



CULTURAL ORIENTATION

ARABIC-SUDANESE



*Pyramids of Meroe, Kabushiyah
Flickr / Scott D. Haddow*

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CULTURAL ORIENTATION | ARABIC-SUDANESE



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*Mosque in Kassala
Flickr / Håkon Kvåle Bakke*

Chapter 1 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Profile

Introduction

For centuries, Sudan was the largest country in Africa. In 2011, Sudan was divided along religious and ethnic lines, and the Republic of South Sudan became its own country. The northern Republic of the Sudan, also known simply as Sudan, is populated by mostly Arab peoples, while those in South Sudan are African and predominantly Christian. Political separation was established on 9 July 2011, after two long civil wars that followed Sudan's 1956 independence. The civil wars killed an estimated 2 million people and displaced and additional 4 million Sudanese.^{1, 2}

The 2011 division between north and south has reduced the size of Sudan and altered its racial and ethnic composition. The Republic of the Sudan is now the world's 16th largest nation and the 3rd largest in Africa.^{3, 4, 5} Key events contributing to the political division. These include the discovery of oil in the south in 1979, and a January 2011 regional vote by the south's predominantly Christian African people to secede from the Arab-dominated north. Since this oil-rich nation gained independence from a joint British-Egyptian administration in 1956, Sudan has been ravaged by drought, famine, economic stagnation, and decades of military rule.^{6, 7} Unresolved issues continue to cause tension over the border between Sudan and South Sudan and the sharing of oil profits. While Sudan controls pipelines, refineries, and an export terminal on the Red Sea, three-fourths of the oil resources are located in South Sudan.^{8, 9}

Additionally, thousands of Sudanese have died and hundreds of thousands have been displaced because of unresolved conflict in Darfur, located in the western region of Sudan near its border with Chad. The United Nations has accused Arab militias in Darfur of systematically killing non-Arabs. International concerns have been raised that the ethnic violence could spread into a regional conflict.¹⁰ At least seven rebel groups remain active in the South.¹¹ The United States, which has supported southern secessionists, considers Sudan to be a major staging ground for international terrorists, second only to Iran.¹²

Geography

Located in northeastern Africa, Sudan is the largest country on the African continent. The country covers an area of 2,505,810 sq km (967,499 sq mi), which is about one-quarter the size of the United States. It is bordered by Egypt in the north, the Red Sea in the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia in the east, Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in the south, the Central African Republic and Chad in the west, and Libya in the northwest.^{13, 14}

Sudan is mostly desert or semi-desert and contains five major geographical divisions. The desert plains of Darfur are bound in the west by a volcanic mountain known as Jabal Marrah.



Map of Sudan and neighbors
CIA Photo

Another area of higher-elevation located in the center of the country are the steep but isolated hills of the Nuba Mountains of western Sudan. Extending eastward from the Nuba Mountains to the Ethiopian border, and from Khartoum to southern Sudan, are clay plains that cover most of central Sudan.^{15, 16} Eastern Sudan includes the grazing lands of al Butanah north of Khartoum, the fertile Qash Delta formed by the Qash river to the east, and the dry and desolate Red Sea Hills to the north that continue into Egypt and border the coastal plain. The Red Sea coastal plain is rocky and barren, and it ranges in width from 6 km (3.73 mi) in the south to about 24 km (15 mi) in the north.^{17, 18, 19}

Climate

Sudan lies on the equator, which results in little temperature change. Consequently, seasons are measured by the length of the country's dry seasons, rather than temperature changes.^{20, 21} Across Sudan there is very little rainfall, except for an area in the northwest where winds from the Mediterranean can produce light rainfall. From January to March, the country is largely dry due to dry winds from the northeast. April is usually the wettest month for southern Sudan, which can experience heavy rainfall and thunderstorms due to moist southwesterly winds. The moist air produced by these winds reaches Khartoum by July and the northern limits of Abu Hamad by August, but in some years, it can reach as far north as Egypt.^{22,}



*Camel rider at the Meroe Pyramids, North-East of Sudan
Flickr / Retlaw Snellac*

Desert temperatures often reach as high as 49° C (120° F). The deserts are plagued by sandstorms called haboobs.^{24, 25, 26} These sandstorms can bury roads so deeply that a traveler once trying to get traction beneath his car discovered the top of a telephone pole.²⁷ The winter temperatures in the deserts dip down to about 4° C (39° F). Rainfall in the desert is less than 10 cm (3.9 in). The rainy season is from April to October and is the period of downstream flooding.^{28, 29}

Rivers and Major Bodies of Water

Sudan extends north from the Sudd to the Red Sea and consists mostly of flat and featureless desert plains.³⁰ The Nile river separates the Libyan Desert in the west from the Nubian Desert in the east. Rainfall is almost nonexistent in both deserts. Although water is scarce, wells are used in the Libyan Desert by nomads, traveling caravans, and patrols. The Nile river, cutting through the middle of both deserts, provides the main water resource for the surrounding region.³¹ The land between the Blue and the White Nile south of Khartoum is known as the Gezira and has been particularly fertile.³²



*The White Nile Bridge crossing from Omdurman to Khartoum
Flickr / David Stanley*

Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan are geographically, separated by an almost impassable swamp the size of Florida. The swamp is formed by a Nile river tributary, known as the White Nile, that flows into Sudan from the eastern highlands.^{33, 34} The eastern and western portions of Sudan are divided by the Nile, which is formed by two bodies of water, the White Nile and the Blue Nile. These two rivers converge near Khartoum, Sudan’s capital. The Blue Nile begins in the highlands of neighboring Ethiopia in the east; the starting point of the White Nile is believed to be in either southern Rwanda or Burundi. The vast wetlands in southern Sudan are formed by the White Nile and are known as the Sudd, which means “barrier” in Arabic.^{35, 36}

Major Cities

City	Population ³⁷
Khartoum	1,974,647
Omdurman	1,200,000
Port Sudan	489,725
Kassala	401,477

Khartoum

The capital city of Sudan, Khartoum is the country's largest city. Khartoum (literally, "the elephant's trunk") is strategically located on the left bank of the Blue Nile just south of the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile, which join to form the Nile river.³⁸ Across the Nile, lies Khartoum's sister city of Omdurman. Jointly, Khartoum, Omdurman, and Khartoum North (Bahri) form the tri-capital National Capital of the Republic of Sudan.³⁹ The city was first settled as an Egyptian army garrison in 1821. In 1885, the garrison was attacked and destroyed, but was rebuilt in 1889 as a base for the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan government.⁴⁰



*Great mosque in Khartoum
Wikimedia / Bertramz*

Omdurman



*Omdurman city
Flickr / karla Schuch Brunet*

The city of Omdurman is one of three town located on the Nile below the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile. After the battle of al-Mahdi with the British in 1885, the al-Mahdi was captured by Anglo-Egyptian forces.⁴¹ Under the leadership of Major General Sir Herbert (later Lord) Kitchener, the city developed into Sudan's cultural, religious, and commercial center. Today, Omdurman is Sudan's legislative capital, it is home to the Islamic University of Omdurman and a

large bazaar where vendors and merchants sell or trade agricultural products, such as gum arabic, livestock, textiles, and handicrafts in ivory, metal, wood, and leather.⁴² The city is an important center for furniture and pottery manufacturing.⁴³

Port Sudan

Port Sudan, located on the Red Sea, is the nation's principle commercial import/export harbor. It was built between 1905 and 1909 by the British to replace the old

coral-choked port of Suakin.⁴⁴ Today, the city's port is a major trade hub and is integral to Sudan's economy. The city is the site of a major petroleum refinery, where oil from South Sudan is refined and shipped around the world. In 1999, the Red Sea Free Trade Zone (RSFZ) was established, which connects the Port of Sudan with the Port Sudan International Airport to enhance Sudan's oil boom.⁴⁵ The port is also a major hub for travelers to and from the Middle East, especially African Muslims en route to their annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, called Hajj.^{46, 47}

Kassala

Kassala, located in eastern Sudan near the Ethiopian border, was founded as an Egyptian garrison in 1834. The city is located on the delta of the seasonal Gash River at an elevation of 495 m (1,624 ft), between the Kassala Mountains to the east and the Mokram mountains to the south. The Takka Mountains rise immediately behind the city. As a market town and trade center, Kassala is connected to Khartoum and Port Sudan by road, rail, and air.^{48, 49} Several ethnic groups make up the population of Kassala. The Beja are the largest of these, followed by the Rashaida, and Fellata. There are also large communities made up of Eritrean and Ethiopia refugees, as well as internal refugees from the Nuba Mountains.⁵⁰



View from Kassala Center to Taka Mountains
Wikimedia / Bertramz

Important Elements of History

Independence

The British maintained a strong presence in the area during the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries. A timetable for the end of British military occupation of Sudan was established in the 1936 Treaty of Alliance. By 1956, Sudan was granted independence.^{51, 52} Prior to the government transition, several hundred northerners were killed by southern army units fearful of Arab domination. The government responded by executing 70 mutineers, but some escaped and formed a resistance.⁵³ A civil war lasting 17 years followed, the first of two in the history of modern Sudan.⁵⁴

At odds were Arabs in the northern region, who wanted the nation to be subjected to Islamic law, Christian Africans in the south, who spoke English and favored secession, and disenfranchised tribes in the east and west, who wanted more political autonomy. Also involved were proponents of both capitalist and communist ideologies, including the Sudanese Communist Party, the guerrilla group Anya Nya, and the leftist United National Front (UNF).^{55, 56} In 1964, the UNF included students and faculty associated with the University of Khartoum, civil servants, trade unionists, and dissident military officers. A general strike spread through the country, with subsequent riots and numerous deaths. That year, the military government of Sudan expelled all foreign missionaries from the southern provinces.^{57, 58} In attempts to remove communists from the southern provinces and the national government, the Sudanese army in 1965 also burned churches and huts, closed schools, and destroyed crops and cattle in the South.⁵⁹



*Independence ceremony on the 1st of January 1956
Wikimedia / Sudan Films Unit*

The Southern Problem

By the late 1960s, the war had taken the lives of about 500,000 people. The ongoing conflict also sent hundreds of thousands of people from the southern provinces into hiding or exile in neighboring countries. By 1969, Israel was training and selling arms to Anya Nya rebels. Exiled communists from the southern provinces then living abroad helped finance the resistance.^{60, 61}

In 1971, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) was established and became the main opposition party.^{62, 63} A government-backed peace treaty, known as the Addis-Ababa Agreement, granted some autonomy to the South in 1972. However, Sudan's crackdown against southern secessionists, leftists, and Muslim secularists continued, resulting in mass imprisonments in 1974 and 1977,



*South Sudanese flag
Flickr / Martha Heinemann Bixby*

often without trials.^{64, 65, 66} Chevron's 1979 discovery of oil in the South prompted the government to cancel the Addis-Ababa Agreement in 1983 and the southern region was abolished. The official language of the South was changed from English to Arabic and the armed forces of the southern region were placed under the command of the central government. All of these actions led to mutinies and the start of the second civil war.⁶⁷

To keep the southern region politically weak, the government divided it into the three former provinces of Bahr al-Ghazal, al-Istiwai, and Aali al-Nil.^{68, 69} In September 1983, Islamic law was imposed throughout the country, thus mandating amputations, public lashings, and other strict punishments for those found guilty of legal offenses.⁷⁰ In response to these developments, the military wing of the SPLM, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), was formed.⁷¹ By 1997, according to estimates, deaths from the continuing conflict had claimed more than 1.5 million lives.⁷² By 1986, widespread famine related to the second civil war had caused an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 deaths.⁷³

Secession



*South Sudanese lining up to vote for secession
Flickr / U.S. Institute of Peace*

An ongoing problem in Sudan is the status of South Kordofan, a Sudanese province that remained part of Sudan after South Sudan's secession. Many of the state's residents are ethnically tied to the groups in South Sudan and are loyal to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, which governs South Sudan.^{74, 75} Complicating the situation, the boundaries of the state are ill defined, and the state is situated next to the restless Darfur region. Sporadic violence

continues in South Kordofan, and Sudanese security forces have deployed to the area, clashing with pro-South Sudan militias. Of particular interest is Abyei—both Sudan and South Sudan claim the oil-rich area. On 22 October 2013, the presidents of Sudan and South Sudan met to establish an Abyei Area Administration, an Abyei Area Council, and an Abyei Police Service.⁷⁶ As of early 2016, the territory's political future is still unresolved. The Abyei Area Administration has still not been formed, and Sudan had stationed 120-150 Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) at the Abyei Difra oil field, in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions.⁷⁷

In September 2011, a similar situation emerged in Sudan’s Blue Nile state. Like South Kordofan, the Blue Nile state is home to ethnic groups related to those in South Sudan who were not offered the right of secession.⁷⁸ Armed conflict between rebels and government forces in this state escalated sharply in October and November 2011.⁷⁹ As of 21 June 2016, this conflict was still ongoing, forcing thousands of people from their homes.⁸⁰

Darfur

The Darfur crisis began in early 2003 amid reports of government-backed attacks in the western region of Sudan against non-Arabized African Muslims who survived by farming. Two rebel groups—the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)—defended the farmers against government-supported Arab militias known as the Janjaweed. Hundreds of thousands of people died in the fighting, which internally displaced an estimated 2 million people and sent 250,000 more to seek refuge in neighboring Chad.⁸¹ As of early 2010, about 300,000 of the refugees were believed to have died, primarily from disease.⁸² Although a 2005 UN investigation did not use the term “genocide,” the United States passed a unanimous resolution declaring the Darfur crisis a genocide.⁸³ Echoing this concern, in July 2010, the International Criminal Court (ICC) charged the president of Sudan with genocide. Related to the situation in Darfur, the ICC issued an earlier arrest warrant for the Sudanese president in March 2009 for crimes against humanity and for war crimes.^{84, 85} As of early 2016, civilians continued to face widespread killings, rape, and destruction of property by militias, as well as arbitrary arrests, detention, ill-treatment, and torture by national security agents.⁸⁶



*Darfur refugee camps, Chad
Flickr / Reclaiming The Future*

Government

The Sudanese government operates under a presidential representative democratic republic. The chief of state is the president who is also the head of government and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The president leads the executive

branch alongside the vice president. The president appoints cabinet ministers, who largely belong to the National Islamic Front party. The primary duty of these ministers is to implement the laws written by the legislative branch.^{87, 88}



*National Congress Party (NCP) building
Flickr / Fraktion DIE LINKE. im Bundestag*

The legislative branch consists of two councils in the National Legislature. The public council consists of 450 members, while the Council of States consists of 50 elected state legislature members.

All members of the National Assembly serve a six-year term. The primary duty of the legislature is to pass laws and to ensure that the executive branch and cabinet implement them.⁸⁹

The judicial branch consists of a High Court, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, and special tribunal courts, such as civil, criminal, special mixed security, military, and tribal. Unlike other countries in which the judicial branch is independent of other branches of government, the Sudanese judicial branch answers to the executive branch and legal decisions are based on Sharia law.^{90, 91}

The country is further divided into three autonomous regions, Darfur Regional Authority, Eastern Sudan States Coordinating Council, and the Abyei Area Administration, which are further divided into states and districts.⁹² There are 18 states in Sudan, each with its own governor, state legislature, and state cabinet. In 2015, the National Assembly granted the president the exclusive authority to appoint state governors.^{93, 94}

Media

Sudan's 2005 Interim National Constitution nominally protects freedom of the press and expression and the country ranks as "not free" in the most recent press freedom report.⁹⁵ The Sudanese government controls both TV and radio stations, requiring that both reflect government policies.⁹⁶ Television is formally censored and licensing of radio stations is under government control, thus private radio stations present entertainment and music.⁹⁷ Sudan's National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) closely monitors the internet, and hacks into email, social media, and online accounts of activists, and regularly blocks websites and servers that violate "public morality."⁹⁸ Media freedom and access to information are severely restricted, and government

and self-censorship are routine. The government revokes operating licenses of newspapers viewed as anti-government.⁹⁹ Sudan's internet access reached 25% in 2015, but might be higher due to internet-enabled mobile phones.¹⁰⁰ Access to websites is frequently blocked by the government, especially those of terrorist organizations, political activist blogs deemed controversial, and the social media sites Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.¹⁰²



*A stack of Sudanese newspapers
Flickr / Gregg Carlstrom*

Important Elements of the Economy

Current Socio-Economic Climate

After the succession of South Sudan in July 2011, Sudan lost three-quarters of its oil revenue due to the interruption of oil production. The nation has struggled since then to stabilize its economy and make up for lost revenue.¹⁰³ Ongoing conflicts in Southern Kordofan, Darfur, and the Blue Nile states, combined with the lack of infrastructure and widespread dependence on subsistence farming, keep about half of the country's population below the poverty line.¹⁰⁴ In 2007, the United States imposed a number of comprehensive sanctions on Sudan, with the goal of applying economic pressure on the government to stop waging war against its own people.¹⁰⁵



*Gezira irrigation scheme
Flickr / Water, Land and Ecosystems*

Although Sudan has been transitioning from a managed to a market-based economy, the government of Sudan remains “heavily involved.”¹⁰⁶ Agriculture, continues to be the backbone of Sudan's economy, employing 80% of the workforce.¹⁰⁷ Subsistence farming in Sudan occurs wherever there is adequate water, while large-scale commercial farming is done mainly in areas irrigated by the Nile. The Gezira Scheme, a major irrigation project, is located between the two Niles southeast of their confluence

near Khartoum. More than 100,000 farmers operate the scheme in partnership with the government.¹⁰⁸

Cotton use to be one of Sudan's most significant cash crops; however today, it generates only marginal income. Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India are the largest importers.^{109, 110} Besides cotton, Sudan's main agricultural products include peanuts, sorghum, millet, wheat, gum arabic, sugarcane, cassava, mangos, papaya, bananas, sweet potatoes, and sesame, as well as sheep and other livestock.¹¹¹

Sudan's industrial base has expanded modestly to include cotton ginning and textiles, soap distilling, petroleum refining, and the assembly of automobiles and light trucks. Other Sudanese industries involve the production/processing of sugar, edible oils, cement, shoes, pharmaceuticals, and armaments.¹¹² However, government efforts to implement major industrial projects have been hindered by a weak infrastructure and shortages of skilled workers, imported components, and reliable sources of energy.¹¹³

Energy

Chevron discovered oil in South Sudan in 1979, but the oil industry remained largely undeveloped until after the civil war in ended 2005.¹¹⁴ Sales in 2005 were reported at USD 1.9 billion, accounting for 70% of the country's total export earnings.¹¹⁵ Today, an international consortium known as the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC)—jointly operated by China, India, Malaysia, and Sudan—is responsible for developing Sudan's oil resources.¹¹⁶ However, the oil fields are located in South Sudan, while the refineries are in northern Sudan. These oil refineries are situated along a pipeline that is 1,400 km (870 mi) long. They are located in El Obeid, El Gaily, Khartoum, and Port Sudan.¹¹⁷ Thus the sharing of revenues from the oil resources of the two countries remains an issue.^{118, 119}



*Oil fields and infrastructure in Sudan and South Sudan
Wikimedia / U.S. Energy Information Administration*

Sudan's major trade partners are China, Japan, India, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.¹²⁰ Major exports include oil and petroleum products,

pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, livestock, cotton, gum arabic, and sugar; imports include machinery, equipment, manufactured goods, wheat, and motor vehicles.¹²¹

Ethnic Groups

Sudan's population is made up of Arabs and Africans. Historically, there have been distinct ethnic division between the Arab-dominated north and the African-controlled south. Prior to the secession of the south (now the Republic of South Sudan), estimates suggested that roughly 70% of the population of Sudan self-identify as Arab. This identification has less to do with ethnicity and more to do with cultural, linguistic, and economic ties to the Arab-influenced government.^{122, 123} The Arab population is diverse. Some clans are nomadic, while others are more settled and work as subsistence farmers.¹²⁴



*Shilluk people
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

African tribal groups in northern Sudan are spread out over vast territory, consisting mainly of the Nile, Nubian, and Beja tribal groups.¹²⁵ The Fur people predominate in Darfur, but share the land with other groups, including the Abala, Kawahla, Baqqara, and Daju. The tribal groups farther south live closer together. The Nuba, Shiluk, Dinka, and Nuer share southern Sudan and the northern portion of South Sudan.¹²⁶

Nubians



*Nubian man
Flickr / Christiaan Triebert*

Since ancient times, the Nubians have lived in the area of northern Sudan and southern Egypt. The Nubian civilization is considered by many to have been one of the great civilizations of Africa. Today, however, the Nubian population is only about 300,000, which makes Nubians a minority vulnerable to manipulation by central governments. Their land has been reduced, and they have been relocated because of the construction of dams

across the Nile. Once the center of Nubian culture, Kom Ombo lies beneath the waters of Lake Nasser, which was created by the Aswan Dam downstream. Nubians were among the first people in Sudan to be Arabized. They are divided into two major communities, the Kenuzi and the Fedicca.^{127, 128}

Beja

More than 2.2 million Beja live in southern Egypt, northern Sudan, northern Eritrea, and along the Red Sea Coast and mountains. Many Beja tribespeople continue to live traditional nomadic lives, tending herds of camels, sheep, and cattle. Some Beja farm in the Red Sea coastal areas. Although the Beja practice Islam and speak Arabic, they do not consider themselves Arabs.¹²⁹ Most Beja have been reluctant to accept government authority, and belong to one of four groups: the Bisharin, the Amarrar, the Hadendowa, and the Bani Amir.¹³⁰

Fur

The Fur people are located in Darfur (“land of the Fur”) and are the largest ethnic group in western Sudan. They are cattle herders and farmers. Historically, the Fur migrated to the Darfur region from Nigeria. Their language, Fur, is a Nilo-Saharan language, but most Fur are bilingual and also speak Arabic. The Fur are Muslim, but because they are considered African, they are one of the groups most widely targeted by the Janjaweed militia.^{131, 132, 133}



*Fur men resting, Darfur
Flickr / Reclaiming The Future*

Nuba

The Nuba Mountains lie in the Kordofan region of central Sudan. The rugged granite slopes of these mountains are home to the isolated Nuba people (who are not related to the Nubian people farther north on the border with Egypt). During Sudan’s civil war, many non-Nubian Sudanese withdrew to the narrow valleys of the Nuba Mountains, seeking refuge from the fighting, persecution, and the Arabization of the central government. Nuba clan members—who may be Muslim, animists, or Christian—speak more than 100 different dialects. Their small villages have access to water year-round,



*Nuba Kambala Dance, Nuba Mountains
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

which supports local agriculture and animal husbandry. The Nuba people have remained largely disenfranchised since 1992, when the Khartoum government began to pursue a program aimed at eradicating them.^{134, 135}

Endnotes for Chapter 1: Profile

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Chapter 1 | Profile

Assessment

1. The division of Sudan into the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan occurred mainly along ethnic and religious lines.
2. The international community has dismissed claims that the violence in Darfur is government-sponsored genocide.
3. The land south of Khartoum is known as the Gezira and has been particularly fertile.
4. The conflict in Darfur has primarily been between two Islamic groups trying to control limited land resources.
5. The Nubians migrated to Sudan from what is today Yemen, hoping to escape religious persecution.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False



*St. Matthew's Cathedral
Flickr / David Stanley*

Chapter 2 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Religion

Introduction

In 2011, Sudan was divided into the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. The secession of South Sudan followed centuries of ethnic fighting between Arab-majority Muslims in the north and minority African tribes in the south who are Christian or practice indigenous religions.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

Christianity—the religion of the kingdoms of Nubia, Magarra, and Alwa—was first introduced to northern Sudan in the sixth century C.E. Islam followed 100 years later. Islam was brought by traders from Egypt and neighboring countries in the Middle East

and spread as Egyptians and Arabs expanded their domination southward in “search of slaves, gold, ivory, and taxation revenues.” By the 16th century, Christianity in the north had been wiped out and replaced by Islam. Although Islam forbids the enslavement of fellow Muslims, it does not forbid enslavement of those outside the Islamic faith.^{5, 6}

Today, the majority of the population of Sudan are Sunni Muslim, although there is a small Christian minority.^{7, 8} That centuries of invading Muslim armies were unable to deeply penetrate the southern region of Sudan is mostly due to a geographic barrier separating the north and south. Christianity, introduced by British missionaries to southern Sudan during the 19th century, has been embraced by people in the region, partly because of the positive socio-economic developments associated with the religion and partly as a way of resisting the spread of Islam.⁹

Overview of Major Religions

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning its followers profess faith in a single God. In the Muslim community, or ummah, God is known as Allah (the Arabic term for God). The Arabic term islam means “to submit” or “to surrender.” A Muslim, therefore, is one who submits to the will of Allah. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message through the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad to be the last of a long line of prophets that included Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), and Jesus (Esa). In this way, Muslims share some of the basic elements of the Judaic and Christian traditions. However, they believe that the message relayed by Muhammad is God’s final and definitive revelation to humankind. This message is recited in the Quran, which is the sacred scripture of Islam. Additional sacred texts include the Hadith, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the Sunnah, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad’s example.^{10, 11, 12}



*An Nour Islamic compound, Khartoum Bahri
Wikimedia / مونتلا دي شرلا مصراع*

The essential beliefs and rites of the Islamic faith are encapsulated in the five pillars

of Islam. The first and foundational pillar is the sincere recitation of the shahada, or Islamic creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” The remaining pillars include, the performance of ritual prayers five times a day; the giving of alms to the poor and needy (traditionally, through a tax on income); fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and the undertaking of a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca to perform religious rituals.¹³ Muslims believe that Allah will judge them for their actions on earth, with the consequences of spending their afterlife in heaven or hell.^{14, 15}

Sunni and Shia Divide

Islam has two major branches: Sunni and Shia. The two sects formed shortly after the initial spread of Islam in the 7th century C.E. They divided over disagreements about the selection process for the successor, or caliph, to the Prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 C.E. The Sunni, as they came to be known, believed that Muhammad had not chosen a successor. Consequently, they decided that the first caliph should be elected from among the leaders of the Muslim community. They selected Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s father-in-law, as the first caliph. The opposing group was later known as the Shia (which translates to “party of Ali”). They believed that Muhammad had designated his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, as his successor. Consequently, they also believed that only Muhammad’s descendants held rightful claims to the caliphate. The unresolved issue of rightful succession created a deep divide between the two groups, leading to infighting and the assassination of Ali.¹⁶ While the two sects share the fundamental tenets of Islam, their separation resulted in a divergence of practices and beliefs. Over time, several additional sects emerged within the two major branches. Today, Sunnis comprise approximately 85% of the global Muslim community.¹⁷



*The whirling dervishes of Omdurman
Flickr / Retlaw Snellac*

Most Sudanese are Sunni Muslims and follow the five core religious beliefs of Islam: (1) shahada, or the profession of one’s faith; (2) salat, or praying at five specific times each day; (3) zakat, or the giving of alms to the poor; (4) sawm, or fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan; and (5) hajj, or making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if possible.^{18, 19}

Sufism

Sufism, a major influence on Sudanese interpretations of Islam, is commonly referred to as Islamic mysticism.^{20, 21} Many Sufis follow Quranic admonitions to leave the material world behind and to pursue only eternal happiness.²² Sufis seek direct spiritual insight without the intervention of an imam. Through meditation, chanting, or dancing, they seek a personal encounter with the divine.²³ Sufis also revere those thought to be endowed with divine grace.²⁴ These venerated individuals, known as marabouts, may be teachers, scholars, healers, or people known for their piety or spirituality.²⁵

Sufi influence can be seen in the numbers of Sudanese Muslims who belong to religious brotherhoods known as tariqas. Traditions such as the tariqa, as well as Muslim sainthood, demonstrate a mixture of Islam and African spiritualism.²⁶ For many Sudanese Muslims, as for many African Muslims, the cult of the saint is important, although it is rejected by some. The cult of the saint is tied closely to the presence of religious orders. Many individuals who came to be considered saints when they died were founders or leaders of religious orders. They were thought to have baraka, a kind of spiritual power. After death, baraka intensifies; the deceased becomes a wali, or saint. The tomb and other places associated with the person who has died become sites of that person's baraka. The deceased, now a saintly being, becomes the local guardian spirit.²⁷



Sufi rituals
Flickr / Steve Evans

Christianity

Historically, the people of the southern province of Al Istiwai—the Madi, Moru, Azande, and Bari—were Christian.²⁸ Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries began providing social services in the 19th century during British colonization.^{29, 30, 31} Since the division of the country into north and south in 2011, Christians in the northern Republic of the Sudan are mostly found in Khartoum.³² The government's estimate that only 3% of the population is Christian has been challenged. According to Bishop Ezekiel Kondo of the Episcopal Church of Sudan and the former chairman of the Sudanese Council of Churches, "We don't know how this number was arrived to [sic]... We believe it is closer to 10 to 15% now."³³



*Internally displaced Sudanese attending mass
Flickr / Photo Unit*

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)—a still-active rebel group in Sudan that fought alongside those now in control of South Sudan—consists largely of Christian fighters. The violence that continues unabated in Sudan's southern border states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile is centered on the government's efforts to eradicate Christian influences in the predominantly Muslim nation. Because of al-Bashir regime's systematic persecution

of Christians and ongoing bombing campaigns targeting rebels in the southern border states, hundreds of thousands of Sudanese citizens have been displaced.^{34, 35}

The Role of Religion in Government

Since 1983, the Islamic legal code—known as Sharia—has been the law of the land in Sudan.^{36, 37} Islamic law is based on the Quran and the time-honored sayings attributed to Muhammad contained in the hadith. Islamic law governs transgressions against society as well as all aspects of personal and family life, including hygiene, marriage, divorce, and inheritance.³⁸

The imposition of Sharia throughout the country in 1983 was one of the main causes of the renewed civil war, which did not end until 2005 when the newly drafted interim constitution exempted the three southern provinces (now in the independent country of South Sudan).^{39, 40, 41} Since 2005, the government has relaxed the enforcement of Sharia in the north, although President al-Bashir has threatened to once again vigorously implement this legal code.⁴² The government has continued to pursue policies of Arabization and Islamization, placing restrictions on religious practices, political association, and freedom of speech and assembly.⁴³ If the government proceeds with stated plans to rewrite the nation's constitution to more strictly comply with Sharia law, international observers fear that violations of human rights in Sudan will increase.^{44, 45} In the past, Christian leaders



*Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir
President of Sudan
Us Navy / Jesse B. Awalt*

have complained that the government has discriminated against Christians seeking employment and has used the bureaucracy to make the building of new churches and conducting outreach efforts difficult.⁴⁶

Influence of Religion in Daily Life

Although Sunnis generally view their branch of Islam as orthodox and all other branches as heresy, the practice of Sunni Islam in Sudan is not uniform and includes non-Islamic rites that vary according to region.^{47, 48} As a result, Sudan's many other religious groups have been marginalized in Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile by the ruling Sunni elites.⁴⁹ Since 2013, authorities have bulldozed or closed churches in Khartoum and Omdurman. Church affiliated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been closed down, Christian workers have been expelled, and evangelical Christians have been arrested.⁵⁰ In 2014, Meriam Yahia Ibrahim, a pregnant Christian woman, was sentenced to death for leaving Islam (apostasy) and converting to Christianity. After strong condemnation of this action by the international community, she was finally released and fled with her child to the United States.⁵¹



*New Al Nukta church
Flickr / Maureen Lunn*

Religious Conventions and Gender Roles



*Sudanese women covered while traveling on local bus
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

Since 1983, Islamic law (Sharia) has been the foundation of the legal system in Sudan.^{52, 53, 54} This law requires strict gender segregation and virtually eliminates women's legal rights to ownership, freedom of movement, and choice of clothing. Although Sudanese women are permitted to possess property, they are legally required to allow their husbands or male guardians to manage it, even if their property is inherited.

Further, women do not have access to bank loans and credit, which are reserved for men only.⁵⁵

Sudanese women also experience limited mobility and public harassment. Sharia gives government agents the right to enforce public morality and limit women’s freedom of movement. All women, including non-Muslims, are required to wear a veil. Women in Khartoum are required to wear opaque clothing from head to toe. Women who do not conform are subjected to detention, fines, and lashings. Further, gender segregation is practiced in all public spaces, such as public buses where women must stand separately in the back of the bus.⁵⁶ With such limited resources, limited movement, and the threat of public harassment, Sudanese women do not generally participate in public life.⁵⁷

Religious Holidays and Events

Islam



Iftar, first meal for Muslims after fasting all day during the month of Ramadan
Flickr / IIP Photo Archive

Ramadan is the name for the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar commemorating the time during which the Archangel Gabriel revealed the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad.⁵⁸ Throughout the month of Ramadan Muslims refrain from eating, smoking, and engaging in sexual activity during daylight hours.⁵⁹ In Sudan, all Muslims except travelers, pregnant women, the sick, and children under 13 years of age are required to observe the fast. Although non-Muslims do not have to fast, they should avoid

eating, drinking, or smoking while in the presence of Muslims during daylight hours. The end of the daily fast during Ramadan comes each day at sunset and is marked by a cannon blast (mou’azzin), followed by a holiday mood and festive feast (fatour).⁶⁰

▶ Will you celebrate the festival?		
Soldier:	intoo HatiHtifiloo bil-’eed usboo’ aj-jaay daa?	Will you celebrate the festival next week?
Local:	aywa / na’am	Yes.

Exchange 1

The month of Ramadan ends with the sighting of the new moon, which signals the commencement of the festival known as Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Ramadan (“the Little Feast”).⁶¹ During this three-to four-day celebration, Muslims feast and visit family, friends, and neighbors. In Sudan, this festival also is known by the Turkish name Ramadan Bairam, one of the lasting linguistic remnants of the Turkish conquest of Sudan in 1821.^{62, 63}

Another important Muslim holiday in Sudan is Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Kabier (“the Feast of the Sacrifice” or “the Big Feast”), which also is known by the Turkish name Kurban Bairam. This four-to five-day holiday occurs in the 10th month of the Islamic lunar calendar and commemorates the pilgrimage to Mecca, as well as Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son. The holiday is known as Eid al-Adha in other Muslim countries, and it is celebrated in Sudan by slaughtering a ram, feasting, and visiting family, friends, and neighbors.^{64, 65, 66}

▶ Would you like something to eat?		
Soldier:	tafaDal bil-akl?	Would you like something to eat?
Local:	laa, ana Saayim	No, thank you. I am fasting.

Exchange 2

Although Moulid al-Nabi (“the Prophet’s Birthday”) is not an orthodox Islamic holiday, it is also celebrated in Sudan. The event occurs about 90 days following Eid al-Kabier and involves large public celebrations at Saggana Square in Khartoum.^{67, 68} Because these Islamic observances are based on the lunar calendar rather than the Western solar calendar, their dates change in relation to the full moon and thus move up about 11 days each year.⁶⁹

Christianity

Christmas and Easter were public holidays in Sudan prior to the 2011 secession of the southern region, but the status of these holidays is now unclear. According to one political science professor at the University of Khartoum, the government no longer recognizes Christmas as a general holiday, although members of



*A holiday mass, Emmanuel Church
Flickr / Gregg Carlstrom*

Western churches will be allowed to observe the occasion.^{70, 71}

The Christmas season in Sudan is based on the Western solar calendar, begins on 25 December, and continues until 9 January.⁷² It is a festive time during which goats and bulls are slaughtered as part of the celebration. On Christmas Eve, people attend church services and wear their best clothes. On 25 December, families exchange gifts and cook a big meal for the occasion, which might be turkey, lamb, or pigeon. Christmas is a time for celebrating, visiting with friends and family, and indulging in favorite foods.

Easter is celebrated after 40 days of Lenten fasting during March or April. In Sudan, Lenten fasting can be similar to Muslim fasting during Ramadan, when nothing is eaten between dawn and dusk. The fast is broken after the sun sets. People attend mass, then celebrate in public gardens with dancing and traditional music. Children paint eggs and families spend time together outdoors.^{73, 74}

Buildings of Worship

Mosques

Mosques serve as a place of worship and play a significant cultural and educational role in Sudanese society. Some mosques hold lectures and conduct classes for studying the Quran, while others house administrative offices for universities. A few provide housing for students.⁷⁵



Grand Mosque in Omdurman built in 1910
Library of Congress

▶ How do I get to the mosque?		
Soldier:	keyf aSel ila al-masjid?	How do I get to the mosque?
Local:	ta'aal awareek	I will show you.

Exchange 3

The al-Farouq Mosque in Khartoum was built by Ahmed bin Ali bin Aon bin Amer. It was enlarged in 1245 and was rebuilt in its present form by King Farouq in 1947.⁷⁶

The Omdurman Grand Mosque was built in 1910 and is one of the oldest mosques in Omdurman. The mosque originally housed a Quranic institute that provided instruction

in religion and Arabic. After the Omdurman Islamic Sciences Institute was established, the mosque began holding classes for teaching the Quran and recitation.⁷⁷

Christian Churches

The majority of Sudanese Christians lived in the states that seceded to form South Sudan. However, some Christians remain in Sudan, and one can still find Christian churches in Khartoum and other communities. Catholic, Presbyterian, Coptic, and Episcopal churches have been active in Sudan.⁷⁸



The cathedral of El Obeid, North Kordofan
Flickr / Rita Willaert

▶ Where is the church?		
Soldier:	mumkin tu wareenee weyn al-kaneesa hina?	Will you show me where the Catholic church is?
Local:	aywa / na'am, hasheelak hinaak	Yes, I will take you there.

Exchange 4

Behavior in Places of Worship

Mosques

When foreigners visit a mosque for the first time, they should ask for permission to enter.

▶ May I enter the mosque?		
Soldier:	mumkin aKhush al-masjid?	May I enter the mosque?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 5

Before entering the building under normal circumstances, remove your shoes at the doorway and place them in the designated area.⁷⁹

▶ Should I remove my shoes?		
Soldier:	aTali' jisma bitaa'tee?	Should I remove my shoes?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 6

Visitors to mosques are expected to show respect. They should not touch anything without permission or walk in front of a person who is praying. Doing so invalidates the prayer and may upset the person praying. Women must dress modestly and cover the entire body, including the head. Makeup or perfume should not be worn.

▶ Do I need to cover my head?		
Soldier:	ana maHtaaj aghaTee raasee?	Do I need to cover my head?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 7

Men should dress conservatively. Some Muslim men wear a jallabiyah, a white gown. Native Sudanese usually wear loose turbans.⁸⁰ Anyone under the influence of alcohol should not enter a mosque. An intoxicated person found in a mosque would be evicted immediately. Eating, drinking, or making noise are not tolerated. The presence of dogs in mosques is considered a desecration; thus, using dogs to search within a mosque should be avoided.^{81, 82}



Sudanese Muslims praying, Al Shaheed Mosque in Khartoum
Flickr / BRQ Network

Churches

Visitors to churches should dress modestly and avoid wearing clothing that is revealing or unclean. Shorts and mini-skirts are not appropriate wear. Appropriate dress includes clean shirts and long pants for men, and skirts or pants along with blouses or sweaters for women. Visitors should remove hats before entering, and once inside the church, refrain from touching paintings or statues.^{83, 84}

▶ **Am I dressed appropriately?**

Soldier:	Hasa ana laabis kweys?	Am I dressed appropriately?
Local:	na'am / aywa inta laabis kweys	Yes, you are.

Exchange 8



*Holy Virgin Mary Coptic Orthodox Cathedral,
Khartoum
Wikimedia / Petr Adam Dohnálek*

Visitors to any church or place of worship should follow protocol notices posted in writing, or the protocols they are personally instructed to follow. Visitors should not bring food or drink into a church, nor should they take photographs inside or outside the building without permission, and they must silence their cell phones.⁸⁵

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Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Chapter 2 | Religion

Assessment

1. The majority population in Sudan is Shia Muslim.
2. Al-Bashir regime's systematic persecution of Christians has displaced hundreds of thousands of Sudanese citizens.
3. The practice of Sunni Islam in Sudan is not uniform and includes non-Islamic rites.
4. Sudanese women have legal rights to ownership and freedom of movement.
5. When in the presence of Muslims, non-Muslims do not need to observe the rules of fasting during Ramadan.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False.



*A group of men from Umm Bororo tribe
Flickr / Vit Hassan*

Chapter 3 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Traditions

Introduction

The population of Sudan is extremely diverse. Sudanese are likely to identify themselves according to their local or regional surroundings rather than their nationality. Decades of conflict have reinforced this identification. Local identities are preserved through social institutions, including marriages within the group and community-based networks, wherein even distantly related individuals are obligated to provide assistance to one another.¹ These social networks expand, radiating out from the family to include additional layers of Sudanese society with which to identify.^{2, 3}

The dynamism of community ties and local identities is not found at the national level. A minority population claiming Arab descent dominates the military-controlled government and national identity. This group maintains an identity based on pan-Arabism and Islamist governance.⁴ However, this identity does not reflect that of the majority population and has contributed to the tensions that have led to continued fighting within the country. Because of the gap between self-identification and national identity, it is difficult to discuss matters of tradition. However, some commonalities cut across different local, regional, and national identities.⁵

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Greetings



*Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir greeted by supporters
Flickr / greg stafford*

Greetings in Sudan differ from Western greetings and can be more involved. Friends may greet each other with smiles and a tender shove to the shoulder. After shaking hands, they will exchange more formal greetings. However, an outsider is greeted with a simple handshake.⁶ Kisses on the cheek, a tap on the shoulder, or a hug are normally acceptable nonverbal greetings. Hugging is reserved for family members or close friends of the same gender.⁷

The Sudanese have a great deal of respect for their guests. As a guest, you should accept their hospitality willingly. Guests are treated courteously and greeted with food and beverages. If you are an important guest, a sheep might be slaughtered in your honor. Do not refuse an offer of a beverage, food, or tea. It is the Sudanese way of welcoming a guest, and refusing this hospitality is considered offensive.⁸

Eye Contact and Personal Space

Eye contact during conversation is considered important, even between genders. However, Sudanese might avoid looking a visitors in the eye. Young people tend to avoid direct eye contact when addressing their elders. Engaging in extended, direct eye contact with members of the opposite sex is regarded as deeply inappropriate.⁹

Sudanese tend to stand quite close while speaking to members of the same sex. When speaking to members of the opposite sex, one should keep some physical distance. Sudanese may touch each other on the shoulder or arm when speaking someone of the same sex.¹⁰

Male/Female Interaction

Sudanese society is deeply patriarchal. Men hold authority over women, children and property and marriages are polygynous (men can have more than one wife). While a Muslim man is free to marry a non-Muslim woman, all Muslim women are only permitted to marry a Muslim man.¹¹ In Darfur and other areas of Western Sudan, a man's social status is tied to the number of wives and children he has. Sudanese men are responsible for financially supporting and leading the family. Sudanese women take on the traditional role of cooking, cleaning, childcare, and helping the men with farming.¹² Women might also collect firewood, fetch water, and take care of other household chores, depending on where the family lives. In rural areas, boys are considered an economic asset and are preferred over girls, who are considered an economic liability. In urban areas, women have entered the job market, which has helped change traditional attitudes about female children.¹³

Many Sudanese girls continue to face the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). The roots of this practice are tied to cultural traditions related to ideas of modesty, morality, and family honor. In Sudan, girls who are subjected to this practice are considered to be more chaste and morally pure.¹⁴ However, there has been a gradual shift in social attitudes towards FGM in Sudan, largely driven by the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Yet, it is still persists, especially in poor rural areas.¹⁵

With the imposition of Sharia across Sudan, the patriarchy has increasingly limited women's roles in Sudanese society.¹⁶ Women face extensive discrimination and are denied the same rights as men in marriage, inheritance, and divorce. For example, men inherit all the property of a deceased wife, yet a woman can only inherit an eighth of her deceased husband's estate. Additionally, women who report a rape or are accused of adultery are typically charged with a



*Newly wed couple visiting Kassala and the Taka Mountains
Flickr / www.j-pics.info*

crime. If convicted, they face death by stoning, while men facing similar charges are released after denial of their participation.¹⁷

Hospitality and Gift Giving

Core Sudanese values are hospitality and generosity, particularly in rural areas. Not welcoming guests, whether strangers or friends, is considered shameful. Visiting friends and family is an important aspect of Sudanese culture, with most visits taking place at home. In rural areas, spontaneous, frequent visits are common. In cities, however, busy schedules mean that advance arrangements for visiting need to be made.¹⁸ Weekends (Friday and Saturday) are the most popular for visiting. It is polite to visit in midmorning or evening since people might be sleeping at other times of the day. Often, entire families will visit. Children are expected to play away from adults. Men and women socialize separately. The average visit lasts for one or two hours, but first-time visitors should only stay for a short time.¹⁹



*Inviting friends
Flickr / Steve Evans*

Visitors should remove their shoes before entering the home. Punctuality is not critical and guests often arrive late.^{20, 21} Guests should dress well, as it is a sign of respect and appreciation.²² It is considered rude to decline offers of food in a Sudanese home. Always accept what is offered. It is polite to engage in conversation during the meal. Avoid topics such as politics and religion. Appropriate topics include the weather or sports.²³

Hospitality customs are an important part of entertaining and daily life in Sudan. As a dinner guest, you will be offered *abre* or *tabrihana*, a nonalcoholic and slightly sweetened fruit drink as refreshment. Guests are seated on pillows, which may be decorated with ostrich feathers, at a low, bare table. Diners' knees are covered with large cloths, which are used in place of napkins. Water is poured over the guests' hands from an *ebrig*, a copper pitcher; the water is caught in another copper bowl or basin, and a towel is used to dry one's hands.²⁴

The host signals the start of the dinner. A first course of soup is served in individual bowls brought in on a large copper tray. After the soup, the tray is removed and

a second large tray is brought in with five or six different main course dishes. If the guests are considered important, a lamb may have been slaughtered. Typically, one eats with the right hand, without the aid of utensils, although spoons may be provided. Everyone eats from the same dish, using pieces of bread to scoop up the food.²⁵ When the main course is served, small plates or bowls are also brought in, and portions of salad are served.²⁶ Hands are washed again, and dessert is served, which may be crème caramela or peeled fruit that has been cut into thin pieces.²⁷ Although no beverages are served with dinner, one can ask for water. Following the meal, guhwah (Sudanese-style coffee) or spiced tea is served, and sandalwood incense is lit.²⁸

Gifts are not normally exchanged in Sudan except on special occasions, such as a wedding or a birth. It is inappropriate to give a gift during difficult times, such as after a death, during sickness, or after an accident.²⁹

Eating Habits / Types of Food

Eating Customs

Rural Sudanese generally eat two meals a day. If they can afford it, urban Sudanese will enjoy three meals a day. Many will start-off their day with a cup of tea, followed by coffee. Breakfast is eaten between 10:30 and 11:30, and might consist of beans, bread, eggs, and cheese. Lunch is the main meal of the day, often consisting of soup, rice, bread, and vegetables.³⁰ Urban Sudanese often do not eat lunch together because of busy schedules, but will gather for traditional meals on the weekend (Friday and Saturday).³¹ Dinner is usually light, consisting of only milk and cake or bread, but sometimes a meal similar to breakfast is eaten. Women and girls eat separately from men and boys. Meals are eaten around a large communal tray with the right hand, using flat bread or a stiff porridge.^{32, 33}



*Sudanese cuisine
Flickr / Maureen Lunn*

Types of Food



Woman preparing Sudanese food
Wikimedia / Dominik HES

Sudanese foods tend to be very simple, as are the seasonings, which usually consist of salt, pepper, or lemon juice. Sorghum, a type of highly drought resistant cereal grass that can be ground into flour, is a staple in Sudan. A special type of bread known as kissra is essential in Sudanese cuisine.³⁴ Kissra is made of either sorghum, wheat, or corn flour, and is eaten with stew, the main dish of Sudan. Sudanese stew consists of dried meat, dried onions, spices, and peanut butter, and other additions, such as milk or yogurt.³⁵ Two well-known stews are Niaimiya ,with okra and Miris made from sheep fat, onions, and dried okra. Asseeda Dukhun, a thick porridge made of sorghum, wheat, or corn flour, or kissra, is served with stew.³⁶ Other types of asseeda are made from sorghum or wheat flour, dukhun, and dates. These types of porridge are served with milk, sugar, and margarine.³⁷

Food varies by ethnicity, tribe, and region. Millet porridge and ful massari, or ful medames (dishes made of mashed fava beans), are popular breakfast foods in the north. Wheat is another staple of the northern area and is used to make gourrassa, a round, thick bread.³⁸

▶ Is this food fresh?		
Soldier:	al-akl daa kweys?	Is this food fresh?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes

Exchange 9

Moukhbaza is a popular dish in the east. It is made from banana paste and reflects the influence of Ethiopian cuisine. In the west, where cattle are prevalent, dairy products provide vital nourishment. Cereals are used to thicken stews made with dried meats. A stew of cooked dried fish is often added to sorghum porridge. The Nile perch is a popular fish found in the Nile Delta and around Khartoum. It is usually fried and served with red peppers.³⁹

Sweets are popular in Sudan. Crème caramela is a favorite dessert. Other dessert offerings include zabadi, yogurt served with a heavy syrup, and hoshab, a chilled

sweet made of chopped bananas, raisins, and figs. Peanuts (Ful Sudani) are a popular snack and are often made into macaroons.⁴⁰

Tea and strong coffee are popular in Sudan. Jebena sudanese is a specialty coffee drink. Coffee beans are pan-roasted in a special pot over charcoal, then ground with cloves and other spices. The coffee mixture is steeped in hot water, strained through a special sieve made of fresh grass, and served in small cups. Alcohol is banned by Islamic law, but bootleg alcoholic beverages are common, including beer, wine, and araqi, a gin distilled from fermented dates.^{41, 42}



*An old lady making strong Sudanese coffee, Kordofan
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

Dress Codes

Sudanese dress conservatively and consider it important to dress nicely at all times of the day. Men and boys typically wear Western-style pants, jeans, button shirts, and T-shirts. However, rural men and some urban men wear the traditional Sudanese jalabiya (long white robe) with an imma (turban).⁴³ Beja men wear a jalabiya with a collar and a sediarja, a colored pocketed vest.^{44, 45}

Women typically wear a thawb, which is a loose fitting gown made of several feet of fabric that is draped over the head and then wrapped around the bodies, with the remainder falling to the ankle.^{46, 47} In Khartoum, married women wear a white thawb to work, and when not at work they wear brightly colored thawbs.⁴⁸ Common accessories include high heels with matching handbags, and gold jewelry. Unmarried women typically wear blouses and long skirts with a hijab, or Islamic headscarf, which is locally known as a tarha.⁴⁹ Unmarried women sometimes wear an abaya, which is a long black robe, and a matching headscarf.⁵⁰ In contrast,



*Elders in jalabiya, Aweil main mosque
Flickr / BBC World Service*

Beja women are known for braiding their hair with small gold rings in some of the braids.^{51, 52} Beja women (and men) often have three vertical decorative scars on their cheeks, and women wear decorative beads and large nose rings.⁵³ Although some women wear Western clothing, to do so challenges strict Sharia interpretations of feminine modesty. This often results in women being placed on trial and punished for failing to dress according to the government's strict interpretation of Sharia law.⁵⁴

Nonreligious Celebrations

Major nonreligious holidays observed in Sudan include Independence Day on January 1, which commemorates the birth of the Sudanese Republic in 1956, and Revolution for National Salvation Day on June 30, which celebrates the 1989 military coup that brought al-Bashir to power.^{55, 56} One concern for visitors to Sudan is that activist groups like to generate publicity on special days. It is difficult to predict on which day such activity might occur, but it is wise to avoid public gatherings on days following important anniversaries: Africa Freedom Day (May 25), South Sudan's Independence Day (July 9), and the founding of the rebel group SPLM/A (May 15).



*South Sudan Independence Day celebrations
Flickr / Steve Evans*

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- **Do** sit in a chair or on the ground without showing the soles of your shoes. Do use your whole hand, palm down, to call someone toward you. Motion toward yourself.
- **Do** greet your host warmly when you are a guest.
- **Do** wave when greeting someone.
- **Do** nod your head down to convey “yes” and up to convey “no.”
- **Do** pass or accept items with your right hand or both hands.

Don't

- **Don't** cross your legs so that the bottoms of your feet show, especially to someone who is regarded as an elder, as this is extremely offensive.
- **Don't** comment on a host's standard of living.
- **Don't** use your index finger to point at a person.
- **Don't** use the “A-OK” sign.
- **Don't** use one finger to beckon someone.
- **Don't** pass or accept items with only your left hand. This is considered offensive and unclean.
- **Don't** wag your finger at someone. This gesture is considered threatening and offensive.
- **Don't** use profanity.

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Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Chapter 3 | Traditions

Assessment

1. Traditional Sudanese forms of greeting are quite formal between friends and family.
2. In Sudan, Muslim men must marry only Muslim women.
3. Sudanese society is deeply patriarchal, and men hold authority over women.
4. Sudanese foods tend to be very simple.
5. In Sudan, people pass dishes to each other with their right hands, and eat with the left.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False.



Khartoum at night
Wikimedia / Aamirco

Chapter 4 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Urban Life

Introduction

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has experienced steady urban growth. By 2015, an estimated 34% of the total population lived in urban areas. It is projected that urbanization will increase at an annual rate of nearly 2.5%.¹ With the secession of the largely rural South in July 2011, this rate will probably continue to fluctuate because of massive rural to urban migration and displacement due to ongoing conflicts, drought and its consequences, the country's political environment, and inadequate rural development.² The population of Khartoum, a vast sprawling megalopolis, is estimated at around 5 million, nearly 14% of Sudan's population. Like many cities

that have experienced rapid growth, Khartoum and other Sudanese cities have quickly grown beyond what the infrastructure and services can properly accommodate.³

Urbanization Issues

Decades of violence between the Sudanese government and various rebel groups have caused significant population displacements and an immigrant population living in deplorable circumstances in rudimentary shelters. Unable to find adequate employment, they struggle to survive. These conditions are the norm in Khartoum, Port Sudan, Nyala, and small urban centers throughout the country.⁴



*Living in shelter
Flickr / Photo Unit*

Civil war and ethnic conflicts have also driven the resurgence of slavery in the country. Women and children, many of them from the southern regions, are kidnapped and used as slaves. Although slavery is against the law in Sudan, there are estimates that several thousand individuals have been enslaved, serving as domestic servants and concubines. Some of the captives escape, but some are handed over by their captors in exchange for fresh water and land. The government denies the problem exists, but has given in to international pressure, establishing committees to look into the problem.⁵

The Sudanese government routinely expels international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian missions that provide assistance to the country's need. The United Nations, the United States, and many other nations have declared sanctions against the government of Sudan for its role in the atrocities in the country's numerous civil conflicts, including Darfur, and for its support for international terrorism.⁶ Thus there are few resources with which to make the necessary improvements that could alleviate the major problems facing cities.^{7, 8, 9} These difficulties are compounded by the loss of many of the country's oil fields to South Sudan and by the U.S. decision in early November 2011 to extend economic sanctions against Khartoum.^{10, 11, 12}

Although telecommunication systems are modern and provide high-quality access to global information, such services are not readily available to the majority of Sudanese. Only 370,400 Sudanese have landlines. Cellular communication is more reliable.

According to 2015 estimates, there are almost 28 million cellular subscribers. Internet use has increased to about 9.6 million users; this figure represents about 27% of the population.¹³

▶ May I use your phone?		
Soldier:	min faDlak mumkin asta'mil telee-fonak?	May I use your phone?
Local:	tafaDal	Sure

Exchange 10

Work Problems in Urban Areas

Due to a lack of basic services and lack of employment in rural areas, people continue to leave their villages and move to the cities. However, because many of those moving from rural to urban areas lack the needed skills and capital to start businesses, they end up unemployed or in the informal sector.^{14, 15} This situation is made even more severe by internally displaced people (IDPs) from ongoing conflicts and civil war in the region, climate change, and population growth.



*Going to work
Flickr / Elmogran*

This migration places tremendous pressure on urban services.¹⁶ In 2016, annual income was USD 4,300, which represents stagnation over the previous three years. This figure, of course, does not reflect the true rate because much of Sudan's economy takes place on the gray and black markets.¹⁷ With inflation hovering around 17.3%, the prospects for the average Sudanese worker are bleak.¹⁸

Healthcare and Health Issues

Most medical facilities in Sudan are controlled by the military or the government. Healthcare is scarcely available outside urban areas. In 2011, life expectancy was just over 64 years, and the infant mortality rate was about 50 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁹ Much of the funding that might otherwise be directed at social services, such as the provision of healthcare, has instead been diverted to the military. Because of the seemingly endless civil wars, many professionals have left the country in search



Patients waiting at an eye camp
Flickr / Community Eye Health

of better employment. There are shortages in medicine, trained doctors, and hospital equipment. In 2008, physicians numbered 0.28 per 1,000 people; nurses and midwives numbered about 0.84 per 1,000 people.²⁰ However, despite healthcare delivery problems, most Sudanese have health certificates that list all the vaccinations they have ever received.²¹

▶ Is there a doctor here?

Soldier:	hal fee Tabeeb hina?	Is there a doctor here?
Local:	laa	No.

Exchange 11

War and recurring droughts have led to massive displacement of populations throughout the country, and malnutrition is widespread outside the central Nile corridor. Approximately 2.2 million Sudanese are categorized as internally displaced persons (IDPs), primarily due to the ongoing violence in Darfur.²²

▶ Do you need my help?

Soldier:	intoo daayireen musaa'ada minee?	Do you need my help?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 12

Spending on healthcare remains low, totaling only 8.4% of the GDP in 2014.^{23, 24} Most people do not have health insurance and must pay whenever they visit a doctor or a clinic.²⁵ Consequently, most people delay seeking medical care.²⁶

▶ Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	fee shafaKhaana hina gareeb?	Is there a medical clinic nearby?
Local:	aywa / na'am hinaak	Yes, over there.

Exchange 13



*Sudanese at the public water pump
Flickr / BBC World Service*

Approximately 60% of Sudanese lack basic sanitation and safe drinking water. Among internally displaced persons (IDPs) women, children, the elderly, and those with disabilities are the most vulnerable, especially in camps and informal settlements.²⁷ This has placed over half of the country's population at risk for disease and malnutrition.²⁸

Visitors to Sudan are advised to have adequate health insurance before traveling and to have current vaccinations for yellow fever, hepatitis (A and B), typhoid, tetanus, polio, rabies, and meningitis.²⁹ Malaria is prevalent, so preventive medication is recommended. A mosquito net and mosquito repellent are crucial, even more so if you are traveling in the southern areas.³⁰

Education and Schools in Cities

The government of Sudan provides free and compulsory primary education for children from age 6 to 13. The language of instruction in primary school is Arabic. After completing an additional three years of secondary education, students are eligible to attend university.³¹ The requirement to serve in the military before completing one's education affected students at the secondary and university levels; however, this requirement was eliminated in 2011.³² In 1990, the al-Bashir regime began to enforce the requirement that Arabic be the sole language of instruction for institutions of higher education. Arabization and Islamist ideology were introduced into the curriculum, even in schools run by non-Muslim religious institutions.³³



*Students outside a high school, Kerma
Flickr / David Stanley*

School enrollment varies by region and falls below 20% in some areas. Nevertheless, literacy rates are increasing. In 2003, the literacy rate was 72% for men and 51% for women.³⁴ By 2016, 83% of men and 68% of women could read and write.³⁵ Educational

opportunities have drawn people from the rural areas to Khartoum. However, dropout rates are high, largely because of economic hardships facing students' families.³⁶

Restaurants

Because eating out is generally more expensive than what the average Sudanese would normally spend to buy food to cook at home, families tend not to go out to restaurants. Nevertheless, eating at cafés or restaurants in Sudan is not much different from the West. Customers are greeted and shown where to sit. When patronizing restaurants, tipping is normal. It is best to drink only bottled beverages and to use caution when dining out. Beef and lamb are considered to be safe choices at restaurants.^{37, 38}



*A restaurant, Dongola
Flickr / David Stanley*

Marketplace and Street Vendors

There are two types of markets in Sudan: the traditional local market and the new modern market. Markets, called suqs, may carry a wide variety of goods or specialty items.^{39, 40} Visiting a suq is a good way to be exposed to the daily life of the Sudanese people.⁴¹



*Traditional market, Kadugli, Kordofan
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

▶ Is the market nearby?		
Soldier:	fee sooq gareeb hina?	Is the market nearby?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 14

The Omdurman Suq in Khartoum is one of Sudan’s oldest markets. Tourists and locals are drawn to its long alleys displaying handcrafted gold and silver jewelry, African beads, copperware, and leather goods.^{42, 43}

▶ How much longer will you be here?		
Soldier:	Hatug’udu kam min al-waqt hina?	How much longer will you be here?
Local:	taanee talaata saa’aat	Three more hours.

Exchange 15

Bargaining is considered an art form in these markets. Negotiating a price is customary, but you should not start bargaining for something unless you intend to buy it.⁴⁴

▶ I can give you this much money for this.		
Soldier:	badeek guroosh kiteer lee-daa	I can give you this much money for this.
Local:	laa	No.

Exchange 16

While you want to make sure you are not paying too much for an item, you should also offer a fair price. If you are unsure, ask a local for assistance. Before you shop, research the average prices of items you want to buy. Decide in advance what your limit will be. Look at the price tag as a suggested amount that can be negotiated.⁴⁵

▶ May I inspect this item?		
Soldier:	mumkin afatish daa?	May I hold this and inspect it?
Local:	Mumkin	Sure.

Exchange 17

Lower-priced items are not always worth the time and effort of haggling. Paying full price for such items shows support for the small business merchants. Some shopkeepers may speak English, but if they do not, you can usually make yourself understood with gestures and a friendly smile. Keeping a list of Arabic numbers with you comes in handy.⁴⁶

▶ Do you have this in a different color?		
Soldier:	‘indakum Haaja dee fee alwaan muKhtalifa?	Do you have this in a different color?
Local:	aywa / na’am	Yes.

Exchange 18

Street Vendors

Many IDPs and refugees have become street vendors. Yet, ongoing price increases across the country, coupled with a lack of employment opportunities, has pressed many university graduates to turn to street vending as a means of support.⁴⁷ Regardless, visitors should keep in mind that some street vendors can be quite aggressive in demanding that you buy something from them.⁴⁸

▶ Buy something from me.		
Local:	maa tishtaree Haaja minee	Buy something from me.
Soldier:	laa, amshee ba'eed / rooH	No. Go away.

Exchange 19



*Street vendors
Flickr / Elmogran*

eating food from street vendors since it might be contaminated with parasites and bacteria.⁴⁹

Street vendors sell various goods, including fruits, vegetables, clothing, housewares, beverages, and sweets. Use special care when buying food from a street vendor since it is quite possible that it wasn't prepared in sanitary conditions. For example, it was reported in September 2016 that eight people died from eating contaminated food from street vendors. In response, Sudan's Health Ministry in Khartoum issued a warning against drinking water from unsafe sources or

Money, Credit Cards, and ATMs

Cash is preferred for most transactions in Sudan. The primary form of currency in Sudan is the Sudanese Pound (SDG). Although there are other ways to exchange money (such as the black market), it is a legal requirement to exchange currency only at a bank or an official Bureau de Change, usually located in a bank or a travel agency, and sometimes at airports and train stations. There are also a number of private exchange offices in Khartoum, which generally have better exchange rates than banks and are open longer hours.^{50, 51, 52}

Typically, credit cards and travelers checks are not accepted except at some international hotels and airline offices. ATMs do not accept foreign cards due to international sanctions, and some will block your account the moment you try to log in. PayPal will also do this. If necessary, money can be wired to Khartoum and Port Sudan through Western Union and Travelex.⁵³



Sudanese lining up inside a local bank
Flickr / Oxfam East Africa

▶ Can you give me change for this?		
Soldier:	mumkin tafik daa?	Can you give me change for this?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 20

Urban Traffic and Transportation

Road conditions in Sudan differ significantly from those in the United States. They are considered hazardous due to the numerous animals and pedestrians on the roads, erratic drivers, and heavily overloaded vehicles lacking basic safety equipment. Outside of Khartoum, there are virtually no traffic signals and local drivers will often stop without warning, or drive too fast for road and weather conditions. Driving at night is dangerous and should be avoided since drivers often do not use their vehicle lights. Further, many vehicles do not have working turn signals, brake lights, or even brakes.^{54, 55}

▶ Is there a car mechanic nearby?		
Soldier:	fee makneek kweys gareeb hina?	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?
Local:	Laa	No.

Exchange 21

Traffic jams are very common in the larger cities, especially during rush hour—between 7-8 a.m. and 2-4 p.m.. You should travel with other people whenever possible, carry

only small amounts of local currency, be certain of your destination, and make sure you have clear directions.⁵⁶

Taxis are easy to find in downtown Khartoum and larger cities, but they typically cannot be called by phone. Two types of taxis are available in Sudan. The first is a non-metered taxi that takes only one passenger from point A to point B. Fares for non-metered one-person taxis rides should be negotiated and agreed upon beforehand. The second type of taxi is a shared minibus, called bakassis, which has no set route or stops. Bakassis simply pick up and drop off wherever people ask them to.⁵⁷



Traffic in Amarat
Flickr / Elmogran

Most taxi drivers do not speak English very well, and their vehicles can be in varying states of disrepair. Taxis are generally not available after dark in residential areas. Daytime rates are reasonable, but they usually double at night. Foreigners can expect to pay double rates any time of day or night.⁵⁸

▶ Can I get a cab around here?		
Soldier:	fee takaasee hina?	Can I get a cab around here?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 22

It is customary to wave down a taxi. Negotiate the rate before hiring a driver. Avoid getting into a cab that already has a passenger. Whether you hire a cab for yourself or for a group, you are expected to tip the driver.⁵⁹

▶ Can you take me there?		
Soldier:	mumkin tashilnee hinaak?	Can you take me there?
Local:	aywa / na'am mumkin. ta'aal waraay	Yes, I can. Follow me.

Exchange 23

It is a good idea to join up with fellow travelers before you hire a taxi. It is safer and you can share the fee. To avoid confusion, be sure to tell the driver where you are

going before you hire him. For the most part, taxis in Sudan are more reliable and more comfortable than public transportation.⁶⁰

▶ Do you accept U.S. currency?		
Soldier:	mumkin tasheel dolaar?	Do you accept U.S. currency?
Local:	laa, benisheel deenaar bas	No, we only accept dinars.

Exchange 24

Renting a car is also an option. A valid U.S. driver's license may be used during the first 90 days of a visit. After that period, a Sudanese driver's license or international driving permit is needed.⁶¹

▶ Can I rent a car from you?		
Soldier:	mumkin ajur 'arabeetak?	Can I rent a car from you?
Local:	Laa	No.

Exchange 25

Car rentals are available in major cities and at airports. Rental cars are expensive, however, and traveling by car is risky in many areas of the country. Visitors renting a car should consider hiring a guide or local driver. Use caution and be aware that jaywalking is an acceptable practice.⁶²

▶ Is there a gas station nearby?		
Soldier:	fee hina maHaTa wuqood?	Is there a gas station nearby?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 26

Sudan's infrastructure includes waterways, railroads, roads, and air service. Much of it, except for the waterways system, is in a state of disrepair from neglect. Sudan has long used the White Nile, Blue Nile, Atbarah, Sobat, and Bahr al-Ghazal rivers as a natural transportation system to move goods between tropical Africa and the Mediterranean. Sudan's railroads and roads were built during the British colonial era and, for the most part, have not been modernized.⁶³ The rail system is more extensive and serves more of the country. The road system, particularly between Khartoum and the Red Sea, has been expanded, but most of the interior is not accessible to vehicles. According to pre-secession figures, there are approximately 11,900 km (7,394 miles) of roadways

in Sudan, 64% of which are unpaved dirt tracks that are difficult to navigate during the rainy season. Sudan Airways serves both international and domestic passengers from 116 airports, 17 of which have paved runways. An oil pipeline that connects the southern oil fields to Khartoum and Port Sudan runs for 4,070 km (2,529 mi), and an additional pipeline for refined products runs for 1,613 km (1,002 mi).^{64, 65}



Railway in Sudan in 2011
Wikimedia / Jkan997

Street Crime and Solicitations

Crime in north and central Sudan remains relatively low compared to other African nations.⁶⁶ Most reported street crimes are pickpocketing, bag snatches, smash-and-grabs, and car break-ins. Visitors outside of Khartoum are advised to keep a low profile, maintain situational awareness, minimize drinking alcohol in public, and mix up the times of days and routes of travel to and from specific locations. Traveling in groups lessens the chance of being targeted.⁶⁷



Sudanese police in operation crackdown
Flickr / peoplesworld

In all urban areas, you might be approached by beggars asking for money or food. Many of these people are IDPs who had to leave their villages. They are called shamasa, or vagabonds.⁶⁸

▶ Give me money!		
Local:	adeenee guroosh!	Give me money!
Soldier:	laa, ma 'indee	No, I don't have any.

Exchange 27

Outside the capital city Khartoum, particularly in Darfur, armed robberies, carjackings, home invasions, and kidnappings by gangs and militias are common. Generally, criminals do not kill or seriously harm their victims, but attempting to resist is often met with violence.⁶⁹ Double-edged swords and machetes tend to be the weapon of choice in violent assaults. In the eastern region of Sudan, organized crime networks are involved in smuggling and trafficking through the porous Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudan borders. These areas should be avoided.⁷⁰

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Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Chapter 4 | Urban Life

Assessment

1. Women and children are kidnapped in Sudan each year and used as slaves.
2. Crime in north and central Sudan is relatively high compared to other African nations.
3. Many healthcare professionals have left the country in search of better employment.
4. Approximately 60% of Sudanese lack basic sanitation and safe drinking water.
5. ATMs are easy to find in Sudanese urban areas.

Assessment Answers: 1 True; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5 . False.



*A nomadic pastoralist
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

Chapter 5 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Rural Life

Introduction

In the rural areas of Sudan, where about 60% of the population continue to live, competition for land, water, and other natural resources is constant.¹ Conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers throughout the rural regions have often turned violent. In Darfur, such conflicts have escalated to war.²

In addition to the situation in Darfur, nomads and farmers along the north-south border have clashed over grazing rights. The situation in the area is made more volatile by citizens continuing to arm themselves after decades of civil war.³ In 2010, armed

Misseriya nomads in the southern state of Kordofan attacked Chinese-controlled oil fields in the war-torn region near Darfur. The Misseriya grievances are about lands to which they have traditionally had access.⁴ The government of the northern Republic of the Sudan has been accused of arming the Misseriya, who seasonally migrate into the oil-rich Abyei region of South Sudan.⁵



*An armed Sudanese civilian
Flickr / Steve Evans*

The ongoing violence between Sudan and various rebel factions has included government aerial bombings of civilians in the contested areas. The attacks have disrupted nomadic and agrarian life and have torn communities apart.⁶ The 2011 secession of South Sudan also separated many families. These separations have been a major contributing factor to renewed conflicts in the Sudanese states bordering South Sudan.⁷

Tribal Distribution

In post-secession Sudan, Arabs make up 70% of the population. Ethnic African tribes make up most of the remaining population, including the Beja, Fallata, Fur, and Nuba.⁸

The Beja

The Beja, once Christian, and believed to be descended from Egyptians, are seminomadic pastoralists living in the rebel-held territory of northeast Sudan, in the desert and in the arid hills between the Nile River and the Red Sea. They are estimated to number about 2.1 million and have inhabited the area for about 4,000 years.^{9, 10, 11} In the past, some Beja insurgents allied themselves with southern secessionists and fought against the government for more autonomy and access to resources. During the late



*Beja nomads
Wikimedia / Nikswieweg*

1990s, the Sudanese army attacked mosques and schools in the Beja region in order to displace Sufi Islam, which is practiced by some Beja.¹² The Port of Sudan, the country's main port, is located in traditional Beja territory.¹³

The Fallata

The ethnic African Fallata population is estimated to be about 5 million. The Fallata are cattle herders. The Fallata tribe have allied themselves with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and they have been fighting the Arab Habaniya tribe in southern Darfur.^{14, 15} Because of the fighting, thousands of Fallata have been displaced from their homes.^{16, 17}

The Fur

The Fur have lived for centuries in the high plains and volcanic mountain ranges of Jebel Marra in Darfur, which is derived from the name of the tribe and means "home of the Fur" in Arabic.^{18, 19} According to estimates, as many as 300,000 people have died from the fighting between the ethnic African Fur farmers and invading Arab nomads over control of land and natural resources. The International Criminal Court has charged the president of Sudan with genocide against the Fur people.²⁰ The genocide has included aerial bombing of civilians believed to be harboring rebel fighters of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Government-backed Arab militias are accused of burning buildings and crops in the region and of committing arbitrary killings and gang rapes.^{21, 22}



*Fur children at school, Darfur
Flickr / Reclaiming The Future*

The Nuba

Approximately 50 separate tribes comprise the ethnic African Nuba people, who are primarily farmers and animal herders. Most Nuba live in the remote Nuba Mountains of central Sudan, in the border state of South Kordofan.²³ Their original homeland at Wadi Halfa, near the country's northern border with Egypt, was flooded when the Egyptians



*Nuba body painting, Nuba Mountains
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

constructed the Aswan High Dam.²⁴ Today's Nuba population outside of Khartoum has been estimated at 1 million.²⁵ Many Nuba live in villages that have been targeted by government-directed aerial bombings. Up to 500,000 Nuba have been displaced, with many fleeing to higher elevations for safety.²⁶

In addition to Arab militias, which have been accused of killing anyone in the region who is black, a government-backed

ground offensive has been launched against the Nuba.^{27, 28} The government has destroyed villages and arrested hundreds of thousands of Nuba, forcing them at gunpoint to convert to Islam.^{29, 30} The government's position against the Nuba stems from the country's civil war, during which many Nuba allied themselves with the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A).^{31, 32} An estimated 40,000 Nuba SPLM/A fighters remain in the region, described as an "easily defended...chaotic collection of hills and ravines covered by a multitude of giant boulders,... with thousands of caves and other places of refuge."³³

Land Distribution / Ownership

The colonial legacy of Sudan, along with the government's appropriation of tribal lands for domestic and foreign investors, has contributed to many regional conflicts, including those in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains.^{34, 35} Beginning in 1923, the British divided the territory into tribal homelands (diar, singular dar), which were each subdivided into hawakeer (singular hakura) allocated to a particular clan or tribe. Because the British empowered tribal chiefs with control of each dar, the tribal chiefs also had the authority to award land parcels according to their preference.³⁶



*Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

Later, the 1925 Land Resettlement and Registration Act allowed the government to seize all unoccupied land, which was presumed to be state-owned.³⁷ The 1970 Unregistered Lands Act authorized the government to use force to protect the land. With this legislation in effect, the government expanded mechanized farming, which by 2005 had increased by 1,500%. The 1990 Investment Act took more land away from rural communities for the benefit of investors.^{38, 39} Although the 1984 Civil Transaction Act repealed the Unregistered Lands Act of 1970, amendments to the legislation have continued to provide a legal basis for the government's claim to ownership of about 90% of the land in Sudan.⁴⁰

Those living in the southern region of the country (now the independent Republic of South Sudan) resisted the north's policy of government ownership of land. The conflicts in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains have been linked to this government policy, which has dislocated tribes and led to fighting over scarce resources.^{41, 42} The need for the development of a more equitable land policy was recognized in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 that ended Sudan's civil war.⁴³

Although customary land rights vary throughout Sudan, the ownership of land has generally been viewed as communal, with local leaders determining who has the right to use the land and its natural resources.⁴⁴ According to some local customs, the person who clears an area of land has the right to cultivate it, and access to water is available to all; however, improved sources, such as wells, have been considered private property.⁴⁵

Nomadic Way of Life

According to the last census in 1993, about 10% of the total population of Sudan are nomadic. Generally, these nomadic groups are camel or cattle herders. They migrate seasonally throughout the country in search of water and grazing resources for their animals, which are their main source of livelihood. From the mid-1990s to 2003, nomadic groups contributed about 21% of the nation's GDP. Some nomads farm at fixed points along their migration routes to and from the rain-fed natural pastures of the Darfur, El Gezira, Kordofan, Blue Nile, and White



Nomadic life
Flickr / Rita Willaert

Nile regions. While most nomads do not have permanent homes, some do live in fixed settlements.⁴⁶ The loss of herds and the economic potential of cultivation caused many traditional nomads to settle.⁴⁷ The government's allocation of land for mechanized farming and foreign investors, including those in the oil industry, has also blocked traditional nomadic routes and forced many herders to work as laborers in settled areas.⁴⁸ Today, those who live as nomads are found only in the far northern regions of Sudan.⁴⁹

Nomadic units in Sudan are based on patrilineal descent. The largest unit is a tribe composed of smaller units. The smallest is the usra, a man's extended family, his sons, their sons, and any unmarried daughters. While this system once provided for fluidity in leadership based on accountability and the outcome of power struggles within the tribe, the British colonial authorities gave formal power to the tribal leader. This made the system more rigid and compliant with colonial law.⁵⁰ Since nomads do not own land, the system of patrilineal descent was used by the government to organize the nomads into governmental units.⁵¹

▶ Do you know this area very well?		
Soldier:	bita'rif al-manTiqa kweys?	Do you know this area very well?
Local:	aywa / na'am bi'rifu	Yes, very well.

Exchange 28

Rural Economy / Typical Sources of Income In Rural Areas



Farming in Gezira
Flickr / Water, Land and Ecosystems

It is difficult to estimate the size of Sudan's active labor force.⁵² A 2007 estimate placed the workforce at roughly 12 million. Data from 2002 put the unemployment rate at 18.7%. About 80% of the Sudanese workforce is engaged in agriculture, which in 2010 contributed about 45% to the country's GDP. Industry, which employs about 7% of the workforce, contributed about 45% to Sudan's GDP in 2010. Services employ about 13% of the workforce and contributed about 10% to

the 2010 GDP. Remittances from emigrant laborers account for about USD 3.2 billion annually.^{53, 54}

Large-scale, market-oriented farming is widespread throughout central Sudan. As of the 1980s, about two-thirds of Sudan's cultivated land was being farmed on a large-scale basis. Farming on this scale is made possible by mechanized, irrigated, and rain-fed irrigation. In comparison, smaller-scale farming based on traditional practices is common along the banks of the Nile River between Khartoum and the Egyptian border, as well as in other regions of the country where water is available.^{55, 56}



*Gezira irrigation scheme
Flickr / Water, Land and Ecosystems*

The Gezira Scheme, a large irrigation project, was established between the White and Blue Niles southeast of their confluence near Khartoum.⁵⁷ Cotton has been the main crop grown for export in the Gezira region since the British developed the irrigation project in the early 1900s.^{58, 59} In addition to cotton, other major export crops cultivated in Sudan today include peanuts, millet, wheat, gum arabic, sugarcane, mangos, papaya, bananas, sweet potatoes, and sesame. Sheep and other livestock also constitute a large part of the Sudanese agricultural industry.⁶⁰

Rural Transportation Issues

Railways

In 1896, prior to British military intervention in Sudan, the British began construction of a railway from Wadi Halfa near the Egyptian border to Abu Hamad on the Nile River north of Khartoum.⁶¹ From that initial project, the railway system in Sudan became one of the biggest in Africa. Today, however, 73% of the rail tracks, which extend for 5,000 km (3,106 mi), are more than 80 years old and in need of repair.⁶² Although the railway system does link most major towns and cities, train schedules are irregular.⁶³



*Railway tracks and station at Malual, North Bahr al Ghazal
Wikimedia / Geoff NoNick*

Since 2008, plans have been underway to modernize the railway and connect the Port of Sudan on the Red Sea to Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkino Paso, Senegal, and possibly Djibouti. Funds were approved in mid-2011 to build a railway that will connect landlocked Chad to Nyala, the capital of South Darfur. Another rail project will connect Sudan, Chad, and Cameroon.⁶⁴ Previously in 2007, a Chinese company signed a deal with the Sudanese government worth USD 1.15 billion to build a new railroad line from the Port of Sudan to Khartoum.⁶⁵ Combined, all these projects will facilitate the delivery of raw materials in Africa to international markets. The infrastructural improvements also will provide more access to the potentially lucrative continental market.⁶⁶

▶ Is there a train station nearby?		
Soldier:	fee maHaTat giTaar hina gareeb?	Is there a train station nearby?
Local:	laa	No.

Exchange 29

Roads



Rural road from Aldng to South
Flickr / Mohamed Sud

During their occupation of Sudan, the British also built rural roads, many of which have been destroyed by years of civil war and neglect. Sudan’s roads cover a total of 11,900 km (7,394 mi); 4,320 km (2,684 mi) of this road system are paved.⁶⁷ Most of the paved roads are located in Khartoum and Port Sudan.⁶⁸ Some highways between a few of the larger cities are paved, including the all-weather road connecting Port Sudan and Khartoum—typically a 12-hour drive.⁶⁹ Another paved road—although not in such good condition as the road between Khartoum and Port Sudan—connects Sudan with the Port of Djibouti and Addis Ababa.⁷⁰

Since 2005, Chinese and Malaysian oil companies have been building roads and bridges in Sudan. USAID, the European Union, and the World Bank also have been funding road construction that will ultimately link north and South Sudan.^{71, 72} A paved highway linking Sudan to Ethiopia opened in 2013.⁷³

Cars are driven on the right side of the road in Sudan.⁷⁴ Road conditions are quite poor in most of the country. Even with four-wheel drive, vehicle travel is challenging almost everywhere. Because of the likelihood of breakdowns, lengthy journeys should be undertaken with at least two four-wheel drive vehicles.⁷⁵ During the rainy season, from April to November, some roads are not passable.⁷⁶ Most of the roads in the interior are not paved and not accessible by wheeled vehicles.⁷⁷

Driving anywhere outside of Khartoum is considered dangerous. Ensure that your vehicle doors and windows are locked while traveling, even during daylight hours.⁷⁸ If you are involved in a traffic accident, you should call for the police. Additionally, you should offer compensation on the spot to anyone involved in the accident, especially if it includes pedestrians or livestock.⁷⁹ If a crowd begins to gather after an accident, you are advised to leave the scene immediately if you feel that you are in imminent danger.⁸⁰

Although buses travel throughout the country, most are crowded and uncomfortable and lack air conditioning, good shocks, and padded seats. Service to mid-size communities is haphazardly scheduled.⁸¹

▶ Will the bus be here soon?		
Soldier:	al-baaS Hayeejee gareeb?	Will the bus be here soon?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 30

Flights

Because of the country's large geographic size and widely dispersed population, air transportation for business, trade, and tourism is more important in Sudan than in many other African nations. In addition to regular domestic and international flights, Sudanese Airways provides chartered flights to the country's major industrial centers.⁸² Of the nation's 74 airports, 17 have paved runways, and two have paved runways that are longer than 3,047 m (9,997 ft). In its number of



*707 Sudan Airways
Flickr / Colin Cooke*

airports, Sudan is ranks in 71st place out of 236 nations.⁸³ Khartoum is considered an international gateway, with flights to the Middle East and Europe. However, flights are irregular, and domestic flights and air transportation within Africa may not be safe because some Sudanese aircraft are poorly maintained.⁸⁴ Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, several private companies have begun offering flights to the city of Juba in South Sudan.⁸⁵

▶ Which direction to the airport?		
Soldier:	yaatu Tareeg bitwadee ila al-maTaar?	Which direction to the airport?
Local:	Tareeg daak	That way.

Exchange 31

Waterways

About one-half of Sudan’s navigable waterways, which extend for more than 4,068 km (2,528 mi), are in use all year long. In parts of Sudan, during the rainy season, the Nile River serves as a major source of transportation for goods and people. Because roads are not serviceable in many areas from April to November during the rainy season, paddle-wheel steamers on the Nile are the only means of transportation in certain parts of Sudan. Steamers carry passengers and freight on the larger rivers, particularly the White Nile between Khartoum and river ports in the far south, where year-round service is available.^{86, 87}



*Water taxi on the Blue Nile
Flickr / Nick Hobgood*

Rural Health Issues

For years, resources in Sudan have been diverted away from the training of healthcare professionals and given to the military. The World Health Organization estimates that there are just 0.28 physicians per 1,000 people; nurses and midwives numbered about 0.84 per 1,000 people.⁸⁸ However, most of these doctors are concentrated in urban areas; few are found outside the cities. Substantial percentages of the population lack access to safe water and sanitary facilities. All these conditions have contributed to



*Women queuing in front of the clinic rooms
Flickr / Trygve Berge*

a life expectancy of roughly 64 years and an infant mortality rate of approximately 50 deaths per 1,000 live births.⁸⁹

Major infectious diseases include malaria, dysentery, hepatitis A and E, typhoid fever, dengue fever, meningococcal meningitis, rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharzia), and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness).^{90, 91} Schistosomiasis (bilharzia), a debilitating disease transmitted by parasitic worms in contaminated water, is a problem for

those living near the White and Blue Niles.⁹² In the more vegetated southern states, trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) is prevalent. This deadly parasitic disease is transmitted by the tsetse fly.⁹³ Frequent dust storms occurring in the desert region can also aggravate sinuses and breathing.⁹⁴

Rural Education

While the government provides free and compulsory primary education for children from age 6 to 13, overall access to education is lower in rural areas and dropout rates are higher.⁹⁵ Arabic is the language of instruction in primary school. After primary school, there are an additional 3 years of secondary education, after which students are eligible to attend university.⁹⁶ Rural children tend to start school at a later age and quit going to school in higher numbers throughout primary and secondary schools. After the age of 10 or 11, dropout rates peak. Although these issues are also true for urban Sudanese children, they are more severe in rural areas where an estimated 1 million children and youth between the ages of 10 and 17 have never attended school and likely never will.⁹⁷ Girls are also less likely than boys to enroll in school, but once they do enroll, they tend to remain in school and attain higher education levels.⁹⁸



*Children at school
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

Educational resources are not evenly distributed between Sudan’s urban and rural areas, resulting in lower per student spending in rural schools for basic education.⁹⁹ The majority of out-of-school children in rural Sudan are primarily from nomadic communities or villages in areas of ongoing conflict. Nomadic families tend to not enroll their children in school because children are needed to herd cattle and assist with daily chores.¹⁰⁰

Village Life

Whether village or nomadic, the community is the focus of rural Sudanese life. Rural communities are composed of families reckoning their lineage through male relatives and ancestors. These large families act as a group to safeguard territory, form ties with other families through marriage, and generally act in the family group’s interest. The leader of the family group is usually a respected elder.¹⁰¹ For most nomadic herders, wealth is still measured by the size of the family’s cattle herd.¹⁰²



*Nomadic family
Flickr / Rita Willaert*

The majority population in rural villages are Sudanese Arab. Historically, Sudanese Arab men and women are segregated and live separate lives. Other rural village populations consist of the Beja living along the Red Sea coast in the east, the Fur and Zaghawa people living in the west, and the Nuba people living and farming along the Nile in the south.¹⁰³

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Border Crossings

Sudan has a number of border crossings with neighboring countries, but most are difficult and some are potentially dangerous. Following the independence of South Sudan in 2011, only one border crossing between the Central African Republic and Sudan remains open, and all trade between the two countries has been suspended. Border crossings between Libya and Sudan are closed, as are border crossings between South Sudan and Sudan.^{104, 105} Sudan’s border crossings with Chad, Ethiopia, Eritrea,



Crossing the border
Flickr / Photo Unit

and Egypt remain open, however, and are considered only relatively stable, although this can change due to ongoing conflicts in the region.¹⁰⁶ The country's newest border crossing with Egypt is the Qastal-Ashkeet crossing on the country's northern border. Sudan hopes this new border crossing will increase trade in livestock, minerals, and agricultural products and facilitate the flow of people between the two countries.¹⁰⁷

Travelers who find it necessary to cross the border from Sudan, should be wary of scams by “helpers,” as well as customs officials. It is recommended that you carry photos of your license plates and travel documents, and be firm but polite if you encounter fraudulent behavior. Approach a border crossing with caution.^{108, 109}

Checkpoints

Before traveling outside of Khartoum, you should check new reports and local conditions, and obtain proper travel authorization from the Sudanese government. Always carry multiple copies of your travel authorization, as you will need them at checkpoints.¹¹⁰



A police man at a checkpoint
Flickr / Rory Mizzen

▶ Is there a checkpoint nearby?		
Soldier:	fee nuqTat taftesh hina gareeb?	Is there a checkpoint nearby?
Local:	aywa / na'am, bitalgaahu gudaamak 'ala masaafa itneyn keelomitr	Yes, it is two kilometers.

Exchange 32

Checkpoints are located between districts and in cities during emergencies. Citizens and foreigners are free to travel, but are required to show proper documents and IDs

when stopped at a checkpoint.^{111, 112} If asked for papers at a checkpoint, be polite and courteous.

▶ Is this all the ID you have?		
Soldier:	daa kulu biTaaqa ili 'indak?	Is this all the ID you have?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 33

Be aware that extortionists sometimes operate unofficial checkpoints. If you are told to stop at a checkpoint and pay money in order to pass, the Sudanese government requests that you refuse, remain stopped, and report the incident by cell phone. If this is not possible, remain safe by complying with demands and report the incident as soon as possible.¹¹³

▶ Please get out of the car.		
Soldier:	min faDlak, uKhruj min al-'arabeeya	Please get out of the car.
Local:	samiH / kweys	OK.

Exchange 34

Landmines

Sudan is considered to be heavily contaminated with landmines, although the extent of contamination is unclear since no survey has been conducted. Due to ongoing conflicts across the region, the use of landmines persists throughout Sudan.¹¹⁴



Landmine warning sign
Flickr / BBC World Service

▶ Is this area mined?		
Soldier:	fee al-manTiqa daa feeHu alghaam?	Is this area mined?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 35

In 2014, the National Mine Action Center (NMAC) recorded 40 landmine-related deaths.¹¹⁵ This is an increase over the number of recorded deaths in 2013 (30), but less than the recorded number of deaths in 2012 (108). Due to the lack of data collection accuracy, however, the actual number of landmine victims might be significantly higher.¹¹⁶ Since South Sudan's independence in 2011, new conflicts have resulted in further landmine contamination, particularly in Abyei, and in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.¹¹⁷

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Chapter 5 | Rural Life

Assessment

1. Ethnic African tribes make up most of Sudan's population.
2. The Fur have lived for centuries in Darfur.
3. The ownership of land in Sudan is generally viewed as communal.
4. Most of Sudan's roadways were paved in recent years.
5. Border crossings between Sudan and neighboring countries are stable and relatively safe.

Assessment Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False.



*Sudanese nuclear family
Flickr / BBC World Service*

Chapter 6 | Arabic-Sudanese Cultural Orientation

Family Life

Introduction

In Sudan, the family is the basic element of economic production and the institution at the heart of society. Traditionally, the extended family structure has been key.¹ Although nuclear families are becoming more common due to a history of violent conflicts and the resulting sharp increase in refugees, family ties are strong, and extended families continue to play an important role.²

Sudanese families are strongly patriarchal and hierarchical. Elders are deeply respected for their wisdom. Parents have a major influence on their children with respect to

their education, health, and future. Parents, children and young adults show affection for each other, even in public. Children are expected to be well behaved, whether or not their parents are present.³ The role of women has been heavily influenced by political changes and the ongoing conflict in the country. Women have been subjected to deep levels of violence and continue to bear the burden of displacement, poverty, and a lack of access to education.⁴

Typical Household and Family Structure

Sudanese family structure is patrilineal and descent is determined through the paternal line. Social and public life is male-dominated. Families usually consist of the male head of the family, his sons, their sons, any unmarried daughters, and women who have married into the family. Marriages are often between first or second cousins, and frequently polygynous (husbands have more than one wife), thus properties and alliances are consolidated.⁵ The patriarch who heads the family is usually the oldest male whose responsibilities include providing food, clothing, and shelter. This can be true in both urban and rural areas. In rural areas, both men and women are involved in agricultural activities; women are primarily responsible for child and family care. The extended family provides many of the social services not provided by the government and assumes responsibility for the aged, infirm, and mentally ill.⁶



Father with his children
Flickr / Rita Willaert

▶ Does your family live here?		
Soldier:	usratak bit'eysh hina?	Does your family live here?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 36

Sometimes, extended families live in houses located next to or connected to each other, creating a compound with a courtyard in the center. In the case of polygynous marriages, the wives and children live in their own separate houses. This atmosphere strengthens the traditional values held very strongly by Sudanese families.⁷

▶ How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	kam nafar sakneen fee al-beyt daa?	How many people live in this house?
Local:	'ashara	Ten.

Exchange 37

Male and Female Interactions Within the Family

In Sudan, women and men take on traditional family roles after marriage.⁸ Whether living in a rural or urban area, married men are responsible for earning an income, leading the family, and herding livestock.⁹ Married women care for their homes and families by cooking, cleaning. And caring for their children. In rural areas, married women also collect firewood, fetch water, and help with farming.¹⁰ This arrangement gives married women some say in what happens in their families, even though they remain bound by social traditions that favor men.¹¹



Mother with her four children
Flickr / Rita Willaert

Two traditional customs are significant in the lives of Sudanese women. They are the zar cult and female circumcision. Both are reflective of and consequential to male/female interactions. The zar is a cleansing ceremony conducted by women practitioners to rid women of “evil spirits” that are traditionally thought to cause certain afflictions, such as depression and infertility.¹² The traditional zar ceremony is unique in that it is not only offers a way for women to be cured of “possession,” but it enables women the opportunity to socialize, build strong female relationships, and communicate in similar way as men do within their male circles.¹³

The second traditional custom that is significant in the lives of Sudanese women is female circumcision, frequently called female genital mutilation (FGM).¹⁴ Performed by midwives and other females under unsanitary conditions, this controversial operation often leads to shock, hemorrhage, and illness, and can create innumerable difficulties throughout life, including obstetrical problems before and after childbirth.¹⁵ This procedure is believed by some to reduce sexual desire and promiscuity and is widely practiced in Sudan by both Muslims and Christians.¹⁶ Despite international

conferences, legislation, efforts to eradicate this practice and the growing number of people that understand the dangers of female circumcision, 88% of women aged 15-49 in Sudan have still undergone one of the three types of FGM. More than 90% of girls in Sudan undergo the severest form of FGM, called infibulation.^{17, 18, 19} This procedure is widespread in Sudan, and has decreased only slightly in recent years.²⁰

Status of the Elderly, Children, and Young Adults



Child soldiers
Flickr / Eye Steel Film

The elderly in Sudan are treated with a great deal of respect and are consulted for their wisdom. They are usually cared for by members of their extended family.²¹ Children are required to be respectful of all adults, not just their parents.²² It is never acceptable for younger people to yell at their elders. In most regions, it is customary for children to contribute to the family by helping with chores, working in the garden or on the farm, and helping care for younger siblings.²³

Many children were forcibly recruited to fight in Sudan's civil wars and regional conflicts. As such, entire generations of young people have been deprived of a carefree childhood.²⁴ Efforts to rehabilitate child soldiers have been met with mixed results. Many Sudanese children are deeply scarred by their experiences.²⁵

Married Life, Divorce, and Birth

Marriage

Most people in Sudan have the freedom to choose whom they will marry, although many marriages are still arranged. In such cases, parents will arrange marriages between cousins or other relatives, or from someone in the same tribe and social class. Young women in rural areas will often marry by the age of 16, while middle class women in urban areas will



Nubian young couple
Flickr / Steve Evans

generally marry after they have graduated from university. Men often marry between the ages of 30 and 40.²⁶ Married women in general might find employment outside the home, but this is more likely in cities where married women are typically employed in government, large private companies, and factories. In rural areas, most family income is derived from farming and livestock.²⁷

Divorce

Divorce in Sudan falls under Sharia Law (Islamic Law) and is considered allowable if the marriage is deemed incompatible with Islamic principles.²⁸ Divorce under Sharia, however, favors men. Some examples of marriage incompatibility are apostasy (if either the husband or wife leaves Islam), if the wife of a non-Muslim converts to Islam, or if either the husband or wife converts to Islam and his or her spouse practices a religion other than Christianity or Judaism.²⁹

Once a marriage is considered incompatible with Islamic principles, the couple can divorce in one of three ways, keeping in mind that Sharia divorce law favors men. The first, talaq, is achieved when the man pronounces “I divorce you” three times. After this pronouncement, the court prepares the official divorce documents and the government formally recognizes the divorce.³⁰ The second, khula, is a mutual agreement between the husband and wife to dissolve their marriage without court intervention. In the case of khula, the couple agrees on a monetary settlement, after which the court issues divorce documents.³¹ The third, tafriq, is the only form in which the court intervenes. Grounds for the use of tafriq are physical or emotional injury, irreconcilable differences, the husband is found to have an incurable physical defect (such as impotence), the husband does not financially support his wife, or the husband is imprisoned or absent for over a year without reason.^{32, 33}



Sudnese woman
Flickr / www.j-pics.info

Birth

Birth and marriage are intricately linked in Sudanese society. Women typically bear five or six children. In the past, however, it was not unusual for women to bear up to 12 children. Male babies are often circumcised at birth, but may undergo this procedure at any time up to the age of eight. It is not unusual for girls, especially in



*Mother and her baby
Flickr / Oxfam East Africa*

rural areas, to be subjected to circumcision (FGM), but not until they are between four and eight years of age.³⁴

A baby's arrival is celebrated through a number of rituals and rites, such as Simbaya, or the naming ceremony. This highly symbolic ritual is a source of baraka, or blessings, and good omens.³⁵ To celebrate this occasion, families slaughter one or two goats or a cow and invite family and friends for a feast. Guests traditionally bring gifts of money.³⁶

After the birth of a child, new mothers in Sudan are confined to their homes for 40 days. During that time, women are typically cared for by their mothers and fathers. At the end of their confinement, women

often perform smoke baths, or dokhan, to give their skin the characteristic color and smell of musk. New mothers also use wax made from lemon and caramelized sugar to remove all body hair; after which they will decorate their skin with henna, which signals they are ready to return to everyday life.³⁷

Family Social Events

Weddings



*Dance performed at weddings
Wikimedia / Tabwoch*

Weddings in Sudan are very elaborate and are usually a two-day celebration, with a lot of food and dancing. The marriage begins with the betrothal, khutba, during which the marriage contract is negotiated.³⁸ This contract contains the dowry, which must be paid to the bride's family by the groom's family. It may include any amount of money, property, or even service. The contract may outline the wife's right to a divorce or to work outside the home, as well as prohibit or

allow the man to take more wives.³⁹ Once this contract is signed, the marriage must be announced to the public. Traditionally, the groom has henna applied to his feet

and hands. The bride is prepared on the following day. All her body hair is removed and then she is decorated with henna. A gathering follows the signing of the marriage contract. Different ethnic groups in Sudan have different wedding traditions and rituals that take place during this ceremony.⁴⁰

Funerals

It is traditional for Muslims to bury their deceased within 24 hours of death. Muslim dead are ritually washed, wrapped in a white shroud, and buried with the head facing Mecca. A funeral consists of a short service at the mosque, a trip to the cemetery for burial, then a trip back to the mosque for more prayers and a meal. Relatives and close friends wear black clothing. It is appropriate and respectful to send flowers and cards to the family. When participating in a funeral procession, one should be silent. Afterward, an expression of condolence, such as “God is great,” is given. One should not laugh or make jokes; nor should one talk about the deceased or about the life of the deceased.⁴¹ After a funeral, the Sudanese observe a three-day visiting period, known as bika, during which family and friends offer condolences to the family of the deceased. During this period, the household is segregated by gender.⁴²

▶ May I attend the funeral?		
Soldier:	mumkin aH-Dur al-ma-tam?	May I attend the funeral?
Local:	aywa / na'am	Yes.

Exchange 38

Birthdays

Sudanese children in rural areas do not celebrate their birthdays; however, children living cities do celebrate this special day.⁴³ When celebrating their birthdays, children will have a cake with candles, they will eat pizza, play games, and drink a red punch called kardadah, which is made from hibiscus flowers. Children do not receive gifts or toys on their birthday; instead, they receive money.⁴⁴

Rites of Passage

Rites of passage play a central role in Sudanese society. They mark the different stages in a person’s life—their personal development and their relationship to the broader community.⁴⁵ These rituals indicate a person’s transition to maturity while emphasizing the transient nature of life. Rites of passage for both men and women prepare them



*Traditional scarification
Flickr / Steve Evans*

to be part of the community and, depending on the individual's ethnic/religious identity, these can include ritual scarification, circumcision (both male and female), and tattooing.⁴⁶

In northern Sudan, Nubian men undergo scarification, which is the practice of using a sharp object to create distinctive cuts. After cutting, the wound is rubbed with caustic plant juice, charcoal, ash, or gunpowder to produce a distinctive raised scar. Nubian men and women receive scars on their arms and torsos, usually as part of an initiation ritual that will depict the passages of life.^{47, 48}

In Islamic societies, permanent scarring and tattooing is not allowed. This means that in northern Sudan, which is predominantly Muslim, scarring is prohibited and henna tattoos take the place of permanent ink tattoos. Henna tattoos are traditionally used as an adornment to women's bodies during special rites of passage. Sudanese women traditionally place elaborate henna tattoo designs on their hands and feet before their marriage at special "women only" parties. Such parties includes singing, dancing, and refreshments of strong coffee, fresh fruits, water, and karkadah.^{49, 50}

Naming Conventions

Muslim Sudanese often name their children after historical heroes, such as Abdul Azeem, which means "the servant of the Mighty One."⁵¹ Other male names include Muhammad, Jameel, and Abdul Hakeem. Some commonly used female names are Hayat, which means "life," Fatima, Amina, Afrah, and Ibtihaj.⁵²

Sudanese Muslim names typically include four to six components. The first component might be an honorific name, signifying that one is the parent of a particular child. For example, abu Omar means "father of Omar." The second component is the personal name, which in Arabic



*Family hosting a big party seven days after the birth of a child
Flickr / Matt Nicholas*

functions similarly to the Western naming convention.⁵³ The third component is a descriptive name indicating a venerable quality one has attained or aspires to. For example, al-Khalil would signify one is a friend and most often implies being a friend of God.⁵⁴ The fourth element is a patronymic name, denoting one's patrilineal descent. For example, ibn Jafar means "son of Jafar."⁵⁵ The fifth component typically denotes one's connection to a location or tribe; thus al-Artega would signify one is from the Artega tribe.⁵⁶ Finally, the sixth element is an occupational name or nickname; al-Haddad would signify one is a blacksmith.

A name based on these conventions might be the following: Abu Omar Ismail al-Khalil ibn Jafar al-Artega al-Haddad.⁵⁷ This name means that the person Ismail is the father of Omar, the son of Jafar, a friend of God, and that he is a blacksmith belonging to the Artega tribe.⁵⁸

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Chapter 6 | Family Life

Assessment

1. Joint or extended families are common in Sudanese culture.
2. Many Sudanese children were forcibly recruited to fight in the many conflicts that plague the country.
3. In preparation for a wedding, the bride is hennaed before the groom.
4. Working outside the home is extremely rare among women.
5. When someone dies, the Sudanese observe a three-day visiting period, known as bika, during which family and friends offer condolences to the family of the deceased.

Assessment Answers: 1. True; 2. True; 3. True; 4. False; 5. True.

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Final Assessment

1. The national capital of the Republic of Sudan is Khartoum.
2. South Kordofan, a Sudanese province, joined South Sudan after South Sudan's secession.
3. In July 2010, the International Criminal Court (ICC) charged the president of Sudan with genocide.
4. On 22 October 2013, the presidents of Sudan and South Sudan successfully established the jointly governed Abyei Area Administration, the Abyei Area Council, and the Abyei Police Service.
5. Prior to the secession of the south (now the Republic of South Sudan), estimates suggest that roughly 20% of the population of Sudan self-identify as Arab.
6. Sudan's legal system is based on Sharia law.
7. Sufism has been a major influence in Sudanese interpretations of Islam.
8. While Islam is prevalent in the daily life of average Sudanese, it is absent from school curricula.
9. The practice of Sunni Islam in Sudan is uniform across the country.

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10. Prior to the spread of Christianity by British missionaries during the 19th century, Christianity was not practiced in Sudan.
11. Core Sudanese values are hospitality and generosity.
12. Sudanese girls no longer face the prospect of female genital mutilation (FGM).
13. Gifts are exchanged in Sudan for all occasions.
14. Lunch is the main meal of the day in Sudan.
15. All Sudanese men dress in stylish Western-style clothes.
16. The Sudanese government has maintained close relationships with the various international aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) operating in the country.
17. While modern communications services are available in Sudan's major cities, few Sudanese have access to them.
18. The al-Bashir regime profoundly altered the country's educational system through Arabization and Islamization of the curriculum.

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19. Unlike other cultures of East and North Africa, the Sudanese frown on haggling over prices in the marketplace.
20. Many street vendors and beggars in Sudan's cities are IDPs displaced by the conflicts that have devastated the country.
21. British colonial authorities strove to maintain traditional nomadic tribal power structures.
22. The Nuba are a nomadic tribe in Sudan.
23. The majority of Sudanese are employed in agriculture.
24. About one-half of Sudan's waterways are navigable year round.
25. About 50% of Sudan's total population are nomadic.
26. Female circumcision is no longer a significant issue in Sudan.
27. Parents, children, and young adults openly show affection for each other, even in public.

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28. After the birth of a child, new mothers in Sudan are confined to their homes for 40 days.
29. Divorce under Sharia law in Sudan does not favor men or women.
30. Sudanese Muslim naming conventions are similar to western naming conventions, except they are in Arabic.

Assessment Answers:
1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. False; 5. False; 6. True; 7. True; 8. False; 9. False; 10. False;
11. True; 12. False; 13. False; 14. True; 15. False; 16. False; 17. True; 18. True; 19. False;
20. True; 21. False; 22. False; 23. True; 24. True; 25. False; 26. False; 27. True; 28. True;
29. False; 30. False