

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AMONG THE ZAGHAWA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN THE SUDAN

El Tigani Mustafa Mohamed-Salih

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



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Muslim Community in the Sudan**

By:

EL Tigani Mustafa Mohamed-Salih

**Thesis submitted for the degree of M.Phil
to the University of St. Andrews.**

March 1988

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Dedication

To my parents and my country



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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the social organization of the Zaghawa Muslim community in the Northern Darfur province of the Republic of the Sudan. The Zaghawa are internally divided into two distinct groups beri and mai. The former constitute the majority of the Zaghawa society whereas the latter are a minority group of hereditary and occupationally specialized craftsmen (blacksmiths, hunters, potters, healers and diviners). Although the two groups claim to be adherents of Islam, the beri are of the belief that the mai are pagans and religiously impure. To avoid being contaminated by the mai, the beri adopt endo-gamous marriages, residential segregation and restricted commensality.

The thesis critically examines the literature on caste and considers the divergent views on whether caste is confined to India or a universal phenomenon which can possibly be encountered in Africa as well.

The author maintains that the narrow definition of the term caste as a unique phenomenon confined to India is inappropriate for there exist many societies outside India which share the structural and cultural features of the Indian caste system. Hence he suggests that the term caste should be broadly defined to embrace any society which displays the characteristic features of caste irrespective of its geographical location.

Despite the Zaghawa being broadly divided into beri and mai, sociologically more important is their categorization into kire bor, misikin and mai. The thesis explains how the Zaghawa society represents a caste-like system and shows how both the marginal kire bor and misikin are able to achieve social mobility whereas it is impossible for the mai to do so.

The study also focuses on the role of the kinship solidarity and village membership in maintaining social security and community welfare, It also examines how the Zaghawa traditionally respond to drought and famine and explains why their traditional institutions of coping with famine failed to save them from the late famine disaster which occurred in the African Sahel.

Introduction

Like many other developing countries, Sudan is aiming at accelerating the socio-economic development and improving the standard of living of its people. I believe that grasping the socio-cultural elements and the behaviour patterns of the country's many communities is inevitable if the planning for their development is to be based on sound basis.

Sudan was hit very hard by drought and famine in 1984. Many people died as a consequence of this natural disaster and there is no guarantee that such a catastrophe will not occur again. While the blame was put on nature, it remains yet to be discovered to what extent the traditional values and beliefs of some Sudanese communities aggravated the disaster and threatened the socio-economic development. While the Sudan cannot afford to control the nature due to its meagre financial resources and low level of technology, it can do a lot to avoid famine by controlling the behaviour of its people and changing their mentality.

Social stratification among the Zaghawa-the society of which I am a full-fledged member- is of more than an academic interest. My main objective in writing on this topic is to bring to light some of the Zaghawa cultural values which I believe are menace to development in the wide sense of the term. The Zaghawa system of stratification inhibits the introduction of industrial development. The major part of the Zaghawa population do not only refrain from any economic

activity that entails the use of iron which they despise and see as incompatible with their status but they also scorn and ex-communicate anyone who participates in this activity and regard him as inferior and nonworthy of their respect. Perhaps more seriously, the Zaghawa system of inequality is responsible for the hunger of those members of the society at the bottom of the social hierarchy who were starving to death during the famine even when food was abundantly provided by the central government and the international relief agencies.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to changing the attitude of the beri towards the use of iron which is inevitable for their development process and for improving the low standard of living of the mai community in Dar Zaghawa.

The major part of the material presented in this thesis derives from my own cultural knowledge as a member of the Zaghawa society. I also carried out a small research project as part of my Honour degree in Social Anthropology at the University of Khartoum which required me to carry out field-work in Dar Zaghawa for three months between May and July 1981. I also consulted reports, books and two unpublished theses on the area. Though I am myself a beri, the material presented in this thesis by no means represents my own views. It represents the actors' view on their social system.

CHAPTER ONE

CASTE AS A FORM OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

1. Social Stratification

Social stratification is an institutionalized pattern of inequality rationalized either by intrinsic criteria such as religious purity and ethnic origin or by extrinsic criteria such as the level of income, occupation and life style. It is not synonymous with inequality because inequality can exist in a society without stratification. (Tuden & Plotnicov 1970:4). Members of a society are unequal in terms of age and sex which are natural differences or in terms of roles associated with Kinship statuses but these do not imply stratification (Berreman 1981:8). Social stratification refers to ranking of members of a society into more or less permanent horizontal layers (strata) placed one on top of another in a status hierarchy (Tuden & Platinov 1970: 2-28, Maquet 1970:102, Berreman 1981: 10-30).

2. General Features of Caste

One type of stratification is a caste system. There seems to be no general agreement on the definition of caste nor on its precise nature. But some ethnographers who write from the Indian context believe that there is a minimal set of primary characteristics, the combination of which consti-

tutes the essence of caste. For example, Hutton interprets caste as a combination of the following phenomena: endogamy, restriction of commensality, status hierarchy, the concept of pollution, association with the traditional occupations, ascription of membership by birth and the pre-eminence of the Brahmins (Hutton quoted in Leach 1971:23). In my view, this set of basic prerequisites of caste stands as an ideal Hindu Indian caste system which can hardly exist even in India (see Todd 1977: 398). In reality only some of these characteristic features of caste are encountered in a particular caste system.

The caste as a form of social stratification divides members of the whole society into discrete, well defined and relatively permanent groups. These different social groups are ranked vertically in a hierarchy of horizontal layers (strata) according to their social status. Members of any particular stratum are considered as a homogeneous group of equal social status. Members of different strata are either superior or inferior to one another according to the position of their strata in the hierarchy. The higher the position of the stratum in the hierarchy, the greater the social status of its members and vice versa. As caste is a system of structured inequality, any individual member is assumed to know how to behave towards other members of the society just by knowing their position in the hierarchy without necessarily knowing them personally. This implies that the same individual can behave as superior in a particular situation and as equal or inferior in another, depending on whom he is

interacting with. Berreman expressed this idea by saying that "one learns how to behave in ways appropriate to his rank, to treat others in ways appropriate to their ranks and to expect them to treat him accordingly" (1973:2). Any individual who is not keeping his/her proper place will be corrected by different devices ranging from an ironic smile to physical coercion.

Unlike the case of the class system of stratification, the differential evaluation of members of a caste system is rationalized on intrinsic basis such as the belief in inborn differences. The membership of a caste stratum is ascribed by birth and it is for life. Any individual member is ascribed the social status of his/her parents irrespective of his/her own achievements and personal qualifications. Consequently, the individual's social standing is not affected by the amount of money he gains from his craft to the same extent as it is affected by his family's social position (see Littlejohn 1972:73, Leach 1971:6). For this reason, an Indian Untouchable may be economically better off than some Brahmins but he still remains Untouchable. This disjunction between the individual's social status and economic power is one of the important features which differentiate the caste system from the other forms of social stratification. Dumont realized that the Brahmins in the Hindu India are ranked high in the status hierarchy irrespective of their economic standing. This led him to suggest that the disjunction between the status power and the economic power is basic in any caste system. He states:

"In order to decide whether we can speak of a caste system in a society, one must ask: Are status and power completely dissociated, can one find the equivalent of Brahman/Kshatriya relation"? (1980:215)

Members of a caste society are also differentiated on the basis of their ritual purity and pollution. For instance, in the ideal Hindu Indian caste, the Varnas are ranked in one unified hierarchy according to their respective degree of ritual purity to Brahmins (priests), Kshatriya (rulers), Vaishya (merchants) and Shudra (servants), excluding the Untouchables who are considered outcastes (Berreman 1973:5, Mayer 1968:343). While the members of the first three groups are "twice born" and hence are accorded a relatively high status, the Shudra are not so and they are consequently regarded as relatively inferior and ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy. The Untouchables are ultimately excluded from the Varna on the basis of their assumed innate ritual pollution which accorded them the lowest status in the Hindu society.

Dumont defines caste narrowly and considers it as a particular feature of the Indian culture. He regards as fallacious any application of the term caste outside the Indian cultural area. This view led him to conceptualizing the purity and pollution in terms of the Hindu religion as essential for any social system to be defined as caste: "If it was confirmed that elsewhere there existed groups in other respects similar, but lacking this link with religious beliefs, then should not these beliefs be considered purely

accidental"? (1980:201). But at the same time he seems to apply the term caste to some societies in India even when the concept of purity does not provide the rationale for their social systems. So, for example, he considers the internal divisions of the Lingayat Hindu religious sect to be castes in spite of the fact that the members of this sect have no concept of impurity. He also admits that the Muslim and Christian communities in India have castes. He explains this fact by pointing out that the non-Hindus in India are in this respect under the influence of the entire Indian social environment in which the caste constitutes a society by itself (1980: 202-10). In my view, the Hindu religion does not seem to be inevitable to caste. Bank's study in Jaffna village has revealed that the Vellala, the dominant caste are neither Brahmins nor even "twice born" whereas the Brahmins have lost their previous high social status (Bank 1971: 3). Yalman's study in Kandyan Highlands (1971) has also revealed that there are castes even among the Buddhist Sinhalese. This study has also revealed that the concept of pollution is associated with family names and place of residence rather than with occupation or birth. These findings encouraged Leach who shares Dumont's view that caste is a unique feature of Indian culture to undermine the importance of Hindu religion in determining whether a system is caste or not (see Todd 1977:401).

An important feature of caste is that any contact between members of a high caste and a low caste will result in contaminating the members of the high caste. To avoid contamination, the members of the high castes keep social

distance from those of the low castes by several means. For example, they adopt endogamous marriages in order to preserve their superiority and high status because the establishment of marital relations with members of inferior castes would degrade their status. Therefore, intercaste marriages rarely occur in caste societies. It is not only marriage with members of inferior castes that could degrade the status of members of the high castes but sexual liaison with them as well. Adultery with a person of a low caste is considered taboo sanctioned by severe condemnation and excommunication.

Since members of the high castes are liable to be contaminated through their association with members of inferior castes, they refrain from eating, drinking or smoking with them. In some caste systems, members of high caste do not share the same vessels with members of low castes or use the same wells with them for the same reason (Dumont 1980: 47). Members of the low castes are also thought to be capable of contaminating the members of the high castes by their physical proximity (Mason 1970: 146). This requires them to adopt residential segregation to keep them distant in space. For this reason, in most caste societies, members of the low castes either live in their own villages or occupy separate clusters in towns.

Caste is associated with traditional hereditary occupations. There is a system of division of labour whereby members of each stratum are exclusively associated with a particular set of activities for their livelihood. Members

of each stratum perform activities that are appropriate to their status. In the Indian caste system for example, the Brahmins refrain from iron-smithing, pottery and weaving which are traditionally performed by the Shudra for they consider these activities to be inappropriate to their high status. The Shudra avoid undertaking some other defiling activities which are associated with taking the life such as butchery and handling the castoffs of the human body as inappropriate to their status. These are exclusively performed by the Untouchables who are more inferior than them.

Like Dumont, Leach regards caste as a cultural phenomenon confined to India. He holds the view that those who apply the term caste to contexts outside the Indian world go astray (Leach 1971: 5). He agrees with Barth that the different caste systems encountered in the Indian sub-continent share structural rather than cultural similarities with the ideal pattern of the Hindu caste organization. But for him, this structural similarity does not justify the universal application of the concept of caste. He considers the Indian caste as a phenomenon of social structure but without compromising the link with the Hindu culture.

While both Dumont and Leach agree that caste is a cultural phenomenon confined to the Indian scene, they lay emphasis on different aspects when defining caste. Dumont considers the concept of the Hindu religious purity and impurity to be the most important determinant of caste. But for Leach, caste is basically an organic system of division of labour of economically interdependent groups

(Leach 1971:5). He sees the existence of division of labour whereby members of different castes are involved in a network of economic, political and ritual relations as a prime determinant of caste. But in my view, this definition is inadequate to distinguish between a caste and a caste-like system which maintains only some characteristic features of caste. To be capable to do so, Todd suggests that Leach should add to his definition that this division of labour is "divinely approved" and "protected by pollution concepts and practices" (Todd 1977:401).

The idea that caste is an all embracing system is held by many scholars. In Dumont's interpretation, caste is an all embracing system in the sense that it is impossible to be in a society and unclassified as a member of a particular caste. He lays emphasis on the system and regards it as a necessary condition for caste: "To be able to speak of caste, there must be a system of castes in the sense that the set of castes includes all the members of the society" (1980: 215). Therefore, he regards these stratified societies in which only one stratum exhibits the characteristic features of castes without there being an all embracing caste system as non-castes. But it has been realized that caste within India itself is an extremely variable phenomenon for there exist many different caste systems (jatis) even in a small locality (see Berreman 1968: 333, De Reuck and Knight 1967: 45). What makes the problem even more complicated is that these different caste systems encountered in the Indian cultural area share structural rather

than cultural similarities with the ideal pattern of the Hindu caste organization. Moreover, Dumont's and Leach's narrow definitions of the term caste proved to be inappropriate even within the context of the Indian cultural area. This seems to favour the view that it is possible to grasp the real essence of caste through defining it in structural terms. Barth also shares this view when he states: "If the concept of caste is to be useful in sociological analysis, its definition must be based on structural criteria and not on particular features of the Hindu philosophical scheme" (1971: 145). Many scholars (for example, Berreman 1968, Vaughan 1970, Maquet 1970) share the view that caste is a universal phenomenon and not only confined to India. There are different societies in different parts of the world which are structurally and functionally similar to the ideal Indian caste. Then the best way to grasp the essence of caste is to study it cross-culturally to compare these different societies in order to arrive at generalizations about them. In this respect, Berreman pointed out striking structural similarities between the Indian caste system and the white/black relationship in the United States. Both societies share endogamy, status stratification, the concept of pollution in sexual relations, commensality and residence (see Sinha 1967: 98). This led him to conceptualizing caste as a common human response to similar social conditions and not a particular phenomenon confined to India.

On the basis of his cross-cultural comparison, Berreman concluded that caste is found in varying degrees in a number

of societies and there exists a range of castes, caste-like and non-caste societies which can be viewed as points along a continuum (1967: 49). This means a caste society may turn to be a caste-like society in which there exist only some features of caste or to a non-caste society which exhibits no feature of caste. Reversely, a non-caste or caste-like society may become a caste society.

Vaughan defined caste broadly to include those stratified societies in which only one stratum exhibits the characteristic features of caste without there being an all embracing caste system. According to him, endogamous, occupationally specialized craftsmen who are viewed as different from the rest of the society constitute a caste. In his study of the Marghi society in West Africa, he described only the ankyagu, a minority group of hereditary specialized blacksmiths, potters, drummers and diviners as caste. The ankyagu are seen as different from the rest of the Marghi people and are characterized by their rustic, conservative behaviour and dress. They perform some other despised activities such as digging graves and carrying corpses to the graves. They also perform other necessary services and provide goods for the rest of the Marghi population. For instance, they are the only producers of the agricultural tools to the Marghi who depend heavily on farming. They also produce different types of weapons and provide various miscellaneous services which contribute to the smooth running of the Marghi society.

Irrespective of this importance of the ankyagu, the

Marghi keep social distance from them and avoid associating with them except when they are in need of their inevitable services. The reason is that the ankyagu are believed to possess supernatural powers and mystical objects which, if put in the farms, can protect the grain from theft.

Marriage with the ankyagu is prohibited by custom. The rest of the Marghi also do not eat or drink with the ankyagu nor share the same dish with them. If the ankyagu is to take food in a Marghi house or drink in the beer market, he has to bring his own vessels (Vaughan 1970: 78). But apart from this restricted commensality, endogamy, ascription of membership by birth, occupational specialization and the economic interdependence between the ankyagu and the rest of the Marghi, other features of caste are lacking. Also the disjunction between the individual's social status and economic power which Dumont considered as an important determinant of caste is not clear in the Marghi society; Vaughan states that the ankyagu are neither despised nor inferior to the Marghi (1970: 90). While for Dumont the concept of purity and pollution in terms of the Hindu religion is the prime determinant of caste, in Marghi society, the concept of pollution is "weak and ill-defined" (Tuden and Plotnicov 1970:17). Apart from stating that the Marghi do not share food, drink or the same dish with the ankyagu, Vauhgan did not mention the existence of the concept of pollution in this society. But the concept of purity and pollution in terms of the Hindu religion does not exist even in some areas of the Indian sub-continent as revealed in Bank's and

Yalman's studies (Bank 1971; Yalman 1971). Also the disjunction between the individual's social status and economic power does not exist in some areas of India. A recent study by Betteile in an Indian village that was undergoing change revealed the fact that the Brahmins managed to secure high ritual status and economic power (see Todd 1977: 398). Therefore, if the disjunction between status and economic power is the prerequisite for caste, even in India itself the term caste has to be used only in those particular areas in which Dumont's criteria could be applied (1977: 399). Todd also pointed out that on Dumont's criteria, three of the four caste systems in Leach's symposium (1971) will fail to be castes. So, even though some of the characteristic features of caste were absent in the Marghi society, one cannot help but to accept Vaughan's classification of the ankyagu as a caste for in the Marghi society, there exist many other features of caste which cannot be overlooked. But as the ankyagu are not despised and the hierarchy is weak in the Marghi society, I believe that this society can be more appropriately classified as a caste-like society.

Maquet holds the view that caste is a universal phenomenon. For him, the term could be applied to any society outside India if it is structurally and functionally similar to the ideal Indian caste society. He stated that, "On theoretical grounds, then one cannot object to the attempt to extend, in similar fashion, the application of caste to institutions other than Indian social divisions" (Maquet 1970:93).

Maquet justified his application of the term caste to the Rwanda society on these grounds. The Traditional Rwanda society was divided into three permanent groups so that every Rwanda man or women was either a Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. The membership of these three groups was ascribed by birth. Like the Indian castes, the three Rwanda groups were ranked vertically in a hierarchy of horizontal layers (strata) according to their differential status and privileges. The dominant Tutsi were ranked at the top of the hierarchy. The relatively inferior Hutu were ranked below them and the Twa were ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy because they were the most inferior group in Rwanda. This inferiority of the Twa was justified by the belief that they belonged to a different race. Members of the other groups described them half-jokingly as more akin to monkeys than to human beings (Maquet 1970: 111).

According to Maquet, Dumont's disjunction between the individual's social status and economic power was also applicable in Rwanda society. He stated that "an intelligent, active and wealthy Hutu had less status power than a Tutsi devoid of these qualities" (1970:105). For this reason, neither a poor and humble Tutsi could become Twa nor a rich Twa could become Tutsi. Members of different castes were conscious of their status hierarchy irrespective of their economic situation. When any two persons were involved in a social interaction, their mutual hierarchical position was the most important factor shaping the interaction.

The Rwanda castes kept social distance between them. A Hutu could push away a Twa who did not keep his proper place (Maquet 1970:115). Members of different castes were residentially segregated and kept separated from one another at different social occasions. The Tutsi, Hutu and Twa did not eat or drink together and there was no room for any kind of socialization across caste boundaries. To enhance social distance, intercaste marriage was prohibited.

The Rwanda adopted a system of division of labour which assigned particular economic activities to members of each caste. The type of activity performed by members of a caste was thought to be appropriate to their status. The Tutsi cattle rearing nomads were the chiefs of Rwanda society. The Hutu were cultivators and herders of the Tutsi cattle. The Twa were hunters, potters, blacksmiths and entertainers. These three caste groups were economically interdependent and none of them could perform activities traditionally associated with other groups. This created three distinct sub-cultures and different life styles in Rwanda society. The existence of all these features of caste led Maquet to apply the term caste in his analysis of the Rwanda social organization even though it lacked many of the complexities of the Indian caste.

Many other scholars also described certain groups in some African societies as castes. For instance, Dilley described the mabube, a specialized group of weavers and praise-singers among the Tukulor of the Senegal river basin as caste (1987). According to him, their singing and associa-

tion with ritual functions made them "apart" or "different from" the rest of the Tukulor society which despised and scorned them. Todd also ascribed the term caste to the Dime society of South-West Ethiopia. For him, there existed an all embracing caste system in the Dime which categorized members of the society into three different blocs ranked hierarchically according to their purity and pollution into chiefs, commoners and ritual servants, smiths and tanners respectively (1977). He added that the tanners and smiths were prohibited from touching other members of the Dime society and entering their houses or farms for they are held to be impure by birth and so were capable of contaminating others by their contact or proximity. Richter studied the Senufo of Ivory Coast and described the fijembele, a hereditary, endogamous group of leatherworkers, carvers, healers and potters who are considered a race apart from the rest of Senufo as caste (1980). According to him, the fijembele were neither polluted nor inferior to the senembele, the dominant group but feared because of the supernatural powers they claimed to possess.

The preceding discussion indicates that the term caste refers to a complex phenomenon. The debate over its definition reveals two conflicting views but there seems to be no agreement on a particular definition of the term caste even among those who share the same basic notion. To throw more light on the complexities of social stratification which exhibits at least certain features of caste, the caste should best be conceptualized as a universal phenomenon and

not a particular feature of the Indian culture. The reason is that many of its aspects are encountered in different societies outside the Indian cultural area. Such societies vary in the rigidity of their stratification to the extent to which they display the most common characteristic features of caste.

One important aspect of castes is that they are based on power rather than on general consent. They are structures of power in the sense that those who exercise power are the most superior whereas those who lack power are the most inferior. In most of the known caste societies, the members of the superior groups are believed to be either conquerors or invaders of the low status groups. Therefore, the high status and power of the superior castes can be seen as legitimized by conquest rather than by consent.

The Zaghawa system of social stratification is similar in many respects to that of other African societies which can be seen as caste-like systems. In consequence, I am going to use the concept of caste in my analysis of the Zaghawa social stratification.

CHAPTER TWO

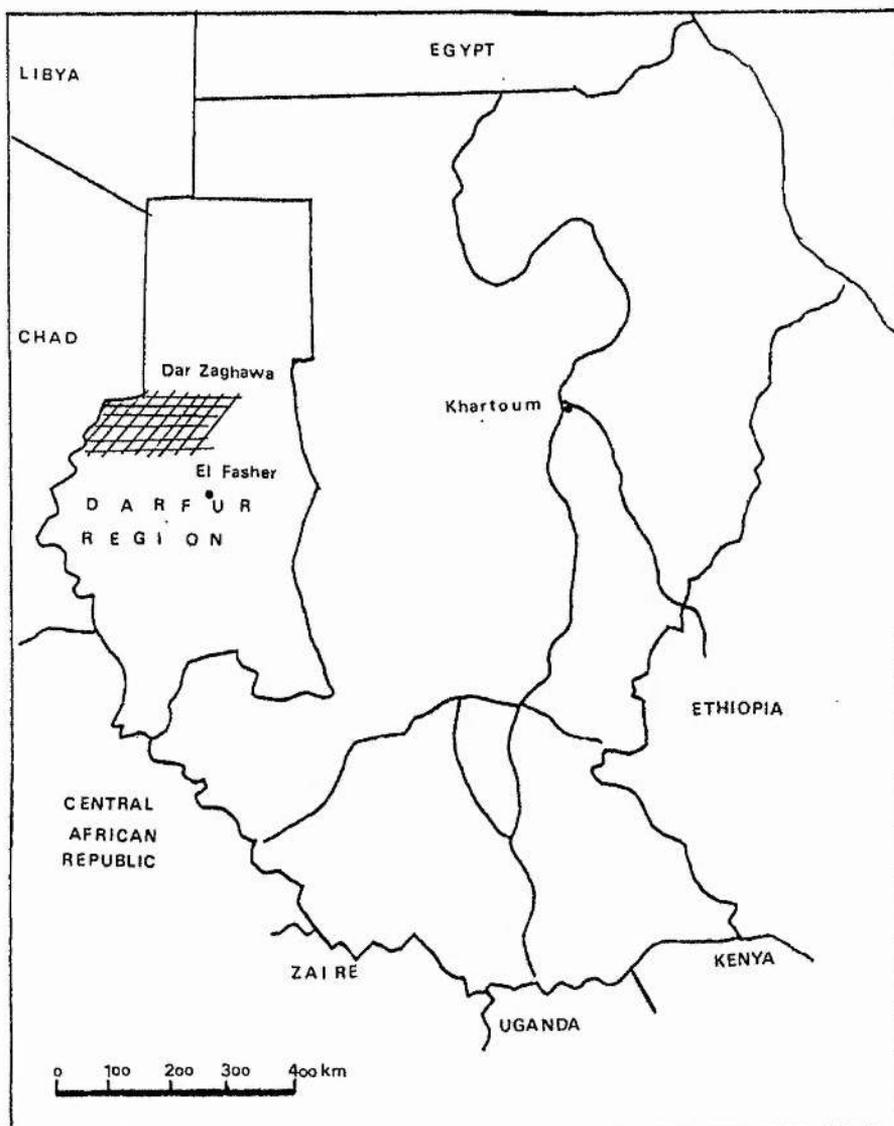
THE ZAGHAWA AND THEIR HABITAT

1. The Country

The Zaghawa are a pastoral semi-nomadic group in Northern Darfur region in Western Sudan. They occupy an area of 40,000 km² in the Sahelian zone delimited by the latitudes 15 - 18 N and the longitudes 21 - 25 E which is traditionally known as Dar Zaghawa (see map 1 & 2). Today, however, not all the Zaghawa of the Sudan live in it. They started to spread out beyond its boundaries to the more hospitable areas of Southern Darfu, Northern Kordofan and the Gezira Aba for various reasons of which the most important ones are the frequent droughts. But more or less, Dar Zaghawa still remains to be the core of the Zaghawa. The recent research by Ibrahim (1984), and Harir (1986) indicates that there is a population of some 40,000 still residing in it.

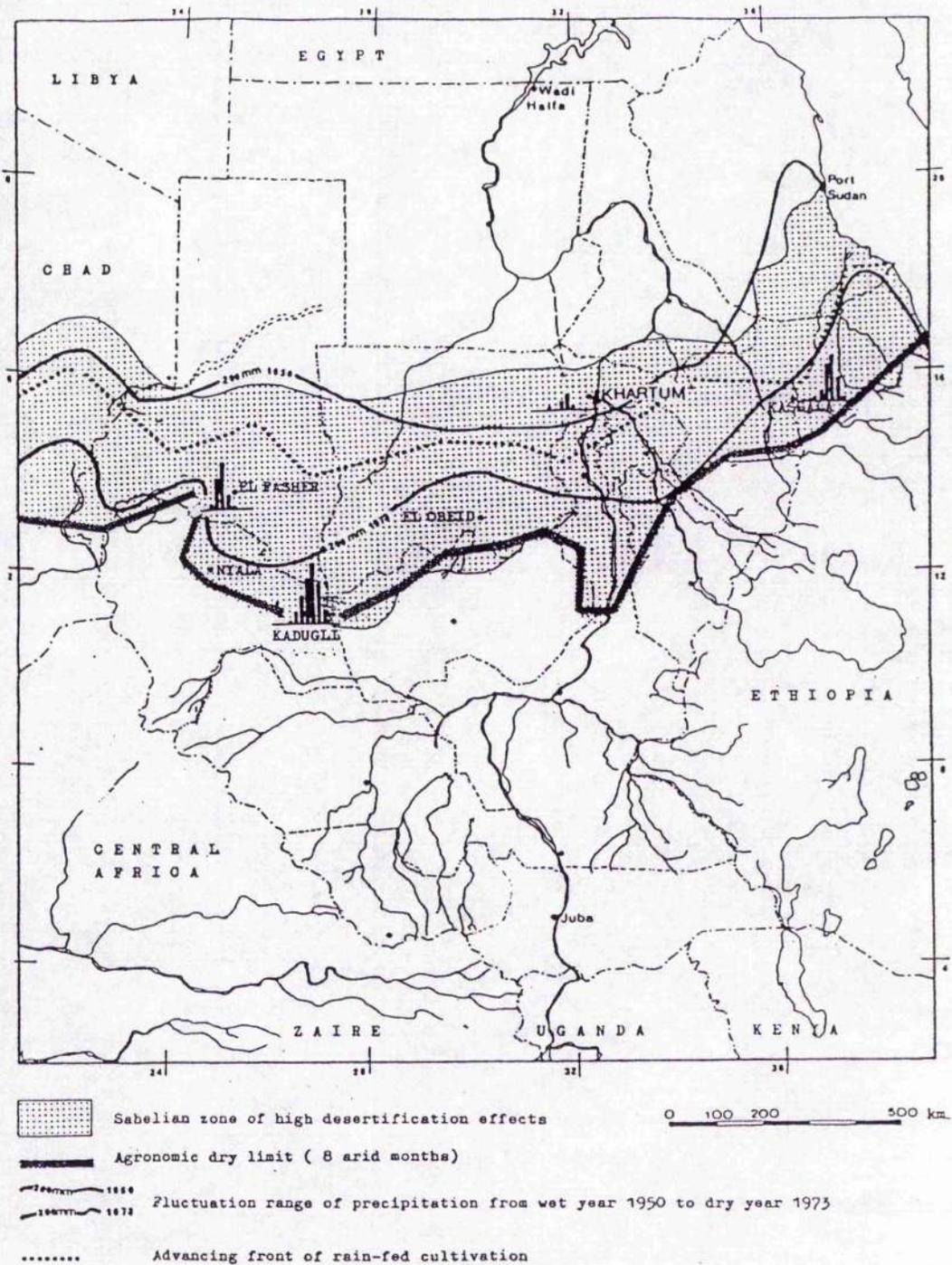
The Zaghawa neighbour the Fur, Tama and Tunjur sedentary cultivators in the south and the Masaliet and Gimir in the west (see map 3). They encounter some pastoral camel rearing nomads such as the Zeyadiya, Kababish and the Meidob as well as the sedentary Berti in the eastern fringes of their territory. The Mahriya and Um Jallul nomads cross the south-eastern part of Dar Zaghawa during their long transhumances. In the north, the international border line between Sudan and Chad separates the Zaghawa of Darfur from those

Map 1: The Location of Dar Zaghawa



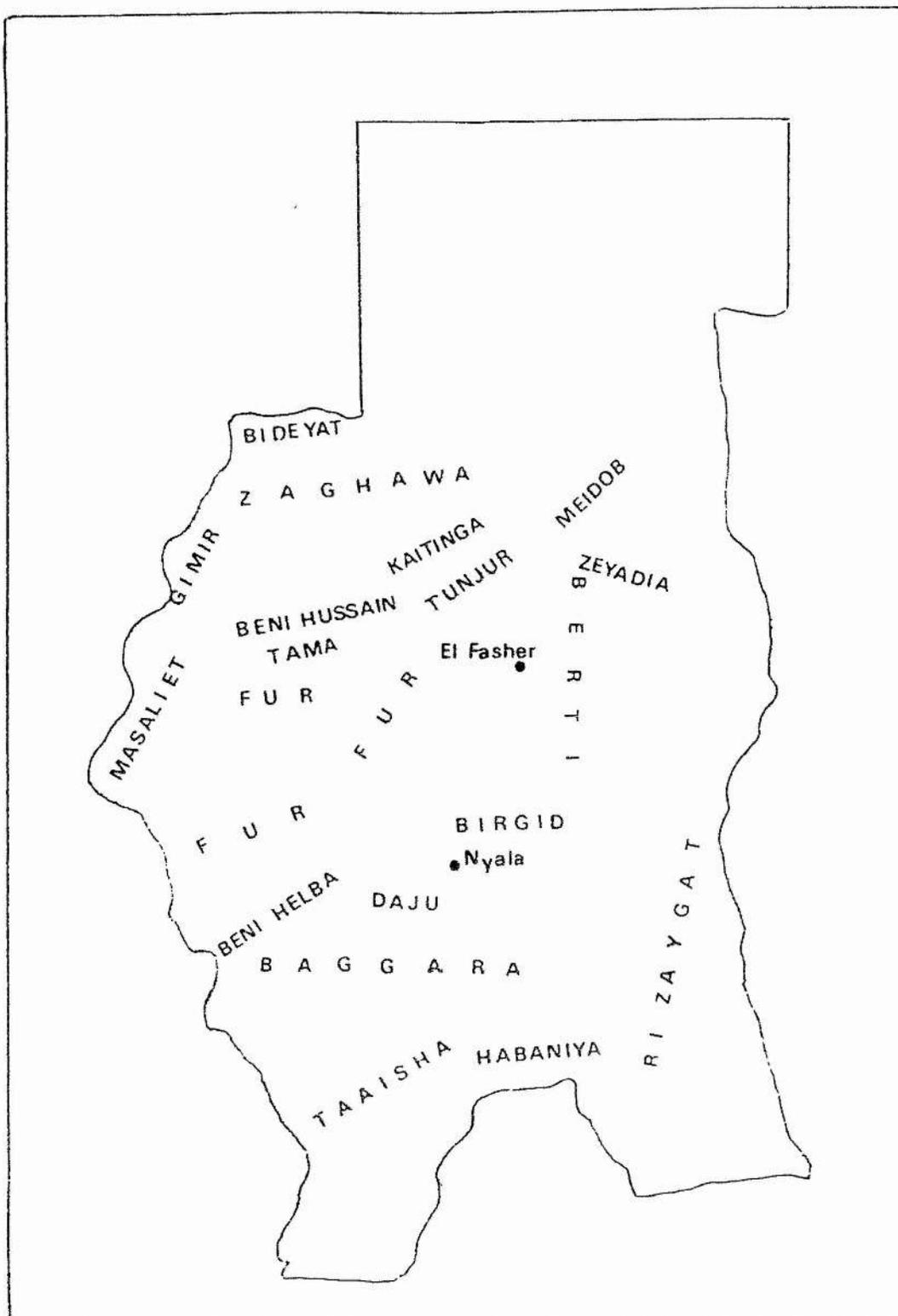
Source: Cater (1986) with modifications

Map 2: The Sahelian Zone in the Sudan



Source: Ibrahim (1980)

Map 3: Zaghawa and Their Neighbours



Source: Abdul Jalil and Khatir (1977)

living in Chad. Traditionally, the Zaghawa identify themselves as beri but the term Zaghawa by which they were referred to by outsiders (see Tubiana and Tubiana 1977) has gained popularity even among themselves. They use this term when they identify themselves to strangers outside their homeland or when they are communicating with others.

Dar Zaghawa is a plateau of a variety of topographic features but in its general outlook, it is a goz land (sandy soils of old dunes) covered by sheets of wind blown sand and barren basement of sporadic hills. Many scattered clay depressions are encountered in different parts of the country which is cross-cut by a great number of wadis. Among these, the most prominent are Wadi Hawar, Wadi Muzbed, Maraheik, Wadi Sunut, Wadi Umburu, Furawiya, Karnoi and Tine. In the north and the north-east, sheets of blown sand are now actively blocking the main water course of many wadis which remained dry for the past few years due to the fluctuation in the rainfall. There are abundant gullies throughout the country which increase towards the south where rainfall is more favourable. The availability of the underground water in some parts of Dar Zaghwa made it possible for the government to establish donkis (water pumping stations) such as Wakhaim, Lukka, Umharaz and Abu-Liha to supply the nomads and the sedentary population with water.

Dar Zaghwa has been influenced heavily by the changing environmental conditions which are occurring in the Sahelian zone. The low precipitation and the immense fluctuation in the rainfall have become characteristic features of Dar Zaghawa

during the last two decades. According to Tubiana and Tubiana (1977: 33), the mean annual rainfall varied from 150 mm³ in the north to 300 mm³ in the south during the 1960s but Harir (1986: 3) suggests that there has been a deficit of 69% in the mean precipitation in 1982 as compared to that of the 1960s. Today, the country can be seen by and large, as of a harsh semi-desert environment.

The rainy season fluctuates from one year to another but in general, it is confined to the period between July and September. Towards the south, it starts raining slightly earlier. The onset of the rains begins by one or two heavy showers after a long dry season to relieve people at a time when the wells dry up and water in the dams turns to be extremely rare and polluted. Despite the short duration of the rainy season, under normal circumstances, the rainfall is sufficient to enable most of the gullies to flow several times in autumn. As many gullies are tributaries of the wadis, the latter flow usually more than twice during the season. When rains do not fall for two consecutive years, loose sheets of wind blown sand block the main course of some of the wadis such as Bameshi and Wadi Muzbed. This leads to the seepage of the water and prevents it from flowing into the lower parts of the wadis. Except in dry years, the surface water is temporarily abundant in pools and water courses during the rainy season. These sources of surface water provide people with a sufficient supply of water before they again have to turn to the permanent wells, dams and water pumping stations.

The rainfall is also sufficient for the growth of grasses such as *Aristida Plumosa* (Bayad), *Nechrus Biflorus* (Haskanit), *Tribulus Terrestris* (Derasa) which provide the main grazing. It also enables the growth of plants which augment the diet of the poor households before the millet ripens. The most important among them are *Echinochloa Colonom* (Defra), *Acacia Publifolia* (Koreb) and *Cassia Tora* (Kwal). The rainfall also suffices for the growth of thornbushes of *Acacia Mellifera* (Kitr), *Acacia Nubica* (Laot) and *Commifora Africana* (Gaful) in the plains and the clay depressions as well as on the hillsides. Bigger trees such as *Acacia Albida* (Haraz), *Ziziphus Mucronata* (Nabag), *Acacia Arabica* (Sunut) and *Balanites Aegyptica* (Higlig) grow in abundance along the banks of the wadis.

2. Territorial Units and Internal Divisions

The Zaghwa are internally divided into four adjacent dars (territories) known as Dar Tuer, Dar Gala, Dar Kobe and Dar Artaj. The population of Anka and Beire are also Zaghawa but administratively they have been following the Kaitinga, a neighbouring administrative unit since the reign of Sultan Ahmed Dawra of the Fur Sultanate (see O'Fahey 1980: 84 for the reasons). Each dar represents to some extent a distinct linguistic area since Kubara (Kobe), Unaiy (Artaj), wegi (Tuer and Gala) and Tuba (Bideyat) speak different distinguishable dialects. The dars are named after mountains around which the founding ancestors of the major clans inha-

biting each dar are said to have resided when they first arrived in the area (see Table 1). Except in a few cases in Dar Tuer and Gala, the clans of a dar claim no common ancestor. The clan is symbolized by the clan brand which identifies the individual clan member in a way similar to the Nuer spear name (see Evans-Pritchard 1940: 215). The clans in Dar Zaghawa are associated with distinct territories but this does not mean that all the clan members have to live within the boundaries of the clan territory. In fact, an individual can live elsewhere if he feels secure away from his clan territory; but even those who reside outside the territory preserve their clan membership. Today, as many Zaghawa moved to live among other groups for various reasons, of which the most important one is the search for water and pasture, it is the dar or the place of an individual's actual residence which identifies him. For instance, when two Zaghawa meet outside Dar Zaghawa and try to establish their respective identity, they never ask about their clans but about their dars. The reason for this is that each dar is a recognized political unit (a sultanate, kingship or shartaiship) whose members have their own customs regulating marriage, choice of leaders etc. Therefore, an individual's membership of a dar conveys more information about him than his clan membership. This system of identifying individuals by their dars is similar to that of the people of Sefro in Morocco (see Rosen 1984: 19-25).

The existence of numerous clans in Dar Zaghwa and their separation into dars which cover vast geographical areas

Table 1: Zaghawa Clans Distributed Among The Dars

No.	Dar Gala	Dar Tuer	Dar Kobe	Dar Artaj
1	Geli Gargi	Agaba	Geira	Awlad Aadi
2	Kaliba	Awlad Degain	Weira	Nagori
3	Buka	Awlad Dowre	Nowra	Birigei
4	Biriara	Lilla	Borsu	Dangari
5	Kurra	Biriara	Todora	Awlad Um Sereira
6	Dawa	Nuira	Meera	
7	Shigeira	Nura	Ango	
8	Gula	Awlad Kadaw	Kaka	
9	Ordio	Awlad Nugei	Werso	
10	Okowra	Bideyat	Bideyat	
11	Tabara	Ila Misa	Boyra	
12	Ohura	Dawa		
13	Elbora	Ini		
14	Kotora	Mai		
15	Abdiya			
16	Awlad Dabo			
17	Warenga			
18	Tamana			

Source: Harir (1986) with modifications.

made the establishment of face to face relations between members of non-adjacent dars quite difficult in the past. This situation led to stereotyping. When members of different dars and clans come together in a friendly situation, they always exchange teasing remarks based on these stereotypes. For instance, the Unaiy (Artaj) are always laughed at by the rest of the Zaghawa who see them as foolish and childish in behaviour. The Kubara (Kobe) are believed to be able to hide their feelings under all circumstances. In this respect, they are said to be like a melon: unless you "kill" it, you do not know how it looks inside. Many Wegi (members of Dar Tuer and Gala) say of the Kubara (Kobe): "give a Kubara a corner of your house and he will claim it altogether". On the other hand, most Kubara believe that the Wegi have familiars and that they are unable to perceive a dangerous situation before they step into it. The Wegi, Kubara and the Unaiy believe that the Tuba (Bideyat) are untrustworthy, unpredictable and always strike from behind. There is a vast repertoire of stories which justify such views.

In spite of the fact that the Zaghawa are internally divided into Kobe, Bideyat, Wegi and Unaiy, who claim no common ancestor, they share features of a common culture and history. Since the independence, the Zaghawa were confined to one parliamentary constituency. After 1969 when Dar Zaghawa was merged as a constituency with Kutum and Kabkabiya, the Zaghawa have always agreed upon one candidate from among themselves to compete with others from outside Dar Zaghawa. The Zaghawa also share a common language although this

contains different dialects with slight variations which I assume are not always fully intelligible to all of them. The Zaghawa have always been identified by others as distinct from other peoples in terms of their culture of which the most important hallmark is their caste-like system. Perhaps more importantly, they have a self awareness as one unified group in relation to other groups. Today, they behave as a common interest group in Darfur in relation to other ethnic groups in a situation of competition for higher offices and lucrative positions in the region which are allocated along ethnic lines.

3. Historical Background

The beri are a pastoral semi-nomadic group which represent the majority of the population of Dar Zaghwa. The mai are a minority group of drummers, hunters, iron-smiths, potters and craftsmen who live among the beri. They are composed of disparate groups who claim no common descent or clan membership. Each major beri clan has its own mai who perform vital services for its members but the mai claim no descent from the founding ancestor of the beri clans. The beri and mai consider themselves to be of different origins. To shed some light on the historical origin of the present day Zaghawa, it is imperative to know how the beri and mai themselves conceive of their past history.

According to the beri tradition, not all the beri are of common origin although most of them claim to have origi-

nated in the east. The five major clans of Dar Tuer (Awlad Dowre, Awlad Degain, Awlad Agab, Awlad Kadaw and Awlad Nugui) claim Bornu origin by tracing their descent to Mohammed Al Barnawi or his son Haj Ali, a Bornu learned man who had been on pilgrimage from west Africa. As a consequence, the members of these five clans who have been ruling Dar Tuer for more than two centuries, trace their genealogy to Tubu al-Awal who is believed to be the founding ancestor of the ruling families of Bornu (Palmer 1967 vol.3: 16-17).

Many of the clans of Dar Gala such as the ruling clan of Kaliba, Biriara, Awlad Dabo and Geli Garge, claim to be Arab Bedouins in origin. The first two claim to be descended from Suliman Haj Terio whose name indicates his eastern origin. The founding ancestor of the Geli Gargi is said to be a flag bearer who came from the east with Mohamed Wad al-Soda who was tracing the fleeing Mahriya, Um Jallul, Taai-sha, Habaniya and Rizaygat Arabs to Darfur (Arkell 1937: 84-94). Despite the fact that the Kaliba, Buka, Geli Gargi and some of the Bideyat moved to their present territory from Bao in the north, according to their own tradition, the Buka, Kaliba, Geli Gergi originate from Dongola on the Nile. The Buka maintain that their founding ancestor came from Dongola to Bao on the back of an ostrich and as a consequence, they regard ostrich as their totem which they do not eat.

The Kobe maintain that they are people of diverse origins who came from different directions. Many beri hold the view that the Kobe are Daju in origin but this view is rejected by the Kobe themselves who see it as too sweeping.

An interview with melik Mohammedein Adam Sebi the chief of Dar Tuer (Arkell 1937) revealed that the Kabga, Kereigu of Dar Kobe and the Dangari of Dar Artaj are the original beri. But Sultan Hasan Borgu, chief of Kabga area which is part of Dar Kobe rejects this view because Kabga is a name of a mountain i.e. of a geographical area and not a name of a clan.

The Unaiy (Artaj) claim to be Arab Gileidat who came from Jebel Imam. There are also other beri clans who claim other origins such as the Lilla of Dar Tuer who claim to be Beni Hilal Arabs. The Okoura, Oste, Ordeo of Dar Gala claim Borgu origin.

Not all these oral traditions can be accepted as true statements of historical fact but they at least confirm Arkell's opinion that the Zaghawa are of different origins and that what really unites them is their common language of Teda Kanuri origin (1951 : 38).

Many scholars wrote about the origin and the past history of the beri who are identified by others as Zaghawa. The name Zaghawa first appeared in the writings of the Arab geographers and travellers. According to Trimingham (1962:104), it was first used by Khuwarizmi (846 - 7) who locates the people he refers to as Zaghawa near the river Atbara east of the Nile.

Al Muhallabi, a tenth century writer, regards the Zaghawa as a blend of people who had a divine kingdom in the past and lived in the area between the Nile and Tibesti and

shared borders with the Nubian Kingdoms (Oliver & Fage 1974:48) (see map 4).

Al Masudi (947) maintains that the Zaghawa are Kushitic elements which migrated to the west of the Nile, leaving behind the Bija, Nuba and Zinj who are of the same origin (Trimingham 1962:104).

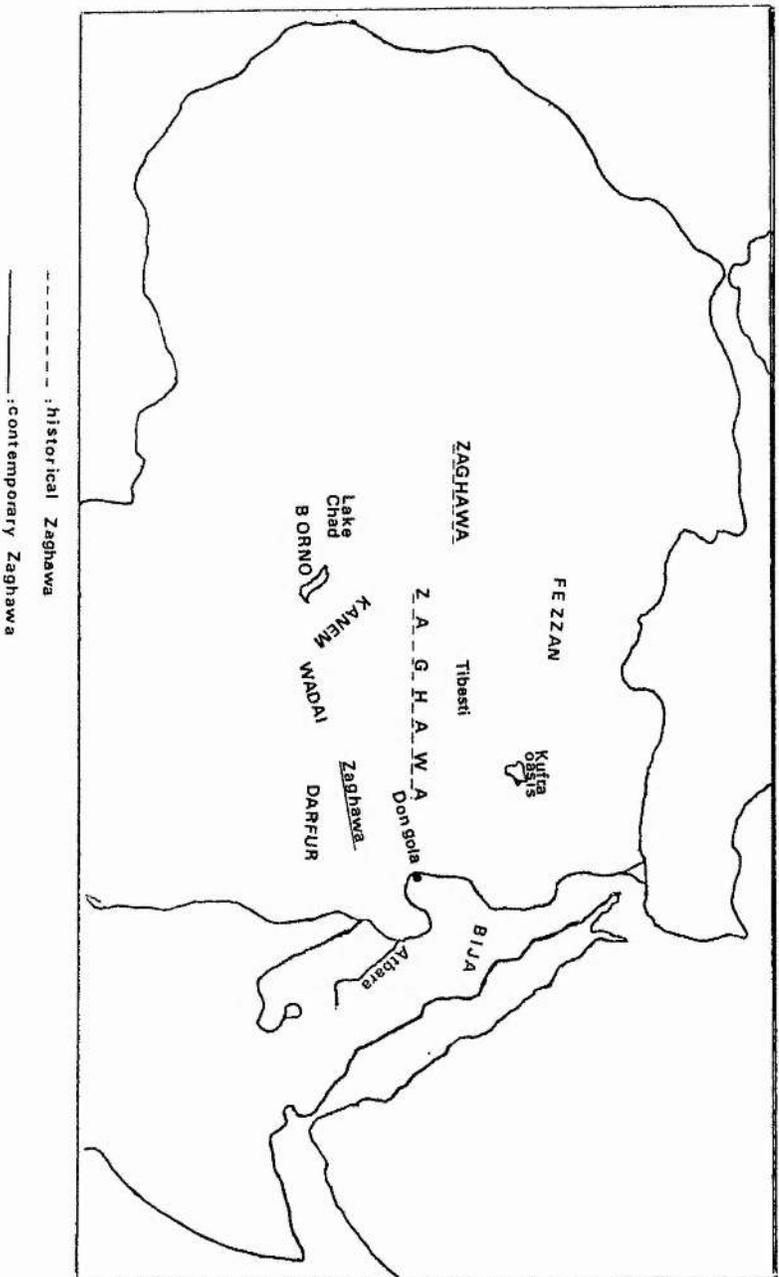
Palmer regards the Zaghawa beri or beli (1967 vol. 1:1) as Yamanites who once dominated the upper Nile valley but were driven from it about 500 - 600 A.D. to diffuse to the North Africa, Libya and central Sahara (1967 vol. 2:2). In some writings, the term Zaghawa appears to denote a geographical area. For instance, Yaqut Al-Hamawi (1224) states that "The Zaghawa is said to be a town south of Ifriquiya in the Maghrib and by others is said to be a tribe of the Sudan south of the Maghrib" (Levstzion & Hopkins 1981: 171).

It is believed by many writers including Trimingham (1962: 27), Yaqubi (Levstzion & Hopkins 1981), Palmer (1936, 1967) and Arkell (1951: 223) that the Kanem dynasty, an ancient state in West Africa south of the Sahara, was established by the Zaghawa. Palmer gives more details:

Kanem is the centre of power and its people are called Zaghawa. It is bounded on the south by Habash, on the east by Nuba, on the north by the land of Barka and on the west by Tacrur (1967: 7).

On the basis of the available sources, it is difficult to judge whether the present Zaghawa (beri) are related to the historical Zaghawa or not. There are controversial views on this matter and in the absence of any substantial evidence, any conclusion arrived at through the reconstruction of history should be taken as a mere speculation.

Map 4: The Historical and the Contemporary Zaghawa



Source: Trimmingham (1968) with modifications

Marie and Jose Tubiana (1977:1) state that they do not know whether there exists or not a slightest relation between the present day Zaghawa and the historical Zaghawa, except the common name.

Hallett, though he expresses some reservations, seems to take it for granted that the present day Zaghawa and the historical Zaghawa are of the same origin:

Today, the Zaghawa are a small group of black nomads in the Northern Darfur, speaking a language closely related to Tebu. A thousand years ago, they were much more dispersed or at least the term Zaghawa was applied to the dominant groups of nomads of non-Berber origins between Chad and Darfur (1970: 142)

Palmer seems to regard the beri as part of the historical Zaghawa who include the beli or Bideyat among many other similar ethnic groups. He writes for example, that "In 1592 there were Berber tribes in Kanem like Kenin, Daju, the beli (Bideyat) of Ennadi and various detached samples of the stratum of peoples who were called by the Arabs Zaghawa" (1936: 149). While he holds this view, he does not seem to differentiate between those he refers to as the original Kushitic Zaghawa of the Nile valley and the present Zaghawa beli who speak the same language (1967 vol.3: 61,96).

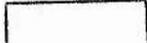
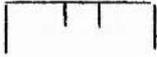
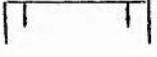
Harir (1986: 72-75), like Yaqut Al-Hamawi suggests that the term Zaghawa of the Arab geographers indicates more likely a geographical area than a particular ethnic group. For him, the term Zaghawa as used by the Arabs stands for all the acephalous tribes which occupied the area west of the Nile and south of the Sahara of whom the present Zaghawa represent a part. His view is in line with Palmer's view

that the beri are a fraction of the Beleun whom Al-Idrisi, the Arab geographer, located between Nubia and Abyssinia (1936: 150). In an elaborate conclusion Harir states that the beri are that part of the generic Zaghawa who were the last to give allegiance to any sort of centralized political power like that of the Fur Sultanate which succeeded to subjugate them in the seventeenth century (1986: 75).

With regard to all the above mentioned views about the origin of the beri and their relation to the historical Zaghawa, it is quite apparent that the term Zaghawa as used by the Arab writers is too general, fluid and confusing. Sometimes it refers to people and sometimes to land. Palmer's (1936, 1967) and Harir's (1986) views that the beri are part of the historical Zaghawa seems, however, plausible. The claim of some beri in Dar Tuer to be Bornu in origin and the opinion of some scholars that Kanem and Bornu kingdoms were established by part of the historical Zaghawa seem to give evidence to the view that at least some beri may be related directly to the historical Zaghawa. Arkell also seems to reach the same conclusion when he states that the beri have originated in Kanem (Arkell, 1951: 223).

There are similarities between the Zaghawa culture and the culture of some West African Muslim Kingdoms which would suggest the western origin of the Zaghawa. The beri for instance, scorn the blacksmiths and discriminate against them for the same reason which Cohen encountered among the Kanuri people of West Africa (Cohen 1970: 249). The influence of West African Muslims on Darfur, which they have been traver-

sing on their way to Mecca, has been realized by many writers (e.g. Osman 1983:8, Lewis 1980:21, Hassan 1980:231). Since this influence has not led to the creation of caste-like systems anywhere else in Darfur, I am inclined to believe that the beri must have some sort of relation with the historical Zaghawa.

At the same time, the influence of the wide Arabic/Islamic culture radiating from the Nile area is strongly suggested. Many beri clans believe to have originated in Dongola on the Nile valley. The clan brands of Biriara, Kaliba, Buka and Shigeira of Dar Gala are  ,  ,  and  respectively. These brands are interpreted as images of crocodile (timsah Ar.). As crocodiles only exist in the Nile or its tributaries, the clan brands would seem to support the claim of eastern origin of the respective clans.

The mai maintain that they are the original and indigenous inhabitants of Dar Zaghawa. According to them, those who call themselves beri are Arab invaders who subjugated them, turning them into servitude. Some even go further than this to suggest that they are the real beri and that the present beri in fact took over their name and their own language. They substantiate their claim that they are the original speakers of the Zaghawa language by pointing out that they are also "words-smith" and more skillful in the use of the language than the beri. Perhaps the refusal of many Zaghawa today to be seen as the original beri or the indigenous inhabitants of Dar Zaghawa could be understood as

a reaction to such claims. Once these claims are accepted, to say of some Zaghawa clans that they are the original beri, means also to suggest that they are mai.

While the mai believe that they are the indigenous inhabitants of Dar Zaghawa, both Palmer (1936: 148) and Abbaker (1980) maintains that the mai diffused from the area of Lake Chad. This view is also shared by MacMichael (1967: 56) who regards both the mai of Dar Zaghawa and the blacksmiths who live among the Berti as "small colonies" from Wadai or west of it. According to a Bornu tradition, the blacksmiths are the descendants of the slaves who were captured by the prophet in war at Kheiber (Palmer 1967 vol. 1: 74). It is said that he spared them from being killed so that they could render services to the Muslim community. This story is also told by the beri in Dar Zaghawa. In light of the available evidence, the view that the mai came originally from the west seems more plausible than the mai's own claim of being the indigenous inhabitants of Dar Zaghawa.

The preceding discussion reveals that whether there is any connection between the historical and the present day Zaghawa still remains obscure for lack of substantial evidence. As my main interest in this thesis concerns the social organization of the beri (the contemporary Zaghawa) society rather than their history, I intend to concentrate on the state of affairs in the beri society in Darfur today. These people who call themselves beri and are identified by others as Zaghawa are Muslims. While they are gearing their way of life towards scriptural Islam, a great deal of their pre-Islamic beliefs and practices is still retained. A simi-

lar state of affairs has been noted in many Muslim societies in Africa (see Holy 1987 and Osman 1983 for the Berti, Lewis 1984: 127-29 for the Somali, Trimmingham 1968 for Sudan and West Africa). The pre-Islamic cultural traits enhanced a duality in the Zaghawa society which enables the Zaghawa to act in different ways in different situations. Nevertheless, the beri accuse the Bideyat and the mai of being lax in religion and of exhibiting many pagan activities. For instance, they point out that the Bideyat swear by Ku mani (spear) instead of by the Holy Quran (see Arkell 1936: 318-19, Slatin 1896: 111-17) and that the mai make offers to some stones and trees. We shall see later how the beri religious beliefs led to discriminating against the mai and thus contributed to producing a stratified society.

CHAPTER THREE

KINSHIP AND POLITICS

1. Family and Household

The elementary family which is composed of a man, his wife and children is the smallest social unit of the Zaghawa society. It always constitutes its own household, a group of people to which the Zaghawa refer as misagu lakkoy i.e. people sharing the same cooking pot.

The polygynous marriages are quite frequent and a monogamous husband is referred to as a one-eyed man. When a man has not another wife to serve his meals and to entertain his guests when his first wife is pregnant or gives birth, he is forced to depend on his mother or sisters or he has to cook for himself. The latter alternative is not only embarrassing but also damaging to his status for it turns his guests away and, as a consequence, deprives him from his chance to rally other men around him. For this reason, the polygynous marriage is an implicit qualification for political leadership. Stories are told about known people who were chosen for leadership but refused because of their monogamous status. The ruling Zaghawa families seek to perpetuate their power by arranging political marriages and generous feast giving. In most cases they exceed the permissible limit of four wives allowed by Islam to be able to produce large quantities of food.

In many cases the jealousy between the co-wives, particularly if they are still young, makes it impossible for them to share the same hearth. As a consequence, each wife inhabits a separate household. The husband rotates among all his households which may sometimes be in different villages. Unlike the Berti (see Holy 1974:16) if the Zaghawa co-wives live in the same village, they build their separate households in the same homestead. This is a cluster of huts usually surrounded by a thorn fence which separates it from the other clusters. The Zaghawa refer to it as a doro. Ideally, it is composed of the man's several wives and the households of his married sons. The Zaghawa take it for an established fact that no woman willingly shares her hearth with another woman. For this reason, after marriage, the new family will establish in most cases its separate household within the doro. Such a household is known as be (house).

The household gradually increases its size by recruiting new members and adding relatives, friends and guests to the members of the individual family which forms its core. Its actual size is also determined by the status of the household head. For instance, the chiefly households tend to embrace "long term guests" and other dependents outside the immediate family such as horgoni (clients). If the household head is the eldest son, he will succeed to the position of the doro head on the death of his father and take over his responsibilities. These include looking after his young unmarried siblings, mother, divorced sisters and any other relatives who are unable to sustain on their own. Likewise,

the wife, having lost the help of her mother, feels it necessary to bring her nephew or niece to look after her baby. This may appear to be a heavy burden for the household head but it is not always so particularly in the good years when food is plentiful. A Zaghawi takes pride in being a head of a big household for big households are always able to meet their ends through mobilizing their own labour.

The husband becomes a full-fledged rajil be beitu (Ar; a man in his house) after he has established his own household but he still remains under the authority of his father, the head of the doro. The latter usually claims the supreme authority for all the doro members. He is responsible for their behaviour towards members of other doros and he is responsible for protecting them from injuries by others as well as for their offences against others.

Today, due to the growing individualism, the ideal solidarity of the doro rarely exists in practice. After the death of its founder, jealousy and competition over the common property tend to split it into separate households.

Conventionally the father is the head of the family and household. He claims full authority over his wife (wives) and children and to some extent over the other relatives who might be living in his household, such as sisters and young unmarried brothers. As a family head, he monopolizes the right of disposing of all the family's joint property. The members of the domestic unit have a jural right to participate in consumption as a result of their participation to the household's livelihood. Normally, the

household head divides the produce into that destined for immediate consumption and that allotted for future use. To meet the immediate consumption, he sells part of the produce in the market and uses the money to purchase additional quantities of millet needed. He also supplies his wife with money to purchase commodities such as onions, dried tomatoes, chillies, oil, okra, dried meat and soap from the weekly markets. The father in his capacity as a family head is responsible for clothing his children and wife (wives) and buying them shoes, tea and sugar. He normally finances these purchases by selling part of the joint produce. When one of the family members dies, he slaughters a bull or two from the family herd to make sadaga (death sacrifice). When his sons reach marriageable age, he pays the required bridewealth cattle to the wife giving group. Apart from providing the meals, accommodation and the occasional gifts, the family head is under no further obligation towards the fakis (itinerant religiousmen) and the hired herders who might be staying in his household. His attitude towards them is different from that towards the child of a kinsman brought to help in herding or tending a baby. The family head is supposed to treat the child as one of his own and he is responsible for providing the child with clothes and shoes for as long as he/she lives in his household.

As a jural representative of his family, the family head uses part of the family's joint produce to meet his obligations towards the community at large. For example, he pays the annual tax on the family's livestock. He also

contributes in raising the funds needed for buying an animal, tea and sugar required for the rain sacrifice which is organized by the village community. Should one of his lineage or clan members commit manslaughter or inflict a serious injury upon someone from another lineage or clan, the family head has to pay his family's share in the diya (compensation for death or injury). When an important government officer or regional minister is to visit the area, the village councils ask the household heads to contribute to the cost of entertaining him and his party. On these occasions, the family head needs to dispose of part of the family's produce to meet the communal demands.

In the Zaghawa view, women do not deserve to be charged with authority as they are thought to be incapable of it. This view is summarised in the saying rai al-mara bikis wara: a woman's idea always leads one backwards and makes one regret. In line with this view, male members of the household claim authority over the female members. For instance, as a rule, brothers claim authority over their sisters. Sometimes even young brothers tend to claim authority over their elder sisters during the absence of their fathers and their elder brothers although not all of them succeed in exercising it effectively. The general pattern is for the authority to go with age and in consequence, an elder brother claims authority over his young siblings. Except in a few cases, the latter cease to submit to this authority when they marry and establish their own households. When the father dies or becomes old, his authority is

shifted to his elder son. Such a shift occurs gradually over time and it is not always accomplished peacefully. For instance, the father may insist to entrust a particular son with taking over his responsibilities when he becomes old, ignoring the order of birth of his sons. Such behaviour, however, often leads to disputes and conflicts among the brothers since it is against the tradition of primogeniture.

Sometimes the elder sons themselves may generate conflicts among the family members. At certain age, the elder son may feel that he has become an adult and he starts exercising an undue authority, seizing the carpet from under his father's feet. To demonstrate his status, the elder son sometimes starts to dispose of the family livestock and to arrange his sisters' marriages without referring these matters to his father. As the father considers the performance of these acts to be his exclusive right and sees them as important symbolic expressions of his status, he soon cancels all the arrangements made by his son to retain his threatened authority. If the elder son is already married but insists to dispose of the common property of the family such as its money, livestock and farm land to his friends for example, this will not only stir the father's anger but will also bring his young siblings into conflict with him. The young brothers who are waiting to marry using the residual family property will lose confidence in their elder brother as a potential family head. The elder brother may fail to bring his brothers under his control when their

father eventually dies and as a consequence, each son goes his way on the death of their father.

It is indisputable that the wife has the right to dispose of her sudag (part of the bridewealth cattle received by the bride) but she is obliged to consult her husband before exercising it. Women and children have no authority to dispose of the joint property of the family. If the family members are forced to sell an animal for a good reason during the absence of the family head, a man is needed for the purpose. The wife has to find one of the village men to guarantee the sale for nobody buys an animal from a woman or a child who have no authority. Merchants are always afraid that the family head will revoke the sale unless a man has already confirmed it.

When the family head dies leaving behind a wife and young children, one of his immediate male relatives will take over his responsibility for them. There are cases in which the wife herself becomes the household head and controls her young offsprings until they reach the age of maturity. Eventually her elder son becomes the household head and takes over the responsibility from his mother. It is considered degrading for the adult man to remain under his mother's control. While this is certainly the Zaghawa ideal, in practice, some women are authoritarian and seek not only to control their children but also their husbands and brothers. After the death of their husbands, such women often become responsible for their households which are then

identified as hinan iya be (X's mother's house) even when X is an adult son.

The Zaghawa recognize as legitimate only those children born to a properly married couple. The two parents bear a joint responsibility for upbringing and socializing them according to the recognized norms of behaviour. The children are taught to respect the elders and to obey their parents. The authority of socializing the children during their infancy is also vested in their other care-takers such as their elder siblings. During the time of weaning, the child needs intensive care but at the same time it has to be separated from its mother. Therefore, the parents either borrow a young girl from their relatives to look after the child or alternatively delegate their authority to one of the close relatives to wean him or her. If any of the child's grandmothers resides in the same or a nearby village, she will take that responsibility. In most cases the maternal grandmothers are ready to participate in weaning the children for they are eager to release this burden from their daughters who have to carry out other duties as well. If no grandmother is around, the parents delegate their authority to one of the child's mother's sisters. The child keeps intimate relations for the rest of his/her life with that grandmother or maternal aunt who took the responsibility of his/her weaning.

The membership of the elementary family and household is important in determining many of the individual's rights

and duties but many of them are also determined by his or her membership of wider kinship and residential groups.

2. The Village

The Zaghawa live in small villages composed of clusters of houses and doros. Each household is composed of two or three huts of circular stone or mud walls with thatched conical roofs. The roofs are supported by one or two upright wooden poles. The huts of the household are usually encircled by hosh (a wall of millet straw) which separates them from the other houses in the same doro. The doros are separated from one another by a thorn fence.

Most of the villages in Dar Zaghawa are inhabited by members of the same lineage (erkabi). In some villages, one can encounter a few non-Zaghawa residents who live there temporarily as fakis and guests; they usually invoke kinship or friendship ties with some of the village members. Any village is under a sheikh who is usually the head of the predominant lineage.

Many Zaghawa villages were located close to mountains which provided effective defence against the forays of other ethnic groups and the Turkish invasions during the 19th century. But except in such situations of danger, the Zaghawa tended to locate their villages near the wadis which provided alluvial lands for cultivation in autumn and water and shade in summer.

When life has become generally more peaceful and at the same time many of the previous farm lands have become exhausted through continuous use, many Zaghawa have established their villages in the plain goz lands far away from any mountains or wadis. Such villages usually start as motio or duldul (a cluster of temporary huts that provide shelter for the farmers during the rainy season). Through time, they gain new members and increase in size until they become permanent villages.

Most Zaghawa Villages have a mesik. This is a separate communal building surrounded by a thorn fence where the villagers spend their leisure time and perform their religious activities and hold their public meetings. When there is a dispute between brothers or co-villagers, the village elders meet in the mesik to discuss the matter away from the earshot of the young villagers and women.

The village community as a whole performs a number of important religious ceremonies. Among these, the Eid prayers, rain sacrifices and mulid celebrations are prominent. The villagers gather in the mesik to perform them.

No matter whether the co-villagers claim kinship ties or not, the harsh conditions of life necessitate mutual help between them in all the activities which exceed the ability of an individual household. This is particularly apparent during the rainy season when the labour available to a household is unable to carry out alone all the necessary tasks on which the household depends for its existence. The mutual help among the village members is not confined to the

agricultural activities but covers also herding, building huts or wedding ceremonies. The best example of the co-villagers' duty towards one another is the hisa (fazaa:Ar; a search party for a stolen animal). When somebody's animal is stolen, it is incumbent upon every adult man in the village to mount his horse or camel and take his amulets and weapons to trace the thief with other village men. All the participants in the hisa know well how risky it may be to trace a well armed thief with bare hands or spears but the cost of not participating in it is much higher. Anyone who does not join the men of the village on such an occasion without having a good reason, will be rebuked and may be asked to move from the village. The village members may also ostracize him so that nobody will participate in his hisa should his camels be stolen.

The village members collaborate with one another in digging wells or removing the layers of sand brought by the running water of the wadi. Because water is roh (source of life) and hence one cannot deny it to others, all the villagers are supposed to participate in the task. Conventionally, the men camp at the site of the well to confine all their efforts to accomplishing the task within the shortest possible time. The woman also contribute to the effort by supplying the men with food until the task is over. If the household head is absent or there is no man in a particular household to participate in digging the well, the woman supplies the men with an animal and provides them with food like all the other women from the village. This gives the

household the full right in using the well. All the households whose members contributed to digging the well have priority in using it. Their close relatives from other villages rank next in their right of access to water. Strangers can use a well if they do not obstruct the access to water of those who have a prior right to it. Horses, guests and participants of hisa have always a recognized right to water from any well and are always allowed water before anybody else.

The village elders who are also the heads of the households meet regularly in their leisure time on an informal basis to discuss all the matters that concern the welfare of the village community. Among these, the problems related to the village pastures are the most important ones. To preserve the village interests, the village elders interact with members of other villages to settle any disputes. For instance, if members of other villages or camps try to establish their own feriks close to their village, it is their duty to ask them to move away. In principle, no one has the right to prevent other members of the dar from utilizing the free pastures but according to tradition, anyone who first establishes his camp or village in a certain area has also the first right to the pastures around it. Similarly when somebody's cattle are sick, the village elders will terminate his right of watering his animals from the communal well to prevent the village herds from catching the disease.

3. Kinship

A Zaghawi is not only a member of a single patrilineal group but claims membership of many other groups as well. According to Harir (1986: 62), he is a member of his father's group (aba be), mother's group (ina be), specific household (doro), lineage (erkabi) and clan (ner). Aba be embraces the individual's relatives of both sexes who are related to him/her through the male parent. Because patrilocality is the rule among the Zaghawa, aba be tends to be a localized group. Those members of the society who reside outside their aba be are teased by the community around them. Ina be on the other hand is composed of the individual's relatives of both sexes who are related to him/her through the female parent such as the matrilineal cousins and the mother's grandparents. The lineage (erkabi) is a localized group of a shallow genealogical depth. It is composed of a group of both sexes who claim descent from a common ancestor to whom they can easily trace their genealogical connection. The clan (ner) is a wider social category composed of several related lineages. It is a category of both sexes the membership of which is determined by the notion of common descent from one apical ancestor. On average, the genealogical depth of a clan goes back to 12 generations. Some knowledgeable clan members claim an exact knowledge of their genealogical links to the clan founder but most Zaghawa only assume descent from him. All those who do not claim descent from the several ancestors buried in

Dar Zaghawa are considered to be foreigners or rootless. To avoid ascription of foreign status, many Zaghawa tend to learn their genealogies by heart.

The genealogically equidistant relatives on the father's and mother's side are not considered equally close: a Zaghawi regards his paternal uncle to be closer to him than his maternal uncle. In line, with this differential evaluation of the patrilineal and matrilineal kin, the Zaghawa regard the patrikin as uru (bones) and the matrikin as eni (flesh).

While the Zaghawa trace their descent through the patrilineal line, they also keep intimate relations with their matrilineal relatives. This enables each individual to have many cross-cutting ties with many other community members. If any two groups are involved in a dispute, it is expected that those of their members who have common interest in both will mediate and resolve the dispute.

The most salient feature of an individual's rights and obligations determined by kinship is that they are permanent and inalienable. Unlike his rights and obligations deriving from his village membership which are tentative and cease to be binding when he moves to another village, his rights and obligations deriving from his kinship status cannot be terminated by altering his residential area. For instance, everybody has the right to inherit cattle and land from his parents even if he lives in a separate village from theirs. However, kinsmen who live in the same village are of course in a better position to help one another than those who live

dispersed in different settlements.

The mutual economic assistance between close kin is an important obligation among the Zaghawa. An individual is always under obligation to assist his destitute relatives who have the right to claim his support. The Zaghawa hold the view that the difference between kin and non-kin lies in the goods and services and the sympathy one could expect from the kin. A kinsman who fails to show his closeness by his deeds is like a stranger. This notion forces the Zaghawa to observe faithfully their duties towards their relatives such as providing them milk cows, pack animals and herders.

Kinship is a major source of security of an individual's life and property. Despite the fact that each Zaghawi can mobilize the support of his cognates, many tend to depend heavily on their agnates. The patrilineal kin bear a collective responsibility for the protection of their lives and property against the threats of outsiders. They also share collectively the consequences of their conduct towards members of other groups. For example, if a lineage member commits a murder or inflicts an injury upon a member of another lineage, his own lineage members take the necessary steps to protect him from retaliation. If the aggrieved group is to be compensated by diya (blood money), all the lineage members will collaborate in the payment.

The protection which a man enjoys from his patrilineal kin does not only concern his personal safety but also his wife's reproductive capacities. Because children trace their descent through their father from whom they acquire member-

ship of a particular lineage, the wife's reproductive capacities are held exclusively by her husband and they are in effect conceived as being owned by his lineage. If a man commits adultery with a woman from another lineage, her husband and his koso bor (father's brother's sons) will not only seek revenge against him but they will also beat up any of his brothers or koso bor (father's brother's sons) they meet. This means that any adult Zaghawi bears the responsibility for the conduct of his patrilineal kin against others. To be able to exercise his responsibility, every adult man carries a weapon at all times not only to be able to protect himself against unexpected attacks but also to wage an attack on any enemy of his group he may suddenly encounter.

The attacks on the adulterer's patrilineal relatives continue until the elders of his lineage feel real threat and agree to pay kaya (cattle paid as compensation for adultery). Only after the compensation has been paid and the dispute settled, can the offender feel safe and walk around during the day time without wearing his veil.

4. Marriage

The Zaghawa get married rather earlier in their lives than members of many other Sudanese societies. Unless a youth's family is poor and unable to pay the bridewealth, he is expected to get married immediately after adolescence. In general, the Zaghawa do not recognize either clan endogamy

or exogamy and an individual is free to marry from any Zaghawa clan or territory. Only with respect to the broad categories beri and mai can the marriages be seen as endogamous for each individual beri or mai is allowed to marry only from his own category.

The Zaghawa are also reluctant to establish marital relations with descendants of former slaves. Although some Zaghawa take wives from this group, they do not marry their daughters to them. If there is a feud between two groups and blood has been shed, no marriage will take place among them until diya has been paid and a spear thrown into a tree as a sign of settling the dispute. Those who do not comply with this rule are thought to end up with serious diseases.

The Zaghawa prefer marriages with people with whom they have kinship ties. The marriages with the mother's brother's daughter and the father's brother's daughter are preferred. The Zaghawa classify the mother's sister's daughter as a sibling and do not marry her.

It is expected that at the time of the boy's circumcision, one of his maternal or paternal uncles will give him his daughter in marriage. If this did not happen, by the time of his adolescence his father considers it to be his responsibility to marry him to a suitable wife of his own choice. Nowadays, boys prefer to choose themselves their wives and to persuade their fathers to pay their bridewealth. Should a man fail to obtain a wife from his relatives, he will look for one from his local community. It is

considered preferable to marry within the same area to bringing a wife from outside.

The Zaghawa are reluctant to have their daughters moved away after marriages unless their marriage is of political significance and creates a desirable alliance. Particularly the members of ruling families contract political marriages and seek their wives from rich families to mobilize their support and gain power.

Marriage is contracted in four phases: betrothal (eg-ger), transfer of the bridewealth (geeze), consummation of marriage (be owla) and the removal of the wife to her new household (be addo) (see also Harir 1986: 44). Each of these subsequent phases brings about new set of rights and duties both for the marriage partners themselves and their families.

When the boy's family has agreed on a particular girl, it is the duty of the boy's father or weli (guardian) to ask for her hand from her father or weli. The girl's father has the right to refuse the request but even if he agrees to marry his daughter to the suitor, he cannot give his formal consent before taking into consideration the views of some of his kin.

If any member of the girl's immediate family has been insulted or abused at any time in the past by the suitor or his family, he/she brings his/her grievances forward at this stage of the marriage negotiations and it is incumbent upon the suitor to compensate him/her for any damages incurred. If the insult was a serious one, the compensation may amount

to a cow. This payment is known as kurati (cleansing and purifying); its name suggests that it symbolically removes the stain incurred by the insult.

The effort to please everybody of the bride's relatives prior to the establishment of the new relation is justified by the view that it is not the girl that the suitor marries but her family at large. The Zaghawa put great emphasis on the social bonds that marriage creates between two groups.

When the girl's father or guardian has made sure that there is general consent, he informs the boy's father that he has nominated somebody (usually the bride's uncle or one of her close partrilineal relatives) to be her weli responsible for implementing the marriage. The boy's father also nominates one of his brothers to be his son's weli. The two welis fix the date for making a oddur (remi al-khashim: Ar.) an official announcement of the acceptance of the suitor's request.

By the time marriage negotiations reach this stage, the suitor has already started distributing considerable amounts of money as well as his services. These payments are irrecoverable should things go wrong and should he eventually fail to marry the girl. The reason is that they are moro i.e. something that has been paid in the dark or behind closed doors and hence assumed unknown. What is refundable is only what has been handled over to the girl's weli in front of the witnesses during the day.

The two welis agree on the transfer of bridewealth, on the number of cattle to be handed over, on the amount of

money to be paid in cash and on the amount that to be paid later at an unspecified date.

Since marriage is a contract, any conditions or reservations which either party wants to stipulate have to be discussed at the meeting of a oddur. For instance, if the girl's father is an influential person, he may insist that his daughter must stay with him after her marriage to give hand in his feast giving. When all such details of the contract are agreed upon, the girl's weli asks for a sum of money to preserve the girl for the suitor. The receipt of this money will automatically eliminate all other suitors from possible marriage and deprives them from the right to talk to the girl.

The Zaghawa believe that there are some techniques which, if wisely adopted, will secure a wife for a man particularly if he has rivals who compete with him for the same girl. For instance, one should gain the acceptance of the girl's mother before he acknowledges her father. Formally men are the decision makers in their households but women are believed to be more powerful in marriage matters. As many families are reluctant to marry off their daughters to the poor, one should display signs of wealth and spend conspicuously in front of the bride's relatives particularly during the first days of engagement. Also if one fears the possibility of being refused the girl, one has to send a person of particular importance and high prestige to negotiate with her family.

When the a oddur is over, the groom is expected to avoid his mother-in-law and abstain from eating or drinking in front of her unless she is one of his relatives. The bride is also expected to avoid her father-in-law as a sign of her respect. From the time of a oddur she avoids mentioning his name. She often refers to him as abu fulan i.e. father of x, x being the name of his first born child. The bride's mother should build a separate hut for her daughter within the household for the groom is expected to visit his fiancée at any time. Like among the Ndembu (see Turner 1981), the mother-in-law is not expected to enter her daughter's seclusion hut. While the a oddur is an important step in the marriage process, it gives the groom no right to sleep with the girl. If she conceived at this stage, the child would still be illegitimate. During the groom's visit to his fiancée together with his peers, the mother-in-law is expected to serve them meals of special quality and it is shameful and harmful to her prestige if she fails to do so.

The groom's mother and sisters are expected to help the bride's mother and to show their respect to all members of her household. This respect should be extended even to her dog according to one proverb which says debe biriogo ga debe (Lit. the in-law's dog is also an in-law).

A oddur is an important stage of the marriage process in that the groom is formally accepted as a future husband; but this alone does not yet guarantee him a wife. Any misbehaviour of his father or his close relatives towards the girl's family at this stage will be held against him and

may encourage the bride's family to cancel its previous agreement. The quest for political power may also inspire the bride's father to reverse his previous decision and to marry his daughter off to someone else. Until the groom's family pays the bridewealth to secure the fatiha (the first chapter of the Quran) whose pronouncement makes the marriage legal, the groom remains in a vulnerable position. His family is thus interested in fixing the date for the transfer of bridewealth as soon as possible. The bride's family, on the other hand, are reluctant to accept the continuous requests from the groom's family for several reasons. They know that by receiving the bridewealth, they are getting nearer to the day when they lose their daughter's productive capacity. They also take into consideration that by receiving the bridewealth, they will no longer be able to exploit the groom's family members and enjoy many of their free services. Sometimes the death of a relative may postpone the transfer of the bridewealth for up to a year. When the bride's family exhaust all their justifications for delaying the occasion, they will agree on a date in the darat (the harvest time) for the bridewealth cattle to be handed over. Darat is chosen as a rule because the dry season in which the cattle is likely to suffer is over.

Because the amount of cattle demanded for bridewealth is usually beyond the ability of an individual to pay, the groom's close relatives are obliged to contribute to the payment. The more close the relative, the more he/she is obliged to contribute generously. Normally, it is the

father's responsibility to provide the bridewealth cattle for his son or at least the major part of it. For this reason many grooms postpone collecting the cows which they were offered until they move to their own households, when their fathers cease to be under an obligation to supply them with additional animals.

The groom's mother's brother is expected to contribute generously to the payment of his nephew's bridewealth. He is most likely to give him his daughter in marriage if he has one of a suitable age or otherwise gives him baw ter (an animal to be paid for bridewealth). Behind this generosity lies the fact that among the Zaghawa like among the Lovedu (see Beattie 1964: 128), the Zulu (see Gluckham 1965: 47) and the Tsonga (see Kuper 1982: 26) the mother's brother is the major recipient of one's mother's bridewealth. The father among the Zaghawa like among the Tonga (see Kuper 1982), does not "eat" his daughter's tehir for that is thought to be forbidden by Islam. While he can possibly dispose of his daughter's tehir to pay the bridewealth for his sons, he cannot use his daughter's bridewealth cattle to take a wife for himself for that would be interpreted as exchanging his daughter's reproductive capacity for that of his wife. It is the bride's brother who takes the lion's share of her tehir to take a wife for himself, leaving her only one cow known as her sudag. Despite the feelings of discontent that exist among the sisters towards their brothers' behaviour, normally brothers regard their sisters' tehir as their right acknowledged by the society. If the

groom's cattle-linked mother's brother is reluctant to contribute to the payment of his nephew's bridewealth, the nephew may steal without retribution some of his uncle's oxen and sell them far away to buy trousseau for his bride and to meet his wedding expenses. As relatives keep their cattle together in one herd, the nephew may alternatively wait until the eve of his wedding day to hamstring one or two of his mother's brother's oxen instead of his own. Next morning when the family members condemn his behaviour, he expresses a mock sorrow saying that he was intending to kill his own oxen but because it was dark, he could not see which was which. But his message to his uncle is clear.

Despite the fact that the two welis already agreed on the amount of bridewealth during their formal meeting, when time is due for geeze (transfer of bridewealth cattle), many things are to be reconsidered. Usually the girl's weli demands more than the normal rate of bridewealth as a tactic to be able to receive the average amount of cattle. The groom's side has to negotiate and appeal to tradition to be able to reduce the bridewealth to its normal size. They are backed by the ajawid who attend the meeting as witnesses. The ajawid too are interested in protecting the tradition against the whims and greediness of particular welis for they also have sons to marry. Generally speaking, many of the problems which arise at this stage concern the actual composition of the bridewalth. For example, the bride's weli may demand a specific horse or camel owned by the groom's father. He may also reject many of the cattle brought by the

groom's weli as old or on the grounds that they are all male animals. If the groom's weli insists on paying all the bridewealth in goats, this stirs the anger of the bride's weli who demands cattle instead. In such cases, the ajawid will interfere and try to reach a compromise. Traditionally, bridewealth is paid in cattle but if one has other animal species, they are acceptable and can be substituted for cows. In many Zaghawa clans a cow is taken to be equal to eight goats or seven sheep. If a horse is included in the bridewealth, each one of its legs is counted as a cow. The value of a camel varies from one to four cows depending on its age.

The bridewealth differs from one area to another in Dar Zaghawa. For instance, among the Kobe, it ranges between 25-30 cows. In Dar Gala and Tuer, it ranges between 15-18 cows but if the bride and the groom are from the same clan, it is reduced to 12 cows in Dar Tuer and 6 cows in Dar Gala.

If the two parties conducting the geeze are not led by elderly men, the negotiations usually get protracted. When the two welis in a geeze agree on all the details, all those who attend the meeting say the fatiha (the first chapter of the Holy Quran) being led by a faki. Women from the bride's side then sprinkle water on the bridewealth cattle asking God to grace them with milk.

Geeze is a crucial stage of marriage in Dar Zaghawa as it makes a dramatic change in the rights and duties of the bride and the groom. The fatiha makes the marriage legally binding and confers a new right on the groom. According to

Islamic principles, he is now permitted to sleep with the bride. But the Zaghawa tradition still deprives him from enjoying that right. He has to wait until the next phase, the be owla (the consummation of marriage). Right from the date of the geeze, the groom is responsible for clothing the bride even though she is still living in her parent's household. He is also obliged to weed his mother-in-law's farm with his peers and young relatives. After the geeze, the bride starts to help her mother-in-law but she does it in secret so as not to be teased by the village girls. The grooms's erkabi (lineage) considers her from now on as one of its members and takes over the responsibility for her protection.

The consummation of marriage (be owla) is the most important phase of the wedding process for according to Zaghawa tradition, it is only at this stage that the groom is permitted to cohabit with his wife. Soon after the geeze, the groom starts to prepare himself for the be owla. He has to prepare the trousseau for the bride and her female relatives and to give a feast to all the villagers which continues for at least three days. Despite the fact that many of his kin collaborate with him, he finances most of the costs from his own herd.

The mother-in-law also starts to collect adl al beit (house utensils) for her daughter. Like the groom's status and honour which are judged by the quality and the amount of the trousseau he displays on the occasion of be owla, the mother-in-law's status and honour are judged by the quality

of adl al beit she brings to her daughter.

The bride's family may try to delay the time of be owla arguing that they have not yet prepared the adl al beit. But since the groom is now permitted by Islam to join his wife, any unjustified delay may encourage him to disregard the custom and join his wife secretly. Such course of action would, however, have serious repercussions. Many people would consider the liaison to be an adulterous one and the bride would lose her reputation. The groom would also damage his dignity by his behaviour and many people would consider him a man of no honour. Many of the bride's female relatives would also be deprived of their right to get clothes from the groom during the be owla ceremonies. For all the above reasons, the bride's family is not able to postpone the consummation of marriage for more than two years time without suffering adverse consequences.

When the date for be owla is specified, the bride's father moves away from the village until the ceremony is over for it is considered impolite for a man to attend his daughter's be owla. The bride's mother with the help of other women from the village prepares large quantities of food and drink for a party held when the groom comes from his village late at night amid the drumming of mai musicians, the dances of his peers and the songs of his own sisters. When they approach the bride's household, the village girls close the gate door and prevent them from entering until they pay them money. If the groom's party succeeded to find their way to light a fire in the seclusion

hut, the girls would lose their right to demand this payment.

The virginity of the bride is tested prior to the consummation of marriage by a few elderly women from the groom's side. If the bride is found deflowered, the groom and his peers will pierce holes in all the vessels brought to them and divorce will be the possible result. If the youth who slept with the girl is discovered, he may be beaten to death by the groom or his patrilineal cousins.

Patrilocal residence whereby the groom moves with his wife to his father's village after be owla is considered ideal. There are however, cases in which this ideal is violated. For instance, if the bride's family has many cattle but no other child to look after them, the new family may prefer for its own benefit to reside uxori locally in the wife's parent's village. When both the bride's and the groom's parents live in the same village, the new family may reside temporarily in the bride's parent's household and later move to the groom's father's doro.

The Zaghawa hold the view that uxori local residence conflicts with the conventional power structure of the domestic domain and that it is detrimental to the husband's dignity. The husband is expected to dominate over his wife and hence he must be in a position to chase her out from his house if she misbehaves. This he cannot do if he resides uxori locally in his wife's doro. Uxori local residence has further disadvantages for a man. If he commits homicide or has some serious conflicts with others, there will not be

any of his patrilineal kin around him to offer assistance and protection. As long as he is away from his family of orientation, he will also forgo many rights to which he is entitled through his kinship ties such as the right to the farm land or to the share of the bridewealth of his female relatives. Should the wife die while the family is residing uxorilocally, the husband loses his right to the farm land allotted to them by his wife's parents. Taking all these factors into consideration, many men prefer to take their wives to their own natal villages immediately after the consummation of the marriage. But this is not always possible because of the conflicting interests of the groom's and the wife's parents. The latter are reluctant to lose their daughter immediately after the consummation of marriage for they would also lose many of her services. She waters the animals, moves with the cattle from one camp to another, participates in the cultivation of the family farm, prepares the meals and performs many other important services for her family. Therefore, it is quite unlikely that the groom would succeed to take his wife home immediately after the consummation of marriage for it takes his wife's family some time to adjust to the new situation. It is also a custom that the married daughter should stay with her parents until she gives birth to her first baby. During this time, her parents make the best possible use of the labour of their son-in-law. They usually send him to import millet from the toy in summer and to bring natron from Nakheila oasis in winter, a journey which takes two months. He is also expect

ted to give hand in the normal day-to-day activities such as watering the animals and searching for the stray ones. Sometimes his mother-in-law asks him to carry out some services which are more appropriate to children. When such demands continue for some time, he will start to feel that he is gradually losing his dignity. Eventually he will start harbouring ill-feelings towards his mother-in-law. Formally, he is rajil be beitu (a man in his house) but practically he is a man in his wife's house. To be a proper rajil be beitu, he has to join his father's doro where his own parents and siblings, helped by other people in the village, have built him a new house.

During the time the couple stay in the wife's village, the mother-in-law teaches her daughter how to prepare different types of dishes and generally how to be a good wife. It is also her duty to teach her the rules of etiquette concerning her behaviour towards her husband and the village elders. She also supplies her with all the necessary household utensils which she will need in her new household. When the date of the bride's removal is due, all her female relatives are expected to bring further gifts such as bowls, plates, dishes and ropes. The bride's uncles, brothers and aunts who received shares from her bridewealth are expected to contribute generously towards the adl al beit.

On the day of the bride's removal, her mother invites the village women and puts on display all the luggage she has prepared for her daughter. The more modern are the

components of the adi al beit, the greater is the honour of the mother.

The bride is escorted to her new household by one of her uncles or elder brothers as her weli who hands over his responsibility for her to the groom's father. A small number of her female relatives also accompany her to her new household and stay with her for a week to help her to start her new life smoothly. The weli usually requests the bride's father-in-law to regard the young couple as his own children and to forgive his daughter-in-law should she make a mistake since human beings are far from infaleable. Then to mark the beginning of his responsibility over her, he tells him that he is handing him over 44 bones (the Zaghawa believe that a woman has 44 separate bones in her body) and he reminds him that none of them is to be broken without retribution. Her husband has only the right over her flesh but not over her bones.

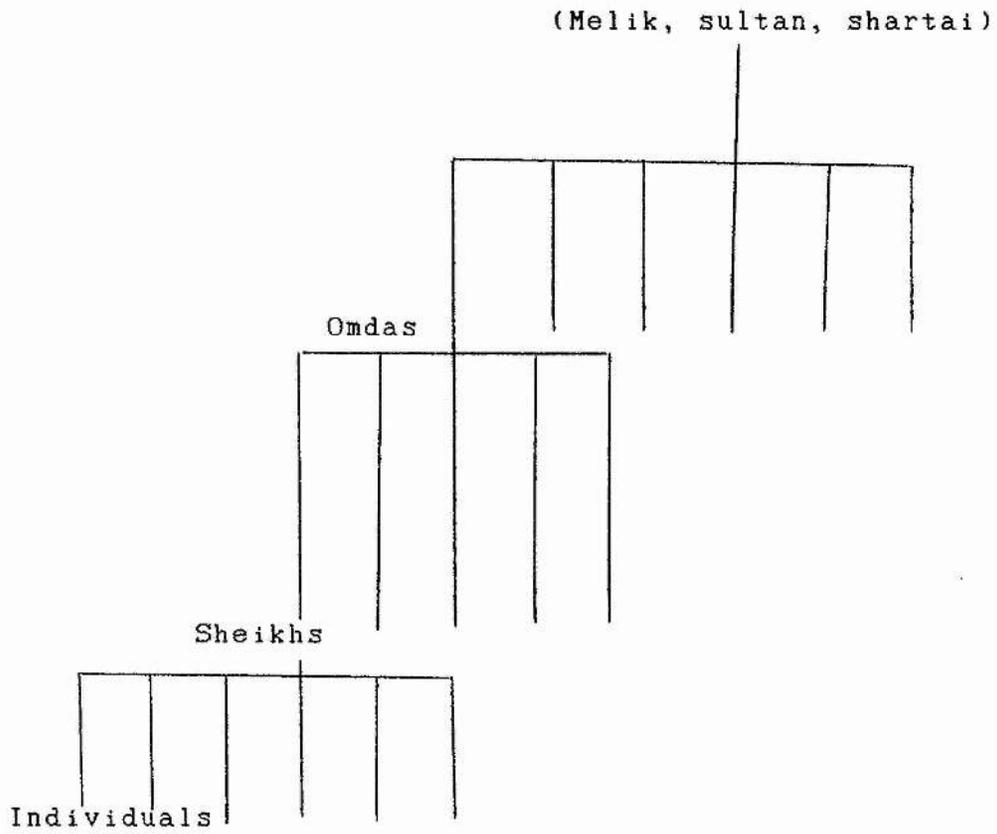
5. Political System

The Zaghawa occupy four adjacent dars but they have no paramount chief. Instead, each dar is headed by its own autonomous chief and has its own nahas which symbolizes its unity and sovereignty. It is not uncommon that members of several clans in a dar trace their descent to a common ancestor. If members of these related clans constitute the bulk of the entire population of the dar, they can exclusively dominate the political leadership as it is the case in

Dar Tuer. Members of the five clans of Awlad Dowre, Awlad Degain, Agab, Awlad Nugui and Kadaw trace their descent to Mohamed Al Barnawi. Because they constitute the bulk of the population of Dar Tuer, they managed to dominate its political leadership for more than two centuries. The chief is chosen through the traditional system of primogeniture and he bears the title of melik (king). In Dar Artaj, the chieftaincy rotates among its five clans which claim no common ancestor. The incumbent leader also bears the title of melik. In Dar Gala, there are 18 clans but none of them has an overwhelming majority. This made the Fur sultanate in the past to intervene as a higher administrative political unit to nominate one of the clan leaders to administer the dar. The nominated leader bears the title of shartai. But since the last four generations, however, the office of the shartaiship has been inherited through primogeniture. In Dar Kobe, the chief has the title of sultan and he also inherits his office through primogeniture.

As a result of the Native Administration introduced by the British in 1950/51, a centralized administrative system was adopted in each dar as depicted in diagram 1. Each dar is headed by a chief chosen by the public. The dar is divided into smaller units (omodiyas) headed by omodas who represent in most cases the numerically dominant clan in the omodiya. In some cases, two smaller clans are merged into one omodiya. The omodas are selected by the clan elders. The sheikhs represent a lower level of administrative authority

Diagram 1: The Hierarchy of The Dars' Administrative System



under the omda. They are lineage heads and they are chosen by the lineage members.

The chief of the dar combines both the administrative and the judicial authorities. Administratively, he represents the government's authority in his dar. For instance, he is responsible for collecting the government tax from the entire population of his dar assisted by the omdas, sheikhs and the ghafeers who play the role of the police. The chief is also responsible for the maintenance of the road that links his capital with Kutum, the headquarter of Northern Darfur. Furthermore, he is responsible for informing the population of his dar to bring their animals for vaccination. The chief is the chairman of the tribal court of law, the member of which are selected from different clans. He is assisted by the court members and a few prison wardens in the performance of his judicial duties.

In principle, the omdaship is an administrative post mainly connected with the collecting of the tax and the relisting of animals for tax purposes but has no judicial authority. In practice, many omdas as clan elders tend to adjudicate on informal basis the disputes that arise between the members of their clans. Thus the omda can adjudicate for example a dispute concerning a fight between two members of his clan and order the offender to compensate the injured party. The offenders are aware that the omda has no formal judicial authority to enforce his verdict but they usually accept it for several reasons. Firstly, they are aware that if they are taken to the tribal court of law, they may face

imprisonment in addition to the payment of the compensation. Secondly, the omda in his capacity as a clan elder safeguards his clan members from being illtreated by the chief without any reasonable justification or harmed by members of other clans. Thirdly, in the countryside where no police is around, if a clan member commits a murder, he can flee to the omda's house to seek protection from retaliation by the victim's relatives. The omda has no power, other than the personal respect he enjoys to protect the murderer but this alone enables him to keep the murderer safe until he hands him over to the police. When the murderer is kept safe under the protection of the police, the omda negotiates the settlement of the dispute with the welis of the two sides on informal basis to set the man free. Since the omda has considerable amount of informal authority, many people anticipate his future support and hence do not take the risk of refusing his verdict.

The sheikhs are lineage heads. When members of a lineage reside in a single village, the sheikh is also the village head. If some of the lineage members move to another village, they either remain under their former sheikh or recognize as their sheikh that one in the village to which they moved. The sheikh's most salient duty is the collecting of taxes and the relisting of animals for tax purposes. Like the omda, the sheikh has no official judicial authority over his followers. But the fact that he is in most cases the village and the lineage head, to whom many village members are linked by kinship ties, makes him pre-eminent among the

other village elders. For this reason, many village members refer to him their disputes. As it is in the sheikh's interest to restore peace among his own people, he usually summons the disputants, their welis and the village elders as ajawid to solve the problem on informal basis. When the dispute concerns a family matter such as divorce or a quarrel between a husband and a wife, the meeting usually takes place in the disputants' household to keep the details confidential. If the dispute is about a farm land or boundaries of a farm, the sheikh usually asks the disputants, their welis and the ajawid to meet on a specific date on the farm site to hold the hearing there. If the dispute is about the failure to repay a loan or about killing a neighbour's animal, the meeting will take place in the village mesik. The sheikh usually furnishes the ground for the discussion of the dispute but the meeting is not bound to take his view as final and the ajawid's agreement determines the verdict. The party which is found guilty is either to accept the verdict or to appeal to the omda or the tribal court of law. In fact, many village members accept the verdict of the ajawid for fear of being described as kassar khatir al ajawid (Ar. one who disregards the solution offered by the ajawid). The person who is described as such is sanctioned by ostracism by all the village members. Because the co-villagers are simultaneously members of the same erkebi (lineage) or ner (clan) who recognize kinship ties with one another, the village elders are under obligation to intervene and solve on an informal basis any dispute that arises

between them or between them and members of other villages. Since those who intervene in disputes (the village, lineage and clan elders) are the people who usually take the lead to protect an individual from external aggression and to contribute in the payment of diya (blood money) to secure his life should he kill someone from another group, the village members are most likely to accept any solution they suggest.

Kinship plays a major role in the Zaghawa politics. The larger the size of the doro, the greater the ability of its head to control the behaviour of others and thus to acquire political power. In most cases, the village and the lineage heads are the heads of the largest doros in the village. Also the clan membership was and still is the main criterion for selecting the omdas, the members of the tribal court of law, the court chairmen and the chiefs. Because the feeling of clan membership is deeply rooted in the Zaghawa society, the political power based on clan membership can be expected to exist for at least sometime to come.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECONOMIC PRODUCTION AND LIVELIHOOD

Each clan in Dar Zaghawa has a particular territory of known boundaries which was the original abode of its founding ancestor. It is held in common by all the clan members who have equal access to it. Despite the fact that no place in Dar Zaghawa is unclaimed by a particular clan, traditionally, individual members of different clans and dars feel free to move across territorial boundaries to graze their animals and collect wild fruit. For instance, members of Dar Tuer can camp in Dar Gala lands to graze their animals. Similarly the Bideyat can move from Wadi Hawar to camp in Wadi Umbar of Dar Artaj to collect *Echinochloa Colonom* (Defra) and other wild fruit on large scale. They have the right to use the land resources but not to settle permanently in these dars. When the Bideyat tried to transform the right to use the pastures and the wild fruit of Wadi Umbar into right of ownership and made life difficult for the Artaj, the latter resorted to force to drive them out.

The household rather than the elementary family is the basic unit of production. The Zaghawa household depends mainly on animal husbandry and rainfed cultivation of millet for its livelihood. Unlike the Berti who see agriculture as the source of their existence or the Meidob pastoral nomads who regard agriculture as a humiliating economic pursuit (see Holy 1974: 22), the Zaghawa have a rather different scale of preferences. They see elbe (livelihood) as

impossible without animals but they also believe in the aphorism "What your farm gives you, your own mother cannot". As a consequence, the Zaghawa household does not rely on the exclusive pursuit of either pastoralism or agriculture. It tries to be self-sufficient and strives to produce most of its needs by mobilizing its own labour.

The division of labour on the basis of age and sex is flexible and it is this very flexibility which provides a household with sufficient labour to cultivate, herd livestock, visit the markets, draw water and carry out all the other necessary activities. The bigger the household, the more labour it can mobilize. Large households have more producers but also have to feed more people. Even so, given the harsh environmental conditions of Dar Zaghawa, large households are better off than small households with fewer consumers. Because of the recurrent crop failure and the extermination of livestock during the droughts, the Zaghawa households have found it more rational to adopt a diversified economy to cope with the situation and reduce the amount of risk. Since such strategy is not possible for the small households, the big households seem to be more appropriate to the conditions of Dar Zaghawa.

1. Pastoralism

Pastoralism is the most important economic activity for the Zaghawa. The arid semi-desert climate of Dar Zaghawa suits camels, donkeys and goats which are capable of with-

standing its rigours. For reasons of viability (see Harir 1986: 5), the Zaghawa also keep other animal species such as cattle, sheep and horses.

Because camels are capable of surviving for long periods without water, they are often used to truck natron extracted in the desert near Nakheila oasis in a journey which lasts for about two months. Today, most of the natron, millet and merchandise is transported by lorries to Dar Zaghawa but many people are still using their camels. During the wedding, death and circumcision ceremonies when large quantities of water are required, camels are used for transporting it from the wells. Camels are also kept as a source of milk, hair, hide and meat as well as for riding. They are seen as a store of wealth and hence considered a rich man's property.

Compared with camels, goats are described by the Zaghawa as miskin manni i.e. cattle of the poor. But irrespective of this connotation, each Zaghawa household keeps a few goats which are a source of milk for young children and which can be easily slaughtered to entertain guests. Goats are preferred to other animals for they can be easily sold in the weekly markets and hence are an ideal source of cash income. Unlike other animals, they need not to be constantly herded for they return on their own from the pasture in the evening. Particularly if labour is in short supply, this is seen as their distinct advantage over all other animals.

Cattle are the basic source of milk and clarified butter. Most Zaghawa households also keep cattle for bri-

dewealth payments. While other animals are accepted in bridewealth payments, conventionally cattle are the most demanded animals for this purpose. Cattle are also the proper animals to be sacrificed during death ceremonies. Goats can be slaughtered in sacrifice but as the Zaghawa say, they have no ism (respect). A bull slaughtered in sacrifice is valued more than a dozen goats. Before commercially manufactured sacks became widely used, bags for carrying millet (ortay and cara) were made from cattle hides.

The Zaghawa households keep sheep for their milk, meat and as a basic source of cash. Sheep are in high demand in Omdurman and this fact encourages many Zaghawa to keep some for the market. They are also the proper animals to slaughter each year during the festival of sacrifice in the month of Zul Hijja.

Donkeys are used for carrying water. As the summer pastures are always far away from the water sources, water has to be brought for the people who are at pasture with the household's herds and for watering animals which are too young to walk to the wells. Donkeys are also used for riding, particularly by the elderly people. When news have to be spread quickly, horse riders are dispatched to inform people in other villages to ask for their help. Most households keep horses in spite of the fact that they are demanding animals which require millet, other special fodder and water every day. They are used to inform others about deaths which have occurred in the village, about cases of camel theft, accidents during well construction and other similar

disasters. Horses are also status symbols and for this reason they are kept by men of the ruling families, omdas and toltole (influential people).

The division of labour according to age and sex enables a household to keep all the different species of animals. Looking after camels is the duty of men and small children. Tending cows and milking them is the work of women. Men may milk camels but it is shameful for them to be seen milking cows or goats. Both young boys and girls milk goats. Children start their training as herders at the very early age. When they are still less than seven years old, they start looking after kids and calves. Later, when they grow older, they become proper herders and when they are fully adult they become saggai i.e. those responsible for watering the livestock.

The different animal species require different types of pastures and different quantities of water. This necessitates the separation of the herds and the adoption of transhumance. In the long dry summer between March and June when the pastures around the permanent water sources have been overgrazed, the households assemble their herds in camps (feriks) in the alluvial wadis. They usually establish their shelters under Acacia Albida (Haraz), Ziziphus Mucronata (Nabag) and Acacia Arabica (Siyal) trees which provide shade both for people and young animals. These trees also provide the only green fodder during this time of the year. During their stay in these camps, women make bags from sheep and goat skins which are used for watering the kids and calves

when they are far away from the wells. The camp may change its site several times during the dry season of the year when pasture in its vicinity has become exhausted.

In rushash, the period between June and July, the camps move close to the permanent villages (geli). It is risky to stay in the wadis or khors in rushash for rain may fall unexpectedly and water may run in the wadis and khors. At this time, older people move to the permanent villages to prepare the farms for cultivation and the younger people are left to take care of the herds. Another reason for the return to the village at this time is that the hosh (the straw wall surrounding the huts) needs to be renewed and strengthened so as to withstand the whirlwinds which frequently occur in rushash.

The rushash is short in its duration but it is the most tedious and strenuous time of the year. All the animals need to be watered every other day except the camels which need water once every five days or once a week. The cows and goats which did not need to be herded in summer are now to be attended to for they may go astray. The household granary gets empty and someone from the household has to make for the toy. This is a journey made to purchase and bring home millet from the homeland of the Fur, Tama and Gimir sedentary agriculturists. Many animals get lost during this time and the household must free one of its members to search for them and recover them before the herds move to the villages. Therefore, households with labour shortages need to collaborate with those which can spare a herder to replace those

who are temporarily away from the camp. The households of the same doro collaborate in this way to make the best of their available labour. For example, a youth from one household takes care of all the sheep and goats of both households so that a youth from another household can look after both households' camels. This pattern of collaboration occurs more likely between polygynous families of the same doro and among relatives.

At the onset of the early showers, the herders take their herds to wherever it starts to rain first. This releases the herders from the laborious task of drawing water from the wells or from the payment of cash at the pump stations. As the scanty growth of dry moss is always prone to be gnawed away by the termites immediately after the first showers, nothing is left on the ground to sustain the herds. This forces the herders to move quickly to where it has started raining first to enable their herds to use the new green grass or to browse the green fodder of the blossoming trees. Sometimes the herders follow the rains too far away from the conventional transhumance areas and the household members lose any connection with them. They enquire about the whereabouts of their herders from the market visitors in order to supply them with millet flour, sugar, natron and vaccines and to give them necessary directions, particularly if the herders are young and lack experience.

When heavy rains fall in July and the grass starts growing in the proximity of the village, herders move back with their animals to the villages. They are expected to

join the other household members in the agricultural tasks. This return journey to the village has to be made as soon as possible for the flowing wadis might block the route. Therefore, when the proper rains start to fall, all the animals owned by the household as well as their herders unite in the village. In this particular time, all the productive efforts of the household are directed to the cultivation of millet.

In the middle of the rainy season, which is called (gay nueri; literally fermented autumn), a kind of worms develop in the animal dung in the old sheep and cattle kraals and make the kraals unhealthy for the animals. The youths of different households take the goats, sheep, cattle and camels to a camp at a distance of two or three miles from the village to provide a healthier environment for the herds. The herders spend the night in camp but they come back to the village for their meals, bringing with them quantities of milk in which other villagers share. These camps are known as dee guri (camel camp) and oro guri (sheep and goat camp).

The millet ripens in the farms in October and November. It is the time referred to as tarba (harvest). The surface water which was previously abundant in the pools starts to shrink and gets polluted. This makes the household members to turn to shallow hand dug wells (koyla) in the wadis to water the herds. To avoid the strenuous task of watering the herds from the wells and to prevent the animals from damaging the crop, the household members start to separate. The old female members stay in the village to harvest the crop.

The adult boys take the camel herds away from the village to where the grass is still green. Girls from different households accompanied by one or two adult males as overseers make for the cattle camps to the south where water is still abundant in pools far away from the farms. Sometimes sheep and goats move together with the cattle herds. Generally speaking, those who migrate together are related to one another or come from the same village. As they are mutually related in one way or another, they live in one single shelter (guri be) and consume together the foodstuffs sent by anyone's family. The male adults who escort the girls stay in a separate shelter at a considerable distance from the girls. This shelter is called iga (guest house). The men spend the night and entertain any male guests there. The camp girls share the same hearth but each keeps her own part of the milk. She sends the clarified butter made of the milk to her own family or exchanges it for sugar in the weekly markets.

In winter when millet has been harvested and the surface water in the camp areas has been consumed by the increasing animal population, herds are brought back to browse the residues of the millet farms (tibe teray). Members of each household stay for a while in the proximity of their farm until they fully collect the crops. The shallow wells (koyla) dry up soon and those herders who have bigger herds need to use the permanent wells or pump stations. The millet residues sustain the herds until the middle of December. After that the households establish their camps in the

gullies where pastures are still intact. Those who have big camel herds and sheep flocks moved at this time to jizu in the past. This is an area on the verge of the sub-Sahara desert in Northern Darfur known for the quality of its pastures. The nature of pastures that grow in jizu enables the camels and sheep to do without water for a long time during winter. In the past, when effective government control of peace was lacking in that area, the herders used to depend on self-help in protecting their animals. Nowadays jizu cannot be used because of the spread of armed robbery which is aggravated by the Libyan-Chad war.

Since 1970, more than 60% of the Zaghawa livestock has been exterminated in the severe drought and in consequence, jizu pastures have been abandoned. Today, members of most households move together with their few camels, sheep and goats from one camp to another more than twice until the next rains. Those who own cattle, move towards the south to Abu Gamra, Lukka, Seref al-jidad, Id al-Kheir and Sereif to spend the long summer there.

As a form of adaptation to the changing environment, many Zaghawa have now shifted from the traditional mode of pastoralism to a commercial one. They purchase livestock in rushash (the period before the rains) at very cheap prices, fatten them during the harvest and take them to the markets in Melit, El Fasher or truck them to Omdurman. This form of commercial enterprise is known as gallaga. Because of their experience in it, the Zaghawa are employed as middlemen by the rich merchants in the urban centres of Darfur. When the

middlemen secure enough capital, they establish small shops themselves and pass into the town life. But not all those who embark on the animal trade necessarily end up in towns for many of them invest their capital locally. Combining trade with animal husbandry, they buy livestock in the rainy season. In tarba, they liquidate part of the herd and use the money to buy various commodities as a safeguard against losses of capital through the death of animals in the dry season. When the merchant needs to stay for a few weeks with his herds, he usually takes with him some of the commodities for which there is increasing demand among the nomads and sells them while attending to his herd. This practice is not special to the Zaghawa but exists among other ethnic groups in Darfur which face similar conditions, for example the Berti (see Holy 1980: 65-71).

An individual acquires livestock from his/her immediate family members and his/her other relatives at different occasions in his/her life time both before and after he/she establishes his/her own household. For instance, when the bride gives birth to her first baby, the baby's grandfather gives it a cow the first time he comes to see it. A week after its birth, the baby receives a goat from its maternal uncle who comes to shave its head for the first time. This occasion is known as omte koto, Lit. hair shaving and the goat is known as the baby's omte koto.

The child also receives milk goats from his/her grandmothers and aunts during the time of weaning. When the child reaches the age of circumcision, his/her chances of

receiving animals increase. It is assumed that the number of animals offered to the child at the circumcision ceremony indicates his/her honour. Therefore, a large number of kin must be invited to attend the occasion to make generous gifts of goats, sheep or cows to the child. If it is not possible to hold a circumcision ceremony because of a recent death of a relative or a village member, the novice visits his/her aunts, uncles and grandmothers immediately after his/her scars have healed. All these relatives are under obligation to give sheep, goats or cows. The child may be quite rich in terms of the number of animals owned, but he or she has no full right of disposal over them. When the circumcision ceremony is over, the child's parents collect the animals which were given to the child by the relatives and put them under the father's control until the child becomes adult. The gifts offered by the child's kin are best seen as symbols of the strength of the kinship ties rather than gifts in the strict sense of the word for it is quite unlikely that the child would get them when he/she becomes an adult. The father may use them in any way he pleases for the benefit of the whole family. An individual has full right to dispose without referring to his father of the animals offered to him at his wedding and of those acquired by his own efforts after he moved to his own household.

Another means through which both the bride and the groom can obtain livestock is the institution of maafa (pardoning). At the time of the consummation of marriage, the groom is taken from his natal village to his wife's

parents' village escorted by his friends and relatives. When they reach the mother-in-law's house, the groom refuses to dismount his horse until his mother-in-law gives him an animal as his maafa. He will lose his chance of receiving this animal if he dismounted his horse before being pardoned or if he impregnated his fiancée before this time. The bride's chance to acquire livestock by maafa is even greater for many of her husband's immediate relatives offer her maafa. Customarily, the bride avoids taking food or a drink in front of her husband's immediate relatives as a symbol of her respect. But because practically she cannot avoid being seen eating or drinking by some of the husband's immediate relatives who usually live with her in her new household, such people need to offer her cows, goats, sheep or cash as maafa to start eating and drinking in front of them. When the bride is removed from her parents' household to her own in the last phase of marriage, she also refuses to dismount her camel until her father-in-law promises to give her a cow or a farm land as her maafa. As a result, she may end up with a considerable amount of livestock and cash.

After the establishment of their household, both the husband and the wife are able to enlarge their animal stock through inheriting animals from their parents and close relatives. According to Islam, every individual is entitled to a specific portion of his/her parent's estate. This portion varies according to the individual's sex and the number of the family members. For instance, the bigger the family size, the lesser the portion received by an individ-

ual heir and vice versa. Also on the basis of sex, a sister is entitled to the half share of her brother. If relatives from outside the immediate family attend the distribution of the estate, they should not be turned away but they are not entitled to a specific portion. In practice, the estate is rarely distributed strictly according to Islamic Law particularly when the estate is not too large to be easily divided among a number of heirs. Sometimes the son who was looking after his parents until the moment of their death will take the lion's share of the estate. In other cases, the brothers take the camels, guns and horses and leave cows, goats, gold and household utensils to their sisters.

The married sisters are generally deprived of inheritance so as not to alienate the family property. Since the responsibility for the girl is transferred to her husband when she marries, her brothers believe that any livestock given to her would automatically enhance her husband's economic standing for he would not need to buy her additional animals. In spite of this reluctance on the part of the brothers to give their married sister a fair share of the inheritance, if the cattle from her bridewealth is part of the estate, she has a solid ground to demand a fair share. It is a common wisdom among the Zaghawa that married sisters always try to keep their brothers economically strong so that they can depend on them in case of divorce or should their husbands fail to support them. Hence, to fight for their rights against those of their brothers is considered to be a risky strategy.

Any animal the bride obtains through inheritance is considered to be her own property over which her husband has no say. She can freely give it to her young brother to pay his bridewealth but she is obliged to inform her husband about her decision. If she is divorced, she can take her animals back to her natal family.

The distribution of bridewealth among members of the wife giving group is an important source of livestock acquisition. Many of the bride's family members are entitled to shares in the bridewealth cattle. For instance, the brother claims the major part of his sister's bridewealth. The maternal uncle is entitled to mama tebi (Lit. mother's brother's share) which is usually a cow. The paternal uncle is also entitled to koso tebi (Lit. Father's brother's share) which is also a cow or a camel. If there are more than one maternal or paternal uncles, they take their shares on a rota basis starting with the oldest one. Aunts and grandmothers normally receive cash at the time of betrothal when their consent to the proposed marriage is sought.

In the past, kinship ties were utilized by the Zaghawa to acquire livestock. Nowadays, due to the massive depletion of livestock through droughts and due to the transformation of the traditional Zaghawa society and the spread of ahal abo (individualism), the animals which one could traditionally acquire from one's relatives outside the elementary family are simply not forthcoming. Consequently, many people have started to depend on their own efforts to acquire livestock.

2. Agriculture

The Zaghawa depend mainly on animal rearing but millet cultivation commands most of their attention in the rainy season. Each household mobilizes its manpower to cultivate one or two farms as the yield from the farm reduces the number of livestock that would have to be sold in summer to meet the household's consumption.

In each clan territory, members of individual families have plots of land known as their tibe (farm land) over which they claim exclusive rights. The family members preserve not only the right to cultivate their land but also the right over the trees which grow naturally on it. Each family members claim their right over the plot through parent-child inheritance from ever since they first occupied their present territory. No tribal leader or sheikh has the right to oust the individual family from its tibe which is regarded as its property. Only when the land under cultivation starts to border on the land of neighbouring village, can the village elders recommend that the owners of the outlying farms stop cultivating their plots to avoid any potential disputes. Such disputes would certainly arise if the cultivation continued as it would become impossible to prevent the livestock from damaging the crops. Only in this case, do the community interests surpass in importance an individual's right. The Zaghawa say geli tibe lire (Lit. village kills the farm).

The alluvial farms are limited in size in Dar Zaghawa. Hence, most families need to put additional land under cultivation to feed their members. They usually clear a new farm in the virgin goz lands (sandy soil of the old dunes) which lie beyond the wadi banks. By putting such a new plot under cultivation for one or two seasons or by surrounding it by a thorn fence, the family's right in the plot becomes recognized and nobody is allowed to cultivate it unless he/she obtains an approval of the plot's rightful owners in advance.

When the groom removes his wife to his father's doro, he is allotted a piece of land by his parents. If this is not possible, he borrows a tibe from some of his relatives to use it until its owner claims it back. If the family head succeeded in obtaining a tibe from his parents, his wife and children continue to use it even after his death and have a right to claim it as their own. The situation is slightly different if the wife is childless. After her husband's death, she retains the right to use the plot for the rest of her life but she cannot alienate it to her own relatives. As long as she lives in her borlia (her husband's natal village) she can cultivate the tibe but her right to use the land is terminated when she remarries into another family.

The Zaghawa do not sell their family farm. This is not because the family holds no right over it but for reasons of status. The ownership of land is tightly connected with fundamental social and political rights. Anyone who has no sarai (farm land usually on the wadi banks) is considered to

be an alien in that particular locality. Thus to sell the family's sarai means to deprive its descendants from their citizenship and from their status as full-fledged members of the society. Sometimes one who has no sarai finds it difficult to stand for elections at all levels for he is always asked to prove his membership of the society. For all the above reasons, when the family members are leaving their traditional area, they entrust their tibe to one of their relatives. In a year of arsu (Lit. flood cultivation, meaning abundant rainfall), the family members may reappear suddenly to claim their tibe back.

Besides the staple food of millet and sorghum, most households grow melons and okra in autumn. Those who live near the dams grow various types of vegetables in the flooded area as cash crops including tomatoes, melons, sweet melons and okra throughout the year.

In the dry season, the Zaghawa settle in feriks along the wadis. The location of the ferik is not chosen haphazardly. Other things being equal, each household tries to settle near its farm to be able to clean it by gradually cutting down the trees in the free time during the long summer. When the household members stay in the proximity of their own farm land, they can prevent the wind erosion of the fertile soil through creating artificial wind breakers to keep the farm intact. The wind breakers are often made of tree branches fixed on the ground or layed down on the ground surface and pressed down by wood or stone. When it is impossible for the household members to spend the summer

season near their farm, the old generation leaves the ferik earlier in rushash and moves to the village to clean the farm before the rain falls.

Sometimes the Zaghawa practise kwa tebi (Lit. dry sowing) prior to the rainfall in rushash so that the seeds start to germinate immediately after the first rains. This gives the grain equal chance with the weeds which threaten to choke it but the practice is risky and sometimes generates reverse results. Birds, rats and other pests dig out the seeds before the rainfall and the field or parts of it have to be resown.

The proper sowing commences after the first heavy rain. It takes usually less than a week to complete but its actual duration depends in each individual case on the number of people a household can mobilize for the task and the site of its farm. Unless the sowing is accomplished within the shortest possible time, weeds will germinate immediately after the first rains and choke the grain. Therefore, any sowing done later than a week or so after the fall of the first heavy rains may diminish the yield of the farm. If a person is ill or absent during this critical period, his relatives and the village members collaborate to sow his farm.

While sowing can be successfully accomplished by only a few members of the household, weeding requires much more labour and longer time. When weeding starts, efficient allocation of labour is needed to spare as many household members for this task as possible. Herding is left to small children under eight. The father and his elder sons leave

early in the morning after tea to start weeding. The wife stays in the village to prepare breakfast for the younger children below herding age who stay in the house and look after themselves. At nine in the morning, she also leaves for the farm bringing breakfast to those who left early in the morning. Weeding continues until the period of rest in the early afternoon when it is too hot to work. Then all adult men in the neighbouring farms congregate under one tree and each brings his own food which is then jointly consumed by all of them. As women do not share meals with men, they and their children gather in a separate place to take the meal together. The small children oscillate between the two groups carrying food from one to the other. Later in the afternoon, both men and women resume the weeding and return to the village before the sunset. Women return earlier to see the young children, to grind millet for the evening meal and to milk the cows which come alone to the village in the evening if separated from their calves. They collect firewood on their way home. Men stay a while longer in the farm to drive away stray animals so that they do not damage the crops. Adult children also leave the farm earlier to meet the young herders and to make sure that the herds have come home safely. If the members of a household are not able to accomplish weeding their farm due to illness, the wife's frequency or children's attendance at school, their immediate relatives and the village members offer help. In most cases the help is in form of a work party mobilized through the offer of food and drink which is known as ebby

or nafir (Ar.). Each household in the village is expected to release an adult member to attend the work party.

The Zaghawa consider Fridays and the last Wednesday in each lunar month as Kubai teggelay (Lit. heavy days) during which no heavy agricultural work is done. In their belief, anyone who weeds on such a day confronts the frightening malak (spirit). Women stay in the village to make collective sacrifice (karama). All the women from the village bring quantities of millet from their own households and boil them together to make karamat balila which is consumed jointly and distributed to children. On Fridays which are Muslim holidays, men either attend the weekly markets held in the small towns, attend the noon prayer or otherwise stay resting in the village.

Sometimes two or more related households adopt a rota system (kaba) whereby they collaborate to weed their respective farms on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Generally speaking, many of the Kire bor (members of the royal families) and toltele (influential persons) who are heads of polygynous families refrain from involving themselves in strenuous manual work. They either have enough labour within their households so that their own contribution is not necessary or they can afford to pay others to work for them.

Harvesting the crop is women's duty. Men contribute by cutting wood and erecting the talba (jurun: Ar.), an oblong wooden frame covered by millet stalks on which the harvested ears of millet are kept. Children are of particular importa-

nce at harvest time. They are awakened early in the morning to depart to the farm and to drive away stray animals, locusts and birds by hitting tins, making sharp noises and burning trees. All care is taken to collect the harvest safely before the crop gets damaged by stray animals and pests.

Threshing is also women's activity. Because it is laborious and cannot be successfully accomplished by the wife's individual effort, she usually invites a group of 4-7 women to assist. When the threshing is over, she distributes to them some millet as a reward. The wife usually restricts her invitation to those whom she is under obligation to help such as her own sisters, her sister-in-laws and neighbours.

In all their agricultural activities, the Zaghawa apply a rudimentary and simple technology. For instance, they use hoes, axes, dogon (wooden flail) and kongo (sharp oblong iron piece for harvesting which are all manufactured by the local mai).

3. Collecting of Wild Fruit

Until millet ripens, the households which run short of grain augment their diet by collecting the seeds and fruit of wild plants particularly *Acacia Publifolia* (kureb) and *Echinochloa Colonom* (Defra) which usually ripen earlier than millet. Generally speaking, the mai and the Bideyat who practise no significant cultivation, depend heavily on wild seeds and fruit. Some elderly Zaghawa women often collect

wild seeds and fruit and keep them as a safeguard against future famine even if they have enough food at the moment. In years of bad harvest, millet prices often increase beyond the means of the poor families. This encourages some women to collect wild fruit for economic reasons and they often market large quantities of wild seeds and fruit which are bought as a substitute for cereals.

While collecting wild fruit is considered to be a practice of poor families, most women in Dar Zaghawa, including those of the royal families, manufacture (Kawal). This is a fermented mash made from the leaves of Cassia Tora. It is subsequently dried and used by most Darfurians to flavour the sauce which is eaten with porridge.

4. Trade

A few decades ago, the Zaghawa used to produce only for their subsistence. The idea of selling the surplus of one's produce such as milk, meat, chickens and eggs was unknown. The surplus was supposed to be distributed freely among the relatives and the needy people. I heard from the late Fadul Musa, a retired officer, that he spared no pains in encouraging the Zaghawa at Umburu in 1942 to bring their surplus for sale in the market but in vain. To be seen selling large quantities of foodstuffs in the market was considered to be shameful. In the past, the Zaghawa used to draw no boundaries between a merchant and a miser for any merchant was considered as a miser. Generally speaking, trade was des-

pised for its basic principles were thought to operate against the values which stress generosity and murawa, i.e. helping the needy. In the Zaghawa view, a person who follows true principles of an "economic man" and carefully counts his millimms and piasters will never slaughter a ram worth 150 to entertain a guest or help a poor relative.

The low esteem in which merchants were traditionally held discouraged many Zaghawa to join trade in the past even if they had sufficient resources to invest. Wealth was kept in form of cattle and camels to generate prestige. As a consequence, only a few gellaba and, at a later stage, Fur were engaged in trade among the Zaghawa in the past. The term gellabe conventionally indicates merchants from the riverain Sudan; these were also the first people who introduced the commercial activities into the whole region.

Recently, the Zaghawa changed drastically their view of trade. The values which prevented them from trading in the past have been dramatically altered and the Zaghawa are nowadays engaged in trade on a large scale. It is a common belief in Darfur today that the Zaghawa are dominating trade not only within the province but also beyond it. Many people call them metaphorically gellaba Zurug i.e. black gelabba.

This recent involvement in trade has been triggered off by the Zaghawa realizing that the traditional rainfed agriculture and pastoralism are unreliable and unable to sustain them. It is also facilitated by the gradual change of their former views on trade due to their contact with other people outside their traditional area. Consequently, many Zaghawa

sold the few animals which survived the drought and started petty trade in the urban centres of the region. Usually an individual member of a household starts trading in town as a bachelor and at a later stage, when he marries, he brings other members of his family to live with him in one household. The parents remain either in Dar Zaghawa, or when they leave Dar Zaghawa, live on the periphery of the towns and depend on the occasional remittances sent by their sons.

In most cases, the brothers who move to the town, combine their efforts to invest their capital together. If two or three brothers live in the same household, they may decide to send one of them abroad to work as a wage labourer to enhance their economic standing. The migrant uses his earnings to purchase foreign goods, particularly from Libya and Saudi-Arabia, and sends them regularly to his brothers in the Sudan. The latter stay at home to control the family shop and take care of the family members. To ensure quick turn-over of their goods, one of them may take part of the goods sent from abroad by their brother and sell them in other towns in Darfur. Sometimes he may take them as far as the riverain area where the demand for foreign goods is high.

To enable the migrating brother to stay with his family, the brothers exchange places every two years or so. The man who returns home takes over all the responsibilities which were previously discharged by his brothers and starts to look after their families and to send their children to school. As the families gradually grow in size, through the

natural process of reproduction and through the men marrying additional wives, it becomes eventually impossible for one brother to look after them. The dwelling area also becomes too small for the increasing number of people. By this time, each brother has usually accumulated sufficient capital which enables him to establish his own kiosk and to invest separately.

It was, however, not only men who sold their households' herds or earned money as labour migrants who were able to start trading. Many former policemen and soldiers started to trade when both police and military service have lost their previously high prestige in the Zaghawa eyes since the early seventies. Many of the Zaghawa policemen and soldiers applied for early retirement and invested their pensions on trade which was then enjoying a very high prestige. Many new kiosks were established by these men in El Fasher, Nyala, El Gineina and many other urban centres of Darfur. Former policemen and soldiers constitute probably a majority among the present-day Zaghawa merchants.

The fact that Darfur shares borders with Libya, Chad and the Republic of Central Africa enabled many people from the region to be involved in trade. Among these, the Zaghawa are prominent. As there exist no natural boundaries between Sudan and the neighbouring countries and particularly between Sudan and Chad, many of them practised some smuggling across the borders. When the Sahara desert acted as an impediment to smuggling across the Libyan borders and prevented many merchants in Darfur from becoming involved in this

activity, the Zaghawa succeeded in dominating the market in Libyan goods. They were able to import them through Bao in Chad without passing through the custom port in Melit. This was facilitated by the fact that the Zaghawa inhabit both sides of the international border line between Sudan and Chad. In fact, the length of the country's borders which are beyond the government's control and the vast distance between Port Sudan and Northern Darfur tend to encourage smuggling across the western borders. Because of the distance which separates Darfur from Port Sudan, the cost of transport increases the prices of many commodities to more than twice their prices in Khartoum. On top of that, some merchants are able to acquire part of the quotas originally specified for Darfur through illegal channels and sell them in Khartoum thus creating the scarcity of goods in Darfur. Knowing that most people in this region have been suffering from famines and have been living from hand to mouth, they seek to acquire the smuggled goods at cheap prices. The increasing demand for cheap smuggled goods encouraged many merchants in Darfur to take the risk. Among these, the Zaghawa are prominent.

The retired Zaghawa policemen and soldiers who joined trade later, utilized their former social relations to enjoy certain privileges. In most cases they find no difficulty in putting their former comrades, who are in charge of combating smuggling across the borders, under obligation to help them when they were caught smuggling. They put it clearly to their previous comrades that by being sympathetic to them,

they were actually preserving the dignity of the police and military forces whose members should not be thrown into poverty when leaving service. So, in most cases these retired servicemen succeed in making their former comrades to turn a blind eye to many of their unlawful practices. This connivance in a comrade's mischief is always justifiable by a well known Darfurian proverb that "a crow never gouges out the eye of another crow".

By stating the above, I am not trying to imply that smuggling and other illegal acts are practised only by the Zaghawa or that all the former soldiers and policemen who became traders were involved in illegal activities. As this thesis concerns the Zaghawa, I am only tracing some of the mechanisms which enabled the Zaghawa to succeed in trade. Smuggling and utilizing former social relations were certainly important factors underlying this success.

The strong kinship ties and the feeling of group solidarity among the Zaghawa and their willingness to help one another are also among the important factors behind their success in trade. A Zaghawi with little investment resources can obtain a financial support from other well-to-do Zaghawa merchants if he can trace consanguinity and affinity relations with them. Due to the existence of murawa (the obligation to help the needy), it is sometimes enough to be a Zaghawi to claim a financial support from them. For instance, if a Zaghawi's goods have been confiscated in an abortive smuggling expedition, he will never sink into poverty for other Zaghawa will collaborate to offer him a

financial support that will enable him to continue in trade. This support takes different forms. It may be in form of providing interest free loans, sponsorship to obtain loans from a bank, etc.

While blood is thicker than water among the Zaghawa, the person's reputation plays a crucial role in determining his access to financial support from his rich relative. A loyal friend, for example, may succeed in receiving a financial support from a merchant whereas his treacherous relative may not; but the merchant is still under obligation to help the latter by other means. Apart from the kinship and friendship ties, there is also a mutual understanding and reciprocal relationship between the already established Zaghawa merchants and those who are striving to enter this career. One example may illustrate this. When the labour migrants import Libyan goods across the desert to Melit market in Northern Darfur, merchants from different parts of Sudan bid for the imported goods in a high competition. However, the Zaghawa migrants are always under obligation to sell their goods to fellow Zaghawa merchants. They address one another as oam bor (brother) even if there is no real kinship between them. They also deliberately resort to their vernacular in the market situation instead of Arabic to hide the real prices of the goods they sell to other merchants.

Since the migrants have no intention to invest the money received for their goods in any further transaction before they go on holidays to their families, many of them credit their goods to known Zaghawa merchants even if other

merchants are willing to pay cash. The Zaghawa merchants ask for the goods by reciting the Zaghawa proverb biriolo guagu kitiga diy which means "you always gain when you lend even if that is to a crow" and which implies that one should look for the future gains rather than for immediate cash. Until the migrants return from their holidays to ask for their money, the merchants are able to sell the goods and make considerable profit.

The Zaghawa migrants guarantee the merchants' future support by entrusting their goods to them or selling them to them below the market price. Importing foreign goods through Melit is of course not an exclusive domain of the Zaghawa migrants; it is a common practice. But the good brought by the Zaghawa migrants can hardly find their way immediately to other merchants if the Zaghawa merchants are present.

Thus as a response to the changing circumstances and as an adaptation to the continuous waves of drought and famine, the Zaghawa were forced to change their previous negative attitudes to trade and become successful traders within a relatively short period of time. By now, many Zaghawa have moved to greater Khartoum to invest their capital in construction companies or travel agencies. Others moved to Khartoum to continue their investment in trade and are engaged in buying and selling imported goods in "Suk Libya" in Omdurman.

5. Hunting

In the past, when game was abundant, the Zaghawa used to hunt on horseback using daggers and spears. Nowadays, hunting is done by guns. While for the beri hunting is only a part-time and ancillary activity, for many mai, hunting of antelopes and gazelles is the main source of livelihood.

The mai use rudimentary tools such as throwing sticks, spears and snares made from gazelle sinews known as gobo. Despite the fact that the mai themselves manufacture the locally produced cartridges, they still prefer to use gobo in hunting. In fact gobo is associated to such an extent with the mai that the beri would never use it. The use of shotguns is despised by the mai who argue that their noise drives away the game and thus diminishes future hunting prospects.

There exists a common belief in Dar Zaghawa that the game is escorted by jinns who can avenge themselves on the hunters. The jinns are believed to be behind many misfortunes which occurred during hunts and ended in the hunter's loss of eyes or limbs. This is also the reason why the Zaghawa abstain from hunting on Fridays and Wednesdays which are believed to be the days when the jinn are particularly active. The idea of jinn herders is similar to the Kwanim Pa belief in the spiritual power of the wild animals (arum) which can inflict death upon the hunters (James 1979: 224). When the hunter kills a giraffe, he has to cut its head and

tail immediately and hide them away so that its jinn herder could not see it.

The Zaghawa also believe in the existence of an inauspicious shade called koboro which can afflict the hunter and make him unable to find game. Like the mukala of the Ndembu (Turner 1981: 121) koboro can scare the game away from the snares or cause the hunter's weapon to miss its target. To rid themselves from the affliction of koboro, the mai perform special rituals before they go hunting. For instance, they invoke God by mounting their young children on donkeys' backs and beating them until they cry and shout loudly. This simple ritual performed to achieve the success of a hunting expedition (wei) stems from the belief that God always answers the request of crying children.

Stemming from their belief that koboro is positively correlated with sex, the mai abstain from sexual intercourse at least a week before the hunting expedition (wei). When the mai kill an animal, they smear its blood on their throwing sticks, spears and knives and deliberately shed some of the blood on their clothes. All this is to bring success in future hunts.

Today, the long persisting droughts have forced most of the game to migrate out of Dar Zaghawa. The beri, who lost most of their animals which previously supplied them with meat, turned to hunting with guns on commercial basis. Because of the ever decreasing number of animals, the traditional mai collective wei is now giving way to individual

wei in which a mai, sometimes accompanied by his son, rides on a donkey in the remote parts of the country and plants his gobos behind shrubs and small trees over a wide area and checks them regularly to collect any captured game. He also locates his hunting net in a strategic place while his son acts as a beater and drives the guinea-fowl and rabbits against it.

6. Crafts

A miscellaneous package of crafts is produced in Dar Zaghawa. Despite the fact that some beri are also expert in rope plaiting and shoe making, crafts are mostly produced by mai. Since most of the crafts produced by the beri are geared toward their personal use rather than for sale, I shall concentrate here on those crafts which are normally produced by the mai as a source of their livelihood.

In the past, the mai used to weave on a rudimentary wooden loom known as gakrak which is obsolete today. Before the European scrap metal became available, the mai also used to smelt iron from the local iron ore. Today, the mai are engaged in iron-working, wood carving and manufacturing various leather products. As such, mai craftsmen do not specialize. Rather a mai seeks apprenticeship since his childhood to be "Jack of all trades" who is experienced in carrying out all sorts of crafts needed by the beri society. As a result, a single mai family which resides in a beri village or ferik can manage to meet all the requirements of the villagers or camp dwellers. The mai and his male children produce knives, spears, axes, hoes and all the agricul-

tural tools. They can also prepare swords' and knives' covers and carve mortars and pestles. The maida (female mai) on the other hand produces all the pottery utensils such as cooking pots and ablution jugs which were inevitable in all the beri households in the past. Now, metal utensils imported from outside Dar Zaghawa are gradually replacing most of them.

In the large villages or small towns where the population size is relatively high and hence ensures good market for all sorts of mai products, some mai have started to specialize in particular crafts. This enables one or two mai to dominate a particular craft market. As most of the mai are adept and well experienced in performing all sorts of crafts, one can easily switch from one craft to another according to the market demand.

The mai use simple technology in producing all their crafts in their open-air workshop (mai Huda). For example, they use fire, charcoal, skin bellows, anvils and hammers. Until recently when matches were unknown to the mai, they used to kindle fire either from embers of another fire, by friction of two pieces of wood or by a flake of flint and tinder.

7. Response to Drought and Famine

The Zaghawa cultivate millet and although they are hardly able to subsist on their farms alone, as long as pasture is not affected by drought, they are able to avoid starvation. The long exposure to dry seasons and droughts

taught them how to cope with the exigencies and forced them to establish their traditional mechanisms for overcoming the famines. One of such mechanisms is the institution of shibiya. When the harvest fails, the females of poor Zaghawa households migrate to work in cropping the millet fields in areas where harvest is good within Dar Zaghawa and are paid in kind. This short range migration is mostly done by polygynous families which can spare the labour of one wife. If the harvest failed throughout Dar Zaghawa, women embark on horbe instead of shibiya. A group of them migrate a long way to dar al said (central Darfur which lies south of Dar Zaghawa) to harvest the millet fields in Fur, Masaliet and Tama dars. They are paid again in kind for their work. At the end of the season, they ask their families to send camels to bring them home. Sometimes they sell part of the millet to pay for the transport of the millet by lorries to Dar Zaghawa.

Those households which keep large enough herds adopt an alternative strategy of drought management known as toy. Towards the mid dry season when they have consumed their own millet, the male youths travel to the adjacent Fur, Masaliet and Tama territories to import the millet necessary for survival until the new harvest. They sell some animals in those areas to get the necessary cash. This practice is similar to that of the Baggara in Jebel Marra who do not cultivate for they assume it is economically more rational to concentrate on their herds and to purchase the whole year's supply of millet from the neighbouring Fur.

They usually sell just two or three calves for cash for that purpose (Barth 1967, Haaland 1969, Mohamed-Salih 1982 b).

If a severe drought strikes the country, a different strategy of drought management, jull is adopted. Jull is the corruption of the Arabic jala which means evacuation. Jull differs from shibiya, horbe and toy in that instead of bringing the millet home, the whole household members migrate to it as was the case in the prominent year of Erebo in which the entire Zaghawa society migrated to Wadi Erebo in Western Darfur. In a year of severe drought, the whole population of Dar Zaghawa evacuates the country and moves to dar al said where the harvest has been successful to stay among other ethnic groups and to return home by the onset of the first showers. This wide scale population exodus creates tensions with the host community because it is difficult for the Zaghawa chiefs to bring their subjects under their strict control while they are dispersed in other communities.

In some years, the heavy demand for millet on part of the migrating Zaghawa encourages the Fur to dispose of all their output. If the next rains are late in coming, the Fur themselves may experience famines. A report on the administration of the Sudan describes the state of affairs in 1950/51 which was one of such years when the Zaghawa migrated to the Fur area:

Zaghawa, Bideyat and Northern Fur were camped all along the Zalingei and Masaliet wadis... and the northward move of the Zaghawa was accompanied by so little trouble that the name of the new melik

Ali Mohammadein stands high with his neighbours. Unfortunately the Fur disposed of really all their grains to these visitors and ran short before the new harvest (Report on the Administration of the Sudan 1956: 125).

The recent famines and droughts started to gain the world recognition and attracted the attention of the people from outside the affected areas in Sudan only after 1973. To the Zaghawa, they have been a perpetual menace to which they have become used and with which they have learned to cope. Droughts and dry years fluctuate with the good years in a rotating sequence (Ibrahim 1984: 7). Given this, the question arises why have the Zaghawa suffered so badly in the droughts which started in 1973 or to put it differently, how and why the experience which they have accumulated over the years failed to help them in the present situation?

There has been an apparent dramatic drop in the rainfall and the level of precipitation in Dar Zaghawa since the early 1970 s. The Zaghawa maintain that the misery and the droughts they are facing are triggered off by natural forces and changes in the climatic conditions in which man has no hand. But according to Ibrahim (1980, 1984), Harir (1986) and Jose Tubiana (in a verbal communication in Omdurman 1981), the Zaghawa have themselves contributed to the changes in their environment. Their animals overgraze the areas around the permanent water sources and turn them into bare lands. By erecting huge dams across the wadis, the Zaghawa indirectly cause desiccation of the vegetation beyond the dams and deprive it from the rain water. Their continuous removal of the natural vegetation cover through weeding the millet fields is thought to enhance nabaka (loose land)

formation around the small shrubs (Ibrahim 1984) and to reactivate the stable sand dunes (Harir 1986). Unaware of the serious consequences of their practices, the Zaghawa are disturbing the vulnerable eco-system of their country and enhancing the man made desertification of which they are both creators and victims.

What is extraordinary about the recent drought is that it continued for a prolonged period and in consequence, caused complete destruction of the vegetation over vast areas. This is even more serious because Dar Zaghawa, even though deemed to be harsh and oppressive in its general outlook, harbours flora and fauna which contributes to the survival of the people during the famines. Unlike some other Darfurian societies like the Eringa and Gimir who dig into termites hills for the grains stored by the insects in times of scarcity, the Zaghawa turn to the palatable plant species of their country. The Tubianas (1977) have compiled a long list of edible plant species and wild fruits which augment the Zaghawa diet during the famine. The prolonged period of the recent drought led to a great number of trees dying. This removed the natural wind breakers and deprived livestock from fodder and as a consequence, more than 66% of the country's livestock has perished (Ibrahim 1984 and Harir 1986). Because the survival and the continuity of the Zaghawa depend on their animals which are the source of milk, cash and transport, the extermination of livestock relegated many of the rich Zaghawa to the status of destitutes. There are no job opportunities or other means for procuring cash

to sustain them. In the past, when only a small sector of the society was poor, it was possible for the wider community to absorb and maintain it without difficulties. This was done successfully through the individuals' observance of their obligations towards their relatives, the institutions of Zakah (almsgiving) and muruwa (helping the needy). In the present situation, everybody became needy including the people who were rich before. It is true that the Zaghawa youths who migrated to the urban centres or to Libya and Saudi-Arabia are sending remittances and providing financial help. But because no food is nowadays produced in Dar Zaghawa, this help is insufficient to sustain the large Zaghawa families.

What aggravated the seriousness of the situation is that the sweeping drought stroke most areas of Darfur indiscriminately including those of Fur and Masaliet. This deprived the Zaghawa from their reservoir which rescued them in years of jull. As a result, the Zaghawa are unable to survive without the relief provided by the national and international agencies. Last year the harvest was unexpectedly good and some families returned from dar al said in the belief that the good old days started to repeat themselves. This may be however, too optimistic a view.

The Zaghawa have not realized that the drought and famine which they have been facing are beyond their traditional means of coping with and in consequence, they are reluctant to leave their country. It is interesting to note that the elderly people have an ethnocentric view that other

people outside Dar Zaghawa are nabati who leave their graves after death (see Holy 1987 for similar views among the Berti) and in consequence, they prefer to die at home. The reluctance of leaving one's own country seems to be a universal phenomenon. According to White, "It is not exaggeration to state that unless they are forced to vacate the area, many will remain in the hazard zone for subsistence" (1974: 22). Despite this reluctance, many factors contributed to tip the balance and force the Zaghawa to migrate in an extraordinary population exodus to different parts of Darfur. Some "burnt their bridges behind them" and clearly showed no desire to return home. They collected the millet straw of their huts and brought it with them to towns where they sold it to pay their transport fares.

It is not in the interest of the ruling families that the Zaghawa leave the country in such great numbers for this deprives them of their power and status and turns them into rulers without subjects. Therefore, they are trying to convince their people to tolerate the hardship and they argue that they are appealing on their behalf to the regional government to improve life conditions in Dar Zaghawa. To many Zaghawa, these arguments sound unconvincing for they know that the local Zaghawa leaders can hardly influence the regional government policy and that some time will pass before the government would be able to do anything to improve the situation. Therefore, many Zaghawa left their traditional country to seek better life elsewhere. Tubiana

and Tubiana (1977: 94) believe that this will end up in the death of the Zaghawa culture.

Today, many of the Arab nomads and the Chadian Bideyat are settling in the deserted Zaghawa villages. The Libyan-Chad war has aggravated this problem. The Chadian Bideyat have gained an easy access to modern sophisticated weapons which enable them to practise armed robbery and to ambush those Zaghawa who still remain in their remote villages and force them to evacuate their lands. The proximity of the international border line between Chad and Sudan favours the influx of the fugitives from Chad. As it always takes some time for the Sudan police and armed forces to arrive on the scene, it is left to the Zaghawa to resort to self-help and use their physical power to protect their animals and farm lands as well as their traditional pastures. Perhaps this Zaghawa protection of their territory which is indirectly defending Sudan's western borders is one of the reasons which led Henderson, a governor of Darfur during the colonial era (1951) to state: " Like others before me, I am becoming convinced of the potential value of Zaghawa to the Sudan. Like the Bija, they have qualities which are lacking in the Semites" (Harir 1986: xx).

Today, as a form of adaptation to the recent drought and harsh environmental conditions, many Zaghawa have started to alter their traditional way of life. The conventional mode of pastoralism which necessitates a semi-nomadic way of life is gradually dying out. Instead, many Zaghawa have started to adopt gallaga. They purchase animals at cheap

prices in rushash, the period just before the rains, fatten them during the rainy season and darat and put them in the market at high prices. Also due to the extermination of the major part of the Zaghawa livestock by the recent drought, it has become impossible for the individual members of the Zaghawa society to make the usual gifts of animals to their relatives at their wedding or circumcision ceremonies. Only the members of the immediate family can afford to do so today. In consequence, many people have started to depend on their own effort to pay their bridewealth. This led many Zaghawa youths to migrate abroad to Libya , Saudi-Arabia and Iraq to work as wage labourers to be able to collect the stipulated bridewealth.

It seems that the Zaghawa have now changed their former view on trade drastically and are involved in it more than any other ethnic group in Darfur. The recurrent failure of millet cultivation and the high price of the millet imported to Zaghawa have stimulated some women even from the formerly well-to-do households to start collecting wild fruit on commercial basis and selling it in the market. Also due the migration of much of the game from Dar Zaghawa, the previous mai collective wei have started to be substituted by individual wei. The spread of the modern metal utensils from the urban centres reduced the demand for the pottery items as well as many of the products of the local smiths. This led many mai to stop producing their traditional activities and forced them to migrate to the urban centres. This loss of hope in producing decent life while staying in Dar Zaghawa

has become a general phenomenon. In consequence, many beri and mai have started to migrate outside their traditional homeland in great numbers to seek better life elsewhere.

CHAPTER FIVE

ZAGHAWA SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

1. The Social Groups

The Zaghawa society is internally divided into two communities, a minority group indentified as mai and the rest of the Zaghawa known as beri. But sociologically speaking, the most important distinction is that of kire bor (members of the royal lineages), miskin (commoners) and the mai (hereditary specialized craftsmen mainly blacksmiths). This tripartite categorization of the Zaghawa society is recognized by the actors themselves as well as by the outsiders. The membership of these three groups is ascribed by birth and it is for life. It has implications for one's status and life chances.

Kire bor are the princes who constitute a small sector of the Zaghawa society. This group embraces the families of the kings, sultans and shartaïs of the four territories of the Zaghawa and their close agnatic kin. While all those who trace their descent to the royal lineages claim to be Kire bor, in reality, only those who are descended from the incumbent chiefs or their close patrilineal kin are considered full-fledged kire bor. Because the Zaghawa trace descent in a patrilineal line, those who are related to the royal families through ties of matrilateral kinship are not considered full members of this group.

Miskin are the general public of the non-royal lineages who are demographically dominant compared with the other two groups. The Zaghawa see no difference between the members of this group and the kire bor except that the miskin claim no genealogical links to the royal lineages. Traditionally, miskin connotes those commoners none of whose ancestors in the past seven generations had access to the throne or to the nahas (the royal drum). These are referred to as miskin saba jid i.e. miskin of seven generations (Lit. miskin of seven ancestors).

The mai are a small minority of people with hereditary occupational specialization of iron-smithing, hunting, pottery, leatherworking and root healing. They are considered to be different from the beri. Many beri believe that they can identify members of this group simply by their physical features. The mai are assumed to have sharp lips, ears and dark shinning skins. Others say that they can recognize the mai by their speech for the mai are said to be not only iron-smiths but also "word-smiths" and they employ a skillful language in their daily life. They can gossip about the beri and insult them in their presence by using various euphemisms the true meaning of which is lost on the beri despite the fact that the beri and mai speak the same language. According to the majority of the beri, the easiest way to identify a mai is to observe him walking; he will start walking with his left foot unlike a beri who always starts with the right one or at least claims to be doing so.

The kire bor, miskin and mai are viewed as relatively superior and inferior to one another. Their members are conscious about their status and their social ranking. This is easily discernible in almost every aspect of their life. For instance, many influential members miss important meetings in Kutum, the headquarter of Northern Darfur district because they do not want to travel in back seats of a car as that does not suit their status. Normally people write down all the names of those whom they want to invite for a feast and inform them of the invitation by sending the list to them. When completing the list, one should be careful to register the names of the guests in the proper order according to their assumed status. Many will refuse to attend a feast if a name of a particular person alleged to be of an inferior status is listed above their own name.

2. Basis of Stratification

Social stratification among the Zaghawa is a multi-causal phenomenon. It is not an individual's economic position that determines his social standing for neither a very poor beri can become a mai nor a rich mai is ever assumed to stand above a beri. This system of stratification is based on the individuals' evaluation according to the cultural notions of good and bad.

The effect of the wider Islamic and Arabic culture upon the Zaghawa is noticeable. In essence, the Zaghawa system of social stratification can be related to the Arabic/Islamic

culture. The beri hold the belief that the mai practise asnam (pagan activities) or kunuz (superstitions) and that they are lax in religious belief. According to the beri tradition, the ancestor of the mai supported the non-believers during the time of the prophet Mohamed and secretly sold them weapons to inflict a defeat upon him. The same idea exists among some other Muslim societies in Africa south of the Sahara (see for example Cohen 1970: 249 for the Kanuri). The beri regard the mai as religiously impure. A more readily offered justification for the pollution of the mai is a mythical story. In the past, the great ancestor of the mai caught a gazelle with a gobo (a snare made of gazelle sinew). It happened that the gazelle had left her kid in the bush. She requested the mai to be kind and to set her free for the sake of her young kid which would die of hunger should its mother be killed but the mai turned down her request. The gazelle requested him in desperation to let her go to nurse her kid once more and promised to return soon to be killed. The mai accepted reluctantly her request and asked, "But how can I be sure that you will fulfil your promise"? It happened that at the time a prophet came across them by chance. He intervened and requested the mai to be merciful and let her go this time but the mai made no response. When the prophet kept repeating his request, the mai said that he would release her to go to feed her kid only if the prophet would agree to put his own foot in the gobo instead of hers to guarantee her return. Eventually, the prophet put his holy foot in the gobo and the gazelle went

to feed her kid. When she returned after a while, the prophet enticed the mai to be kind and set her free but the mai turned him a deaf ear. He immediately killed her amid the curses of the prophet. From that time the mai and his progeny became suffering the consequences of that perdition and became afflicted by innate and inherent pollution, the stain of which they cannot remove even if they wash themselves in seven seas. Not to be afflicted by their pollution and contaminated by the contact with them, the other members of the society have to avoid them. Furthermore, the mai became devoid of baraka (blessing). In consequence, neither their herd increases in size nor are they able to collect good harvest whatever the size of plot they cultivate.

According to this notion of religious purity and pollution, the society considers the members of kire bor and miskin as pure whereas the mai are alleged to be in the state of religious impurity. This is taken by the beri to be the justification for the mai's situation.

The political leadership among the Zaghawa is vested in the major clans whose founding ancestors are assumed to have been the original inhabitants of the dars. Normally the leadership is passed down the line of the first born sons of the tribal chiefs who hold office irrespective of their personal qualifications. Chiefs' younger sons are deprived from this privilege. The traditional leaders have a legitimate authority over the entire population of the dars. When Native Administration was introduced, the former chiefs were reappointed as administrators of their dars and given autho-

rity to collect the animal and poll tax. It was not uncommon that the chiefs delegated their authority to register the taxable animals held by the members of their dars to members of their clans. Many chiefs used their authority to suppress members of other clans and their contenders by imprisoning them or confiscating their animals. Thus the Native Administration helped the chiefs and the ruling clans to restore their power position and to perpetuate their status.

Like in the Trobriand Islanders (see Keesing 1976: 355), among the Zaghawa, it is not the people who are ranked but their lineages and clans. Individuals are ranked according to their lineage or clan affiliation. Members of the royal lineages and clans are considered to be of a higher status than the members of the non-royal lineages and clans. The Zaghawa maintain that the ancestor's nobility is hereditary and can be transmitted to his progeny. It follows that the more noble ancestors an individual has, the more legitimate and higher is his status. Hence, the personally achieved status is considered of no importance in comparison with the inherited nobility passed down from the great ancestors. This is the reason why the members of the kire bor group consider the non-royal members as misikin saba iid of relatively low social standing.

The Zaghawa believe that some occupations are charged with baraka (blessing) while others are devoid from it. Following this, individuals are evaluated as good or bad according to the activities they perform. Those who perform activities which are endowed with baraka are considered

better than those who perform activities endowed with no baraka. For instance, farmers are assumed to be better than the butchers. The reason is that farmers grow millet which is the source of life both for human beings and birds which feed on the crop whereas butchers take life. According to the Zaghawa tradition, to give life is considered good and blessed while to take life is bad and interpreted as a sin.

Most of the activities performed by the mai are either associated with taking of life or with fire which is a means to it. For instance, while the beri depend on herding and millet cultivation for their livelihood, the mai depend on killing gazelles and cutting down trees for wood carving and coal. These activities entail taking of life whether of animals or trees. The mai also work as blacksmiths, thus performing a job which requires the use of fire. The maida (female mai) also make pottery by transforming clay, the source of life in Muslims' belief, into pots by using fire and sell them for cash. In consequence, the mai as a group are ranked lower than the beri. Those individual beri who are engaged in activities associated with the taking of life, such as butchers, are also considered inferior. In addition to the life taking as the justification of butchers' low status, the Zaghawa narrate a mythical story which justifies the butchers' inferior position. It is said that when the prophet died, all members of the society attended his funeral and as a consequence God blessed them except the butcher who deprived himself from baraka. He did not attend the funeral because he was afraid that if he went

to the cemetery, a dog which was wandering about, would eat his meat. So, he stayed at home to safeguard his property. When the dog realized that the butcher was not going to leave the meat unattended, it hurried to attend the burial ceremony just before it was over. When the butcher got to the ceremony, it was already too late. This is why the Zaghawa say that "a dog is better than a butcher". Today, many butchers in Dar Zaghawa are either mai or individuals from outside the Zaghawa area for the beri are reluctant to undertake this job.

In the present situation, occupations are also evaluated according to their prestige. The occupational prestige among the Zaghawa is dynamic and changeable over time. For instance, during the time of war, the society tends to emphasize the values of bravery and endurance. In consequence, soldiers and policemen are ranked high in the society. During the time of high inflation rates in which all those on low salaries become unable to procure decent life, merchants have the highest prestige. Under the normal conditions, the school teachers and the public administrators are the most respected occupational groups. Therefore, it is always possible that a less prestigious occupation at a certain time may turn to be the highest in prestige at another time and vice versa. For instance, until 1960s the Zaghawa considered the military service to be the most prestigious occupation and many Zaghawa joined the Sudan armed forces. Soldiers were praised in songs and chosen as husbands in preference to other men. Nowadays, this occupation is considered mean and soldiers are now teased

and described as slaves of the government. Merchants who once had a very low status are nowadays awarded high prestige and many soldiers and school teachers are resigning to become tradesmen. This dynamic mode of evaluating occupations has influenced the whole structure of the Zaghawa society and distributed its members among particular occupations which were ranked high at different times. The proliferation of soldiers, policemen and school teachers among the Zaghawa compared with the other ethnic groups in Darfur can be explained as an outcome of this dynamic occupational prestige.

While an individual's occupation is an important determinant of his status, it does not follow that those of the same occupation are ipso facto of the same status. Other factors should be taken into consideration to determine the individual's status in the Zaghawa society.

3. The Hierarchical System

Despite the fact that there exist more than one gradient of stratification among the Zaghaw, it is believed that kire bor rank high on all of them whereas the mai rank low on all of them. The miskin rank high on some of these gradients of stratification and low on others. These three groups can thus be viewed as constituting a prestige hierarchy of horizontal layers (strata) which are relatively superior or inferior to one another. The kire bor are ranked at the top of the hierarchical ladder, the miskin are relatively

low compared to the kire bor but are ranked higher in relation to the mai. The mai are ranked at the bottom of the social ladder on the grounds that they are physically and ritually impure and practise activities devoid of baraka. The membership of these three strata is ascribed by birth and therefore it is permanent for one inherits the stratum of one's parents.

Generally speaking, the Zaghawa do not stress the distinction between the members of the two upper strata but the difference between miskin and kire bor on the one hand and the mai on the other is always emphasized. The mai are considered incapable of governing their affairs and hence they are seen as needing guidance and supervision from the beri. Any attempt to treat them as equals and rank them above the others will be confronted by a strong opposition from the members of the two upper strata. For instance, in 1952, the chief of Dar Tuer realized that many beri youths adopted camel theft as a means of displaying their bravado and courage to gain prestige and fame and to be praised in songs by the young beri girls. To fight against this crime, he appointed a few mai as prison wardens in charge of the beri camel thieves detained in jail. As the beri do not accept orders from the mai because of their low status, many of the beri who were remanded in custody adamantly refused to be led by the mai to jail. They preferred to be dragged by force to the jail than to walk on their feet behind the mai. When the news about the appointment of the mai as

prison wardens spread throughout Dar Zaghawa, there was a dramatic reduction in the cases of camel theft.

But this policy of putting the mai in charge of the beri also generated serious repercussions. Some clansmen interpreted it as a malicious attempt by the incumbent chief to undermine their dignity and they threatened to give him no allegiance.

Members of the kire bor stratum also do not accept equality with the miskin. When the May regime dissolved the Native Administration system to bring equality between the rulers and their subjects, this was quite unbelievable to many Zaghawa chiefs. A chief of one Zaghawa territory expressed this general feeling by saying that he would rather die than see the miskin equated to the kire bor.

Although the whole Zaghawa society is broadly divided in terms of status into three strata, status differences also exist among members of each stratum. For instance, within the royal lineage, the closer a person is genealogically to the incumbent chief, the higher is his or her status. Since the chieftaincy is passed through the first born son of the chief, the chief's younger brothers and their descendants gradually lose status and become relatively inferior kire bor. This variation of status is even more apparent among the commoners. The well educated persons and the senior government officers are socially respected and accorded high prestige. The families of omdas (clan leaders) and sheikhs who have relative power over the others are superior to the rest of the commoners. Similarly, the aayan

(Ar. :big men) who have achieved power through displaying personal attributes such as generosity, sagacious ideas and the ability to arbitrate between the disputants are held in high esteem. In general terms, the Zaghawa respect members of the major clans more than those of the small ones. The Ordio, Ustay and Beiy clans, for example, are mocked for being minority groups. It is assumed that these small clans are unable to protect their members against the aggression of others or to collect the requested diya (blood money) and so to spare the life of a clan member who killed a member of another clan. On the other hand, the horgoni (clients) who bring horses' fodder to the chiefly households and usher the chiefs' guests in exchange for food and shelter, are of low social standing.

Certain differences in status exist also among the mai. The mai sheikhs who are in charge of their fellow mai and collect their animal tax are of a higher status than the rest of the mai. Those government employees who receive salary are relatively superior to the others as they are thought to be known by the government. The experts who renew the nahas and those who manufacture the locally made rifles are more prestigious than the mai who only manufacture the traditional mai goods and perform the traditional mai services.

Members of the different strata are separated from one another in an institutionalized pattern of behaviour. This is always apparent in many aspects of their social life among which the following are the more salient.

a) Endogamy

It is a general principle among the Zaghawa that people marry within their own stratum i.e. their equals. Consequently the kire bor are the most appropriate spouses for the kirda (the female members of the royal lineages). It often happens that a kire bor who fails to find a suitable wife in his own territory, looks for one in other territories not to jeopardise his status. Some kire bor deliberately choose their wives from the ruling families of other territories to create alliances. This enables their sons to gain support from their powerful maternal uncles should their own patrilineal cousins rise against them. Similarly the miskin are more likely to marry within their own stratum for they encounter many obstacles if they attempt to marry into the royal families. Irrespective of the general principle of marrying within the same stratum, the Zaghawa practise hypergamous marriages in which women marry up. Many kire bor take wives from the well-to-do and influential miskin families to manipulate them in their quest for power but they are reluctant to give them their own daughters in marriage.

Both kire bor and miskin are prohibited by custom from marrying the mai or even to participate with them in the tribal dances. When the beri boys approach the maida to dance with her not knowing who she is, she will immediately say "I bagi gay" (Lit. my well is different) to indicate that she is a maida. Sexual liaison with a maida is considered to be a heinous crime. The beri say that he who commits it will be afflicted by pollution which he cannot get

rid of even if he bathed in seven seas. In 1980, a beri was found guilty of committing adultery with a maida. He was made free by the mai after having paid a heavy fine and the whole matter was kept secret for if it became known by others, it would damage the man's reputation. The mai promised to say no word about the case when the culprit had paid the fine. The beri was surprised next morning when his wife came to request her divorce because she could not tolerate to share his favours with a polluted maida. Sexual intercourse is an indication of non-existence of social barriers between those involved in it and their equality in status. For this reason, the mai could not let such an incident pass without utilizing it to support the claims of equality, despite of his promises.

b) Residential Segregation

The kire bor, miskin and mai of each territory are physically separated from one another in residence. The kire bor of Dar Tuer and Gala inhabit Umburu and Karnoi respectively whereas those of Dar Kobe and Artaj dwell in Tine and Umharaz. The miskin and mai reside in their own villages. In the past, the kire bor prohibited others from living in their villages which were exclusively occupied by their members. This residential separation was further enhanced by the policy of the Native Administration adopted by the British (see Harir 1986). Some royal families were relocated and separated from their miskin and given

additional authority and formal powers to collect taxes from them. Today, the villages of the royal lineages are by no means confined to them for they embrace members of other groups as well.

The mai are segregated in their own villages for these settlements are avoided by the members of the other two strata. Apart from the common belief that the mai are ritually polluted, they are also considered physically impure as they are very much associated with dirt. For instance, they deliberately shed the blood of the animals they killed on their clothes to bring good luck in later hunting expeditions. The maida mix animal dung with their hands to produce pottery items. This symbolic and physical pollution required of the mai prevents the kire bor and nisikin to reside with them in an effort to avoid being contaminated by any physical contact with them. In consequence, the mai are segregated in their own villages in different parts of Dar Zaghawa. When existence was threatened by drought and many beri migrated outside Dar Zaghawa, the mai shifted to the Zaghawa small towns of Umburu, Karnoi and Tine to seek markets for their miscellaneous goods and services. Even in these small towns, the mai are segregated in their own wards and do not mix with other inhabitants. The mai are not only segregated in residence but also in the marketplace. While the beri women assemble in an open space at the weekly markets to sell their products, the maida are forced to occupy a separate space at a distance from the beri women. The mai also establish their open-air workshops in the

remote corners of the marketplace away from the other shops.

In summer, when the beri move to camps, the mai establish their shelters at a reasonable distance from those of the beri to supply them with their indispensable services without polluting anybody.

c) Commensality

Like other Sudanese, the Zaghawa take their meals by sharing a common dish or dishes. When a visitor arrives at meal time, he is always invited to share the dish. But this sharing of meals is limited to members of the two upper strata (kire bor and miskin) who all abstain from eating, drinking or smoking with the mai. When a mai visits a beri household during a meal time, he is never invited to join in. Instead, he is offered some food to take separately. Some beri ask the mai to wash his hands thoroughly with soap and then join them in the meal. As people normally wash their hands with soap only after the meal but not prior to it, the request clearly indicates to the mai his inferior status and he usually stays away to be served alone. When a mai is doing a service in a beri house, he deliberately absents himself during the meal times to avoid being humiliated either by not being invited or asked to wash his hands with soap first.

The beri normally do not stay as guests in the mai households unless they do not know that their hosts are mai. When the beri discovers that his host is a mai, he avoids

eating in his household for the beri do not take food prepared by a maida. Furthermore, most beri do not trust the mai to have slaughtered his animals according to the proper Islamic sunna (tradition) and so they consider his food as polluted.

This aversion to sharing food with the mai is stronger among the Kobe and Bideyat than among the other sections of the Zaghawa. Today, many educated beri in Umburu eat together with a few selected mai but this does not seem to be the case in Tine or Karnoi.

d) Division of Labour

The membership of a particular stratum determines the individual's way of life. A traditional division of labour exists between the members of the different strata. For instance, the political leadership is vested in the members of the kire bor stratum. They are exclusively authorized to administer the animal tax in collaboration with omdas and sheikhs. As representatives of the chiefs, the Kire bor occasionally adjudicate in minor disputes that arise between individuals or groups. The kire bor maintain that only their members are capable of the leadership and control of men in the society due to their vast experience inherited from their chiefly ancestors. They often tease the miskin that they may well be able to take care of the animals but that they have no idea about the control of men. Such allegations, even if expressed jokingly, are always rejected by

the miskin. The fact that the kire bor had the first opportunity to attend the government schools in the past enabled them to dominate the few lucrative government jobs in Dar Zaghawa.

Many kire bor consider the performance of handicrafts and the slaughtering of animals as menial tasks which do not suit their status. Therefore, they tend to persuade others to carry them out for them. Prior to 1970, most of the miskin youths were involved in seasonal migrations to the riverain area of the central Sudan to work for cash. The kire bor refrained from such migrations as they thought them to be inappropriate for their status and honour.

Although all the Zaghawa social groups adopt pastoralism in varying degrees, the miskin are very much associated with this particular economic pursuit. The mai in general do not have animals but work as herders for others to earn cash. As for the kire bor, they either consider animal rearing as inappropriate for them or they lack the proper technique of animal rearing. At present, many Kire bor who own a few animals prefer to stay in the small towns and hire others to look after their herds or they farm them out to a relative or a friend in the rural areas.

The miskin practise handicrafts such as shoe-making, rope plaiting and wrapping amulets but they are prohibited from practising certain crafts which they regard as inappropriate for them. These are traditionally performed by the mai.

The mai practise a miscellaneous package of activities most of which are considered either polluting or inferior. For example, they practise iron-smithing, wood carving and hunting with gobo from which both the kire bor and miskin refrain. If a beri is found hunting with gobo, he will be severely condemned and ostracized. The mai are the only drummers and musicians in Dar Zaghawa. The maida practise pottery, leather tanning and millet grinding for cash. Among the Kobe, hair plaiting is considered a defiling activity which can only be performed by the maida.

4. The Zaghawa Caste

The issue of applying the term caste to societies outside the pan Indian cultural area is controversial and open to debate as indicated in the first chapter. Despite this fact, some scholars (for example Dilley 1987, Richter 1980, Todd 1977, Maquet 1970 and Vaughan 1970) described a few societies of Africa as having castes on the basis of their structural and functional similarities to the caste society of India.

The Zaghawa can also be seen as representative of those African societies which are described as caste-like systems. The three horizontal layers of clearly defined categories of kire bor, miskin and mai are ranked vertically according to their status and prestige such that the kire bor rank highest similar to the Brahmins in the Indian caste system (Dumont 1980:47) and the Tutsi in Rwanda (Mason 1970: 14).

The mai are ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy and considered inferior like the Twa in Rwanda and the Untouchables in the Hindu India. The membership of these three ranked groups is ascribed by birth and the individual's status is derived from his group membership irrespective of his individual achievements or personal qualities.

The Zaghawa maintain a traditional system of division of labour in which members of different strata inherit their occupations and their way of life. They are culturally prohibited from performing activities normally carried out by others. For this reason, a rich and eligible miskin is deprived from competing for the throne whereas a less qualified and poor kire bor can inherit the throne. During the famine, a kire bor and the miskin would rather starve to death than hunt with gobo for that is a mai activity.

The mai are considered inherently impure for being cursed by the prophet and they are believed to be able to contaminate others by their proximity or direct physical contact. The kire bor and miskin avoid being contaminated by the mai through adopting residential segregation, restricted commensality and endogamous marriages. They regard sexual intercourse with the mai as taboo. No beri engages in an open fight with the mai for fight takes place among equals. Should a beri punish a mai, he uses a tree branch for the purpose instead of his hands to avoid being contaminated by the direct physical contact with mai's body. This concept of the innate pollution of mai lies at the root of their inferiority compared with members of the other two strata. Any

attempt to redress the balance by raising the status of the mai or treating them as equals to the beri is met by a serious opposition from the dominant groups. In this respect, the case of the mai jail wardens at Umburu is a case in point. The beri camel thieves reacted violently against the appointment of the mai in charge of them because they saw it as a violation of the rules of caste.

It thus appears that the Zaghawa society resembles many of the African societies described as castes for it displays most of the characteristic features of caste mentioned by Hutton (quoted in Leach 1971: 2-3). It also satisfies the three features which Tuden and Plotnicov believe are indicative of caste when they appear in a highly salient form: occupational specialization of endogamous groups, ascription of membership by birth and regulation of social distance by the concept of pollution (1970: 16). I think that the Zaghawa social stratification can be regarded as caste also on the basis of Dumont's stipulation that there must be a system of castes that includes all members of the society before we can speak of caste (Dumont 1980: 215). In Zaghawa society, there exists an all inclusive system in which every Zaghawi is either kire bor, miskin or mai. But because the Zaghawa social organization lacks many of the complexities of the Indian caste, I prefer to classify it as a caste-like system.

As the Zaghawa caste is based on the views of the beri and their attitudes towards the mai, a brief discussion of the attitudes of the mai towards the beri and their inter-

pretation of the reason behind their inferior social standing seems to be necessary. In general, the mai consider their despised position in the society as a consequence of their internal colonization. They reject all the justifications produced by the beri to discriminate against them and regard them as false. They reject the beri despising them for their iron-working on the ground that this had been practised in the past by al-nabi Dawood (the prophet David) who is holier than the beri themselves. Paradoxically, the mai see the beri as being backward for iron-working is practised today by the government and great industries in Khârtoum whereas the beri mistakenly regard it as a despised activity and refrain from it. The mai further justify the backwardness of the beri by saying that everywhere people respect the innovators and call them usta (experts) but the beri detest and scorn them instead. For many mai the beri are inconsistent in their attitude towards them because many of the beri who do not even pray themselves discriminate against the mai on the grounds that they do not observe their religious duties.

Despite these views held by the mai about the beri, the long exposure to oppression and deprivation and the lack of any hope for change made many of them to internalize their inferior social standing. Many mai themselves share the beri belief that they have no baraka. Many mai cultivate only small strips of land in the belief that even if they cultivate a large area of land, they would not reap a good harvest. Therefore, even in good years, many mai depend on

charity. Some mai also share beri's view that they are polluted and inferior. One example can show this. Some years ago, two Bideyat raped a mai girl in Dar Gala thinking that she was a berda (female beri). When she approached the camp wailing, many people hurried to the mai household to find the reason. The maida told them what had happened adding that the Bideyat could still be chased for they could not have gone far away. To the surprise of all present, the girl's father said calmly: "Leave them alone. It is them who lost their honour and shame". Perhaps the mai may have been wise not to trace the recalcitrant Bideyat, but his justification is still indicative of his self-perception.

5. Intergroup Relations and Pattern of Interaction

Since there exists a system of division of labour among the Zaghawa in which members of different strata are ascribed their occupations by birth, the strata are of necessity interdependent. The mai goods and services are necessary to make life meaningful and comfortable for both members of kire bor and miskin strata. For instance, drumming the nuggara (a small drum held under the arm) is necessary in every Zaghawa wedding ceremony. Any groom who fails to bring a mai drummer to entertain the audience is held in low esteem. Therefore, to gain prestige, any beri groom tends to appease a mai and pay him generously to play the drum during his wedding ceremony. Although the mai are thus important to the beri, the beri give them no credit. They are careful not

to develop any relation with the mai when the wedding ceremony is over. Sometimes, during the ceremony itself the beri encircle the mai with a small thorn fence to make a barrier between him and the dancers.

Today, many of the mai goods and services are exchanged for cash but until a few decades ago, they were obtainable only through the system of client-patron relationship. In the past, every mai household was attached to a particular beri household on the basis of such relationship. The mai household supplied the beri household with axes, hoes, knives and ablution pots. In return, the beri household protected the mai from the aggression of the other beri and provided it with food and used shoes and clothes. The question which poses itself is how this pattern of interdependence and superiority-inferiority between the beri and the mai came to existence? According to many beri, this relationship was established to satisfy the needs of the mai for protection. In the past, they believe, there was lack of security due to intertribal wars and continuous forays between neighbouring ethnic groups in which the weak were the most vulnerable. As a minority group, the mai were unable to protect themselves and so they were forced to seek some powerful beri households to protect them in exchange for their goods and services.

Other beri relate the client-patron relationship between the beri and mai to the allegation that the beri had rescued the mai from a severe famine in the past. When the beri mounted their camels to seek refuge in a more hospi-

table area in the south to escape the famine, the mai had no camels to ride. The beri realized that if the mai were left on their own, they would be exterminated by the famine and in consequence, the beri would lose those necessary but despised activities which the mai traditionally provide. They agreed that each beri who could afford it, should give a lift to a mai and so they rescued them from death. When the famine was over, the beri returned with the mai to their country. Since then, the mai became indebted to the beri and offered themselves as serfs to them. While both of these stories interpret the mai as if they have chosen their subordination, MacMichael (1967: 56) believes that both the mai and the blacksmiths among the Berti are held by force as small colonies. The fact that the mai themselves are of the belief that they are suffering consequences of internal colonization makes me more inclined towards MacMichael's view. It seems to be more sound sociologically as that the relationship between beri and mai is based on an institutionalized pattern of inequality. The beri systematically degrade the mai and express contempt for them in any social situation that brings them together. For example, among the Zaghawa, it is impolite to address an old person by his or her first name. But the beri address an old mai not only by his first name but also as boregi (my child) which is the appropriate form of addressing a child. On the other hand, it is improper for an old mai to address even a young beri boy as boregi. It is also improper for the mai to address the miskin by their first names. Instead, they use abu fulan

(x's father where x is the name of his first born child). The mai address the kire bor and kirda as obboh and ommoh (titles of a male and female members of the royal family respectively) which is more prestigious than abu fulan or um fulan for the female.

There is no occasion in which the beri and mai appear as competitors; the beri have always priority over the mai. For instance, when the beri draw water from the well according to the principle of first come, first served, the mai are made to wait even if they came earlier than some beri. They can draw water only in the evening after all the beri left the well.

The majority of the beri are of the belief that the mai are magusi (pagans) but the mai state that they are also Muslims even though they know only little about the teachings of Islam. Some of the mai who reside in the small towns attend the Friday noon prayer in the mosque as well as the prayers of the two festivals (eids). The beri accept equality with the mai only in the mosque when performing the religious service. According to the principles of Islam, all Muslims are equal in status and the ethnic or racial differences count for nothing (Levy 1957: 55). Members of the society are evaluated according to their individual merits but not on categorical basis. Accordingly, in the mosque, the mai can stand shoulder to shoulder with the beri in the same row. Any mai who came early to the mosque can sit in the first row without being asked to move to the rear. While, according to Islam, these principles of equality are

of general nature and ought to be observed in all aspects of life, the beri apply them situationally. In the mosque and during the prayers they mix freely with the mai but outside the mosque, they change their attitudes and interact with the mai according to the principles of their traditional culture. The fact that only few mai attend the Friday prayers but many of them make offerings to trees and rocks make many beri to consider them all as pagans.

The fact that the beri behave towards the mai in one way in the religious context and in a different way in non-religious context is also noticeable on the occasions of death. When a mai dies, the beri participate in the funeral. They carry the corpse to the cemetery and perform the funeral prayer since the deceased is a Muslim. But when the funeral prayer is over, instead of accompanying the bereaved mai family to its household to console it as they always do when a beri dies, they return to their own households. The reason behind this is to avoid taking the mai food which is usually served on this occasion. Many beri consider the mai food as polluted on the assumption that the mai do not slaughter the animals according to the proper procedure of Islam.

As a survival tactic and to reach their goals, the mai flatter the members of the upper castes. They address the miskin as obboh, the proper form of addressing the kire bor. In the populated areas, they show deference and docility to the beri who mock or insult them for they find safety in deference. But in the remote parts of the countryside, the

mai show hostility and aggression against the beri and tend to provoke them by using insulting language.

While on the one hand the beri discriminate against the mai and scorn them, on the other hand, they fear them for the mai claim to possess magic powers which can be activated to harm anybody they choose. Therefore, it is always dangerous to harm a mai beyond reason and thus to provoke him to resort to his mysterious powers. Many beri are also of the belief that if a maida visited a household twice asking for alms and they gave her nothing, something would go wrong in that household. For this reason the household members must treat her kindly and offer her some millet or some other foodstuffs.

The interaction between miskin and kire bor is also based on an institutionalized pattern of inequality. While the kire bor address the miskin by their first names or at best as abu fulan and um fulan, the miskin address them as obboh and ommoh. The kire bor are normally the first to be served with food and tea during communal meals. The rule of starting serving tea from the right is ignored if an influential kire bor is present; he is always served first.

Generally speaking, the chiefs tend to avoid mixing with the miskin in the belief that it distorts the image of the chief in their eyes and reduces the social distance between them. In most dars the miskin must take off his shoes to show respect before he addresses the chief.

Although they may despise them, the kire bor depend on the miskin for their political power. As I mentioned before,

the political leadership is inherited through the traditional system of primogeniture but this does not mean that there is no competition among the kire bor. The greater the number of miskin followers a kire bor has, the more influential and powerful he becomes. Therefore, any member of the royal family who seeks political power must appease as many miskin as possible through generous feast giving and through establishing inter-marital relations with them to support him. This always ends up by creating factions in the society. As the kire bor need the miskin to support them politically and to take care of their herds, the miskin also need the kire bor to support them in court and to protect them from being ill-treated by other kire bor.

To maintain their political status, the chiefs depend on a large number of followers and as they seek to keep the number of followers as high as possible, they tend to be more generous and helpful towards their miskin than any other kire bor. Sometimes the chiefs promise to give their daughters or sisters in marriage or a permanent salaried job to the influential miskin in exchange for their political support. Though they may fail to keep many of their promises, chiefs are able to rally many miskin around them by applying this technique. A well known Zaghawa proverb states that "a chief's promising is sufficient to keep the miskin hanging on him for seven years".

To conclude, social stratification among the Zaghawa is based on a caste-like system. Since the extent to which a society can be described as having a caste-like system is

measured by the degree to which it displays the characteristic features of the Indian caste system, the Zaghawa society displays a caste-like system to a much greater extent than many other African societies which have been described as castes (see for example, Maquet 1970 for the Rwanda, Vaughan 1970 for the Marghi, Nadel 1954 for the Nuba and the Nupe, Richter 1980 for the Senufo). Many of these societies unlike the Zaghawa either lack a clear caste system, hierarchy or the concept of pollution. For instance, the ankyagu in the Marghi society and the Tiran clan in the Nuba are feared for they claim to possess supernatural powers but not despised whereas the mai in the Zaghawa society are feared and despised too. Nadel takes the fear and the need to avoid the supernatural powers possessed by particular groups in some African societies to be equivalent to the Indian concept of purity and pollution (Richter 1980: 51). The Zaghawa society recognizes the concept of pollution itself in terms of mythological beliefs and their own interpretation of Islam instead of the Hindu religion.

I used the terms caste, stratification and hierarchy as basic concepts in my analysis of the Zaghawa social organization but these are by no means the actors' words. The Zaghawa neither use these terms nor have any word that stands for them in their own language. But the fact that the actors have no equivalent words to any of these three terms does not mean that they do not conceptualize them. It is widely accepted in the anthropological literature that the institutionalized pattern of behaviour of members of a par-

ticular society is a manifestation of the notions they hold in their minds. Stemming from this point, the pattern of the intergroup relations in the Zaghawa society can be taken as an indication for the existence of the notions of caste, stratification and hierarchy among its members. By carefully observing the Zaghawa behaving in a certain meaningful manner in a particular situation and considering what they say they do in such situations, the anthropologist can be able to infer behaviour even if the Zaghawa themselves do not express them verbally. Holy and Stuchlic expressed this possibility when they stated:

"However, even if the actors do not make verbally explicit the norms which they actively apply in the course of their behaviour, these norms are not unavailable for anthropological analysis" (Holy and Stuchlic 1983: 68).

CHAPTER SIX

MOBILITY PROSPECTS IN ZAGHAWA SOCIETY

Social mobility is defined as changing the overall social position of members of a society from one identifiable social collectivity or stratum to another (see Hope 1972, Cohen 1970: 230). When members of a low status stratum shift to a high prestigious stratum, this is described as upward mobility. When the opposite occurs, it is described as downward mobility. Social mobility is open or flexible when it is possible for a large number of people to climb up the hierarchical ladder during their life time. When this is not possible, social mobility is closed or rigid. In Africa, according to Tuden and Plotnicov, social mobility is greater "when the cultural differences between members of different strata are least salient and it is more rigid where these are pronounced" (1970: 7). When social mobility is open, members of low strata can achieve a relatively high status. But in societies with closed mobility, members of the low strata can behave as members of a high stratum and still be seen as low and inferior (see Rose 1976, Lipset and Zettberge 1966: 565). Social mobility is either rapid (intragenerational) whereby individuals are able to change their status during their life time or gradual (intergenerational) when social status can only be changed over generations (see Littlejohn 1972: 129, Glass 1954: 242, Al Gohari 1981: 210, Barth 1971: 130).

Groups and strata but not the individuals are the units on which the analysis of social mobility concentrates. Among the Zaghawa, individuals are evaluated according to the position of their families in the social hierarchy and not according to their personal achievements or economic standing. To ascertain an individual's status, the Zaghawa inquire about his/her parents rather than about his/her occupation or level of income.

Unlike the other forms of social stratification, caste is defined as a closed system of social organization. Individual members of the society are ascribed their status by birth and there is no social mobility. Although caste is thus considered to be a rigid system of social stratification which permits no change, Berremen maintains that change is inherent in any social system and that the breakdown of the caste system is ultimately inevitable (1973: 15). Dumont also shares the same view when he states that "castes are in the process of weakening under modern influence and will one day simply disappear" (1980: 220). Among the Zaghawa, many factors have contributed recently to a change in the traditional system and brought about a movement towards equity and democracy. However, change does not affect all the social strata in the same degree.

1. Social Mobility of The Marginal Kire bor

The kire bor stratum consists of people of different status. Those who are descended from the incumbent chiefs or

their close patrilineal relatives have a higher status than the Kire bor who are genealogically more remote from the present incumbent. By definition, these remote Kire bor become miskin saba jid after seven generations and slip into a relatively inferior status. Since they are members of the upper stratum but fear downward mobility, their main concern is to perpetuate their position as Kire bor.

The Zaghawa treat with respect even the remote Kire bor. They consider it unwise to ill-treat a marginal Kire bor on the assumption that he will never get access to the chieftaincy and to justify their attitude, they invoke a well-known Zaghawa proverb which says that one should not reside in the course of a Khur which has been dry for a long time in the belief that the rain water will never flow in it again.

The marginal Kire bor themselves try hard to live up to the culturally defined standards of their stratum. For instance, they wear clean clothes, sit on firsha (precious carpets) and ride on horses instead of donkeys. By sticking to these symbols of status they align themselves symbolically with the other Kire bor. The marginal Kire bor also try to be on good terms with the ruling families in their effort to be entrusted with the administration of the giziya (the animal tax). Besides the material benefits which accrue to them from the administration of the giziya, this activity, which they carry out as representatives of the chief, also gives them the desirable authority over the miskin. As birth alone is not enough to accord the marginal Kire bor a high

status, they often try to secure high reputation through many devices. For example, they mediate in disputes that arise between groups or individuals. They also get actively involved in local politics and attend all the important meetings in the village and try to contribute actively to their deliberations. Through this involvement in local politics they strive to gain respect of the other Kire bor as well as of the general public. To retain their pre-eminence, they try to marry the Kirda (the female members of the royal families). They also prefer to give their own daughters in marriage to the Kire bor instead of marrying them to the miskin. By so doing, they try to preserve their genealogical link with the ruling families. To rally many people around them and to create ism (fame), the kire bor always invite members of the local community for feasts on different occasions and offer them food in an ostentatious manner. This may require them to enter into polygynous marriages to be able to produce large quantities of food on such occasions. Thus, by all the above mentioned mechanisms, the marginal kire bor are on the whole, able to perpetuate their relatively high status.

2. Social Mobility of The Miskin

The miskin are recruited to their stratum by birth but they can achieve both inter- and intragenerational mobility through many institutional devices. Among these, education, hypergamy, achievement of high economic status, participa-

tion in the awlad masakin movement and equality guaranteed by state legislation are the most salient.

In the past, most of the Sudanese used to send their youngsters to the Quranic shcools. When the formal education system was introduced by the British, the majority of the population, with the exception of the families of the tribal elites, remained reluctant to send their children to the government schools. The Zaghawa were no exception. Although the children of the kire bor entered government schools, the miskin continued to send their children to the Quranic schools. Only later, when the miskin realized that the informal education does little to prepare their children for the new job opportunities, many of them began to send their children to government schools so that they would gain access to the lucrative high salaried positions.

Until recently, individuals were recruited to the upper stratum solely on the basis of descent from the royal families. Today, though birth into particular families is still important in determining the individual's status, people are also recruited to the upper stratum on other grounds among which education is most prominent. It enables the children of the miskin to move along the hierarchical ladder and achieve an intergenerational mobility by qualifying for lucrative and highly prestigious occupations which were not available to their fathers. Today, an educated son of a miskin can become a doctor, engineer, judge, district commissioner or a senior police or army officer. All these occupations are highly prestigious not only by the Zaghawa stan-

dards but also by the standards of the wider Sudanese society. In many cases, they enable the educated miskin to ride a government car which is considered an overt symbol of prestige and status. Furthermore, education elevates the status of the miskin and makes them eligible to marry the kirda or girls from prestigious families from outside Dar Zaghawa. So, now as a consequence of the spread of education among the miskin and their acquisition of occupational prestige, to ascertain a person's status, many Zaghawa ask "what is his job" instead of the traditional question "who is his father"?

As I mentioned earlier, the kire bor are the appropriate mates for the kirda. But to create alliances, the Zaghawa chiefs as well as the influential kire bor tend to adopt hypergamous marriages by taking wives from the miskin stratum. Such wives eventually become senior women in the society. More precisely, they achieve an intragenerational mobility by shifting from their previous miskin stratum to that of the kire bor during their life time. Their sons also automatically acquire the kire bor membership and become eligible to compete for the throne and beat the nahas.

Like among many other African societies (see for example Fallers 1973: 70), among the Zaghawa, the extended kinship solidarity links people of different strata. As I mentioned earlier, the Zaghawa trace their descent through the patrilineal line but keep intimate relations with their maternal relatives. Any marriage between the miskin and the kire bor families elevates the status of the miskin. Accor-

ding to the Zaghawa cultural tradition, the wife taking group is obliged to respect the wife givers. Therefore, the kire bor's maternal relatives are respected by all the members of the kire bor in the territory as a wife giving group. Because they are backed by the members of the royal families, they can gain access to the few government jobs which are highly desirable and to reap other privileges which are not easily obtainable by the rest of the misikin.

In the past, the misikin's economic position was irrelevant to his social status. A misikin may have been rich and keep a large herd of livestock but he still would have been considered socially inferior to the kire bor. Now, due to the rapid and progressive movement towards urbanization and the creeping mode of individualism to the Zaghawa society, the system of evaluating people according to their birth into particular families is giving way to a new emerging system. The individual's economic status started to be one of the important determinants of his/her social status and as such, it has become a crucial factor of social mobility. In consequence, many rich misikin are now gaining high prestige and are able to climb up the social ladder. Today, while many kire bor fail to live up to the culturally defined standards of the kire bor, many misikin can live up to that standard. Some misikin have changed their previous life style and are now able to acquire good houses furnished with expensive carpets traditionally used by the royal families. Furthermore, some rich misikin are able to use their economic power to gain popularity and manipulate their popular base

politically to enter the parliament to gain further prestige.

In the past, the Zaghawa chiefs were able to utilize their political power to reap economic privileges from the miskin. In the present situation, this has become impossible and in consequence, the chiefs have to depend on their relatively poor salaries to entertain their guests. This made many miskin to consider those kire bor who still compete rigorously for the chieftaincy as irrational and unable to cope with the changing economic conditions.

The common victimization of the miskin by many of their leaders united the educated miskin across the four Zaghawa dars and led to the foundation of a reform movement known as awlad masakin (children of the commoners). This was a political movement directed against the injustice of the Zaghawa leaders and it gained grounds among the miskin within a short period of time. It enabled the "flatique" (the rebels against the Sultan of Dar Kobe), the rebels of Artaj who rose against melik Musa and many miskin from both Dar Tuer and Gala who rebelled against their chiefs, to work together and bring an end to the Native Administration in Dar Zaghawa. In fact many factors were behind the success of the awlad masakin movement. Firstly, the injustice of many Zaghawa chiefs was apparent to anybody. For instance, the miskin animals were registered for tax purposes every three years and the stipulated tax remained unchanged until the next registration. If a tax payer lost most or all of his livestock because of a drought or other disaster, he was

still forced by the chief to pay the stipulated tax. As animals were at the same time the only means of cash income, many people had no means of paying the tax and were sentenced to imprisonment for tax evasion. When the awlad masakin movement established itself as an opposition front against the injustice of the royal families, many of the maskin who were jailed came to support it.

Secondly, the ruling families were divided among themselves and in many dars the chief's half brothers were themselves giving their support to the movement in the expectation that they might be brought to power by the choice of the maskin. Many marginal kire bor also supported the maskin on kinship grounds for the maskin were their maternal relatives.

Thirdly, the movement was led by a successful ring leader. He was a person of high reputation both inside and outside Dar Zaghawa whom Harir (1986) describes as an inch higher man among his peers. He was elected by the Zaghawa to represent them in the parliament many times. This enabled him to fight for the rights of the maskin in the country's highest political arena asking the government to liquidate the Native Administration to ensure the legitimate rights of the individuals. The fact that most of the ring leaders of the awlad masakin movement were either school teachers or students of the high secondary schools gave the movement further popularity for they were highly respected among the Zaghawa.

The Zaghawa chiefs tried their best to stop the movement. They realized that the more the miskin children were educated, the more the movement was able to gain new recruits. Therefore, many chiefs tried to prevent the miskin from educating their children as their long term policy. For instance, in more than one Zaghawa territory the chief was accused of preventing the establishment of a school in a particular area within his territory. Chiefs also punished those miskin who joined the movement by heavy taxation and imprisonment as a policy to discourage others. In some dars, chiefs prevented the leaders of the movement from having proper contacts with the miskin for the fear of stirring them to rise against their leadership. In this respect, the case of Tine, the capital of Dar Kobe is a good example. In 1968, the chief tried to prevent Suliman Mustafa, the flag bearer of the movement who was then a candidate for the Zaghawa constituency, from entering Tine during an election campaign. As Tine was an important centre in the Zaghawa constituency both for its geographical location and population density, it could hardly be neglected by any candidate who wanted to win the election. Suliman therefore insisted adamantly to enter Tine irrespective of the psychological pressure exerted upon him that he would never come safe from it. When he got there unexpectedly, the chief found no other way except to resort to physical power to prevent him from addressing the people there. The police interferred to restore peace but the accident paradoxically created a hero of Suliman and brought him new supporters.

Other chiefs saw the imprisonment of the ring leaders of the awlad masakin to be the most appropriate device to overcome the movement. In Umburu, Suliman and representatives of many clans of Dar Tuer were arrested for an alleged breach of law by holding an unauthorized meeting. As the Zaghawa traditionally discuss the problems concerning the choice and legitimacy of their leaders in meetings of clan elders without taking permission from anybody, the imprisonment of those who attended the meeting horrified the Zaghawa clansmen and inspired them to look for a body that could protect them from the aggression of their leaders. The awlad masakin association proved to be that body. So, all these punitive measures adopted by the chiefs only aggravated the situation and ended up by publicizing the awlad masakin movement which, as a result, gained further grounds. While in the past a chief could use his power to seize the maskin's property without reasonable justification, in the present situation nobody can take the maskins' property without seeking their proper consent. The reason is that the maskin throughout Dar Zaghawa are encouraged by the awlad masakin to sue anyone who abuses them.

Until 1969, the political leadership among the Zaghawa was based on kinship and descent from the royal families. The highest political office was passed from father to son through the system of primogeniture. Hence, it was only the kire bor who could compete for the chieftaincy. The maskin and the mai were deprived from accession to the throne simply because they share no descent with the ruling family.

The miskin can compete for the lower political offices such as that of omdaship and sheikhship but not for the throne. An important blow to the traditional Zaghawa political system came from the central government. In 1969, it dissolved the Native Administration in an effort to hand over the political power from the members of the royal families to the general public. Later, to ensure that goal, it introduced "the local government act" and established the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) as a mass organization. According to the SSU's declared principles, none of its members claims pre-eminence over any other member in the society. Through these measures, the central government made the kire bor and the miskin equal at least in theory.

The kire bor like many other similar ruling families in the wider Sudanese society were considered to be men of al ahd al ba'id lit. men of the "old era" which preceded May regime which took power in the Sudan in 1969. Such ruling families were alleged to be antagonistic forces to the new regime and so an isolation act was passed to exclude them from participating in the SSU (see Harir 1986: 184). In consequence, the miskin took the lead of the SSU in Dar Zaghawa. Since it was not possible for the miskin to gain access to similar privileges in the past, I regard this as a mobility prospect. But the kire bor did not surrender. In practice, the isolation act was not seriously implemented and many kire bor were able to gain the membership of the SSU. Gradually and through time many influential kire bor started to compete for the leadership of the SSU to perpe-

tuates their high status. Many factors were behind their success. It goes without saying that a minimum degree of literacy was required from the miskin to practise their right to participate effectively in the newly introduced mass organizations such as the SSU, the "village councils" and the "magistrate courts" which were all based on written rules (see Harir 1986: 184). When the kire bor joined the government schools introduced by the British, the miskin refused to join such schools and preferred to go to Quranic schools instead. Therefore, except for a few miskin who could understand properly the written rules of the SSU and the "village councils", the majority lacked that minimum degree of literacy. In consequence, the kire bor took the advantage of their relatively high degree of literacy to gain access to the leadership of the "local councils" and the SSU as well as the membership of the "magistrate courts" in most of the Zaghawa territories. This was not the only factor behind the success of the kire bor in perpetuating their high status. They also created alliances by marrying into influential miskin families to mobilize their support. Such miskin supported the kire bor for they believed that any privileges acquired by the kire bor would directly benefit their sisters' sons. Other miskin also supported the kire bor for various reasons. In their golden age, the kire bor were able to help many miskin either by supporting them in courts, helping them to secure government jobs or by educating their children. Such miskin kept on giving their support to the kire bor as a reward for their previous

services. Those miskin who competed with the kire bor were unable to offer similar services to their fellow miskin and consequently, could not mobilize their support by the same degree. For all these reasons, the introduced political changes did not have an important effect on diminishing the status of the kire bor and the Zaghawa ex-chiefs. Manipulating their social networks to their advantage, the kire bor managed to dominate the leadership of the "village councils" and many effective SSU offices in Dar Zaghawa. In consequence, the kire bor succeeded to perpetuate their status even after the dissolution of the Native Administration.

Towards its last days, May regime readopted the Native Administration which existed prior to 1969 for several reasons. The government realized that there was a continuous reduction in its revenues from the animal tax. The Native Administration was seen as more efficient in collecting this tax than the newly introduced system. The government further discovered that the newly introduced substitute for the Native Administration were unable to maintain law and order particularly in the remote areas of the country. It also became clear that the "village councils", "magistrate courts" and the SSU required a certain degree of literacy which the common people did not possess. In addition to this, the ruling families which the regime tried to isolate, were able to perpetuate their status by manipulating their social networks. So, all these factors gave rise to the readoption of the Native Administration in the rural areas of the country.

In Dar Zaghawa, members of each dar were given equal chance to compete for the office of the chieftaincy irrespective of their strata. It was left to the omdas and sheikhs as representatives of the clans and the clan sections of the dar to choose three candidates by casting votes. The government preserved the right of choosing any of the three candidates to be the leader of the dar. Surprisingly, in most dars the competition was among the kire bor themselves for no miskin or mai stood for the election to win the throne. Many reasons were behind this. Nobody in Dar Zaghawa could imagine a mai standing for elections to be chosen as a chief. They are socially inferior and could not convince others to support them. As for the miskin, most of them still believe that a miskin who competes with the ex-chiefs and the kire bor would only create enemies for himself and lose his money for nobody whose ancestor did not acquire the nahas could ever be elected by the Zaghawa to be their chief. The majority of the miskin speculated that the Zaghawa ex-chiefs, who managed to perpetuate their high status even when they were deposed, were going to win the election and so they preferred not to compete with them. But in Dar Gala, many miskin competed for the throne. To many Zaghawa, these miskin only wanted to prove that the miskin also have equal right to compete with the kire bor because this access was not open to them in the past. As many miskin expected, the Zaghawa ex-chiefs and the kire bor were reappointed as leaders of their dars and were able to retain their former status. Consequently, the division of Zaghawa

society into kire bor, miskin and mai became preserved. But even though these three strata continue to exist in the present situation, one cannot fail to see elements of change in the system. In the past, chiefs claimed legitimacy of their power on the basis of their descent from a former chief. Today, chiefs assume that their power is legitimized by the consent of the general public represented by the ondas and sheikhs of the dars. The miskin and the mai have acquired the right to compete for the chieftaincy at least in theory which was not the case in the past.

3. Social Mobility of the Mai

The mai live among the beri but they have their own sub-culture. They have their own names which are slightly different from the beri names. Social mobility of the mai is rigid for they cannot change the membership of their stratum which is accorded an inferior status. Individual mai can be rich, own cars and good houses and acquire other symbols of prestige. But they still remain mai in spite of their wealth. The following case may illustrate this. A Kobe beri merchant married a girl from a non-Zaghawi family in El Fasher. A few years later, when his wife had born him two or three children, a rich mai, who ranked high by the standards of the town, decided to marry the beri's young sister-in-law secretly. The prospective father-in-law accepted the proposal. He informed the mai that he had already married his elder daughter to another Zaghawi who proved to be decent

and that he was glad to give him his young daughter in marriage. When the news reached the beri merchant, he was horrified and took the matter very seriously. If the mai succeeded in his attempt, this would generate stigma to his children for they would be related to the mai's future children through their mothers. So, the beri tried to persuade his in-laws to turn down the suitor's request pointing out that he was a mai but, as the in-laws had no prejudice against the mai in their culture, they failed to understand the real essence of the problem. Because traditionally a man has no say in the marriage of his sister-in-law, the girl's father rejected the beri's advice and went ahead with the marriage arrangements, for he had already given his word to the mai. The beri thought of divorcing his own wife to solve the problem but he discovered that even if he did so, there would still be a relation between his children and those of the mai through their mothers. He saw killing the mai as the only way of preventing his marriage. When people realized what he intended to do, a group of elderly beri mediated to resolve the problem. They told the girl's father about the internal cleavages of the Zaghawa and their division into beri and mai. They also described to him the consequences of marrying his daughter to that particular man. They eventually managed to cool down the tension by convincing the mai to look for a wife elsewhere.

The mai strive to change their inferior social position through many devices most importantly education, changing their traditional occupations and migration. The state is

also contributing towards the achievement of equality of all members of the society. I shall now consider how far the mai have succeeded to achieve social mobility through grasping the new opportunities open to them.

In the past, the mai were reluctant to send their children to school because they overvalued the contribution of their children in the production of livelihood. Now, the relative success of the misikin in improving their social standing through education, encouraged many mai to send their children to school too in the hope that they would also be able to alter their low status but in vain. The social environment in the government schools in Dar Zaghawa is discouraging to the mai youngsters. There exists a social barrier and discrimination against them as members of an inferior caste. The beri children who are numerically and socially dominant are hostile towards them and they are reluctant to share with them food, accomodation or sit together with them in classes. This situation encourages many mai children to terminate their schooling to avoid humiliation and discrimination. But in spite of this hostility, some mai children are able to pursue their general education which makes it possible for them to get caste-free occupations and pass into the town life. Many of these educated mai usually marry non-blacksmiths outside Dar Zaghawa and rarely come to visit their families. Because of the differences between the way of life which they are able to pursue in towns and the traditional way of life of their families, the educated mai avoid their own people and stick

to the towns. On the whole, the education helps the individual mai to escape from their traditional environment and to pass into the town life without changing the overall status of the mai families.

The mai exclusively practise certain activities such as drumming, iron works, hunting with snares (gobo) and producing pottery which are all considered inferior and polluting. Because these activities indicate the mai, whoever performs them even outside the Zaghawa community is held in contempt by the beri. This is also the reason why the beri themselves abstain from pursuing any economic activity which entails the use of iron.

Even if the beri discriminate against all the mai as members of an inferior caste irrespective of their occupation, those mai who perform the traditional mai crafts are still considered relatively more inferior than the others. Therefore, in an attempt to gain social mobility, many mai who acquired little education abandoned their traditional caste occupations and started to work as tailors, soldiers, lorry drivers or wage labourers in building constructions. Those mai who are employed as prison wardens in Umburu and in consequence are seen as having gained a certain recognition by the government are considered relatively superior to the other mai. As they are economically better off than the traditional mai, they are able to buy "white" clothes and acquire some other symbols of prestige in an attempt to change their social status. Even though some beri tend to describe them as not keeping their proper place, the majori-

ty of the beri respect them more than any other mai. This fact indicates an incipient mobility.

The discrimination against the mai is part and parcel of the Zaghawa culture. It is unlikely that the beri would change their attitude towards the mai unless change is imposed from outside the society. To instigate such a change, many formal decisions were made by different bodies ranging from the local Zaghawa courts to the state legislations. The first attempt was made by the local Zaghawa court at Umburu. To equate the mai with beri, it passed an order preventing the beri from using the term mai to address a blacksmith or a potter. It proposed instead the term usta (expert) which is acceptable to the mai. The court also threatened to fine or imprison any beri who failed to comply with that order. Invoking that formal decree, the mai sued many beri including the kire bor and some other prominent members of the community for addressing them as mai. This caused many problems to the beri and embarrassed the court members who were themselves beri. For instance, most of the kire bor when brought to court refused to pay the fine just for "calling a spade a spade". In several cases, to resolve the dispute, the court members themselves handed over the stipulated sum of money secretly to the kire bor to pay it in front of the mai in court. The court realized that its attempt to elevate the status of the mai by a formal decree led in fact to the increase of tensions between the beri and the mai. In consequence, it found it necessary to abolish its local order.

Another attempt to close the social gap between the beri and the mai was made by the education authorities of Darfur. The failure of the local Zaghawa court to prevent the use of the term mai led to the realization that the beri would not easily accept equality with the mai. In consequence, the education authorities planned to avoid the discrimination against the mai through adopting a long term policy. Instead of trying to raise the mai to the status of the beri by a formal decree, they thought it better to concentrate on gradually changing the mentality of the beri. As part of this strategy, they decided to involve the bulk of the beri children who passed their post primary school examination in Nyala Trade School in iron works as part of their training course. The purpose of this exercise was to demonstrate to the beri that dealing with iron is not a despised activity or degrading to anyone's status. At the beginning, the beri children felt uneasy when they realized that their education entails dealing with iron. But because the Trade School was in Nyala, away from their traditional homeland, their parents and kin at home were not aware of the nature of their education. This made it possible for the beri children to finish their training smoothly. Eventually, they became engineers and technicians and good salaries and the access to the use of government vehicles enhanced their prestige. In fact, their prestigious status encouraged many other beri to apply for training in technical schools. The education authorities thus succeeded to change the mentality of at least some beri who ceased to view iron work as a despised

activity which degrades their status. In consequence, many beri stopped to despise the mai on the basis of their involvement in iron works.

The state has also contributed indirectly to elevating the status of the mai and to narrowing the gap between them and the beri. As I mentioned earlier, when May regime came to power, it dissolved the Native Administration and thus undermined the basis for the pre-eminence to the members of the royal families. When the SSU was introduced as a unifying and egalitarian political party, the mai were recruited to its membership together with the beri. Eventually, some of the mai were chosen to the executive body of the SSU "basic units" (wihda asasiya). While in the past the mai had to sit on the ground in the presence of the beri, in the meetings of the SSU "basic units", they started for the first time to sit on chairs like the beri. This became an important symbolic expression of their equality with the beri.

The majority of the mai live in extreme poverty. When Dar Zaghawa was struck by the recent drought and famine, they were hit more severely than any other category of the Zaghawa. The fact that the beri themselves now started to live from hand to mouth only aggravated their situation for the beri became unable to support them economically as they did in the past through the traditional system of client-patron relationship. This forced many mai to migrate outside Dar Zaghawa. But this is not the only reason behind their out-migration and their recent deprivation only tipped the

balance. The major cause was the mai realization that as long as they live in Dar Zaghawa, they will be despised and ranked at the bottom of the social hierarchy irrespective of their educational or economic achievements. While in Al-Malam and Zalingei, for example, the society can assimilate the blacksmiths and potters once they gave up their traditional occupations (Mohamed-Salih 1982), among the Zaghawa, this proved to be impossible. In Dar Zaghawa, the mai bears the stigma simply because his ancestor once practised the traditional mai activities even if he has not involved himself in them. This attitude made any kind of upward movement impossible for the mai in Dar Zaghawa, and the relatively flexible mobility for the craft practitioners in other areas encouraged many mai to migrate outside their traditional area in the hope that they will be able to change their status.

Many of the mai who migrate from Dar Zaghawa prefer to settle in big anonymous towns where nobody could distinguish them as mai rather than in small villages. Because in towns people are treated according to their individual achievements, the mai can gain respect of their neighbours and manage to avoid discrimination. In towns, they drop their traditional occupations and start to sell tea or become tailors, garage mechanics and manual labourers. Through time, they become skillful labourers and start earning wages which enable them to wear clean clothes and eat better food compared to their previous diet in Dar Zaghawa.

To improve their inferior status, the mai migrants in towns tend to fake their genealogies, adopt beri names and assume the general Zaghawa identity. A few years ago, one of the mai who passed into town life was able to marry a beri girl who went to shibiya by faking his genealogy and saying that he was a beri from Awlad Degain clan. He kept himself away from the other mai so that his wife would not discover his true identity. They lived as husband and wife for some time until one day some of his relatives who arrived recently from Dar Zaghawa came to visit him. The beri girl immediately recognized that they were mai from their accent, the shape of their donkey saddles and other objects which they carried. The beri girl left the house amid the laughter of the mai and his relatives who were glad that at least one of their number had a chance of marrying a beri girl. This indicates the strength of the psychological barrier that still exists between the beri and the mai which makes marriage between them impossible except by deception. In Dar Zaghawa, it is considered unbelievable that the mai would marry or have sexual relations with beri girls. Therefore, he can mix with beri girls and pass into the women's section of the household without raising anyone's suspicions. To be able to marry beri girls when in town, mai conceal their identity.

4. Conclusion

Due to the successive waves of westernization and democratization spreading from the urban centres, the Zaghawa, like many other traditional African societies are facing drastic changes in their economic, social and political life. In consequence, one expects a new pattern of stratification to emerge. For example, traditionally certain things were taken to be overt markers of the kire bor's superior status, such as clean clothes, large precious carpets, etc. Today, these items have become widely accessible to many people and they have lost their significance as symbols of kire bor status. Many miskin managed to establish themselves in the urban centres when they left Dar Zaghawa in times of drought and famine. Many of them migrated to Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iraq to work as wage labourers. Through time, they became successful merchants in the urban centres of Darfur and are now able to acquire symbols of prestige. As in the urban centres of Darfur people are evaluated according to their economic standing and wealth rather than their descent from particular families, an incipient class system is emerging among the Zaghawa.

Many factors can be viewed as conducive to social mobility of the low status groups in the Zaghawa society. The Zaghawa represent only a minor sector of the wider Sudanese society. Unlike in India or Rwanda, where the caste system regulates the social life of the state, the existence of the Zaghawa under the umbrella of the Sudanese state

brings their caste-like system under many external influences which favour change. Due to the changing environmental conditions and the recent drought, many Zaghawa moved outside their traditional area. They live among neighbouring ethnic groups in Darfur and the wider Sudanese society among whom the caste principles do not work.

The spread of formal education among the beri has accelerated the social mobility of the miskin and eliminated the basis of discrimination against the mai. By proving to at least some beri that the iron working is not a degrading occupation, formal education managed to change their mentality and alter their views about the mai. Many beri themselves are now involved in iron works either as engineers or labourers in building constructions. Education qualifies the miskin and the mai to compete with the kire bor and other members of the wider Sudanese society for government jobs on equal footing. These jobs which are attainable only through education, enable the miskin and the mai to acquire educational prestige and high social esteem.

The dissolution of Native Administration by the state in 1969 also contributed genuinely towards narrowing the gap between the social categories in Dar Zaghawa. The state introduced the SSU which proclaimed equality of all its members and started to challenge the previous pre-eminence to the members of the royal families. It is true that the ex-chiefs and the kire bor managed to perpetuate their high social status even after the dissolution of the Native Administration but it remains to be said that the miskin and

the mai also managed to move upward in the political hierarchy. Some miskin became leaders of the SSU in its initial stages or members of the "magistrate courts". Because each member of a "magistrate court" had a chance to become its chairman on a rota system, they acquired authority which was previously confined to the chiefs of the dars. Some mai gained access to the membership of the executive committees of the SSU "basic units" where they started to sit on chairs alongside the beri and thus symbolically expressed their equality with them. When the state readopted the Native Administration, the Zaghawa ex-chiefs and the kire bor had to compete for power with other strata of the society. The highest political office became open to all and ceased to be their monopoly. The awlad masakin movement also contributed significantly to changing the traditional Zaghawa social system. For instance, in the past, most of the problems which arose between the miskin and their chiefs were concerned with the injustice of particular leaders but not with the office itself. Recently, due to the influence of the awlad masakin movement, many people started to call for democracy and started to question the right of the royal families to exercise political power; in their view, this power should rest with the general public.

While the miskin are continuously gaining power and improving their social standing, the mai do not seem to be making a similar progress. Because their discrimination is a cultural trait which is reinforced by myths and religion, it is unlikely that they could get rid of their inferior social

standing within a foreseeable future unless they physically
withdraw from Dar Zaghawa.

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