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Managing Pastoral Adaptations in the Red Sea Hills of the Sudan: Challenges and Dilemmas

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a case study from the Red Sea Hills in the Sudan. The ethnographic material has been collected by members of The Red Sea Area Programme - RESAP, a collaborative research effort between the Universities of Khartoum and Bergen. Most of the work within RESAP has been focused on the Hadendowa people, and on the Sinkat district in the Red Sea Hills. Through the formulation of research issues the programme aimed at producing information relevant for the social and ecological rehabilitation of the Beja communities so hard hit by the droughts in the 1980s. An integral part of this type of work has also been to reflect on the future development of pastoralism in the Red Sea Hills as well as how issues relating to the continuation of this type of adaptation should be handled, thus relating to basic planning dilemmas within this type of region. It is from this latter part of our experience I shall draw in the present paper.

This paper is preliminary and descriptive,its aim to focus on certain broad themes of relevance to pastoral planning and to discuss such issues in the context of Red Sea area pastoralism. It will deal with four major issues; resource degradation, local groups and resource management, spatial flexibility and access to various resources, and finally, the problem of development administration in the Red Sea Hills area.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

General information

The Red Sea Hills area is about 220 000 square kilometres. The most important land forms are a coastal strip, a mountain area raising up to 2000 meters, and a plateau stretching west of the mountains about 1000 meters above sea level. The climate varies with each unit. The coastal plain receives both summer and winter rain whereas the other two areas only receive summer rain. However, in spite of these variations, the whole province receives *less than 200 mm* a year and the *variability* is extremely high. Perennial vegetation and any cultivation is therefore only possible along the river beds (*wadis*) which receive seasonal floods. Such seasonal rivers run towards the Red Sea as well as towards the Nile, allowing for a certain degree of *Beja* settlement.

The name *Beja* denotes a confederation of groups controlling different parts of the region. In the north, towards the Egyptian border live the Bisharyyin; the Amarar are found around Port Sudan whereas the Hadendowa dominate in the south, from Sinkat to the Gash Delta. In the southeast of the Red Sea area and into Eritrea we find the Beni Amer. In addition we find the Rashaida, a pastoral group that emigrated from Saudi Arabia and is not linked to the Beja confederacy. In the towns there are several groups from other areas of the Sudan, from the Nile Valley, the West and to some extent the South.

Economic and social aspects

The economic adaptations vary throughout the region. The basic activities are animal husbandry and rainfed cultivation, made possible by a combination of rainfall and seasonal flooding. Animals roam around settlements or are herded to different types of vegetation. Goats dominate, but camels are also kept and play a significant role in Beja culture.

The Beja are also heavily dependent on wage labour. In the northern mountains there are mines that employ a certain number of local Bishayyin. The Amarar and Beni Amer have a history of labour migration to Port Sudan, and have found work mainly in the harbour. The Hadendowa also work there but they are moving as well to the two major irrigation schemes in the region, Gash and Tokar. An increasingly important source of income is the sale of *charcoal*. During the drought years of the 80s, the cutting of trees increased and today may be the most important threat to the natural environment and Beja livelihoods.

The social organisation within which such activities take place is based on the segmentary lineage, although within this overall organisation are a number of different levels of social and territorial groupings. However the basic productive unit is the family and it is within such family units that the basic management of resources takes place. The wider levels provide people who can be called upon for co-operative endeavours, a tenure system that gives access to productive resources and also a tribal organisation with leaders (*sheikh, omda, nazir*), courts (*majlis*) and a code of traditional Islamic law (*shari'a*) that allow for the regulation of access to resources and can deal with conflicts.

Family assets

An important asset within families is *animals*. Both boys and girls are given animals from their fathers on various occasions in their lives such as birth, name-giving, circumcision and marriage. After marriage these animals will be taken from the father's herd and joined together as a new herd under the management of the new husband. With time, such a herd may grow, and there may not be enough labour to look after the herd. The common groups with which he then cooperates are his *brothers*. The animals may thus be herded together by the brothers themselves or by their children.

Animals are not only important in economic life, but also in ritual occasions like weddings. The animals needed by a man to get married are partly given to him by his father, although there are also mechanisms of sharing in the society through which people can get animals if they do not have any or even have too many. Members of the family are thus dependent not only on the economic status of their fathers but also on a wider context of social relationships in which the sharing of animals is an important characteristic.

Land is the second important productive asset for the Hadendowa. Young boys will cultivate together with their fathers, and when they marry will get their own fields. However some may decide to find other occupations, and therefore land will become available. Cultivation is a more individual activity than herding and the family is thus more dependent on its own labour. While men are responsible for animals (herding and watering) and for the major part of cultivation, as well as producing charcoal and wage

labour, women provide the food and mats for the family as well as putting up the house itself when the family moves.

Recent developments

The Red Sea Hills area thus presents several problems typical of the Sahel belt in Africa more generally - an arid environment with low and unreliable rainfall where human livelihoods are based on animal husbandry and cultivation. The Beja were able to survive in such a marginal environment due to sound local land use practices, in addition to their involvement in caravan trade with Egypt as well as Arabia across the Red Sea.

More recently, population growth, reduced warfare, the trend towards more sedentary forms of life and the rapid growth of towns in the area (particularly Port Sudan) have introduced new pressures on the traditional pastoral way of life. New employment opportunities are emerging, both in towns as well as through irrigation schemes such as Gash and Tokar. Rather than relieving pressure on resources, these new opportunities are resulting in people trying to maintain a stake in several resources, thereby creating more pressure on the pastoral system.

PASTORALISM, ANIMAL NUMBERS AND THE PROBLEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

A basic parameter in the working of a pastoral system is the relation between carrying capacity for the area and demographic processes, i.e. the growth

rate of man and animals. The basic issue is whether the stocking rate exceeds, is in balance with or below the theoretical carrying capacity.

No reliable quantifications of such parameters have been made by any development agency in the region, or by RESAP. Gunnar Håland (1990) has presented the basic steps in such an analysis, using available data from various reports and applying them to the situation in Derudeb. He concludes that the actual animal numbers in the Red Sea Hills fluctuate under a threshold of a theoretical carrying capacity. This lack of correspondence between land degradation and animal numbers is perhaps no surprise in an area like the Red Sea Hills. The region is an example of the non-equilibrium system that has been analyzed in recent years by Ellis and Swift (1988), Breman (1988), and Behnke and Scoones (1991). The highly unpredictable rainfall pattern on which primary production depends results in highly variable carrying capacities that can hardly be matched by natural increase in animal populations. Animal and human population numbers are cut back by factors such as climate (drought), disease and raiding. (Helland 1992).

Vegetation

Botanical surveys by RESAP are consistent with this conclusion. Botanically the Red Sea Hills show a lot of variability. On a macro scale the vegetation in the region can be classified as a) semi-desert grassland and shrubland, b) semi-evergreen bushland and thicket, c) Red Sea Coastal desert and d) desert. In all zones the vegetation reflects water availability and physical conditions such as depth and particle size of the soil. Certain areas stand out, however, characterised by mist as in Erkowit and *Jebel* Elba, and salt in

the salt-marsh along the Red Sea. Although surveys show that there has been a reduction in tree cover and of certain tree species (e.g. *acacia etabica, dracena umbet, olea chrysoylla*), this development is not related to pastoralism *per se* but to the demand for fuelwood and charcoal in Port Sudan and other urban centres in the region. Secondly, the surveys also established the spread of certain weeds, such as *agremone mexicana* which is often found in dense populations on loose sand. It is also common along *khors*, and its seeds seem to be easily spread by the temporary water flow. Although often seen as a sign of *overgrazing*, it is interesting to note that this weed frequently colonizes areas which have been cleared for sorghum cultivation during the fallow years. It is also very common around settlements. One may ask therefore whether its spread is rather a result of human activities, particularly agriculture.

This survey material has also been confirmed by more in-depth studies based on time series data from areas like Erkowit. Vetaas (1992) concludes that the pattern of change is best summarized as: 1) a decrease in single-trunk hard-wood trees suitable for fuel-wood, and other species with commercial qualities, 2) an increase in the most toxic plants and a few dwarf-shrubs. The species whose abundance has increased are often those with a wide distribution in Sudan or the whole Sudano-Sahelian region. Those plants restricted to Erkowit and *jebel* Elba have declined the most. Vetaas relates this change to a change in animal composition (more goats), and also the increasing pressure in dry season and drought areas made possible by the availability of moisture brought by the heavy mists which characterise this area.

Overall, there is therefore no clear relationship between pastoral activities and resource degradation. Tree cutting is related to the demand for charcoal and fuelwood from the urban Port Sudan market as well as smaller market towns and truck stops in the region. The weeds may be an effect of agriculture in such a marginal environment. Finally, the pressure on regions such as Erkowit, seen as a 'safety area' in periods of drought, is probably related to increasing numbers of animals brought by people in search of fodder, and is not related to any internal dynamic of growth within the individual pastoral herd.

PASTORALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

However, although there may not be an overall problem of degradation in the Red Sea Hills generated by pastoralism, there are nevertheless several signs of resource degradation (such as cutting down trees) which may develop into a serious ecological problem. This raises the issue of resource management, and whether there are indigenous systems and groups that operate in ways to secure the control of access to productive resources which may be useful for long-term resource management. This question requires an understanding of the local Hadendowa tenure system, which is embedded in the descent structure of the group.

Access to resources

Social organisation is based on agnatic descent which refers back to a common ancestor, *Barakwin*. The Hadendowa are further divided into

several sub-divisions, roughly made up of four levels. Each sub-division controls territory, but of particular interest is the minimal lineage, *duwab*, a unit with collective rights to land, vegetation and water within a certain area.

Furthermore, tenure rights are codified by a combination of traditional law (*urf*) and Islamic law (*shari'a*). The Hadendowa differentiate between two types of tenure rights: firstcomer rights, which mean that those who settled first are the original owners of an area, a right that all members of that *duwab* have in common and should defend, and rights given by the original owners to members of other tribes to settle and make use of the territory. Such arrangements involve the payment of a small tribute from the "renters" to the owners called *gwadab*. The original rights are termed *asl*, the secondary, usufruct rights are called *amara*.

This system provides people with access to different productive resources. People from different tribes and *duwabs* can graze and browse their animals on pasture. They can normally also make use of the wells in the area they are passing through. But they are <u>not</u> allowed to cut down trees or make wells in any area other than in their home territory. If someone wants to build a house, dig a well or cultivate in another tribe's area they have to get permission from the owner. Such permission can be given and is traditionally formalized through the incomer giving a token gift (*gwadab*) to the owners. This is of small economic value but is a symbolic gesture, indicating acceptance by the newcomer that the land does not belong to him.

Land for *cultivation* is found along seasonal rivers and has a different ownership structure. This land was divided among different members of the tribes a long time ago, and land is transferred through inheritance. The river

valleys used for rainfed cultivation are thus divided according to sections and individual users. Inheritance of agricultural land is codified through Islamic *shari'a* law, men inheriting one part and women one half of a man's part. Normally, women do not get plots allocated to them, but cultivate on their husband's land. Also, if men move away, brothers may cultivate the plots of their absentee relatives. Thus there is considerable local and individual variation in the pattern of formal ownership rights and actual cultivation on specific plots. The same pattern holds for *irrigated plots*.

Water is open to anyone to use, but *wells* can only be dug by people from the landowning tribe and section. Water from wells can be taken for human as well as animal consumption. However, only irrigated plots within reasonable distance from a well can make use of the water.

Such tenure arrangements thus allow people to regulate access to resources. The continuing presence of trees in the area, in spite of recurrent droughts, shows that they have been effective in the past. But given the current rate of tree-cutting, the indications are that these tenure systems are no longer sufficient alone to control the use of resources under conditions of increasing resource pressure.

Social organisation

One reason why such tenure arrangements may not be a viable solution to the long term problem of resource management is that they also relate to several other aspects of Hadendowa life. The working of such institutions must be seen within the broader context of Hadendowa livelihoods and social organisation, and cannot be reduced to a 'tool' for resource management.

Each Hadendowa maximal lineage is large, highly segmented and with a genealogical span to the founding ancestor of sometimes as many as 16 named generations. As families develop over the generations and as lineages expand, not all their segments grow at the same rate. Some families and groups multiply more rapidly than others, and some may lose members through disease and famine, and previously also through warfare.

Throughout history, other tribes have spread into different areas of the Hadendowa territory, due to their political strength (based on animal wealth). The result of this is that people belonging to the same tribe have territories in different parts of the Hadendowa area. Thus a tribe in Sinkat for instance may also own land in the Gash area. This pattern reflects a division between rich, high potential areas like the Gash, and the poorer, more arid northern areas in the Red Sea Hills.

The tribal territories are further divided into smaller areas, each occupied by a *duwab*, the smallest territorial unit in the Hadendowa segmentary system to which members have collective rights and claims. The *duwabs* vary in number and in size within different tribes. They also frequently experience fission, when people leave their own areas and settle within another *duwab's* territory. This might then be the beginning of a new *duwab*.

Such processes of fission are basic to our understanding of Hadendowa tribal dynamics. Certain people may break away from their *duwab* due to conflicts over land, women etc. and establish themselves as an independent *duwab*. They may also attach themselves to a different lineage in order to succeed.

Hadendowa honour

Secondly, descent and kinship among the Hadendowa relates to a number of other aspects of Hadendowa society. The Beja are Muslims and have strong notions of *honour and shame*, notions which are defended on both a tribal and individual basis. A recent conflict between the Hadendowa and the Rashaida tribe is a case in point. The conflict was over a claim from the Rashaida to have a *nazir*, a claim to which the Government was sympathetic given their long history of residence in the region. The Hadendowa however resisted this claim, as this also signified the fact that the Rashaida had legitimate claims to territory in the area. Such conflicts appear within lower levels of social organisation (*duwab*), as well as at the family level. Honour is thus obtained through a continuous process of defending Hadendowa heritage, based on blood relationships and kinship as well as territory, an historical symbol of their past achievements.

In addition to protecting Hadendowa honour, there is also a process in which Hadendowa *compete* for honour to gain influence and authority in society. The manifestation of honour in a person also leads to this person being one to consult (*omkir*). This ideal is represented in the concept "the responsible man", a position which requires many skills and may be similar to the Melanesian "Big Man" position which can be challenged by other persons, and one man's position may be superseded by others. However, it is only with reference to the management of land, animals and local resources etc. on which this honour can be built.

This basic system also gives shape to many of the conflicts that appear as a result of ecological degradation. The mobility with which groups respond to

pressure is a case in point. With increasing marginalization more people are moving around, so increasing the chance of breaking local traditions and practices. Earlier in this paper it was pointed out that people who do not have land-owning rights should not dig the soil or cut trees etc. When this happens, at an increasing rate, the result is increasing conflict. But because of the cultural codification of land such conflicts manifest themselves not as a battle over resources as such, but as a struggle about honour.

The above shows that it is not likely that such a fluid social structure can become a viable basis for defining groups on the ground which can handle resource management. One aspect of this multi-faceted organisation does relate to resource management, but it also deals with honour and with basic competition for prestige in the community.

PASTORALISM AND THE NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY

However, although no direct links between environmental degradation and pastoralism can be established, this does not mean that there is no resource management problem relating to pastoralism in such areas. For the units engaged in pastoralism there is a constant need to manage their herds in order to provide the necessary products for their survival. In an environment such as the Red Sea Hills the general trend is towards individual units' maximizing animal numbers in order to withstand the recurrent crises. The ability to increase the numbers depends of course on *the growth potential of different types of animals, but also on the* management unit's ability to mobilize necessary labour to maintain the herd

and to undertake necessary migrations, as well as the unit's ability to get access to areas with available pasture.

Traditional mobility patterns

The long droughts may still reduce the availability of fodder to an extent that the region cannot sustain existing herds of animals. Such periods of stress are met by migrating to other areas, ie. expanding the spatial scale of exploitation (Ellis and Swift, ibid,48) or by human migration to raise alternative income (labour migrations etc). There are always units that do not make it through such stress periods. Thus there is a constant 'sloughing off' process through which pastoral units, unable to maintain themselves during such periods of stress, have to abandon their traditional livelihoods and seek alternative employment.

The implications of this in terms of the spatial flexibility of pastoralism are significant. Pastoralists often need to migrate over long distances to special areas where there is grazing available in dry periods and where there may also be other opportunities for income generation. The Tokar and Gash areas for example are particularly important to the Hadendowa. These riverine areas have always been important grazing grounds to the Hadendowa. More recently, the government has established flood irrigation schemes in these areas, thus also making them into sources of fodder and wage labour.

The Hadendowa move to Tokar between December and March to graze on the harvested area of the irrigation scheme. Between March and May grazing takes place mainly on the natural pastures of the Tokar area after which they return to Sinkat. Between May and August, animals graze on the

nearby *wadis* and *khors* within the Sinkat area. In August/early September, a separate type of migration takes place, when people either cultivate their plots, work as share-crop farmers, agricultural labourers or in other manual non-agricultural activities. Migration to the Gash area starts in June as rain comes earlier than in Tokar, continuing until January.

The importance of such areas for the Hadendowa cannot be exaggerated. Firstly, people may use the areas for many reasons which are not related to pastoralism, such as irrigation scheme policies towards which crops to grow, policies of land and water distribution, technical issues relating to irrigation as well as general policies towards tenants within the schemes. Although such schemes very often end up having an adverse effect on pastoralist groups, a significant point about these scheme areas is that the Hadendowa have a very strong position within them. This position has again been very important in providing tribal unity among the Hadendowa, since they still play a role in the management of an area of traditional importance to people.

The question of access to the types of resources within such areas is important. The Hadendowa partly have traditional rights to pastures and cultivation areas within these areas as they were engaged in such cultivation and pastoralism in the region before the establishment of the schemes.

Modern influences

However the areas are also modern scheme areas, with leasehold land and agricultural schemes. In addition to the pasture land there are registered tenancies, and land outside the scheme which is allotted to non-registered tenants. Also within this system the traditional Beja land rights are

recognised. Such customary rights are expressed through the recognition of the rights of *Sahib Dimin* in Tokar and *Sahib Rabt* in Gash. The terms signify Hadendowa people with land rights within the allocated scheme land but who are not necessarily living in either Tokar or Gash. They hold these rights through their lineage belonging. Many of them live in Sinkat, and although an absent scheme owner, they maintain a presence in the scheme areas through sharecropping arrangements. Furthermore the lineage sheikhs are part of the distribution systems of tenancies, and by maintaining a presence in the committees dealing with such issues they maintain positions of influence.

Hence, although the Hadendowa have lost land to the schemes we cannot conclude that these areas have been detrimental to the Hadendowa pastoral system. On the contrary, the schemes seem to have opened up new avenues through which the group could get access to new resources. The importance of these areas in crisis periods like the latest drought is significant. The schemes also provide openings for those who have been pushed out of the system by providing wage labour and sharecropping opportunities. An important prerequisite for this scenario has been the acknowledgement by the authorities of the traditional rights of the Hadendowa in such areas. Furthermore, the schemes have been organised in ways that have allowed Hadendowa leaders to participate and thereby maintain tribal interests in the modern scheme contexts.

Nationalization of land

It is interesting to note, however, that the efforts of the present government to make such schemes more effective can change this pattern. Since independence, the governments of Sudan have opted for a policy of nationalization and bureaucratization of land administration. In 1970, the Unregistered Land Act instituted a leasehold tenure system, declaring that all unregistered land, occupied or unoccupied, belonged to the State and was deemed to be registered in the name of the state. The Act was a response to land grabbing by commercial elites in central Sudan and the original intention was to establish direct state administration of all unregistered land. However, state ownership has been used primarily to give governments a freer hand in land acquisition and distribution in development project areas. Consequently, land outside major development projects has continued to be administered by traditional authorities. In spite of Islamization efforts in the 1980s, leasehold remained the tenure on which Government made available land in development projects. This is the case both in the irrigated schemes and in the mechanised farming schemes in rainfed agricultural areas. Rents are nominal, and the most important function of the lease is to set out the complex relationship between farmers and the scheme. This leasehold system is also said to be consistent with indigenous tenure models which recognize a tribal or other community interest in land. The state is seen as a successor to the tribe, and state leaders replace tribal leaders (Bruce, 1989).

This scenario has been applied to the Red Sea Hills. However, the emerging policy of privatization, if carried to its logical conclusion, will interfere with the existing distribution of goods and money which flow from the schemes to poor areas such as rural Sinkat. The safety cushion of areas such as Gash

and Tokar may be diminished, to the detriment of people living in the Red Sea Hills, but perhaps, and this is the dilemma, to the benefit of the Sudanese national economy.

PASTORALISM AND THE AGENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Hadendowa pastoralism is therefore clearly a highly complex but flexible system. In this context the points brought out by Behnke and Scoones (ibid. p.23ff) are relevant. The facilitation of "opportunistic management" through more flexible marketing systems, by providing tenure arrangements that allow for mobility and access to "key resources" as well as a pastoral administration keeping a low bureaucratic profile, are important starting points in discussing new approaches to pastoral planning.

The policy implications following from these points necessitates some sort of overall administrative structure that is itself flexible and also sensitive to the needs of pastoralists. Pastoral communities are clearly not homogeneous units, but are highly stratified both between and within groups. Also, there are 'new' types of pastoralism emerging that have not been dealt with in this paper. One example of this is the Rashaida who are integrated into mechanised scheme areas, paying for access to graze on farms, and also now having their own farms for such purposes. They are also able to use pasture areas that have been closed by bringing in water by tankers. Thus, in addition to being sensitive to the kinds of pastoral systems outlined in this paper, such administrations should also be able to handle new pastoral adaptations. These challenges bring us back to the need to support local and

regional administration, and to enable such structures to cope with the complexities of pastoral planning.

Administrative structures

If we therefore look at the administrative structures in the Red Sea Hill area in terms of their ability to participate actively in long-term pastoral planning, a number of problems are apparent.

The public structures are in serious crisis and are moving away from the local and regional matters they are meant to serve. This development can be seen on many levels, and here I can only summarize.

The administrative system has been progressively centralised, with over 80% of its revenue coming from central government. Major revenue sources in the region, like the Tokar and Gash schemes, are controlled by parastatals (Gash and Tokar Agricultural Corporations) which are under direct control from the centre. Revenue from both flow directly to the central ministries in Khartoum, the region getting little back through their development budgets. Furthermore the spending of such resources is primarily on social services, and mainly on salaries. The situation is thus one in which the lion's share of budgets goes towards the maintenance of salaries and on-going activities. Very few resources are allocated for investments in development, and there are very few offices providing agricultural services, soil conservation or pasture management.

Yet another problem is a lack of coordination in planning. Since important resources are controlled by parastatals such as in Gash and Tokar, the

regional and local administration has no opportunity to coordinate planning. Despite the importance of these areas to the future viability of pastoralism, administrators based in Sinkat have no means with which to consult decision-makers in the schemes. A similar situation exists in Port Sudan harbour, which provide essential work for the pastoralists. The port is controlled by the Seaport Corporation and, although its policies are very influential on the availability of alternative employment for the Hadendowa, no links of coordination exist.

A final point is the question of the legitimacy of this system, and the extent to which ordinary people have access to it and are given the opportunity to argue for their interests. The 1981 People's Local Government Act abolished the system of an *elected* membership,replacing it with councils in which the members were appointed by the authorities. The ability of this new system to obtain information about events such as the drought of 1984/5 was thus greatly reduced.

NGO perspectives

Turning to international NGOs and their activities in the region, for many this long term development work was a continuation of relief efforts that had taken place since 1985. Such development efforts necessarily related to how different agencies saw the future of pastoralism in the area, and also how they saw the role of government structures in such developments.

Some argued that the long-term solution to the resource problems was to be found within the Red Sea Hills themselves, but that such solutions had to be found *outside* the pastoral sector, i.e. that people should be given alternative

income opportunities. The systematic creation of alternatives to the pastoral system was at that time clearly based on a conception that pastoralism constituted a problem in the Red Sea Hills. Other agencies focused on activities within the pastoral sector, such as the maintenance of wells, veterinary service and re-stocking. This was based on an understanding that pastoralism constituted the only way out for the long-term survival of people in such marginal areas. Such different views thus formed the basis for differential inputs in different parts of the Red Sea Hills, depending on which agency was active in what area, and was a consequence more of NGO ideology than government planning priorities.

However, no matter how different organizations looked upon the origin of the problems they all seemed to design strategies in which *development projects* constituted the main mechanism through which such problems could be addressed. Such projects were *small-scale* and *community- based* with an emphasis on "participation" and "appropriate technology". This was, and still is, a reflection of NGO ideology.

However, as this discussion of the Hadendowa tenure system shows, the definition of viable groups and types of organization which can deal with resource management or local development is no easy task. Rather, we may easily fall into the trap of creating groups on the ground that do not function that way in the traditional system we are eager to protect. The experience during the food aid period showed interesting signs of how local people responded to a system which tried to make use of local structures to organize their food distribution. Many local "food sheikhs" appeared, making claims to sheikh-ship. Similarly, the number of religious institutions (*khalwa*) increased in Sinkat from under 50 in the mid-80s to about 150 by 1988. My

contention is that much of this was directly related to how a local structure was manipulated by local people themselves, in order to obtain the much wanted food.

Secondly, the "local focus" of NGO activity may also be a problem. We have seen in this discussion that the Hadendowa pastoralists depend on pastures far away, and are affected by policies taken there, for quite different reasons other than the well-being of the pastoralists. How can a local perspective deal with this, and to what extent can NGOs provide such links? The experience in the Red Sea Hills indicates a proliferation of projects that did not address such issues, nor did they lend support to government services that might improve *their* capacity to work. Rather, the situation was one of *by-passing* (Hassan Abd el Ati, 1993).

I am not arguing here that there are no positive results stemming from NGO projects, nor do I wish to dispute the importance of their humanitarian effort. I am merely trying to reflect on the basic role such organizations may have in the overall planning dilemmas in regions such as the Red Sea Hills area. One important (though possibly unintentional) positive NGO contribution, however, may have been to act as a go-between between the Beja and the government. This role as advocate may be a very significant one, and should certainly be developed further.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, we may easily end on a note of despair: there are no shortcuts to development, and simple models based on "popular participation" may seem as far-fetched in solving problems as is government coercion.

I therefore agree with Richard Hogg (1992) when he states that:

> *"Ultimately, the plight of Africa's pastoral populations can only be addressed by the joint actions of governments, international donors, NGOs and pastoralists alike. If the joint action is to be achieved it will only be on the basis of a common agenda in which all agree that pastoralism is an economically viable, sustainable and worthwhile way of life." (p.144)*

However in doing so, I am not only arguing for a new perspective in range management and pastoral administration, but rather for a move towards the heart of the African crisis itself.

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