 1980s. At the other extreme, I do believe that characterizing Darfur conflicts as Arabs versus Africans obscures the reality and renders the way to grasp the conflict discourse very difficult.
Mornei area is the example through which the study has traced back the above-mentioned processes. It is a rural community that is situated in southeastern part of Al-Genien area in West Darfur State. In addition to that it is a multi-ethnic setting in which different ethnic groups have been sharing natural resources and potentials for a long time. It is part of a territory known as Dar Masalit and the Masalit represent the dominant group. Other people living there include Arabs, Daju, Fur, Tama, Bargo and Zaghawa. The importance of Mornei stems from the fact that it is the merging point for many big water courses (wedian, sing. wadi) in western Darfur. This very fact makes it a fertile land suitable for farming and grazing activities. For this reason it has always attracted pastoral nomads and other immigrants, (more information about Mornei will be given in chapter 5).

2. The problem of the study

As is the case of a number of studies that have been discussed in the introduction (Abdul-Jalil, 2006; Mohamed, 2002; Suliman, 2007; Tubiana, 2007), this study also attempts to investigate the issue of contested land rights and ethnic conflicts between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists in Dar Masalit, West Darfur state. Following Abdul-Jalil’s above mentioned argument, the study will try to uncover the different aspects of land-based conflicts in Dar Masalit, Mornei in particular. In addition to that the roles that are played by the different actors and/ or stakeholders at the grass-roots level will be revealed as well. The main questions to be posed here are: who are the different stakeholders that have been engaged in Dar Masalit’s grass-roots conflicts, Mornei in our case? Why, when and how? It’s well known that the title of this study focuses the concern on what is recognized as the
traditional stakeholders (farmers and pastoralists) of land-based conflicts in the Sudan. However, as mentioned through Abdul-Jalil’s argument, the role that is played by local and educated elite - (political entrepreneurs in the language of Barth) - in the eruption of this conflict will be dealt with as well.

On the other hand, following some parts of each of the above-mentioned Suliman’s, Tubiana’s, Assal’s and Manger’s arguments, I do believe that understanding land-based conflict in Dar Masalit entails giving more attention to the issue of state. This will require analyzing the negative results that have been created at the grass-roots level as a direct outcome of the implementation of developmental projects and the administrative performance of the Sudanese state in the local arenas.

In the same way, the question of the legal dimension of land-based conflicts and to what extent it has contributed to the emergence of conflicts in this area will be scrutinized. Here, the study will try to examine whether there is a contradiction within the dominant pattern of land tenure system in this area. More specifically, light will be shed on the two very important issues of the customary, as well as the statuary, land tenure systems.

Anthropologically speaking, we are now compelled, I think, to divert from the simplified ways of tackling the conflict in Darfur. The example for this simplicity is the prevailing "naturalist thinking" as well as the perspective that conceives the conflict in Darfur as Arabs versus non-Arabs (Zurga).\(^1\) In fact, these two perspectives have been rejected due to

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\(^{1}\) \textit{Zurga (black in Arabic, sig. Azrag)} is a term used nowadays to refer to the “African” indigenous tribes of Darfur who speak different African languages as mother tongues namely, the Fur, the Zaghawa, and the Masalit etc. It is worth mentioning that other “African” groups who speak Arabic language as a mother tongue (like Bertí, Tunjur and etc) are also classified
the fact that “none of them offers a convincing explanation of why wars happen when and where they do, offering only an explanation of how war is intensified or prolonged.” (Richards, 2005: 4). I have, as an alternative, adopted a holistic perspective that depends on a broad thinking, which addresses the association between three basic elements: first, the resource-based conflict, and in this case, the main focus will be directed towards land-based conflict in its relation to the socio-economic developments occurred at the grass-roots level. Indeed, factors such as population movements, environmental degradation and hence; land scarcity would be part of this investigation. Consequently, this will lead us to the second part of our theoretical perspective, which highlights the role played by the Sudanese state in these conflicts. Third, ethnicity which is considered as a theory of rational choices will be dealt with in the course of the conflict as well.

The general argument of this study could be stated as follow: there are specific factors, mostly at the grass-root level, that have triggered the conflict between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists (principally the camel nomads) in Dar Masalit since the mid of 1990th onwards. These factors are connected to the successive waves of droughts that have struck the region, particularly north Darfur, since the early of 1970th onwards. In the same way other factors such as the latest massive human and animal movements (from northern Darfur, Chad and Central Africa) to west Darfur together with the recent changes in the local livelihood systems in

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as Zurga. According to Suliman (2007), the “Arabs” have firstly used this term to refer to the indigenous “non-Arab” farmers who occupy the central part of the region. Later on, the African tribes adopted the term and applied it to distinguish themselves from their Arab neighbours. According to Mohamed and Badri (2005), this term appeared for the first time in the mid of the 1980s during the competition over leadership positions between the Zaghawa and the Rezaigat in south Darfur. In fact, that period has witnessed an intense tribal-based polarization which has begun to occur almost in the all parts of the region, south Darfur in particular. Consequently, the grave conflict between the Fur and the gathering of the Arab tribes that erupted in 1987 around Jebel Marra was part of that tribal polarization in Darfur.
Dar Masalit are considered among the direct causes that have contributed to the eruption of the conflict in this area. However, it is important to stress the point that the argument of this study also assumes that the root causes of this conflict are basically related to the role that is played by the Sudanese government. Here, the main factors that will be focused on are the nature of the interventions of the Sudanese central government, Inqaz in particular, in Dar Masalit. At this point, the question of development in Darfur coupled with the land legislations (issued by the central government in both Darfur and Dar Masalit) are believed to be the root causes of the conflict in Dar Masalit.

Based on the above, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- How did various groups secure access to natural resources (mainly land) in the past?
- What is the role played by land scarcity in the eruption of grassroots conflicts in Dar Masalit?
- How has the conflict over resources affected and shaped identity politics?
- Why has the land-based conflict been couched in ethnic terms? And if yes, what is the nature of this ethnicity?
- How have the macro state policies, (e.g. lack of development, land policies and legislations etc), resulted in the emergence and/or escalation of the conflicts on the micro level.

3. Significance of the study

This study tries to provide an account to the land-based conflict in Dar Masalit area. As such, it will enable policy-makers, politicians and scholars to possess an adequate and detailed understanding about the
unstable situation in Dar Masalit in particular and West Darfur State in general. This issue stems from the fact that adequate knowledge is important for understanding and resolving the conflict in Darfur.

Similarly, this study is intended to establish a link between land-based conflict, state and ethnicity in Darfur. Thus, it is an attempt to show to what extent is the issue of natural resources, land in particular, influential in the onset of conflicts in west Darfur State, particularly Dar Masalit. Besides, the study also intends to show that the present scale of violence could not have been produced by land scarcity alone. Rather, macro-state policies are believed to have played crucial roles in this concern as well.

4. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:
1- Reveal the different aspects and the multi-layered nature of conflict, in Dar Masalit, and especially Mornei area.

2- Produce a detailed description of the dynamic relations between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists in Mornei. As well as, giving full explanation of how they make their choices in the course of their mutual relations.

3- Discover the nature of resource scarcity, and its impact on the emergence of the conflict in Dar Masalit.

4- Investigate local resource-management systems along with traditional mechanisms for conflict-management and assess its practicality and adequacy.
5- Understand the role played by the central government in the course of grass-root conflicts in Dar Masalit.

5. Methodology:

The study adopts a holistic approach. More specifically, the historical method has been used to give insights about the development of the conflict and its subsequent escalation. Using this approach, I tried to address the main aspects of the problems in the region: resource-based conflict and ethnicity. The interplay between these aspects creates what we currently call the crisis of Darfur.

I have also adopted the descriptive method to explore the current nature of land-based conflict in the region. The descriptive method has been very useful in this study. It enabled me to describe and analyze issues of relevance to the local context namely; the nature, developments and legislations of land tenure system in the course of its consequences on inter-group relations.

The holistic approach adopted in this study helped me very much to carry out an in-depth analysis; and, consequently to understand the issues involved in the conflicts in Dar Masalit.

6. Data collection

6.1 Secondary data

Since the real escalation of the conflict in Darfur took place in 2003, there has been a growing amount of literature regarding Darfur in the last few years. I tried to make sure that I cover the most important contemporary works regarding the conflict in the region. Therefore, I have consulted
books, papers, documents, reports, internet websites, newspapers, relevant administrative reports and maps on the relevant issues.

6.2 Primary data

I have carried out two trips to the study area in May and November 2006. During these visits, I have frequented Al-Geniena town and the nearby villages. The places that I covered during these visits belong to what is commonly known as “Dar Masalit”. It is a huge tract of land extending from Al-Geniena town to the east, south and west. It includes rural communities like Habila, Kingo, Kraink and Mornei (see map no 3). I devoted more time to collecting data from Mornei since it is the focus of my study. More information about Mornei area will be presented in details in chapter four.

The main tools of data collections that were used in this study are observation, in-depth interviews and focused group discussions.

In-depth interviews were carried out with different key tribal informants, local administrators, community leaders, and governmental officials in Mornei area and in the rest of the places I visited. Those informants and tribal leaders belong to farmers and pastoralists communities living in “Dar Masalit”. Furthermore, I met some local educated elites from both farmers and pastoralists groups and conducted in-depth interviews with them. Those intellectuals are school teachers and employees of regional state ministries. Moreover, I held some group discussions inside the main IDPs camp in Mornei with some displaced people from farmers, who are basically from non-Arab tribes as well as with some youth inside Al-Geniena town. On the other hand, the nomadic pastoralists groups are generally highly; consequently, I was not able to conduct enough
interviews with them, except limited ones with their local leaders (Mahria and Mahadi) inside Al-Geniena town.

It is worth mentioning here that I have also depended on observation as a vital instrument for data collection. The observations were conducted in the local markets, IDPs’ camps, nearby rural settlements, besides the ongoing economic activities along the Wadi (Arabic name for a valley) and in some other popular gatherings.

7. The limitations of the study

1- The study deals with the issue of land tenure and conflict in Dar Masalit in West Darfur State. Nonetheless, there are many similarities regarding land tenure systems all over the region. These similar cases remained vital for the purpose of comparison, in spite of the fact that generalization remained methodologically difficult.

2- The study concentrates on land-based conflict in Dar Masalit. As a result, other important causes of conflict remain out of the direct concern of my study. Even though, these sources of tension and conflict are also playing an important role in the trajectory of the crisis in Darfur today.

3- Due to security considerations, my movement was restricted during my fieldwork experiences in the area. I concentrated my work throughout that period in the IDPs’ camps; I did also some work in Al-Geniena town among the same groups. I have likewise accessed most of the farmers (who are basically Masalit, Fur and Daju) in rural areas through the agents of the humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children and WFP.
4- Finally, I should admit that accessing farmers, who are basically non-Arabs, was relatively easier than when I tried to approach pastoralists nomadic groups (basically Arabs) in the different localities I visited. This is because farmers are hosted mainly in IDPs camps such as the one in Mornei and they were considering me as a member of their ethnic group. So, since I reached Dar Masalit in May 2006, I realized that farmers and pastoralists have been tribally categorized.

8. The basic concepts of the study

There are some concepts that are repeated more frequently in this study. For that reason a definition of each of them is given below:

8.1 Ethnic Group

For the purposes of this study, ethnicity is described as: “…an instrument, a contextual, fluid and negotiable aspect of identity.” (Porto, 2002: 7) However, this term has been used widely to indicate every form and/ or attempt of a specific group towards ‘making boundaries’ in the sake of including or excluding other particular groups (Schlee, 2008). This study deals with ethnicity as a term that denotes every form of difference. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the point that this study will elaborate on the question of how boundaries are made in the course of the conflict in Dar Masalit.

Based on the above mentioned perspective, the term ethnic groups is defined as: “…a reference group, the member of which are supposed to share common attributes…such attributes do not necessarily represent the whole range of characteristics exhibited by a certain population nor are the objectively verifiable by necessity” (Abdul-Jalil, 1984: 61).
Following Abdul-Jalil, this study adopts using the term ethnic group instead of “tribe”. This stems from the fact that ethnicity has a dynamic nature. The nature of this dynamism is attributed to the fact that: “both the criteria for the identification of ethnic groups and the way in which individual members express their allegiances to them change through time and with respect to the circumstances under which such processes take place” (Abdul-Jalil, 1984: 56). On the other hand, the advantages of employing this term, ethnic group, can be attributed to the fact that “it is flexible and can be applied in almost any situation where allegiance to a named group is mobilized. This can vary from voluntary associations in African towns or groupings in rural areas to ethnic clubs in United States of America, and sectarian organizations in Northern Ireland” (Abdul-Jalil, 1984: 59).

8.2 Conflict

Conflict is defined as “the striving of different people or groups towards goals that are difficult to reconcile. Conflict is a ‘situation’ be it social, cultural economic or political, which arises when actors envisage mutually incompatible interests or goals” (Ali, 2007: 7). According to this definition, when specific groups of people reach a point, in which they realize that, their goals and interests are contradicted, conflict is highly anticipated. However, additional factors are needed for labeling a specific situation as conflict. The most important factor is that conflict is considered as an organized and not accidental process. In other words, conflict or war is defined recently as “the calculated use of violence for rational political ends” (Richards, 2005: 2).

According to Mohamed and Badri (2005), three types of conflicts can be identified in the region:
1. A regional conflict of all ethnic groups claiming an identity as Darfurians, versus the central government. The regional share in national wealth as well as the access to the central or the regional power are said to be the main causes of this type of conflicts.

2. Ethnic based conflict, especially which stands on Arab/ non-Arab dichotomy.

3. Inter-communal conflict that is basically fought for citizenship rights and resources. Here, ethnicity is not considered as the main factor that underlies the conflict.

It worth mentioning that, these three types of conflicts are connected together and difficult to separate in reality.

8.3 Ethnic Conflict

For the purposes of this study, the term ethnic conflict is defined as those kinds of conflicts which have been couched in ethnic terms. In such cases, ethnic terms are usually taken as signs of affiliation with others. According to Schlee, these ethnic terms/ or signs of affiliations usually include “…race, kinship, language, religion, local or regional signs, historical experience, social class, generation, gender, or participation in a social movement.” (Schlee, 2009: 2). However, it worth mentioning the fact that, the term “race” is not used in its biological sense, rather it is used as “…a category common in the modern identity politics, especially, though not exclusively, in British and American discourse” (Ibid).

The main examples that are usually taken as ethnic-based conflicts in the recent history are: the wars among Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian Muslim, and Albanian ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s
and; the mass genocide of ethnic Tutsis by ethnic Hutus in the African country of Rwanda in 1994.

According to this study, the term ethnic conflict denotes the different confrontations that have emerged between the “Masalit” groups and the “Arabs” in Dar Masalit area since the middle of 1990s. Recently, each of the two conflicting ‘ethnic groups’, has adopted a specific ethnic identity based on their conceived perceptions about their origins. The results of the study have shown that now each of the two groups see itself as extremely different from the other despite their in-depth historic interconnectedness, culturally, religiously, residentially, socially and economically.

At this point, it is problematic to use terms like Arabs and Africans in the context of the conflict in Darfur. For it is clear that these terms are subjected to the dynamics of the ongoing conflict itself. First, there are great cultural similarities between these groups because of centuries of acculturation, cultural borrowing and inter-marriages. Nonetheless, due to the escalation of the conflict, many people had to choose between the two available sources of identities that were increasingly polarized. As a result, many people made their choices with either of the two poles, although, this is not to imply that they do belong racially to the specific identity labels they opted for. We see, for example, groups like Bargo-Selihab and Gimir decided, for different reasons, to identify themselves as Arabs, whereas many individuals, and some times complete groups, who claim Arabic descent, choose to be part of the political structure that represents the so-called African groups. In the successive sections, I will use these two terms to refer to the two mentioned groups, because they do identify themselves in that way, moreover, this identification has acquired
a growing momentum at the grass root level nowadays and many people act according to it.

Based on my fieldwork in Mornei, the Masalit ethnic group includes; Masalit as the main group as well as the Fur, Daju and Zaghawa, in addition to some smaller tribes from non-Arab decent, such as the Marariet and the Erenga. On the other hand, the Arab ethnic groups consist of all the tribes, which claim Arabic origins, and some smaller non-Arabs such as Gimir and Bergo. Nevertheless, the main tribes that are involved in the conflict are related to the northern Rezeigat camel herders such as Awlad Zaid, Awlad Jonoub, and Alnja’a. Besides, this group also includes some tribes from cattle herders such as the Salamat, Taaisha and Bani-Halba.

**8.4 Farmers**

Settled groups who practice subsistence cultivation are referred to in this study as farmers. These groups consist mainly of the Masalit, Fur, and Daju. The same thing applies to the different settled groups that occupy the central areas of greater Darfur. These areas are labeled as the farmers’ zone of central Darfur area. The main livelihood activity that is practiced in this zone is the traditional subsistence agriculture. This activity is called locally, especially in Dar Masalit, *Zira’at Al-Bildat* (the cultivation of small farms). It is worth mentioning that these groups practice animal husbandry as a second activity, as well. The animals they usually breed, within their villages, are mainly cattle; however, there is a recent inclination towards sheep and goats breeding. Some scholars have documented that the farmers who were able to increase their cattle to certain limits usually leave their farms and adopt pastoral nomadism as a way of life (Haaland, 1969).
8.5 Pastoralists

The term “pastoralists” in this study refers principally to the Northern Rezaigat groups. They consist of three main sections; Mahamid, Mahriya and the Nuwaiba (De Wall, 2005). The Northern Rezaigat groups are camel herders who roam in a vast belt that extends across Sudan, Chad and Niger Republic. In the Sudan, these groups resided in Northern Darfur for centuries; nevertheless, due to the successive environmental and political changes in Sudan and some African countries, most of the pastoralists have left their traditional habitats in the Northern belt and steadily migrated to western and southern Darfur. This process has been observed since the sixties and the seventies of the last century. Currently, some sub-sections of these groups are relocated in Northern parts of Al-Geneina area near Kaja valley. The main groups in this gathering are; Awlad Junaob, Al-Naja and Awlad Rahama. In the dry season, they used to migrate to the fertile pastures and water sources in Mornei vicinity in the southeast side of Al-Geneina area. The pastoralists groups in Al-Geneina area include some smaller ethnic groups from the cattle herders who are normally located in southern Darfur such as the Bani-Halba and the Salamt.

Lastly, we should consider the fact that pastoral nomadism as a way of life is not only performed by the “Arab” groups. Rather, there are many “African” groups in Darfur pursuing animal husbandry as well. Zaghawa, some sections of the Fur, Gimir and Bargo are examples of these groups. Therefore, as it was concluded by Haaland from his case study on the sedentary people of Jebel Mara in 1969, nomadisation processes are basically shaped by economic transformations that have taken place at the different levels, particularly the grass-roots level (Haaland, 1969).
8.6 Systems of Land Tenure

This term is used in the present study to refer to the predominant practices concerning access to land rights in Dar Masalit. It also refers to the recognized principles, inherited local rights and the principles of land ownership and land-use in these communities. In addition, it involves a description of how the different ethnic groups could claim rights over land (ownership or utilization). I will uncover the environmental and political impacts on creating new bases for claiming and contesting rights over land in Dar Masalit related to the above mentioned issues.

At this point it is necessary to indicate that Sudanese communities have recognized two main systems of land tenure:

8.6.1 Customary land tenure system

With exception to the central and northern riverian parts, customary land system is found in almost all other parts of the rural areas of the Sudan. In this respect, the dar system is one of the most well-known patterns of customary tenure in the region. Thus, a brief definition will be provided about this issue in the next section.

8.6.1.1 The Dar system

According to Mohamed and Badri (2005: 19), dar or homeland is a “territory that is controlled by members of a single ethnic group. Dar ownership implies rights over land and political and administrative power.” The British colonial government (1917-1956) established the dar system when it found the Native Administration (1921-1933) in Sudan.
When it comes to Darfur, the communal leaders paramount chiefs of the tribes (that have been granted homelands by the Fur Sultanate during the 17th and 18th century) have been given the authority to become in charged of their homelands (dars). On the other hand, “minority groups, who are not part of the dominant group owing the dar, are seen as followers of the dominant groups (Mohamed and Badri 2005: 33).

8.6.2 Statuary/ or Modern land tenure system

This system follows the modern legal bases of ownership that stands for many procedures, among which land registration is considered the crucial one.
Chapter One
Land, state, ethnicity and grass-roots Conflicts

1.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretical part of the study. It tackles grass-roots conflicts across three basic dimensions; land, ethnic differences and the crisis of state. In fact, this is what I have called it, elsewhere in this study, the holistic approach.

Following the anthropological viewpoint, circumstances on the local level will be the starting point of this analysis. More specifically, a dialogue has been created between the two main perspectives of land-based conflict and ethnic-based conflict.

Conversely, the wider political contexts in which grass-roots conflicts are embedded have been dealt with as well. More explicitly, the analysis has been directed to the upper level to incorporate the question of how the contemporary African states have contributed in the creation of instability in their communities instead of making the development.

1.2 Resource conflict versus ethnic conflict: tautological debate or two sides of the same coin?

As mentioned before, the begging of the 1990s has witnessed the appearance of a number of theoretical perspectives that have begun to interpret and analyze the conflicts through new dimensions. At this point, one could say that ‘resource conflict model’ and ‘ethnic conflict model’ have mostly attracted the attention rather than the other approaches. To clearly specify my position, I would say that the theoretical approach
adopted in this study is based on the ‘constructivist’ assumption that combines the two above-mentioned approaches (Porto, 2002). What is more, as pointed out by Sisk, I also accept as fact that these two approaches “…are not mutually exclusive and can in fact be describing different sides of the same coin” (Sisk, 1996: 13).

As regards the first approach, the resource conflict model, it has been noticed that a wide variety of variables, basically economic in their nature, are taken as analytical units to answer the basic question of what are these conflicts about. Some of these variables include economic indicators e. g. the economic growth rate and per capita income. Besides, other variables such as lack of development, greed and scarcity of natural resources are also taken as analytical units for interpreting the emergence and escalation of conflicts all over the world, particularly Africa. Again, among all these above-mentioned variables, this study will mostly concentrate on the role played by scarcity or relative scarcity of resources, land in particular, as prime triggers of violence in Dar Masalit. As far I am concerned, using land scarcity as an analytical tool in this study stems from the fact that the communities of Dar Masalit perform economic activities that are basically related to the subsistence economy. More to the point, a vast majority of the population, consists of both farmers and pastoralists are fundamentally depending on the land resources when they perform their daily livelihood activities.

As to the second approach, the ethnic conflict model, a number of recent studies have emphasized the role played by ethnicity in the occurrence of the contemporary conflicts, especially in Africa. At this juncture, it is important mentioning the fact that, there are two main schools within the proponents of this perspective, primordialists or essentialists and
structuralists or instrumentalists. On the one hand, essentialists consider ethnicity “….a primordial or inherited group characteristics…” (Porto, 2002: 7). On the other hand, structuralists, such as Fredrik Barth, argue that: "... categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on the absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories." (1969: 9). This assumption conceptualizes ethnic identity as: "...an instrument, a contextual, fluid and negotiable aspect of identity." (Porto, 2002: 7). This point of view envisages ethnicity as: an instrument employed by individuals, groups, or elites to achieve some larger, typically material end (Barth, 1969; Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Jenkins, 1997).

Turning to the basic assumption of the holistic approach adopted in this study, conflict is conceived as “...a multi-causal phenomenon, where different causal sequences may apply to different conflict situations” (Jabri, 1996: 65). This fact entails that, “...rationality is bounded by institutional roles and established norms which impact upon the informational and analytic loops which actors may go through prior to the onset of war,” (ibid). Therefore, the general claim that resource scarcity, alone, is the prime cause behind conflicts must be doubted. This fact implies adding other factors that are mostly related to the ethnic conflict model. Here, the role played by grievance should be merged with the aforementioned land scarcity. More specifically, factors such as cultural identity, ethnic and religion divisions, and historical animosity could explain why conflicts tend to escalate and be more strife. In the same way, issues such as political exclusion, negative policies conducted by the
central state in the peripheries should also be considered side by side with the economic factors.

1.3 Ethnicity and conflict: it is all about rational choices

A quick look at the literature that dealt with the issue of nomad-sedentary relations in the Darfur rural communities shows us that many studies have used the Barthian perspective to ethnicity (Abdul-Jalil, 2008, 1984; Haaland, 1972). Although, most of these studies have been carried out during the times of relative social stability in Darfur, however, they succeeded to a great extent, to uncover the nature of ethnic phenomenon in Darfur. Likewise, this study, as well, adopts ethnicity as an appropriate analytical frame that would enable us, I assume, to fully understand and comprehend the nature of the grass-roots conflicts in Dar Masalit in particular and Darfur in general.

In fact, there have been two main academic approaches to ethnicity. On the one hand, according to essentialists, “ethnicity is considered a primordial or inherited group characteristic’ (Porto, 2002: 7). However, this study opposes this notion, because it adopts the ‘constructivist’ approach that envisages ethnicity as an instrumental, contextual and fluid phenomenon (ibid). In other words, in this study, ethnicity is conceived as “a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material ends” (ibid: 7).

To be more specific, this study considers the process of group identification as a rational choice that is opted for by a particular group of people in specific circumstances and for specific duration of time. Nevertheless, as emphasized by Gurr (1993), I also agree we shouldn’t underestimate that, “…cultural identity may be stronger and more
enduring than most other collective identities (i.e. ideological or class), it most likely to provide the basis for political mobilization and conflict when it provides the basis for invidious distinction among the peoples (inequalities among cultural groups in status, economic wellbeing, access to political power) that are deliberately maintained through public policy and social practice.” (Porto, 2002: 8).

The contemporary studies about ethnic conflicts demonstrate that the conflict process entails the establishment of new criteria of identification and/ or boundary making among the groups that are engaged in a specific conflict (Schlee, 2008; Mohamed et al, 2003). However, “identification with a larger or smaller group, or to seek a narrower or wider alliance, appears to be a conscious decision.” (Schlee, 2008: 27). That means in different situations, (including the conflicting and the peaceful relations), the people regularly make different decisions and adopt varied identities based on their rational estimations to their costs and benefits. Schlee asserted that: “Costs and benefits here are the reason for identification.” (Ibid: 27).

More precisely, I have relied on Fredrik Barth’s ideas about ethnicity as a final product of the interplay between many socio-political factors. According to him ethnicity is a “situational” and not a primordial inclination. Ethnic identity, according to Barth, is a feature of social organization and a result of the interaction between different groups, not a mere feature of culture. In his introduction to his edited book Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (1969), Barth asserted the importance of interconnectedness for shaping and reshaping each group perception about itself. He writes (1969: 9) "... categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on the absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail
social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories."

Fredrick Barth’s basic argument about ethnicity and ethnic identification could be summarized as follows: he thinks that we should focus on the boundary maintenance, recruitment processes in the group, and not on the cultural features of that specific group. Using Barth’s language, we are not supposed to relay on the "cultural stuff" of that group. Ethnic identity could make an organizational difference only when individuals feel it and act on it according to the way they perceive it. Subsequently, ethnicity for them is a kind of self-assertion.

In addition, the cultural difference is only significant for those individuals who use this specific cultural difference to mark their differentiation from other groups, not for outsiders and researchers who think that these cultural features are significant to differentiate between one group and the other.

Again, Barth thinks that the entrepreneurial role is important in shaping ethnicity and ethnic affiliation in the respective group. Here, the elite role could be observed, because while they are pursuing their political enterprises, they make use of ethnic identification and affect its subsequent development especially among the populace.

Now, as point of departure from the issue of ethnicity, I would like to say that to have a realistic understanding about Darfur conflict we need to “…attend closely to the ways in which identity conflicts are, in significant ways, a by product of the political structure of the Sudanese polity.” (De Wall, 2007: 3). Thus, to have a broad theoretical conflict
perspective, the next section will consider and tackle the question of the relationship between state and conflict in Africa.

1.4 State: the wider context of the African grass-roots conflicts

Understanding the African grass-roots conflicts require familiarity with the wider political contexts in which they are embedded. As far as I am concerned, the issue of state (governance in particular) is among the main factors that should be given more consideration. However, academicians have dealt with this subject in different ways. As to the Sudan, for example, many anthropologists argue that issues such as lack of development and/or marginalization, lack of democracy and/or bad governance and mismanagement are among the main causes that underlie grass-roots conflicts (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Assal, 2006; De Wall, 2007; Manger, 2005; Mohamed et al 2003). Nonetheless, some political scientists remind us that issues of weak states and state building are, to a great extent, the context in which most conflicts occur in the developing countries (including Africa) today (Ayoob, 2001; Kupchan, 2001; Tilly, 1975). Here, the important point to be pointed out is that most of the perspectives that have dealt with the subject in Africa emphasized that, on the one hand, the contemporary African states lack the resources and experience to satisfy the demands of their people and to maintain peace and stability. On the other hand, and most importantly, instead of entrenching the development to meet the basic demands of their citizens, most of the leaders of the “national” governments in Africa concentrate the political power in their hands so as to accomplish their vested political and economic interests. Accordingly, the unprecedented cases of marginalization, corruption, human rights violations, eruption of grave ethnic and religious conflicts that have afflicted almost all the African
communities recently shouldn’t surprising us. Now, the gloomy, tragic and malignant socio-economic realities that are badly affecting countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Congo, Zimbabwe and Chad exemplify the crisis of state and/ or governance in Africa.

1.5 Land in the course of Darfur’s grass-roots conflicts

Land is considered as the most vital resource in Darfur as well as in other rural communities in Sudan. This issue stems from the fact that, “it is a base for socio-economic livelihood and survival, and an icon for socio-political identification to the bulk of the rural communities in the developing societies” (Komey, 2008: 2). In other words, apart from its economic value, land embodies an important symbolic value in Darfur region. This is due to the fact that it represents the main source of group identification in Darfur (Abdul-Jalil, 2005). The reason being that settled communities are considered owners of the territory which they occupy and that area is referred to by the name of the oldest group to occupy it. Therefore, it has, commonly, been acknowledged that the process of group identification depends, profoundly, on their acknowledged territory.

It has been widely noticed that land-based disputes did not represent a serious problem in Darfur before the mid of 1980s. This issue could be noticed vividly, if we trace-back the records regarding grassroots conflicts in Darfur. The case of Um qozain conflict that had erupted between the camel nomads of northern Darfur and their neighbors from northern Kordofan in 1932 can be taken as an example. The tribes that were involved in this conflict consisted of Zeyadia and Meidob from northern Darfur against Kababish group from northern Kordofan. The main reason behind this conflict was said to be the competition over the
fertile animal pastures inside Um qozain area. However, this conflict was peacefully settled (through local mechanisms of peace building) in Um qozain tribal reconciliation conference\(^2\), which carried out in 1932 (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Rabah, 1998).

Similarly, the conflict between the northern Rezeigat group and the Beni Halba that erupted in *Ed alnabagia*, which is located in south Darfur State, in 1976, represents another land-based conflict’s case in Darfur. The main reason for this conflict was, also, said to be the competition over grazing and water rights. However, many people died in that conflict, it was resolved peacefully through the tribal reconciliation conference that was held in Nyala in 1976.

Given the above-mentioned two cases, land-based conflict is not a new phenomenon in Darfur. According to Suliman, while the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s have witnessed small disputes and skirmishes, mostly over land, the mid of 1980s onwards have witnessed grave land-based conflicts (Suliman, 2007; Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Rabah, 1998). At this juncture, the conflict between the Fur and the Arabic tribes gathering in Jebel Marra in 1987, as well as the conflict between the Masalit and Arab Nomad groups that took place in al-Geniena in 1996 are examples of these recent intensified conflicts in Darfur.

\(^2\) The local term *motamer asulah alqabaly* -translated to the tribal reconciliation conference-refers to a very famous traditional mechanism for conflict settlement between and among the Darfur ethnic groups. This mechanism has been recognized since ancient times that date back to the emergence of Darfur Sultanate its self. The persons who are locally allowed to undertake these tasks are the wise men within the local tribal leaders that are not taking part in the conflict. When a conflict erupts between specific groups, these persons usually make their consultations and establish a committee to reconcile between the conflicting groups and settle the conflict. The persons who constitute this committee should be neutral, wise, virtuous and fully trusted inside and out side their communities. Besides, at least, they should be familiar with the local traditions and customs of Darfur community.
Here, one could say that the commonsensical assumption, which is basically adopted by much western media commentary that depicts the recent conflicts in Darfur as ‘Arabs’ versus “African” is rejected in this study. However, De Wall reminds us that “Despite their historic and ethnographic inappropriateness for Darfur, the labels “African” and “Arab” have gained political currency among Darfurians…” (De Wall, 2007: 3).

Based on the recent secondary data that have dealt with the subject, one could say conflicts have erupted, even, among the groups that belong to the same ethnic background. For example, the conflict between the southern Rezeigat and the Malaya in 1968; between the Beni Halba and the Mahria in 1976 represent types of conflicts that have erupted between “Arabic groups”. Whereas, the conflict between the Zaghawa and the Marareit in 1999; between the Zaghawa and the Gimir in 1999 are examples of conflicts that have erupted among “non-Arabic” groups. This reality, also, refute the notion that ascribes the conflicts in Darfur as due to the alleged ethnic and cultural “differences” in the region.

At this point, it is important mentioning that a glance at the conflicts that have erupted between 1932- 2000 in Darfur, illustrate that northern Darfur nomadic groups, mainly Zaghawa and northern Rezeigat, have intensively taken part in most of these conflicts (see table no 1 at the end of this chapter). The notable point to be said is that these groups have a long history with migration in Darfur due to the negative consequences of both drought and political tensions in Chad. In addition, northern Rezeigat are a landless group. Therefore, arguments that ascribe the emergence of Darfur conflicts to the land issues stand on solid ground.
For more information about conflicts and their main causes you can see table no 1

Table No 1: major conflicts reported in Darfur: 1932-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Tribal groups involved</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Major cause of conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kababish, Meidob and Zeyadia</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rezeigat and Ma’alia</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Local politics of administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rezeigat and Dinka</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beni Halba and Mahriya</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>N Rezeigat (Ab’bala) and Daju</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>N Rezeigat (Ab’bala) and Bargo</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>N Rezeigat and Gimir</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>N Rezeigat and Fur</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>N Rezeigat Bargo</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ta’aisha and Slamat</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Local politics of administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kababish Berti and Zeyadia</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Rezeigat and Dinka</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>N Rezeigat and Beni Halba</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Rezeigat and Messeiriya</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kababish, Berti and Meidob</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rezeigat and Messeiriya</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Gimir and Fellata (Fulani)</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Administrative boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Kababish, Kawahla, Berti and Meidob</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Fur and Zaghawa</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Armed robberies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Arab and Fur</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Grazing rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Gimir</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Administrative boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ta’aisha and Gimir</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Land rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bargo and Rezeigat</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Ma’alia</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Land rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Marareit</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Beni Hussein</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Zaghawa V. Mima and Birgid</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Birgid</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Birgid</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Fur and Tarjam</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Land rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Arab</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Zaghawa (Sudan) V. Zaghawa (Chad)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Tribal politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Masalit and Arabs</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Grazing, administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Rezaigat</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Local politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Kababish Arabs and Meidob</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Grazing and water rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Zaghawa and Gimir</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Grazing, Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Fur and Arabs</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Grazing, politics, armed robberies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Abdul-Jalil 2007*
Chapter Two
Darfur and its people: General Account

2.1 Location and history

Darfur region is located in the Western part of Sudan. It lies between latitudes 10 N-16 N and longitudes 22 E-27 E. This area now consists of the three states of Northern Darfur, Southern Darfur and Western Darfur. It is estimated at 510.000 square kilometers, which represents one-fifth of the entire territory of Sudan. North Darfur state occupies 260.000 square kilometers, South Darfur state 139.000 square kilometers, and West Darfur state 150.000 square kilometers (Suliman, 2007). The region borders three neighboring countries: Central African Republic and Chad to the West and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the North. When it comes to its internal borders, Darfur borders five Sudanese States: the Northern state, Northern Kordofan state, Western Kordofan state, Western Bahr El-Ghazal state and Northern Bahr El-Ghazal state.

According to O’Fahey (1980), the region has witnessed the emergence of three Sultanates: the Daju, the Tunjur and the Fur. However, this fact applies to the ancient Darfur that was not including Dar Masalit, which has been annexed to Darfur since 1922-23. Given the above-mentioned fact, the extreme West of contemporary Darfur has been the homeland of the Masalit Sultanate since the last quarter of the 19th century.

2.2 Ecological zones

Ecologically, Darfur region is regarded as one of the most diverse regions in Sudan. Its environmental zones are said to be “ranging from a typical desert environment in the north to rich savanna marshland in the South”
However, geographical experts divide the region into six environmental zones: the desert zone, the semi-desert zone, the Jebel Marra plateau, the western alluvial plains and the southern plains (ibid: 55).

2.3 Ethnic composition

According to Assal, Darfur region includes about 90 ethnic groups that are distributed across the different parts which lie within its boundaries (Assal, 2005b). In fact, these ethnic groups have been classified through different academic categories. For example, a former British administrator in the Sudan during the colonial era (MacMichael) classifies Darfur people into three “races”: the Arabs, the non-Arabs and the West Africans (MacMichael, 1967). However, as said by Mohamed and Badri (2005), we should be aware of two facts; first, that the term “race” used by MacMichael is very problematic as well as it’s not applicable today. Second, and most important, it should be noted that the West Africans have been fully integrated into Darfur communities. Conversely, other two Sudanese anthropologists (Ahmed and Harir, 1982) classify the Darfur people into four categories: the Baggara, the Abala, the Zurga and the residents of the urban settlements. Unlike MacMichael’s perception about Darfur people, it is clear that the

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3 The term ‘Baggara’ is used in Darfur as a local description for the nomadic groups who perform cattle husbandry. They are found in both Darfur and Kordofan. Contrasting the dominant commonsensical assumption and due to the changes that have occurred among the livelihood systems in Darfur, cattle herding is no longer confines to the Arabic groups of South Darfur.

4 This term is also a local term used by the Darfur people to denote the camel herders. It has been mostly connected to the Arab nomadic groups who reside Northern Darfur.

5 See chapter (1) page 22 footnote no 2.
classification provided by Ahmad and Harir is mostly an economic activity-based classification.

For the purposes of this study, Ahmad & Harir’s classification has been adopted, but with some slight amendments. For example, this study has replaced the term “the Zurga” with the term ‘the sedentary farmers’. According to the new classification suggested by this study, Darfur people could be divided into four categories; the sedentary farmers, the cattle pastoralists, the camel pastoralists and the residents of the urban settlements. For the purposes of this study, a brief account will be given to each category and the main tribes which included in it.

2.3.1 The sedentary farmers

The term sedentary farmers is basically denotes the “non-Arab” groups which occupy the central belt of the region between the latitudes 12N 14N 20N. In general, this area is divided into two parts: the eastern side of Jebel Merra, which is recognized as the sandy plains area (locally known as qoz), and; the western side of Jebel Merra. The above-mentioned central belt lies in the semi-arid zone with the Jebel Merra massif as the main geographical feature in this area. In addition, this area includes the most fertile agricultural and pastoral land, as well as most of the biggest valleys of Darfur. The main ethnic groups included within this category are the Fur, the Masalit, the Birgid, the Berti, and the Daju. These ethnic groups pursue traditional farming along with animal husbandry of cattle, goats and sheep, mainly near and around the farms.

The groups that are included within this category could be described as follow:
The Fur

The Fur is regarded as one of the most influential Sudanese ethnic groups, socially, economically and politically. In fact, the influence of this group has been profoundly, particularly since the mid of the 17th century, when they established their Sultanate, until the first quarter of the 20th century. Although, they are originally Africans, the different Fur groups have intermingled with the other ethnic groups (both the Arabs and the non-Arabs) inside and outside Darfur. In this respect, their intermarriage relations as well as the cultural assimilation between them and the Bani Halba is a recognized issue in Darfur. The traditional homelands of the Fur are located in and around Jebel Merra massif, namely in Zallingi, Wadi Salih and Azoum.

The Masalit

Masalit people are also considered, mostly, as of Africans origin, nonetheless, the ruling family, who belong to the Gernyang sub-clan, claims the Arabic origin. They are among the biggest ethnic groups that are found in the recent West Darfur State, Al-Geneina in particular. Although there are ambiguities concerning their origins, Masalit identify themselves as Africans. However, their ruling clans claim the Arabic origins. As said before, they are among the largest groups that perform farming activities in the central belt in Darfur. The Masalit are not a one unified ethnic group, rather they had been different scattered clans and sections for a long time before they were unified by Sultan Abaker Ismael, the first founder of the Masalit Sultanate in the last quarter of the 19th century. Despite the fact that their traditional homeland is located in Al-Geniena, however, enormous numbers of the Masalit have migrated to
Giraida area in South Darfur as well as Gedarif in Eastern Sudan since early times. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, either in Giraida or in Gedarif, Masalit have been to a great extend integrated in these “new” communities.

The Birgid

According to MacMichael, Birgid people are of African origins. In addition, he pointed out that there are many similarities between them and the Nubian “tribes” of Northern riverian Sudan in terms of their local languages. Birgid’s main homelands are mostly found in the northern and the Eastern parts of Nyala town.

The Berti

According to Alhassan (1970), this group used to reside in and around Mileet area, which locates in North Darfur, neighboring the Zaghawa and the Zayyadiyya. However, due to scarcity of natural resources, coupled with the persistence of inter communal disputes between the Berti and their neighbors, huge numbers of Berti people have chosen to leave their above-mentioned areas and migrated to eastern Darfur and northern Kordofan. At this juncture, Umm kiddada, Al-tiuaisha and Jebel Alhila are considered their main homelands in Eastern Darfur.

The Daju

Daju group is classified as an African. According to Rabbah (1998), there are different historical viewpoints regarding their existence in Darfur. Their traditional homelands are mostly located in Southern Darfur. However, a number of them are scattered in western Darfur and southern Kordofan.
2.3.2 The cattle nomads

The cattle nomads (locally known as the Baggara Arabs) consist of a number of ethnic groups that are found in different homelands which are located in the rich savannah belt along latitude 12 degrees. These ethnic groups are mostly identified as Arabs. However, it is not actually the case. The cattle nomads comprise the Rezaigat, the Habbaniya, the Taaisha, the Bani Halba, the Maaliya and the Fellata (Fulbe) (see figure 1: p 43).

The Rezaigat

According to Mohamed and Badri, “the Rezaigat form one of the largest regional communities and possess considerable animal wealth (cattle). The 1993 census estimates that their number more than 400,000 people. They live in the extreme south-eastern corner of the region with the Humr people of western Kordofan to the east of them, the Dinka communities of Bhar El-Ghazal to the south, the Habbaniya Arabs to west and Maaliya Arabs to the north-east. Several sedentary communities, including the Zaghawa and other non-Arabs live to the north of them.” (Mohamed and Badri, 2005: 76). It should be noted that there are two kinds of Rezaigat; the cattle herders Rezaigat or the Southern Rezaigat; and the camel herders Rezaigat or the Northern Rezaigat. Although, the second part of Rezaigat mainly resides Northern Darfur, it is said there are alleged blood relations between the two parts. (More information about the Northern Rezaigat will be given when I come to talk about the camel herders’ category.
The Habbaniyya

The Habbaniyya group is divided into two main sections; Al-Tara and Al-Sout. Their traditional homeland is called Bouram, which is bordered by the Rezaigat in the east, the Taaisha in the west, Masalat in the north and Bhar Al-Arab in the south.

The Taaisha

The Taaisha group includes two basic sections; Gilada and Ereig. Their traditional homeland is located in Rehaid Albirdi, which lies in the western borders to the Habbaniya homeland. This ethnic group has played an influential political role in Sudan during the Mahadiest era. In fact, the Khalifa Abdullahi, who was the successor of the Mahadi from 1885 to 1898, belongs to the Taaisha or to the “Gharraaba” in the language of some Northern riverian who believe in northern hegemony in the Sudan. To reinforce his power after being threatened by the relatives of the Mahadi after his death, the Khalifa Abdullah has organized vast and successive migrations (both forced and voluntary) for the Taaisha from Darfur to Omdurman.

The Bani Halba

The Bani Halba encloses two sections; Awlad Jabir (the sons of Jabir) and Awlad Joubara (the sons of Joubara). Their traditional homeland locates in a place called Ed Al-firsan which lies to the northern boundary of the Taaisha homeland.

The Maaliya

Members of the Maaliya group are distributed in different settlements in south Darfur and west Kordofan. However, their traditional homeland is
located in Adeala area which lies to south-western borders of the Rezaigat homeland.

2.3.3 The camel nomads

The Northern Rezaigat groups and the Zaghawa are the main biggest groups to be found within this category. In the same way, Midob, Berti and Zayyadiyya also exist in this arid land of northern Darfur. However, for the purposes of this study, a brief account will be given to the northern Rezaigat as well as the Zaghawa.

The northern Rezaigat

In fact, the northern Rezaigat groups are chiefly Arabs. They occupy the semi-desert northern part of the region. As is the case with a number of tribes in Darfur, northern Rezaigat groups also have their extended clans outside the country. These clans are found throughout the semi-desert zone that extends from north Darfur to the westwards. Then, it crosses the borders of many countries that lie in that direction including Chad, Niger and Mali. The main sections of the northern Rezaigat groups that are found in Sudan are Nuwaiba, Mahamid and Mahriya. According to De Wall (2005: 7), “…these sections have a troubled and uncertain relationship with their larger southern cousins, alternately claiming kinship and independence.” One of the main facts that should be noted is that: “Whereas the southern, Baggara, Rezaigat were awarded territory by the Fur Sultan (who had not subjugated the area where they chose to live), the northern clans continued a primarily nomadic existence on the desert edge, without a specific place they could call home” (Ibid: 7).
The Zaghawa

According to MacMichael (1967), Zaghawa people are basically non-Arabs. In other words they are basically Africans. Similar to their neighboring Arab groups, Zaghawa used to be camel herders. However, since their migration to south Darfur in the mid of 1970s onwards, they have become mostly farmers as well as traders. Wadi Huwar, Tina and Korounoy are among their main traditional homelands in north Darfur.

According to a number of studies, the Sahelian belt droughts, starting in the 1970s and aggravated during the mid 1980s resulted in massive migrations among the Zaghawa to all parts of the region. In addition, Northern Rezaigat groups also were forced to change their seasonal movements, moving earlier and deeper into the south and staying longer than usual (Abdul-Jalil, 2005; Mohamed and Badri, 2005). Therefore, the regular involvements of the Zaghawa as well as northern Rezaigat groups in the most of the recent inter-communal conflicts that have taken place in Darfur shouldn’t be surprising issue (see table no 1). However, as I said before, to analyze the discourse comprehensively, other factors that relate to the Sudanese macro economic and political system should be considered as well. This issue will be discussed later through the analysis of my case study.

2.3.4 The residents of urban settlements

As is the case with most urban settlements in Sudan, the people who fall within this category generally include the whole governmental employees (e. g. teachers, bank officers, members of security apparatus and etc). Besides, merchants are also considered as the most prominent group to
exist in the Darfur biggest urban settlements (Al-Fasher, Nyala and Al-Geneina). In this regard, since the 1970s onwards, Darfur history has regularly witnessed successive migrations of the northern riverian merchants (called locally as Jalaaba) to its above-mentioned big urban settlements. However, it should be noted that the existence of the northern riverian traders in Darfur has a long history that dates back to the emergence of Darfur Sultanate itself. Now, members of most of the Sudanese ethnic groups are found in the Darfur biggest urban settlements.

Since the 1970s onwards, the main urban settlements in Darfur have witnessed major changes in terms of their economic and commercial activities. Besides, this period witnessed the establishment of the mechanized farming projects in Darfur. Not only this, in fact, the above-mentioned economic changes have attracted traders and investors from all the parts of the Sudan, especially northern and central Sudan.

According to Rabbah (1998) quoted in El-Battahani (2007), a broad comparison between the different ethnic groups in Darfur region in terms of their economic resources, animal wealth, education, and possession of arms could be described as follow:

**Table No. 2: Population and access to Resources in Darfur:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>population</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Economic Resources</th>
<th>Animal Wealth</th>
<th>Arms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zagawa</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab tribes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masalit and other tribes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Rabah: 1998*
Figure (1): Map of Darfur showing the main ethnic groups of the region

Source: Human Rights Watch 2004
2.4 Criteria of Ethnic Identification in Darfur

It is important mentioning the fact that this study has benefited from the practice and analysis of ethnicity provided by Abdul-Jalil (1984) in his interesting study conducted in a small area north of Kutum town called Dor. In this concern, The ‘Barthian perspective’ along with its later application conducted by Haaland in Western Darfur, has been employed and applied by Abdul-Jalil in his aforementioned study in north Darfur. In their above mentioned studies, each of Barth, Haaland and Abdul-Jalil tackled the issue of ethnic identification in Darfur as a direct incarnation of the social organization. Accordingly, their focuses were basically intensified on economic and socio-political processes at the grass root level. Again, this study will elaborate on the same aspects. However, the role that has been played by the external factors, e.g. the intervention of the state, the negative role of the local elites and etc, will be considered as well.

According to Abdul-Jalil, there are four main criteria that are used as indicators for the identification of ethnic groups in Darfur. These criteria are: “territorial, occupational, linguistic and genealogical” (Abdul-Jalil, 1984: 63).

2.5 Native Administration

Historically, it stands to reason that Darfur people used to have a special and effective system of local administration. This system dates back to

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6 It is believed by many anthropologists that the study of Haaland, Gunnar, (1969). “Economic Determinants in Ethnic Process”, represents One of the most notable implementation to ‘Barthian perspective of ethnicity in Darfur in the last century. In this study, Haaland presented an in-depth explanation to the question of how ethnic formation in Darfur communities is basically influenced by economic determinants.
the early time of the Darfur Sultanate. It was based on “Tribal and/ or Ethnic Leadership” (Abdul-Jalil et al, 2007: 39). On the other hand, this system represents a form of decentralized governance, upon which the Fur Sultanate has successfully preserved a peaceful coexistence among and between the different ethnic groups affiliated to the Sultanate at that time. However, the system was reformed by the British Colonial authorities in 1922. Accordingly, additional roles have been added to this local organization, which come to be known as ‘Native Administration’ since that time.

According to Rabah (1998) the term (Tribal Leadership and/ or Native Administration) refers to specific patterns and/ or local instruments for conflict prevention and resolution practices that have existed since the establishment of the Darfur Sultanate.

When it comes to the structure of the native administration system in Darfur, the reality has shown that this system has no single unified pattern that has been applied all over Darfur. In other words, “the system of native administration that exists in Darfur today does not manifest homogeneity of titles or administrative structure.” (Abdul-Jalil et al, 2007). However, in general, the executive apparatus of this system consists of three intermingled levels. Each level represents a defined administrative unit, to which specific functions and roles are given. These three levels include the upper level, the middle level and the bottom level. The upper level is headed by the paramount chief, who is regarded as the leader of the tribe; to whom the final word about his tribe’s administrative affairs belongs. In the light of the above mentioned issue, the labels Sultan, Malik, Shartai and Nazir are some examples of the aforementioned Darfur’s paramount chiefs. These paramount chiefs are
“assisted in most cases by Omdas, who are usually heads of the tribal subsections, which comprise the middle tier of the administrative structure.” (Abdul-Jalil et al, 2007). Lastly, the bottom level of this system is basically governed by the Sheikhs, who are considered to be the village or the camp heads. In other words, the sheiks are the main figures (within the native administration system) who deal directly with the people at the grass root level.

According to (Abdul-Jalil, 2007), the main functions of the native administration to have been noticed lately, in Darfur, could be stated as follow:

- To manage the affairs of the tribal community;
- To allocate land for cultivation and grazing;
- To settle disputes and maintain security among and between the tribes, including the disputes over land tenure;
- To make the needed administrative linkage between the local council, and the province- and state- level governments;
- To collect the taxes and other levies;
- Mobilize communities; and
- Lead tribal and sub-tribal courts.

Ga’afar Numayri, who seized power through a military coup in 1969, started the interferences in the Native Administrative System in Sudan. Establishing development and modernization in the Sudanese rural communities were the announced objectives to give good reason for the intervention in the aforementioned native administration system. So, Numayri’s government abolished the native administration in the Sudan in 1970.
Recently, a number of studies emphasized that the undermining of the native administration system in the Sudan in 1970s, as well as the recent polarization of it that have occurred since the mid of the 1990s, are among the reasons that have escalated the conflict in Darfur (Abdul-Jalil et al, 2008; Mohamed, 2002; Rabah, 1998).

In conclusion, one could simply argue that the undermining of the local administration system in Darfur region is believed to have created a chaotic situation regarding the issue of tackling the emerging land-based conflicts, in Darfur, before and after 2003 (Abdul-Jalil, 2007). Therefore, the arbitrary uncalculated governmental legislative interventions in the customary administrative systems without considering the prevailed traditions and customs are among the main causes that underlay the grassroots conflicts in Darfur (Takna, 2007; Rabah, 1998).
Figure (2): The regional government System of Darfur Sultanate

The Sultanate System and the Native Administration System

* N.D (North Darfur), W.D (West Darfur), S.D (South Darfur), E.D (East Darfur)

Source: Ahamed (ND)
Figure (3): The central government System of Darfur Sultanate

Source: Ahamed (ND)
Chapter Three
Land tenure and Land Policies in Darfur: Important Facts for Consideration

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses the concern on the development of the customary land tenure system in Darfur. However, a brief account about the situation of this issue on the national level has been dealt with. Besides, governmental legislations that have negatively affected the situation in Darfur have been dealt with. Last, light has been shed at the situation of land resources within the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005.

3.2 The communal land tenure system

According to the available secondary data about the subject, this ancient pattern of land tenure has been found in the pre-state period. It is believed that: “…the tribe was the overarching organizing principle” (Abdul-Jalil, 2006). In addition to that, it has been taken for granted, at that period, that members of a group, usually a sub-division of a tribe, who live together in a recognized territory, have enjoyed equal rights for accessing the land that surrounded their settlement. This ancient form of land tenure system was recognized as ‘the communal land tenure system’. According to this system, families maintain their usufruct rights to a defined land as long as area. Otherwise, the land would revert and fall under the responsibility of they continue farming and other carrying out activities in this defined the
community leader. Accordingly, it could be given to another family whenever available.

With respect to the situation of the uncultivated land, it is assumed that all the members should have the benefit of equal rights to utilize it for different usage, such as wood cutting, collection of wild fruits and hunting (Abdul-Jalil, 2005). The person who was responsible for land allocation, and land management in general, at that period, was the community leader.

Due to the long-lasting processes of socio/ political, economic and environmental changes that have been taking place all over Darfur, the former communal land tenure system has been changed as direct response to the above-mentioned societal changes. Accordingly, Darfur has recognized the hakura system.

3.3 The hakura/ dar system

According to the recorded documents about the subject, a new system of granting land titles has been established in the early ages of the Fur Sultanate. This system is called dar or hakura system. The emergence of this system was connected to a combination of socio-political, economic and administrative circumstances that have occurred at that time. In the light of the above mentioned information, hakura system was originally established by Fur Sultans to attract the religious teachers (locally named as fugara) to settle in Darfur and preach Islam. On the other hand, attracting merchants from the Nile valley, rewarding individuals for their services to the Sultanate, covering the expenses of army leaders and state
officials and consolidating the state power were the main causes to which
the emergence of hakura system was ascribed (O’Fahey, 1980).

The word hakura means a land leased or specified or dedicated for an
individual or for group of people i.e. ‘community land’. Therefore,
hakura includes different types or carrying different names. This basically
depends upon the purpose of the establishment of the hakura. For
example, the hakura granted for residency as well as practicing livelihood
activities called hakurat Gaadh\textsuperscript{7}. It is a land granted to individuals,
normally Ulma (religious scholars), dignitaries or relatives etc to live on.

Sultan Musa Ibn Suleiman, who was the second ruler of the Keira
dynasty (1670 – 1682), is thought to have invented this system. However,
another story emphasized that Sultan Ahmed Bakur, the third ruler of the
Keira dynasty (1682 – 1722), is the person who have established the
hakura system (O’Fahey, 1980).

According to the hakura system, land is classified into two main
categories;

\textbf{3.3.1 The administrative hakura or dar}

This kind of land granting was basically allocated to the Darfur tribal
leaders. However, being the owner of the land, the Sultan of the Fur was
the only person to have the authority over land allocation. At this point, it
is worth mentioning that most of the tribal leaders of Darfur have been
given defined territories for residing their people, enabling them to pursue
their livelihood activities and governing them on behalf of the Sultan of

\textsuperscript{7} Gaadh is a local wooden food plate that is used mostly in Darfur.
Darfur. Accordingly, the dar (translated to *homeland* in English) system has been established in Darfur, (e.g. dar Meidob, dar Zaghawa, dar Karni, dar Fia and dar Rezeigat). Some dars were named after places and not after the tribes or clans e.g. dar Fia in Kebkabiya or dar Hamra in Kutum which includes Tunjur people. Hakuras given to the Arab tribes were generally called ‘hakurat dhulf’\(^8\); it means that the hakura is basically allocated for grazing purposes.

In a nutshell, these kinds of hakuras were granted for specified tribes or group or group of tribes or communities and are for the general benefit of that group or tribe or individuals living in it. However, these types of hakuras can not be inherited by that group, but they can exercise administrative authority over this land and other groups within it.

### 3.3.2 The hakura of privilege

In this case, the land is to be granted by the Sultan to certain persons, mainly the religious leaders (fugara and ulama), the merchants and the high ranking officers and military leaders. Since there was no cash to give salary, the hakura was an appropriate way to acknowledge the services dignitaries and learned men to the Sultanate.

When it comes to the land rights of the Northern Rezeigat, (e.g. the Mahamid, the Eriagat, the Etiafat and etc), these groups are said to have never enjoyed complete land rights, either in Dar Masalit or other areas in Dar Fur. Therefore, in contrast to the other sedentary groups and the southern Rezeigat cattle-herding tribes, they have never possessed recognized homelands as well. This reality stems from the fact that these

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\(^8\) According to my informants, the word dhulf here refers to the foot of the caw.
groups are highly mobile. However, the main land rights that have been enjoyed by them are: (a) to move with their animals through defined routes (*masarat*); and, (b) to have the access to the cultivated pastures of the sedentary farmers after the harvest period. In addition to that, these Northern Rezeigat groups were allowed to settle in certain places, known as (*dwamir* or *masaif*), in the land of their friends from the sedentary farmers in the dry season.

In summary, when it comes to their traditional right over land in Darfur, the situation of the Northern Rezeigat could be considered as the worst in comparison with the situation of the indigenous sedentary groups and cattle-herding Southern Rezeigat “tribes”. One researcher elaborated the same point with respect to the land rights of the pastoralists groups in northern Kordofan. Herein, he stated that: “Land laws during both the colonial and post-colonial periods have not recognized any pastoralist’s rights to land other than usufruct rights, and even those were most generally not observed” (Babiker, 2008). In fact, I found that his comments could be applicable to a great extent to the situation of the above-mentioned northern Rezeigat group of Darfur.

### 3.4 The traditional tribal dars in Darfur

According to Ahamed (ND), tribal dars in Darfur can be divided into two sections (Fur dars and; dars of other tribes) as follow:
3.4.1 The Dars of the Fur

In all these dars Fur tribe is the dominant group with other indigenous and Arab tribes. These dars are:

- **Dimangawiya Dars (Fur are dominant)**


- **Jebel Marra Dars (Fur groups are dominant)**

These dars were under the direct control of the Sultan in Al-Fasher. They were also called (Aba Fuga), means the dish of the Sultan. This is because the rich produces of these dars are handed over directly to the Sultan in his palace in Al-Fasher. These dars are:

Dar Wana, Dar Turdi, Dar Murri, Dar Lewing, Dar Nyuringa, Dar Turra and Dar Beria.

- **Southern Darfur Dars ‘Magdomiya’ (Mixed ethnic groups):**

The dars that fall within the boundaries of the Magdomiya include all the homelands that are located in the south east part of Jebel Marra. Accordingly, the dars that belong to the Fur, the Birgid, the Bigo, the Masalit, the Gimir and all the Arab dars in Southern Darfur are found the Magdomiya administrative unit. However, this situation has been changed now due to the successive big changes in the native Administration System those have been practiced by different National governments in the Sudan.
Northern Darfur Dars ‘Aba Tonga’ (Fur and Tunjur are dominant groups):

These dars include: dar Fia, dar Furnong, dar Jebel Si and dar Frock.

The Dars of mixed tribes in North Darfur (mainly Tunjur, Fur and Zaghawa):

These dars consist of dar Sowaini, dar Beiri and dar Hamra.

The other categories of the Fur dars

1. Hakurat (or dars) of Gabbayeen:

These hakuras comprise Trane, Taweela and Dobo.

2. Hakurat Gaadh:

These were small dars for religious teachers and religious persons to live in it.

3. Hakurat Dadinga:

This was for Dadinga around Al-Fasher.

3.4.2 The Dars of other tribes

The Dars of the Zaghawa

These dars include: Dar Galla, Dar Furawiya, Dar Kaitenga, Dar Kobe, Dar Kabga and Dar Artag.

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9 Gabbayeen here refers to the people who were responsible for collecting the land deuces (e.g. zkat alfitr & the Ushor) in the name of the Sultan of the Fur.
• **The Dars of Berti**

It consists from Dar Berti, Dar Towaisha and Dar Al Simeyat.

• **Dar Masalit**

Masalit are the dominant ethnic groups in their homeland. This dar is divided into a number of Fourshiat\(^{10}\) under which a number of smaller administrative units that are ruled by Sheiks and Omdas are found. These small administrative units include some dars of Arab tribes. The Omdas as well as the Sheiks of these tribes are usually appointed or recognized by the Sultan of Dar Masalit. “However, more recently a number of higher levels of Native Administration Posts higher than Omdas, namely Amirs, were granted by the Government against the will of consent of Dar Masalit Sultan and the Indigenous people. This became the cause of great unrest and conflict over land in Dar Masalit and Western Darfur State in general” (Ahamed, ND: 12).

**The Arab Dars**

The Arab ethnic groups are dominant in their dars. As said before, these dars are called locally dar dhulf, an expression which denotes the dars of animal grazing. All these dars are located in Southern Darfur. They include: Dar Rezaigat, Dar Habbaniya, Dar Bani Halba, Dar Taaisha, Dar Fallata, Dar Siraif Bani Hussein and Dar Mima.

\(^{10}\) It is one of the divisions of the Masalit administrative system. These administrative units are governed by the chiefs of the Masalit sub-clans, who are usually appointed by the Sultan of the Masalit. They are called locally Foursh (sing Foursa). The Masalit label Foursha is equivalent to the Fur labels Shartai, Malik, Sultan and Nazir.
Figure (4): Map of Darfur showing the main traditional Dars

Source: Sudan Survey Department 1939
3.5 The nature of land tenure system in Sudan during the Colonial period

The colonial authorities had established and implemented varied land tenure systems in the different areas of Sudan (Komey, 2008). This reality indicates that Sudan has never witnessed a one unified system of land tenure during both the colonial and national regimes. The repercussions of applying these policies are said to have, recently, endangered a lot of Sudanese communities and made them vulnerable to the emergence of the land-based conflicts. The ability of these communities to enjoy secure land rights has been tremendously jeopardized. The practiced land tenure policies during the colonial period have been described through these statements: “the management and practices of land tenure during the colonial era were pursued through series of land legislations which amounted to more than fifteen Ordinances enacted between 1899 and 1930 (Sudan Archive: 627/12/36). However, “the applications of these ordinance were confined to northern and central regions of the Sudan excluding the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, South Blue Nile and South Sudan throughout the colonial period” (Komey, 2008: 4). In other words, most lands that are located in the central and northern regions of the Sudan (especially those around the river banks) were considered as private with full ownership. whereas, no individual private ownership of land was recognized in Nuba Mountains, Darfur, Southern Blue Nile, and South Sudan during the colonial period.

3.6 The situation of land tenure in Darfur in the post colonial period

It seems that the serious attempts that have been made for establishing “modern” statutory land tenure system in northern and central Sudan have not found their ways to be established in Darfur. These policies have been followed by a number of national governments in Sudan. In fact, this
reality supports the argument that emphasizes the negative role made by the state policies in the eruption and escalation of grass-roots conflicts in many parts of the Sudan.

3.7 National land policies that affect the situation in Dar Masalit

Concerning land policies and legislations in Dar Masalit, my informants emphasized to me that the above hinted-at policies are among the main reasons that created new claims over land rights, particularly among the nomadic groups. For example, I was told that some recent migrants from northern Rezeigat groups in Dar Masalit have begun to raise their claims over land ownership in Dar Masalit\(^\text{11}\). Their claim has mostly relied on the argument that Dar Masalit area is no longer belongs to the Masalit; instead, according to them, it is now belonging to the Sudanese government according to issued governmental laws (e.g. the Emirates Act; issued by west Darfur government in 1994, and the Unregistered Land Act (ULA); issued by Ga’afar Numayri regime in 1970).

3.7.1 The Unregistered Land Act (ULA) 1970

According to Unregistered Land Act, “...All unofficially registered land in all parts of the Sudan was to be considered government owned land, hence accessible to all citizens.” (Abdul-Jalil, 2006: 26). At this point, it is worth mentioning the fact that, the ULA was not effective in Darfur during the Numayri era, however it has become very influential after the eruption of the Darfur grassroots conflicts since the mid of 1980s. Here, it was asserted by some Sudanese scholars that: “...the Act paved the way for later developments regarding land tenure in Darfur.” (Ibid: 26).

\(^{11}\)An interview with Mohamed Yagoub Rezig, a firsha of Eaish-Barra area that is located in the western side of al-Geniena, September 2006.
3.7.2 The Emirate Act 1995

According to (Rabbah, 1998), Emirate Act was issued in Dar Masalit by the governor of West Darfur State, Mohamed Al Fadul, in March 1995. Regardless of the former dominant customary land system in the area, the act divided Dar Masalit to 13 estates\textsuperscript{12}, 8 of them were given to Arab groups. The Arabs that were granted these estates are basically from the Northern Rezaigat landless groups. Again, in contrast to the customary land tenure system, the government of West Darfur State appointed the local “governors” of these states. Instead of maintaining the former local names of the local governors (Foursh; sing Foursha), these new appointed “governors” were named Umara. Now, the 13\textsuperscript{th} new estates or Emirates that were established in Dar Masalit are:

1. Emaarat Sirba (granted to the Masalit).
2. Emaarat Silaiaa (granted to the Arabs).
3. Emaarat Um Gudwal (granted to the Arabs).
4. Emaarat Kundrag (granted the Arabs).
5. Emaarat Abu Surouj (granted to the Masalit).
6. Emaarat Kurungo (granted to the Arabs)
7. Emaarat Al-Geneina (granted to the Masalit).
8. Emaarat Maistrai (granted to the Arabs).
9. Emaarat Um Tajook (granted to the Arabs).
10. Emaarat Mornei (granted to the Masalit).
11. Emaarat Fora Baranga (granted to the Masalit).

\textsuperscript{12} These estates were called \textit{emaraat} (sing, \textit{emara}). \textit{Emaara} is an Arabic name dates back to the establishment of the Islamic State in the Arab Island in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century. The governors of the administrative units (given the names \textit{emaraat}) on the city levels were called \textit{Umaraa}, sing \textit{Amir}. So, it is assumed that this action fall under a broad social philosophy called indigenisation that have been adopted by Inqaaz regime at many levels in the Sudan. According to its proponents in the Sudan, the idea of Indigenisation (or \textit{taaseel} in Arabic), denotes implementing the Islamic view of Economic, Governance, Administration and etc in all walk of life.
12. Emaarat Um Sumfumti (granted to Arabs).
13. Emaarat Rigil Al Kiri (granted to the Arabs).

Despite the efforts that have been done towards “modernizing” and changing the customary land tenure system in Sudan, including Dar Masalit, still, these systems could be described as a mixture of customary and statutory systems. However, according to some reports presented by Darfur Land Commission (DLC), despite the establishment of the unregistered land Act in 1970, the successive governments of the Sudan have not been able to have a direct control on the agricultural lands in Darfur, except in some areas that amounts to 90,000 feddans. Actually, these areas were allocated as rural developmental projects in Khor Ramala, Zalu and Habila, which are located in west Darfur state (Darfur Land Commission, 2007). At this point, it is worth mentioning the fact that the total areas of the registered lands in Darfur region is estimated as not more than 1% from the total area of Darfur (Ibid). This mainly includes towns of El Fasher and Nyala and some agricultural land around them that are mainly used for orchards and dairy farming.

In a nutshell, the above-mentioned sections have vividly uncovered the situation of land tenure issue in Darfur in the course of its relation to the intervention of the successive Sudanese central governments. Indeed, any objective readings to the above-mentioned facts will reach the same conclusion that the interventions of the successive Sudanese central governments in Darfur, including the British colonial government 1899-1956, have recently left very negative repercussions. Therefore, the next last section will be dedicated for the issue of land regulation within the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005.
3.8 Land Regulation within the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005

When I came across the issue of land regulation within the Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005, I found it good on the papers. This legislation has seriously tried to reform one of the main mistakes that have been made through some former land legislations, especially the ULA 1970 as well as the Emirate Act 1995. This is for two reasons: first, the legislation has initiated a National Land Commission. Second, the legislation has stated clearly that laws at the different levels should be amended in accordance with customary laws, local heritage and international trends and practices.

In page 70, the subject 186 that concerns Land Resources, Interim National Constitution of the Republic of the Sudan 2005 has issued three articles about land regulation in the Sudan. These articles are mentioned as follow:
1. The regulation of land tenure, usage and exercise of rights thereon shall be a concurrent competence, exercised at the appropriate level of government.
2. Rights in land owned by the Government of the Sudan shall be exercised through the appropriate or designated level of Government.
3. All levels of government shall institute a process to progressively develop and amend the relevant laws to incorporate customary laws, practices, local heritage and international trends and practices.
Chapter Four
Dar Masalit: A socio-economic account

4.1 The Masalit Sultanate: Historical background

Before it has achieved its full independence and recognized as an autonomous Sultanate, Dar Masalit has been considered as a part of Darfur Sultanate for a long time. This recognition has been the case since the establishment of the Fur Sultanate in the mid of the 17th century until the last quarter of the 19th century; the period that witnessed the emergence of the Masalit Sultanate. Therefore, it should be noted that there is no clear differences between the local administrative systems of the two Sultanates. In the same way, the Masalit customary land tenure system is another version of the wider Darfur system.

The Masalit Sultanate is considered as one of two Sultanates that had emerged in the westernmost part of Sudan in the last quarter of the 19th century. These two Sultanates are: the Gimir Sultanate, which was established in the northern part of western Darfur; and the Masalit Sultanate which was found in the southern part of west Darfur.

The emergence of the Masalit Sultanate is mostly ascribed to a leader and religious teacher from Masalit tribe called sheik Ismail Abdel Nabi. This person was appointed by the Mahadi as Ameer of Dar Masalit area in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Ismail Abdel Nabi had unified all the groups who have resided in Dar Masalit and won independence from the Fur Sultanate, which was ruled by Sultan Ali Dinar at that time. However, Sultan Abaker Ismail, the son of sheik Ismail Abaker who became the first Sultan of Dar Masalit about 1889, was considered as the key person to establish the Masalit Sultanate. After continuous attacks
that have been carried out by Sultan Ali Dinar in Dar Masalit, Sultan Abaker was defeated, captured and killed in 1906. Meanwhile, his brother Taj el Din took the responsibilities of defending the Sultanate against the external threats by the Fur Sultanate, from the east, and the French attacks, from the west. He had done this mission successfully and succeeded to make Sultan Ali Dinar sign a peace agreement with him before he was killed by the French troops in 1910\(^\text{13}\). His successor was Sultan Mohamed Bhar el Din, nick-named Endoka, the son of Sultan Abaker Ismail. Sultan Endoka is considered to have spent peaceful and quiet ruling periods compared with his ancestor Sultans. Sultan Mohamed Bhar el Din died in 1951 (Murray, 1957). His successor was Sultan Abdel Rahman Bhar el Din, who has ruled the Sultanate during the independence period in Sudan until his death in 2001. After that he was succeeded by his Son Saad, the recent Sultan of Dar Masalit. In fact, the Sultanate has been ruled through the Indirect Rule system that was established by Lord Lugard, and experienced in Nigeria during the colonial era. However, the successive administrative interventions, by the Sudanese governments, have tremendously changed the administrative system in Dar Masalit.

In a nutshell, greater Masalit homeland encompasses Dar Masalit, which occupies the southern and western part of al-Geniena area; Dar Erenga, Dar Jebel and Dar Gimir in the northern part; and the Singar area in the extreme south of Dar Masalit. However, Dar Gimir is said to have been considered as a separate entity (see figure 5: p96; figure 6: p 70).

\(^\text{13}\) Sultan Taj el Din was famous for his brave resistance against the expansion of the invading French forces to Dar Masalit in the first quarter of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Here, it is important to indicate the fact that Masalit are still remembering the famous battles that he has leaded against the attacking French troops, especially in Darotei, in which he was killed in 1910.
4.2 Al-Geneina: the traditional homeland of the Masalit

According to my informant, Darfurians identify Al-Geneina as the traditional homeland of the Masalit. For that reason there is a locally well-known statement that says “Al-Geneina dar Masalit”. The English meaning of this statement is: ‘Al-Geneina is the homeland of the Masalit’. Naming places after specific ethnic groups is a well known ancient tradition in Dar Fur. Its emergence is mostly ascribed to the influence of the customary land tenure system of the Fur Sultanate.

According to my informants, the term Dar Masalit does not refer to the domination of the Masalit ethnic group over the land rights at the expense of other ethnic groups residing in the area. Rather, it entails that all ethnic groups which reside in this area, are subject to the jurisdiction of the Masalit local administrative system. This tradition has been widely acknowledged in Darfur. However, the administrative interventions of the successive Sudanese governments in the customary land tenure system in Darfur are thought to have negatively affected this situation. The so-called ‘Emirate Act’, which was established in Dar Masalit in 1995, depicts a clear example of these negative governmental interventions in local matters. Accordingly, customary land tenure system of the Masalit is believed, to have been threatened, or rather undermined. This issue will be discussed at length later in chapter five.

4.3 The People of Dar Masalit

Since they are the traditional leaders of this homeland, the Masalit are the main existing ethnic group in this area. They occupy all the land that extends from al-Geniena towards the eastern and southern directions. Their area includes huge extensions of settlements that comprise Habila,
Kaingo, Anderbaro, Gobei, Mastrei, Tarbaiba, Konga-Haraza, Kirainik, Mogornei and Mornei. According to my informants, the Masalit people occupy approximately two-thirds of the entire area of Dar Masalit\textsuperscript{14}.

Apart from Masalit, other people who reside in this area could be generally divided into two categories as follow:

\subsection*{4.3.1 The Sedentary farmers}

They identify themselves as ‘the indigenous groups’ sometimes. This category comprises all the “tribes” that had been originally found in this area before the others came to it. Therefore, beside the Masalit, the Daju group are also settled across various locations in Dar Masalit, mainly in the eastern and the southwestern parts of dar Masalit (see map no 3). On the other hand, the Tama, the Erenga and the Messeiriya-Jebel occupy the northern part of the area. Their homelands include Jebel-Moon, Kondobi, Sirba, Abu-Suroog and Silayaa. Another big group that is found in Dar Masalit is the Singar. This group resides in the southern part of Dar Masalit, namely Furbranga, Mukjar, Sujo and Jumaiza (see figure 6: p 79). Lastly, apart from its “indigenous” groups, other ethnicities are also found in different places in dar Masalit. These groups include the Bargo, the Marareit and Mima.

\subsection*{4.3.2 The pastoralists groups}

Arab pastoralists groups that are found in Dar Masalit can be divided into two categories; old-timers and newcomers. As for Old-timers, they have migrated to this area since a long time (dating back to the era of Darfur

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{14} An interview with Bashir Hamad, the Federal Minster of Forests and Agriculture in Western Darfur State, al-Geniena September 2006.
\end{footnote}
Sultanate). These groups encompass the Maha’adi, the Hoteeya’a, the Tarjam, the Ta’aliba and the Da’roug. Almost all these groups practice cattle-herding in addition to small scale farming activities. It is worth mentioning that these groups have their acknowledged homelands that are located in the north east part of Dar Masalit. In addition, they have created strong relations with the Masalit through inter-marriages and mutual resource sharing practices. It is actually difficult for an outsider to differentiate between all the above mentioned ethnic groups, (the “non-Arabs” and the old-timers “Arabs”), because they share the same religion, the same language, the same economic activities and the same local administrative system. On the other hand, “Newcomers” are the second division within the Arab pastoralists’ category. This group is basically consisted of the Northern Rezaigat camel nomads as well as the Salamat cattle nomads. Northern Rezaigat are said to have been, endlessly, moving in Dar Masalit since the 1960s as a direct result of successive waves of droughts as well as political tensions in Chad. They are basically composed of the Mahriya, the Nuwaiba, and Awlad Rashid. As to the cattle nomads, they include the Salamat as well as the Bani Halba. The main areas that are usually visited by these above-mentioned Arab nomad groups in Dar Masalit are those where there are water sources and pastures. For example a number of clans of these nomadic groups are found in the south western part of Dar Masalit, especially in Mornei, Fora Baranga, Beida and Arara. Also, some of them are found in the south eastern part of Dar Masalit, mainly in Krainek and near Seraf Omra located on the border of West Darfur and North Darfur states.
Figure (5): Map of Western Darfur showing its traditional Dars

Source: Sudan Survey Corporation, 1941
Figure (4): Map of Dar Masalit showing its main ethnic groups:

Source: Designed by the researcher
4.4 Environment

Dar Masalit can be divided into two main zones according to climate endowments. These zones allow for specific livelihood activities as follow:

First; The semi-desert zone: This zone comprises the locations that lie in the northern part of Dar Masalit encompassing Kulbus, Kondobi, Sirba, Abu-Soroog and Silaia (see figure 6: p 70). Its soil is covered by extended sandy stretches. The annual rates of rainfall range from 150 to 200 mm.

Second; The savanna zone: This zone covers wide areas, which lie in the central, western and the southern parts of Dar Masalit. The main locations that lie within this zone include Kerainik, Mogourni, Um Tajouk Maisteri, Arara, Baida, Gobaei, Fura-Branga and Mornei (my case study). The annual rate of rainfall in this area is between 200-400, 600 mm.

4.5 Livelihood activities

As is the case in many rural communities in Sudan, land use in Dar Masalit comprises two economic activities: the traditional subsistence small scale farming; and, livestock breeding, (mainly cattle, goats, sheep and camels).

According to my informants, most of the Dar Masalit people perform the above-mentioned ‘small scale farming’. Besides, animal rising, (mainly cattle, sheep, and goats), is pursued as complementary activity as well. However, it has been a noticeable issue that, systems of land use in this area are basically influenced by the prevailing environmental system. For
example, camel nomadism is mainly performed in the places located in the northern areas of Dar Masalit. These places fall within the semi desert zone. On the other hand, cultivation of *durra* and *millet* is mostly practiced in central and southern parts of Dar Masalit. However, herding of cattle, sheep and goats is practiced side by side with the traditional small scale cultivation. These kinds of land use systems are appropriate to the existing environment that allows agriculture and animal raising activities. In fact, these new trends towards animal rising in Dar Masalit have taken its strong influences on the system of land use in the area.

**4.6 Agriculture and pastoralism in the context of west Darfur**

As I mentioned before, agricultural activities as well as nomadism are the main traditional economic activities that have been performed in Darfur for centuries. However, according to my informants, West Darfur has witnessed intensified small scale farming activities. In addition, they emphasized that, this area has been endlessly visited by the nomadic groups from south and west Darfur. Here, it should be noted that its location within the Savannah belt makes it more appropriate for the existence of the above-mentioned economic activities.

**4.6.1 Agriculture**

People practice subsistence farming activities not more than to meet their local substantial needs. They purse these kinds of agricultural activities in the lands that are not far from their residential areas. When it comes to the agricultural technology, the studies highlighted that they are mostly “very simple techniques” (Daldoum, 1999: 49). On the other hand, large scale cultivation is a very limited activity in this area. This is because of the lack of markets, absence of infrastructure and the lower necessary
bases for economic development and investment. The main agricultural products that are found in this area consist of millet, durra, and groundnuts. These crops are cultivated by the settled farmers that reside in “Al-Geneina and Wadi Azuom areas as well as in the uplands of Jebel Marra range” (Ibid: 49). Other agricultural products include the orchard products and vegetables. In this concern, the numerous valleys in the state are the best land for planting orange, mango, guava and etc. The vegetable products like onion, tomatoes and the sugar cane usually cultivated during the summer season, mainly in the streams of Jebel Marra and the extended zones in the lower valleys.

4.6.2 Nomadism

Although this study has classified the people of Darfur region (especially in the rural areas) to farmers and pastoralists, it should be noted that these categories are interlinked and overlapping. This reality is (to a great extent) applicable in West Darfur State. This is because the ecology of the area allows of performing both cultivation and pastoralism. Therefore, this could also give an explanation to the question of why has constantly this area been attractive for people from the other parts of Darfur.

As a matter of fact, an observer can easily notice that the nomads in Western Darfur are mostly from Arab origin of both camel and cattle herders. According to Haaland, 1969: 58), “In the dry season many nomads (mainly the Bani Halba and the Bani Hussein) spend the season among the Fur in the lower parts of the western Darfur.”

The nomadic groups that are accustomed to migrate to west Darfur State could be mentioned as follow:
1) Camel nomads
The main groups included within this category the Mahriya, the Erygat, and the Nuwaiba. They usually migrate from their traditional areas in northern Darfur. Other northern nomads are the Baggara of the Bani Hussein and the Terjum. According to my informants, with the exception of the Baggara, the above-mentioned groups have started to exploit the tree-belts in the western Wadies of Kaja, Azoum and Wadi Salih. The important point to be noted here is that since the mid of the 1970, camel nomads have been forced to change their normal seasonal movements. They have become to move earlier and deeper into the south, as well as, their staying have become longer than usual.

2) Cattle nomads or the Baggara
These groups usually take early movement towards west Darfur in the dry seasons. The Bani Halba and the Terjum usually visit the area of Wadi Salih in their dry season movement. Recently, they have become accustomed to reach the southern pastures of the region as far west as of Wadi Azum. However, unlike the Bani Halba and the Terjum, the other groups of the Baggara Arabs (specifically the Taaisha and the Rezaigat) usually took further south direction into Bahr Al-Arab zone during the dry season.

3) Nomads from the Republic of Chad
These groups are mostly cattle nomads. They include the Salamat, Awlad Rashid, Bani Halba and Saad. There are also camel nomads of Mahriya, Erigat, Nuwaiba and others who have been accustomed to visit the northern parts of western Darfur since the existence of the Fur Sultanate.
Figure (6) Map of Darfur showing the seasonal nomadic movements in the region

Source: Daldoum 1999
Chapter five

Competing livelihood systems and conflicts in Mornei

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, light will be shed on the issue of the changing of the farmers’ small-scale livelihood system in the course of its relation to the conflict in Mornei. To do this in a sufficient way, a detailed ethnographic account about the study area has been provided. This description includes the geography, location of Mornei, its population, natural resources and livelihood activities. In the same way, adequate accounts about the main cases that have been collected from the field have been provided. But, before that, the trajectory of the farmers-pastoralists relations in Mornei has been highlighted.

5.2 Mornei area: A background

According to many of my informants, the oldest settlement in this area is “a small village called Didima that has been established since the first quarter of the 19th century”15. They say that the first inhabitants of this area are the Masalit, especially the Fukujung sub-clan. This area is located in the southeastern part of Al-Geniena; at a distance estimated at 87 kilometer. Besides, it lies in the northern side of a big mountain called ‘Mornei mountain’ (see figure 8: p 90). Mornei borders Zallingi locality in the East, Al-Geniena locality in the West, Um Shalaya area in the North and Wadi Azoum in the South.

15 An interview with Hussein Mohamed Bashir; a teacher and one of the old inhabitants of Mornei. Mornei basic School for boys, 27.09.2006.
Historically, Mornei was regarded as one of the main local administrative units (froushiat; sing froushia)\(^\text{16}\) of Dar Masalit Sultanate. However, a number of administrative changes have been made, at both the national and local levels, since that time. At this point, it is necessary to mention that Mornei was transferred to a local council in the early 1970s due to the establishment of ‘the Regional Governance system’ in the era of Numayri’s government. In 1996, Mornei continued to be an administrative unit and governed as, a locality (mahliya) as result of some of administrative changes done by Inqa’az regime at that time.

According to the available official statistics, the population of Mornei was estimated to be 6,000 inhabitants before the eruption of the war in 2003 (Mornei administrative unit, 2006). The main villages that comprised Mornei at that time were: Sareri, Tomi Foca Fufo, Eshbara and Bobaya which were located in the Western bank of Madary valley. As well as, Nori and Gandarni villages, which were located in the western side of Nori valley and in the northern part of Mornei (see figure 8: p 90).

5.3 Soil and Topography

The topography of this area is composed of different types of soils that could be classified into four categories as follow:

1. Broad spots of a black clay soil that almost covers more than a half of Mornei area. This type of soil is locally known as gerdoud or Jugulayia. It lies quite distance from the valleys. Sorghum, okra and

\(^{16}\) According to the local administrative traditions of the Masalit, the term Froushia denotes local administrative unit. It is ruled by a person who is directly appointed by the Sultan of Dar Masalit. This person is labeled as foursha; Pl fourash (the local governor). The Fourash constitute the council of the Sultan of the Masalit.
sesame are the main crops that are usually cultivated on this kind of land.

2. A vast area of stabilized sand dunes, which are locally called *qoz*. The area covered by this type of land is roughly estimated to constitute one quarter of the total cultivated land in Mornei. The main crops that have been cultivated in this type of land are millet, scarlet runner and watermelons.

3. The spots of land that lie beside and around the water courses (*wadis*). It is a yellow fertile soil with a dense vegetation cover. This type of land is locally recognized as *tartoura*. It mostly occupies the eastern part of Mornei. According to a Sudanese Forestry researcher: “The land surrounding the [western Jebel Marra] valleys is Archaean Plateau characterized by dry land tree species including *Acacia, Balanites aegyptiaca, Boswellia papyrifera, Acacia seyal, Acacia senegal* and *Ziziphus spina-chisti* in addition to other rare species like *Acacia gerardii, Boscia senegalensis* and *Combretum species*.” (Elsiddig, 2007: 160).

4. Scattered small areas of a clay hard soil, known locally as *nagaa*. This type of land is not suitable for cultivation, because it cannot absorb enough water.

5.4 Population

As mentioned before in this chapter, Mornei is basically a homeland of one of the Masalit sub-clans called *Fukujung*. Nevertheless, other ethnic groups live side by side with the Masalit in this area. Following the former chapters of the study, this chapter also classifies Mornei people
into two main categories; farmers and pastoralists. These categories could be mentioned as follow:

5.4.1 The Sedentary farmers
This group includes the following ethnic groups:

- **The Masalit**: According to my informants, this group is the biggest group that has ever existed in Mornei. They represent more than half of the total population of the area before 2003. The main villages of the Masalit are, Sareri, Tomi Foca Fufo, Eshbara, Bobaya and Nori. These villages are located in the south and the western part of Mornei. However, as is the case all over Darfur, neither the homelands nor the villages have ever been exclusive for one ethnic group. Therefore, these villages have multi-ethnic communities that include, apart from Masalit, other ethnic groups from Darfur and outside Darfur. However, due to the war that has erupted in Darfur since 2003, the Masalit in particular, have been forced to flee their villages before they were finally sheltered in IDPs camps, mainly in the Mornei IDPs camp (Mornei administrative unit, 2006). For more information about Masalit see chapter 2 and 4.

- **The Fur**: Here, one could say that since Mornei lies beside the traditional Fur homelands in Jebel Mara, mainly Zallingi and Azoum, it is natural to find big numbers of people from the Fur ethnic group in this area. The Fur group makes up the second biggest group that resides in Mornei. Their main villages are located in the eastern side of Mornei beside Azoum valley (Also, for more information about the Fur group see chapter 2).
Other non-Arab groups: Apart from the Masalit and the Fur, there are other non Arab groups said to have inhabited Mornei. These groups include the Daju that mostly inhabits the western side of Mornei. Besides, Gimir, Tama and Misseriya Jebel reside in the northern parts of Mornei. On the other hand, Zaghawa, Maraasi, Barno and Berti are distributed in different areas in Mornei.

5.4.2 The Pastoralists

With respect to the pastoralist groups, again we find the two types that have been mentioned before, (“old-timers” and “newcomers”), in Dar Masalit.

So, pastoralists groups in Mornei include:

1. The old-timers/ or the settled group: This group includes Hawara, mainly the family of Saleem, who reside, side by side with Masalit, Fur and Daju, in the eastern settlements of Mornei. In addition to some families from Mahadi, Beni Halba and Tarjam that reside in different parts of Mornei. The majority of them inhabit the northern settlements. According to my informants, these above-mentioned groups continued to live in Mornei since the first quarter of the 20th century. These groups used to practice cattle nomadism. However, they could be mostly classified as farmers rather than being pastoralists. For this reason, the farmers-pastoralists classification adopted in this study is flexible. This means that the strict boundaries between farmers and pastoralists in this area no longer exist.
2. The newcomers or/ the pastoral nomad groups:

These groups used to visit Mornei after the end of the harvest season in February. They comprise both cattle-herding and camel-herding pastoralists. The camel-herding groups (locally known as *abaala*) represent the largest segment. They include Awlad Janoub, Awlad Zaid, Awlad Rashid, al-Naga’a and Awlad Raham. They are basically found in Northern Darfur, in which they are mostly known as the northern Rezeigat (locally known as *al-Rezaigat al-Shamalia*). However, they move across a broad belt that extends from Northern Darfur westwards, across the Sudanese/ Chadian borders to incorporate the camel nomad groups in Northern Chad, Niger and Senegal. On the other hand, the cattle-herding groups, (known locally as *Baggara*), consist of the Slamat, Nuwaiba, and the Bani Halba. While the Bani Halba migrated from their traditional homeland in Ed el-Fursan located in south Darfur, the Salamat, who have strong relations with Taaisha, have allegedly immigrated from Southern Chad.

5.5 Natural Resources

There are different sources of natural resources in Mornei, a fact that renders it to be among the richest areas in Darfur when it comes to the issue of natural resources. The main natural sources that are found in this area include:

- Various water sources, mainly the valleys.
- A broad fertile agricultural and pastoral land.
• Vast extended forests of *haraz*\(^{17}\).

When it comes to the water resources, Mornei has a number of valleys, which make it one of the most attractive places for different categories of pastoralists from all over Darfur as well as from the neighboring African countries (Chad and Central Africa in particular). At this point, it is important to say that *Azoum* (which goes through the southern side of Mornei to meet *Bary* that originates from the north Jebel Marra) is considered as one of the biggest valleys of Darfur. As well as, additional valleys are distributed in different parts in Mornei (e.g. *Madray* and *Tulus* in the western area, and; *Ruay* in the northern side). In addition, there are other smaller valleys that are located in different places in Mornei. (See map no 5).

As for *Azoum*, it originates in the south-western part of Jebel Marra Mountain. It runs in the western direction, going through some of the Fur homelands located in western Jebel Marra, e. g. Zallingi, Azoum and Wadi Salih, until it meets Bari valley at Mornei. After that, it passes across the Masalit homelands located to the west of Zallingi, e. g. Mornei, Habila and Fura Branga until it crosses the Sudanese/Chadian border and ends in the lake of Chad.

With regard to forests, it could be said that, since this area receives plentiful levels of annual rainfall ranging from 400-600 mm per annum, vast extended forests of haraz trees are intensively founded in Mornei. According to my informants, these enormous forests are mostly utilized as a source of fire wood as well as building materials. However, it was emphasized by my informants that due to land scarcity that has surfaced

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\(^{17}\) The acacia trees are locally called ‘*haraz*’. Almost all the forests that lie in western Darfur State, particularly Mornei area, are mainly constituted of acacia family trees.
recently in Mornei, people have begun to cut down the trees of the forests so as to utilize its areas for agriculture and grazing purposes.

### 5.6 Livelihood Activities

According to my informants, small-scale subsistence agriculture as well as animal raising activities of cattle, goats and sheep, are the main economic activity performed by the settled groups in Mornei. Nomadic groups that seasonally migrate to the area carry out camel as well as cattle herding activities as the major livelihood activity. Despite the fact that Mornei’s main market is periodic (2 days a week) and small, limited commercial activities (mostly related to agricultural and animal products) are performed to satisfy the very basic needs of the population. However, my informant emphasized that local animal wealth trade (specifically sheep and goats) has begun to flourish recently. But, usually, people travel to Al-Geneina and (some times) Zallingi, in which they can buy the products that are not found in their local market. In a nutshell, there are no notable livelihood systems to be found in Mornei apart from small scale farming activities as well traditional pastoralism. Thus, within this issue, light will be shed on the agricultural activities as well as animal pastoralism.

#### Agricultural activities

There are two different types of agricultural activities that are being performed in Mornei. These types are: A- Rain fed Cultivation; B- Irrigated Farming of horticulture.
A. Rain fed cultivation

As is the case with most areas of Dar Masalit, rain fed cultivation is the most prominent economic activity that is pursued by the sedentary population in Mornei. It is practiced mainly during the rainy season. The main agricultural products that are produced in this type of cultivation comprise sorghum and millet. Besides, groundnut, sesame and watermelon are also cultivated during this season. This kind of agriculture is mostly carried out around the households. It is locally called as (zira’at al-bildat). The main objective of it is to satisfy the subsistent needs of these above-mentioned households. All members of household participate (in different degrees) in this small scale subsistence cultivation. However, women usually undertake the big part of this work. Actually, all members of household (mainly the wives as well as the younger sons and daughters) start the first stage of this kind agricultural. They start the operation through cleaning the farm and digging small halls to put the seeds (of the above mentioned crops) in it. This stage usually starts in June and some times in May. After that they wait until the rainy season starts in June or July. After two months farms grow quite bigger. In this stage members of households begin to clean the growing farms from the spoiled bushes and grasses. Here all members participate, however, again, the role played by women and the younger sons and daughters is quite important. The last stage is the harvest, which regularly starts in December. Here, men as well the adult sons play the larger role. Operations of harvests usually completed by the mid or the end of January. This is for the main crops, sorghum, millet and sesame in particular. When rainy seasons come late, as is occur some times, harvests might consequently, belated until the mid of February. In such situations, a lot of cases of conflicts are expected to emerge. Because, the
pastoralists groups (both camel and cattle) usually visit the area by the beginnings of February. So, in case, if they enter the area without being informed that operations of harvests haven’t been completed yet, their animals are likely to enter these yield farms and make damages\textsuperscript{18}. However, after the latest developments in the local economy of the settled farmers (e.g. the growth of irrigated horticulture) the numbers of cases of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have increased. Actually, more detailed information about irrigated horticulture is given in the next section.

**Irrigated Horticulture**

This type of cultivation is basically practiced beside the valleys in winter. The main agricultural products that are cultivated include onions, okra, scarlet durra, coriander and humus in addition to the appearance of tobacco cultivation, which has been recognized recently as a cash-crop in Mornei. When it comes to agricultural tools, one could say that very traditional technologies such as axe, hoe, and bucket are basically used in this area. Axe and hoe are used in the digging operations that concern the cultivation activities; whereas, the water bucket is a small round wooden container with handle attached to its sides used for drawing water from wells in the local irrigation operations. However, according to my informant, people have begun to utilize power generators as well as tractors since the beginnings of the 1990s. People label this relatively new kind of agriculture as *zira’at al-bw’abeer*. To some extent, this new system represents the early beginnings of establishing small-scale mechanized farming activities in Mornei. It is basically initiated by small

\textsuperscript{18} This is the very conventional idea of how, usually, conflicts erupt between farmers and pastoralists in Darfur. However, it would be a very naïve proposal to merely analyze Darfur conflict through this simple assumption.
groups of people that include some government employees, local merchants and some local administration leaders.

In the course of an interview with a 51 years old Daju farmer and former member of the farmer’s union in Mornei, who used to reside in Bobaiya village, (see figure 8: p 90), which is located in the southern side of Madary valley, he said to me that: “…one of the notable changes, which have taken place recently in this area, is the performance of new kinds of cultivation not only in Mornei, but all over Dar Masalit. More specifically, I could say that, apart from the traditional small scale Durra and Millet cultivation, we have begun to perform the irrigated horticulture, (al-Zira’a al-Shitwia), and; using tractors’ cultivation, (zira’at al-bwabeer). Hence, different kinds of cash crops products have begun to be cultivated in the course of these agricultural developments. These products are onions, okra, scarlet-durra, kasbra, kabkabi as well as tobacco.” Here, I asked him if Mornei people have enough fertile lands to perform these new activities. He said: “yes, this has become one of our main dilemmas in recent times. However, as land owners, we have the complete right to utilize any unoccupied part inside our homelands. So, we have used, almost, all the vacant fertile areas, mainly that locate beside the valleys. Consequently, no vacant areas exist beside the valleys in Mornei any more. Not only this, but, we have begun to utilize, even, the distant vacant areas, which used to accommodate the seasonal migrants nomad groups, mainly the Arabs.” Then he was very surprised when he said: “…who can believe that the land would be leased for cultivation in this area!”
Now, either in its traditional way or through using the relatively advanced machines, irrigated horticulture has been remarkably increased all over Mornei. This reality has augmented the demand over the agricultural land. Farming activities have begun to increase at the expense of the former vacant areas (especially that located besides the valleys) those were allocated for pastoralists in the past. Moreover, even animal routs have begun to be employed, by settled farmers, for farming activities as well. As result, changes have not been confined to agriculture, but farmers in Mornei have even changed their mechanism towards animal raising activities.

**Keeping animal**

As has been said before, Mornei inhabitants are basically farmers. However, massive activities of animal husbandry, basically in the form of raising cattle, goats, sheep and few camels are being practiced as well. This local economic activity can be referred to as agro-pastoralism or transhumance.

Most of the settled people in Mornei have started to change their methods of animal husbandry. They have started to concentrate on raising sheep more than cattle and goats, on the other; they have become more independent in conducting their animal husbandry. In other words, they no longer rely on their friends from the nomad Arab groups to take care of their animals as was the case in the past. These new above mentioned changes in the local economic activities have modified the previous mode of the local interdependent economic activities between the settled groups.
and the nomadic pastoralists in Mornei\textsuperscript{19}. This new reality has reduced the chances of the nomadic groups to benefit from the farmers’ cultivated land through the previous traditional interdependent economic relations between the two ethnic groups.

It could be said that although they have been acquainted with animal rising activities since a long time, however, settled farmers in Mornei have (to a great extent) increased these activities recently. Due to its quick marketing, they have begun to focus profoundly on sheep. Nevertheless, one could easily notice the big numbers of cattle as well as goats herds.

Regarding the situation of the Arab nomadic groups, again differences are needed to be made between cattle pastoralists and camel pastoralists. As is the case with the settled farmers, cattle pastoralists in Mornei, are acquainted with small-scale farming activities. When these groups visit the area in their seasonal migrations, some of their households ask the local sheiks for giving them an agricultural land, in which they usually practice small activities of cultivation of durra and millet. This activity was quite minor in the past. However, it has become larger recently. In fact, a number of cases of settlement operations (among these cattle nomads groups) that have taken place in the homelands of the settled farmers groups (the Fur and the Masalit in particular) have started through the course of the seasonal migrations of these above-mentioned cattle nomads. Thus, their settlements as well as their integrations with the settled farmers’ communities could be described as a unique one. When it comes to the camel pastoralists groups those migrate to Mornei,

\textsuperscript{19} A Focused Group Discussion with the main settled Sheiks of Mornei –Ebrahim Khatir Abdal-alla, Mahdi Isaq Khamais, Adam Haron Ali and Ahmad Abker Osman-, Mornei IDPs camp, al-Geniena, September 2006.
they usually don’t perform agricultural activities. They mostly confine themselves to their camel pastoralism activity. However, both cattle and camel nomads get their animal products and sell it or exchange it with their needs from the agricultural products that are usually supplied by the settled farmers. In addition, both cattle and camel nomads are accustomed to get firewood from outside the surrounding villages and sell or exchange it with the farmers.

In summary, one could say that the recent developments that have connected to the local economy of Mornei, along with other factors, have made farming activities and pastoralism in a quite competitive relation rather than being complementary as is the case in the past.

5.7 Education

Religious education that is basically depending on providing educational services through religious schools (locally known as *khalaawi*), has been the most prominent type of education in Mornei since very ancient times. This type of education is the preferred among the population. My informants told me that the people in Mornei used to look down on the person who doesn’t care about his religious learning. To the extent that they do not allow him to marry their daughters, as well as they don’t invite him to attend their occasions.

According to the official data, there are 30 primary schools, which have been established during the 1990s. Before this history, only 2 schools were found all over Mornei. As for the secondary schools, there is only one secondary school in Mornei. It is a mixed school that provides its educational services for both boys and girls.
Figure 8: Map of Mornei showing its main villages before 2003

Source: designed by researcher 2006
5.8 The trajectory of Farmers-Pastoralists relations in Mornei

5.8.1 The manifestation of the former co-existence between farmers and pastoralists in Mornei

As has been noticed elsewhere in Darfur (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Assal, 2006), my informants also emphasized that the farmers-pastoralists relations in Mornei have been frequently ranging between complementary and conflict. According to some anthropologists this phenomenon is basically attributed to the socio-economic as well as the political transformation at both the grass-roots and national levels (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Assal, 2006, Haaland, 1969). However, my focus here has been basically directed to the grass-roots level.

Despite the fact that many recent studies have described the current farmers-pastoralists relations as a highly conflicting and ethnically polarized (Mohamed et al, 2003) my informants asserted to me that the former relations were, in the most cases, very special in their nature. In the words of one of my informants: “this uniqueness was reflected in the absolute mutual cooperation that has been speaking louder among these two groups for years.” The main manifestations of it were embodied in the reciprocal economic operations, intermarriage relations and sharing the same culture and religion. The expressions of this special relation could be mentioned as follow:

- There was a symbiotic relationship between sedentary farmers and nomadic pastoralists after the harvest season, through which farmers used to open their farms for nomadic herders to feed their animals. This season is called locally *taleeg* (opening the farms for animals to feed). It usually takes place in February at the beginnings of the summer seasons. This operation has mutual benefits between the two
groups; animals feed and farms become more fertile. In addition to that there are many customs that should be respected between the two groups.

- Another expression of this mutual and complementary relation occurred when the numbers of farmers’ cattle increase, especially when it becomes more than 20 heads. Here, one of the farmers’ choices is to give the cattle to the one of his friends from the cattle pastoralists group so as to take care of them. On the other hand, when they decided to go deeper in their migrations, a number of pastoralists left their wives as well as their children inside the villages with the families of their farmers’ friends.

- Last, my informants told me that throughout their shared history in Mornei, farmers and pastoralists used to exchange economic benefits. For example farmers supplied pastoralists with the needed agricultural products, whereas pastoralists used to provide them with different animal products.

5.8.2 The occurrence of competitive relations between Farmers and pastoralists in Mornei

According to my informants, the small scale farmers groups in Mornei (e.g. the Masalit, the Fur, the Daju and etc), were not confining themselves to the farming activities alone, rather they have begun to practice remarkable pastoral activities recently. These activities of animal keeping include cattle, goats and sheep raising.

For instance, in a joint interview with a Masalit and Daju “farmers” from Fufo village, which lies in the southern part of Madry valley (see figure no 8), one of them, the Daju farmer, told me: “…the majority of Mornei
people were having considerable numbers of cattle and sheep herds, before the eruption of the conflict in Dar Masalit.” Then he continued and said: “…for example, I and my sons used to possess more than 130 heads of sheep, 200 heads of goats, 20 cattle and 3 camels.” Then when I said to them: “it is said that, recently you have become pastoralists instead of performing your former farming activities,” the Masalit farmer answered: “we haven’t changed our former economic activities, but we have intensified the animal raising activities, especially the sheep, because it could generate more income for us…” Then the Daju farmer said: “we have fertile areas of land and plenty of water sources, so, why don’t we raise and increase our own animals? We have the absolute right to perform any economic activity in our land.” At that moment, the other farmer said: “when the conflict erupted in this area, every one of us was having his own herds. But, the strange thing is that, these animals herds were becoming the main targets of the Arab nomads’ attacks in this area.”

In the same way, in the course of one of the discussions that have been carried out in a workshop held in al-Geniena in 2006, an Arabic camel herder who is also a member of the Pastoralists’ Union, said: “we were very happy and living in peace in the past, because every group used to practice a specific economic activity; the settled groups were accustomed to farming activities and we were accustomed to pastoral activities, so, I think, it would be better if each group returns to its former economic activity…”

At this point, it is worth mentioning that this phenomenon is not a new one in Darfur. For instance, in his most quoted article: “Nomadisation as

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an economic career among the sedentaries in the Sudan Savannah belt”, Haaland (1969: 165), states: “…a process whereby some households change their economy from one based on grain to one based on cattle.” On the other hand, the cattle pastoralists groups who used to migrate to Mornei (e. g. the Slamat, the Bani Halba) were not restricting their livelihood activities to Pastoralism.

In a nutshell, there have become no clear differences between farming activities and pastoralism in Mornei. It has become noticeable that the animal raising activities among these above-mentioned farmers is getting bigger, to the extent that the farmers’ communities in Mornei have become unable to host their former visitors from the nomadic groups and their animals (when they inter the area in their seasonal migration) as is the case in the past. In reality, the increasing market demand of the animals (in local, regional and international markets) is among the main causes that have enlarged the farmers’ trends towards animal rising activities in the area. Here, my informants told me that the marketing of animal wealth, sheep in particular, has become larger. Al-Geneina and Zallingi were the main big animal markets utilized by Mornei people. Besides, some merchants used to come to Mornei and buy the sheep as well as the goats directly from the farmers. All these bought animal herds were usually sent to Serf Omra animal market, from which big livestock traders and their agents sent the herds to Khartoum and out side Sudan. In this respect, to have a complete picture, it should be noted that the national trade of livestock between Sudan and some Arabic countries (Saudi Arabia and Egypt in particular) was prospered during the 1980s and the 1990s. This was also a further factor that has urged the farmers to increase their animal raising activities. As result, instead of being complementary in the pasty, farmers-pastoralists’ relations have become
competitive. In consistence with these developments, my informants told me that disputes and confrontations between farmers and pastoralists have been increased in the beginnings of the 1990s.

5.8.3 The nature of disputes between farmers and pastoralists in Mornei before the mid of the 1990s

My informants told me that: “the former clashes between farmers and pastoralists usually used to increase in summer after the harvest seasons in February, March, April and May.”\(^{21}\) Because, these times regularly witness high seasonal migration of nomadic pastoralists groups, from both north and south Darfur, to Mornei. However, these clashes have not increased, politicized and developed to grave conflicts. Instead, they were minor and consequently; easy to control by the local leaders. At this point, my informants told me that: “…both Masalit and Fur farmers have engaged in a number of small disputes and skirmishes with some clans of the Northern Rezaigat camel nomads, as well as with some cattle nomad pastoralists, especially the Salamat and the Bani Halba.”\(^{22}\) Here, my informants told me that the Salamat has taken part in many disputes, especially with the Masalit and the Daju but most of their disputes have taken place with the Masalit, mainly around Azoum and Bari valleys. They said, “….unlike other nomadic groups, the entry of the Salamat, who have begun to immigrate from Chad since the 1960s onwards, to Dar Masalit, Mornei in particular, could be described as totally unorganized one. Because, the Salamat, especially in their most recent immigrations, have not immigrated with their mobile sheiks, as is usually the case with the other nomadic groups in the area. The existence of their mobile sheiks

\(^{21}\) An interview (with two farmers) conducted in Mornei IDPs camp. One of these two farmers is a 52 years old Masalit farmer called Mohamed Salih who used to reside Fufo village in the western side of Mornei. The other is a 55 years old Daju farmer called Hassan Bakheit who used to reside in Bobaya. Mornei, 24. 09. 2006.  

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
is anticipated to organize their entry as well as to solve the expected disputes and skirmishes between them and the hosting communities.

As for the camel nomads, they have also engaged in a number of disputes and skirmishes with the farmers in Mornei. However, their local sheiks that used to migrate with them were accustomed to settle these disputes in collaboration with the local sheiks of the settled farmers. As is the case with the Salamt, most of the disputes between the Northern Rezaigat camel nomads and farmers have taken place around Azoum and Bari valleys in the past.

According to my informants, no cases of grave conflicts have been recorded between farmers and pastoralists in Mornei until the mid of 1990s. However, in 1995, two vehement conflicts between Masalit farmers and some sections of northern Rezeigat pastoralists, (Awlad Jounob, al Naja’a and Awlad Eid in particular), erupted in Majmary and Nori in the North West part of Mornei. Then, a number of cases of conflicts have been witnessed all over Dar Masalit. The main groups that have participated in these conflicts from the cattle nomads are the Salamt, the Bani Halba and the Terjum. As for the Northern Rezaigat, all the above-mentioned sections have taken part in these conflicts. When it comes to the settled farmers, the main groups that have played a part in these conflicts include the Masalit, the Fur and the Daju.

**5.8.4 The nature of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Mornei after the mid of 1990s**

As mentioned before, since the mid of 1990s onwards, Mornei has witnessed an emergence of intensified conflicts, mainly between the Masalit farmers and both the cattle as well as the camel nomad pastoralists groups. In addition to, armed robbery operations have been broadly activated during this period. Accordingly, conflicts have almost
erupted allover Mornei. Masalit villages such as Bobaya, Eshbara, Solma, Trafia and Nori have witnessed strife conflicts, and were totally destroyed and burned. Moreover, my informants told me that the nomad groups have begun to target their cattle. Mohamed Isaac Mohamed, a 51 year old Daju farmer from Mornei, emphasized that: “…in the recent conflicts in Mornei, it has become a repeated phenomenon that, after burning our villages, the attackers from pastoralists groups used to meet in an specific place and began to collect the cattle of the village. In some cases, when some of us succeeded to withdrew and get access to the police, we constantly found no response. Consequently, lack of trust has emerged between us and the government. So, we have realized that the so-called Arabic gathering is a real issue.”

The other most important point, my informants told me that their neighbors from the old-timer pastoralists groups in Mornei (especially, the Mahadi, the Tarjam and the Hawara) have been mobilized and (some times) threatened and forced by the attackers to join the wide umbrella of pastoralists groups (or rather the “Arabic Gatherings”) and fight against the Zurga. Here, an objective analysis to the continent of the following interview will support my informants’ above mentioned claims.

In n interview with a 64 years old Masalit farmer who used to reside in Eish Bara village in Mornei, (see map no 4), he told me that: “…because our land is very fertile we have endlessly, since the 1980s, accommodated successive migrations from all over Darfur. However, we were not having serious problems in terms of hosting seasonal migrants from the Arab nomad groups in the past. There had been enough land for all, and; we were having strong system of native administration, as well as; every one, including the Arab nomad groups, used to abide by our acknowledged
customary land tenure and use systems.” When I asked him, why they don’t abide by it now? He said, “Because they feel stronger now, and they have great ambitions to take our land by force. This is because; they have been armed by the “National Congress government. Now they compose a one front.” And, do you believe that since that time all indigenous ethnic groups have been classified as rebels…” Then, the conversation continued for a long time until he furiously said: “…everyone in Dar Masalit knows that, west Darfur government created the Emirate Act to reinforce and consolidate the situation of the foreign invaders from the camel nomads and the Arabic groups at the expense of the indigenous people who posses this land, especially the Masalit…” The conversation was continued until he said: “…we knew that a number of secret meetings have been held, in al-Geniena, between some influential leaders of the camel nomad Arabic groups, some leaders of the Sudanese Army and security apparatus, as well as some political leaders of the national congress party in al-Geniena. We knew from our sources that, in this meeting, the camel nomads were promised to be granted Dar Masalit land, while they were demanded to fight the emerging “rebellion movements” in Dar Masalit in particular and Darfur in general.”

Similarly, in a group discussion, which I carried out in Mornei IDPs camp with 5 sheikhs (who affiliate to the Masalit the Fur, the Daju, the Zaghawa and the Barno), the same issues were emphasized. For instance, in the course of this group discussion, the Masalit sheikh stated that: “…since the early times of the Dar Masalit “tribal” conflicts that exploded in the mid of the 1990s, “we” have realized the necessity of reorganizing our selves and becoming more unified instead of being fragmented, as was the case in the past. Accordingly, we have begun to construct a unified front that could include all the Zurga. Our main goal
was to protect our lives as well as our historical homelands that were targeted by our historical enemies who were backed by the government of Khartoum.” Here, when I asked him what you mean by “we?” One of the other sheiks immediately replied: “we” here means the “indigenous groups,” and it also means the “Zurga.” After that, I asked them: who are the enemies you have just talked about? Here, the sheikh of the Zagahawa replied: “our enemies are the Arabic nomad groups, especially those who ride camels.” Do you mean the northern Rezeigat? I asked, “Yes, but specifically the sub-clans that usually migrate to this area such as: Awlad Janoub, Awlad Zid, al-Naga’a and Awlad Rahama,” He replied. However, the sheikh of the Fur stated that: “Slamat and Beni Halba from Baggara group joined some fifth columnists from the non-Arabic groups, namely the Gimir, the Tama and the Bargo and allied with the camel nomad invaders and fought us under the umbrella of the Arabic Gathering.”

In conclusion, one could say that the former unique peaceful co-existence between farmers and pastoralists has been almost totally destroyed. To the extent it has been noticed that since the conflict has become a full-fledged war in 2003, the two labels of Arab and Zurga have been widely adopted for the groups’ identification. Now, not only in Mornei, but almost in all parts of Dar Masalit, ethnic background has become the prominent factor in the every day interactions.
Chapter Six
Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an in depth analysis about the conflict in Dar Masalit. Besides, it highlights the main conclusions of the study. On the one hand, my analysis is basically based on the cases that have been collected from the fieldwork. However, on the other, it has related the analysis towards the Sudanese national level as well as to the regional level in Africa. In a nutshell a basic three issues have been dealt with in the course of the analysis. These issues are the customary land tenure system in Dar Masalit and its relationship to the conflict; the direct as well as the root causes of the grass-roots conflicts in Dar Masalit and; the question of how has grass-roots conflicts couched in ethnic terms (in Dar Masalit) recently?

6.2 Customary land tenure System and its Relationship with the Conflicts in Dar Masalit

The cases presented in the previous chapters vividly show that there has become no equal access to the land resources in Dar Masalit in general and Mornei in particular. Based on the customary land tenure system, some groups such as the Masalit, the Fur and the Daju have continuously enjoyed acknowledged customary rights over land tenure and use in this area. The emergence of the recent environmental crisis in northern Darfur together with the profound changes in the traditional small-scale farming system in Dar Masalit put the customary land tenure system to a real test. Here, one could say that throughout Dar Masalit history and until the mid
of 1990th, this system has been coping efficiently with the land issues (land management, allocating land for grazing and pasture and etc) at the grass-root level. However, due to different causes, the settled farmers and/or the “indigenous” groups in Dar Masalit have begun to employ the customary land tenure system to maintain exclusive rights over land. For example, the cases reveal that when land scarcity emerged in Mornei in the mid of the 1990th, the Masalit and some other settled groups such as the Fur and the Daju found it easy to legitimately utilize the vacant land (particularly the fertile land besides the valleys) that used to be allocated to the pastoralists groups to graze their animals. Thus, the settled farmers have begun to raise the issue that they have the absolute rights over every inch in their homeland. Simply, according to them, as long as they are (customarily) the “owners” of the homeland, so, they should be having the rights over “their” land first. In fact, this issue is not new in Darfur. The secondary data about Darfur conflicts prove that several conflicts that have been erupted in the region (e.g. the Maaliya versus the Rezaigat 1968; Taasha versus Salamat 1980; the Rezaigat versus the Zaghawa in 1986 and etc) have been fought over customary land rights.

The cases demonstrate that the land-less groups (especially some clans of the northern Rezaigat) which have been familiar with the migration to Mornei, have begun to raise the claim that Dar Masalit no longer belongs to the Masalit. Because, according to them, this land is now owned by the government according to the formal legislation. Therefore, they have begun to refuse abiding by the customary land tenure system any more. The main governmental legislations that were basically referred to by these above-mentioned landless groups (to legitimize their access to land) are the Un Registered Land Act (ULA) as well as the Emirate Act that were established in 1970 and 1995 respectively.
In summary, one could say that the recent socio-economic developments at the grass-roots level in Dar Masalit have shown that, in contrast to what is perceived by the proponent of the customary land tenure system, this system failed to maintain equal rights over land use when it was put to a real test.

6.3 The direct causes of the grass-roots conflicts in Dar Masalit

An in-depth sociological analysis to the cases presented above will demonstrate that factors that underlie grass-root conflicts in Mornei as well as Dar Masalit have been fundamentally attached to the competition over land resources. One could say that the occurrence of strong trends towards the market-based economy (mostly) within the traditional small-scale farming activities, mainly among the Masalit, the Masalit and the Daju. The direct consequences of these transformations have been reflected in the increasing demands of extra land. Given the fact that there have been increasing influxes of human and animal migration to Dar Masalit recently, joint with the occurrence of the above-mentioned market-based economy, land has become a scarce resource in Mornei. As a result, fierce competitions over land resources, mainly between the settled farmers and the nomadic pastoralists (basically the camel nomads) have taken place in Mornei. Here, one could safely conclude that this conflict is basically an expression of competing livelihood systems. Again, this phenomenon is not new either in Darfur or in the Sudan. As emphasized by man researchers in Sudan (Abdul-Jalil, 2007; Assal, 2006; Babiker, 2008; Suliman, 2007), competition over land is the joint element between most of the grass-roots conflicts in the Sudan. At this point, Assal (2006: 102) concluded that that: “…the cause of many conflicts we see today in the Sudan is related to resource access and usage…”
When it comes to the situation on the regional level in Africa, again, a number of studies stressed that land is the crucial factor behind the conflicts in the continent. For example, one of the researchers interested in conflict in Africa concluded that: “the access to and control of valuable natural resources, including minerals, oil, timber, productive pastures and farming land, have been crucial factors in the occurrence of violent conflicts across the continent” (Porto, 2002: 2).

Land is crucial element to understand the conflict in Dar Masalit. However, lack of land resources has begun to occur in Dar Masalit. Although, the area is basically a very rich in terms of fertile land, however the later massive human and animal movements to the area coupled with the changes in the subsistence economy of the settled groups have created a relative scarcity and; consequently triggered the conflict in Dar Masalit. However, this is a one part of the picture. The other part (which is very important) is related to the macro policies of the state. Here, I agree with Abdul-Jalil that: “What would have been a clear inter-ethnic competition over natural resources has turned into a complex multi-tier conflict that is heavily influenced by national policies in the centre” (Abdul-Jalil, 2006). Similarly, some studies carried out in the African communities emphasized this issue as well. For example, one of the studies that examined the question of land scarcity and conflict in Rwanda concluded that: “Land is not the root cause of the Rwandan conflict. Various factors contributed to the onset and continuation of the conflict in Rwanda. The role of land, however, is critical to understanding conflict dynamics in Rwanda. Land scarcity in Rwanda is both a function of population pressure and the unequal distribution of land. Control of the state by elite groups has facilitated their domination of land ownership.
This has aggravated land scarcity for the rural poor by concentrating ownership of land with minority.” (Bigagaza et al, 2002: 78).

By the same token, in another case from Somalia, the following conclusions were highlighted: “land and resources alone are not the ultimate sources of conflict in Jubba land or Somalia. Rather, land and resources are embedded among many other interrelated factors, including conflict to control the state, engagement of third parties, including neighboring governments, ineffectual or missing state institutions, and official policy that curried favor with minority groups through patrimonial favor, but excluded most other groups.” (Farah et al, 2002: 349). Therefore, the next section will try to answer the question of how have the macro-policies of the central state affected the situation in Dar Masalit?

6.4 The root causes of the grass-roots conflicts in Dar Masalit

Lack of development and/or marginalization as well as the absence of the good governance in Africa are said to be the root causes of most conflicts that have erupted in the African communities in recent history. At this point, Manger (2005) argues that to fully understand the conflicts in the African continent, “…a focus on the state and on the concept of ‘governance’, in this case ‘bad governance’, i.e. the reproduction of autocratic leadership, corruption and the collapse of states into warring factions. This suggests a need to look at people’s use of, and control over, resources at many different levels, thus permitting a consideration of processes of power and authority” (Manger, 2005: 135).

In the same way, when it comes to the situation of Darfur, again a number of studies proved that lack of development is among the main root causes
that have strongly participated either in the onset or in the escalation of the different grass-root conflicts in Darfur (Assal, 2005a; Mohamed, 2003).

As to the issue of lack of development, the primary data collected from the fieldwork show that there is a disturbing shortage of educational services, an absence of basic health services, and a very weak infrastructure. To give an example, there was no even a one paved road in Dar Masalit until the time I finished my second trip to the fieldwork in August 2006. At this point, I would like to say that, most of the people that I met during the fieldwork have repeatedly asserted that lack of development is the key factor behind their disaster. Here, I could say what is claimed by several armed movements (mainly JEM and SLA/M) in Darfur, provides more ammunition to this argument. To widen the analysis, I could say this is not the problem of Darfur alone, rather almost all the conflicts in the Sudanese peripheries are related in a way or another to the issue of development (Mohamed et al, 2003).

As for the influence of the state policies in the conflict in Dar Masalit, evidences taken from the fieldwork show that, severe confrontations as well violent conflicts between the “Masalit” and the “Arab” have erupted sooner after the establishment of Emirate Act in Dar Masalit in 1995. My informants told me that Masalit have felt that their historical customary land tenure system was targeted by the central government. Likewise, other policies endorsed by the central government, such as arming the nomadic Arab groups and their supporters to fight the Masalit and their followers from the settled groups, have made the situation more problematic. Then, to top it all, instead of using the Sudanese national army, the central government has begun to systematically use the Arab
Militias (Janjaweed) to suppress the emerging armed movements in Darfur by 2003. This phenomenon is called war by proxy. It is not a new phenomenon either in Darfur or in the Sudanese history.

6.5 How have recent conflicts in Dar Masalit evolved around ethnic terms?

As it has been demonstrated above, land is the key factor that underlies the conflict in Dar Masalit. However, the above-mentioned cases show that, grass-roots conflicts have been strongly couched in ethnic terms. In the same way, the recent literature that have dealt with the subject, either in Darfur or in the other Sudanese communities, proved this reality as well (Assal, 2007; Miller, 2005; Harir, 1992; Wane et al, 2004). At this point, Wane concluded that: “On the surface, many conflicts seem to revolve around ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic divisions…” (Wane et al, 2004: 7).

To be more specific, the cases collected from the field illustrate that conflicts in Dar Masalit have revolved around tribal divisions. These divisions range from the small tribal and/ or sub-tribal units at the grass-root level, (Masalit versus Arabs), to the appearance of the broad highly politicized ethnic groups, (the Zurga versus the Arab Gathering). Here, one could say that elites have played a crucial role in this issue. Again, it worth mentioning the fact that a number of school teachers, retired officials and governmental employees, and members of the former native administrative system, have been politicized and recruited to work either for the NCP or for the Darfur armed movements. Besides, the informants stated that tribalism was the main tool, which have been employed by the
different ethnic groups for the purpose of recruiting and polarizing additional numbers of proponents.

6. 6 Conclusions

Land is the key factor that underlies the conflict in Dar Masalit. However, to be more specific, issues such as the later massive human and animal movements to the area coupled with the changes in the subsistence economy of the settled groups have created a relative scarcity and; consequently triggered the conflict in Dar Masalit. However, to understand the complete picture of the conflict, we need to link what is going at the grass-root level with the policies at the macro level as well.

When it comes to the negative role played by the Sudanese state in this conflict, one could say that lack of development along with the governmental, administrative and land legislations implemented in Darfur, are the root causes behind the escalation of the conflicts in Dar Masalit. On the other hand, the use of the Arab militia, instead of using the national army, to fight the armed movements in Darfur, is among these unwarranted policies that have escalated the conflict in Dar Masalit. Thus, I do believe, it is not just a claim to find that most of the emerging armed movements in Darfur, namely JEM and SLA/M, are stressing the issue of marginalization in Darfur.

As result of the conflict, the different groups in Dar Masalit have revolved themselves along ethnic terms, especially the tribalism. Accordingly, many divisions and organizations have occurred among the population. These divisions range from the small tribal and/ or sub-tribal units at the grass-root level, (Masalit versus Arabs); to culminate in the appearance of a broad highly politicized categories, e.g. the Zurga and the
Arab Gathering. To put it in a nutshell, my case study in Dar Masalit has demonstrated that ethnicities are not the cause of the ethnic conflicts, but, on the contrary, land-based conflicts have created ethnicities in the area.
Bibliography


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### Appendixes

**Appendix 1 List of Key Informants (KIs)**

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Place</th>
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<td>1. Abdulla, Ibrahim Khatir</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>25. September</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5. Bashir, Hussein Mohamed</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20. September</td>
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<td>8. Hamad, Bashir</td>
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<td>9. Khamis, Mahdi Isaag</td>
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<td>25 September</td>
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<td>11. Osman, Ahmed Abaker</td>
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<td>12. Reizig, Mohamed Yagoub</td>
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<td>13. Salih, Mohamed</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>21 September</td>
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Appendix 2 Participants in Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

Place: Mornei IDPs camp, al-Geneina
Date: 25. September 2006

Names of participants

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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