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OWING AND OWNING:
ZUBAYR PASHA, SLAVERY, AND EMPIRE
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SUDAN

by

ZACHARY BERMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017

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Zubayr Pasha, Slavery, and Empire
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate
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ABSTRACT

Owing and Owning: Zubayr Pasha, Slavery, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Sudan

by

Zachary Berman

Advisor: Simon Davis

The Mahdist revolt provides a quandary: why did Africans revolt against imperialism in defense of slavery? This study approaches the issue by analyzing the life of Zubayr Pasha, most well-known of Sudanese slave-traders in the decades leading to the Mahdist Revolt. What I found in interviews with him, parliamentary debates over him, articles about him, and proclamations concerning him, was that the emotional responses to his story show different perspectives on the processes of overlapping imperialisms, voluntary slavery, and a host of integrated issues. To himself he was a trader, a businessman working within the letter of the law; to others he symbolized either native brutality or realpolitik. The implications of this work are a new understanding of slavery and imperialism as more subtle and more related concepts than they are usually given credit for, making the Mahdist revolt less mysterious.

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Introduction

H. M. Gov't should select one above all others, namely Zobier. He alone has the ability to rule the Soudan.

– Charles Gordon at Khartoum to Evelyn Baring at Cairo, Feb 18, 1884.

Problems

It is time the complex story of Zubayr Pasha was re-examined. Zubayr Raḥma Maṣṣūr al-Abbasiyy, Zubayr Pasha, or simply Zubayr, was the leader of a company that became a state. He was born in 1831 just north of Khartoum among the Jimiab clan of the Ja'aliyyin tribe, famed as educated powerful Arab Sudanese traders. He followed an older cousin in 1857 on a mission to southern Sudan to seek out new sources of ivory, ostrich feathers, and other primary materials along with markets for cloth, jewelry, and other manufactured goods. A year later he set out at the head of a mission of twenty-five men from Khartoum to the southwest in the region of Bahr al-Ghazal. A series of similar voyages followed over the next five years. His staff grew with his business, which traded in slaves among other merchandise, as was customary in the region and among his competitors. In 1865 Zubayr made a flood-season base near a small kingdom ruled by a king named Adoo Shukoo. The king became wary of Zubayr, so went with his army to attack Zubayr's camp. Zubayr's security force repelled the attack, killing the king in the process. Zubayr became ruler of this small kingdom. Thereafter, he extended his territory to include all of Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur, partly under the auspices of Egyptian-ruled

Sudan. The Egyptian Khedive and Sudanese Hukumdar¹ both preferred to extract a small tribute from Zubayr and acknowledge his rule rather than antagonize him. Trade in Zubayr's territory benefitted from the association with more established government. After tensions with the Sudanese government grew, in 1875 Zubayr travelled to Cairo to go above the Hakumdar and seek an audience with the Khedive. Khedive Tawfiq kept him under house arrest in Cairo, which lasted for twenty-five years, except for a brief excursion as an Ottoman soldier against Russian troops in the Balkans and in captivity on Gibraltar, until 1902, when he returned to Sudan and became an advisor to the British-Egyptian government in Khartoum.

Zubayr Pasha points to a new understanding of nineteenth century imperialism in Africa. In the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s in peripheral Sudan, the old regime of overlapping and concentric local empires was collapsing under pressure from a more integrated European-based imperialism, at least until the anti-foreign Mahdist regime appeared in 1881. At the same time, British abolitionists exerted substantial influence over metropolitan government, and this more streamlined imperialism had the potential to liberate native peoples from slavery. Rather than embrace abolitionism, however, many native peoples, native leaders, imperial administrators, and metropolitan leaders, among them Zubayr and General Charles Gordon, questioned abolitionist empire. But those who questioned conquest in the name of abolishing slavery were called ignorant, atavistic, and mad by journalists, politicians, and administrators. Historians have understood the delicate position Gordon was in, but have failed to understand the more subtle definitions

¹ The Hukumdar, or governor-general of Sudan, was a position beneath the Khedive, and generally given little resources to fulfill his duties. The position held by thirty men between 1835 and 1885. Ismail Pasha Ayyub held the position from 1872-1877, and Charles Gordon from 1877 to 1879.

of slavery that Gordon, Zubayr or the Mahdi understood. Though Zubayr and the Mahdi certainly underestimated British power, they understood the realpolitik of slavery and imperialism. They understood that slavery and imperialism were both expressions of exploitation. Sudanese slavers would not willingly cede the power they had over those subject to them merely to themselves become powerless subjects of distant metropolises. Sudanese slaves, with what little power they had, might not see the logic in struggling to be subject to devils they did not know over being subject to devils they did. Zubayr, Gordon, and the Mahdi all understood that understandings of slavery based on trans-Atlantic examples did not apply in Sudan, and that premature attempts at abolition could exacerbate the lawlessness of the frontier, delay the formation of effective state government, and push Sudan further from the influence of Europe.

Zubayr Pasha defies categorization, because he occupied space, exercised his will and assumed functionary roles which conventional narratives of imperialism overlook. Classical theories of imperialism (Lenin, Hobson, Schumpeter) as well as more recent works (Cain and Hopkins, Robinson and Gallagher) fail to describe the category of agency that Zubayr represents in the imperial mode. Zubayr was neither of the metropole nor of the periphery, or more accurately he was of one metropole and of another periphery simultaneously. He was more than at opposite ends of two imperial processes; Zubayr Pasha was the barometer of more layered and concentric imperialisms that defined nineteenth century actualities in Africa.

Zubayr Pasha also helps put a clearer view on timing of the moment of transition to modernity in marginal regions of northern Africa. The 1870s marked the transition in peripheral Sudan to Egyptian colonial control, indirectly influenced by European powers.

The 1880s marked the moment of attempted transition to a new kind of imperialism, a distinctly modern imperialism, of direct control. This transition, however, engendered the Mahdist revolt in Sudan, which directly repelled imperial control. Zubayr Pasha was treated very differently by the British Government in 1884 and 1885 compared to 1887 and 1888, showing the British reaction to their failure.

Finally, Zubayr Pasha also provides an answer to a quandary of late nineteenth century international relations: why did native peoples, who were liable to enslavement by local independent regimes, fight against abolitionist imperialists? Imperial administrators, and historical discourse based on the records of imperial administrators, lobbyists, and activists, argued that they fought out of ignorance and atavism, and that those who were neither ignorant nor atavistic and continued to fail to see imperialists as liberators from slavery were mad. Zubayr Pasha, and particularly the versions of his life story that he dictated, explain the irony that these ignorant, atavistic, and mad individuals understood, that most imperial administrators did not: Replacing dominance under slavery by the dominance of empire was only to replace one dominance by another, more efficient, dominance. Zubayr Pasha, and to a lesser extent Charles Gordon and even William Ewart Gladstone, were quick, curious, and creative, deeply interested in politics, economics, religion, and philosophy, forward thinking and wanted the best for all men, and failed to see a clear line between bondage and empire.

This dissertation begins with Charles Gordon, in 1884 and 1885. Gordon is a natural starting point, being both the introduction to Zubayr for most British of the nineteenth century, and being very similar to Zubayr. Gordon's philosophical perspective was similar to Zubayr's, even as Zubayr was Sudanese Arab, Muslim, and a trader, and

Gordon was British, Evangelical Christian, and a general. In order to explain the quandary in which Gordon, Gladstone, and Zubayr found themselves in 1884, this dissertation, after telling what happened to Zubayr in 1884 and 1885, tells the story of his career in the 1850s and 1860s, and continues, past 1884 and 1885, to Zubayr's death in 1913.

General Charles Gordon in a last ditch effort to save British-Egyptian control of Sudan from the Mahdist uprising, threw his support behind empowering Zubayr Pasha. Zubayr had a successful career as a merchant leader in Sudan between 1857 and 1875, but then had been under house arrest in Cairo between 1875 and Gordon's request in 1884. This dissertation asks why Gordon supported Zubayr, why Gordon's request was denied, and why instead Zubayr was imprisoned on Gibraltar from 1885 to 1887. In 1884 and 1885 Zubayr became a polarizing figure in Parliament and the British press, and this dissertation asks what he represented in Britain, and what this reveals about Britain's relationship with Egypt and Sudan in the late nineteenth century.

Egypt's modern relationship with Europe began with Napoleon's invasion in 1798. After the three-year occupation toppled its old ruling Mamluks, leaving a power vacuum, Mehmed Ali arrived in Egypt with British forces in 1801. Mehmed Ali was born in Albania to a Turkish-speaking family, and came with a loyal group of his own soldiers, sent by the Ottoman sultan to ensure Egypt stayed Ottoman. Under Mehmed Ali for the next almost fifty years, the Egyptian state and especially military apparatus grew greatly. He was able to achieve near-independence from the Ottoman Empire, to expand his Egyptian domain into northern Sudan in search of gold and slaves, and to keep Egypt out of debt and to limit British and French influence. After his death, Egypt and northern

Sudan were ruled by his dynastic successors: his son Ibrahim briefly (1848), his grandson Abbas (1848-54), and his fourth son Said (1854-63), none of whom expanded Egyptian control of Sudan, though they did expand Egyptian debt to European banks. Mehmed Ali's grandson Ismail took control in 1863, and under his regime Egyptian control was extended southward throughout today's Sudan, Uganda and eastward to Eritrea. These expansions were of the looser imperial type, not state expansion: power was highly devolved at every level, little influenced by Ottoman Tanzimat regularization efforts, being based on tribute rather than standing legal and bureaucratic integration.²

In order to augment Egypt's tax base, Ismail had turned Zubayr's small empire into the new Egyptian province of White Nile in 1871. Two years later Zubayr expanded White Nile to include Darfur. Zubayr claimed to have conquered Darfur in the name of the Egyptian Khedive, but another Sudanese military-political leader, Ahmed Bilali, also claimed to have conquered Darfur in the name of the Khedive. Bilali was granted the governorship. Small overlapping empires within empires meant that one way to expand one's range of power was to appeal to leadership of a higher level empire for support. Neither the Khedive nor the Hukumdar in Khartoum had the motivation, nor the power, to conquer Zubayr, but with just a word, they could empower a rival.³

Zubayr traveled with a large entourage and many gifts to Cairo to ask Ismail to appoint him governor rather than Bilali. Instead, Zubayr was placed under house arrest in Cairo in 1875, and kept there under Tawfiq. Zubayr was allowed freedom of movement

² Hasan Ahmed Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 198–216; P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

³ Richard Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan: 1839-1889* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 122.

within that city, and a small salary, but his movements and communications were watched. With two exceptions, he was prevented from leaving Egypt for twenty-five years. Zubayr was only allowed to leave Egypt twice: to fight as a soldier defending the Ottomans from Russia, and to be held under even closer watch by British authorities on Gibraltar out of fear that he would participate in the Mahdist revolt. From exile in Cairo Zubayr exerted limited influence over his lands, if any.

Under Ismail, Egyptian colonization of Africa reached its peak, with loans by European banks and exploration and military service by European soldiers. Ismail incurred perilous European debt for various projects, primarily the Suez Canal, but including expansion in Sudan. Ismail increasingly indebted himself to European businesses and employed British and other European officers and officials in his service, to the point where in 1876 he was obliged to set up a public debt commission, the Caisse de la Dette, controlled by commissioners from various European governments, with increasing control of Egypt's finances in order to ensure repayment of government loans. In 1879 Tawfiq, Ismail's son, was installed as he was more easily controlled by European consuls, primarily British ex-soldier and imperial administrator Evelyn Baring. In 1882, after an attempt by Ahmed 'Urabi to wrest more control of Egypt for the Arabic-speaking majority from the Turkish-speaking elite and their British backers, the British occupied Egypt and took effective control of more than just finances. British officials encouraged the taxation of Sudan to help pay Egypt's debts to British and other bankers.⁴

⁴ John Dunn, *Khedive Ismail's Army* (London: Routledge, 2005). David Landes, *Bankers and Pashas: International Finance and Economic Imperialism in Egypt*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958).

Eight years after Zubayr came to Cairo, Charles Gordon tried to bring him back from forced retirement. Gordon, a hero in Britain for his military leadership in helping repress the Taiping rebellion in China, was afterward governor-general of Sudan as an officer in the Egyptian service, not as a British official. Later was put in charge of putting down the Mahdist rebellion. Mahdists, like the Taiping, were a messianic-based movement. Gordon decided that he needed to install a native alternative to the Mahdi to rule Sudan. Gordon had been something of a seeker of fortune in Sudan, raised in rank through foreign contract service, which aided him in seeing the advantage of Zubayr as another seeker of fortune, who would be eager to rise in rank to leader of all of Sudan. Zubayr, despite his eight year absence from Sudan, still might have held enough cultural capital to help lead Sudan down a road of moderation between foreign-imposed and local-isolated control. Zubayr and Gordon had a tumultuous relationship, alternating between publicly shaming and defending one another. The imperialist-local interaction between Gordon and Zubayr, and by analogy between Zubayr and local kings of Bahr al-Ghazal, was a new form of synthetic imperial politics.⁵

After Gordon's request for Zubayr to be sent to Khartoum was rejected, the Mahdia succeeded in conquering Sudan and preventing reconquest by foreign troops for thirteen years, despite poor administration and a devastating drought. When British and Egyptian troops managed to reconquer Sudan in 1898, they set up a unique power-

⁵ Pierre. Crabites, *Gordon, the Sudan and Slavery* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1933); Charles George Gordon, *The Journals of Major-Gen. C.G. Gordon, C.B., at Khartoum*, 2nd ed. (London: Kegan Paul, 1895).

sharing government, a co-dominus, or Condominium. Zubayr was allowed to return to Sudan, and became an advisor to this new government on issues of slavery.⁶

Zubayr was important to Britain in 1885 because he symbolized slavery and alternate views of civilization and empire. After his moment in the Parliamentary and journalistic spotlight in 1884, Zubayr was imprisoned on Gibraltar because he represented the archetype of a slave king, not for accusations of actual slaving or kingly activity.

Sources

My main primary sources are published and unpublished interviews of Zubayr, Public Records Office along with Foreign Office records at the National Archives of the UK, British Parliamentary papers, the Charles Gordon collection at the British Library, the Wingate papers at Durham University, British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) archives and newsletters, Egyptian National Archive records, published travelers' records, and British periodicals. Secondary sources include literature on imperialism and the British empire, on Africa and imperialism, and on Middle East and I particular Nile Valley and African imperialism. .

The first chapter relies on British National Archive records, particularly the three volume Foreign Office collection entitled "Zobeir Pasha: Imprisonment and Proposed Employment of" and one volume "Claim of Zobeir Pasha Against the Egyptian

⁶ P. M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan, from the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day*. (New York: Grove Press, 1961); P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958); Na'ūm Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān 'al-qadīm Wa-'al-ḥadīth Wa-jughrāfiyatuhu. (The History and Geography of Ancient and Modern Sudan)* (Bayrūt: Dār 'al-Thaqāfah, 1903); Heather J Sharkey, "Domestic Slavery in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Northern Sudan" (M.Phil, Durham University, 1992).

Government.” Published interviews with Zubayr (by Na‘um Shuqayr, a Lebanese historian⁷, Flora Shaw, a British journalist, and Lord Ribblesdale, a Liberal peer in the Lords, all taken on Gibraltar between 1885 and 1887) are the best source of information on his early career and his ruling philosophy, particularly when taken against traveler’s records. These interviews and traveler’s records provide the bulk of primary source evidence for chapters two and three. Chapter four relies on British National Archive records, British press, Egyptian National Archive documents, and records from the Sudan Archive at Durham. Chapter five depends on British parliamentary records, Egyptian National Archive records, British newspaper articles, and British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society records.

I rely heavily on interviews by Flora Shaw⁸ and Na‘um Shuqayr,⁹ as have all previous authors writing on Zubayr. Four books have been published expressly on Zubayr: H.C. Jackson in 1913 published one in English, consisting almost entirely of a translation of Shuqayr, though he also interviewed Zubayr personally and bases his conclusions on these conversations.¹⁰ Sa’d al-Din al-Zubayr published a retranslation of

⁷ P.M. Holt says that Shuqayr was Lebanese, and particularly adept at understanding the Sudan because he was “an Arabic-speaking member of the Egyptian Military Intelligence organization, controlled by Major (later Sir) F.R. Wingate, he took an important part in the gathering of information from Sudanese sources in the later years of the Mahdia and during and after the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of the Sudan. After the fall of Omdurman in September 1898, he was responsible for assembling and investigating the Mahdist archives, and he incorporated numerous documents in his *Ta’rikh*. Other material was derived from Sudanese manuscript chronicles and oral sources. Shuqayr was careful in reproducing his sources, and discriminating in his use of them, but Budge [in his Egyptian Sudan based largely on Shuqayr’s material] (and those who have used Budge) blurred the distinctions which Shuqayr maintained. P Holt, “Sultan Selim I and the Sudan,” *Journal of African History* 8, no. 1 (1967): 19. Jackson mentions that Shuqayr’s interviews with Zubayr occurred in 1900. al-Zubair and Henry Cecil Jackson, *Black Ivory, Or the Story of El Zubeir Pasha, Slaver and Sultan* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1913), 103.

⁸ Flora Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” *Contemporary Review* 52 (1887): 333–349, 564–584, 658–682.

⁹ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh ‘al-Sūdān*.

¹⁰ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*.

Jackson back into Arabic in 1952, with the addition of a timeline, photographs, and concluding commentary.¹¹ Khalifa Abbas al-Abid published a translation of Shaw into Arabic 1995 with photographs and a copy of a set of letters from Zubayr to the Sultan of Darfur, which I analyze in chapter four.¹² ‘Izz al-Din Ismail published an Arabic version in 1998 that combined a retranslation of Jackson with elements of P.M. Holt’s *Mahdist State in the Sudan*.¹³ Rex Sean O’Fahey recently published an article on Zubayr’s early career comparing many of the above sources as well as others. No primary source-based monograph has been published in English on Zubayr since Jackson in 1913.¹⁴

Zubayr is mentioned in passing in many historical works in both English and Arabic on the Mahdist revolt, on Sudanese history, and on Charles Gordon, though only referring to 1884 and 1885. References to Zubayr in journals are likewise nearly all from 1884 and 1885. This dissertation covers that well-documented period in one chapter, and works to expand upon the analysis offered in these sources by spending two chapters analyzing Zubayr’s career in Sudan, and two chapters analyzing Zubayr’s experiences after 1885. Previous authors writing on Zubayr have ignored the period after 1885 nearly completely, and it is particularly in the chapter on Gibraltar, from 1885 to 1887, that this dissertation provides new primary source material.

¹¹ Sa’d Zubayr, *al-Zubayr Bāshā: Rajul al-Sūdān (Zubayr Pasha: Man of the Sudan)* (Cairo: Sharikat Istāndart lil-Ṭibā‘ah, 1952).

¹² Zubayr Bāshā, *al-Zubayr Bāshā Yuru Sīratahu Fī Munafāhu bi-Jabal Ṭāriq (Tāriq (Zubayr Pasha Tells His Story on Gibraltar)* (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Sūdānīyah, 1995).

¹³ ‘Izz Ismā‘īl, *al-Zubayr Bāshā wa-Dawruhu Fī al-Sūdān Fī ‘Aṣr Al-ḥukm al-Miṣrī (Zubayr Pasha and His Role in the Sudan During the Period of Egyptian Rule)* (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb Far‘ al-Ṣiḥāfah, 1998).

¹⁴ No book at all seems to have been published on Zubayr in English since 1913, either fiction or non-fiction.

Methodology

This dissertation concerns the history of slavery in the the Nile Valley, the formation of the borders of what would become the nation-state of Sudan, revolts and conquests and empires. I depend methodologically, however, on something closer to the history of memory: an analysis of the differing opinions concerning those events. A cultural chasm presented itself in the arguments for and against Charles Gordon employing Zubayr as a puppet in Sudan in 1884. That cultural chasm was between those who saw slavery in Manichean terms and those who saw spectra of freedom and servitude. Zubayr convinced those who knew him better to lean toward the latter group. I want to get at what arguments Zubayr made to convince them. My methodology is to dissect the primary versions of Zubayr's story, each told directly by Zubayr to the author, to understand both the different arguments he made to different audiences, and the greater arguments he made to multiple audiences to better understand how Zubayr's understanding of freedom versus servitude contribute to understandings of processes of formation and power today.

This dissertation uses the accelerating development of exchange networks in south-west Sudan in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the context in which Zubayr developed his understandings of freedom and servitude. Those networks exchanged goods, people, and identities. This work uses shows these networks to be exploitative, that this exploitation broached local, regional, and grand-imperial networks, and that a useful parallel can be made between this relationship of exploitation and relationships of exploitation within the rubric of slavery. Zubayr failed to see the distinction between exploitation in the name of slavery and exploitation in the name of freedom if the name were the most notable difference.

This dissertation approaches the actions of Zubayr and those who interact with him through a systematic appraisal of how these actions appeared to the actors. Though actions provide a framework for this story, the more substantial analysis is of the way the players discuss how occurrences appeared to them. This is the most effective methodology for this subject because the evidence I have suggests the subjective ways actions were perceived and little about the ways actions were taken. This is political and economic history, but beneath that this is cultural and intellectual history: I study the way the concepts of slavery and imperialism were understood as much as how they looked.

My sources have dictated this approach. Interviews with Zubayr about his career are as important for how he perceived his career as for what he did. Reflections of travelers who met Zubayr and traveled through his lands are not so much important for establishing if Zubayr's descriptions were right or wrong, but how outsiders to the system of trade and slaving in Bahr al-Ghazal perceived it. Newspaper clippings, records from the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the impressions of the captain of the ship that carried Zubayr from Alexandria to Gibraltar, these all give insights into what these very specific authors found were the justifications behind actions.

It is not enough to compare the contemporary Sudanese and European systems to find the ways in which they do and do not translate economic power into freedom; this would be what Homi Bhabha calls *cultural diversity*. More important here is what Bhabha calls *cultural difference*, the process by which what was happening in Sudan was fit into European categories, therefore authorizing political and military dominance:

If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics, or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements *of* culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity...It is the problem of how, in

signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic.¹⁵

It is this *signifying* that impacts Zubayr. Once the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society categorize Zubayr as a slave trader, and Gordon as a slave liberator, those categories are repeated in the name of a past that is not necessarily faithful of the historical memory, but rather a strategy of representing European authority of force.

Zubayr's narratives attempt to counteract this strategy by describing himself as a trader and imperialist adventurer acting in ways that paralleled traders and imperial adventurers in the European mold, and in the case of the Shuqayr narrative, in the Arab mold. Zubayr placed himself into the historiography in order to try to demonstrate that though his actions might have seemed distasteful to distant audiences, the compatriots of those distant audiences were participating in quite similar actions, with much less criticism.

Discourses

This dissertation contributes to various historical discourses, on Nile Valley slavery, slavery and imperialism in northern Africa, British imperialism in Africa, and general theories of imperialism, not to mention the small historiographies on Zubayr Pasha and the integration of Bahr al-Ghazal into Sudan.

Scholarly discourse on Nile Valley slavery is mostly based in European sources, and says as much about the way Europe viewed the Nile Valley as it does about the Nile Valley per se. Europeans had a difficult time trying to make sense of the very different

¹⁵ Homi Babha, "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5 (1988): 5–23.

institution of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, in which slaves could be wealthy and powerful. More recent literature takes local sources into account to a greater extent, and Egyptians and Sudanese have participated in European-based academic discourses to a greater extent, revealing some essential conflicts.¹⁶

While the history of Zubayr is part of this dissertation, the reflection of Zubayr in Britain is more central. This is similar to the way that Edward Said and Dipesh Chakrabarty are interested in the history of Europe, but it is not the focus of their works. The focus of these scholars is the way Europe sees history outside of Europe as reflections and aberrations of Europe. To Said the literature of Europe essentializes non-European cultures, reading them through inappropriate lenses. For Chakrabarty the writing of non-European history is read through a similar lens, as faulty or delayed versions of European history. These authors, as well as Ranajit Guha and others, see the way Europeans, and they point out that Europe is an idea not a clearly defined place, took control of the discourse of extra-European intellectual heritage as a reflection of the way Europeans dominated the world politically. In the tradition of Said and Chakrabarty, the way Zubayr was expressed in Europe says something about Sudan and Egypt, but it says more about Britain. Said and Chakrabarty, however, are focused on the Europe-Other dichotomy. Egypt was simultaneously imperial and imperialized; Deim Zubayr was also simultaneously imperial and imperialized, an empire unto himself as well as part of

¹⁶ Harold Alfred MacMichael, *A History of the Arabs in the Sudan and Some Account of the People Who Preceded Them and of the Tribes Inhabiting Dârfûr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922); Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, "Breaking the Pen of Harold MacMichael: The Ja'aliyyin Identity Revisited," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21, no. 2 (1988): 217–231.

overlapping overarching powers. Including them both within a world capitalist system does not quite do justice to the layers of overlap of exploitation.¹⁷

Scholarly discourse on Nile Valley slavery began with comparisons with trans-Atlantic slavery, which showed a bias that was hard to escape, a bias that spoke strongly to a focus in British consciousness on trans-Atlantic slavery. Historians of Nile Valley slavery based their early writings on those of colonial administrators and travelers, such as Harold MacMichael. Trans-Atlantic and Nile Valley slaveries were so different, however, that these comparisons showed little about the Nile Valley. Slavery in the Nile Valley developed very gradually over millennia rather than over only a few centuries, was a symbol of social status more than an instrument of monetized profitable production, and most Nile Valley slaves worked domestically or militarily rather than in agriculture or mining. Scholarship on Nile Valley/Middle Eastern slavery then shifted toward analyzing divisions of types of slaves.¹⁸

After divorcing itself from discussions of global slavery trends, historical discourse on Nile Valley slavery moved to differentiating types of slaves: military/administrative, domestic, harem, and agricultural. These types continued to reflect European visions, for example the focus on upper-class slave-owners who

¹⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 28; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

¹⁸ Yusuf Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800-1909* (Houndmills: Macmillan press, 1996) describes European slavery as abolitionist and Nile Valley as a non-abolitionist system; Ronald Segal, *Islam's Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001) argues that the lack of a significant diaspora of descendants of slavery in the Middle East is particular to the relative ease by which slaves were emancipated and integrated into their new societies. Ahmed E Elbashir, *The United States, Slavery, and the Slave Trade in the Nile Valley* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983) makes an important point that these two slaveries were intertwined: Sudanese soldiers, likely slaves, fought in Mexico, and American civil war veterans fought in Sudan.

differentiated female domestic slaves from harem women, whereas the majority of Nile Valley slave owners did not differentiate these categories.¹⁹

Women working as domestic servants were the largest portion of the slave trade within the Sudan and into Egypt and Turkey.²⁰ harems owned by upper-class Sudanese and middle-class Egyptians were chosen from among these women, as opposed to Eastern European women who were owned primarily by wealthy urban elites. Eunuchs, for elite harems, were generally captured in Sudan between the ages of ten and twelve and castrated near the Sudan/Egypt border.²¹ Agricultural slavery was rare throughout Nile Valley history due to it being more economically viable to pay free peasants, use corvee labor, or rent land to semi-bonded peasants, but the 1860s and 1870s were an exception to this trend. Cotton prices skyrocketed as a result of the American Civil War and the Egyptian government launched slave-worked cotton farms under pressure to repay government indebtedness to Europe. Trade in men for agricultural slavery in Egypt increased in this period.²² Small family owned farms in northern Sudan in the period also tended to own one or a handful of agricultural slaves, but in this context they were somewhat more akin to domestic slaves due to the small scale of these farms.²³

Of the four categories of slaves, the most typologically problematic is military-administrative slaves, *kul* in Turkish. These were most central to Zubayr's form of rule,

¹⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Ehud Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

²⁰ Ehud Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 13.

²¹ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 76.

²² Elbashir, *The United States, Slavery, and the Slave Trade in the Nile Valley*.

²³ Sharkey, "Domestic Slavery in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Northern Sudan."

and his story sheds new light on the kinds of power those in this station held. These slaves have been studied at length in the context of the palace in Istanbul but hardly at all in the peripheral areas in which slaves were captured.²⁴ Europeans were accustomed to drawing a deceptively clear line between conscription and slavery, from the European example, made simpler by using race as the main distinguishing factor.²⁵ Europeans were also accustomed to drawing a similarly deceptive line between those who were paid a salary or who yielded considerable political power and those who were slaves. The inadequacy of these assumptions within the highly institutionalized Ottoman center has been shown, but the periphery provides a unique comparison.²⁶ On the one hand a continuity of tradition between center and periphery existed in regular enslavement and subsequent training and empowerment of slave-soldiers. On the other hand, the chaotic uninstitutionalized nature of a frontier region shows more flexible categories of slave, freeman, and soldier.

Slave soldiers in other parts of Africa were also more akin to the slave soldiers of Bahr al-Ghazal. Robin Law describes a tradition of slavery in the Oyo empire that while most soldiers were not considered slaves, elite soldiers of the *Alafin*, king of kings, were recruited from among the palace slaves. He also describes a tradition of slavery in which slaves were often captured from more literate societies to the north of Oyo and kept as

²⁴ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 13.

²⁵ In the twentieth century this changed dramatically with widespread use of colonial troops in other colonies.

²⁶ Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East*.

secretaries for their illiterate masters, challenging ideas of power relations via education.²⁷

Historians of Nile Valley/Middle East slavery historiography have recently begun to differentiate individual experiences and further show the complexities of these categories. Scholars have written mostly on the experiences of particular slaves, abolitionists, politicians, and slave owners.²⁸ A critical lacuna is left in lack of narratives of slave traders. Rather than one universal role of slave trader, however, there existed a spectrum of positions of power in the slave trade, from those who captured slaves in raids to those who forced marches to those who protected the trade indirectly to those who sanctioned it tacitly while working for officially abolitionist governments. At every stage along this spectrum wealth and power were gained by the transfer of arms and money outward toward the periphery in exchange for slaves and ivory toward the center. An analysis of the roles of the slavers is overdue.

Understanding of the nature of the slave-master relationship in the Nile Valley has gone through great changes.²⁹ Ehud Toledano suggests shifting from the terminology of *slave* and *master* to *enslaved* and *slaver*. He describes the relationship between them as “an involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners.”³⁰ That description I find very useful: it is particularly apt for Nile Valley slavery where race and permanence were not necessarily elements of the relationship. As

²⁷ Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, C.1600-C.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 12, 190.

²⁸ See John O. Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell, *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002).

²⁹ Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*; John Edward Philips and Miura Toru, *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000).

³⁰ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 20.

an extension of his terminology, I prefer the term bondage to slavery; bondage highlights the relationship between two people, while slavery emphasizes only the slave. A Foucaultian perspective might emphasize the ways slaves were active participants in their relationship with their enslavers, but the term bondage goes further, emphasizing the ways slavers were themselves dependent on the relationship. The power that slaves had over their masters was multifarious: economic necessity, slaves' often close relations with the most powerful members of society, and their ability to defend their legal rights under the statutes of slavery.³¹

Scholarly discourses on the Nile Valley are just beginning to grapple with wider discourses on empire and globalization generally. The Nile Valley in the late nineteenth century consisted of Sudan, a province of the Egyptian empire, and Egypt, a province of a British empire, loosely defined. Egypt, which had a power structure made up of a Turkish-speaking elite and European advisors, and a majority that were likely hardly aware that they lived within a state, apart from the intermittent burdens of corvee labor and of conscription. It is a foggier but truer picture to see, rather than discrete political entities, ephemeral foci of power that are symptoms of globalization. These expressions of power were asynchronous with layers of imperialism above and below by days and years as well as decades and centuries: power continually shifted geographically as well as chronologically. British power over Egypt and Egyptian power over Sudan, for example, were not or reactions or reflections of one another but part of a bigger process. They were barely empires, and they were hardly states. They were hubs, temporary

³¹ Marc-Henri Piault, "Captifs du pouvoir et pouvoir des captifs," in *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, ed. Claude Meillassoux (Paris: Maspero, 1975).

concatenations within an inexorably centralizing set of imperialized core-periphery relationships. One useful parallel might be Oyo, where Robin Law argues that the reasons behind the growth of large scale more exploitive slavery in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not so much the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as was previously assumed, but rather was a result of the expansion of trade in non-human goods, which expanded opportunities for the profitable employment of slaves on a large scale. Slavery in Egypt and Sudan and Oyo were all dominated by a system whereby slaves were generally integrated into households where they were "only marginally disprivileged members,"³² but the change to larger scale slavery, as Zubayr's example also shows, was not due to the direct impact of Europeans, but rather to the indirect impact of hastily amplified trade.

Toledano's definition of *an involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners* applies nicely to the relationship between periphery and metropole, particularly given the dynamic and often ephemeral nature of all relationships. As much as dependent states depend on the core for organization and distribution of goods, the core depends on the periphery for production and consumption. Sudan was thought of by nineteenth century Egyptians as part of an Egyptian empire. Eve Troutt Powell suggests that Egyptian forms of imperialism and racism toward Sudan were influenced by Egypt's simultaneous experience on the other end of imperialism, not that racism or imperialist tendencies were unknown in Egypt before the modern age.³³

³² Law, *The Oyo Empire*, 206–7.

³³ Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 17.

Even if Mehmed Ali was not under the thumb of European pressure the way Ismail was, he certainly felt the growing power of Europe, and sought to emulate it.

While it is true that racism was accentuated by the increasing integration into Europe-centered markets, the increase in racism that accompanied that integration may not have been as much a symptom of the influence of European cultural prejudices as much as of the economically impelled hasty fusion of peoples previously distant. This is a slight extension of Robin Law's argument concerning global trade in products influencing a transformation in slavery rather than directly the global trade in humans.³⁴ From European travelers to Zubayr's narratives, racism is a means to an end of political and economic development. Racism and slavery may have been a wrong-headed means that eventually fouled efforts toward that end, but then again enforcement of abolition of slavery often turned out to foul its own end as well. Racism and slavery might also be seen as a desperate means to gain control and advantage in a frenzied time, even if it caused even more chaos and frenzy. This dissertation builds on both the work of Toledano and Troutt Powell in understanding the racial element and the nature of slavery and imperialism in the Nile Valley in the nineteenth century.

British influence in Sudan before the Mahdia was not the same kind of government-defended British business that existed in other British controlled parts of Africa, such as George Taubman Goldie or Cecil Rhodes , though each example differed widely. Karl Peters' takeover of German East Africa was, like Zubayr, accomplished through treaties with local kings, but Peters worked representing the Kaiser directly, at least soon after, while Zubayr ruled for decades before his territory entered into the

³⁴ Law, *The Oyo Empire*, 206–7.

auspices of the Khedive. De Brazza's conquests on the Congo coast were through even more peaceful treaties and agreements, unlike King Leopold's harsher violently enforced regime in the Congo Free State. Even Stanley, who even more than De Brazza considered himself an explorer not a claimer of land, led to a great deal of destabilization in the lands he explored, contributing to the spread of disease and supporting less scrupulous hangers-on. In British influenced territory, Goldie worked more directly with commercial interests, although as much as possible through chartered companies rather than directly through British government. Like Leopold, Goldie was not afraid to use violent force, and his destruction of his own papers might speak highly to this point. Rhodes was even less hesitant to use force than Goldie, and less shamed by it. Flora Shaw wrote to Lugard to alleviate his shame, saying that after getting to know Rhodes in South Africa that Rhodes' means were entirely justified for his noble and unselfish aims.³⁵ This same Flora Shaw, before she knew these men, interviewed Zubayr on Gibraltar, as is detailed below. Shaw ties these gentlemen together in a fascinating way that is discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Shaw fell in love with the then-married Goldie, but after two years had lapsed beyond Goldie's wife's death without a proposal of marriage from him, Shaw accepted Lugard's proposal in 1901, Lugard having been in many ways Goldie's successor in Nigeria, and Shaw having coined the term *Nigeria* four years earlier in a *Times* article. Shaw continued to support Lugard's vigorous policies that thorough pacification was necessary before indirect rule. All of these capitalists/explorers/administrators, and others like them, created in the wake of their activities a destabilization of former regimes and a

³⁵ Helen Callaway and Dorothy O. Helly, "Flora Shaw/Lady Lugard," in *Western Women and Imperialism Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 86; E. Bell, *Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard, D.B.E.* (London: Constable, 1947), 92.

vacuum of power that eventually sucked European governments, foremost the British, into colonial rule. Bernard Porter's recent work on contemporary understandings of the British Empire and Richard Huzzey's work on anti-slaving efforts within it, help to support an argument that while the British Empire was seen as a monolith from without, from within it was barely seen at all, and certainly not monolithic, not in the period of most of Zubayr's life. It was during the 1800s, Porter argues, that the Empire begins to become increasingly conscious of itself as such. I argue that this is symptomatic of the change from an older more *ad hoc* imperialism to a more systematized one, and miscommunications about those types contribute greatly to the confusion over Zubayr.³⁶

Even a better comparison than these European contemporaries of Zubayr is Tippoo Tib and the Zanzibari expansion into inner East Africa. Heinrich Brode described Tippoo Tib in much the same kind of language that Shaw and Ribblesdale described Zubayr, being a mixture of African and Arab features, having great influence in peripheral African regions, being the conduit between European influence (Portuguese in Tippoo Tib's case), Arab influence (Omanis for Tippoo Tib), and formerly isolated regions of central Africa (eastern Congo). The clearest connection, of course, between Tippoo Tib and Zubayr is their relation to slavery, in which they both sought advantage but through intermediaries, rather than trapping and transporting people themselves. Along with black ivory came white ivory for both men as well, with Tippoo Tib making much of his fortune from ivory.³⁷

³⁶ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*. Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain*.

³⁷ Heinrich Brode, *Tippoo Tib, the Story of His Career in Central Africa*, (London: Arnold, 1907), 15–18.

Abdul Sheriff, writing about the process by which Zanzibar acted to integrate East Africa into the world economy, agrees with Brode that Tippu Tip's expansion was a form of "empire-building" and was part of the Scramble for Africa. Like Zubayr's conquests, Tippu Tib's conquests functioned in a frontier region in which merchants had to build their own infrastructure, often using slaves as porters in addition to slaves being goods themselves. Sheriff describes a situation remarkably like Zubayr's, in which "A proliferation of small, weak chiefdoms sucked [merchants] into deep involvement in local politics."³⁸ Zanzibar was to the lands around the Great Lakes what Egypt was to Sudan.

British presence in Sudan was more in the mold of the Egyptian-Ottoman imperialism that already existed in Sudan: Money was earned through taxation of the populace more than foreign business ventures, and that money went largely to pay off Egyptian debts to Britain.³⁹ British banks rather than the British government owned most of the debts under the type of gentlemanly capitalism Cain and Hopkins describe.⁴⁰ Khedive Ismail sold Egypt's shares of the Suez Canal in 1875 to Disraeli's government to pay off some of Egypt's debt to banks, but this further reduced Egypt's ability to produce income to pay off the rest of its debt.⁴¹ Sudan was useful to Ismail as a tax-producing machine to help pay off Egypt's debt, and though tribute to Egypt was not new, spreading

³⁸ Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices, & Ivory in Zanzibar: Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy, 1770-1873* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), 189–90.

³⁹ This is also more like the method employed in the British Raj in India, where Indian taxes subsidized British railway dividends. The Indian railway, like the Suez Canal, provided guaranteed profits not through expanded business but through repayments through taxes. See Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁴⁰ P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, England: Longman, 2002).

⁴¹ Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*, 310.

the borders of Sudan brought an expanded tax base. The gentlemanly capitalists, if there were any in Sudan, were rarely British or European but rather Turks and other Arabs like Zubayr, growing rich off of the movement of ivory, slaves, and ostrich feathers from formerly disconnected areas.⁴²

In other parts of central Africa, Muslim capitalists also expanded influence. These Africans exploited other Africans less Muslim, less Arab, and less cosmopolitan than themselves. Rabih Fadl Allah, sometimes referred to as Rabih Zubayr because he had his early training in Zubayr's army, is also a clear parallel to Zubayr. To the south, Tippoo Tip expanded from a base in Zanzibar to control a great swath of east-central Africa.⁴³ Tippoo Tip followed method of economic and military conquest similar to Rabih and Zubayr. Though Tippoo Tip's son Sefu lost his territory to the Congo Free State and Rabih lost his territory to France, both in battle, their regions just like Zubayr's were eventually under European control. Globalization of control and finance grew in Africa far beyond industrialized European control. European control continued to grow, and the frontier region in which these non-Europeans controlled small empires eventually shrank away, these empires being crushed in the scramble for Africa. This process was neither quick, consistent, or clear at the time, however. Zubayr was kept around as a critical tool of the new imperialism in Sudan, because though British power grew and crushed empires, it struggled to do so, as the example of the Mahdia shows, and so it needed locally powerful men like Zubayr, even if he was not used in this instance.

⁴² Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*.

⁴³ Brode, *Tippoo Tib, the Story of His Career in Central Africa*.

These non-European imperialists, on the other hand, were not necessarily so capitalist. Mahmoud Mamdani suggests that the Nguni *dificane/mfecane* migrations of the nineteenth century, of which Zulu expansion was a part, were counterpart to the Fulani *jihad* in west and central Africa, because they both “subjugated peasant societies to a range of similarly enforced tributary relations.”⁴⁴ *Enforced tributary relations* are certainly financial, even if the units of currency were cattle and land, but the relations were not so clearly capitalist. Mamdani’s argument is that what the Nguni were doing in their northward march was similar to what the British and Boers were doing to the Nguni in Natal, what the Fulani were doing in west Africa, and what Europeans were doing throughout Africa, and by extension what Egyptians were doing in Sudan, and what Zubayr was doing in Bahr al-Ghazal: exploiting, subjugating, organizing, and enforcing tribute. The difference between the less capitalistic and more capitalistic modes was the degree to which tribute was in grain or slaves to sustain local empires, or in ivory and slaves for export.

Mamdani’s definition does nothing to mitigate the overlapping of empires the way Zubayr’s empire overlapped with the Egyptian. The concept that empires or states broadcast power in proportion to closeness to the metropole, but allowing for overlapping states and concentric states, is Jeffrey Herbst’s, which he describes as typical of pre-colonial African rule. Herbst’s concept helps to reduce the confusion of Sudan being part of an Egypt that had its finances controlled by London but with the Ottoman Sultan regarded as political sovereign in every Friday prayer service. Egypt, Britain, the

⁴⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 43.

Ottoman Empire, and Zubayr each broadcast a different type of power over a different range, and were at the same time under the influence of other empires.⁴⁵

Christopher Bayly's argument about the integrity of nationalism and imperialism can be extended to this new context. Bayly argues overarchingly that "Imperialism and nationalism were part of the same phenomenon." When he explains later in the same paragraph his justifications for that, however, the justifications are quite standard, that "nationalism and conflict in Europe made states more aware of their competitors abroad and more inclined to stake out claims," and that "the partition of Africa was...a preemptive exercise, by which national governments attempted to steal a march on their rivals by claiming tracts of territory which might at some time in the future become economically or strategically important."⁴⁶ The idea that imperialism was an extension of nationalism abroad is important to keep in mind, but even Bayly considers these ideas "old-fashioned."

Bayly's justifications may be old-fashioned, but his generalization is new, particularly as it allows for the simultaneous integration into the process of imperialism of "the contemporaneous growth of national feeling among colonized peoples or people threatened by colonial expansion." Not only did nationalism in Europe cause imperialism, but "national feeling" on the periphery sustained it. Cromer, Curzon, and their contemporary proconsuls, Bayly argues, "governed their territories in the 1890s or 1900s with the aim of heading off, divert, or suppressing demands by the educated

⁴⁵ See Jeffrey Ira Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) for the concept of broadcasting power; and Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) for French and British cooperative colonization.

⁴⁶ C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780-1914* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 230.

intelligentsia for greater freedom and political representation.”⁴⁷ Bayly argues that European empires grew quickly in the late nineteenth century both in size and scope not only out of competition with one another but also out of competition with local elites. Zubayr and the Mahdi were both the kind of local elites that provided competition to both the size and scope of empires, and the Fashoda incident provides the greatest evidence of this idea. France and Britain were not alone in fighting over control of the upper Nile. They were both fighting with the Mahdi as well. Britain and France had not merely struggled with one another for control of Egypt, but each had struggled against Mehmed Ali and his dynasty. Egypt, Sudan and other peripheries to European empires may have had “national feeling” but they were not nation-states. Bayly argues that the smaller, looser, and overlapping forms of governance that Herbst describes for Africa be referred to as “archaic globalization,” and he shows that these forms were not only dominant before the advent of the nation-state, but were persistent throughout the rise of nation-states, and acted to both facilitate and subvert European empires.

To a large extent, and particularly in Nilotic, eastern and southern Africa, Britain justified empire on the grounds of assisting abolition. Abolition efforts by European powers were often accompanied by forced labor regimes, by governments and companies alike, to ensure financial self-sufficiency. Zubayr, like these regimes, integrated regions he conquered through domination into a global trade economy. Ivory collection in Sudan and Congo and palm oil trading on the Niger before Goldie’s National Africa Company reflect this pattern. The irony of forced labor to ensure abolition was overlooked by the perpetrators and early historians not only because the system was to their economic

⁴⁷ Ibid., 233.

advantage but because for those living in areas where abolition was enforced it was semantically possible to capture, chain, dominate, and buy and sell individuals as long as they were referred to as “liberated.”⁴⁸

To the governments of Benjamin Disraeli (1868 and 1874-80) and William Gladstone (1868-74 and 1880-86), British control over Egypt and Sudan and the crises of the 1880s were subordinate to greater imperatives, including Afghanistan, Cyprus, and the Ottoman Empire generally. Disraeli’s expansion was in opposition to Gladstone’s attempts toward balanced budgets and reduced empire. Liberal Gladstone was in a tight position in 1880 when he took back the government on a platform of balanced budgets after six years of imperial expansion under Disraeli.⁴⁹ He had three unappealing options: First, withdrawing troops from global adventures such as Sudan in 1884 would mean leaving these places in something akin to anarchy. In a more anarchic state, they would be prey for poaching by other powers that might be significantly less just with control than Britain was. Gladstone’s treaty with the Boers, for example, left South Africa unstable. Second, to make the colonies profitable would require just such brutal practices of nearly enslaving the populace, such as mining conditions in South Africa. Third, draining British coffers to support a just empire went strongly against the balanced budget and Little England policies that Gladstone had argued for in his Midlothian

⁴⁸ For South Africa, see Shula Marks, “Southern Africa, 1867–1886” in *Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 6, Ed. Roland Oliver (New York: Cambridge University Press 1985). For Congo, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

⁴⁹ John Crangle, “English Nationalism and British Imperialism in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli, 1868-1880,” *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies* 21 (1982 1981): 4–12.

campaign. With none of these three options good ones for him, Gladstone did little but damage control.⁵⁰

Charles Gordon, stranded in Khartoum in 1884, could neither convince Gladstone's administration to free Zubayr to his aid, because of abolitionist opposition to Zubayr, or to send significant troops, either of which might have kept Sudan within the British sphere. If Cromer had sent him to Sudan, Zubayr could not have been kept under control, and it was difficult to predict how Zubayr's appearance would have impacted the growing Mahdia. Gordon's desperate support for Zubayr was arguably so dramatic as to be not quite believed, however. Jeff D. Bass contributes to discussions over European interpretation being more revealing than African reality by arguing that Gordon saw Gladstone's moderate imperialism, moral imperialism, as a "grotesque hybrid,"⁵¹ and that by supporting Zubayr, Gordon was merely trying to embarrass Gladstone into either abandoning empire or fully embracing it. "What, then, did Gordon believe to be the ultimate solution to the Sudanese crisis? Throughout the *Journals*, he repeatedly stated his aversion to a British occupation of the Sudan. However, I would argue that his justification for remaining in Khartoum ironically subverts this position and ultimately privileges a British assumption of responsibility. In this case, the argument Gordon employed was not the product of his own rhetorical invention but was an outgrowth of British expansion itself."⁵² The Bass discussion is fascinating in its use of a very different methodology to understanding the problem of Gordon, Gladstone, and Zubayr.

⁵⁰ Paul Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy*. (New York: Harper, 1935), 23.

⁵¹ Jeff D. Bass, "Of Madness and Empire: The Rhetor as 'Fool' in the Khartoum Siege Journals of Charles Gordon, 1884," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 4 (2007): 459.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 462.

Bass does as good a job as any of giving credit to Gordon not for being fickle but for being strategic and wily. On the other hand, his conclusion that Gordon could not have really wanted moderation or Zubayr is less sustainable. Yes, Gordon was caught in a difficult and contradictory place within competing ideas of empire, even competing within the mind of Gladstone and certainly within his administration, but it seems clear to me that Gordon's apparent madness arose not from his contempt for moderation, but rather that moderation via Zubayr, although requiring subtlety and discretion, was ultimately the most beautiful possibility. Bass is so eager to use rhetorical arguments that he sees irony upon irony where the possibility of straightforwardness provides a more elegant and plausible argument.

Early commentary on British imperialism per se commented on its similarities and differences from classical versions of the institution. "Our colonies do not resemble the colonies which classical students meet with in Greek and Roman history," argued John Robert Seeley in 1883. "Our Empire is not an Empire at all in the ordinary sense of the word. It does not consist of a congeries of nations held together by force, but in the main of one nation, as much as if it were no Empire but an ordinary state."⁵³ Seeley emphasized both the white colonies and Europeans in tropical dependencies. The Earl of Cromer, on the other hand, argued in 1910 that the white colonies, and Britain herself, were not important. Cain and Hopkins spend a huge amount of time comparing tropical dependencies to white colonies, since the latter involved a large portion of trade with Britain. Cromer argues that the numbers of consequence were population, and that with,

⁵³ John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, orig. London: Macmillan, 1883), 44.

as he wrote, 410 million people in the British empire, 44 were in the UK, 12.5 were Europeans outside the UK, 48 were Africans, and 305 million, about 85% of the total outside the UK, were Asians. To Cromer, the British Empire was essentially a tropical Asian empire, and focusing on the empire outside of Asia, particularly self-governing “white” colonies, was missing the point.⁵⁴ Cromer does not mention Egypt in this discussion, but since Egypt was the main artery to Asia, and was therefore administered along with India, Egypt was very much not missing the point.

Cromer’s view helps when seeing Zubayr, despite the fact that Sudan has never been in Asia, because it frees the scholar from getting sidetracked by white colonies, which were essentially different, and thus confuses generalizations about empire. The tropical dependencies of the British realm were the colonies densely populated by non-Europeans, in contrast with the white colonies, populated mostly by Europeans and their progeny, such as Australia and Canada. Tropical dependencies were mostly within the geographical tropics, but did not have to be. Egypt was a tropical dependency, as was Sudan, as was India, with European Christian advisors to Arab Muslim rulers, and particularly in Bahr al-Ghazal, with no Europeans outside of a handful of advisors, explorers, and merchants. Egypt was a tropical dependency. Sudan and Bahr al-Ghazal were tropical dependencies of tropical dependencies of tropical dependencies, and adding discussions of white colonies contributes less than adding discussions of Chinese colonization of Mongolia (see Adas, below).

Enough time has passed for sufficient distance to allow a more nuanced analysis of the British empire. “The study of empires has also waxed as confidence in the self-

⁵⁴ Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*, (London: J. Murray, 1910), 15.

sufficiency of the nation state has waned.”⁵⁵ In other words, empire is as good a word as any for what we are left after prime credence in the nation-state has failed. The fog of the nation-state idea kept scholars from seeing the globalization/imperialism matrix. We cannot define empire only in the negative, as denying nation-statehood but it is a good place to begin.

Most British subjects were essentially disengaged from the imperialist project at the peak of the British empire. Too much patriotism by large numbers of the lower classes might have incited impossible demands for involvement or share of supposed wealth. The upper classes were taught to rule, the lower classes to obey, and only a tiny number needed be aware of the empire, an empire that required no cheerleaders from among the population, no taxes from the British public, and few soldiers and administrators.⁵⁶ That tiny minority tried to replicate mirrors of aristocratic life abroad, or if not the aristocratic life, the realpolitik aristocracy of the bourgeoisie, creating infrastructure where they needed it, creating states where they needed them via the mechanisms of capitalism.⁵⁷ This gentlemanly tradition was less useful for colonial administrators than a modern “itch for efficiency”⁵⁸ through innovation, which was found not in the landed elite, but in the urban industrial capitalist elite. David Cannadine sees

⁵⁵ John Gascoigne, “The Expanding Historiography of British Imperialism,” *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 02 (2006): 577.

⁵⁶ Bernard Porter, “‘Empire, What Empire?’ or, Why 80% of Early-and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It,” *Victorian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2004): 260.

⁵⁷ P. J. Cain, “Character and Imperialism: The British Financial Administration of Egypt, 1878–1914,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, no. 2 (2006): 177–200.

⁵⁸ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Cain, “Character and Imperialism,” 178.

colonies as places of tradition; P.J. Cain sees colonies as places in which modernity was experimented with most radically.

While some nineteenth century writings on empire have maintained their place in the historiography of empire, two very twentieth century works dominate the field, Cain and Hopkins' *British Imperialism* and, particularly in conversations about Africa, Robinson and Gallagher's *Africa and the Victorians*. They derive their analyses, even if dialectically, from Hobson's *Imperialism* and Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* which built on Marx to imagine a global capitalist business class dominating a supra-nationalist world, and while they provided powerful conceptualizations, they provided fairly little detail about the way such a global or imperial capitalist class functioned. Cain and Hopkins and Robinson and Gallagher used Hobson's and Lenin's frameworks but went into significantly more detail and provided a bridge between them and previous discourse on empires that was overstatedly about formal political empire. Since Cain and Hopkins and Robinson and Gallagher, historians have furthered the work begun by these four authors, further complexifying British imperialism and blurring the lines between it and what has become known as globalization.⁵⁹ Cain and Hopkins describe formal empire as the tip of the iceberg of informal empire, the empire as primarily strategic rather than economic, and the elite that ran it as a closed group. Robinson and Gallagher, partly perhaps because they describes the entire globe, describe an imperialism closer to our understanding of globalization, with a more economic than strategic basis, and run by an open and inclusive, albeit small, group of bankers. That

⁵⁹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*; Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism in the Dark Continent* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961).

group of bankers, along with their colleagues in civil service, politics, big business and the military formed to Robinson and Gallagher an “official mind,” a kind of collective consciousness that controlled the empire.

Cain and Hopkins improve upon Robinson and Gallagher by specifying that what unified the collective consciousness was a belief in monetized overseas commercial expansion. Robinson and Gallagher use the official mind of British politics as its lens, whereas Cain and Hopkins come to a similar conclusion primarily through numbers rather than words, showing that decisions were based on enforcement of an economic policy rather than social and diplomatic ties. Both works argue that Africa’s fate was determined in London, not in Africa, which shows the tautology they both depend on far too much: the authors all looked at records in London and through them found London the overwhelming locus of control. This is not merely their issue, but the issue of nearly all researchers, for when faced with the ease of collecting information in London and the difficulty in collecting it in Africa, for example, we focus on where our efforts are fruitful. This changed somewhat in the era of area studies in the 1970s, with the bridging of sociology, history, and anthropology, but that it waned again in the 1990s. Historians in particular have shied away from theory, thought of as the terrain of sociologists, and oral histories, thought of as the terrain of anthropologists, and kept to more traditional narratives of political history, seen as safely within their discipline.⁶⁰ While my records are largely from London, through them I see that metropolitan decisions were influenced from the periphery as well as the reverse, in a reciprocal relationship. Zubayr broadcast

⁶⁰ Michael Adas, “Social History and the Revolution in African and Asian Historiography,” *Journal of Social History* 19, no. 2 (1985).

his power not only over Bahr al-Ghazal, but to Cairo and into Parliament in London.

Imperialism was not merely the extension of metropolitan power, but local actors had a hand in the process of empire.

Decline of the primacy of the nation-state model via globalization has renewed interest in imperialism, argue Cain and Hopkins.⁶¹ It is unclear if Cain and Hopkins mean here the end of the concept of the nation-state as academia envisions it, or the end of the nation-state as a genuine political entity. Regardless, Cain and Hopkins saw imperialism as the descendent of globalization rather than as a manifestation of it. Wallerstein's world-system theory helps to show the two concepts of imperialism and globalization as at least overlap, but it relies in definitions of core and periphery on definitions of states, where the addition of Herbst's broadcasting power shows states overlapping, and it relies on definitions of capitalism, which cause trouble when dealing with humans-as-goods in the Zubayr example. The relations that Zubayr shows are more than capitalist, I argue. Capitalism, slavery, and imperialism are all examples of exploitation. When a man volunteers for slavery, he is volunteering for a bigger role in a global system, but there is nothing directly capitalist about that exchange; he is selling freedom for power.

Recent scholarship argues that British imperialism is not a predecessor of globalization, but a symptom of it, as early as 1830, not just after World War II. "Were the British surfing a global wave, or were they the hapless victims of a sea-change they could barely register?"⁶² Either way, "that segment of global history driven by British

⁶¹ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 5.

⁶² John Darwin, "Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830-1960," in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History*, ed. Shigeru Akita (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 44.

imperialism"⁶³ was essentially part of a singular global history. The forces were bigger and longer-term than Cain and Hopkins seem to see. The British empire was, at all times, very sensitive to pressures from the global economy and from strong peripheral states. Though the British empire might have been stronger than any other nationally-based coagulation of forces, its circumstances were determined by global and local overseas conditions it could not reliably control, or even discern. Not only was the empire subject to such forces, it was hardly noticed from below from lower classes in the metropole, if not the periphery.⁶⁴ This discourse contributes to dispute the historical existence of empire, per se. Other scholars have quoted German historian Erich Marcks who in 1903 described something fairly accurately describing today's concept of globalization, when he said, "The world is...more than ever before, one great unit in which everything interacts and affects everything else, but in which also everything collides and clashes."⁶⁵

Robinson and Gallagher formed a peripheral theory by which formal imperial expansion displaced informal empire. As official government control grew, for example in Egypt in 1882, informal control shrunk; British explorers who ceased exploring and controlling the route to the Nile source.⁶⁶ Their idea of shrinkage and growth is flawed, because they seem not to see the layering of empires that Herbst sees in his *States and*

⁶³ Shigeru Akita, *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1.

⁶⁴ Porter, "'Empire, What Empire?' or, Why 80% of Early-and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It."

⁶⁵ As quoted in Geoffrey Barraclough, *Introduction to Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1964) 47. Barraclough references E. Marcks, *Die imperialistische Idee in der Gegenwart* (Dresden, 1903), reprinted in E. Marcks, *Männer und Zeiten* (Leipzig, 1912), 271. Barraclough did not use the word globalization, but he emphasized that imperialism was a global phenomenon in the late nineteenth century, that the scramble for Africa was a symptom of a larger phenomenon including Japan, and that this phenomenon depended firstly on technology rather than philosophy or even economics.

⁶⁶ For more on exploring as controlling, see R. A Butlin, *Geographies of Empire: European Empires and Colonies, C. 1880-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Power in Africa.⁶⁷ Robinson and Gallagher, as well as Cain and Hopkins, fail to see empires that overlap, and empires within empires. Cain and Hopkins criticize Robinson and Gallagher for focusing too much on the sharp delineations of red from not red on a map, but they suggest replacing it with subtleties of pink. Herbst would argue not only for varying saturations of red, but of a variety of other colors, also varying in saturations. Were Egypt painted blue, Egyptian Sudan would be a fainter blue, while Cairo and Alexandria would be a darker blue, tinged strongly purple from British red. Cain and Hopkins argue against at least the strongest version of this peripheral thesis, arguing that if the metropole stays constant, the periphery will not erupt.⁶⁸ This returns to their tautological conclusion that the periphery merely reacts to the metropole, since this is the way it would seem from the metropole.

Scholars have dichotomized reactions to the British takeover of Egypt in 1882. Some see it as having been primarily economic, others that it was primarily military-strategic, and others that it was in defense of national prestige. Ian Phimister argues it was for the defense of British economic interests rather than the strategic interests Cain and Hopkins argue were the prime motivator. In tropical Africa, Phimister argues, British administration was “more restrained and reactive than Cain and Hopkins now allow”⁶⁹ or than was the case in Egypt. Phimister points to Cain and Hopkins separate works,⁷⁰ which he argues describe something more akin to globalization and less to British imperialism

⁶⁷ Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 35–39.

⁶⁸ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 9.

⁶⁹ Ian Phimister, “Empire, Imperialism and the Partition of Africa,” in *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History*, ed. Shigeru Akita (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 73.

⁷⁰ P. J. Cain, *Economic Foundations of British Overseas Expansion 1815-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1980); A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

or even the imperialism of free trade. Gentlemanly capitalism, Phimister argues, may explain Egypt well, but Egypt was not typical of the Scramble, and gentlemanly capitalism fails in describing an entirely transnational scramble in which gentlemen had little control.⁷¹ Dan Halvorson argues that neither Suez nor finance were the main motivations behind the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. Rather, parallel to Cain's idea of individual character being the motivating force of empire, Halvorson sees national prestige as the motivating force behind the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. Britain, he argues, could not let 'Urabi embarrass her. He calls protecting the canal and British economic interests "secondary and derivative" to showing Britain to be foremost among European powers in protecting European-controlled globalization.⁷²

Recent works on British imperialism, as on Nile Valley slavery above, have leaned further on the stories of individual actors. On the one hand this technique shows that there were men at the center of imperial policy conscious of the empire, but on the other hand that there was great disagreement between them and those they worked over and below, which takes the sense of real empire apart into an angry conversation of conflicting opinions.⁷³ While Edward Beasley suggests a handful of administrators as embodying nerve center of the empire, William Roger Louis boldly suggests one, Sir Percy Anderson, who Louis sees as the man who liberalized the empire. Anderson was an administrator immune from politics, an "African thinking machine of the British government," and perhaps more responsible for the peaceful partition of Africa than any

⁷¹ Phimister, "Empire, Imperialism and the Partition of Africa," 77.

⁷² Dan Halvorson, "Prestige, Prudence and Public Opinion in the 1882 British Occupation of Egypt," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 56, no. 3 (2010): 424.

⁷³ Edward Beasley, *Mid-Victorian Imperialists: British Gentlemen and the Empire of the Mind* (London: Routledge, 2005).

other single man.⁷⁴ Anderson argued for a free market system that would allow British businesses to thrive with minimal government intervention as opposed to his more interventionist moralist predecessor.⁷⁵

The failure to be able to see Europe as periphery might be why Cain and Hopkins throw up their hands when they come to globalization. The Ottoman Empire is a useful historical opposition to the model of Europe vis-à-vis Asia or Africa, being that the Ottomans had an empire with its origins and heartland outside of Europe, while it expanded through Budapest and the gates of Vienna. Russia is similarly provocative, expanded mostly eastward but also westward into Poland, Ukraine, etc., both under Tsars and in the guise of the USSR. Austria-Hungary also provides a great counterpoint to the idea of empire as European-toward-non-Europeans by including no extra-European colonies, as, to all intents and purposes, did the Nazi empire.⁷⁶ In order to really see imperialism, we need to divorce it from the idea of Europe as metropole, and divorce it from Europe altogether. In some ways Egyptian/Arab/Ottoman imperialism is more like Qing imperialism than like European imperialism: Race was less essential than culture, colonized territories were culturally different but geographically contiguous with metropole, and because they were territorially contiguous, relations between periphery and metropole were nothing new in the modern era.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Wm. Roger Louis, "Sir Percy Anderson's Grand African Strategy, 1883-1896," *English Historical Review* 81, no. 319 (April 1, 1966): 292.

⁷⁵ William Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization: Collected Essays* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 52.

⁷⁶ Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁷⁷ Michael Adas, "Imperialism and Colonialism in Comparative Perspective," *The International History Review* xx, no. 2 (June 1998): 253–503.

This western/non-western continental theory is especially pernicious when looking at empires entirely within Africa. If what Zubayr ruled was an empire, one peripheral to an Egyptian/Sudanese empire, peripheral to a European one, it seems more like 20th/21st century globalization-style imperialism. Britain did not call the shots on the upper Nile. Britain called shots in Cairo and Alexandria (see Abu Nazzara cartoon), but not as much as in Delhi or Suez, and more than in Khartoum. If Zubayr did not rule an empire so much as a company, then Shigero Akita's argument that private company violence has been seen as a historical relic, not studied enough in history nor in the present is particularly apt: Zubayr is a great example of the kind of private corporate violence not studied enough in history, and Akita's argument makes Zubayr's story all the more relevant today, for most of the chapters in Akita's compilation related to late twentieth and early twenty-first century examples of private commercial violence yet they seem very similar to Zubayr's.⁷⁸

Zubayr recounted that before he visited Cairo, he imagined he could find redress there, in what he thought of as the seat of power. When he arrived, and perhaps his disappointment resulted from his arrival to a Cairo ruled weakly by Tawfiq rather than more strongly by Ismail, Zubayr found Cairo to be as much a rubber stamp on the way to British control as Khartoum was on the way to Cairo. What continually surprised travelers, particularly Schweinfurth, and Zubayr reflects the same, was that Bahr al-Ghazal was not ruled from Khartoum or Cairo or London but from Deim Zubayr.

What I argue for is Zubayr's empire, and I use the term empire in the sense that Adas does, freed from focus on European examples, but I add the notable of freeing also

⁷⁸ Akita, *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History*, 2.

from scale. Depending on the Latin *imperium*, “power to command” or just “command” frees us from understanding that an empire needs an emperor, a particular size, or a base in a particular continent. Hobson, however, depended on Seeley to define imperialism, and in doing so defined it not as power, but rather as weakness:

Professor Seeley well marked the nature of Imperialism. “When a State advances beyond the limits of nationality its power becomes precarious and artificial. This is the condition of most empires, and it is the condition of our own. When a nation extends itself into other territories the chances are that it cannot destroy or completely drive out, even if it succeeds in conquering, them. When this happens it has a great and permanent difficulty to contend with, for the subject or rival nationalities cannot be properly assimilated, and remain as a permanent cause of weakness and danger.”⁷⁹

The Zubayr example does not contain the clear seed of a state that Seeley and Hobson believe a proper empire ought to begin with, but it does begin with a kingdom, Tikma’s kingdom that Zubayr conquered, before expanding that kingdom until its power became precarious. Seeley, Hobson, and Lenin all follow Marx in imagining imperialism as a post-state function over countless examples of pre-state empires from outside of modernity in either time or space. Beyond imperialism coming after statehood, these theorists differ in defining the relationship of nation to empire; for example, Seeley with his “fit of absence of mind” thesis, saw national culture as more essential than material determinism in pushing the British empire outward, so was hardly Marxist otherwise.

Zubayr did not rule a state, nor a nation, nor a tribe, and nor a feudal domain, though the last is the best choice from among those. Zubayr ruled over a set of chiefs, each ruling a different nation (language, territory, identity), albeit small by 19th century global standards. The study of history understandably tends toward totalization in its

⁷⁹ John Hobson, *Imperialism: a Study*, 6th impr. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 7, orig. 1902; quoting Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, iii.

analysis. The study of micro-empires, stripped of both racist and counter-racist lenses, has much to give to the study of imperialism. We can understand the totality of imperialism better by including within it examples of the myriad micro-empires. The world outside of the great empires does not consist of independent tribes and isolated nations, but of confederacies and empires just as loose, ephemeral, dynamic, and subject to globalization as the British empire, broadcasting power in the same ways as their larger counterparts, but in miniature. Micro-empires influenced by the British empire could be neither controlled by British representatives nor run by local agents on British terms, but were rather in competition with the British empire.

The loose imperialism form of rule, micro or macro, allowed large-scale abuses including slavery. "Royalty is terribly gone; and loyalty in consequence has had to go. No man reverences one another," argued Thomas Carlyle in 1849.⁸⁰ Carlyle argued that this sort of reverence for power was civilization's bulwark against anarchy. Carlyle not only wanted to avoid liberating slaves from enforced labor, but wanted to force any idle hands, rich or poor, to work, to respect power, and to revere royalty. "It is not good to be without a servant on this world but to be without a master is equally dangerous." Carlyle, in his hyperbolic pseudonym, argued for required state service by all with no exception. The starving in particular, and particularly the starving Irish, he wanted fed and forced to work. Capitalism, he argued in classic anti-liberal fashion, the free hand of the market, was the free hand of anarchy. The role of the state was to enforce stability of the social order. Those who do not work, regardless of their race, should be helped/forced to work

⁸⁰ Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question," in *Imperialism*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Originally in *Fraser's Magazine*, Feb 1849.

through a type of serfdom that would help societal stability and get more people working. Zubayr seemed to have agreed with this argument, that slavery can improve an economy and with that development and societal stability. Zubayr was anti-liberal, arguing that development requires a strong hand to bring unmonetized communities into capitalism. Carlyle claims that those who do not work, rich or poor, need guidance. By what definition work, Mill asks. The work of the rich when done by the poor is considered indolence. The work of the poor when done by the rich is recreation. The strong hand of the state would easily become abusive making such subjective judgments.⁸¹ Gladstone as he became more liberal in his career, began to favor Mill and Cobden over Carlyle, and this contributed to his acceptance of the Mahdist revolt as a movement of a nation wanting independence.

European empires rarely depended on market forces they relied on at home to work in tropical colonies and acted much like Zubayr did in his tropical empire. Adam Smith worked in Europe but tropical economics were an exception to these laws. Poor tropical soils were one reason, which contrasted with the vision Europeans had when seeing tropical lush vegetation and made them see tropical people as lazy, rather than struggling with greater pests and poorer soils. Curtin calls this the "myth of tropical exuberance" which convinced them that lazy people would only enter the market when forced. While in Europe higher wages meant more labor, in the tropics where people seemed to easily satisfy their scant desires, higher wages meant more quick satisfaction and less labor, a phenomenon Curtin calls "the expectation of chronic underemployment." One solution to it was regressive taxation, a hut tax (see Earl Grey

⁸¹ Anonymous [Mill], "The Negro Question," *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1849.

below). Another was convincing chiefs to convince men to sign contracts, enforceable by violence from colonists. A third way was to hire labor from abroad in long term contracts that seemed good at home but provided barely enough money to survive on in places where living costs were higher. A fourth idea was to flood areas with people until land was insufficient to produce food and people would be forced to earn wages for food. A fifth was debt peonage.⁸² These semi-slaverys make powerful parallels to the various kinds of semi-slavery in Bahr al-Ghazal.

Regressive taxation was the most straightforward method of semi-slavery. Taxing the humble classes who had nothing but their labor, administrators argued, was critical to keeping government going, for together they could contribute far more than the fortunes of the wealthy, and if not taxed the poor felt little desire to earn money. In Europe this tax need did not apply because the poor there were taxed through consumption and customs duties. Where the majority were subsistence farmers, where the climate required little clothing, where people seemed to prefer idleness and sobriety to consumption and luxury, they need to be taxed somehow. "A sink into an easy and listless mode of life quite [is] incompatible with the attainment of any high degree of civilization," Earl Grey complained of his stymied civilizing mission.⁸³ Earl Grey's ideas of regressive taxation taken to their logical conclusion mesh with Carlyle's and Zubayr's. Since there was no monetary economy to speak of in Bahr al-Ghazal, by enslaving the Azande, Zubayr made them productive members of a commodified economy, a taxable quantity, taxes which went to his government, which brought a higher degree of civilization (literacy, law, etc.),

⁸² Philip D. Curtin, ed. *Imperialism*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 132–5.

⁸³ Thomas Earl Grey, "Letter to Lord Torrington," in *Imperialism*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 169.

or so he claimed to British audiences later. Those claims fell on deaf ears as pandering except for a select group, including Gordon, Ribblesdale, and Shaw, but they were not enough to counter the Anti-Slavery Society's influence over official British attitudes to Zubayr when he tried to reinvent himself as a useful instrument of British interests in Sudan in the 1880s.

Slavery was both cause and effect of economic stagnation: "Over the centuries, slavery, wars, and massacres have depopulated immense regions. Thus the natives, being without wants, did not feel obliged to work."⁸⁴ French possessions had the same problem as British: plantations lay fallow because freed slaves would not work for wages low enough to keep the plantations commercially viable. Louis Vignon argued against free trade, since a monopoly was required for a company moving into a new tropical populated country, needing a huge investment to control the country, and it would not be fair to allow another company to come along afterwards and take advantage of the investment of the first: postal service, militia, and infrastructure. Therefore it seemed to Vignon only fair to give at least a partial monopoly.

Imperial power, and for that matter enslavement, is the interaction between dominance and subordination. Ranajit Guha reflects a Foucaultian understanding that a relationship of control involves the participation of both the dominant and submissive parties. While Toledano describes a power relationship as one of mutual dependence, that both parties need the relationship, Guha assumes the relationship needs both parties: If the colonized did not recognize the colonizer there would be no colony, just as if the

⁸⁴ Louis Vignon, "Colonial Labor," in *Imperialism*, ed. Philip D Curtin (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 172.

colonizer did not recognize the colonized there would be no colony. Guha extends his analysis a great step further than the duality of dominance and submission, dividing each of these forces into “a pair of interacting elements”: dominance made up of coercion and persuasion, and submission made up of collaboration and resistance. By his definition, dominance needs both coercion and persuasion, and so he avoids both liberal and fascist utopias.⁸⁵ Hegemony, Guha defines as dominance when persuasion (carrot) outweighs coercion (stick). Without coercion, persuasion is not dominance, since it elicits no resistance, and hence is not hegemony. Without persuasion, coercion is also not dominance, since it elicits no submission, and hence is not hegemony. Dominance needs both a carrot and a stick. Submission needs both hope and resentment. Hegemony needs both positive and negative. The positive needs outweigh the negative, but not so much as to eliminate it.⁸⁶

Forms of persuasion under Zubayr’s rule included universalism in the form of Arabic language and Islamic law, the importation of goods and money, and a Pax Zubayrica. His forms of coercion included force by arms and enslavement. Forms of collaboration included participation in the slave trade either as slave or slaver and migration to his capital. Resistance was most successfully offered by the Rezagat who protected their nomadism, which was a form of resistance against any stable government. Darfur resisted formally by refusing to join Arab-European imperialisms. Azande/Nyam-nyam had less recourse to resistance. Their most effective recourse was coopting the

⁸⁵ Guha manages to avoid liberal and fascist utopias, but ignores Tory class-dominated utopias, as the kind Cannadine describes in *Ornamentalism*.

⁸⁶ Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21.

economics of warfare, being willing to switch sides mid-battle either to join the winning side or to earn better wages, which destabilized their value as a military force, requiring Zubayr and other powers the much greater expense of importing more loyal troops.

According to Guha, then, Zubayr's rule could have failed to be hegemonic for a failure to provide persuasion to outweigh his coercion, but though Guha does complexify dominance and submission, he still sees them through a dichotomous lens of two parties. Zubayr's rule was successfully hegemonic according to Guha's scheme, as I see it; Zubayr's rule failed because it was seen by empires above him as resistant. I extend Guha's (and Toledano's and perhaps Foucault's) analysis of dominance and submission, not further dissecting the definitions of dominance and submission, but showing that one man's ceiling is another man's floor; one man's resistance is another man's domination; one man's metropole is another man's periphery.

Zubayr was the dominant/persuasive/coercive element toward the Azande, Rezagat, and Fur, but he was the submissive/collaborative/resistant element toward the Khedive, Cromer, and Queen Victoria. Zubayr is dominant over King Tikma, who is dominant over his chiefs, who are dominant over family heads, who are dominant over wives, who are dominant over their children. Zubayr is dominated by the Khedive who is dominated by Cromer, who is dominated by Gladstone who is dominated by the fickle electorate, who are dominated by the market, which is dominated by the wants and desires of new markets, including perhaps even Azande children. The parallels are rough. Cromer was largely independent of Gladstone, for example. These layers of power, with great upward and downward autonomy, were based on continual renegotiations, and not

formalized under British imperial hierarchy until well into the twentieth century, and even then not completely in Egypt.

To ignore these layers of dominance, to look too closely at merely one layer (for example slaver/enslaved), was to miss the bigger picture of layered dominance, Carlyle argued. To focus on slavery was to miss the fact that desperate poverty was a form of unfreedom, and freedom from want was a form of freedom. Mill, then, would agree with Guha, not merely that persuasion need outweigh coercion in order for dominance to be hegemonic, but that the single layer of dominator and submissive was more essential to understanding the human experience than Carlyle's multi-layered approach. If the British masses were unaware of Egypt, the Egyptian masses were unaware of Bahr al-Ghazal. This is what frustrated Zubayr the most in his time in Cairo, not being watched, not being poor, but being unknown. In Bahr al-Ghazal he had been king. In Cairo he was not a dethroned king, he was nobody. He was debated in the House of Lords after his potential usefulness in Sudan, but he remained a nobody with merely potential for power.

Outline and Arguments

This dissertation argues that Zubayr's imprisonment on Gibraltar from 1885 to 1887 marks his turning point from wielding a loose, broadcast, and overlapping style of imperialism to being subordinated to a more direct, more delineated version of imperialism. The Mahdist regime represented not the old style, but an alternate version of the new style; It was an alternate modernity. As Zubayr was a holdover of the older style, a charismatic character who continued to believe in the old style, at the moment of shift to the new style, Zubayr had to be muffled. As part of this shift in imperial style,

beaucracy shifted from both opposing and working within slavery to a tacit rule of avoiding the topic.

I begin with the opinions expressed by Zubayr and the British government about him while on Gibraltar, what they say about versions of imperial rule, and what they say about slavery. I then follow his career from its beginning, starting in Bahr al-Ghazal, then following the transformation of his company into a small empire, to his initial house arrest in Cairo, and I end with his return to Egypt and Sudan after Gibraltar: the chapters are chronologically organized with the exception of Gibraltar being first, to bring it to the fore.

This organizational scheme puts my work on Zubayr in a new light, where others either emphasized Zubayr's career in Bahr al-Ghazal or the moment in which Charles Gordon suggested Zubayr take control of Sudan. I argue that both of these moments, along with his house arrest in Cairo, contributed to Zubayr's being sent to Gibraltar. Furthermore I argue that Zubayr's relationship with the Anglo-Egyptian government shifted while he was in Gibraltar, and that the last few decades of his life, left out of or deemphasized in previous works, were an important stage in his career.

This organizational scheme also contributes to an understanding of how imperialism actually operated in contrast with ideologized statements both at the time and in scholarship. The comparison here of Zubayr's time on Gibraltar, in Bahr al-Ghazal, in Cairo, and in Sudan under the Condominium that shows the contrasting needs of various elements of imperial forces. This comparison has not been fully explored before. Those who sent him to Gibraltar were fearful not of his slaving past but of his potential to destabilize the Sudan, and were ready to empower him for that same destabilizing aim.

Those who feared his growing power in Darfur feared a very different sort of destabilization. Those who kept him out of the limelight in Cairo were not sure what they wanted of him, but that he stay. Those who used Zubayr's knowledge to help British aims in early twentieth-century Sudan felt very differently about Zubayr's slaving past, found it useful and productive. Some of the difference between these phases of Zubayr's life result from different chronological circumstances, but they also shed light on different branches of the British-Egyptian empire with different needs, a lack of singular imperial center.

The first chapter discusses Zubayr's travel to and time on Gibraltar from 1885 to 1887. This chapter argues that his imprisonment there by the British government is understandable in terms of defending the empire from embarrassment more than from military threat. This chapter analyzes difficulties between different branches of government squabbling over issues small and large, from the cost of renting furniture to the fate of the Ottoman Empire, all of which seemed to reflect in Zubayr. Chapter one introduces the characters of Flora Shaw and Lord Ribblesdale, who would later record narratives of him, and shows how Zubayr gathered these and other hangers-on, people looking to share a bit of his fame. Finally, this chapter discusses the curious arrangements of Zubayr's family and entourage who came with him to Gibraltar, who were given slightly more freedom than he was.

The second chapter discusses business in Bahr al-Ghazal from 1856 to 1866, the early part of Zubayr's career experience. This chapter argues that to Zubayr trading in goods, trading in people, and ruling territory were part and parcel of one another. Chapter two lays a great deal of context, putting Zubayr and the travelers who visited him in the

context of the relationships of Britain to Egypt and Sudan, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire to Sudan, and Sudan to Bahr al-Ghazal. This chapter analyzes the various roles of peripheries and frontiers between and among overlapping empires.

The third chapter discusses the expansion of Zubayr's territory within Bahr al-Ghazal and finally into Darfur, from 1866 to 1875. This chapter argues that Zubayr had his own civilizing mission and was part of overlapping greater imperial civilizing missions. Chapter three dissects the various forces that interacted with Zubayr's territory, including the Darfur Sultanate, nomadic Arab tribes to the north, settled tribes within Bahr al-Ghazal, and nomadic tribes to the south. This chapter outlines not only Zubayr's established ruling style, but his wars of conquest to expand within Bahr al-Ghazal, and finally his conflict with and conquest of Darfur.

The fourth chapter discusses Zubayr's initial period in Cairo, from 1875-1885. This chapter argues that Zubayr was held in Cairo for political concerns rather than for committing any infraction, and that the tension between Gordon and his superiors, and the contradictory heated reactions on Zubayr from politicians and the press were a result of the contradiction in British imperial policy that Zubayr's opinions and actions catalyzed. This chapter puts three related revolts into comparative context, the Mahdia, the 'Urabi revolt, and Zubayr's son Suleiman's revolt. The chapter then describes the delicate and dramatic relationship of Zubayr and Charles Gordon, and particularly their meeting in January 1884. The chapter ends with Gordon's death, Mahdist conquest of Khartoum, and discussions of sending Zubayr to Gibraltar.

The fifth chapter discusses Zubayr's return to Cairo and eventually to Sudan after he left Gibraltar, from 1887 to his death in 1913. This chapter argues that British rule of

Sudan came quickly to approach and to appreciate the style of rule that Zubayr had used before them, and that Zubayr became an advisor to them. This chapter returns to Zubayr after his return from Gibraltar, frustrated in Cairo, and argues that he once again had a moment of possible empowerment around the Fashoda crisis and British reconquest of Sudan. This chapter then describes Zubayr's relationship with Reginald Wingate toward the end of Zubayr's life, when the slave king had the opportunity to advise the abolitionists on matters of slavery.

Notes on archives and transliteration

Archival abbreviations are as follows:

DAW: Dar al-Wathaiq in Bulaq, main government archives in Cairo.

SAD: Sudan Archive at Durham University, UK

FO: Foreign Office, at the National Archives of the UK in Kew Gardens

WO: War Office, at the National Archives of the UK in Kew Gardens

Transliteration is always problematic. The most respected academic transliteration system, from the International Journal of Middle East Studies, requires characters with diacritics that can print as boxes on unprepared systems. I have nevertheless used their system for footnotes, and kept to it for the most part in the text. Zubayr and Sudan I treat as English words, without diacritics or *al-*. I have kept the *al-* in Bahr al-Ghazal, because it is more grammatically necessary in Arabic, if not in English. Original varieties of spellings are kept in quotations. Zubayr is spelled a variety of ways in sources, but confusion should be minimal as are no other individuals noted with similar names: Zubeir, Zebehr, Subeir, Zobair, and Ziber, and any combinations of these spellings are all the same man.

Chapter 1: On Gibraltar, 1885-1887

There was always a great deal to be said in favour of employing Zebehr on our side. But as this was not done, I think he should be prevented from doing us harm. I do not believe he will remain quiet, if he is not for us he will be actively against us. On these grounds and in spite of the arbitrary nature of the proceeding I think Zobebr should be at once arrested and sent to Cyprus.

-Evelyn Baring to Granville ¹

Without trial or inquiry or any reasons being given him, Zobebr found himself a prisoner inside a locked stockade.

-Thomas Lister, Lord Ribblesdale ²

Evelyn Baring, British consul-general in Egypt, sent the above top message to Foreign Minister Earl Granville in March 1885 ordering Zubayr Pasha to be arrested. Baring explicitly stated in the order that the proceedings were arbitrary, but he feared what Zubayr would do against British interests if no action was taken. This chapter dissects the two years that followed this order. In that time, the arbitrariness of the order was debated, in terms of how and with what implications the potential positive and negative impacts that Zubayr could have had on British policy in Egypt and Sudan were argued in diplomatic letters, in the press, and in parliament. Zubayr was a distinct participant in these discussions, despite the apparent distance separating his periphery from Gladstone, Granville and others at the core, showing an expression of power from periphery to core, rather than merely the reverse.

¹ Baring to Granville, March 11, 1885, FO 78 4194.

² Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories*, 138.

Zubayr's experience on Gibraltar contributes theoretically to this dissertation in key ways: Zubayr broadcast his power across layers of government, even into the House of Lords, while in the cottage on Gibraltar. Layered forms of imperialism are shown in the diplomatic record concerning Zubayr: Cromer in Cairo, Lord Ribblesdale on Gibraltar, attempts by Abdul Rassoul by mail to implicate a global movement, and often the strongest statements made by British official translators. This imprisonment, covering the two years after the Mahdist conquest of Khartoum and the surrounding correspondence in this chapter illuminates the shift from sparse indirect rule over Sudan to the understanding in British circles that Sudan, and with it the Eastern Problem generally, required more intensive attention. The great support that the pro-slavery Mahdist movement had among the peasants of Sudan caused a difficult British coming to grips with the idea that domination by slavery and domination by imperial hegemony might have been uncomfortably similar in their core of domination, as seen in the ways Zubayr's slaving career was discussed during these two years.

Zubayr's imprisonment was important to the British government. Despite the expense and requests from within various branches to free him, Zubayr was kept in the Governor's summer cottage on Gibraltar; "The Cottage at Europa," with a rotating entourage including family members, servants, tutors, and translators. Other local leaders in the periphery of British control such as the Egyptian leader 'Urabi Pasha and the Zulu King Cetshwayo were imprisoned as a matter of political expediency, but Zubayr's imprisonment caused particular embarrassment, lacking any form of process, and because it highlighted distressed British policy toward Sudan.

Flora Shaw, an English general's daughter and aspiring young journalist on vacation on Gibraltar at the time,³ described the cottage Zubayr was kept as "a grim little place with a cliff rising sheerly behind it and the sea far below it. In the garden wild plants grew, for only they could survive the East wind which in winter drenched house and garden with salt spray." Inside the cottage, Shaw "found Zebehr in a shabbily-furnished room, the chimney smoking, salt water running down the window panes...Zebehr was suffering from tooth-ache, and the circumstances seemed hardly favorable to conversation which had to be carried on by means of an interpreter. However, coffee and cigarettes" were brought in for her interview.⁴

By the window, two little tables and a circle of chairs were set ready. The Pasha – dark, slight, tall, looking all the taller when he rose for the draperies of Eastern dress-- used to sit in an armchair, smoking a tchibouk of hashish,⁵ and having one little table at his right hand for the papers and pencil with which he occasionally illustrated his speech...round our chairs black servants, some of them natives of the countries of which we spoke, stood in attendance. When the narrative grew dramatic they listened eagerly. Now and then, on a question from the Pasha, one or other could offer some bit of information about his country or people.⁶

Shaw describes "black servants," presumably brought with Zubayr, but it is unclear how many there might have been or how they might have been paid while on Gibraltar. The ship's manifest on arriving in Gibraltar simply added that servants came. These servants

³ Shaw was also later married to Frederick Lugard, governor of Nigeria. Shaw thus had the opportunity to name Nigeria.

⁴ Bell, *Flora Shaw*, 50–2. Bell had access to Flora Shaw's personal correspondence, but wrote her biography for a popular audience without notes and not distinguishing between quotes and paraphrase; it is unclear if these are Shaw's words or Bell's based on Shaw's sentiments.

⁵ A tchibouk is a long pipe. On the one hand it is possible that Zubayr smoked hashish on Gibraltar, particularly being close to the historical cannabis-growing Rif mountains in northern Morocco. On the other is also possible that Flora Shaw confused the flavored sweetened tobacco customarily smoked in Egypt through a long water pipe for hashish.

⁶ Bell, *Flora Shaw*, 52.

presumably had been with Zubayr in Cairo and would also have suffered from the cold and damp on Gibraltar.

Thomas Lister, Lord Ribblesdale, was Liberal whip (Lord-in-Waiting) in the House of Lords under Gladstone before he was called to act, as Major Lister, as Zubayr's personal guard on Gibraltar.⁷ Ribblesdale described Zubayr's imprisonment as melancholy, particularly due to the vast change in weather from hot Sudan and arid Cairo. Ribblesdale told that while on Gibraltar, Zubayr

never, or seldom, laughed, but if he was in good spirits, which depended much upon the weather and the amount of sunshine, I felt him to be cheerful. Within the precincts of the cottage he enjoyed the necessaries, and some of the luxuries, of life. If during the winter he often regretted a warmer sunshine, he appreciated English grates and English coal. On the other hand, the grey, lashing rains and blurred horizons, with which all who have been quartered on the Rock are familiar, had the opposite effect. He would then become very downcast about everything.⁸

Ribblesdale's emphasis on the amount of sunshine might seem overstated in reference to the Mediterranean location of Gibraltar, but it should be remembered that the cottage grounds, as opposed to other habitable parts of the island, were under a steep east-facing cliff, and therefore would not get direct sun afternoons even on a bright clear day.

Ribblesdale got to know Zubayr personally, and like many others came to like him, but for those above Ribblesdale in Foreign Office administration, these personal relationships had to take a back seat to political expediency. Ribblesdale brought up Zubayr in discussion in the House of Lords, but not a discussion that resulted in any notable change for Zubayr.

⁷ Thomas Lister, 4th Baron Ribblesdale (1854-1925), was a liberal in the House of Lords and Lord-in-Waiting under Gladstone, also Master of the Buckhounds under Gladstone and Rosebery after his return from Gibraltar. He is best known as being the model, in 1890 for John Singer Sargent's best-known portrait, now in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

⁸ Baring to Granville, March 11, 1885.

Ribblesdale had taken his seat in the Lords in February 1877 but then rejoined his regiment on Gibraltar in 1885, returning to London in 1892. Late in 1885, Ribblesdale took over main responsibility for Zubayr and the Governor's summer cottage that Zubayr occupied. Ribblesdale wrote that his responsibilities there were to:

administer all monies allowed by the treasury for Zobehr's housekeeping and other expenses, at that time a little over £2000 a year; to forward and receive his correspondence through defined authorities; to attend to his wishes as far as they might be, and- upon this Sir John Adye, the governor, the kindest and most understanding of official gaolers, laid a particular stress- to do what I could to mitigate banishment from home and kindred. I was only too glad to do so- it became at once my pleasure as well as my duty.⁹

Ribblesdale certainly did not seem to mind his position, and by Ribblesdale's account, John Adye seemed not to begrudge Zubayr the summer cottage. Both Ribblesdale and Adye could easily have considered their work a heavy annoyance, and perhaps Adye did begin to feel that way after two years, as will be seen below. Ribblesdale and Adye, however, seem both to have considered Zubayr a gentleman approximating their rank, and so worthy of respectable treatment, and perhaps he showed himself worthy. Neither Ribblesdale or Adye seems to have had any power in the decision concerning Zubayr's being sent or retrieved from Gibraltar.¹⁰ Just as Cannadine's King of Hawaii, Zubayr was treated as something approaching a peer, if an imprisoned one.¹¹

Baring determined this more than anyone else did. Baring was British consul-general in Cairo, head representative of the British government in Egypt and Sudan, but was much more than that: Baring effectively ruled Egypt, and if Egypt ruled Sudan,

⁹ Thomas Lister Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories* (London: Cassell & Company, Ltd., 1927), 139.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹¹ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 45.

Baring ruled Sudan as well. Baring communicated military necessity from the front lines in southern Egypt with London, and communicated London's desires and requirements to the Egyptian government. Baring, under considerable pressure from both these sides, decided that Zubayr be sent to Gibraltar, and two years later that he return to Egypt.¹²

During those two years, Baring wavered between holding Zubayr in Egypt and then returning him to Sudan as an agent against the Mahdi, while on the other hand fearing that if he sent Zubayr, he would merely act in his own selfish interests, which might well go against those of Britain. Meanwhile, Zubayr wavered between on the one hand arguing that right and justice demanded he be either tried or freed, and on the other hand volunteering himself as a useful tool in the fight against the Mahdi. It seems that Baring was only concerned with the latter, that Zubayr might be a militarily advantageous tool, but also a potentially destructive loose cannon. Baring decided to keep direct and indirect surveillance on Zubayr, in Gibraltar when he felt it necessary.

Three months before Zubayr was sent to Gibraltar, the Mahdist government in Sudan (January 1885-1898) took control of Khartoum, where Charles Gordon was killed. The Mahdist government was initially under the leadership of Muhammad Ahmed, who proclaimed himself the Mahdi in 1881. The Mahdi in Islam is thought to work with Jesus as the End of Time approaches. It is a concept almost entirely used in Shia Islam, not the Sunni Islam nearly exclusively practiced in nineteenth century Egypt and the Sudan. The Shia concept of the Mahdi, however, gained traction in late nineteenth-century Sunni Africa as European imperialism toppled local forms of government in rapid succession,

¹² Baring's title does not amply describe his power. Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, was de facto ruler of Egypt from 1883 to 1907, despite de jure rule by the office of the khedive, a parliament, and the Ottoman Sultan. See Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

leaving a sense of such upheaval that the world seemed to be coming to an end, as similar contemporary movements such as the Ahmadiyya in India, the Taiping in China, and the Maji Maji in Tanganyika.¹³ Michael Adas also compares these to other prophet-inspired movements against European imperialism, such as the Saya San in lower Burma, the Dipanga-led movement against the Dutch in Java, the Pai Maire Movement of Maori in New Zealand, and the Birsa Rising in East-Central India. Adas argues that the causes of these movements, though disparate geographically and across the nineteenth century, are similar and can be understood in terms of communal disintegration and loss at the hands of the Europeans whose interests were colonizing them.¹⁴

The concept of a Mahdi was also promoted by association with Jesus as Christianity spread rapidly via missionaries and imperial armies.¹⁵ Various figures had declared themselves Mahdi across northern Africa in the late nineteenth century before and after Muhammad Ahmed, but he was uniquely successful against Egyptian forces, who were led by European officers, and set up an independent government. Though the Mahdi sent provocative letters to Queen Victoria and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire,

¹³ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran : Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven.: Yale University Press, 2003), 45–6.

¹⁴ Michael Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements Against the European Colonial Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 44.

¹⁵ “The nineteenth century coincided roughly with the thirteenth century of the Hijra (1200-1300/1785-1883), the century associated in Muslim eschatology with the manifestation of the “expected Mahdi” (al-Mahdi al-Muntazar) or the “awaited deliverer” who “will fill the world with equity and justice after it has been filled with tyranny and oppression”” Muhammad A Al-Hajj, “The Thirteenth Century in Muslim Eschatology: Mahdist Expectations in the Sokoto Caliphate,” in *Research Bulletin*, vol. III (Centre for Arabic Documentation, University of Ibadan, n.d.), 2; See also: Paul E. Lovejoy and J. S. Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905-6,” *Journal of African History*, 31, no. 2 (1990): 219; Muhammad A. Al-Hajj, “Hayatu B. Sa’id: a Revolutionary Mahdist in the Western Sudan,” in *Sudan in Africa*, n.d., 129.

warning of his imminent takeover of the world, his control never went beyond the borders of Egyptian Sudan.¹⁶

British and Egyptian forces were able to keep control of coastal regions and the Egyptian border at Aswan, but were still nervous three months after the Mahdist takeover of Khartoum when Baring in Cairo wrote to Granville:

Belief in the Mahdi and hostility to the English is undoubtedly spreading here. Among the classes who are disposed to be hostile, Zobeir possesses great influence. He is in great want of money and is much dissatisfied with way he has been treated. Personally I believe reports about his being in communication with the Mahdi are true although I can not prove their truth. If he escaped and joined the Mahdi, which he could easily do, he might, from his knowledge, ability and from the fact that he has numerous friends here, and considerable local influence in the Sudan, do a great deal of harm.¹⁷

The Mahdi occupied Khartoum, concluding his conquest of Sudan, in January 1885. In this battle Egyptian, and through Egypt British, control of Sudan was lost. It was lost after a great struggle by Charles Gordon in Khartoum, but only a great ambivalence by Gladstone in London. Robinson and Gallagher refer to Egypt and Sudan as “Gladstone’s bondage,” but Gladstone was unwilling to be pressured into making a protectorate of either.¹⁸ All that remained of Sudan outside of Mahdist control were Equatoria, deep in the south, for all intents and purposes independent, and the narrow Sudanese littoral at Suakin on the Red Sea (see map in appendix). The defeat would hold strong in the British imagination for generations through the popular Kipling poem “Fuzzy Wuzzy”

¹⁶ See also F. R. Wingate, *Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan: Being an Account of The Rise and Progress of Mahdism, and of Subsequent Events In the Sudan to the Present Time*, 2nd ed., Cass Library of African Studies no. 44 (London: Frank Cass, 1968); and Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*.

¹⁷ Baring to Granville, Cypher, March 12, 1885, FO 78 4194. Cromer’s opinion of Zubayr will be discussed in depth in chapter 4. Cromer’s analysis that Zubayr was in communication with the Mahdi was little more than pure conjecture, based on reports of conjecture.

¹⁸ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 141.

describing the tall afro-style hair warriors of the Beja tribes, fierce fighters for the Mahdi, wore.¹⁹

“The total garrisons in the Soudan,” in early 1885, of British and Egyptian troops, “amounted to about 55,000 men. Of these, about 12,000 were killed. 11,000 eventually returned to Egypt, leaving about 30,000 who remained in the Soudan. This figure is exclusive of civilians, women, and children, the number of whom Sir Reginald Wingate estimated at 5000. These figures speak for themselves.”²⁰ Baring wrote quixotically that these figures spoke for themselves, that the vast majority failed to get out. The remaining 30,000 troops, all Egyptians, could have defected to the Mahdi, escaped and integrated into the population, or been captured by the Mahdi and enslaved as prisoners of war, regardless their loss was an embarrassment to Egypt and Britain.

The defeat had been at the same time a relief and an embarrassment for Gladstone’s government. On the one hand, he had won election largely on the Liberal Little England outlook, and he was ready to see independence movements take greater responsibility for coffer-draining colonies. On the other hand, the loss of Transvaal in 1881 to Boers and the mooting of home rule for Ireland meant accusations of weakness, a loss of national virility.²¹

The Little Englander moniker was used as a form of criticism of Gladstone and others, and some argue that it was misused. John Galbraith argues that Gladstone’s view

¹⁹ “Fuzzy Wuzzy” was first published in Rudyard Kipling, *Barrack-room Ballads and Other Verses by Rudyard Kipling*, 14. ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1898).

²⁰ Evelyn Baring, *Modern Egypt by the Earl of Cromer* (London: Macmillan, 1908), vol. ii, 31.

²¹ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*; Robert T. Harrison, *Gladstone’s Imperialism in Egypt: Techniques of Domination*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995); Knaplund, *Gladstone’s Foreign Policy*. See extended discussion in chapter 4.

on imperialism was more subtle than this suggests, that he did not want to abandon the colonies but rather reestablish a relationship with them that was less paternal and more cooperative. Galbraith makes a good point that Gladstone was optimistic about a new kind of imperialism, but that new form of imperialism, at its essence, was cheaper, and a more cooperative empire is essentially one in which England is less dominant, is littler. I disagree with Galbraith not that Little Englander was used derogatively in the period, but that Little Englander need not be seen as such today, and is an accurate term for those of a liberal economic bent. Gladstone, it seems from Galbraith's evidence, did not necessarily imagine less English business in the world, but less English government and troops.²² Imperial informalization may have indeed been Gladstone's wish, and Little England may have been the wish of many Liberals, but the use of Zubayr as a proxy was precluded by his association with slavery – a moral sin in the eyes of Liberal ideologues.

When Gladstone's government took over from Salisbury's, Wolseley, who would later lead the failed mission to rescue Gordon from Khartoum, tried to tempt this new government into abandoning the defensive strategy of the old. Salisbury's government, concerned with military necessity over Pendjeh in Afghanistan, had abandoned Dongola, the province between Khartoum and Wadi Halfa on the Egyptian border. Wolseley argued on June 24, 1885, "no frontier force...can keep Mahdiism out of Egypt, and the Mahdi sooner or later must be smashed or he will smash you." Gladstone's government rejected Wolseley's view, and kept to the defense of the Egyptian border, largely because Wadi Halfa was a more defensible position than Dongola.²³ Wolseley's view was proven

²² John S. Galbraith, "Myths of the 'Little England' Era," *The American Historical Review*, 67, no. 1 (October 1, 1961): 34–48.

²³ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. ii, 29.

wrong, the line between Egypt and Sudan was kept, Britain kept ever stronger control of Egypt, and the Mahdists never seriously threatened Wadi Halfa.

Gladstone's government sent Zubayr to Gibraltar two months after the fall of Khartoum, with the borders between British-Egyptian and Mahdist-held territories having proven stable. It initially seems ironic that Zubayr would be imprisoned only after any real threat of him supporting the Mahdists was over. On closer examination, however, Zubayr was imprisoned after it was fairly certain he would be of no use to Britain. Baring and the British left Zubayr in Egypt so long as he appeared to be on the British side, with potential use in any last ditch effort to retain control of Sudan; once British forces withdrew from Sudan, Baring and his generals decided Zubayr was merely a risk. Rather than being an asset, he had to be neutralized, but without sacrificing his potential future usefulness. In the months before Mahdist takeover of Khartoum, Zubayr was at his closest to being empowered by Britain. In the years after, this possibility faded. Chapter 4 will review debates within the various branches of British government as to Zubayr's possible use in 1883 and 1884. This chapter shows the scant effort to employ Zubayr during his time on Gibraltar.

This chapter is divided into three sections: Hangers-on, Wardens, and Family, each describing a different group of people with whom Zubayr interacted on Gibraltar. Each of these groups demonstrates something unique about Zubayr's captivity: Hangers-on and advocates such as Shaw and Ribblesdale were enamored with the drama of his fame and perceived innocence, and used him to further their personal ambitions. Wardens, politicians such as Baring and Granville, saw him as a tool to be used or hidden depending on larger political concerns. Family members, including immediate family

members and personal servants who accompanied Zubayr to Gibraltar, were caught up in the isolation of the Rock. Drama, politics, and isolation were different and at times opposing elements of Zubayr's captivity.

Hangers-on

The most interesting interactions with Zubayr on Gibraltar were not with his government minders, nor with his family, but from people who wanted to use his presence there to further their own careers, the hangers-on. These hangers-on were coopted by Zubayr as the main method by which Zubayr broadcast his interests around the imperialistic milieu.

The most mysterious of Zubayr's hangers-on was Abdoul Rassoul, who mounted a letter writing campaign with the aim of bringing an end to Zubayr's imprisonment. Abdoul Rassoul felt the imprisonment was unjust, and he sought to bring it to the attention of anyone who would listen, particularly within the British government. Abdoul Rassoul identified himself as a Muslim from India. He lived in London while Zubayr was on Gibraltar, and followed him to Cairo, despite little evidence of encouragement on Zubayr's part.

Lord Ribblesdale, was one of Zubayr's immediate wardens, but became something of a hanger-on, later publishing a version of Zubayr's life story as told to him. Ribblesdale had great impact on the reception of Zubayr in Parliament, as he both had personally known Zubayr and sat in the Lords.

J.T. Wills was a merchant in the ivory trade wanted to use Zubayr's expertise to help him establish himself in that trade in 1887. Wills shared his research with the Royal

Geographical Society, while trying to use its members to gain political traction in allowing him a free hand in Bahr al-Ghazal.

The London law firm of Gadsden and Treherne attempted to take up the defense of Zubayr in the summer of 1885, though it is not clear to what extent they did this to try to gain publicity, or did so at Abdoul Rassoul's urging, or some combination.

The most effective of Zubayr's hangers-on, in terms of furthering his immediate case for liberation, was Flora Shaw. Shaw was on vacation on Gibraltar with a promise from a London newspaper to publish travel stories she might have. Shaw wanted to publish more than light travel stories, however. Her dreams of becoming a foreign political journalist led her to seek regular interviews with Zubayr once she discovered his cottage, and she imagined herself as having liberated him from captivity with the articles she published in 1887 in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Shaw later went on to prominence in imperial Africa, through her writing for the *Times*, and her friendship with Rhodes, romance with Goldie, and marriage to Lugard, as described in chapter 5, with Zubayr's story catalyzed this lifetime involvement in Africa.

Zubayr's letters to Abdool Rassool describe Zubayr's relation to the strings of power, to the relation of other colonial subjects to those same strings, and to the pan-Islamic movement in its relation to the British empire. Abdool Rassool was far from an ideal representative, and Zubayr's thankfulness and dependence on him show the powerlessness that Zubayr felt. Abdool Rassool in his letters to Zubayr hints to the culture of colonial subjects and their relations to British power. He identifies himself as an Indian, which may well be, especially with the larger meaning of that term at the time, lived in London and Cairo, and briefly worked in the University of London library.

Colonial subjects did not only live in their home colonies, they also lived in the metropole and in other colonies, and Abdool Rassool lends this dissertation a hint to their complicated positions in these places. Finally, Abdool Rassool encouraged Zubayr to see his situation in terms of a Huntingtonian clash of civilizations between the British/European and pan-Islamic worlds. While the story of Abdool Rassool tells less than other evidence here about the grand political situation of Zubayr, it lends an air of the everyday struggles of Zubayr and those like him, colonials out of their colonies.

Abdoul Rassoul, who also spelled his name Abdool Rassool, always followed by “the Indian”²⁴ lived in London and claimed to understand Zubayr and want to help him. Some of the letters from Abdoul Rassoul are in English and some in Arabic, both in handwriting that, particularly next to that of British diplomats, is inconsistent and sloppy, even childlike (see example in appendix). The official translator complained that the handwriting might be of a drunkard,²⁵ but it is equally possible that if he was indeed from India, neither the Arabic nor the Latin script might be native to him. The name is religious, meaning “servant of the Messenger/Prophet” and could have been an assumed name, particularly given the lack of any family or town of origin name. His first letter to Zubayr is missing, but a response to it sent from the Colonial Secretary at Gibraltar on May 18 reads merely the formality, “I am to inform you that your note to Zobehr Pasha will be delivered, but, as regards your seeing him, I am to refer you to the Secretary of

²⁴ The official translator, M. Redhouse, spells his name ‘Abd-‘r-Resūl. Contemporary academic English transliteration from Arabic would spell it Abd al-Rasūl. If he was Indian, even though his name was originally Arabic, it might have been traditional to transliterate it out of Hindi/Urdu/Begali/etc differently. The two words are one name in Arabic, meaning *servant of the messenger/prophet*, therefore I use both.

²⁵ Redhouse to Sanderson, January 21, 1887, FO 78 4196; Redhouse to Sanderson, Foreign Office, February 3, 1885, FO 78 4195.

State for Foreign Affairs in London for permission.”²⁶ Abdoul Rassoul next wrote to the Earl of Granville, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on May 29. In this letter he describes Zubayr as “my worthy friend” and that he writes “with no political object whatever but solely for the sake of consoling him in his misfortunes,” for Zubayr’s “great anxiety is to know what crime is alleged against him.”²⁷

If Zubayr and Abdoul Rassoul were attempting to get Zubayr released through a conversation with authorities about the reasons Zubayr was being held on Gibraltar, those authorities did not reply. In these messages, concerning permissions and funds, filtered down to Gibraltar, military affairs and larger political issues were perforce avoided. Between Cairo and London, the reasons for Zubayr’s captivity were perfectly clear: “It will be some months at least before we shall be able to tell the full effect of the evacuation policy on the situation in Egypt and the Soudan,” wrote Baring to Granville in London on May 31. “In the mean time I think Zobeir should be kept at Gibraltar and [General Garnet] Wolseley [leading British troops at the Egyptian border to Sudan] agrees.”²⁸ It was not at all clear to Wolseley, Cromer, or Granville what impact Zubayr would have on Sudan were he allowed to travel there, or even what impact he could have remotely from Cairo, but they imagined it could be a large impact, and wanted to be in control of such an impact if it were to be used, particularly the timing of such an impact. It was never clear what Zubayr’s relationship with the Mahdi would be once beyond British control. Decisions were not made about Zubayr based on evidence that he desired

²⁶ Gifford, Colonial Secretary, Gibraltar to Abdool Rassoul, Burne St., London, May 18, 1885, FO 78 4194.

²⁷ Abdoul Rassoul, Paddington, London to Granville, May 29, 1885, FO 78 4194.

²⁸ Baring at Cairo, to Granville (?), June 3, 1885, FO 78 4195.

to, or wanted to, or was likely to, side with the Mahdi, or for that matter against him. No such evidence existed. Decisions were made based on the fear of what might happen, based purely on fearful conjecture.

Zubayr sent another letter to Abdoul Rassoul, thanking him for his letter of 16 May but complaining that he had not come to visit.²⁹ Abdoul Rassoul, perhaps on receiving this letter, wrote to Salisbury, taking a new line, posing as Zubayr's religious adviser. He asked for permission to visit "my friend Zubair Pasha, now a prisoner at Gibraltar, owing to the ministerial crisis there imminent."³⁰ Abdoul Rassoul was denied this permission. His next letter was more vehement, revealing his tenuous ability in English:

I take the liberty of craving your Lordship's careful attention to the following tyranny and oppression which have been by Great injustice thrown upon the famous Zubair Pasha who was most successful in the Soudan and General Africa then he has with Great Loyalty surrendered the Soudan and all those regions to the Ex Khedive Ismail- a fact which no one can deny by the British officers; but this notorious thief the ex-Khedive was in the place of reward ordered to his officer who killed the son of Zubair Pasha and taken by force (£900,50,000³¹) with all his other wealth and at length has made him a prison in Cairo; whose forefathers were Great Emperors and Khelifas of all us mussulmans in their time.(sic)³²

Perhaps the most curious part of Abdoul Rassoul's literary departures is his desire to see Zubayr's plight as integral to global politics. His postscript began: "individuals were

²⁹ Abdoul Rassoul at Burne St to Salisbury, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 1, 1885, Translated and submitted by M. Redhouse July 13, 1885, FO 78 4195.

³⁰ Abdoul Rassoul to Salisbury, July 8, 1885, FO 78 4195.

³¹ In a subsequent document this number is referred to as "nearly a million pounds" so the number intended is likely 900,000, perhaps with the addition of 50,000 shillings. Another possibility is that the author, claiming to be from India, is using the Indian numbering system, whereby commas are added every two numerals after the last three, which would yield 9,00,00,000 but that he omitted the first comma, although this would yield the much greater quantity of ninety million pounds.

³² Abdoul Rassoul to Salisbury, July 29, 1885, FO 78 4195.

most meditative for self-interest in the Soudan warfare and thereby to gain credit in London. But it is their true to Know that their ominous unsuccess and covetousness; they have unfortunately encouraged the Russians to advance day by day on the eastern door of India and the German on the western door.” Even more dramatically, he argues that “England...is now in fatal danger by the invade of her own religious enemies.”³³

Abdoul Rassoul wrote Zubayr again at the end of August, in which he fueled Zubayr’s comparison with Ahmed ‘Urabi Pasha, leader of the Egyptian 1882 revolt³⁴:

It has been publicly announced on the part of the English Government that Ahmed 'Arabi Pasha was a rebel, and the order was issued for his banishment to the island of Seytan [Arabic for Ceylon]. With all this, 'Arabi Pasha is not confined in one spot, but he is permitted to refresh himself and travel in every part of that island and whenever friends of 'Arabi desire it, they have interviews with him without the permission of the Government. But it is a conviction with me that the Government is not entitled, in the way of justice and equity, until there shall be proved and established some, even the smallest crime against the victimized Zubeyr Pasha; but notwithstanding, he is confined in one place, and no one of the friends of Zubeyr Pasha is able to have a meeting with him to offer him consolation of mind without permission.³⁵

The ‘Urabi comparison, along with the comparison to the Zulu King Cetshwayo, are interesting in terms of precedent, but since Zubayr was not accused of a crime, like ‘Urabi, and was not held in London or used in Africa as Cetshwayo, the comparisons are of limited use, no matter how provocative.³⁶

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ The ‘Urabi (often ‘Arabi) revolt in 1882 led Arab Egyptians in the lower ranks of the military against the Turkish-speaking upper ranks of the military. Turkish elements of the government being closely aligned with British influence working to repay massive debts to British banks, the revolt precipitated British military action. Liberal policy was to avoid a protracted and expensive military occupation, and therefore withdraw as quickly as possible if invasion was necessary.

³⁵ M. Redhouse, “Translation of an Arabic Document, Sent from the East-Indian ‘Abdu-’r-Resu_l to Zubeyr Pasha as a Kind of Current Journal of Events, Rumours, or Suppositions, and Dated 25th (?blotted) August 1885 with Postscript Dated 15th September 1885,” 1885, FO 78 4195.

³⁶ Cetshwayo was king of the Zulus from 1873 to 1879, when he was deposed and exiled to London until 1883.

The Treasury, following the established British principle of empire on the cheap, was open to the ‘Urabi comparison, since it relieved them of the financial responsibility arguing that “the cost of his detention should, as in the case of ‘Urabi, be a charge on the Egyptian Government.”³⁷

Regardless of Abdoul Rassoul’s failure to achieve anything in terms of Zubayr’s liberation, Zubayr appreciated any correspondence. Eighteen eighty-five ended with Zubayr writing an extensive letter to his only active advocate, Abdoul Rassoul, thanking him for his efforts, and expressing his eagerness to have someone visit.³⁸

In one of his more candid moments, the government translator responsible for Abdoul Rassoul and Zubayr’s correspondence shows his feelings about the former : “I return the horrible scrawl of ‘Abdu-‘r-Resul, with a short summary of its contents. From its condition, I am inclined to suspect the writer of having been intoxicated. You will see it contains nothing of any importance.”³⁹ Nevertheless, Abdoul Rassoul continued to send his solicitations to every office he could. He wrote to Rosebery, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: “Let His Royal Highness Zubour Pasha be thrown in oppression and tyranny by Great injustice and unlawfully, with all his family in prison at Gibraltar from one year, yet, has anything changed from the Soudan- rebellion and its dread on England? Or will it change? And what benefits has England gained in this one year of his exile? Or will it gain by this unhappy policy?”⁴⁰ In response to this melodramatic letter concerning

³⁷ Welby at Treasury Chambers to Under Secretary of State Foreign Affairs, September 22, 1885, FO 78 4195.

³⁸ Zubayr to Abdoul Rassoul in London, December 31, 1885, FO 78 4195.

³⁹ Redhouse to Sanderson, Foreign Office, February 3, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁴⁰ Abdoul Rassoul at Lymour Place to Lord Rosebery, Secretary of State, March 1, 1886, FO 78 4195.

the greatness of the Ottoman Sultan, details of British policy in Africa and Asia, and the like, Abdoul Rassoul was told glibly: “if you require a passport you should apply for one in the usual manner according to the enclosed printed regulations.”⁴¹ It is unclear if the cold Foreign Office response reflected desires to avoid using local agents, or if they thought Abdoul Rassoul not a trustworthy agent.

In any event, Abdul Rassoul continued to lobby Salisbury. The Foreign Office sent a reply to his next extensive letter, repeating that he was forbidden to visit Zubayr, but that his letter had reached its destination.⁴² Zubayr replied to this letter from Abdoul Rassoul, finally asking him to “cease from interference with the action of Government towards us” because it was embarrassing and would come to nothing, but that he should keep writing to Zubayr, “for the solace of our minds.”⁴³

A personal letter filed with the diplomatic ones brought light to the character of Abdoul Rassoul:

Your query as to Abdul Rasul. In the spring of this year he was found intriguing with other natives, and [ill] a sort of recognized Agent of Zobeir Pasha, our political A.D.C. thought it advisable for us to keep our eye on him for a time. With Godley’s sanction Dr Rost our Librarian employed him avowedly temporarily in indexing certain Indian and Arabic books. After a short experience of him, he was found to be both ignorant and inefficient and after a payment of about £10 was “discharged” neither Lord Randolph Churchill nor Lord Kimberley knew anything of the arrangement which was a subordinate one and unfortunately a failure.”⁴⁴

The position as librarian allowed British agents to keep an eye on Abdoul Rassoul by coopting him, at least for a short period, but the pressure from the A.D.C. was not enough

⁴¹ FO to Abdoul Rassoul, March 12, 1886, FO 78 4195.

⁴² FO to Abdoul Rassoul, September 18, 1886, FO 78 4195.

⁴³ Zubayr to Abdoul Rassoul, October 9, 1886, FO 78 4195.

⁴⁴ [ill. VO.I. Durne?] to Sir Philip Currie, Undersecretary to Salisbury, September 10, 1886, (my 4119-20), FO 78 4195.

to convince the University of London library to employ someone so inefficient for an extended period. Redhouse the translator, tiring of Abdoul Rassoul the same way Dr. Rost did at the University of London library, complained of the tediousness of his task, asking, “Does Abdu-r-Resul drink? His scrawls are shameful. Zubeyr must indeed be in a strait to accept of such an advocate.”⁴⁵

Zubayr was powerless on Gibraltar, closer to the center of British power, so soon after he was nearly handed a new Sudanese throne. Not only had his physical position shifted, but the relationship of power between Britain, Egypt, and Sudan had shifted that year. The Mahdist uprising had forced the British hand to either rule strongly or withdraw, and Gladstone’s ambivalence led to the latter. The newer British imperialism in Sudan when they returned in 1898 was to be one of tighter control, reducing the power of local elites.

A law firm attempted briefly to advocate for Zubayr in his first summer on Gibraltar, though it came to nothing. The law firm of Gadsden and Treherne in London was “instructed by a friend and relation of” Zubayr to “take certain steps with a view to taking in hand the Defence of Zebehr Pasha.” Such a friend was probably Abdoul Rassoul, since no other communication between Zubayr and anyone in London is in these files. Gadsden and Treherne asked “whether he is at present in the custody of the Military or the Civil Authorities and what if any facilities could be afforded for communicating with him either verbally or by letter.”⁴⁶ The Royal Courts of Justice decided that the firm had no permission to communicate with him, and could not have any information beyond

⁴⁵ Redhouse to Sanderson, January 21, 1887.

⁴⁶ Gadsden & Treherne [law firm], 28 Bedford Row, London to Right Honorable Robert Bourke, M.P. Foreign Office, August 31, 1885, FO 78 4195.

what was publicly known, which was “that Zebehr Pasha is in custody under a special Ordinance of the 27th March 1885.”⁴⁷ The “special Ordinance” is evidence that imperial policy toward political prisoners was not a matter of established policy, but rather was *ad hoc*. On the one hand, this improvisational attitude shows a lack of coherent policy. On the other, a policy of improvisation might be preferable to the publicity that would follow a clearly stated policy that individuals, even if not citizens and perhaps not even subjects, could be imprisoned indefinitely by Her Majesty’s Government without trial or charge, even if this would reflect the reality that Crown prerogative overseas was little constrained by parliament or public opinion.

The ad-hoc nature of the special ordinance was paralleled in the nature of Egypt’s government. The Egyptian treasury had been under British and French control before 1882, and after 1882, Egypt became an informal British protectorate. While increasingly within the British sphere, Egypt continued to be tenuously part of the Ottoman Empire (under the hereditary governorship of the Mehmed Ali dynasty), but not as much a part of the Ottoman Empire as Palestine or Iraq. These borders, for example at Sinai and above Aswan, were on the one hand merely provincial borders between provinces of a single sovereign government, and at the same time borders between different empires, which left vague treaties over borders open to future disputes.⁴⁸ Territoriality and political relationships were fluid and porous and it was within the indeterminate spaces that men like Zubayr and others made themselves.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Royal Courts of Justice to Marquis of Salisbury, September 1886, FO 78 4195.

⁴⁸ Gabriel R. Warburg, “The Sinai Peninsula Borders, 1906-47,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, no. 4 (October 1, 1979): 677–692.

⁴⁹ See the recent dissertation (Princeton, August 2012) by Matthew Ellis on the Sanusi and the

Lord Ribblesdale after his months spent watching over Zubayr on Gibraltar expounded upon his mistreatment in the April 5, 1886 sitting of the House of Lords, before returning to his military post. Ribblesdale had interviewed Zubayr extensively while employed on Gibraltar, probably more extensively than he was required to. Ribblesdale explained that he held this post for three months, from December 1885 until March 1886, “so for three months he saw a great deal of and talked a great deal to Zebehr.” Ribblesdale elaborated,

At first Zebehr used only to tell him of the moving adventures of his old life in the Bahr-el-Ghajal.[sic] But as they came to know each other better they used to talk of the Soudan, of General Gordon, of the Mahdi, of the Slave Trade, of the Cairo Pashas, of duties and taxation, and of many unhappy and far off things. These conversations were at once serious and animated, and to him most interesting and delightful.⁵⁰

Ribblesdale’s delight and empathy followed his understanding of Zubayr’s predicament: the frustration that Zubayr felt at the arbitrariness of his imprisonment, his lack of trial, the impossibility of ruling with perfect morals. Even though Zubayr did not have the rights of a British citizen, “one of the securities which was claimed to appertain especially to the world at large when Mr. Gladstone was in Office was that the rights of weak and small nationalities were respected.”⁵¹ Ribblesdale seems to have been taken by Zubayr’s vision of his freedom, which Baring, Wolseley and others saw as naïve and

formation of the Libya/Egypt border.

⁵⁰ House of Lords Debate, April 5, 1886, vol. 304, Hansard cc704. These conversations were through an interpreter, Hamed, who Ribblesdale identified as the escort to the first hippopotamus to visit England, but he may have confused a hippopotamus with a Giraffe, for the first Giraffe to visit England was also escorted by a Sudanese named Hamed. (“Hamed was at this time an oldish man, but his beard, as he often told me, grew in the Zoological Gardens. He had come to England as the personal escort of the first hippopotamus which visited our shores.” Lord Ribblesdale, “Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar,” *The Nineteenth Century* LXIII (1908): 937. Also, see Michael Allin, *Zarafa: A Giraffe’s True Story, from Deep in Africa to the Heart of Paris*, (New York: Walker, 1998).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, cc706.

perhaps manipulative. Ribblesdale quoted Zubayr in the House of Lords: “He said--Let some wise man go who knows the English; let him tell the Arabs that war with the English people means ruin and trouble; that peace means trade up and down the Nile, the wealth of individuals, the prosperity of a nation. The Arabs are not a savage or a stupid people.”⁵² Ribblesdale even empathized more strongly than Gladstone with the Mahdist revolt:

The English people had shed too much blood and done too much harm in Upper Egypt for the Chiefs and merchants, whom we had driven to defiance, to believe all at once and on hearsay from Khartoum that England had no designs upon their religion or their liberties and their fortunes. In mind, body and estate the Soudan had reason to detest the very name of England for many hundreds of miles.⁵³

Ribblesdale concluded these comments motioning that the time had come when Zubayr’s presence in Sudan would be helpful. The Earl of Dundonald responded that “The Soudanese in their dealings with one another could not, from a civilized point of view, be regarded as much more sane than a lot of lunatics,” and that the only sane administration was a European one. Liberal Lord Fitzgerald followed with a dissection of the legal status of Gibraltar:

What was Gibraltar itself? It was very difficult to define it in contemplation of the law...Parliament might deal with a Possession of this kind as it pleased; but Parliament had never dealt with Gibraltar as far as he knew...It was altogether in the hands of the Crown. It was not a Crown Colony. It was a Possession of the Crown acquired by conquest...the Governor in Council had the power to enact Ordinances for local purposes in Gibraltar, but that could not issue any Ordinances which were inconsistent with the general law of England.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., cc 709.

⁵³ Ibid., cc 710.

⁵⁴ Ibid., cc 713.

Ribblesdale's argument is curious. What else is a crown colony besides a possession of the crown? This goes to show that even at the time among those in power the ad hoc definitions of categories of control were not clearly understood.

After these three speakers, the debate was settled by the Liberal imperialist Earl of Rosebery, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He agreed with Ribblesdale that the situation was "distasteful" and that the circumstances were "unconstitutional" but that they were "dealing with an extraordinary and exceptional state of things, caused by our occupation of a country [Egypt] of which we have not the sovereignty, of which we have not the nominal protectorate, but of which we are in military occupation; and we have to face a dark and unknown quantity of danger in the hostile tribes of the Soudan," and this military necessity required holding Zubayr.

"I admit," Rosebery offered, "there is no Constitutional argument I know of to be raised for detaining Zebehr Pasha; but there are in Egypt at this moment considerations which overrule all considerations."⁵⁵ This debate in the House of Lords is the closest thing that Zubayr got to a trial. He won the argument that his detention was unconstitutional. However, he lost the argument that constitutionalism would take procedure over political necessity. The fact that he got as far as being debated in the Lords, however, and that he was imprisoned in relative luxury, are interesting in themselves, and perhaps lend credence to Canndadine's ideas of high class equivalents across cultures being granted relatively high levels of respect.

This same kind of exceptions to the rule of law led Europeans to take up the paths opened by Zubayr and other Sudanese in a succeeding phase of buccaneering venture into

⁵⁵ Ibid., cc 718.

positions of economic advantage in the far reaches of Sudan. One, J.T. Wills, the ivory merchant mentioned earlier, asked for permission to visit Zubayr to get geographical information in preparation for a presentation at the Royal Geographical Society.⁵⁶ His presentation would be on the region between the Congo and Nile river basins, and “the newly discovered rivers” leading from the continental divide into the Congo.⁵⁷ He identified these regions as Zubayr’s “hunting grounds” for ivory, arguing that “if navigable,” the rivers “would be of much use in the event of an English ivory trading company being started to get at these ivory regions from the Congo, an event which I hope to realize.” Despite his request to visit Zubayr, he argued against releasing him, because he did not want Zubayr to compete with him in the ivory trade, but also because he argued that the region was already being disputed between France (from the west) and the Congo Free State (from the south), so he did not wish Britain to further muddy the political situation.⁵⁸ If the Berlin Conference border between British-Egyptian Sudan, King Leopold’s Congo, and French Central Africa was muddy, Wills preferred to keep it muddy, to provide him flexibility in operations, rather than have his government watching him.

Though the peak period of mentions of Zubayr in the British press was in the period leading up to his incarceration in Gibraltar (1883-4), dramatic portrayals of Zubayr in newspapers big and small continued to use him as a convenient stereotype of

⁵⁶ J. Wills, “Between the Nile and the Congo: Dr. Junker and the (Welle) Makua,” *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, 9, no. 5 (1887): 285. See in dissertation appendix both the sketch map included in Wills’ request for permission to see Zubayr and the map printed in the Royal Geographic Proceedings.

⁵⁷ Winfield at Downing Street to USSFO, March 15, 1887, FO 78 4196.

⁵⁸ Wills to FO, March 18, 1887, my 4206-8, FO 78 4196.

the rapacious native, the slave king, showing their superficial coverage from 1885-7.⁵⁹ Although the English-language press persisted in the slave-king motif, which in a sense kept the political situation free from muddle, an Arabic newspaper in London, the *Nahla* (bee) also wrote to Zubayr in June 1887 to get details of his story. They had apparently already published a short version, for Zubayr asked that they republish it in English. The *Nahla* was possibly the first Arabic paper published in London. It was published by John Louis Sabunji, a Syriac Catholic priest, who published *Nahla* in Beirut before moving himself and the journal to London where it began publishing in 1876, where it could criticize the Ottoman Sultan freely.⁶⁰

Zubayr told the newspaper that his life story was too long to tell in a letter, but that they should contact “Miss Shuwa Letli Bak Hasti Ebinja Keman Siri, English ... for she was with us here in Gibraltar for several months before Ramadan and took down the cream collected from some of our acts.”⁶¹ Though the twice transliterated and probably misheard spelling is awkward, he is probably referring to Miss Flora Shaw;⁶² she did sit with Zubayr for regular afternoon appointments for several months recording his life story. In those months, Zubayr and Shaw formed a collegial relationship. She read press reports about him, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, too incendiary and shallow to allow him to

⁵⁹ A search of the *Nineteenth Century British Newspapers* database (on March 11, 2010) for Zebehr yields no articles before 1883, 30 articles in 1883, 685 in 1884 (Charles Gordon’s request for Zubayr), 308 in 1885 (his departure for Gibraltar), 37 in 1886, 123 in 1887 (his departure from Gibraltar), 38 in 1888, and fewer than ten per year after 1888. Searches for other spellings of Zubayr yield statistically insignificant results.

⁶⁰ L. Zolondek, “Sabunji in England 1876-91: His Role in Arabic Journalism,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 14, no. 1 (January 1, 1978): 102–115.

⁶¹ Zubayr to editor of *Nahhla* newspaper in London, June 16, 1887, FO 78 4196.

⁶² My best guess: Miss Shuwa/Shaw Letli/Lady Bak [Ottoman honorific] Hasti? Ebinja? Keman/[also] Siri/Sir.

respond. Shaw considered herself to be trying Zubayr against public opinion. Once befriending him, Shaw seems to have hoped that if she could prove him innocent in the press, it would help his case, for he had no direct legal recourse. Shaw seems to have agreed with Zubayr when he told her, “What I like in the English... is their justice. They are often ignorant, but when they know they act faithfully.”⁶³

Shaw’s biography, based only on her notes, argues that her position ran against a trend in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Under the auspices of editor Liberal William Thomas Stead from 1883-1889, the *Gazette* had turned from a Conservative gentleman’s journal to a Liberal gentleman’s journal. The *Gazette* eagerly derided Zubayr the “slave king,” even with creative illustrations of the evils of slavery (see appendix). Shaw saw her discovery of injustice against Zubayr as a dramatic shift for the paper vis-à-vis Zubayr in 1887.⁶⁴ In fact, the *Pall Mall Gazette* wavered on Zubayr. As early as Gordon’s suggestion of Zubayr to rule Sudan in March 1884 the *Gazette* ran two editorials three days apart, one arguing that Gordon was mad and empowering Zubayr foolhardy, the next proclaiming with no irony, “Zebehr for the Soudan!”⁶⁵ The paper had no consistent editorial policy on the issue, and perhaps Shaw’s understanding was based as much on articles from a variety of sources, for many more populist papers printed throughout 1884-1887 a rash of articles explaining the incendiary term *slave king*, such as the *Reuters* article referenced in both *Echo* and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*.⁶⁶

⁶³ Bell, *Flora Shaw*, 54.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶⁵ “Zebehr or Gordon?” *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 7, 1884; “Zebehr for the Soudan!” *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 10, 1884. Text of articles in appendix.

⁶⁶ “Zebehr Pasha: A Day with Our Slave King,” *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (August 1887): 140–1. Quoted from *Echo*, 4 August 1887.

Just as Zubayr was careful to influence his own life history, even though he left others to write it, Shaw also failed to write an autobiography, but left enough in her personal papers to convince a future biographer that her article had been controversial. “There was obviously very great ignorance about Zebehr, this must be dispelled,” her biographer wrote, though there was little in reality in Shaw’s article that differed from Ribblesdale’s explanation in the House of Lords. “Here obviously was exactly the sort of material she needed for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but the matter must be approached a little carefully,” Shaw’s biographer explained, “since Flora would have preferred to send an article more in harmony with the editor’s views.” Regardless of the revolutionary status of her article, Shaw wrote for a more popular audience than the House of Lords. The *Palil Mall Gazette* was a journal for gentlemen, not a popular audience, but gentlemen encompassed more than the House of Lords.⁶⁷

Her first article from that material was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in June 1887.⁶⁸ This was Shaw’s first published article. It and the subsequent lengthy articles on Zubayr that Shaw published in issues of *Contemporary Review* launched her journalistic career. Though Zubayr’s release was nearly a foregone conclusion by the time these articles were published, he was grateful for Shaw’s efforts to defend him, and when they met in Cairo a year later, he went out of his way to show his appreciation.⁶⁹ While British

⁶⁷ Bell, *Flora Shaw*, 55.

⁶⁸ Flora Shaw, “Zebehr Pasha at Gibraltar: A Lady’s Interview with the Captive Chief,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 28, 1887.

⁶⁹ While in Cairo after Zubayr’s release, Zubayr met her at Shepherd’s hotel, had them dine with him in the grand and crumbling Giza palace he lived in, in December 1888. Flora found he had lost his “fire” and had a “pathetic dignity” in comparison to his persona on Gibraltar. Shaw proceeded to spend much of the rest of her life publishing letters of her travels in Africa mostly in the *Times* of London. She had close relationships with Cecil Rhodes, George Goldie, and Fredrick Lugard, the last of whom she married. Among other accomplishments, Flora Shaw chose the name Nigeria for that country based on the

government wardens had concluded that he would be set free by the time these articles were written, that decision had been liable to countless delays, and might have been delayed further had there be no reason to fear public outcry.

That public outcry was exactly what Zubayr had been looking for, and while it did not quite occur as he might have hoped, it shows the extent to which he was able to broadcast power from his cottage prison via these hangers-on.

Wardens

Though it was the British government which kept Zubayr on Gibraltar, that government was hardly a united force: Much disagreement is recorded within and between the War Office and Foreign Office about whether and why to hold Zubayr, and whether and why to release him. The generals on the Sudanese border were at one end of this conversation, Gladstone and Salisbury on the other, and in between was the Foreign Office and more importantly Baring. Baring in Cairo was the most significant link in the chain of information from southern Egypt to London. In a sense, the role of the Egyptian government in this story was played by Baring, who was in effect in control of that government, but disagreement can also be seen in the moment of Zubayr's release between Baring and Egyptian Prime Minister Nubar Pasha.

The broadcasting of Zubayr's power, and the contemplation of broadcasting British power via Zubayr into Sudan, are clear in this section. Discussions of the issue of Zubayr's slaving past also suggest a slowly growing understanding among British bureaucrats that resistance to imperialism, even resistance to abolitionist imperialism,

Niger river. Bell, *Flora Shaw*, 67.

even by those who might be enslaved themselves, had its internal logic, in seeing domination by Britain as no better than domination by slavers. This was expressed through the initial confusion as to Zubayr's and the Mahdists' positions, and accusations that Zubayr might take side with the Mahdi, which lessened as understanding of the Mahdi and Zubayr grew.

The line of communication about Zubayr was not simply straight between Aswan, Cairo, and London. Zubayr's immediate wardens at Gibraltar, though essentially powerless in the higher levels of bureaucracy, communicated the day-to-day stress of Zubayr's imprisonment and attempted to push for progress on the issue.

Zubayr was arrested in Alexandria on March 13, 1885. "in the street ... going to the house of Said Ibrahim El Senoussi,"⁷⁰ where he had gone "to clear up some matter of acute controversy in the sacred writings of [this] noted Koran pundit."⁷¹ The British soldiers, he wrote, refused to allow him to go home to change his clothes, and took him directly to a ship in the harbor, where the captain received him "with courtesy." After twelve hours in the harbor, his sons and servants and Hawa Abdullah, presumably his wife, joined him.

Two days earlier, Zubayr's arrest had been ordered in a letter from Evelyn Baring to the Earl of Granville. "From several indications I cannot help thinking that Zobeir Pacha intends to leave Egypt,"⁷² Baring wrote, with no destination suggested. These indications are not specified, and no evidence that Zubayr aimed to leave Egypt was

⁷⁰ Zubayr to Her Majesty's Government, March 30, 1885, FO 78 4194.

⁷¹ Lord Ribblesdale, "Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar," *The Nineteenth Century* LXIII (1908): 938.

⁷² Baring to Granville, March 11, 1885. FO 78 4194.

provided anywhere in the Foreign Office files. It appears that Zubayr's trip to Alexandria alone might have been Baring's main indication:⁷³ "He is now at Alexandria, where his wives joined him this morning, and whence escape is very easy...Zobeir Pacha ought to be arrested at once. I should propose to put him on board a man of war and send him to Cyprus"⁷⁴ Despite his strong urges to arrest Zubayr, he continued, "I have no really trustworthy evidence against Zobeir Pacha, but I have little doubt that he is in communication with the Mahdi. Some evidence might perhaps be obtained from his papers, which would be seized." No such evidence was found.⁷⁵

Baring needed no evidence, as Zubayr was not to stand trial. Baring operated on the advice of Lord Wolseley, commander of the Army in Sudan. "I also think when the commander of an Army in the exceedingly difficult position in which Lord Wolseley is placed says certain measures are essential to the success of his operations those measures must be taken whatever may be the objections to them."⁷⁶ Baring seemed to think that even under surveillance in Cairo for the ten years that had passed since his leaving Sudan, Zubayr might have helped its rebellious Mahdist government. While there is no evidence that Zubayr supported the Mahdist government directly, Wolseley and Baring argued that Zubayr was interested primarily in regaining his former influence and wealth, via arrangements with any Sudanese regime. For his part, Zubayr, when narrating his life, argued that he always believed the Mahdi to be a false prophet, and that even he had been

⁷³ From Cairo, one looking to travel to another city most likely aims for Alexandria, it having been then as it is now the only sizeable city in Egypt outside of Cairo. Escape from Egypt was easier from Alexandria, but there are countless other reasons to visit the Mediterranean.

⁷⁴ Baring to Granville, March 11, 1885. FO 78 4194.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. FO 78 4194.

offered the position of Mahdi before Muhammad Ahmed, by the same ‘Abd Allahi who offered it to Muhammad Ahmed, in 1873, but Zubayr had turned it down believing Mahdism to be a false interpretation of Islam.⁷⁷ Zubayr cannot be taken at his word, since such a description was useful in his case against the British government. In hindsight in 1885, Zubayr could easily say that he would not have supported the Mahdists, because at that point their downfall seemed imminent.⁷⁸ The death of the Mahdi later in 1885 likely contributed to British desire to control Zubayr, since at that moment it might have been thought that his demise would mean the end of Mahdist regime, but the Khalifa’s tight rule meant that the Mahdist regime was not about to fall.

Zubayr befriended Captain Ernest Rice of the ship *Iris* that took him from Alexandria to Gibraltar. Despite his bitterness at being taken, earning high regard from Rice for his conduct, and inducing the captain to write a letter on his behalf proclaiming his innocence. “Yesterday, Zebhr asked to see me,” the captain wrote, “and gave me a short and interesting history of himself. The gist of which was that he had fought for years in the Soudan for the Khedive.” Since the office of the Khedive had been then and was to remain at the mercy of British influence, formal or informal, this was tantamount to saying that Zubayr had worked for British interests and was innocently loyal rather than a rogue working for self-interest. He urged the captain to tell of his attempts to aid Charles Gordon and Sir Evelyn Wood, and in short “he was always, and is now, in accord with the English in Egypt, and that any papers found in his house would prove that to be

⁷⁷ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 58; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, 44; ‘Isamat Hasan Zulfo, *Karari : the Sudanese Account of the Battle of Omdurman*, trans. Peter Clark (London: F. Warne, 1980), 25.

⁷⁸ As Gordon said in 1884 of Sudanese who supported the Mahdists on their ascendancy, “All men worship the rising sun.” (see chapter 4).

the case.” Zubayr consciously worked his contacts in order to further his version of his history, he seemed not to be able to help himself. Zubayr argued that if Ahmed ‘Urabi, who had mounted a large-scale anti-British revolt in Egypt, and who “had killed many English officers and men...had been tried on certain charges: that he Zebehr, wished to be tried also, that he had no idea why he was arrested and thought he was hardly treated.”⁷⁹ Zubayr compared himself to ‘Urabi, even if the initial comparison suggested rebellion, because it seems he felt he could, if given proper formal opportunity, defend his innocence not only enough to free him, but perhaps to recover some part of his fortune.

Ernest Rice and John Adye were the first British personnel to be taken in by Zubayr’s charm. Rice, the ship’s captain, volunteered from their stop in Malta that “the Pacha has raised no difficulty in any way during the time he has been on board and has not only conformed himself to the regulations of the ship, but has insisted upon his sons and servants doing the same.”⁸⁰ Rice liked Zubayr so well that he listened to his story again, sending the story this time from Gibraltar to his commander-in-chief, John Hay, on 31 March 1885, repeating Zubayr’s political advice to the British military. In the same polite vein, John Adye, the Governor of Gibraltar, remarked that “Zobeir Pasha on landing and being taken to the residence provided for him, expressed himself well satisfied, and has only asked that his wife be duly informed of his arrival, and that he was well.” Zubayr complained of mistreatment at the highest level, not the local. This sense of his place in the larger political situation was also reflected in the conversations that

⁷⁹ Captain Ernest Rice, aboard the “Iris” at Malta to Admiral John Hay, Commander in Chief, FO, March 23, 1885, FO 78 4194.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Lord Ribblesdale had with Zubayr at Gibraltar: Ribblesdale was impressed that Zubayr was much more interested in macroeconomics than the micro, being unconcerned with the price of common goods, but much interested in British government and imperial finances.⁸¹ Zubayr cultivated this image of himself as an urbane political player on the highest level, both because it was his character to do so, and because it was his best chance to cultivate friendly influence, and thereby his freedom.

Zubayr wrote a series of letters to members of the British government. The first such letter is addressed to “Her Majesty’s Ministers.” Later letters are addressed more specifically to the Foreign Office, Salisbury, and Gladstone. The first letters address themes of innocence and justice. “I beg to submit to your sense of justice that as I think you are aware, I have been residing in Cairo for 10 years without doing anything disloyal to the Government...” he began, allowing colony and metropole to stand as one government. “I had hoped that my honour would have been respected by your justice which is known in the East and West. I was always ready to render any service you might have ordered me to do, but you have not availed ourselves of them.”⁸² His willingness to work for the British reflects Baring’s words in the opening quote of this chapter. He was

⁸¹ “Zobeir was interested in direct trade as well as in its relation to revenue and economics, but he had the grand style in these matters. For instance, I never heard him ask the price of anything—not even of a horse, which pained me in an Arab. But he constantly asked questions about revenue and taxation and customs, not only in Gibraltar but in England. Possibly a whole-hogger at heart, I fancy that the nicer discriminations of Mr. A.J. Balfour would have been more to his mind, and would have accorded more nearly with his own notions of fiscal policy” Ribblesdale does not seem to entertain the idea that Zubayr might have been interested in British finances because he might have been a Mahdist spy. Ribblesdale, “Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar,” 941.

⁸² Zubayr to Her Majesty’s Government, March 30, 1885. FO 78 4194.

willing to work for the British, and many in the British administration had been willing to have him work for them, but they did not trust him enough.⁸³

Particularly in the first letters, Zubayr represented himself as incredulous that he could be imprisoned without having broken a law, civil, religious, or moral: “I am a religious person and have always been respected and I have never done anything deserving of this treatment,” he proclaimed. It took many months of imprisonment for him to realize that his imprisonment was not due to an accusation of illegality. “If spies have reported anything against me government ought to enquire carefully into the matter. I am true and loyal to the British Government and always pray God to make their enterprises successful.” Zubayr believed he was imprisoned for something he had done, and demanded to be sent “to London to explain to them my affairs and to great hardships to which I have been subjected in order that I may attain through their justice security for my safety and honour.”⁸⁴

The Egyptian government was not directly involved with Zubayr’s arrest. Zubayr was taken at Alexandria by British troops, under orders from British military authorities, and the Egyptian government was never consulted. The Egyptian government blamed Britain entirely for Zubayr’s imprisonment. Nubar Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt, and effectively the most powerful man in Egypt after Baring, argued, “The Egyptian Government had nothing to do with the matter. Zobeir was an English prisoner, his arrest having been made on military grounds by the English military authorities.”⁸⁵ Zubayr’s

⁸³ H. J. De la Bere, Financial Secretary’s Department, War Office to Treasury, August 26, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁸⁴ Zubayr to Her Majesty’s Government, March 30, 1885. FO 78 4194.

⁸⁵ Edwin H. Egerton, Baring’s office, Cairo, relating conversation with Nubar Pasha to the

imprisonment on Gibraltar had been British, but Nubar's words overdramatize the fact, since his stricter imprisonment on Gibraltar came within the period of his looser house arrest in Egypt, which had been by Egyptian authorities. Egypt did raise his pension, from £36 to £100 a month after his move to Gibraltar.⁸⁶ This increase might have been a bribe to get Zubayr's support for Nubar, but more likely Nubar was merely annoyed at Zubayr's complaints of poverty and wanted to quiet him for a time.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Ahmed the Mahdi, believed by many to be destined to usher in the end of the world in his lifetime, had died of typhoid fever in June 1885. Abdallahi ibn Muhammad took control as Khalifa, his successor. The Khalifa attempted to continue the Mahdi's attempts to expand territorial control, but was repulsed by armies on all sides.⁸⁷ The use of resources on these campaigns along with a drought gradually created famine conditions in Sudan.⁸⁸ Joseph Ohrwalder was a Catholic priest and missionary, who spent most of the Mahdist period captive under the Khalifa before escaping. He wrote that after drought and years of the Khalifa's rule,

In some districts half the people are dead, in others the loss of life is even greater. Whole tribes have been completely blotted out, and in their places roam the wild beasts, spreading and increasing in fierceness and in numbers, until they bid fair

Marquis of Salisbury, July 18, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁸⁶ Baring at Cairo, to Granville (?), June 3, 1885. FO 78 4195.

⁸⁷ The Khalifa's army fought British troops in the north, French troops in the west, and Ethiopian troops in the east, all in failed attempts to gain territory.

⁸⁸ This famine was also because of Mahdist Sudan's isolationism, of course. The reason that Iraqi famines around this time were less severe than contemporary African famines, Hala Fattah argues, was that Iraq was integrated into Gulf trade when Ottoman and British trade were hindered. Embargoes failed because illicit trade with Persia minimized deaths by famine in the nineteenth century. During World War I, however, Iraqi famines resulted in many deaths, because British tight military control made embargoes enforceable. British and Egyptian loose control of Sudan, in a parallel case, made possible famines less severe, whereas the tighter military control that the Mahdia had over Sudan exacerbated the famine of the 1890s. Hala Fattah, "The Politics of the Grain Trade in Iraq c. 1840-1917," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 5-6 (Fall 1991): 151-165.

to finish the destruction of the human race; for they enter huts, and women and children are no longer safe”⁸⁹

Meanwhile, Zubayr continued to urge those around him to promote his cause:

“Zobehr Pasha is very anxious to have some information as to his detention at Gibraltar and whether he is likely to be released soon,” wrote Adye.⁹⁰ At the end of July, the Governor made a more reasonable request, for Arabic books for Zubayr and family to read. The request was forwarded to Cairo.⁹¹

The easy comparison of this arrest was to Ahmed ‘Urabi two and a half years previously. Yet, the Egyptian government resisted the ‘Urabi comparison, at least partly to avoid these selfsame financial responsibilities, perhaps as part of a general purge of responsibility for problematic presences: “Nubar Pasha, who has previously told me that he does not consider that Zobehr Pasha is in any way imprisoned on account of the Egyptian government, said most decidedly that so far from having anything against his release, he would look on his liberation as an act of justice.”⁹² Indeed, Salisbury’s Foreign Office sided with the Egyptian government, arguing that

The case differs materially from that of Arabi Pasha and others, exiled in Ceylon, inasmuch as Zobehr Pasha and his associates were not arrested and are not detained by the desire of the Egyptian Gov’t, by that of the British Military Authorities in Egypt. Lord Salisbury has recently taken steps to ascertain whether Zobehr Pasha might not now be released without inconvenience... Lord Salisbury trusts that the delay will not be long, but in the meantime it appears to him that

⁸⁹ Joseph Ohrwalder and Sir Francis Reginald Wingate, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, 1882-1892: From the Original Manuscripts of Father Joseph Ohrwalder*. (S. Low, Marston & company, 1893), 449.

⁹⁰ Adye to Derby, June 4, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁹¹ Adye to Stanley, July 31, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁹² Salisbury’s office to Treasury, October 10, 1885, FO 78 4195.

would be impossible to call upon the Egyptian Gov't to defray the expense of detention.”⁹³

On the other hand, Egerton, representing Baring's office in Cairo, suggested that “if it is intended to abandon entirely [Sudan], [Zubayr] might be useful there as a counter irritant, but a good hostage should be retained at Cairo.”⁹⁴ Egerton was still swayed by the argument that Zubayr was a slave-trader, however, and therefore could not be trusted. Egerton seems to have been swayed not merely by the argument that slave-trading was an objectionable past even in colonial politics, but that such a past put a dark mark on Zubayr's character. His wording, in fact, mirrors some of the anti-Zubayr writings of the British and Anti-Slavery Society (discussed in chapter 4).

It must be remembered that hitherto it was never been made Zobebr's interest to work with us, on the contrary it would be very surprising if this great slave-trader were not inimical to the English. He can attribute to them the death of his son, the refusal to send him with General Baker to Suakin, and later for Gordon at Khartoum, the neglect and suspicion shown to him who was formerly the first man of the Soudan, and his arrest later by the British Military Authorities.⁹⁵

Egerton's tone seemed somewhat more suspicious of Zubayr than Baring. Baring and the generals in Egypt (Grenfell, Stephenson,⁹⁶ Baker) seemed more open to the idea of using Zubayr if it was of military advantage, regardless of his past. Baker, for example, argued that he could be sent to Darfur, to entice that province to side against the Mahdist government but that he should be kept out of Egypt.⁹⁷ Grenfell agreed: “Zebehr's presence in the Soudan would cause a diversion...If the Government is prepared to

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Egerton to Baring (?), September 17, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Stephenson appears at the unusual meeting with Wingate and Thomas Cave and Zubayr on March 30, 1893, see chapter 5.

⁹⁷ Egerton to Salisbury, October 1, 1885, FO 78 4195.

provide him with men arms and subsidy, I believe he would go and be useful.” Grenfell seems to agree with the strategic use of Zubayr, but qualifies the strategic importance by characterizing Zubayr: “although better than the present men, is a notorious slaver and is known as such in England.”⁹⁸ (See chapter 4 for extended discussion of this characterization.) The entire reason for Zubayr’s imprisonment was military strategy, both to hold Zubayr from acting outside of British control, and to have him ready to use if the case for it became clear. However, even military strategy was indirectly hampered by abolitionist politics as the moral duty of the empire. These causalities were fluid both through time and among the vast variety of administrators and politicians involved, and between British civil and military authorities.⁹⁹

Salisbury began to worry four months after his capture: “The continued detention of Zebehr Pasha is a cause of expense and embarrassment, and the Marques’s [sic] Gov would be glad both on grounds of humanity and policy if an arrangement could be devised which would admit of his liberation without danger to Egyptian or British interests.”¹⁰⁰ This is the first mention of *embarrassment* or *humanity* in reference to Zubayr’s incarceration, save for the words of Zubayr and Abdoul Rassoul.

Meanwhile, the British administration in Cairo continued to urge using Zubayr in Sudan. Henry Drummond Wolff, “Her Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to His Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey, on a Special Mission with particular reference to the affairs of Egypt,”¹⁰¹ suggested that if he were properly paid

⁹⁸ Grenfell at Aswan to Egerton at Cairo, September 29, 1885, FO 78 4195.

⁹⁹ See chapter 4 for a thorough discussion of abolition and empire.

¹⁰⁰ FO to CO, October 19, 1885, FO 78 4195.

¹⁰¹ “Foreign Office, August 3, 1885” *The London Gazette*, August 18, 1885, p. 16. FO 78 4194.

and given assurances on his interests, he would be loyal and effective.¹⁰² Edward Wortley, aide-de-camp of General Wood at Aswan in Egypt near the Sudan border, argued to Drummond Wolff that

so long as the Soudan is not governed by any civilized power, slavery will exist in that country...if Zebehr was now released and sent direct to the Sudan to establish himself as best he could, no harm could result from such a course, and he might possibly prove a means of creating some kind of Government, which at any rate could not be worse than the present state of affairs in that country.¹⁰³

Despite Wortley's position on the ground, Wolff ignored the stratagem.

Eighteen eighty-six began with Henry Drummond Wolff in Cairo suggesting conditions for releasing Zubayr, eighteen months before any conditions were presented to Zubayr. Drummond Wolff had represented Britain at the convention over the fate of Egypt and Sudan in Istanbul in August and September 1885. Drummond Wolff proposed that Zubayr be sent to Sudan, to try to use his influence to aid British, Egyptian, and now also Turkish military efforts. His proposal was that Zubayr be given £5000/year, to be raised up to £10,000 if he made himself useful strategically, presumably enough to employ a significant force of Sudanese. While a great deal in comparison with the tens and hundreds of pounds complained about in terms of Zubayr's incarceration, this sum may have seemed modest in comparison with large-scale military affairs, an economical choice if a risky one.¹⁰⁴ The Foreign Office replied that General Wolseley, on the Egyptian border, was opposed to sending Zubayr, and that it would be better to let any military plan for Sudan develop before involving Zubayr.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Drummond Wolff to Marquess of Salisbury, December 14, 1885, FO 78 4195.

¹⁰³ Stuart Wortley at Aswan to Henry Drummond Wolff, November 30, 1885, FO 78 4195.

¹⁰⁴ Sir H Wolff at Cairo to Colonial Office, January 2, 1886, FO 78 4195.

¹⁰⁵ Foreign Office to H.D. Wolff, January 17, 1886, FO 78 4195.

On June 9, 1885, when Gladstone's government, which had been in power for five years, fell, Salisbury had formed a government, but it only held for six months, until January 1886. Gladstone returned to office, but only also for six months, until July 1886. Salisbury then returned, this time for six years until 1892. Then, Gladstone took office one final time until 1894. Salisbury continued to be Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for most of the time he was Prime Minister.¹⁰⁶ This seems to bear some influence on Zubayr's condition. Gladstone's government was concerned primarily with keeping Zubayr, whose influence might be difficult to predict, out of a fray, and minimizing financial and political costs of holding him indefinitely. Salisbury's government was more open to ideas of using Zubayr in reconquering the Sudan, even if the cost were much higher than holding him on Gibraltar. The changes of government in 1885 and 1886 were so swift, however, that it is difficult to relate the two. Even Salisbury's six-year term from 1886 to 1892, for example, did not give him opportunity to mount an attack on Sudan. This was to wait for his third government, beginning in 1896.

After failing with his strategy of usefulness and his strategy of outrage, Zubayr seems to have attempted a strategy of killing with kindness. Perhaps to prove that he was trustworthy and civilized enough to be freed, Zubayr wrote the "Minister of Foreign Affairs"¹⁰⁷ on June 13, 1886 a letter impressive for even Zubayr or Abdoul Rassoul in its flowery pleasantries, and to emphasize them even more apologized for having "abbreviated the recital of this matter for fear of tediousness..."

¹⁰⁶ In the twentieth century it became standard practice to have the Prime Minister also have the position of First Lord of the Treasury, but Salisbury was only First Lord of the Treasury for a small portion of his time as Prime Minister.

¹⁰⁷ The letter was addressed to Minister of Foreign Affairs, showing ignorance Zubayr's part of the different roles of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

And with all that has been narrated to Your Lordship's Excellency, by the help of God, who be exalted, and His guidance, there entered not into our heart at the time, nor did there penetrate into our thoughts, any vanity or presumptuous lust to lead us to dwell with pleasure on an idea of revolt or independence of the laws of our exalted local government in Egypt (or Cairo) or withdrawal from relations with foreign States by infractions of treaties and canonical documents, upon which are based the prosperity of the world, the wealth of the people through terrestrial transactions.¹⁰⁸

This letter continues for thousands of words, which hints at Zubayr's feeling that his time had come, but equally could hint at Zubayr's boredom and desperation for an intellectual activity.

Zubayr seems to have understood the political climate, for just four days later, Baring wrote Salisbury: "Both General Grenfell and Colonel Cheruside, the officer commanding the Egyptian troops on the frontier, are of opinion that the return of Zobeir Pasha to Egypt would not now be a source of any danger" as long as he was under surveillance and his liberty was dependent on him not participating in the Sudan, and it seems to have been understood that enough surveillance could be kept to keep him from travelling far from Cairo or having substantial correspondence with Sudanese elites.¹⁰⁹ Salisbury requested that arrangements for Zubayr's release be made.¹¹⁰ A document in Arabic and English was made to be signed by Zubayr "pledging himself to certain conditions." A copy of the letter in French was sent to Gibraltar, translated here.¹¹¹ The Egyptian government agreed to the conditions.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Zebehr to Minister of Foreign Affairs, June 13, 1886, FO 78 4195.

¹⁰⁹ Baring at Cairo to Salisbury, March 26, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹¹⁰ Salisbury to USSFO, April 6, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹¹¹ Baring to Salisbury, May 13, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹¹² Nubar to Baring, May 8, 1887, FO 78 4196.

I, the undersigned, pledge to the government of His Highness the Khedive to resident on my return to Egypt in the town or city that I will be assigned by the government, to allow myself to be put under its surveillance, and to never get involved with political issues related to Sudan or any other matter relating to the army.

In case of any violation on my part I declare myself ready to submit to such treatment as the said government desires, whether it desires I be removed from the country or wants me to submit to a trial in the manner it deems appropriate. In front of these witnesses, I sign this commitment to be in accordance with the content of this letter.

signed and sealed by Zubayr in Arabic

also signed by three witnesses, Gibraltar, 2nd August 1887: A.W. [ill.] Major General, Mrs. W [ill.] captain, and احمد الصافي الرَّحمان [Ahmed al-Safi al-Rahman, the last with seal].¹¹³

Thus, as May began, things looked good for Zubayr's imminent liberation, but as has been proven here many times, Zubayr's imprisonment had little to do with Zubayr, and much to do with larger political and military issues. Drummond Wolff at the time was negotiating with the Ottoman and Egyptian governments for a lasting solution that could extract Britain from the expense and difficulty of presence in the eastern Mediterranean. "I think," Baring wrote,

it might be rather unfortunate if Zebehr's release happened simultaneously with announcement that we should evacuate [Egypt] in three years.¹¹⁴ There is no real connection between the two, but release might possibly afford an additional handle for criticism on the evacuation. Would it not be as well that I should let

¹¹³ English in text is my translation from this original French (Baring to Salisbury, May 8, 1887)

Je, soussigné, prends l'engagement vis-à-vis du gouv't de S.A. le Khedive de résider a mon retour en Egypte dans la localité ou la ville qui me sera désignée a cet effet par le dit gouv't, de me mettre sous la surveillance et de ne jamais me mêler de questions politiques se rattachant au Soudan ou autres ni d'aucune question se rattachant a l'armée.

En cas de contravention quelconque de ma part je me déclare prêt a subir tel traitement qu'il plaira au dit gouv't de m'appliquer, soit qu'il veuille m'éloigner du pays, soit qu'il veuille me soumettre a un jugement de la façon qu'il jugera opportune.

En for de quoi j'ai signe le présent engagement pour être traite en conformité de la teneur.

¹¹⁴ Baring seems to have never been convinced that such a short timetable for withdrawal from Egypt was practicable, but went along with negotiations since the negotiations seemed to calm tensions with the Ottoman sultan.

Zebehr's release be known at once? It will then probably be half forgotten by the time any public announcement in connection with Sir H. Wolff's negotiations.¹¹⁵

Salisbury agreed, saying "signature of convention is close at hand so that if we gave the order now Zobebr might arrive in Egypt at the same time as convention. If on the other hand, the convention were delayed and the Sultan heard of Zobebr's release, he might think we were manufacturing an intentional danger beforehand."¹¹⁶ Despite the fact that Baring felt Zubayr's release "would not materially affect situation" he still feared that "Coming just at this moment his release would probably be misinterpreted" and therefore would best be delayed.¹¹⁷

Sir Henry Drummond Wolff had gone, on Salisbury's orders, to Istanbul on August 22, 1885 and on October 25 signed an agreement between Britain and the Ottoman Empire to each send a special commissioner together to Egypt to work out an agreement between the Ottomans and British over Egyptian and Sudanese rule. Wolff when he arrived in Cairo days after that convention was full of confidence, but it took another nearly two years to sign an agreement as to what was to be done, and that only on Egypt, ignoring Sudan. Wolff had misunderstood, assuming that as Muslims, Sudanese would follow the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire as Caliph of all Muslims. When he realized the Mahdi's followers followed only the Mahdi, and considered Turks and Christians equally heathens, his diplomacy could do nothing until the Mahdist regime fell, gradually, to political inertia, drought, and warfare.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Baring to Salisbury, May 13, 1887. FO 78 4196.

¹¹⁶ Salisbury to Baring, May 14, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹¹⁷ Baring to Salisbury, May 15, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹¹⁸ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. ii, 373.

Concerning Egypt, the negotiations were tense. Gladstone was busy settling French diplomatic anxiety over British occupation of Egypt. France and Britain had worked together to influence Egypt, at least since the beginning of the Suez Canal Company, and more directly since 1876 through the Caisse de la Dette, without direct military occupation. The first years of British occupation of Egypt and the Suez Canal did not sit well with France. Gladstone ordered Wolff to sign for an immediate withdrawal of half of British occupation forces in Egypt, and a timeline for entire withdrawal, which Wolff duly offered in negotiations, right at the time Zubayr was to be freed from Gibraltar, an understandably delicate time for British-Egyptian relations. The possibility of withdrawal collapsed with the collapse of Gladstone's government on July 9. Salisbury's government had a markedly more aggressive stance toward France, and his reluctance over withdrawal contributed to Wolff's negotiations dragging on another year.¹¹⁹

As the period between the letter of conditions for Zubayr's release and his actual release dragged on, and Wolff's negotiations seemed interminable, the Governor of Gibraltar also became restive. He stated that it would be impossible to continue to place the cottage at the disposal of Her Majesty's Government; because the Governor's other residence needed immediate repairs and the Governor needed somewhere to live in the meantime.¹²⁰

Finally, after the change of government and Wolff's negotiations, Baring ordered that Zubayr's signature be put on the letter with the conditions and arrangements made

¹¹⁹ M. Hornik, "The Mission of Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople, 1885-1887," *English Historical Review* 55, no. 220 (1940): 598.

¹²⁰ Herbert at Downing Street to USSFO, June 22, 1886, FO 78 4196.

for his return to Egypt.¹²¹ This change of policy was most likely from a combination of Salisbury taking office and Drummond Wolff's negotiations being stalled, and it is unclear if either factor might have been enough alone to have Zubayr freed.

The causes for the long delay in Zubayr's release, including Drummond Wolff's negotiations and fears of Zubayr's involvement with the Mahdi, show a sea change in the way Egypt and Sudan were ruled, a continuation of the change that expressed itself in 1882, in Cromer's strong hand over Egypt, and would be seen in the post-Mahdist Anglo-Egyptian regime: a sea change from looser empire to more direct British control.

Family

The most essential curiosity to the Western reader in the story of Zubayr Pasha is the lack of available information concerning his family. Partly perhaps stemming from the Arabic tradition of historical narrative free from personal narrative, partly due to Zubayr's control of his own narrative and his desire to make it more palatable to a western audience, virtually nothing is known about his family. In the ways this dissertation approaches the form of a biography, its biggest lacunae are in Zubayr's personal history.

The ways in which Zubayr sculpted the terms with which his family was referred, and promoted his claim to the rights to a monetary fortune from his years in Bahr al-Ghazal, show his broadcasting power. More interestingly, the way Zubayr's family was pampered on Gibraltar show the British government's consideration of Zubayr's high-cousin local rank, partly perhaps out of the kind of respect that Cannadine argues for

¹²¹ Baring to CO, July 19, 1886, FO 78 4196.

in *Ornamentalism*, and partly perhaps out of a desire to keep Zubayr fairly pleased with the British government in case he was to be used as a political tool in Sudan.

Foreign Office records refer to a woman who is likely his wife, and a nephew who might instead be an employee. At the onset, it might seem strange that even British authorities seemed not to take the time to carefully record the names of their prisoner's wives and children, or anything about accompanying servants, but this perhaps reflects on the mentalities of class in contemporary British elite circles. The most likely answers to this conundrum seem to be firstly that these were not of concern to British authorities, and secondly that these details were difficult to get clear answers about. Zubayr was the prisoner of concern, not his family or other associates, and the British government likely wanted as little responsibility as possible for these extra captives, considering them in essence guests of Zubayr, not prisoners in their own right.

In addition, to Zubayr, as it should become clear in this section, the difference between a child and an employee, or a wife and a concubine, could be merely a semantic game. Zubayr carefully controlled the words he used for each.

The list of passengers on the Royal Naval ship "Iris" was five strong: Zubayr, his two sons Mohamed and Ali, his nephew Yassin, and his Secretary Abdalla.¹²² The list of passengers received in Gibraltar also lists five, possibly the same five, although the names listed after Zubayr and his sons are one Adal Zubeir, perhaps an interpretation of Abdalla, and a Sheikh Abdel Kader.¹²³ Servants are not mentioned on these lists, but

¹²² "Statement of Expenses Incurred by the Naval Department on Account of the Foreign Office," March 1885, FO 78 4194.

¹²³ Adye to Derby, June 4, 1885. In addition to the possibility of swapping out a passenger in Malta, it is unclear if servants are included in this list, so perhaps the ship captain and the governor at Gibraltar interpreted different members of the party as being servants. Also quite possible is that Zubayr's

Flora Shaw and Ribblesdale both describe Zubayr being waited on by servants from the southern Sudan. If they did not arrive, unmentioned, with Zubayr, they must have been sent without being recorded by the Foreign Office, or somehow otherwise made their way to Gibraltar.

The ship's captain adds, "In view of possible arrangements, I have been careful not to allow Zebehr to consider himself a prisoner in the strict sense of the word, but, as a person whom, for political reasons, it is better should be absent from Egypt, for the present." Zubayr agreed with this statement, and with the new possibility that this afforded him, asked first to be taken to England rather than Gibraltar, and to have his secretary¹²⁴ sent back to Egypt to attend to his affairs.¹²⁵

Though not housed in a prison, Zubayr needed a place to live on Gibraltar that could be guarded. The Governor continued: "after consideration I selected what is called 'the Governor's Cottage at Europa' for the purpose. It is isolated and at a distance from the town and other buildings, has sufficient accommodation, is healthy and owing to its situation is easily guarded." The cottage was empty, however. "The necessary equipment for two sitting rooms and bed rooms including furniture, plate, linen, glass, crockery, cutlery, kitchen utensils, etc, were...hired in the course of a few hours and the house was made ready for occupation." Adye could not have anticipated the length of Zubayr's stay, so the Governor was not overly concerned with the monthly rate of rental of all this equipment. In addition to the house and contents, an officer was put in charge of counting

nephew chose different of his many names to identify himself by when asked on different days. FO 78 4194.

¹²⁴ The word secretary is also given in the Arabic, "oakil" a word more often translated as agent. In any case, the man was a sort of assistant to Zubayr's business affairs.

¹²⁵ Adye to Derby, June 4, 1885. FO 78 4195.

Zubayr's party twice daily, providing them with food and other supplies, and leading a guard of nine men on the property. A cook, "one or two" other servants, and an interpreter were also hired.¹²⁶

Four young men accompanied Zubayr originally to Gibraltar. It is curious that so little about them is mentioned in the documents, given that they too were in captivity, but like Zubayr's wives, they were not seen as important. They were not important, until Zubayr requested that two of them be freed. In the original documents concerning his travel, the four young men were identified as Mohammed, Ali, Abdallah, and Yassin. Mohammed and Ali were always referred to as his sons, and in response to Zubayr's complaints that they were forgetting more than they were learning, Baring arranged for the Egyptian government to pay for a tutor to go to Gibraltar in March 1886.¹²⁷ Abdallah was identified as his secretary, and Yassin as his nephew. On June 27, 1886, Zubayr wrote asking for the liberation of his employees Abdallah and Yassin. It seems that Yassin was his nephew and also his employee. Baring requested advice as to the nature of Yassin and Zubayr's relationship from the captain who made the original arrest in Alexandria.¹²⁸ That captain, then living in London, wrote to the Foreign Office at the end of July, repeating that Yassin "was stated to be a half-son of Zobebr's...His being a half son would not be incompatible with Zobebr's statement that he is a servant and in receipt of wages" except that he noted that in Zubayr's undated request for their liberation, a

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Baring at Cairo to Rosebery, March 31, 1886, FO 78 4195 The tutor apparently arrived, because permission was requested (16 Sep: Adye to Stanhope)and granted (4 Oct: FO to Colonial Office) for the tutor to go to Tangier for a religious festival, and later he got sick and needed to be replaced (11 Dec: FO to War Office, Cairo).

¹²⁸ Baring to Rosebery, June 27, 1886, FO 78 4195; Adye to Derby, March 31, 1885, FO 78 4194.

copy filed along with the captain's letter, Yassin is identified as 'of no kinship.' It is unclear what the meaning of *half-son* might have been, perhaps a stepson or an employee so emotionally close as to be considered like a son. The captain continues in saying that he nevertheless does not think harm would come from freeing either of them, but local surveillance would be a good idea to see if they try to communicate Zubayr's wishes to Sudan.¹²⁹

Major Roberto of the Royal Fusiliers, in command of the cottage and its inhabitants, was one man Zubayr needed to befriend. Two weeks into his stay, Zubayr seems to have befriended Major Roberto enough to have him write a letter on his behalf: "Zobehr Pasha has requested that his secretary 'Abdulla Effendi Abaroush' and his adopted son 'Yassin Hamid' may be sent to his family at Cairo. He states that there is no one to take care of his family there. The Secretary understands his family affairs and should anything happen to him (Zobehr) this man would take his family back to their home in the Soudan where they all come from, as in Cairo they are strangers."¹³⁰ The ship's captain had thought Zubayr had made this request too strongly, and that something disloyal might be behind it. Regardless of whether Major Roberto found it suspicious, Baring, Salisbury, and others higher up the hierarchy refused even indirect communication between Zubayr and the outside world except what they could read and approve. The requirement of this high-level clearance for any communication on

¹²⁹ Captain Fenwick to FO, July 26, 1886, FO 78 4195.

¹³⁰ Zubayr later asks "to beg their Excellencies to relieve the wants of his family at Cairo by giving them one hundred pounds monthly...His family are quite strangers at Cairo, they are from the Soudan and are all women and children without any property...He himself remains under the orders of the English Gov't here until they let him know the reason why he has been brought here...His family are sixty three in number." Zobehr Pasha via Roberts at Governor's Cottage to the English Gov't in London, May 22, 1885, FO 78 4194.

Gibraltar contrasts with the loose promise by the reluctant Egyptian government to maintain an unspecified surveillance over Zubayr after his return to Cairo in August 1887, which can at least partly be explained by the change in climate after stabilization of the Egypt/Sudan border.

Close surveillance on Gibraltar was exemplified in the arrival of a more permanent translator a week later. “In consequence of suggestions made by Sir E. Baring in a telegram, I caused the Dragoman to be carefully searched on arrival, both as to his person and effects,” wrote the Governor of Gibraltar. “He had a small sum of money (£3 and a few shillings) which I allowed him to retain. He had also with him an Arabic Book (sic), a pocket book with notes, and some letters and papers all in Arabic.” Since the man in question was the only translator available, the Governor had to send the documents to the British Minister at Tangier, who returned them, saying that “whilst the book and pocket book and contents are apparently harmless, some of the letters are of a suspicious character and some apparently in cipher.” He therefore sent the letters and documents to Baring in Cairo for translation, but before a response was received the tutor had gone to Tangier for a religious festival and picked up an illness which caused him to be returned to Egypt. The proximity of Tangier to Gibraltar leads this story to be believable, and the suspicious cypher could have been Tamazigh (Berber) if the translator was of Moroccan extraction, which seems the most likely, but it equally could be that he translator was actually intriguing with Zubayr.¹³¹

Zubayr requested to have some of his family join him was honored and paid for by the Egyptian government and “three persons arrived ... and have gone to reside with

¹³¹ Baring to Granville, March 11, 1885. FO 78 4194.

Zobehr Pasha. Two of them are females and one of these is said to be a lady, and a wife of Zobehr. They were searched on arrival, it having been previously ascertained that they had no objection” presumably for papers, but also for money. “On the person of the lady was recovered £102 and some small coins, and various Arabic documents were also found in their baggage. I have retained the money pending instructions and propose to send the whole of the papers to Sir. E Baring for his considerations.”¹³² Perhaps they were fearful that Zubayr could now bribe his guards and somehow escape. Regardless, this £102 became an issue after Zubayr’s return to Egypt, when the British government held it against Zubayr’s petty debts on Gibraltar rather than allowing it to be considered the property of the lady who brought it (see chapter 5).

Zubayr was concerned for his own freedom, but he also seemed genuinely concerned for his sons, living isolated indefinitely where his sons might not be able to continue their education.

I have been confined here 6 months. As I am here by Order of the Government I have kept quiet and asked no questions all this time. I have written two letters which are still unanswered. This is not the British justice I have known. I request that through your kindness and justice you will set my sons and servants at liberty. I especially want my sons Ali and Fadle to go and finish their education, either in Egypt or England. Here they are forgetting what they knew before. Yassim and Abdullah are not related to me but only hired servants. While they are here I have to pay them and government has to keep them for nothing. I want them to go to Egypt to get the wages due to them and be discharged. I myself am awaiting your orders.¹³³

Again, these could be ploys to appeal to British sense of literacy and civilization and frugality in order to send messages to Egypt and Sudan. Of course, though Zubayr

¹³² Abdoul Rassoul to Salisbury, July 8, 1885. FO 78 4194.

¹³³ Zobehr Pasha at Governor’s Cottage, Gibraltar to “to be laid before Her Majesty’s Government” and delivered to Stanley in London, August 20, 1885, FO 78 4195.

said he had “asked no questions all this time,” he had asked questions, repeatedly, in two letters, sent in March and May, before this in August.¹³⁴ Perhaps he was both.

Arrangements were eventually made that the Egyptian government would watch the men, and a year later, the men were released to be sent to Egypt.¹³⁵

Eight months into his internment, without word of a hope of a conclusion, Zubayr began already in early October to complain of the winter: “I have no power or endurance for cold, whereas its season has already come upon us, and its time has begun, and its occurrence has given me extreme and severe anxiety” therefore he asked to return to Egypt.¹³⁶ A doctor was sent to Zubayr a month later, and said that his anxiety was of concern, but not his physical health. Though the steep and isolated eastern side of Gibraltar on which the Cottage rested is noticeably colder and windier than the populated western side and Gibraltar noticeably colder than Cairo or Khartoum, it retained a mild Mediterranean climate.¹³⁷

Zubayr’s wife, with four other family members, left Egypt in August for Gibraltar.¹³⁸ The additional expense of having shed Yassin and Abdullahi and gained five caused some stress on the Foreign Office.¹³⁹ The Government of Gibraltar spent over the £150/month allowance for Zubayr’s retinue.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Baring repeated his view

¹³⁴ Zubayr to Her Majesty’s Government, March 30, 1885; Zobeir Pasha via Roberts at Governor’s Cottage to the English Gov’t in London, May 22, 1885. FO 78 4194.

¹³⁵ FO at Cairo to Earl of Teitelsburgh (?), August 19, 1886. FO at Gibraltar Aug 20, 1886, FO 78 4195.

¹³⁶ Zubayr to “Chief Ministry of the Foreign Office of the Government of Great Britain Oct 4, 1885 (my 3959-3965): FO 78 4195.

¹³⁷ Adye to Stanley, Nov 30, 1885, FO 78 4195.

¹³⁸ No date, presumably FO, postscripted 3 Nov (my 4130-32). FO 78 4195.

¹³⁹ FO to Wolff, copy to Treasury, Oct 29, 1886, FO 78 4195.

¹⁴⁰ Army Pay Office, Gibraltar, to Secretary of State for War Office, London, Nov 11, 1886, FO 78

that timing of the Wolff negotiations was delicate and Zubayr should be kept at Gibraltar.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the French representative to the Wolff negotiations, de Freycinet, refused to support any British desires at Constantinople until the British declared a fixed date for withdrawal from Egypt, and even though de Freycinet resigned at his frustration in December 1886, Salisbury worried the standoff had put French-British relations worldwide at risk, and must have pressed this upon Baring.¹⁴²

Eighteen eighty-seven began with similarly familiar and mundane issues: A new interpreter was needed since the incumbent was ill.¹⁴³ Zubayr's son Fadle Bey had arrived on Gibraltar, and was exhibiting "bad behavior" so the officer in command at Gibraltar asked to send him back to Egypt along with the sick interpreter.¹⁴⁴ Zubayr asked for £50 so that the women of his party "may undertake their personal requirements as is the custom with women of their country" and to have material for dresses.¹⁴⁵ Salisbury's office replied, "A compliance with the present application would no doubt lead to further requests of the same kind."¹⁴⁶

Since small requests seem to be getting nowhere, as soon as he felt that his freedom might be assured, Zubayr argued for the first time that a fortune was stolen from him in Sudan. This letter was sent just four days before Baring sent word to London that

4195.

¹⁴¹ Baring at Cairo to Iddesleigh, Dec 16, 1886 (my 4164), FO 78 4195.

¹⁴² Hornik, "The Mission of Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff to Constantinople, 1885-1887," 612.

¹⁴³ FO to Treasury, Jan 11, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹⁴⁴ Harding, G.O Commanding at Gibraltar to Sec State for War, Gibraltar, Jan 10, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹⁴⁵ translation of letter from Zubayr to Governor of Gibraltar, signed 25 May, June 22, 1887. Continues: "We are hostages under the orders of the English Government, and in duress."

¹⁴⁶ FO to CO, June 16, 1887, FO 78 4196.

he should be released. If Zubayr had not known about his apparently imminent liberation, it seems logical that his arguments would continue to concern his freedom. Zubayr had befriended the officer in charge of him enough to dictate to him a letter; it is possible that the officer had given him inside information that the tide of Zubayr's fate was about to turn. The letter explains that

Some years ago [ill.] and goods valuing £976,000, the property of Zobehr Pasha in the Soudan, were seized by the Egyptian Government, and Zobehr Pasha states that His Excellency Sir Evelyn Baring and His Excellency Nubar Pasha (at present in Egypt) are both aware of the exact items which make up the above mentioned sum, and also are thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the seizure of the same.¹⁴⁷

Zubayr did not simply ask for his fortune back, however, perhaps seeing that he would need someone else to gain by this transaction. Instead,

he wants this money transferred from the Egyptian Government to the English Government, where it can remain in safety till the cause of his detention here has been thoroughly enquired into and determined, and until Her Majesty's Government may be pleased to order his release.¹⁴⁸

Even if Zubayr did not suspect that his release was imminent, he seems to have felt that he had a better chance at receiving the funds if they were in British coffers, and that the British government would agree to transfer funds to their accounts, even if temporarily.

Baring explained that Zubayr had renounced any claims to his former consolidated fortune four years earlier, on the condition that his monthly allowance from the Egyptian government would be increased by LE9.50¹⁴⁹ to make a total monthly allowance of LE200, serviceable to his immediate heirs throughout their lives.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Officer in charge of Zubayr on Gibraltar (Maunsell?) to Colonial Secretary, March 22, 1887, my 4238, FO 78 4196.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ LE is the French abbreviation for Egyptian Pound. It remains the most common abbreviation for the currency today in English. (In Arabic, the same unit of currency is referred to as a "guinea" with

Zubayr argued that his agreement had been against his better judgment and made only out of dire circumstances. He argued that this could be clearly seen, since the total of the monthly allowance that would be used by him and his immediate heirs through their lives would be “not a quarter of a tithe of the interest on” nearly a million pounds.¹⁵¹ A month later, Zubayr wrote again on the same issue, arguing that it was through political intrigues that the money had been stolen from him, and that he should at the very least be loaned out of the money enough to cover his debts, but these pleas fell on deaf ears.¹⁵²

Conclusion

Zubayr left Gibraltar in August of 1887. In that sense, he was successful. He had used what little advantage he had through his hangers-on to prod Baring, Gladstone, and Salisbury to free him. He was freed, however, not so much for what he had done, but for the changes in political circumstances vis-à-vis the Mahdia and Wolff negotiations. He had tried being a thorn in the side of these men, while at the same time tried to convince them he would be a useful agent. At the same time, he gained the confidence of his immediate wardens to try to plead his case for him up the political chain. Zubayr’s varied attempts to help his case had little effect one way or another, except perhaps to help him keep a sense of sanity and purpose. Zubayr was freed after fear of Mahdist expansion had passed, and negotiations with the Ottoman Porte over Egypt had stalled indefinitely.

stress on the second syllable.) Egyptian and British pounds were very roughly equivalent until World War I.

¹⁵⁰ Baring at Cairo to Salisbury, May 2, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹⁵¹ Zubayr to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 16, 1887, FO 78 4196.

¹⁵² Zubayr to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 12, 1887, FO 78 4196.

As his last failed request, after being informed of his trip back to Cairo, Zubayr asked to visit London at his own expense en route to Egypt.¹⁵³ Salisbury rejected the request out of hand.¹⁵⁴ It is easy to imagine that Zubayr felt he might have been received in London with fanfare and been able to make a case in the press for the return of some part of his Bahr al-Ghazal fortune. Perhaps also he merely was curious to see the lights of the London before returning to Africa.

Zubayr departed Gibraltar on August 16, 1887, on the P and O steamer “Rosetta” for Port Said, Egypt. The cottage, the Governor General of Gibraltar reported, was left in very bad condition, was “perfectly uninhabitable,” and would require extensive repairs. Hardinge, the new Governor of Gibraltar, insisted that the Imperial Government pay rent on the cottage until it was returned to its former state.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Zubayr and family arrived at Port Said, Egypt on 23 August, and proceeded to Cairo, where the Egyptian police kept them under special surveillance.¹⁵⁶

This chapter used three faces of Zubayr’s experience on Gibraltar, hangers-on, wardens, and family, to demonstrate how the figure of Zubayr shows shifts toward newly modern ways of thinking about empire. Zubayr worked through hangers-on to broadcast power from this isolated cottage across layers of imperial control. His wardens’ words show a shift in the period 1885-87, after ‘Urabi and Mahdist victory, from trying to operate empire through the strings of puppets to seeing the necessity of increased direct British control in Egypt and Sudan. Their words also show an increase in understanding

¹⁵³ Letter in French signed by Zubayr, August 2, 1886, FO 78 4196.

¹⁵⁴ FO to CO, August 6, 1886, FO 78 4196.

¹⁵⁵ Hardinge, General and Governor Gibraltar to Holland, FO, August 17, 1886, FO 78 4196.

¹⁵⁶ FO (Baring) to CO, September 3, 1886, FO 78 4196.

of the ways in which abolitionist empire might still be seen from some peripheries as brutal domination. Finally, through his family, Zubayr shows both the ways he broadcast visions of himself, and the ways he broadcast ideas of his personal fortune, ideas which he drew on in his later life as leverage for increased subsidies.

This chapter functions as an entry into the story of Zubayr Pasha by narrating his experiences and debates over them at the moment of his greatest accessibility to the historical reader. In the next chapter, I will go back to the beginning of Zubayr's career in Bahr al-Ghazal, to give context to his adventures there and the wider political-economic world of the time.

Chapter 2: Situating Bahr al-Ghazal, 1856-1865

In an entourage such as Zubair's was to become, there was little difference between a slave and a man of free birth once officer status was reached: under such an authoritarian regime all were subservient to a marked degree, all classes of subordinate attaining a common level.¹

Accusations concerning what Zubayr Pasha did and did not do in Bahr al-Ghazal during his career there were leveled at him in diplomatic circles, by the British Anti-Slavery Society, and in Parliament while he was on Gibraltar. In order to understand what Zubayr's did and did not do in Bahr al-Ghazal it is necessary to narrate his actions, and perhaps more importantly, to give them context. This chapter gives that context, placing Bahr al-Ghazal within Sudan, relative to Egypt, and in its broader situated relationship with the British and Ottoman empires of the 1850s and 1860s, while narrating Zubayr's years of exploration as a nomadic merchant.

This chapter functions to set up the status quo from which changes toward modern forms of imperialism shifted: This dissertation focuses on a moment of transition, a frontier closing, and this chapter shows the opening of that frontier. The expansion of Egyptian control into northern Sudan, and the subsequent expansion of Sudanese trade networks into Bahr al-Ghazal set up a frontier period, a period in which power was broadcast via the thinnest of networks, a period during which political borders were fairly meaningless, because imperialism was layered and concentric. This period also shows a corresponding fluidity in personal status power relations: On a frontier, with neither a

¹ W. Hallam, *The Life and Times of Rabih Fadl Allah* (Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., 1977), 32.

state structure or tribal structure to defend them, poverty and slavery were nearly equivalent status showing lack of power.

Zubayr was born north of Khartoum, Egypt's administrative center in Sudan, in 1830, received a traditional Quranic education, and became enmeshed in the regional trade network his family and their Ja'aliyy tribe had been involved in for generations.² He accompanied a cousin on a trading mission in 1856 into Bahr al-Ghazal, to the south of Egyptian-ruled Sudan. Though this was Zubayr's first trading mission, this tradition of armed northern Sudanese trading in the south beyond the swamps of the White Nile began as early as 1839 and had expanded in the subsequent decades.³ The Egyptian government had begun to control and monopolize trade in northern Sudan, leaving little room for profit for small traders, so young men looking to get started in trade moved southward outside of Egyptian state control.⁴

Zubayr's cousin, with whom he traveled, was in the employ of Ali ibn Amuriyy, one of the most successful traders in Bahr al-Ghazal at the time. The cousin had traveled with Amuriyy "surreptitiously."⁵ It seems that many men joined these voyages against their wills while others snuck aboard the same voyages. Zubayr traveled along with this voyage, he reported in an interview with the Lebanese historian Na'um Shuqayr fifty

² "The Dja'aliyyun, sharp-witted folk with great trading ability, profited under Turco-Egyptian rule. Dja'aliyyun of the dispersion were numerous in Kurdofan and Dar Fur, especially in the Arab-negroid southern fringe, where conditions were favorable to petty traders (djallaba). The involvement of the djallaba in slave-trading led to severe measures being taken against them." P. M. Holt, "Dja'aliyyun," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb (Leiden: Brill, 1954).

³ R. S. O'Fahey, *The Darfur Sultanate* (New York; Columbia University Press, 2008), 262.

⁴ Ahmed Abdel Rahim Mustafa, "The Breakdown of the Monopoly System in Egypt After the 1840s," in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, ed. Peter Holt (Lond.: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁵ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 61.

years later, because he was worried about his cousin traveling without family to such a dangerous place as Bahr al-Ghazal.⁶

Zubayr described the first trouble the merchants encountered, when there “came a day when the people of the country conspired against us, and we were compelled to have recourse to arms.” Though Zubayr describes Ali Amuriyy as a merchant and trader, when the people “conspired” against him, only then did he describe Amuriyy’s employees as “our troops,” who Zubayr explained, “were into two parts of one hundred men each.

The savages then attacked us with hordes numberless as the flies that assemble on a dead bullock, and we were swiftly engaged in a hand to hand conflict. We were upon the edge of destruction, and the jaws of death gaped open for us, so that we were sure of annihilation. Preeminent amongst the enemy was one who resembled an elephant in bulk, whose ugly visage would put to shame a warthog’s self. Him I saw a giant among his fellows sending to an untimely end many of the true believers. With a blow between the eyes I brought him to the ground, and, seizing a loaded rifle that lay beside him, I maintained a desperate fight for the space of an hour, and while I thus busied myself in the fray no less than eleven of the enemy fell victims to my prowess.⁷

This description of battle against savages might otherwise seem out of place in a story of merchants and trade, but in Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s, at the edge of the Nile watershed and beyond the control of Egyptian Sudan or any modern state, the line between trade and conquest was often difficult to draw.

This chapter discusses Bahr al-Ghazal and the motives of the businessmen in it, stretching from Europe, through Egypt, and through Sudan, and emphasizing the period of Zubayr’s entry into Bahr al-Ghazal, between 1856 and 1866, before he created a fixed government there. This chapter relies on two main types of primary sources: extended interviews with Zubayr and travelers’ records. The interviews I rely on with Zubayr were

⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁷ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 7.

undertaken decades after the actions in question, with Flora Shaw, Na'um Shuqayr, and Lord Ribblesdale.⁸ Samuel Baker, Georg Schweinfurth and Charles Chaillé-Long traveled in Bahr al-Ghazal and wrote their traveler narratives close to the period in question, but had limited interaction with Zubayr and limited understanding of his experience. To get a better idea of the ethnic milieu of Bahr al-Ghazal, this chapter also relies on the tribal history reconstructed by Father Stefano Santandrea who lived in Bahr al-Ghazal from 1928 to 1958.

Both Zubayr's interviews and travelers' records leave gaps. Zubayr told his story thoroughly only to Flora Shaw and Na'um Shuqayr, both of who published their interviews. Flora Shaw interviewed Zubayr on Gibraltar, as discussed above, and published her interview in periodical form. Na'um Shuqayr most likely interviewed Zubayr in Sudan between 1900 and 1902, and included the narrative of Zubayr's life in his *History and Geography of Ancient and Modern Sudan*, published in one large volume in Beirut in Arabic. Shaw asked Zubayr many questions related to the moral impact of his actions, and focused on these in her published versions, whereas Shuqayr's published version included more details of military and political movements as Zubayr had told them. Both writers accepted Zubayr's descriptions of what had happened in his life without any clear recourse to other sources.

Travelers' records help to balance Zubayr's narratives, but leave their own gaps.

Travel literature inevitably has a more comparative aspect. Travelers lack an

⁸ Ribblesdale was a MP in the house of Lords who interviewed Zubayr on Gibraltar but only published an article on them twenty years later. Na'um Shuqayr was a Lebanese historian who included his interviews with Zubayr, taken in 1900, as a standalone section within his extensive *History and Geography of Sudan*. H.C. Jackson, a British member of the Sudan Political Service, published a translation of Shuqayr's section for which did interviews with Zubayr to publish the only biography of Zubayr in English, in 1913.

understanding of the subtleties of what they observe, but at the same time have the perspective to see it where locals find it too normal to see. Georg Schweinfurth was fairly scientific about his observations, making every attempt to understand the flora, fauna, and ethnic differences between the various places he traveled, but he lacked a subtle understanding of local politics. Samuel Baker later became the Khedive's representative when he traveled to the Equatoria region, and his understanding of the politics of slavery is a bit more subtle than Schweinfurth's, but his level of outrage at a socio-political system that he found to be immoral prevented him from understanding it more fully.⁹ Lord Ribblesdale, may have spent more time with Zubayr than Shaw, Shuqayr, Schweinfurth or Baker, when he was stationed on Gibraltar, but as his purpose for being there was not related to transcribing or writing, he was less systematic about his appraisal, and since he published his version only in 1908, it was more impressionistic.¹⁰

The aim of this chapter is to provide a wider context for the story provided by these narratives, and so the majority of the chapter is based on secondary source material to show the evolving relationship between Britain, Egypt, Sudan, and Bahr al-Ghazal in the mid-nineteenth century, and to place Zubayr's career, based on primary sources, within that context.

With the line between trade and conquest was difficult to draw in Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s, slavery in this context was difficult to distinguish from poverty on the one hand, and with trade on the other. In a context in which wages were unregulated and

⁹ Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa, from 1868 to 1871* (New York: Harper, 1874); Samuel W. Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*. (London: Macmillan, 1866).

¹⁰ Ribblesdale, "Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar."

usually in kind, and no practical limits existed to abuses by employers on employees, including forbidding departure, there was little or no line between employment and servitude. In a context in which violence was an essential part of trade, in which traders had control of the means of violence, and not governments, there were no limits as to what could or could not be bought or stolen. In this Hobbesian environment institutions and power were fluid, without externally observed or enforced status. This is not to say that violence dominated at every moment, but that external limits on violence were absent.

Darfur provides clearer evidence of this difficulty in defining slavery, since it had a more centralized government and more written records before the nineteenth century. Under the sultanate that ruled for four centuries until Zubayr, Islam was the official state religion and Arabic the language of record in Darfur. Society in pre-nineteenth century Darfur “was characterized by a complex hierarchy of dependency and subordination,” argues R.S. O’Fahey, although perhaps any society is. Slaves were a distinct legal category within that hierarchy, but, O’Fahey argues, not necessarily at the bottom. Free men with neither social connections nor wealth would be clearly below slaves of wealthy connected men in a hierarchy. Therefore, “historians and anthropologists have been reluctant to use ‘slave’ or ‘serf’...because of the American and West Indian images they conjure up.”¹¹ It was this Darfuri tradition of slavery, clearly defined but not in ways conventional to Europeans, that was expanded into Bahr al-Ghazal as new traders from Khartoum and further north moved deeper into the marsh. A legally delineated definition

¹¹ R.S. O’Fahey, “Slavery and Society in Dar Fur,” in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Vol II, The Servile Estate*, ed. John Ralph Willis (New York; Psychology Press, 1985), 84.

of slavery, and especially one that conferred upon slaves certain advantages along with its myriad disadvantages, was critical to the development of Zubayr's private imperium. This system allowed the creation of wealth via the buying and selling of people while encouraging the desperately poor to volunteer for servitude. Controlling, regulating, and taxing this system was, for all intents and purposes, creating a government as Zubayr did, which will be related in more detail in chapter 3.

As Darfur waned in power in the nineteenth century due to improved navigation up the Nile, and as Islam and written language became more widespread in Bahr al-Ghazal, the contrast between these two regions faded somewhat, and Bahr al-Ghazal generally, under Zubayr specifically, came to form a frontier between Darfur and Darfur's sources of slaves. Before Zubayr, Darfur had used Bahr al-Ghazal and the regions to its south as sources of slaves. Zubayr's establishment of government, Muslim and armed, made those regions off limits, morally and practically, to Darfur as sources of slaves.

Darfur is an example of being both within Islamic and African traditions of slavery, though these traditions were common among Arab Muslim Africans, non-Arab Muslim Africans, and non-Arab non-Muslim Africans alike.¹² Similar examples of slavery in societies both Islamic and African extend across the Sahel. Among the Segou of Mali, the social category of *jòn* was a soldier-slave in the same vein, one employed and empowered by his employment, and at the same time has his freedom substantially and legally reduced.¹³ In Songhay, the emperor's slaves also had a similar status.¹⁴ These

¹² Without the fairly unified legal status of slaves under Islam, slave-soldiers in non-Muslim African societies might exhibit a larger range of traditions in this regard.

¹³ J. Bazin, "Guerre et servitude a Segou," in *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, ed. Claude

soldiers had the status of slave, not as an exception, but as the rule that soldiers in these societies were considered slaves. Their status was legally different, but perhaps not effectively different, from soldiers in societies where soldiers were not considered slaves. "Being a slave," Eve Troutt Powell argues similarly in the Egyptian and Sudanese contexts, "did not exclude one from either power or...knowledge."¹⁵

Slavery is both everywhere and nowhere in this chapter, as slavery was everywhere and nowhere in Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s. Slaves were treated as any other item of trade, and at the same time, slaves and the very poor were interchangeable. The poor had few means to resist enslavement, and at the same time the most to gain from it in terms of monetary income and protection from violence. Zubayr was both part of this shift and an opportunistic exploiter of it.

Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s was outside of the Egyptian colonial province of Sudan. It contained a vast number of small Nile tributaries running north and east, gathering as the Bahr al-Ghazal River just before they met the main branch of the White Nile heading north toward Khartoum. Beyond Bahr al-Ghazal to the south are low hills, after which begins the Congo watershed leading to the Atlantic.¹⁶ Bahr al-Ghazal is a temperate, wet, and swampy area. Roads and rivers were both often impassable in the nineteenth century. Because of the difficulty of traversing the terrain, the peoples of the region were separated into tribes of greatly varying culture and religion and language; they often knew fairly little of one another's existence or of the outside world. The region

Meillassoux (Paris: Maspero, 1975).

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Captifs ruraux et esclaves impériaux du Songhay," in *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, ed. Claude Meillassoux (Paris: Maspero, 1975).

¹⁵ Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, 14.

¹⁶ See map in appendix.

is within the territory of the tsetse fly and the deadly sleeping sickness it hosts, so it could not support horses, camels, or other pack animals, but it hosted many lions and elephants. Before the nineteenth century, what few exports originated in the region were in the form of limited numbers of slaves to Darfur and through Darfur to Egypt, along with ivory exported mostly to India for the manufacture of religious objects.¹⁷

Networked trade expansion, ultimately connected to the capitalist world in the nineteenth century brought the formerly isolated tribes of Bahr al-Ghazal together under Zubayr, brought Bahr al-Ghazal into Sudan, Sudan into Egypt, and Egypt toward France and Britain. Zubayr can be seen to have been a primary agent of this change, however unconsciously, of broader global market forces expressing themselves in Bahr al-Ghazal.

Zubayr was hardly unique for being a Muslim primary agent of capitalist integration in the mid-nineteenth century. Gad Gilbar describes a category of “big merchant” entrepreneurs who became dominant in late nineteenth century Middle East. He argues against the idea that the dominant merchant class was either state-supported, non-Muslim, or had foreign ties in either the Ottoman Empire, Iran or the Gulf. He identifies a group of prominent Muslim merchants acting without notable government support, including the Sudanese Abdallah Bey Hamza, who had trading relations with Zubayr after 1900, and who traded mostly in gum arabic and indigo. Gilbar’s definition of big merchants contributes to an understanding that Zubayr was hardly unique in the time and place that he lived for his large scale trading outside of state control. Zubayr

¹⁷ Bahr al-Ghazal was part of Sudan from 1876 to 2011, and will now become the westernmost province of the new Southern Sudan.

differed, however, with Gilbar's big merchants in the extent to which his company not only worked with little state support, but functioned as its own state.¹⁸

The fluid alliances in Sudan between big merchants, mercenary soldiers, and weak states showed more of a globalizing process than a nationalizing one. Whether integration of Bahr al-Ghazal into Egypt and Egypt into France and Britain were more or less separate processes and one process, therefore, depends on interpretation.

One example of this subjective interpretation is the careers of John Petherick, and even more so Samuel Baker and Charles Gordon in southern Sudan, since Petherick worked for the British government, Baker and Gordon for the Egyptian. The two worked to expand Egyptian territory into Equatoria, to the southeast of Bahr al-Ghazal. They were British, but they were officers in the Khedive's army, taking orders from the Khedive in Cairo, and to a lesser extent from the Governor-General in Khartoum, and never from London, even if London influenced the Khedive directly and indirectly.¹⁹ Baker and Gordon were essentially soldiers of fortune in Egypt. On the most theoretical level, their involvement was part of processes by which the free-market, supported by the threat of force and revolutions in technology, further embraced new areas. Those markets pulled from Bahr al-Ghazal primarily ivory, slaves, and ostrich feathers for export to Sudan and Egypt and, with the exception of slaves, to Europe. In exchange, firearms, ammunition, and trinkets were pulled from Europe through Egypt and Sudan to Bahr al-Ghazal. These trade networks had little overlap with parallel East Africa or even Red Sea

¹⁸ Gad G. Gilbar, "The Muslim Big Merchant-Entrepreneurs of the Middle East, 1860-1914," *Die Welt Des Islams* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 1-36.

¹⁹ Alice Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire: Samuel Baker, Charles Gordon & the Creation of Equatoria* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 202.

trade networks in the nineteenth century. The Nile route replaced the overland route through Darfur and the Forty Days' Road to Cairo as travel became safer and more efficient on the Nile. Most slaves stayed in Sudan or Egypt, with a small minority traveling across the Mediterranean to Istanbul. Trade from East Africa, including slaves and ivory, traveled north and east to Arabia and India.²⁰

Egypt's mounting debt subjected it increasingly to the British and French realms of influence, at least to the degree of power given to the Caisse de la Dette. In turn the need for revenue brought Sudan further into the growing Egyptian empire. Debt conferred control and these empires were a political manifestation of that control. While colonial empire formalized dominance, the less formal stages, such as the Caisse de la Dette, were forms of dominance nonetheless, albeit more subtle. The growth and formalization of empires was the political face of the transfer of goods and wealth from peripheral regions, generally referring to only the final stage of progression through degrees of subordination toward the metropolises, with the means of integration moving towards subordination to new actors the other way, like firearms to Ethiopia, and to Zubayr. Slavery and colonial conquest were two symptoms of this transfer of control by economic forces. Bahr al-Ghazal became part of Sudan in the late-nineteenth century, but in the mid-nineteenth century Bahr al-Ghazal was no more part of Sudan than Egypt was part of Britain, which is to say, in "an involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners."²¹ This chapter expands upon this description that

²⁰ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*; Roland Anthony Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Africa Since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 80–4.

²¹ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 20.

Ehud Toledano coined for slaver and enslaved, and which I use also in parallel for metropole and periphery.

One lens to understanding the nature of slavery and political power is the institution of Mamluks and mamuks more generally in Egypt. Tax-farmers in Ottoman Egypt were generally manumitted Mamluks, for example. Tax-farmer was a position of great political power and financial gain. To have these positions go to former slaves shows that the regime, here the Ottoman regime, which kept in Egypt many of its Mamlu traditions, was empowering freed slaves explicitly because they were freed slaves, and so they had developed in their tenure and training, a much closer relationship with the power structure than peasants could hope for.²²

On a smaller level, too, using slave soldiers was a way to gain loyal and trainable household members much more quickly than one could by marriage or reproduction. “The acquisition of Mamluks,” wrote Jane Hathaway, “was for the Qazdughlis and other ambitious grandees of the eighteenth century not so much a program of ethnic consolidation or the implementation of a slave ethos as a strategy for expeditious household building. For those with the requisite rank and income, Mamluks were by the mid-eighteenth century a means towards a strong self-sustaining household.”²³ It is these eighteenth century Egyptian traditions that became nineteenth century Sudanese traditions, and led to the tradition in which Zubayr was steeped, that slavery was not so much a

²² Jane Hathaway, “‘Mamluk households’ and ‘Mamluk factions’ in Ottoman Egypt: a reconsideration,” in Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann, *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 108.

²³ *Ibid*, 115.

tradition of domination of one ethnicity over another, or a tradition of forced labor, but a means to enlarge one's household.

Another useful lens to understand the overlapping layers of slavery, political expansion, and trade in this chapter is that of southern Africa at about the same time, in which these forces were together known as *difecane*. These were northward armed migrations of Zulu and related Nguni peoples away from European settlements at the Cape Colony. Resistance to these more organized military tactics especially of the Zulu was virtually impossible for the various settled peoples of the region. Their most effective mode of resistance was allying themselves with the most powerful group in the regions further north: the Yao, centered in today's Mozambique, who in turn had pressure put on them and military technology borrowed from Swahili traders, who had pressure put on them by Arab and Portuguese traders. The Swahili were better organized, better financed, and had better rifles than the Yao, and the Arab and Portuguese traders were themselves more powerful than the Swahili. This chain of pressure and technology was also a chain of financing and a chain of slave raiding and trading. Warrior slaves known as *achikunda* were sponsored by Portuguese, Swahili, Arab, Yao and Nyamwezi (of Tanzania) traders. This worked in stages: Portuguese and Arab traders extended credit to Swahili traders, who then extended credit to Yao and Nyamwezi traders, who did most of the raiding for slaves themselves. This process not only helped the Portuguese, Swahili, and Arab traders gain much larger numbers of slaves, but it helped the slave raiders justify their actions: if they themselves were slaves, and becoming a slave had made them relatively

wealthy and powerful, they might think that those who they were enslaving might benefit from the process.²⁴

Tippu Tib was the most successful of these traders, himself half-Nyamwezi and half-Swahili. Tippu Tib was based in Zanzibar and raided for slaves and ivory among the various peoples of the eastern Congo. The *achikunda* bands of warrior slaves, like those of Tippu Tib, raided small inland states, the same states the Zulu were raiding, for slaves to sell in the eastern Indian Ocean and reaching the Middle East. The Zulu brought a level of violence and warlordism to the communities to their north, but these communities were also under attack from equally armed and violent peoples to their north, so the Zulu were in one sense crushing these communities, and in another sense giving them the tools to defend themselves from a more powerful enemy. This process lasted from the turn of the nineteenth century until British efforts to abolish slavery in southern Africa began to be successful in the 1880s.²⁵

Slavery in early Zulu traditions, according to Paul Lovejoy, was a means of incorporation in a new society, and incorporation was necessary before slaves could be emancipated. Slaves could not be freed until they were slaves, and freed slaves were part of the more powerful society, whereas those who had never been slaves were not. Enslavement among the Zulu, then, as among Zubayr's conquered peoples, was a critical step on the road to personal empowerment for those enslaved, at least in the eyes of the slavers. Enslavement brought individuals from the world of the less developed peoples

²⁴ Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 237. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 49.

²⁵ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 158.

into the world of the more developed peoples.²⁶ This chapter and the next will go into more detail concerning the process by which enslavement led to empowerment in Zubayr's realm.

Carolyn Hamilton in describing the Zulu avoids the word *slave*, but describes the status of newly integrated peoples in similar ways to slaves: These peoples were considered ethnically inferior outsiders who were below the status of subjects, "those who sleep with their fingers up their anus," given only menial jobs, and forbidden from top positions. These Hamilton differentiates from subject peoples who were integrated into society through the *ambutho* system. Hamilton concluded that that Zulu system was differentiated between peoples north of the Thukela river, subjects, and those from south of that river, outsiders.²⁷

This chapter gradually focuses in on the history of Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s and 1860s. The political and economic relationship of Britain and Europe to Egypt and Sudan forms the first section of this chapter. The relationships of the Ottoman and Egyptian governments to one another and to their colony, Sudan, are discussed in the second section of this chapter. The Sudan that was created in the 1820s and expanded in the decades following form the third section. The expansion of Sudan into Bahr al-Ghazal is the final section of this chapter.

²⁶ Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 158, 237, 249. In a similar way today a parent might knowingly sell his or her child into indentured servitude as a prostitute because it comes with access to money, something perhaps absent from the parents' rural poverty.

²⁷ Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 49.

Britain and Europe

This section shows the loose, layered, overlapping, and concentric empires that Britain, France had over the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, and transitively into Sudan.

Britain's relationship to her empire can also be understood as a relationship of mutual dependence by two, or in this case multiple, unequal partners. British support, on a political-military level, was for greater or lesser expansion depending on variations in the domestic political climate. On an economic level, however, these were cycles of different types of control. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson defined that debate by arguing that "refusals to annex are no proof of reluctance to control": that support for free trade was simply an alternate tactic to economic global dominance from coloring the map red, though at the time they might both have been thought of as aspects of universal progress.²⁸ The bulk of the work of informal empire, not dissimilar to today's neo-imperialism, was done through local collaborators, who might be of local or European origin and identity; "Now liberation, not acquisition, was more often the aim of power; and free trade, not monopoly, was its device."²⁹ These collaborators traded far beyond the sphere of political annexation. The British military rarely had to protect them both because their individual failures or deaths were not devastating to the British economy, and because the guns these men possessed meant they rarely needed defending. When they did, in Nigeria, Uganda and the Transvaal, the movements to intervene were highly contentious, for if nothing else, these ventures would be financially costly to the British government in ways infringing the classical liberal norms of the time.

²⁸ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, 6, no. 1, New Series (January 1, 1953): 1–15.

²⁹ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 4.

Recent scholarship has questioned both the Robinson and Gallagher and Cain and Hopkins ideas by challenging if not only was free trade a looser form of imperialism, but that imperialism was merely a shade of globalization, that the British were not in control of global changes, but were as much subjects as originators of those changes themselves.³⁰ This argument that the empire barely existed helps the idea that most British were not aware of its existence, or if so, considered the empire as a concept incidental to their interests and identities.³¹ Another argument for this more subtle reading is the idea that private corporate violence has been the rule rather than the exception throughout history, rather than typical of the rule of a particular empire.³²

Richard Huzzey states this most clearly when he argues that “British imperial policy was not controlled by any particular cabal.”³³ Britain’s territorial expansion in Africa developed after slavery was abolished in the empire, and anti-slavery provided a cover, an excuse for increasing British control that was little about anti-slavery at all (see Wingate in chapter 5 of this dissertation), and largely about the expansion of markets. Though the British Imperial East Africa Company was short-lived, it showed what British involvement in Africa was really about.³⁴

Huzzey’s work works hand-in-hand with Bernard Porter’s idea of absent-minded imperialists. Porter calls them that not because those involved did not know that what we now consider the empire was happening (though the vast majority of Britons who were

³⁰ Darwin, “Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830-1960,” 44.

³¹ Porter, “‘Empire, What Empire?’ or, Why 80% of Early-and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It,” 260.

³² Akita, *Gentlemanly Capitalism, Imperialism, and Global History*, 2.

³³ Huzzey, *Freedom Burning*, 158.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 132.

not involved, he argues, were purposefully kept in the dark about empire). Porter calls them absent-minded because the empire writ large was so insignificant to those in power who were concerned with their small free-trade fiefdoms within it. Those involved knew too much to consider Sudan, Bengal and New Zealand as similar enough to be part of one experience. Huzzey not only would agree with Porter, but would go further and argue that anti-slavery efforts in Nigeria, Zanzibar and Sudan were so different as to be hardly part of the same anti-slavery experience, and even less so part of something we now falsely assume was understood then to have been a unified empire.³⁵

When free trade, or perhaps the Wallersteinian capitalist world system, did need defending, it was usually against indigenous revolution or rival powers with differing criteria for intervention which forced Britain's hand. When the Taiping rebellion threatened access to China, Charles Gordon was sent to command the Ever Victorious Army of Chinese peasants, the army of the Chinese Emperor, which already had American officers in 1863.³⁶ When Gordon was sent to put down the similarly millenarian Mahdist revolt in Sudan in 1884, this was also in defense of capitalism, as funds from the Sudan to Egypt repayed British banks. By threatening the Red Sea and Egypt itself the Mahdia even more directly threatened British financial and trade interests. Gordon was sent to maintain free trade in China and in Sudan.

Zubayr's relationship with Gordon came to play a critical part in both of their lives and it is useful to see the two men in parallel, having been born only three years

³⁵ Bernard Porter, "'Empire, What Empire?' or, Why 80% of Early- and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It," Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*.

³⁶ Charles Gordon was born in 1833, and became increasingly evangelical in his adolescence. In 1956 he went to fight in Crimea. He returned to England in 1858 and left for China in 1860. (Rubinstein, *Britain's Century*, 201).

apart, and having gone to near the edges of the control of their peoples in their late twenties to spread that control through the pursuit of personal fortune beyond the metropolitan conventions they were born into.

Zubayr was not the only merchant who traded beyond the perimeter of state control in Bahr al-Ghazal. Men of various backgrounds had already traded in Bahr al-Ghazal when Zubayr arrived, and even set up small settlements, but none had the staying power of Zubayr, perhaps because none had quite his self-belief as civilizer. “One man can do little;” Zubayr said in describing this period, “but what he can do is to open the door to civilization, and civilization will do the rest,” Zubayr put it when speaking to Flora Shaw for her British audience.³⁷ John Petherick, who doubled as trader and British consul in Bahr al-Ghazal, began trading along the upper White Nile 1853, and established a base among the Dinka in 1863. Petherick worked as a representative both of the Royal Geographical Society and the British government, but these organizations were so remote as to add few burdens to his primary work as a trader and likely helped his position; rumors were popular that he traded in slaves but he denied them.³⁸ Alfonso de Malzac established the city of Rumbek among the Dinka Aqar in 1856; Malzac was a Frenchman, his lands being bought by an Austrian, Franz Bandar, who had worked for Malzac. Ambrose and Galoïse Poncet, brothers and Frenchmen, also set up their camp among the Aqar.³⁹

³⁷ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 575.

³⁸ Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 10.

³⁹ al-Tijānī ‘Āmir, *Janūb al-Sūdān : Baḥr al-Ghazāl Bayna al-‘Iṣābāt wa-al-Hukūmāt Min 1850 Ilā 1920 M (The Southern Sudan: Bahr al-Ghazal Between Gangs and Governments 1850-1920)* (Cairo: Markaz al-Nīl lil-I‘lām, 1980), 18–26; Rex S. O’Fahey, “Al-Zubayr’s Early Career,” *Sudanic Africa* 16 (2005): 53–68.

The British government therefore was somewhat represented, but what representation there was, through Petherick, was tenuous since Petherick's primary business was trade. The traders in Bahr al-Ghazal were also French and Austrian, in addition to Egyptians such as Abd al-Mesih Ghattas, Muhammad Khayur al-Arqawi, Muhammad Ahmd al-Aqqad, al-Nur Muhammad Anqara, Muhammad Abu Suud, and other Sudanese, and Kuchuk Ali, a Turk.⁴⁰

One problem with the trading collaborators as agents of empire thesis is that they acted less under the auspices of national interests than as fingers on an invisible hand of ill-defined capitalist penetration. The work of buccaneers certainly seems to have worked to expand global finance, but not necessarily to any gain for British finance. Egypt, Sudan, and Bahr al-Ghazal all became more closely integrated into financial systems in different ways, and via very different types of buccaneers. Other buccaneers, for example, kept close to court in Cairo, taking Egyptian national debt home in their pockets to London and around Europe.⁴¹ Tax farming buccaneers took from Sudanese peasants, keeping much in their pockets and sending some to Cairo. Zubayr and other buccaneers just outside of Sudan, took elephants, ostriches, and people of darker skins, and sold them northward. The buccaneer metaphor is thus easily maintained within the model of these overlapping empires.

If the disengagement of buccaneers from their home governments shows a new kind of imperialism, buccaneers who led states, such as Mehmed Ali of Egypt and King

⁴⁰ Amir, *Janūb al-Sūdān* The word Turk is used by some Sudanese sources to be generally anyone from further north than Sudan, including Egyptians, Europeans, Syrians, and those from Anatolia, but this wider meaning is more used in context to the Mahdi in the 1880s. Kuchuk Ali was probably Turkish at least to the extent that Turkish was his first language.

⁴¹ Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*.

Leopold of Belgium, provide more powerful examples of the new conception. While these leaders weren't buccaneers on the ground as Cain and Hopkins imagined, they otherwise embody the archetype, using colonial adventures for personal or dynastic gain, accepting private fortune should things go well but appealing to state force if they failed and not always successfully.

On the opposite end of each of these chains of transactions from buccaneers were gentleman capitalists, the bankers of the City of London and Paris. These gentleman capitalists would be an interesting road to go down to understanding the story of Zubayr in the future, to try to find records of ivory and ostrich feather purchasers in London and Paris, and to try to find records of the movement of these products across the Mediterranean, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation, focusing on the impacts of the sources of the ivory rather than the destinations.⁴²

The new bourgeoisie of industrializing Europe wanted to distinguish itself from the working classes, and ownership of pianos was a principal way to do so. Printed sheet music gained popularity, and ivory imports for piano keys skyrocketed. Ostrich feather hats joined pianos. The beautiful feathers became popular in the hats of this new bourgeoisie. A new middle class was greatly motivated to show itself visibly to be different from the merely surviving working classes. Nothing said that a woman had more money than she needed than a hat with a feather from an exotic tropical bird, and a piano with ivory keys in the parlor.⁴³ On top of a piano and a feather hat, the new

⁴² Cain, P. J., and A. G. Hopkins. "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II: New Imperialism, 1850-1945," *Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (1987): 1-26.

⁴³ R Beachey, "The East African Ivory Trade in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of African History* 8, no. 2 (1967): 269.

bourgeoisie surrounded themselves with cosmetics, art supplies and paper, all products that used small amounts of gum from a Sudanese Acacia tree as a stabilizer. Gum arabic, when dry, is very stable and easy to transport, but the trees from which the sap comes grow only in Sudanic Africa, mostly near the Nile. With the increasing industrialization of textiles, its use in sizing cloth became increasingly important, and the market for it grew steeply. The same factors that led Europe to desire increased qualities of ivory for piano keys and ostrich feathers for hats it seems clear would contribute to increased consumption of the products made with gum arabic: cloth, paper, paint, glue, ink, cosmetics, and exotic desserts.⁴⁴

Gum arabic grew in Bahr al-Ghazal, but it mostly grew further north toward Khartoum. It was not the main product exported from Bahr al-Ghazal, but it paved the way for others. Gum arabic was easy to transport, so with it trade between the north of Sudan, among the Ja'aliyy largely, to Egypt and Europe began. When tax collection in the north became overly demanding, profits from gum were no longer sufficient, and Ja'aliyy and other jallaba moved to Bahr al-Ghazal and similar regions, maintaining their trade relationships built on gum with increasing amounts of ivory.

These three products: ivory, ostrich feathers, and gum arabic, pushed Zubayr into Bahr al-Ghazal, where he could buy them at low prices, then send them to Khartoum to be sold at much higher prices. Others would buy the same products in Khartoum and sell them in Cairo, others would buy them in Cairo and sell them in Marseilles, and still others buy them in burgeoning Marseilles and sell them to shop owners in Paris, "Capital

⁴⁴ James L. A. Webb, "The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal," *Journal of African History* 26, no. 2-3 (1985): 149. Today in most of these uses gum arabic has been replaced by petroleum compounds. It is now used primarily in soft drinks and continues to be produced mostly in Sudan.

of the World,⁴⁵ who would then sell them to the makers of pianos, cosmetics, and hats. Zubayr traveled south in search of these products to trade down the Nile to Egypt and Europe.

Taxes from these sales, and profits from Egyptian state monopolies, which included gum arabic and ivory and at times slaves, were also anticipated as helping to service to pay off Egyptian debts to British and French banks, enforced by British and French advisors and the threat of British and French military force. Resources were nonetheless dissipated in vast modernizing construction projects, including large amounts to European advisors. Large amounts of money were transferred by British bankers at the Khedive's court to other British bankers in London, for example, and put on Egypt's tab, at high interest rates.⁴⁶

This debt would have been even harder to service had it not been for the cotton famine. The American colonies and a stable United States government provided plenty of raw cotton through the mid-nineteenth century. The American Civil War caused a global cotton famine. The Egyptian cotton industry was poised to take good advantage of this cotton famine.⁴⁷ Egyptian government, on the other hand, was not ready. Temptation and manipulation from cotton wealth and the promise of Suez riches ripped Egypt from the control of Egyptian government.⁴⁸ With the dearth of export cotton due to the American

⁴⁵ Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴⁶ Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 79.

⁴⁸ Arguably the Mehmed Ali administration was more Turkish than it was Arab, and hence less Egyptian, and Ismail was in this tradition, but while his grandfather spoke little Arabic, Ismail spoke Arabic, the language of most Egyptians. He may or may not have been truly Egyptian, but he was certainly more Egyptian than British and French imperialists.

Civil War, British and European cotton markets would suddenly turn their powerful and rapt attention both directly to Egypt and through Egyptian trade routes to India. American cotton provided most of the raw cotton for Lancashire mills. When the American North blockaded the South, a quarter of a million people in Lancashire became unemployed, after even cotton stockpiles were used up. In 1862, after American cotton was used up, Egyptian and Indian cotton began to replace it, but cotton imports by Britain did not reach their previous level from 1861 until 1866. Though the Suez Canal was not yet open, it was under construction through the American Civil War, and exports from India to Britain were already traveling through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean via rail from Suez to Cairo to Alexandria. As the Canal was built, Indian and Egyptian cotton became increasingly important to Britain, and allowing for the possibility of being cut off from Egypt was increasingly dangerous to the British economy.⁴⁹

This section has shown how British influence was broadcast into Egypt and Sudan in uneven and informal ways, and that British interests were tied into global trade. The interests of European bankers and traders paralleled those of Syrian and Egyptian traders, who also participated in globalizing forces, as will be seen more clearly in the following section.

Egypt and the Ottoman Empire

Egypt's debt to European banks was mostly accumulated from Ismail's reign, which began in 1863. Mehmed Ali ruled Egypt from 1805 to 1849, carefully avoiding external debt and expanding government control geographically and administratively. He

⁴⁹ Rubinstein, *Britain's Century*, 138.

worked to increase cotton yield to improve the Egyptian economy, but controlled and centralized the industry to its detriment: He dispossessed large landowners who had been running farms under a form of sharecropping, taking increasing government control over what farmers could plant, forcing them to sell their produce at government designated prices set by revenue needs rather than the market. If the farmer made a profit above his taxes, he would get a credit for future taxes rather than cash. Thus, Egyptian peasants were reduced to de facto state serfdom. Many peasants fled agricultural lands for cities, to exchange the humiliation of profitless fieldwork for the humiliation of street begging. Ismail was more tempted than Mehmed Ali to indebt himself to European bankers, perhaps because he was overconfident in the longevity of the bubble in cotton prices created by the American Civil War, and that the revenues enabled by this bubble would enable him to pay off the debts.⁵⁰

This section will show the ways Egypt and the Ottoman Empire used piecemeal imperial influence over Sudan in similar ways that Britain and other European empires used imperial influence over Egypt. This section will also lay the groundwork for discussions of slavery and abolition in chapter 3, with the understanding that enforcement of abolition over vested financial interests requires a stronger level of control than this loose-type of imperial influence.

Egyptian expansion into Sudan was already in progress when Zubayr was born in 1830: in 1820 Egyptian forces under Mehmed Ali's son Ismail Kamil conquered the weakened Funj state just to the south of Egypt, which became the new Egyptian colony

⁵⁰ Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*, 76; Afaf Sayyid-Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 76.

of Sudan. Zubayr's family embraced Egyptian conquest for the new trade opportunities they hoped it would bring. The Funj state had been able to provide little protection to long-distance trade, as taxation was minimal and occasional. The Egyptians founded a city at Khartoum as their new capital where the White and Blue Niles met.⁵¹ Beyond this new territory to the south, were vast regions belonging to no modern state, yet increasing in economic importance. As Egyptian interest gradually moved southward, traders moved in just ahead of political administrators.

The dominant Egyptian motive in Sudan was extracting resources and taxes. Egypt was a colonial power like any other; it wanted to make the Sudanese Egyptian yet wanted to rule over them as a lesser people. Whatever the varying wider motives for colonial annexation in Africa, Egyptian rule of Sudan was organized for profit. Colonies were organized to make money for the metropolitan government, either indirectly through business interests or directly through taxes.⁵²

For the first few decades of Egyptian rule, the government enforced a monopoly on all exported products, thinking this would assure the profits went squarely into its own hands. Cattle were a major export from northern Sudan to Egypt, in addition to gum arabic, indigo, ivory, slaves, and minerals. In exchange, the Egyptian government, sure of its monopoly profit, exported improved agricultural techniques and seeds, veterinary doctors, police and administrators, which expanded trade volumes at first. Eventually state monopolies were phased out and reduced to taxation. Whether the profit-taking was

⁵¹ A small settlement may have existed before 1820 at the location of Khartoum and may have used the name, but it was neither important economically nor politically until Egyptian rule. The Arabic word *khartoum* is also used for the trunk of an elephant and a garden hose, since Khartoum was the beginning of the unified trunk or hose that waters Egypt.

⁵² Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 14.

called monopoly or taxation, by the 1860s the result was the same: peasants and nomads produced the wealth that the Egyptian government used to help pay off its European debt.⁵³

State revenue impositions in a region without state protection and without money inevitably meant exploitation, both of and by Zubayr's clan. When products were taxed, Sudanese peasants were often held responsible beyond their ability to pay, forcing the peasants to take loans to pay taxes. Those with funds, which included many Ja'aliyyin, took advantage of this opportunity, paying taxes for peasants, charging high interest rates for the use of the money, and having to resort to violence to recoup their loans. These loans are evidence not simply of a lack of coinage, but of a newly economized region beyond an orderly regulatory pale. Though it was the primary intermediary in this financial squeeze, the Egyptian government (*the Turks* to the Sudanese) was not the only middleman. Egyptian peasants paid taxes in kind, but Sudanese peasants often couldn't afford their taxes in agriculture or even personal possessions, the Sudanese economy in the nineteenth century being so much less developed than the Egyptian. Merchants and moneylenders stepped in to pay taxes on behalf of peasants, protecting them from the violence that went along with tax farming, but putting them deeper in debt than they could ever escape. Taxation in this context was similar to what we might think of as tribute, and the relationship of over-taxation and eventual rebellion against it was part of the Egyptian-Sudanese relationship from as early as 1822 in which Ismail Kamil Pasha, head of the Egyptian invading army, was burned alive because his demands for tribute were too high, all the way to the Mahdist call in the 1880s to "Kill the Turks and cease to

⁵³ Mustafa, "The Breakdown of the Monopoly System in Egypt After the 1840s," 212–14.

pay taxes!”⁵⁴ Revolt and resistance was not to immediate state formation, but to state tax demands that resulted in abusive practices.

Tax collectors, and the entire Egyptian administration, military and political, both in Egypt and Sudan, were Turks. Some were ethnically Turkish, and many from regions in the Caucasus. They spoke mostly Turkish, and Arabic-speaking Egyptians were not allowed into the upper ranks of the military or government. Generations of recent historians heavily reliant on the ethnic idea of nation have referred to Arabic-speaking Egyptians as *true* or *real* Egyptians, following in a sense Ahmed ‘Urabi’s call in 1882 when he mustered the support of Arabic-speaking Egyptians in the Egyptian military to take control from their Turkish-speaking superiors. Those Turks, however, were Egyptians. Some, like Mehmed Ali’s family, were only a few generations in Egypt. Earlier Turks were Christians and Circassians, were captured, trained, and formed into non-hereditary Mamluk households (*buyut*) that ruled Egypt. Mehmed Ali may have not been born in Egypt, but his biggest accomplishment was to make Egypt a strong military, economic, and political power, if not independent of the Ottoman Empire in name, certainly in fact. Sudanese then and now refer to the period of Egyptian occupation as the Turkiyya, and most scholars refer to it with the redundant term Turco-Egyptian, which assumes the nationalist slant that Turks could not be Egyptians or that Egypt was ever entirely independent of the Ottoman Empire. The Turco-Egyptian nomenclature is especially egregious in the era in which Ottoman *tanzimat* policy further distinguished the Ottoman Empire from Egypt, where Ottoman policies were not generally

⁵⁴ Anders Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya: Peasants and Traders in the Shendi Region, 1821-1885* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 82.

implemented, even if Egypt was modernizing in its own way. *Egyptian* is used here to refer to the government and people of Egypt, including those who spoke exclusively Turkish, if they were not part of the Ottoman government.⁵⁵

Mehmed Ali and Ismail advanced their own style of new state, parallel to the Tanzimat. Mehmed Ali's conquest of Sudan brought some new soldiers and new tax revenue, even if it never brought much gold, tales of gold being the initial motivation for the invasion. Mehmed Ali hoped that by increasing the productive capacity of Sudanese agriculture and husbandry he would be able to create an economy capable of paying tax revenue and providing goods at low monopoly prices that the government could sell. This modernizing force was typical of Mehmed Ali's Egypt as well as the *Tanzimat* (organization) movement across the Ottoman Empire and was continued under Ismail. Nonetheless, political disorder in the declining Funj Sultanate, Egyptian control of Sudan gave security to Sudanese and Egyptian traders, and an increase in trade both of Sudanese goods to Egypt and Europe and European and Egyptian goods to Sudan. Egypt was in a position to refuse orders from Istanbul, despite the Ottoman *Tanzimat* bureaucratization revolution of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly after gaining de facto independence from the Sultan in the 1840 London Convention on the Pacification of the Levant.

The expansion of Egypt into Sudan and the opening of markets had a greatly destructive impact on Egyptian peasants as well as on Sudanese peasants. Egyptian peasants became reluctant to farm under harsh regulation and Egyptian agricultural output fell. By having more modest visions of government, Mehmed Ali's successors

⁵⁵ Ottoman identity at this time was also being reimagined in this period, as pan-Islamic, pan-Turkic, and Ottoman nationalist. It is only in this period that Ottomans were beginning to take pride in being called Turks, as opposed to thinking that Ottomans were elites and Turks were peasants.

Abbas and Said began a period of increased production, particularly cotton production, as peasants were motivated to return to fields from cities. Ismail continued Mehmed Ali's modernization but also Abbas and Said's lead on ending monopolies and increasing debt, Europeanizing Egypt by following the European zeitgeist of free trade. Railway and canal projects were intended to create an industrial and commercial hub that would move Egypt towards contemporary status with the developed Mediterranean powers. Ismail took control of Egypt after the brief reigns of Abbas and Said. Abbas and Said had slowly yielded to European financial hegemony. When he took over after Abbas and Said, Mehmed Ali's grandson Ismail encouraged big government again, including both domestic public works projects and imperial expansion, including into Zubayr's Bahr al-Ghazal and up the White Nile in Equatoria.⁵⁶ However, Ismail lacked his grandfather's sense of fiscal responsibility. Ismail fell victim to the great curse of spiraling debt, paying off huge loans by taking bigger loans on harsher terms, and as his financial situation fell deeper into ruin, continued to spend lavishly, doing his very best to project his prestige as a ruler and ignore realities. He allowed his advisors to do whatever they could to raise funds, and turned a blind eye to details, allowing advisors themselves to skim immense amounts for themselves.⁵⁷

It was very easy for Ismail's predecessors to ignore the distant Sudan and tax-collecting policies there. As Eve Troutt Powell makes clear, Egyptians never felt Sudanese were their equals. The Ja'aliyyin were pressured, like all Sudanese, to raise tax

⁵⁶ Ismail also spent lavishly on parties, and hundreds of his own personal slaves. (Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 28.

⁵⁷ 'Abd Rāfi'ī, *'Aṣr Ismā'īl*, al-Ṭab'ah 4. (al-Qāhirah J.M.'A.: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1987); Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt*, 74.

revenues, and were more ready than others to take advantage of changing conditions with their developed trading and financial culture.⁵⁸

The various Egyptian regimes had different levels of interest in control over Sudan, culminating in Ismail's expansion, but it continued to be a very loose form of control, empire on the cheap, especially when it came to British abolitionism, which Khedives had little interest in spending money on. While the British Anti-Slavery Society had the ear of various ministers, those like Cromer who had control in Egypt had little motivation to push abolitionism.

Sudan

The dynamics of Khartoum's control over peripheral Sudan are most clearly seen as an extension of the dynamics of London's control over Cairo and Cairo's control over Khartoum. This section contributes to my greater arguments of the loose and overlapping ways power was broadcast before 1885 in Sudan.

When Mehmed Ali's son Ismail Kamil first took control of northern Sudan for Egypt, his primary mission was to extract slaves and gold. Therefore, he introduced heavy taxation of all the settled people, which led them to revolt and kill him in 1822.

Though levels of official taxation were reduced somewhat, tax collectors often used brutal methods. Tax collectors were culturally and linguistically separate from their Sudanese constituents, generally being from the Caucasus and being known as *bashibazouks* or untrained soldiers. Sudanese had been unused to paying taxes at all. During the Funj Sultanate in northern Sudan until 1820, no regular taxes had been levied,

⁵⁸ Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 105.

and no taxes at all had been levied on the poor. These new taxes wreaked havoc on the economy and social networks of Sudan, requiring penniless peasants to take loans to pay taxes, as stated above, and it being exceedingly difficult to collect money from those who have none, great disruptions of the social order became common.⁵⁹ “Throughout the Soudan money is exceedingly scarce and the rate of interest exorbitant, varying, according to the securities, from thirty-six to eighty percent. So high and fatal a rate [of interest] deters all honest enterprise, and the country must lie in ruin under such a system.”⁶⁰ Exorbitant rates of interest were hardly unique at the time to Sudanese loan sharks in isolated southern villages: British and French banks were by the 1860s actively pursuing risky loans at steep interest rates to the Egyptian government. That debt trickled down to these same loan sharks, forcing peasants to pay steep taxes.

In 1825 the leader of Egyptian forces, Mahu Bey, reduced official taxation and tried to bring stability to Sudan, though tax collectors still collected exorbitant rates for their own incomes. His successor Ali Khurshid Agha was finally titled a governor, rather than a commander-in-chief, and he continued as Mahu Bey had, expanding Khartoum, and ruled until 1838. His successor, Abu Widan, expanded Sudanese territory in bits and pieces, including its first coastline. Under Abu Widan’s rule, in 1839 and again in 1840 and 1842, Selim Kaptan explored up the White Nile. Thus strengthened with increased territory, rumors abounded that Abu Widan was plotting to make Sudan independent, until he very suddenly died in 1843, perhaps poisoned by Mehmed Ali’s daughter, his wife. Mehmed Ali took the opportunity to divide Sudan into provinces, each responsible

⁵⁹ Ibrahim, “The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885,” 207.

⁶⁰ Baker, *The Albert N’Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 18.

directly to Cairo, though he wavered on this policy, variously giving Khartoum slightly more power. When Mehmed Ali left power, Abbas did not deal with Sudan, and Said considered abandoning Sudan entirely. When Ismail took power in 1863, the tide turned considerably for Sudan. He invested in a bigger administration, including a rudimentary river police force, and variously backed abolitionist governors or slave-trading businessmen, whichever he thought could more aptly bring order.⁶¹

Egyptian control in the south of Sudan, as a semi-formal expansion of Egyptian power, it was through the use of diplomat-soldier-merchants of a variety of nationalities. This was overlapping imperialism, as they kept relations with their home countries as well as Egypt, or perhaps more clearly was an expansion of the capitalist world system. Trading in the south began with Selim Kaptan, likely an ex-Ottoman naval officer, who employed two Frenchmen, Jacques Pons d'Aroud and George Thibout in 1838, the former an official and the latter a trader. The territory up the White Nile had been unknown because of the prominence of dense marsh vegetation across the river, called *sudd*, meaning dam, which required such immense effort to clear that voyages were typically delayed months, but depending on wind and weather might clear somewhat. The two Frenchmen published diaries of their journeys, which heightened interest in Europe for this combination of exploring toward the source of the Nile and possibly getting rich: Also in the 1850s David Livingstone and John Hanning Speke were exploring into central Africa, and as will be described below, the thrill of possible discovery of territory accompanied a thrill of possible discovery of wealth. In 1850 a British merchant and in 1851 an American diplomat tried to get further than Kaptan, but both failed due to dense

⁶¹ Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan*, 49-64.

sudd. Richard Burton and John Speke were given funding to explore the source of the White Nile in 1856 by the Royal Geographic Society, Foreign Office, and East India Company, though from the East via Zanzibar rather than through Khartoum. They both met Samuel Baker and the British consul in the Sudan, John Petherick, in 1863. The trading and diplomatic activities of Petherick, Baker, and others overlapped closely, their diplomatic credibility helping their trading efforts, and their trading efforts supporting their meager diplomatic incomes.⁶²

The very clear aim of these famous Europeans was the source of the White Nile; they did not consider Bahr al-Ghazal much. The source of the White Nile held no riches, but merely the fame associated with finding the source of the Nile, so calling their travels part of the capitalist world system underplays how much of the motivations of merchant-diplomats was for fame and renown, forms of power but not of capital. Bahr al-Ghazal is *one* source of the White Nile, but most of the river has its source further south, in Lake Albert, Lake Victoria, and elsewhere south of Sudan. The map of Sudan that was drawn under Ismail, and under the influence of these European explorers, very much is a map of the Nile toward its source. To the west of the Nile, the vast regions of Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur caught the interest of some Europeans, but more Egyptians, and quickly became dominated by Ja'aliyyin from northern Sudan. Zubayr was an imperialist buccaneer, seeking out the area of Bahr al-Ghazal partly because extracting its resources would be freer of the European intervention that made Equatoria troublesome.

Zubayr, as other Ja'aliyyin, followed the market. He looked for cheaper sources of things that were quickly becoming popular luxury items in Europe, primarily ivory,

⁶² Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 4–7.

ostrich feathers, and gum arabic.⁶³ They were not as interested in the fame that came from discovering new territories as the power that came from ruling them and the money from extracting their resources. Away from the watchful eyes of European or Egyptian administrators, the line between trade, taxation and robbery in these districts was often far from distinct.

Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1850s was a time “when thousands of northerners turned slave-hunters and slave traders (jallaba) and joined the Klondike-like rush for slaves and ivory.”⁶⁴ In the narrative that Flora Shaw recorded with Zubayr, this Klondike-like rush had “the same sort of attraction that the wilds of America and Australia have had at various times for young Englishmen.” Shaw seems to have been conscious of the comparison, of including Zubayr and other northern Sudanese as, if not colonizers in the European mold exactly, colonizers of a kind nonetheless. To Flora Shaw the trading was exploring full of mysteries:

The expeditions were trading expeditions, but they went down prepared for rough personal adventure. The country was in many directions unexplored, and the stories that were told of it were as wonderful as the accounts first brought home to Europe from the West. Some portions were described as gardens, in which every sort of fruit grew wild; others as deadly swamps, where nothing but crocodiles and venomous insects could live. Dwarfs, giants, gnomes, and white races with long and silky hair were among the inhabitants of the wilds. There were the horrors of cannibalism to face, the excitement of big game to hunt. Every expedition went fully armed; sometimes enormous fortunes were brought back; very often lives were lost.⁶⁵

⁶³ Similarly, the metal coltan suddenly became extremely valuable in the 1990s due to its use in cell phones and laptops. Most of the world’s coltan mines are in eastern Congo. Not surprisingly, violence exploded in eastern Congo. Cell phones and laptops, things that everyone wants and no one needs, caused abuses and murders.

⁶⁴ Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 105.

⁶⁵ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 336–7.

This exaggerated language belied a core of truth: the south did have a wide variety of tribes, which from long periods of isolation were more culturally removed from one another than neighboring peoples in most parts of the world.

Members of the elite trade-oriented Ja'aliyy tribe played a major role in these expeditions. Trade with the south was also necessary because trade in the traditional Ja'aliyy region was declining. The new Egyptian-controlled capital of Khartoum had displaced the Funj capital of Sennar to the south, and the main Ja'aliyy city of Shendi, just north of Khartoum. Boat traffic down the Nile was increasingly passing through Shendi without stopping. More critically, travel was avoiding the Shendi portion of the Nile altogether: The Nile loops east-north-west as it travels southward from Khartoum and has three cataracts (rocky unnavigable portions) in that loop. In the post-1820 era of increasing security on land under Egyptian control, trade increasingly took the land route across this loop in the Nile, which also happened to avoid Shendi and the whole Ja'aliyy region. If Ja'aliyyin were to stay in the trading game, they had to follow the trade.⁶⁶

The 1850s and 1860s marked a great increase in independent slave trading in the Sudan. With Mehmed Ali's death and the tendency of his successors to favor less government control, privatized slaving grew rapidly. These new slavers considered themselves a breed apart from their predecessors, preferring to call themselves traders (*tujjār* تجّار) or foreigners (*khawājāt* خواجهات) rather than itinerant traders (*jallābāt* جلابات).⁶⁷

From Khartoum, the White Nile approaches Bahr al-Ghazal from the east. The entrance into Bahr al-Ghazal was the end of the portion of the White Nile that was easily

⁶⁶ Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 106.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

passable by river, at the permanent settlement of Mashra' al-Riqq. This settlement functioned as a sort of port from the White Nile into Bahr al-Ghazal, which was filled with small tributaries and dense rushes and was often unnavigable even by the smallest boats. On Zubayr's first voyage their ship was left docked for four months at Mashra' ar-Riqq while they traded.⁶⁸ Trading penetrated from the east toward the west, up the Bahr al-Ghazal River, and southward along its many tributaries. Approaches to Bahr al-Ghazal from the south-west via the Congo River, or overland, were occasionally used, but less often, since the regions to the south and west were less developed and extended further from sources of capital and technology. Darfur to the north exhibited some limited influence in the region, but mostly in terms of slave raiding, not trading.

Slaves were traded via the Nile, but also from Darfur overland to Benghazi and other ports in Libya. A continual slave trade existed from before Ottoman rule in Libya through to the 1870s, despite increasing pressure by Europeans via Istanbul to suppress it. This trade was mostly directly from Wadai but also a large number of slaves came from Darfur, or originally from Bahr al-Ghazal, to ports in Libya rather than through Cairo. However, with the gradual establishment of Egyptian security along the Nile route in the 1830s and 1840s, it became more efficient than grueling month-long desert treks, if for nothing else to reduce casualties among captives. It was then that slaves captured from among the Azande in Bahr al-Ghazal ceased to travel through Darfur to either Libya or Cairo, and began to travel overwhelmingly via the Nile to Cairo, or via the Nile to Khartoum and then overland to Port Suakin on the Red Sea to Arabia and Istanbul.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 61.

⁶⁹ B.G. Martin, "Ahmad Rasim Pasha and the Suppression of the Fazzan Slave Trade 1881-1896," in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Vol II, The Servile Estate*, ed. John Ralph Willis (New York:

These new traders along the Nile were the economic part of the Egyptian colonial project. Mehmed Ali exerted an identity for Egypt the way European nation-states exerted their national identity in the nineteenth century: by taking colonies. By dominating Sudan as part of his empire, Mehmed Ali distinguished Egypt from Sudan, making Egypt metropole to Sudan as well as periphery to Europe, and thus decreased the distinction between Egypt and Europe. Thus, Sudan ceased to be simply a vaguely defined region to the south of the Sahara, and began its history as a political entity with defined borders, albeit poorly defined at first, and with poor central control.⁷⁰

By the 1840s, the Egyptian government created a monopoly system over trade on the White Nile in order to more efficiently tax imports. This benefitted Cairo, but was deeply opposed by both Sudanese and foreign traders who were either kept as employees of the monopoly or traded illegally, or both. Enforcement proved too difficult, and the monopoly system gradually disappeared in the 1850s. The vacuum that the end of monopoly created benefitted foreign merchants first, Egyptians, Syrians, Turks, and Europeans, because they had more access to the capital required to fund a trading voyage. Northern Sudanese Arab traders, *Jallaba*, many of them *Ja'aliyyin* worked for these foreigners as servants, soldiers, agents, or even partners.⁷¹ Northern Sudanese learned commercial and military expertise and gained capital and slaves from the foreigners, eliminating the economic need for the foreigners. The foreigners were more likely to be

Psychology Press, 1985), 50–81.

⁷⁰ Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 47.

⁷¹ As explained elsewhere, *jallabat* (sing. *jallaba*) was a term used for itinerant Arab merchants, who could be of a variety of tribes. *Ja'aliyyin* (sing. *ja'aliyy*) were a large tribe of Arab Sudanese prominent in both trade and politics. *Jallaba* is more of a description of employment, *ja'aliyy* an ethnic relationship, though the two overlapped greatly.

loyal to the government, since they had no other local affiliations, but the anger of the local traders at high taxation eventually contributed to the Mahdist revolt. The Sudanese governor Musa Hamdi Pasha (ruled 1862-5) made a strong effort to control the trade on the White Nile after government monopolies faded away, trying again to get higher tax revenues. His efforts functioned to discourage foreign merchants, many of whom left, leaving increased Arab Sudanese leadership in trade in the south in the 1860s and 1870s, such as that of Zubayr and Muhammad Khayur al-Arqawi, replacing prominent traders like Kuchuk Ali, a Turk, and Ghattas, an Egyptian. The old regime of foreign merchant princes was replaced by the new regime of Sudanese merchant princes. Zubayr was not the first of the merchants, or even the first of the merchant princes, but he was the most successful.⁷²

The colonial relationship of north to south was constructed around ethnic difference. Zubayr's trade success and philosophy was also based on this difference. The ethnic differences between Europeans and Egyptians, Egyptians and Sudanese, northern Sudanese and southern, all contributed to the expressions of economic differences through colonial type relationships.

The Nuer are the standard example of distant relations with the north, and Zubayr came to interact with them later in his story. The Nuer are a tribe, and Sudan is a state, E. E. Evans-Pritchard argued, with little or no contact between them: "I do not believe that anywhere were the Nuer deeply affected by Arab contact."⁷³ Even if Evans-Pritchard seems to exaggerate the case, his strong impression strongly suggests a lack of close

⁷² Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 105–6.

⁷³ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer, a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 133.

relations between Nuer and northerners. Zubayr later found such isolation in the south evident: he was asked more than once if he and his retinue came “from sky or water.” In one circumstance, Zubayr camped on the land of a local king and awoke to a near riot. Local headmen were overcome with fear for Zubayr and his company and the outside world they brought in, saying: “Now they have seen our country, they will bring more men and take it from us. Some day they will kill us. We had better kill them first.”⁷⁴ Zubayr understood the insular nature of the tribes he worked with, but seems never to have put morals above progress, profit, and survival. Zubayr responded to these headmen: “If you kill us, drain this great river, for it will bring our friends to you for vengeance. They will take your country and destroy you out of the world. But if you cannot drain the river, then be advised; leave us alive.”⁷⁵ Zubayr spoke with a sense of the dramatic, but he knew that in the long run, northerners had friends with technology and organization that southerners did not.

Sudan can be divided into three dynamic and overlapping sections: the north, Arabized and Islamized by way of Egypt and Arabia; Darfur in the west, Islamized by way of the western Sudan, but having kept their native languages; and the South, neither Islamized nor Arabized.⁷⁶ The power structure in northern Sudan had been Christian from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries and Muslim and largely Arabic speaking from the sixteenth. The south, though, has always been more diverse than the north. Tribes of the south were less connected to the outside world, keeping localized languages, cultures,

⁷⁴ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 344. Note easy comparison to native American relations to early European explorers and settlers.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 334 Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ Yusuf Fadl Hasan, *Sudan in Africa* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1971), 73.

and religions. Trade in the south was local and minimal before the nineteenth century. No language ever became universal in the south the way Arabic did in the north. The lack of fluid communication that this engendered, along with less advanced technologies made southerners easy prey for northern Sudanese slave raiders. In addition to their advantages in technology and education, northerners could use Islamic regulations concerning taking slaves as prisoners of war in conflicts against non-Muslim peoples to legitimize their trade. These regulations concerned wars not slave raids, but the slope between wars and raids was slippery. The religious difference between north and south provided a convenient excuse for northerners' feeling of superiority. Firearms not only enforced northerners' feelings but also gave them an easy method for subduing resistance. For Zubayr rebellions against traders were done out of primitive misunderstanding, because in his mind he brought culture and civilization to isolated regions. To the rebels, it seems, Zubayr also brought the loss of local control and destruction of local stability.⁷⁷

Zubayr was part of a smaller ethnic kinship network, but what defined him most substantially in his work in the south, as well as toward Europe, was his identity as an Arab. H.C. Jackson started his 1913 biography of Zubayr with the words "A tottering and uxurious old Arab" to describe the man he met.⁷⁸

There are and have been a variety of conflicting definitions of Arab: one who speaks Arabic, one descended from inhabitants of Arabia, an inhabitant of a country in which Arabic is the dominant language, and one in sympathy with the aspirations of the Arab speaking peoples, and a nomadic desert dweller. Zubayr is often referred to as an

⁷⁷ As of 2011, the south, including Bahr al-Ghazal, became the new nation of Southern Sudan.

⁷⁸ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, i.

Arab by Europeans, though he uses the term only for those tribes that were nomadic, like the Rizayqat, never for those with permanent dwellings.⁷⁹

Sudan has always been connected to both black and Arab identities, the word being shorthand for the Arabic Bilad al-Sudan بلاد السودان “land of the blacks.” Given this general meaning, it is easy to understand how the word Sudan has meant various different places in Africa. Before the nineteenth century, it generally referred to all of sub-Saharan Africa. In lower case, the word has evolved to mean the region of tall grass savanna in a wide stripe from the Nile to the Atlantic. The country known today as Mali was known as Soudan (sometimes to be clear *French Sudan*) from 1890 to 1899 and 1920 to 1960. The Sudanese nation as it is known today is a construction of the nineteenth century, if not the early twentieth.⁸⁰ It is not until the World War I period, as Heather Sharkey argues vividly, that the educated begin to identify proudly as Sudanese in the modern sense: it was not until the twentieth century that Sudanese became a cultural or political identity.⁸¹

South Sudan, including Bahr al-Ghazal, became part of Sudan through the process described in this dissertation, the process by which Zubayr brought the rule of Arabic speakers upon the non-Muslim non-Arab southerners. That Sudan existed between about 1875 and 2011. The Sudan that exists today, after Southern Sudan

⁷⁹ The Arab League claims: “An Arab is a person whose language is Arabic, who lives in an Arabic speaking country, who is in sympathy with the aspirations of the Arabic speaking peoples.” The term *Arab* continues to be redefined: I heard Egyptians refer derogatively to Gulf tourists in Egypt as Arabs.

⁸⁰ Ethiopia and Africa were both terms that at times referred to the entire continent and others to smaller regions. The United States of America was often referred to as Columbia to distinguish it from the rest of the American continents leading to the naming of the District of Columbia. *Sudan* is not unusual in referring to various entities.

⁸¹ Sharkey provides vivid descriptions of students at Gordon College, the elite school for early twentieth century Sudanese students, refusing to be labeled with a tribe and exasperating administrators by claiming only Sudanese as their tribe, which if we imagine Sudanese meant peasant to the old regime, we can easily see was a nearly revolutionary claim.

seceded, is more similar to the Sudan that existed between 1820 and 1875. South Sudan is again a place without a clearly dominant ethnic group, and while much more integrated into global networks of trade and information than it was in 1875, South Sudan is one of the most isolated, poorest, and least formally educated places on the globe.

Black, سود, is used in Zubayr's narrative and Sudanese history more generally to refer to non-Arabs, and the same word for black was also used for slaves, a distinction that may not have been immediately obvious, and which is critical for an understanding of Zubayr's understanding of slavery. Since none of the definitions of Arab relate to skin tone or physical marker, a black person in Sudan need not be identifiable in physical form to a non-black person. Zubayr at one point says he *rented a few blacks*, استأجرت بعض السود. The word *blacks* is unambiguous in its meaning, though it may have referred as much to socio-economic status as skin color.⁸² *Rent* is the most common meaning of the first word, but it can also mean lease, hire, charter, or employ. Thus we can read what Zubayr did in Mashra' al-Riqq as hiring a group of men of dark skin color who he would pay directly and who could keep their pay. We can also read it as Zubayr having paid the owners of slaves/servants for their use. Since so much of the local population owed tax debt, and were forced one way or the other into paid work to pay off that debt, perhaps there is little difference between the two readings.⁸³ Either way, it is clear that both his employees and those he was trading with were identified as blacks, or southerners. When they lived in their ancestral homes, they had kept tribal names, but once they got to

⁸² Today Sudanese consider it impolite to refer to someone's skin as black; they generally describe dark skin as being blue or green, perhaps as Americans use chocolate or ebony.

⁸³ Definitions here from Rohi Ba'labakkī, *Al Mawrid: Arabic-English Dictionary*. (Beirut: Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayen, 2008).

Mashra' al-Riqq they took on a new ethnic identity based on their being black, meaning not Arab, and not European. Bango, Dinka, and Jur were quickly becoming simply black.⁸⁴ In Arabic the term *abd*, pl. *abid* عبد, عبيد is often used to describe any person of darker skin and sub-Saharan ancestry, though less so in politically-correct modern usage. The term *abd* otherwise means slave or servant and is often seen as disrespectful, except for its use in Arabic names such as *Abd Allah*, Servant of God, and *Abd al-Rahman*, Servant of the Most Compassionate. African identity, when it is used in the primary and secondary literature on nineteenth-century Sudan, is synonymous with black, meaning non-Arab. Seeing southern Sudan as the imperial periphery to northern Sudan or Egypt, these distinctions can be seen less as simple racism, and more as the kind of imperial-centrism that sees peripheral peoples as commodities⁸⁵.

Northern and southern Sudan despite their shared history, have great differences in ethnic and cultural identity, differences that helped justify gradual colonial conquest and a form of trade that often seemed closer to pillage. To northerners, southerners are other to the same extent that to Egyptians Sudanese are other, or to Europeans Arabs are other. Maltreatment is easier to facilitate upon the other, particularly if one can justify it by making them less other. By Europeanizing the world, Europeans felt temporary mistreatment might be justified by permanent improvements they made in the lives of others. By Arabizing and Islamicizing southern Sudan, northern Sudanese felt temporary mistreatment might be justified by permanent improvements in the lives of southerners,

⁸⁴ See Muddathir 'Abd Al-Rahim, "Arabism, Africanism, and Self-Identification in the Sudan," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 2 (July 1970): 233–249.

⁸⁵ See Earl Grey discussion in Discourses section of Introduction.

or so at least Zubayr could report in hindsight, when he argued that his actions were with the aim of civilization in his mind.⁸⁶

The ethnic and political relationships between northern Sudan and the Khartoum government with southern Sudan and its disparate non-Arab peoples shows not only the layered and overlapping quality of political control but also the establishment of a frontier society and the dynamicism of small layered empires within that society. Zubayr's part in this dynamic frontier contributes to my greater arguments concerning the timing of this frontier moment between pre-modern and post-1885 forms of control.

Bahr al-Ghazal

Encroaching foreign trading interests in a stateless region take on many of the roles of a state, becoming de facto portable states. Bahr al-Ghazal had small kingdoms before the coming of these trading companies, but those kingdoms were without firearms. The traders being armed had the means of control of violence, and hence sovereignty in the region. It is a particular context in which portable and temporary institutions have greatly more control than long-standing governments, but it is essential to understanding Bahr al-Ghazal in the 1860s.⁸⁷

These portable and temporary institutions contribute to my argument that slaving on a frontier is an expression of temporarily unrestrained power relations. With neither a state nor tribes able to restrain them, trading companies in Bahr al-Ghazal broadcast their power in ways, such as slaving, that further destabilized a destabilized region.

⁸⁶ Hasan, *Sudan in Africa*, 73; See also Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*; Shaw, "Zebehr Pasha at Gibraltar: A Lady's Interview with the Captive Chief," 575.

⁸⁷ Please see the conclusion of this dissertation for a brief discussion of the way the phenomena of companies sovereign over small governments applies to twenty and twenty-first century contexts.

Shuqayr and Shaw report the role of trading companies in Bahr al-Ghazal in different shades: To Shuqayr, Zubayr described a company as a tool for conquest and political domination; to Shaw, Zubayr described a company as a tool to bring law, order, and morality. Zubayr considered Shuqayr to be a compatriot in this conquest, so to speak, and so spoke proudly of brutally dominating others. Shaw not merely was loyal to a different ethnic group; she was represented by the government that controlled Zubayr. With Shuqayr, the morality of his actions was understood; with Shaw, the morality of his actions was central and emphasized. The quote this chapter began with, in which savages are like flies, is from Shuqayr.⁸⁸ The story below, in which Zubayr refused the advances of the beautiful virgin for fear that he would leave a family behind is from Shaw.

Zubayr's slant toward Shuqayr is clear in the story of Zubayr's rise to prominence in Ali Amuriyy's company. It was the local tribesmen stealing from the traders, Zubayr argues, that first motivated him to take control of Ali Amuriyy's trading company. To Zubayr what he and the other merchants were doing was fair trade, even if it only one side had guns. When locals tried to take back products Zubayr thought he had bought, the traders took it as criminal theft. "I undertook with my cousin Ali Amuriyy to help him with this trading, but we hadn't stayed even a few months when the people of the country we were staying in agitated against the traders, desiring their money, in 1856," he narrates. The locals agitated, desiring the wealth of the traders, wealth that the traders felt was rightfully purchased. "A group of them from all over gathered and attacked the

⁸⁸ The opening quote of this chapter is from Jackson's translation of Shuqayr, which is more dramatic and no less accurate than my own.

zariba and killed a few of the traders and stole their money and attacked the zariba of Ali Amuriyy, so I became the leader of his men.”⁸⁹

Each trading company formed its own camp, a thorn stockade called a *zariba* after the use of such camps in more peaceful periods to protect domestic animals from wild predators. These zaribas (Arabic plural *zara'ib*) were outposts not only of Zubayr's later territory and Ali Amuriyy's territory, but Egyptian and eventually British territory. Ali Amuriyy was not the first trader to come to Bahr al-Ghazal and form a zariba. Due to the proliferation of large wild animals, spiked walls of protection were the most common technology for defense around households big and small. The vast increase in traders in the late nineteenth century was, in addition to Egyptian political changes, because of rifles.⁹⁰ A spiked wall was difficult to penetrate; A spiked wall with riflemen behind it was nearly impenetrable, allowing an invading group to enter territory controlled by hostile human groups and hostile animals, and very quickly create a safe base of operations in their midst.

Ali Amuriyy was one of a generation of Sudanese traders who began to replace the earlier European and Egyptian ones. Ghattas was an Egyptian Christian (Copt), who began the process of Arabizing the role of trade leader and moving deeper into Bahr al-Ghazal, and he maintained his company through this division, at least until 1875.⁹¹

Muhammad Khayur al-Arqawi, from the region/tribe of Dongola in northern Sudan, was a contemporary of Zubayr. Abu Qurūn, who had been in the employ of John Petherick,

⁸⁹ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 62.

⁹⁰ Technology as the main force of change in the nineteenth century, which O'Fahey appreciates in his article "Al-Zubayr's Early Career" should not be overlooked in the face of political or cultural shifts. See Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*.

⁹¹ 'Āmir, *Janūb al-Sūdān*, 18–26.

set up a base among the Azande, on the southern reaches of Zubayr's territory, in 1870.⁹² Some of these men still held outposts when Zubayr began to consolidate Bahr al-Ghazal, but none had attempted to consolidate the region himself.⁹³ The replacement of Europeans and Egyptians by northern Sudanese traders was largely the result of sufficient capital being established in Sudan. The new Sudanese trading elite had the result of promoting an understanding that Sudanese might lead themselves, contributing eventually to Mahdist success.⁹⁴

Zubayr came to be a leader in ways different from his predecessors, in his view as expressed to Shuqayr, not merely for ego but to plug the hole of leadership that might mean death and ruin for his compatriots. This was his reaction to people stealing products from him which he believed he had purchased.

I lit fire to his zariba and defeated the gang completely after I killed a large portion of them. When the traders heard of my victory over them, they came to me, gathering around me. The people of the country feared me and were not encouraged to return to attack me. My friend Ali Amouri considered that his peace was at my hands and grew to love me more and came to me swearing that I would have a tenth of the total of his profits from ivory. When the country calmed down he took me in, making me his agent. He then went to Khartoum and disappeared for six months. He returned with goods and found that I had as much of the commodities of the region as he could not have gathered in two years. So

⁹² Anders Bjorkelo at the University of Bergen is currently working on a project about other merchants who worked before and during Zubayr's reign: Al-Aqqad and Kuchuk Ali, though they mostly worked along the White Nile, as evidenced by their interactions with Samuel Baker (see Alice Moore-Harell *Egypt's African Empire*). Little is known about the other merchants in the region. Bjorkelo refers to the term Zand, which I assume is Azande, particularly as they were the dominant tribal affiliation of southern Bahr al-Ghazal.

⁹³ Bjorkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 105–6.

⁹⁴ The increasing focus of wealth in the hands of Zubayr and other northern Sudanese elites might have contributed to pre-Mahdia fears of a Sudanese nationalist movement, and Tawfiq's decision to keep Zubayr in Cairo in 1875. Baring, when he arrived in Cairo in 1877, would likely have agreed to that decision to keep Zubayr from leading such a movement. That increasing concentration of wealth in Sudanese hands contributed to the initial success of the Mahdia, but by the time that movement was in Mohammed Ahmed's hands, Zubayr went from being a threat to British influence to a possible competitor to the Mahdi.

his desire to keep me employed grew and he looked to me to have half of his company. I refused, however, and resolved to establish a place to trade on my own.⁹⁵

So, Zubayr saw himself putting down an unjust rebellion, he came not only to have the gratitude of the company leader, but Zubayr came to become first Ali Amuriyy's agent and then ready to establish his own trading company.

Europeans also reported that they felt the sort of savageness that Zubayr described in Bahr al-Ghazal, "a land sacred to slavery and to every abomination and villainy that man can commit,"⁹⁶ Baker called it, partly due to traders and partly due to the local peoples. Baker noted, along with the savagery, the profitability, since "a good season for a party of a hundred and fifty men should produce about two hundred cantars (20,000 lbs.) of ivory, valued at Khartoum at 4,000 pounds. The men being paid in slaves, the wages should be nil, and there should be a surplus of four or five hundred slaves for the trader's own profit--worth on an average five to six pounds each."⁹⁷ Schweinfurth also described the abject poverty among the local peoples, describing how "numbers of young natives will often voluntarily attach themselves to the [traders], and, highly delighted at getting a cotton shirt and gun of their own, will gladly surrender themselves to slavery, attracted moreover by the hope of finding better food in the Seribas than their own native wildernesses can produce." If to Zubayr, the experience was difficult to describe to Shaw in terms that she found morally acceptable, to their colleagues, Schweinfurth and Baker

⁹⁵ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 62.

⁹⁶ Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 24.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22–3.

found it equally difficult to explain what they saw, particularly the vast profitability, the statelessness, and the volunteers for slavery.

Money for these voyages was difficult to raise, because of the risks and was often borrowed at one hundred percent interest, plus the promise to repay the money in ivory at only half its market value, showing that the risk of never paying back the money was high.⁹⁸ A typical voyage would include “runaway villains from distant countries, who have found an asylum from justice in the obscurity of Khartoum,” a motley crew that also might be typical in other regions with weak or absent state structures and economic opportunities.⁹⁹ These men would be paid in advance for many months of work, in order to be able to pay their previous debts and free themselves from various types of economic captivity. This type of voyage was for trading, but one European witness described them as piratical since the leader spent many times as much money on arms and ammunition than on items to trade with, mostly beads.¹⁰⁰

In Shaw’s account, Ali Amuriyy had been admonishing Zubayr for doing nothing but reading the Koran. “Ali Imouri continued to leer at him, asking whether he supposed that they had intended to bring a missionary with them.” Zubayr in response claimed that his weakness was a lack of a weapon, so “Ali Imouri gave him a gun which was rust-eaten, and two cartridges.” In their first skirmish, “with one of his two cartridges Zebehr had the good luck to kill the black chief” and “from that day Imouri treated Zebehr with as much favour and respect as he had before shown him contempt. He gave him a tent,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰⁰ Baker, *The Albert N’Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 23.

and coffee, dates, bread, arms, clothes, and everything he wanted.”¹⁰¹ In Zubayr’s world, a castaway became a respected colleague with one shot.

The world Zubayr knew as the world of merchants had its share of violence against resistant tribes, and it had its share of risks from nature. Lions were certainly a concern, but not as big a concern as getting lost. While traveling with Ali Amuriyy’s group on their smaller boats through the swampy terrain of Bahr al-Ghazal, the group lost track of river tributaries into one massive lake, leaving the group disoriented. “We were lost on that lake for 75 days,” tells Zubayr, “during which we didn’t see anything but sky and water and we used the provisions, so we ate what leather we had with us and overcame our hunger.”¹⁰² A rifle had a good chance of killing a warrior or a hungry lion, but it was not much use against a giant lake. When they finally spotted smoke from far away, a scouting party of nine men was chosen by Zubayr to explore the smoke, but they got lost on their own for four more days, returning to find eighteen of the larger group having died in their absence. With no other options, he struck out again with a dozen men to try again to find the source of the smoke.¹⁰³ Even if Zubayr exaggerated the numbers in his memory, the impact of the story remains: the only practical means of transportation was by water and watercourses were easy to lose.

Bahr al-Ghazal is generally described in travel and academic literature as a great swamp, difficult to cross and easy to get lost in, leading to the necessity of having men like Zubayr integrate it into global capitalism, for no contemporary technology was nearly as useful as understandings of local customs and languages. Not only was travel

¹⁰¹ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 337–8.

¹⁰² Shuqayr, *Tārīkh ‘al-Sūdān*, 63.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 63.

difficult in Bahr al-Ghazal, but it should be remembered that populations were low and population centers distant from one another. Because of the difficulties of travel, distance between villages, and low population, vast linguistic and cultural differences prevailed between locations, and because of that the frontier moment in Bahr al-Ghazal was longer than in places more easily integrated into states and empires.¹⁰⁴

Peoples of the center and western Bahr al-Ghazal before Zubayr exhibited a uniform resistance to centralized power, with especially the Bongo, Jur and Ndogo having no kings or even paramount chiefs, except perhaps very temporarily in times of warfare. This lack of unity provided a political vacuum, especially as invading traders waged not just a temporary war, but a permanent war, the prisoners of which were sold away.¹⁰⁵

Leaving most of his company lost in the middle of a lake, perhaps liable to capture and enslavement, more likely liable to die of hunger, Zubayr accompanied a new scouting party that found at the source of the smoke they had seen a populated island with cattle, the smoke being “the smoke of cow dung that the people had burned in the afternoon every day, taking the ashes for their bed as was their custom,” perhaps to ward away insects. “They asked us, and they seemed to be tricking us with their innocence, from where we had come whether from sky or land or from the water and what we aimed for in coming onto their island.”¹⁰⁶ Whether from sky or land or from the water could be

¹⁰⁴ Bahr al-Ghazal would continue to be difficult to rule by the British after 1898 mostly due to difficulties of travel, and indeed the difficulties of travel there remain today, where air travel is the only practical means of transportation much of the year, an impractical solution for the vast majority of impoverished residents.

¹⁰⁵ Stefano Santandrea, *Ethno-Geography of the Bahr El Ghazal (Sudan): An Attempt at a Historical Reconstruction* (Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1981), 110.

¹⁰⁶ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 63–4.

a colorful expression in a local language, could be an exaggeration, or could be a sign of the local population playing dumb for Zubayr in the hopes of taking advantage of him.

Given the complex linguistic mix of Bahr al-Ghazal, it is lucky that Zubayr had with him someone who could speak their dialect of Nuer. The king slaughtered a cow in hospitality to the group, and some of the men ate the meat so quickly, Zubayr reports, that they died from it. They bought more cows and had them slaughtered and brought the meat to them men in the boats, and brought the men to the island.¹⁰⁷

The role of the merchant, much like the role of the leader of a small state, had much to do with diplomacy. Having someone who could speak the local dialect must have helped, and a successful merchant needed employees of a variety of linguistic backgrounds working together. This fact alone meant that merchants inadvertently if not consciously contributed to cultural as well as political unification of disparate groups.

The local power holders were fearful of Zubayr both in the short and long-term, knowing that he and his men had the firepower to cause immediate chaos to their people, but also that the institutionalization of government and trade would also cause chaos to their way of life, albeit at a much slower pace. When the people of the island heard about the arrival of Zubayr and his group, delegates from around the island came to the king “demanding to kill us and appropriate our money.”¹⁰⁸ Zubayr and his men slept that night guarding themselves in shifts. Zubayr tells:

My turn was the first watch of the night. I saw a lion approaching from far away so I shot him and he fell, striking the ground forcefully, which woke up King Kurium from his sleep and thinking that his men had come to fight, and it had woken up many of the island residents also. When they saw the lion had been

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 64.

killed they became very happy because this lion had been hunting and killing any of them that it came across such that none of them would leave their homes at night, even King Kurium. His happiness was so great that he promised me one of his daughters and wanted me to set myself up with him on the island.¹⁰⁹

Once again, the sea change from enemy to ally happens with only one shot. The power of the rifle in an area where very few had them cannot be underestimated.

In Shuqayr's version, the role of the merchant is close to the role of ruler. In Shaw's version, below, the role of the merchant is closer to the role of a civilizer.

Shuqayr emphasizes what a boon the experience was for Zubayr; Shaw what a boon the experience was for the island dwellers.

When he saw the dead lion [King Kurium] fell on Zebehr's neck and embraced him with expressions of joy, as did also the men of his family. They told him that this lion had been for thirty years the scourge of the settlement, that he came every night and took something, and that in the course of his life he had eaten upwards of two hundred natives, besides children and cattle. They had gone out against him many times, but they had been unable to kill him. "But now, because you have done this great thing," the king said, "I will make a treaty with you that none may hurt you." The natives also came running to see what had happened and when they saw the dead lion there was great and general rejoicing. They called Zebehr by honourable names- their savior and their deliverer; and all the chiefs brought milk and ashes and poured them over him. In the morning the king made a speech to him before all the people saying: "Now we see what kind of man you are, and that you have arms better than our arms; we wish to keep you here always with us. You shall be a great chief with us, and we will treat you with honor; but you shall never go away. You shall stay rather, and kill for us our enemies as you have killed this lion."¹¹⁰

The formerly isolationist king was now intent on Zubayr staying on with him, at least partly because Zubayr had better arms. Those arms were a physical manifestation of globalized capitalism, coming from a more developed place and being critical to the king's power over his enemies.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁰ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 345.

Again, Zubayr paints himself as more of a gentleman than can almost possibly be imagined, and rests on Islam as the fount of his gentlemanly behavior. In the above, Shuqayr's version, Zubayr barely mentioned that he was offered one of the king's daughters as a wife, which would have coopted Zubayr's fighting power into his domain. When he told the story to Shuqayr, apparently, this was not of interest or particular importance. When Zubayr had told this same story to Flora Shaw earlier, he went into detail about his conflicting emotions concerning this marriage, attracted to the beautiful and kind young woman who eagerly wanted to consummate their marriage, and guilty that he would either have to take her from her family or abandon her soon after when he moved on. The king sent a daughter to Zubayr as a gift. "She was seventeen, and pretty and kind, and she spent thirty nights in his hut. But he had no intention of remaining with the tribe; and, to tell the story as simply as he did, it was not possible that a son of Zebahr should be left to be born after his father's flight." Since he also did not feel comfortable taking her to face the dangers of travel, he had to remain chaste with her, Zubayr told Flora Shaw. The girl came to Zubayr and asked "'Am I ugly?' she asked, and he answered 'No.' 'Do I displease you, that you do not like me?' He assured her, on the contrary that she was kind and that he liked her. 'They why do you not take your wife?' He told her that he was a Moslem, and that Moslems could not marry as her people did. It was necessary, he said, to bring his own priests and to fetch presents from his own country to offer her."¹¹¹ King Kurium was not eager for Zubayr to leave, knowing that his

¹¹¹ Ibid., 345.

island had been discovered. Zubayr had to threaten the king's guards with his guns to escape without a fight.¹¹²

Guns were central to the role of the merchant: the Klondike-like rush to Bahr al-Ghazal was due to the discrepancy in firepower between merchants and tribes. Tribal kings had de jure sovereignty over their territories, but firearms gave traders de facto sovereignty wherever they went. Zubayr saw this power in his interactions, understood the fear that the people he traded with felt for him, and chose to understand it as ignorance to the civilization he was bringing.

Guns did not prevent one from getting lost, however, and getting lost was more dangerous than lions or rebellious tribes. As powerful as the traders were with their firearms, dangers remained. Zubayr controlled men, but he could not control wilderness. Bahr al-Ghazal was, as Zubayr described it, a wilderness of humans and animals to be tamed by civilization. Baker and Schweinfurth describe it similarly.

The moment between the importation of guns and the establishment of integrated communications helped define the frontier phase of the development of Bahr al-Ghazal. Before the importation of guns and boats the frontier had not opened, and global influence was indirect at best. After communication and firepower improved, global influences were able to go deeper. Between them, during the frontier, Zubayr and other stateless actors thrived.

This section showed the ways power was broadcast within Bahr al-Ghazal, through the use of portable trading company-states, and how the use of rapidly evolving rifle technology allowed them to dominate local tribes.

¹¹² Ibid., 346.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced Bahr al-Ghazal, explained Zubayr's initial relationship with the region, and tied it in economically and politically with Sudan, Egypt, and Britain.

Before the invasion of merchants, Bahr al-Ghazal had been substantially isolated. Nomadic tribes in the north of the region, and Darfur to their north, were much more connected economically, religiously, and politically to northern Sudan and Egypt. The peoples Zubayr and other traders traded with, primarily Azande (aka Zande or Nianim), who lived on the divide between the Congo and Nile watersheds, had been particularly isolated.¹¹³

This chapter contributes greatly to the central arguments of this dissertation. It shows trading companies working in the frontier region of Bahr al-Ghazal, a region made functional by quasi-imperial middlemen operating on their own account. Those middlemen had little direction from their imperial powers, be they Egyptian, British, or Ottoman. Those powers contributed to the destabilization of the region by encouraging well-armed traders, who nullified old regimes and relationships. Those well-armed traders, working without restraint, felt no need to temper their use of slavery as a political weapon, beyond a nod to Islamic law. This chapter begins to show the resentment at foreign influence that later came to a head with the Mahdist revolt and the centralization of power at Khartoum.

¹¹³ Janet Ewald, *Soldiers, Traders, and Slaves: State Formation and Economic Transformation in the Greater Nile Valley, 1700-1885* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 161. The Azande were the population most impacted, but local Fertit and Dinka were also impacted.

Chapter 3: Zubayr's Country, 1866-1875

Remember this, that the lives of those poor savages...are as precious in the eyes of Almighty God as are your own. –Gladstone 1874 Midlothian Speech

The land is so rich...that it is a treasure-house, but for want of knowledge the natives are poor. They do not know what they possess. With all the fruits that lie on the earth, they eat each other. They fight because it is their custom to spend their lives in hunting, and they know no other way to settle their quarrels. Yet they are by nature gentle and good, and they are ready to learn the ways of peace from those who go to them peacefully. –Zubayr Pasha on Gibraltar¹

This chapter argues that in Zubayr's country slavery was a function of imperialism, that slavery and imperialism were parallel forms of temporary subjugation of people. The primary source narrative of this chapter is mainly Zubayr's and traveler's accounts. Zubayr claimed in his narratives that slaving was part of his imperial civilizing mission. The narratives of European travelers who visited Zubayr form a stark contrast to Zubayr's narrative: These travelers were torn by the contradiction between understanding Zubayr's slaving civilizing mission after being steeped in the European abolitionist civilizing mission. Finally, Father Santandrea's ethnographic reconstruction helps to set a framework for the tribes described by these other narratives and their previous relationship with Zubayr's country.

The transition from mobile company to bordered state was in three stages. The first was transforming a company into a core state. The second was to create a "core raiding/training zone" in which slaves were the main item raided for, and in which the

¹ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 569.

trader-victim relationship segued into the ruler-subject relationship. The third stage was security of the routes in and out of the new state. This chapter is divided into three sections based on these principles: the establishment of a core state, the creation of a raiding/training zone to the south, and securing routes out of the new state to the north.²

After a small conflict, Zubayr's military force conquered that of a local king, likely from among the Woro, or perhaps Kresh or Ndogo peoples of western Bahr al-Ghazal. Zubayr took over the powers of that king, and was able to achieve peaceful relations with the tribes settled nearer to his capital, the Woro, Kresh, and Ndogo, but also many Golo, Jur and Balanda, all tribes primarily of Bahr al-Ghazal, and elements of Nuer, Shilluk and Dinka, tribes which spread further around southern Sudan.³

The territory under Zubayr's control expanded in the following decade eventually including all of Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur. This chapter will argue that his sovereignty was porous and thin, and that even at the peak of filling the role of the slave king, Zubayr was but a cog in an immense machine.

Zubayr Pasha had a traveling trading company that in 1865 went to battle against a small king. Zubayr's troops won the battle, after which Zubayr set up the location as the capital of his *Deim*, his country, and in the location a town still exists with the name Deim Zubayr.

This chapter contributes to my greater arguments of empire gradually replacing slavery as a more efficient form of domination. This chapter contributes also to my argument that imperialism in pre-1885 Sudan was layered and broadcast. This chapter

² O'Fahey, "Al-Zubayr's Early Career," 64.

³ Stefano Santandrea, *A Tribal History of the Western Bahr El Ghazal* (Bologna: Editrice Nigrizia, 1964), 74.

discusses the relationship of the concept of broadcasting power to concepts of frontier societies and mutual dependence.

These three frameworks will help frame this decade in Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur: broadcasting power, frontier societies, and mutual dependence. The first argues that Zubayr's territory in Bahr al-Ghazal broadcast power in the same way that other states and empires did. Zubayr's rule of this territory, regardless of it being composed of smaller units or being a unit in a larger government, was a form of governance. The second framework argues that these were frontier societies, so broadcasting power makes sense in this context to an extent that it does not in a nation-state context. Here Zubayr's territory is compared with other neighboring frontier societies for context. The third framework argues that an essential mutual dependence existed between conquered and conquering individuals and groups. In this final stage I argue that this mutual dependence between unequal partners existed in a continuum of scale from governments to individuals, and that slavery was a reflection of larger political processes of integration.⁴

These frameworks will help to lay the groundwork for how Zubayr both controlled and did not control Bahr al-Ghazal, how Bahr al-Ghazal both did and did not become a province of Egypt during this time, and how Darfur both was and was not part of Zubayr's realm. These vagaries contribute greatly to an understanding of the delicate and dynamic relationship between Bahr al-Ghazal, Darfur, Khartoum, and Cairo in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

⁴ Broadcasting power is a concept I get from Jeffrey Herbst, frontier societies I get mostly from Dennis Cordell and mutual dependence I get from Ehud Toledano, all mentioned in earlier chapters. See subsequent sections in this chapter for discussion of these concepts and these works. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*; Dennis Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.

In Africa, where nothing parallel to the European state system had taken hold before the twentieth century, rulers broadcast authority as far as they could from their centers of power. Neighboring states often overlapped in the areas in which they broadcast power; states functioned within states, and areas outside of any state influence remained. The concept of broadcasting political power like broadcasting radio signals is particularly useful for this study. If we can take for granted that the power of a state is not enforced equally throughout its realm, but rather is enforced strongly at its center and tapers out gradually toward the edges, it will be easier to understand, for example, the influence of the British and Ottoman empires on Darfur, or even the Egyptian state on northern Sudan. Jeffrey Herbst contends that broadcast power in Africa described small empires, ruling over tiny dependent territories full of infinitely small ethnic groups, extracting occasional tribute from them, and invading them only when security of the center was at risk. Herbst describes a dynamic and fluid concept, rather than the imagined sovereignty and permanency of the Westphalia system. “Precolonial Africa,” he argues, “was a state system without fictions.”⁵ Shared sovereignty was the rule, not the exception. “There was far less of a distinction between domestic and foreign affairs as the state negotiated with other states and, sometimes, its composite parts.”⁶ Herbst describes a fluid, ad-hoc, and informal version of federalism, but with little overarching structure or consciousness across distances.

Herbst does not exactly challenge Benedict Anderson’s idea of imagined communities, but he changes its focus. Anderson describes a modern world that began

⁵ Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 53–5.

⁶ The Condominium arrangement in which Egypt and Britain shared Sudan as their colony from 1898-1956 perhaps showed reflections of the rule of shared sovereignty in Africa.

with print capitalism in Europe and colonial state formation in the Americas. The idea of the nation-state that began there spread to much of the globe. Anderson describes nations as *imagined*, Herbst as *fiction*, nearly synonymous terms. One way to see these two terms as different is that Anderson's imagination has more to do with nationhood and a shared belief and emotion, an internal event, whereas Herbst's fiction has more to do with the realities of state power, the extent to which states controlled the territory they claimed. Anderson focuses on the nations from their centers, whereas Herbst focuses on their peripheries. To Herbst, nations are fictions, but more importantly, they are small, and the places between them are large.⁷

Dennis Cordell, writing about the border between what would become Chad and Sudan in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, argued that a frontier was a dynamic zone, was "not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies...The frontier 'opens' in a given zone when the first representatives of the intrusive society arrive; it 'closes' when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone."⁸ A frontier thus imagined is geographical but still has an essentially temporal aspect: it opens, and it closes. All political borders are temporary on a long enough scale, but this definition of a frontier is particularly temporary, a moment between distinct societies and singular hegemony. A frontier understood as both temporal and geographical is the context in which Zubayr established his territory, before an even bigger hegemonic power took it over. Zubayr

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991).

⁸ Quoted from Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 13; Originally from *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 7. Cordell's work on Rabih Zubayr, Zubayr's most successful protégé, will be mentioned in more detail in chapter 4, since Rabih did not come to prominence until after Zubayr was in Cairo.

used the Arabic word for open (*fataha*) to refer to integrating isolated regions into larger political-economic regions. In this sense *open (fataha)* overlaps with but is not entirely synonymous with *conquer*, or *invade*, like the contemporary financial English term *opening markets*. That financial usage is not only a metaphor: Zubayr opened the markets, but he also opened the territory politically.

This opening was, of course, happening elsewhere, globally even, and particularly by British and French opening of the Ottoman Empire. The British-Ottoman treaty of 1838, though not uniformly enforced, was a game changer, argues Elena Frangakis-Syrett, a shift on the level of the shift I describe in 1885. Frangakis-Syrett argues that this treaty began the process of modernization of trade, of expansion of European networks, of reduction of local control, of transfer of trade power from locals, primarily minorities, to European firms. This treaty, in short, opened the Ottoman Empire, and it opened it not merely in the sense that markets are opened in the modern sense, but in the sense that Zubayr used the term open (فتح *fatah*), to mean opening of markets via conquest. The treaty was not a military conquest, but it was implicitly qualified Ottoman political control over Ottoman territory. Elena Frangakis-Syrett describes the impact of the 1838 treaty from the perspective of Izmir, but a similar process happened in Sudan, with the great exception of the new monopoly on slave trade. In fact, this modernizing process, the Tanzimat, seems to have arrived later in Sudan, only beginning in the 1850s, and genuinely expanding in the 1860s, Zubayr's career being the archetype of these new wider networks of trade. Frangakis-Syrett uses the terms internal and external to the Ottoman Empire, because her view is on the European border. A parallel process occurred deeper within the Empire as local networks grew in distance. Not only

Europeans, but Egyptians and Syrians traded increasingly in Sudan in the period after 1838.⁹

Ehud Toledano, historian of Ottoman slavery, describes the relationship between slaver and enslaved as “an involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners.”¹⁰ Slaves, Toledano argues, are in a Foucaultian power relationship, active participants in the relationship of slavery, that “power and powerlessness were never the crude attributes that they might seem.”¹¹ He argues: “Slavers were not all-powerful, nor were the enslaved completely powerless.”¹² The slavers were not all-powerful. By extension, Toledano’s “involuntary relationship of mutual dependence between two quite unequal partners” applies to the relationship between periphery and metropole of an empire, even a tiny empire. As much as dependent states depend on the core for organization, technology, and distribution of goods, the core depends on the periphery for raw materials, labor, and consumption. Zubayr’s tiny empire, for example, depended on those to his south for ivory, food, and labor (slaves), and they depended on Zubayr for imports, technology, and the kind of law and order a more integrated region relied on.

⁹ Elena Frangakis-Syrett, “Implementation of the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Convention on Izmir’s Trade: European and Minority Merchants,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 7 (Spring 1992): 91–112.

¹⁰ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 20.

¹¹ Perhaps beyond even Foucault or Toledano, the Oxford English Dictionary in its 2006 draft additions include the usage of slave in the sense of the slave-master relationship in a sadomasochistic relationship, with references from 1901, 1907, and 1921 as well as more contemporary references (accessed online November 2010). To me it seems short-sighted to disintegrate this meaning from others. A closer understanding of this usage could be useful in expanding beyond economic, social and cultural reasons for volunteers to slavery. A further discussion of this usage could include a discussion of the ways religious adherents describe their faiths helping them escape the tyranny of free choice. The assumption of freedom as a universal human goal seems to me anchored in a limited and ahistorical perspective. I would like to pursue such research in a future project.

¹² Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 258–9.

Across Muslim Africa, new states were formed in the nineteenth century. These new regimes, Zubayr's among them, did not introduce slavery, but they used it to their advantage. Slave raiding and trading was common in Muslim Africa before the nineteenth century, as it was in non-Muslim areas of Africa. It has been suggested that the reason for slavery's ubiquity in Africa was that people were a relatively scarce resource in sub-Saharan Africa, due to disease and drought, etc., and slavery provided the most effective means of mobility for this resource.¹³ While this argument pertains to the New World as well, the regular and rapid integration of slaves into host communities in Africa helps explain the lack of either large scale slavery or abolition movements in Africa. Slavery was practiced before the nineteenth century in both Muslim and non-Muslim regions, and the spread of Islam acted to limit but also to justify its practice. Islam acted to decrease the racial aspect of slavery,¹⁴ for example, by making religion the sole criterion for suitability of enslavement, and encouraged manumission and conversion¹⁵, but at the same time justified continual and regular raids on pagan

¹³ Humphrey Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 1.

¹⁴ By fairly effectively forbidding the enslavement of their coreligionists, Islamic law from its beginnings increased the trade element of slavery. In the European Middle Ages/Golden Age of Islam, slaves were commonly imported to Muslim Spain, North Africa and the Middle East from Central and Eastern Europe, mostly Slavs, as well as Central, Western and Eastern Africa. Venetian traders in particular were very involved in the exportation of European slaves to the Islamic world, and among other medieval slavers Vikings raided in Britain for slaves to sell in the Islamic world. The early Ottoman period accelerated the enslavement of men and women from the Caucasus rather than Slavic areas. Russian protection of the Caucasus led to increased reliance on Africa for slaves, and particularly the upper Nile Valley. Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*; Pierre Docks, *Medieval Slavery and Liberation*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

¹⁵ The issue of the rights of converted slaves did not have clear consensus. Trout Powell mentions the village of Gaw that once witnessed a full scale riot over the question of whether a Christian slave master had the right to force himself sexually on his white Muslim slave woman, and the court that took the slave from her master to protect her from sexual assault. (Eve Trout Powell, *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 31.

Africans.¹⁶ The necessity for continual raids was due to the common practices of manumission and conversion among domestic and agricultural slaves, practices encouraged by Islamic teachings¹⁷, as well as a high rate of early death for all slaves due to new diseases and long marches, and growing armies.¹⁸ Sennar, the Funj state, direct predecessor to Egyptian Sudan, had a slave army, called a *jihadiyya*, made up mostly of slaves from the Nuba mountains who were not Muslim on capture, but probably were if and when they returned home.¹⁹

The more peripheral a region was the more abusive labor practices could be without upsetting liberals in the metropole, for example in the Congo and South Africa.²⁰ The appearance of European goods and particularly weapons and transportation technologies worked to further peripheralize Bahr al-Ghazal. The region was not peripheralized in the sense of marginalized to the periphery, but rather pulled in from the outside to just within the periphery of influence. Imperialize and colonize nearly have this meaning, but these terms emphasize expansion of control and expansion of a legal

¹⁶ Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa*, 16.

¹⁷ Islamic teachings were used to justify and explain a wide variety of opinions on slavery. Eve Troutt Powell refers to a classic tale of subtlety in both slavery and racism among religious Egyptians: When 'Ali Mubarak was awestruck at a very dark-skinned man being revered as a sheikh, Mubarak's father told him "My son, we are all slaves of God, and God raises up whom he wants." This gets to the heart of the issue of slavery within Islam. Mubarak used the word 'abd to refer to black slaves, but this is the same 'abd in very common names such as 'Abd Allah, 'Abdu, 'Abd al-Malik, and various variations. Though being slaves to men and being slaves to God are quite dissimilar, it is not the status of being a slave, but to whom one is enslaved that matters for status. (Troutt Powell, *Tell it to My Memory*, 34. Quote from Ali Mubarak, *al-Khitat al-jadidah al-tawfiqiyya* (1886-9) 9:39.)

¹⁸ Terence Walz, *Notes on the Organization of the African Trade in Cairo, 1800-1850* (Cairo: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1972).

¹⁹ R.C. Stevenson, "Some Aspects of the Spread of Islam in the Nuba Mountains (Kordofan Province, Republic of the Sudan)," in *Islam in Tropical Africa*, by IM Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 210–13.

²⁰ South Africa is a good example, for as Britain integrated the Cape, the Boers fled on the Great Trek further into the periphery, partly in order to avoid abolition, in the 1820s and 1830s.

framework, and my emphasis is that these regions were not within a single empire, but had a special relationship, influenced by an empire, by multiple overlapping and layered empires, but not subject to the legal framework and protection of any. It is the ensuing chaos, the moment between very local sovereignty and further-reaching sovereignty, in which slaving thrives: Periphery as a period, a developmental stage, as much as a place. Dennis Cordell has clearly articulated periphery or frontier as a temporary autonomous zone, free both from local and imperial law.²¹

With the integration of northern Sudan into Egypt, trade along the Nile outpaced trade from Darfur overland into Egypt. Yearly raids among the Azande for cattle and slaves by the rulers of Darfur were replaced with a form of colonization, first by Europeans and Egyptians, and then by northern Sudanese, in Bahr al-Ghazal. Europeans and Egyptians, and some Syrians, had the financial resources to trade/conquer earlier than northern Sudanese. Sudanese traders earned the required investment by assisting the Europeans and Egyptians before establishing their own companies. Rather than a more simple view that local control preceded metropolitan control, the case in Bahr al-Ghazal is more dynamic: There was a localization of power within the new proto-Sudan between moments of European control. The new relationship between northern Sudanese and Bahr al-Ghazal had stronger elements of free trade and competition among traders, had more of a civilizing mission, and had a much more devastating effect on local populations. These forms of colonization and free trade by northern Sudanese, themselves marginalized in northern Sudan by Egyptians, onto southern Sudanese were parallel to

²¹ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 12–13.

and influenced indirectly by the forms of free trade and colonization that Europe had on Egypt, and Egypt on Sudan simultaneously.

Slavery was well established across northern Africa, and the extension of the Egyptian state apparatus into Sudan in the 1820s organized the trade along state-sponsored lines. The Egyptian state, as has been previously mentioned, conquered northern Sudan to gain slaves for its military, in addition to searching for gold and for members of the Mamluk old regime who had fled there. They accomplished this through direct enslavement by government military raiding, and by exacting tribute in kind from local chiefs in the form of slaves.²² The Nuba Mountains, the furthest north of the non-Arab regions of Sudan, were raided by Egyptian forces earlier than regions further south. These raids, more often and more devastating than earlier raids or raids by smaller state organizations, caused the populations such desperation that many Nuba committed suicide to avoid enslavement.²³

New conquerors even if they had abolition in mind, as Zubayr and British leaders claimed at least in hindsight, had to make peace with the old elite in order to rule successfully on the cheap. When the British conquered the Sokoto Caliphate, in today's northern Nigeria, in order to avoid upsetting the established order they worked indirectly and even directly to prevent the liberation of slaves.²⁴ In a similar note to empowering status quo rulers, if not directly concerning slavery, the South Africa Act of 1909

²² Richard Hill, "An Unpublished Chronicle of the Sudan 1822-41," *Sudan Notes and Records* 37-8 (July 1956): 15.

²³ Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," 206; Also see Richard Leslie Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820-1881*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 13, 25.

²⁴ Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 161; Also see Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, 261-8.

institutionalized Afrikaner domination, even after the Afrikaners were defeated by Britain.

Zubayr was economically motivated to oppose the slave trade, because he and merchants working under him required vast numbers of porters, and he did not want the populations available for this work captured and sent away to be sold. Zubayr was not able to prevent those around him from buying and selling slaves, to one another or to itinerant traders who would visit Zubayr's capital.²⁵ Even if Zubayr had eventual abolition in mind, unlikely but possible, he, like other conquerors, had to make peace in order to rule successfully as he established a state.

Establishment

“Suddenly,” Flora Shaw wrote, “from a trader, Zebehr had become a king.”²⁶ Shaw quotes Zubayr, who used the terms *tujjar*/trader and *mak/malik*, king. The only records of this are through Zubayr's narration to Na'um Shuqayr and Flora Shaw, so while in terms of an objective history of the actions, they are of little use, they yield great comparisons in terms of how Zubayr interpreted these actions differently in conversation with Shuqayr and with Shaw. Shaw interviewed Zubayr earlier than Shuqayr. It is not clear when Shuqayr interviewed Zubayr, but as Shuqayr was employed by the Sudan Political Service, it was likely after 1898. The difference in the perspectives of the two biographers has much more to do with professional bias and audience than with chronological setting. Shuqayr as a historian writing a history for a pan-Arab audience

²⁵ Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan*, 132–3.

²⁶ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 348.

represented conquest as a natural part of history, and sovereignty or right as flexible, whereas Shaw, writing as a journalist for a political British audience, represented moral justification as primary to conquest.

The moment of Zubayr's transformation from trader to king resonates not only my greater themes of broadcasting power and loose, overlapping imperial control, but more clearly demonstrates the replacement of slavery by the more efficient parallel form of domination that was imperialism. Zubayr went from controlling a company that participated in slaving to ruling over a territory in which slaving was prevented, and which, perhaps, was moving toward the eventual abolition of even the transportation of slaves, not for humanist concerns, but for concerns of economic efficiency.

These forms of loose, overlapping, and analogous forms of domination were shown clearly in Timothy Mitchell's argument that Ottoman Egypt contained a spectrum of overlapping and dynamic sovereignties. Mitchell uses the example of landholding, which he explains, "did not refer to land as an object, to which single individuals claimed an absolute right. It referred to a system of multiple claims." Landholding and governing are nearly synonymous as they both refer to sovereignty over territory, so while he uses different terms, his discussion is germane here. Mitchell argues that landholding stands not for control of a territory but to its use and usufruct, claims he argues which were "not to the land itself but its revenues... The doctrine of state ownership of land did not correspond to the modern notion of property but registered the ruler's political claim to a share of the revenue, while also acknowledging both the revenue claims of local political forces and the subsistence claims of the cultivator and other members of the village." Neither cultivators nor kings had unique control over either land or its revenues. Unique

sovereignty if applicable to any time and place was certainly inapplicable to Ottoman Egypt, British Egypt, or Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Revenues from Bahr al-Ghazal were owned by cultivators/captors, merchant-rulers, the Egyptian government and British and French banks. These power-sharing relationships, Mitchell continues, “were not fixed in an abstract code of law but were guided by legal precedent and by prescriptions developed in response to actual circumstances and events.” Sovereignty was not merely shared by layers, but was subject to continual reevaluation and changes in real control, determined by *realpolitik*.²⁷

Mitchell’s arguments about sovereignty and land ownership are clearly seen in late-nineteenth century Egypt, where land cultivation was a large part, directly and indirectly, of that economy. In Bahr al-Ghazal at the same time, cultivation was a much smaller source of revenues than trade of ivory and slaves. Sovereignty in such a situation is even more dynamic, and even more shared, even shared with the goods themselves. Slaves were at the same time traders and products traded; slaves were goods and slaves were also captors and owners of other slaves. In Bahr al-Ghazal, political control could not be so clearly seen as layers of revenue sharing of products of the land, but rather of layers of revenue sharing nonetheless.

In 1865, Zubayr’s army killed a king and took control of his territory, transforming Zubayr on that day from a trader to a king. Zubayr’s told his autobiography orally to two writers who were introduced in the previous chapter, Flora Shaw and Na’um Shuqayr. As discussed in the previous chapter, these two writers gave different

²⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 57.

emphasis to his story, both because Zubayr emphasized different details to the different listeners and because the writers framed the story differently for their different audiences. To Shuqayr the historian, conquest and political change were a part of the natural order, and Shuqayr's version emphasizes the element of dramatic conquest. Flora Shaw was more interested in the moral dimension of why Zubayr became a king, so her version portrayed Zubayr's position as a delicate one and his conquest as just. When Zubayr told his story to Shaw he told it in the best light to convincing British readers in power to free him. When Zubayr told his story to Shuqayr, Zubayr was already free and in Sudan again.

Shuqayr's narrative promoted something akin to Dennis Cordell's frontier societies model: the frontier appeared to be moving of its own accord and the actors within it, including Zubayr, appeared to be benefitting or losing but not controlling the process. The frontier societies model sees a flux of order and chaos, and slavery was a symptom of that flux, an example of the change in the direction of control. Slavery in this context was not primarily a mode of production. Slaves were not primarily used to produce anything except further domination and demonstration of class divisions. Shuqayr assumed this moving frontier, the growth of Dar al-Islam, so he did not need to point it out.²⁸

Shaw's narrative, however, promoted something more akin to Toledano's mutual dependence model: she emphasized how Zubayr needed the kings of the south since his life and career were constantly in jeopardy, just as people Zubayr conquered needed him for defense from other traders. Since the mutual dependence model is based on the individual rather than the society, it shines light on the problems of slavery and

²⁸ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 12–16.

imperialism for individual participants. Shaw therefore grappled carefully with the moral issues surrounding slavery.

The broadcasting power model applies to both narratives, but differently: to Shuqayr Zubayr broadcast Muslim Arab power, perhaps even to combat European Christian power, whereas to Shaw Zubayr was broadcasting civilization writ large.

Shuqayr portrayed Zubayr as motivated primarily by vengeance, having to realize what he felt was just himself. In the Shuqayr version, King Adoo Shukoo had betrayed Zubayr's brother, Mansur. The king had not only killed Mansur, but had also killed "his friends who I [Zubayr] had sent to trade in his lands, and taken all of their money." When King Adoo Shukoo understandably then refused Zubayr entry into his kingdom, Zubayr said "I ingratiated myself to him with gifts, and made it clear to him that I had no aim other than trade, but he refused my gifts and insisted that I leave his country." Shuqayr made Zubayr sound surprised that he was not let into the kingdom after offering gifts, though it seems only natural not to allow the brother of someone one killed to get close. "It was then the rainy season and the country was flooded with water so I asked him to give me a chance until there was a break in the rains and the roads were opened," and here again Shuqayr made it seem that either Zubayr was surprised not to be given permission or that Zubayr expected to attack and was only asking permission in order to do his due diligence and be able to defend his actions as possibly defensive. The king, of course "refused, so we fought him in a war and there occurred between us a number of bloody battles until he was killed. His son succeeded him, but I snuck up on him and killed him as well, so then I had ownership over his country and all the countries around it to the Bahr al-Arab." Shuqayr seems to suggest Zubayr was open to an outcome that

was other than bloody, but it does seem from this portrayal that Zubayr's takeover of the kingdom was somewhat premeditated.²⁹

Zubayr then made his capital in the kingdom at a town that then lost its previous name of Baya and was subsequently called "Deim Zubayr," the country/capital of Zubayr.³⁰ It was only then, in the Shuqayr narrative, that Zubayr's civilizing mission became apparent:

I became... a king and the people became like drops of water to me from every direction to be involved in my service. I brought arms and gathered a powerful army and ruled the lands by the book [Quran] and the Sunna and started to develop and build and civilize these countries and to spread the range of trade in them.³¹

To Zubayr, in Shuqayr's narrative, becoming a king empowered Zubayr to expand his ability to civilize along the frontier. Civilizing was defined as one element of a project that also included economic and infrastructure development: developing, building, and civilizing. These in turn were supported by control of the means of violence and a legal system based on the Sharia, expanding the frontier of Islam. Shuqayr felt no need to justify any part of the process of conquest and dominance, nor to call attention to it, for Zubayr's use of the Sharia as a quickly established system of law and his defense of conquest through expansion of Islam were already typical across the Sahel.

Despite Zubayr's palace at Deim Zubayr, Lawrence Mire argues his was less of a government over Bahr al-Ghazal and better described as the most powerful company among many in the region. Mire says the critical location of Deim Zubayr on the road between Dar Fur and Azande was fortuitous, allowing his small territory to have wider

²⁹ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 65.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

influence than that of other traders. In the context of zariba-based trade in Bahr al-Ghazal by Khartoum merchants, each ruling over a camp in an otherwise unruled territory, this fits. As that territory became enveloped in Egyptian and British empires, as the vacuums between ruled spaces were filled, they were filled not with Egyptian and British influence, so much as by Zubayr's influence. Zubayr's influence did not have the centralization of a state government, but of an empire.³² Some authors have suggested that if Zubayr's territory was not quite an empire yet, he was in the process of forming an empire, certainly by the time he conquered Darfur.³³ This begs the question of the canon of imperialism as a unilateral or predominant European power over Africa.³⁴

Shaw portrayed this same story but with moral justifications at every step. In the Shaw narrative Zubayr was motivated by trade rather than vengeance. Mansur was not mentioned in Shaw's version. Instead of specifying Zubayr's brother and his friends, Shaw introduced the vague "six merchants" who "had been down there some time before, and had conducted themselves badly in the country, making disturbances and fighting against the king." This told the same story, of conflict between a previous group of traders and King Adoo Shukoo, but with sympathy for the king, not the traders. Instead of killing them, Shaw narrated that King Shukoo more sympathetically "had driven them out of the country." When the king then refused Zubayr entry into his kingdom, Zubayr, needing the king, politely replied in the Shaw narrative: "Very well, I will go; I have not

³² Lawrence Mire, "Al-Zubayr Pasha and the Zariba Based Slave Trade in the Bahr al-Ghazal 1855-1879," in *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa: Vol II, The Servile Estate*, ed. John Ralph Willis (New York: Psychology Press, 1985), 117.

³³ Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan*, 69.

³⁴ For the canon, see: Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism* and; Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians* For challenge to the canon, see; Adas, "Imperialism and Colonialism in Comparative Perspective" For a full discussion, see the introduction to this dissertation.

come to fight; I will force nothing; and if you don't want me I will leave you. But if you will give me permission to remain till after the rains, I shall be very glad, and I will trade with you peacefully." Zubayr and Adoo Shukoo were mutually dependent in the Shaw version, and it was only when their relationship decayed through mutual distrust that Zubayr felt the necessity to broadcast his power through violence.

The Shaw story differs in substantial facts from the Shuqayr in the period after tensions were formalized between Zubayr and Adoo Shukoo. Rather than have his gifts refused, as in Shuqayr's account, the king was pleased, "and they came, after some negotiation, to an agreement that Zebehr's caravan might remain for nine months in the country, but not in the [capital] city of Mandugba. A place was assigned to him for a camp at four hours' distance from the town, and he constructed a fortified station, within which he built storehouses."³⁵ Zubayr described in the Shaw narrative the declining relationship between himself and Adoo Shukoo as gradual. At first Zubayr's men got along famously with Adoo Shukoo's:³⁶ He kept his men "under the strictest discipline. He forbade them to quarrel on any pretext whatever with a native, or to take so much as a sugar-cane without paying for it. He also made a rule of paying liberal prices for all goods brought in, and the natives began to flock to him with ivory and other produce."³⁷

For the canon, see: Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism* and; Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*; For challenge to the canon, see: Adas, "Imperialism and Colonialism in Comparative Perspective" For a full debate on the canon, see introduction to this dissertation.

³⁵ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 346–7.

³⁶ "[Zubayr] had been there three months, when one of his men was killed and his arms stolen. He took no vengeance but, carrying the corpse in to the king, he said: 'See what has happened. Now, if you are a great king you will do justice. I ask only to have his arms which have been stolen given back, and I leave the punishment of the offender to you.' The king gave him ground to bury his dead, caused his arms to be returned to him, and punished the murderer. Four months later, the same thing happened again, and he did as before, peacefully asking and obtaining justice." (Shaw, 348)

³⁷ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 347.

Zubayr meanwhile was building himself a defensive position. Even in the Shaw narrative, which made Zubayr seem beyond question, Zubayr seemed dishonest toward Adoo Shukoo. The king “asked with some anxiety why he was building in a country where he was only to remain for nine months. Zebehr replied that as there were lions and leopards in the country, it was necessary to protect his men.” Zubayr also tempted the king by telling him he could use all the construction Zubayr had created after he left. “The king upon this gave him permission to build what he pleased, and Zebehr constructed a strong defensive position, within which he accumulated stores.” If there was to be a battle eventually, each side would have a defensive position. The difference was in technology. Zubayr told through the Shaw narrative that “He was well provided with ammunition, and his men were armed each with a French rifle, a pistol, and a sword.”³⁸ Adoo Shukoo’s men were likely armed each with a sword, but likely without functioning firearms or ammunition.

In the Shuqayr narrative tension did not need time to build, since tension and violence were taken for granted on the frontier; in the Shaw narrative seven months passed in peace between the first tensions and the first violence, since King Shukoo and Zubayr both benefitted from peace. However, even in Shaw, King Shukoo asked Zubayr again to leave when the harvest season began. Zubayr’s ivory stores had become by that time valuable, and he did not feel safe traveling with such a fortune, or at least this was the excuse he gave King Shukoo in asking for more time to wait until he could gather more trusted colleagues to travel with him and the treasure. King Shukoo of course refused this request, because this could only mean a larger force against him. Zubayr then

³⁸ Ibid., 347–8.

offered to leave if he could have enough grain to feed his men on the journey. Zubayr sent five emissaries to the king to ask to buy the grain, but the king killed the emissaries.

Since Shaw wrote that peace and mutual dependence rather than tension and inevitable confrontation seem to have prevailed, she felt the need to mention that Shukoo's attack on the emissaries "was not quite so sudden as it sounds in a shortened narrative" since "he had never been favorable to the Egyptian traders [Zubayr's group], and Zebehr had for some time past expected an attack. He had friends among Adoo Shukoo's people, who gave him warning."³⁹

Shaw also gave extended detail of the battle between Adoo Shukoo's forces and those of Zubayr. In the battle, Zubayr's forces were better armed and trained, and far outnumbered, similar to British battles in Ghana and South Africa, German battles in East Africa, and French in West Africa. To Shaw, steeped in stories of these early battles, Zubayr appeared part of the process of broadcasting civilization across Africa: "The native forces were led by the king in person, and were in numbers out of all proportion" to that of the more technically advanced Sudanese Arab force. Zubayr's smaller force were better trained and better armed. "His orders to them were not to waste their ammunition with random firing, but to aim careful, and to pick out the chiefs." The sporadic, irregular mode of Adoo Shukoo's operations meant the battle fizzled for days. Zubayr was wounded in the battle, perhaps evidence that despite their advantages the two sides were not vastly unequal. On the third day, Adoo Shukoo was killed, and without a leader, the opposition fell quickly to Zubayr. Not wanting Adoo Shukoo's successor to return later, Zubayr followed him into nearby mountains and killed him, reminiscent of

³⁹ Ibid., 348.

Mehmed Ali's invasion of Sudan in 1820 in pursuit of remaining Mamluks that might compete with him.⁴⁰

It is unclear if, in Shuqayr's narrative the "various battles" between the two referred to battles on these three days, or over the course of the seven months. Regardless, in both stories, Zubayr caught up with Adoo Shukoo's son and had him killed, leaving the throne open.⁴¹ Zubayr's soldiers had access to dramatically more advanced weapons than his opponents, including Adoo Shukoo. It was not simply European forces who used revolutionizing technology on Africans; the vast social changes brought about by advances in military technology were largely brought about by Africans on Africans of the further periphery.⁴²

Installing a more moral government was central to Shaw, so Shaw quoted Zubayr in speaking to the chiefs now under his power, saying, "It is now harvest-time; let us sign a peace, and go and gather your corn; otherwise when the winter comes there will be famine." Shaw felt the need to make it clear that Zubayr had the best interests of those under his control at heart.

Zubayr then "accepted the title of Sultan from the lesser kings, and began to live in imperial state."⁴³ *Sultan, lesser kings, and imperial state* seem to be terms chosen carefully, by either Shaw or Zubayr. In the Shaw narrative Zubayr was a king for only an

⁴⁰ Ibid., 348.

⁴¹ This battle is reminiscent of another company-kingdom battle, from Daniel Headrick (*The Tools of Empire*, 20.) "In December 1824 the British East India Company and the kingdom of Burma had gone to war... The war lasted two years and inflicted heavy casualties on both sides. The Burmese, despite their antiquated weapons, showed their skill as guerrillas in the swamps of the Irrawaddy. The British lost three quarters of their troops, most of whom were Indian sepoy, largely from disease."

⁴² John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

⁴³ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 348-9.

instant before lesser kings asked to join him. Though these kingdoms and empires were smaller than they were in other parts of the world, the parallel works, much in the way that the king of Hawaii was parallel, in a significant sense, to the kings of Europe. Perhaps Zubayr was simply respecting the terminology of those he ruled, respecting that those below him were titled king (*malak* in formal Arabic, *mak* in Sudanese colloquial), and that therefore he be a Sultan. This would then be the same logic with which, after a decent interval, the British crown was acquiring the manner of the defunct Mughal dynasty. Queen Victoria could not be Queen of India, since those she ruled considered themselves kings and she had to be Empress of India. Titles aside, what Zubayr and Queen Victoria were doing was broadcasting their power as far as they could.⁴⁴

This section showed, through Zubayr's transformation of a company into a fledgling state, a tiny empire really, that power was broadcast in a spectrum of ways in southern Sudan in the mid-1800s, and that the domination by way of slavery was transformed into a domination by way of political control.

Zubayr broadcast power toward both his neighbors to the south and his neighbors to the north. His neighbors to the north were very different from his neighbors to the south, however, so the results of these two kinds of expansions were quite different.

Northerners

While authorities in Cairo and Khartoum were not concerned by how Zubayr and those under his control dealt with the pagan African peoples living to his south, those same authorities were concerned with how Zubayr dealt with the Arab or Muslim people

⁴⁴ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 45.

to his north. Darfur had until the mid-nineteenth century been a bigger prize than northern Sudan; while Darfur had lost political and economic power, it was still a prize. Zubayr's battle with Ahmed Bilali and his conquest of Darfur led, he and others testified, to his twenty-five years of exile.

This section furthers the idea of broadcast empire, for while Darfur was independent of Egyptian Sudan before Zubayr's conquest, Khartoum was motivated to suppress Zubayr's expansion toward this independent entity. It also shows the transition from a looser form of control, indirect influence over Darfur, to a tighter form of control, sending Ahmed Bilali and troops to take control of Darfur in the name of the Khedive. It also, of course, shows the movement toward empire and away from slavery, since Darfur's economy rested so strongly on slave trade, and a territory in the name of the Khedive would be under the influence of abolitionist Britain.

Tensions between Zubayr's Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur began to grow in 1869, and these tensions focused on the character of Ahmed Bilali.⁴⁵ Bilali had been a *faqih*, a religious scholar, in the court of Darfur.⁴⁶ Zubayr described Bilali as a scheming

⁴⁵ Shaw uses the name Bilali, Jackson's translation of Shuqayr also uses Bilali, and century scholars writing in Arabic use البيلالي al-Bilaaliyy. Schweinfurth refers to him Hellali. O'Fahey argues that since he was of the Bulala tribe, the proper adjective form should be al-Bulalawi. R. S. O'Fahey, "Al-Bulalawi or al-Hilali?," *Sudan Notes and Records*, (1973).

⁴⁶ A *faqih* is someone learned in *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence. *Fiqh* is the expanded traditions of how to apply *Sharia* to the details of everyday life and social interactions, and a *faqih* can advise Muslims in the application of Islamic law. *Faqihs* (Arabic plural *faqiha*) in the small courts of empires such as Darfur, however, were nearly magicians. Georg Schweinfurth describes the great lengths that Zubayr went to overcome the widespread perception, particularly among non-Muslims, that *faqihs* had magical powers: "Seebehr Rahama, the great Seriba owner, whose territory joins the southern frontiers of Darfoor, had boasted ... that he possessed a means of foiling the black art of the Foorian Fakis." Schweinfurth is perhaps sarcastic when he uncritically refers to the "black art" of the *Faqihs* of Darfur, particularly as he was a scientist by training. Zubayr's method was novel, "he had had 25,000 [Maria Theresa] dollars melted down into bullets in Khartoom, and as the amulets of the Fakis did not apply to silver, he declared these new-fashioned shot to be most effectual." Zubayr certainly could have done this to give his soldiers a psychological edge even if he did not believe it himself, but Schweinfurth explains it through Zubayr's "blind superstition." (Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the*

aggressor who trapped him into going against the wishes of the Egyptian government. He also blamed Bilali for laying the foundation for his quarter-century of exile, and the loss of his empire, his career, and his freedom.

Bilali was originally from the Bulala people further west, in today's Chad. The trouble with Zubayr started when, as a gift, the Sultan of Darfur gave Bilali a piece of land in southern Darfur, close to Zubayr's ill-defined territory. Soon after, Bilali was forced to leave Darfur after an altercation with the Sultan's sister, so he went to the Egyptian-Sudanese authorities in Khartoum claiming that he owned not only the copper mines on the border of Darfur and Bahr al-Ghazal, but all of Darfur, and Wadai to the west, now in Chad. The weak governor in Khartoum at the time, Ja'far Pasha Mazhar, seeing Bilali as a check to Zubayr's power, supported him and even donated a few troops to his cause.⁴⁷

One reason the governor would have donated troops to Bilali's cause was to get a wild card like Bilali away from Khartoum, but in doing so, he tacitly appointed him governor of Darfur and Bahr al-Ghazal. Assigning multiple people to rule the same territory and then letting them fight amongst themselves would have been an effective way of keeping competitors weak, given that Khartoum had little money or power to influence things directly on the periphery. Samuel Baker and Charles Gordon soon after entered this mix, incredulous to be assigned territories to rule on behalf of the Khedive in Cairo, then to have the governor of Khartoum financially support traders usurping their

Unexplored Regions of Central Africa, from 1868 to 1871, (New York: Harper, 1874) 325.

⁴⁷ O'Fahey, *The Darfur Sultanate*, 264.

power in the same regions.⁴⁸ The frontier society and broadcasting power frameworks help explain functions of government so weak and stretched so thin on the ground.

The clearest narrative of what happened between Zubayr and Bilali was published by Charles Gordon, so I present it first, and follow it with narratives by Romolo Gessi, Georg Schweinfurth, Flora Shaw, and Na'um Shuqayr. I include all of these, since the interpretation of this event was so critical to the way Zubayr's career was interpreted later. This event demonstrates much of what I argue in this dissertation concerning the ways local power was broadcast and the shift that was beginning in the ways imperial power was projected. Khartoum and Cairo had little control over Bahr al-Ghazal, just as London had little control over most of the British empire in the pre-1885 period; imperial power was expressed by subtle manipulations of influence. In this case it was expressed by the governor in Khartoum giving two men control over the same region, a region that governor did not have control to give.

The Bilali incident had soured relations between Zubayr and his supporters and the government in Khartoum. Gordon, who became governor at Khartoum after Ja'far Pasha Mazhar, published a pamphlet in Arabic in 1879 to defend the actions that the Khartoum government had taken and to make Zubayr seem to have been at fault, in order to try to gain the trust of Zubayr's remaining supporters. Gordon's interpretation of the Bilali incident was that Bilali had approached the governor in Khartoum saying that,

in the countries of Bahru-'l-Gazāl and Zafrat-u-an-Nuhās (copper-mine) there were many people who were Muslims for the most part, and possessed of much wealth and great advantages; that he knew all about the country and its inhabitants, as also that they were subject no one of the nobles of Dārfūr or others; that he desired to conquer it and annex it to the Khidīval territory, to ease the

⁴⁸ Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 31.

minds of the inhabitants and bring their hearts to learn to the Government; to acquire for the treasury the advantages of that country and its mines.

To ease the minds of the inhabitants is a phrase that particularly shows Gordon's bias, or perhaps the bias that inevitable peripheral lands would be integrated into larger states and the sooner this happened the more stability these regions could have. This alarmed Zubayr, of course, since he was the de facto ruler of Bahr al-Ghazal. His territory was growing and he feared "that the presence of the Government there would result in his own expulsion thence, to his deprivation from the advantages thereof, and from the importation of slaves," not to mention the end of his sovereignty. The Sultan of Darfur complained to the governor that Bilali was one of his former servants and an upstart. So as not to start a war with Darfur, the governor ordered Bilali and Zubayr not to attack Darfur, but in order to placate Bilali made him mudir, governor, of Bahr al-Ghazal and Hufat an-Nahas (the area between Darfur and Bahr al-Ghazal rich with copper mines), and sent him there with troops and arms. The governor, Ja'far Pasha, sent orders to Zubayr to make peace with Bilali, "helping each other to captivate the hearts of the inhabitants."⁴⁹

Gordon again shows great bias through his choice in vocabulary in describing what happened when Zubayr met Bilali in Bahr al-Ghazal: "Zubeyr now commenced to exhibit his intentions, hatred, and enmity, by slow degrees, until war broke out between him and Bilālī with the government troops." Zubayr, to Gordon, had acted not out of defense of his territorial sovereignty, but rather out of hatred and enmity. The result Gordon reports agrees with other accounts: "Bilālī himself and many of the troops were

⁴⁹ Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582.

killed and Zubeyr seized as booty all the ammunition and weapons. The remnant of the troops were retained by him.” The governor saw the facts quite differently at the time when faced with Zubayr’s claim that “it was Bilālī who had attacked him, because Zubeyr had perceived his intention to abscond with the troops and go to Dārfūr, and had dissuaded (or prevented) him from carrying out that purpose.” The governor failed to act at the time, and “those events remained in suspense and forgotten” until Ismail Ayyub took control over the government in Khartoum later, in 1871.⁵⁰

Travelers’ records provide more perspectives on the Bilali incident than on earlier parts of Zubayr’s career. The most concise version is from Romolo Gessi, who ruled Bahr al-Ghazal after Zubayr had left and had Zubayr’s son killed for treason (see chapter four). Gessi reported that “Ziber had massacred the Egyptian garrisons left in these provinces by the Government of Khartoum,” and that the result was that “instead of sending an army against him to punish him,” the Khartoum government “nominated him Bey and Governor of Bahr-el-Ghazal” since

Ziber had succeeded in corrupting the authorities at Khartoum, who represented him to the central Government at Cairo as a colossus whom it was impossible to conquer, and advised that he should be handed ‘with a pair of gloves,’ as the saying goes, while instead, he ought to have been made to feel the weight of a firm and iron hand.

Gessi did not arrive until after Zubayr had left, however, and he brought “the weight of that firm and iron hand” on Suleiman, not Zubayr. Gessi was particularly biased in his account, however, for as a usurper of Zubayr’s domain, Gessi needed to establish an official version of history that put him in the right.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Romolo Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan: Being a Record of Explorations, Adventures, and Campaigns Against the Arab Slave Hunters* (London: Sampson Low & Co., 1892), 301.

Georg Schweinfurth, mentioned in the previous chapter, made a stronger attempt than Gessi to be objective and analytical. Schweinfurth was on a tour of Sudan recording flora and fauna, and to a lesser extent tribal customs, and happened to be visiting Zubayr's camp as just another stop in his travels in Sudan just as the Bilali episode was coming to a head. Schweinfurth was a naturalist, and while he commented on the contemporary political situation, he focused on identification of human tribes and wildlife. Schweinfurth narrates from his arrival in Zubayr's zariba, which had by that time become a large town:

A few days before I started on this little journey to the west, a circumstance had occurred that had thrown all the inhabitants of this Seriba into a great commotion, and which did not augur altogether well for my projected tour. A conflict had broken out between the black Government troops and Seebehr's [Zubayr's] Nubian soldiers, and twenty Nubians as well as many of the negroes had lost their lives in the fray.⁵²

Schweinfurth took pains to identify physical characteristics of various tribes, so his specific use of the term black and Nubian cannot be taken as casual. Zubayr divided his troops, when he enumerated them, into *nizzam*, an Arabic term for organized, and *bashibazouq*, a Turkish word for informal troops. The origins of these two words might be significant, because Schweinfurth might have identified the *nizzam* troops as Nubian by their native use of Arabic. Either Zubayr did not involve his informal non-Arab troops in this battle, or Schweinfurth did not distinguish them from Zubayr's *nizzam* troops. Schweinfurth identified the troops under Bilali alone as black, but the color may well have as much to do with their loyalty as the color of their skin or language they spoke.

⁵² Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 330.

Schweinfurth identified the bashibazouqs as Turkish, which they certainly might have been, but again this may have been an identification of their loyalty or dress.

Schweinfurth told that these bashibazouks had joined in with the Khartoumers under Zubayr since Bilali was their common enemy, mostly because he had extracted unreasonable taxes/bribes when he ruled southern Darfur.⁵³ When Bilali went to Khartoum claiming Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur, “all the representations by which he had induced the Viceroy to undertake the expedition to the Gazelle [Bahr al-Ghazal] had turned out to be nothing but the fraudulent devices of a swindler; Bilali had never possessed land in this district at all, and much less had received any grant of territory from the Sultan of Darfoor.”⁵⁴

At the heart of the Bilali episode is not an ethnic battle, as Schweinfurth initially described it, but a battle for courtly approval from the viceroy of Sudan, and winning effective control of the area was the key to approval from the weak viceroy. “Hellali” as Schweinfurth called Bilali,⁵⁵ “had ordered his soldiers to make requisitions of corn upon the natives under Seebehr's [Zubayr's] jurisdiction,” natives who were already being taxed by Zubayr. When the natives protested, Bilali's troops resorted to violence to collect the grain. Zubayr's troops came to protect the natives, when “Hellali's people immediately opened fire upon the Nubians, and the very first shot wounded Seebehr in the ankle. This was the signal for a general battle, and many lives were lost on either side.” When Zubayr prevailed in this battle, Schweinfurth reported, the governor at

⁵³ Ibid., 330.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ O'Fahey, “Al-Bulalawi or al-Hilali?”

Khartoum proclaimed him governor of the region because he did not have the power to reverse the realities of Zubayr's ascendancy.⁵⁶

If Gessi considered the struggle merely abuse from an out-of-control Zubayr, and Schweinfurth considered it a struggle between many political factions vying for power, Shuqayr considered it an issue of Bilali coming and disrupting what had been a peaceful status quo. Shuqayr describes Bilali as a man "from the west who had stayed on after the Haj." It was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for pilgrims from West Africa to pass through Sudan on their way to or from Mecca, become sidetracked, and settle down permanently, but none of the other versions mentions his pilgrimage. Shuqayr enumerated 200 organized soldiers (*nizzam*), 400 bashibozouk, and 600 others, all under Bilali, and that they "encircled Bahr al-Ghazal" and "read to its people a formal order (firman) from the government naming Bilali administrator of Bahr al-Ghazal." In Shuqayr's narrative, Zubayr then hid "in a creek by the road" with some of his soldiers, where he ambushed Bilali's troops, killing Bilali, and killing or capturing his troops.⁵⁷

Shuqayr does not mention the governor appointing Zubayr, but rather only wrote that Zubayr informed the governor of the result of the battle. Zubayr had prevailed, so he was de facto ruler, and if the proclamations from the governor were true or false had little bearing.⁵⁸ This episode reveals the weakness of authority from Khartoum, or for that matter from Cairo, over this periphery.

Shaw's narrative gives many extra details left out of these other versions: In Shaw's version the governor at Khartoum in 1869 ordered Zubayr to accompany Bilali to

⁵⁶ Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 331.

⁵⁷ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 67.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Bahr al-Ghazal on the way to his ultimate goal of Darfur, to assist him, and to report his actions back to Khartoum. Perhaps the governor thought either the two men would learn to work together, or one would kill the other, and either way the conflict between them would be distant from Khartoum, given the many hundreds of miles of difficult terrain between Khartoum and the conflict. When Bilali reached Zubayr, Zubayr asked for his plan. Bilali responded that he planned to go by Zubayr's capital, so Zubayr went ahead to prepare quarters for Bilali's army. The additional details that contribute to the slow growth of tension also change the story substantially. Shaw makes it clear that Zubayr and Bilali had a reasonable working relationship for a period. It was not, according to Shaw, Zubayr who initially had tension with Bilali, but rather the local commander of Egyptian troops, Kurshuk Ali, an ally of Zubayr. Bilali poisoned Kurshuk Ali, putting Zubayr on guard.⁵⁹

The incongruity between the Shaw narrative and the Shuqayr and Schweinfurth narratives is that Shaw narrates the detail that Bilali's army camped by Zubayr's capital peacefully for a year, and that in fact Zubayr spent £7,500 to maintain them. By the time a year had passed, Zubayr had begun to doubt if Bilali really wanted to attack Darfur, or meant to stay in Bahr al-Ghazal. "To this Bilali replied that it was true that he meant to attack Darfour, but that he had a commission from the Government to conquer the provinces of the White Nile first." Zubayr responded to his claim asking to see papers of permission from the governor. "Bilali angrily denied the right of Zebehr to interfere. Zebehr could not extract any definite statement of his intentions. He was obliged to content himself with reporting the whole interview to Khartoum, adding his opinion that

⁵⁹ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 659.

Bilali was altogether untrustworthy, and praying the Government to take preventive measures as soon as possible. “Bilali then, in the Shaw narrative, “sent for mercenary troops from Darfour, where the warlike tribes hire themselves out to whoever wants them,” which would correspond to Schweinfurth’s “blacks.”⁶⁰

This political-military conflict suddenly became religious, however, when Bilali “began to spread the report that he was the Mahdi.” To Zubayr, this was one step too far, for if local people started to back Bilali as the Mahdi, his power would be increased substantially and he would certainly take Zubayr’s territory. Strangely, Bilali continued to press Zubayr to be peaceful with him, offering to “govern side by side.” Bilali began taking over the eastern edge of Bahr al-Ghazal, proclaiming himself to be Mahdi and master of all of Bahr al-Ghazal. Zubayr sent him a message, asking, “Have you authority from the Government to take this place from me? If you have, tell me. If you have not, tell me also, that I may decide what I shall do.” In this, the Shaw narrative, Zubayr makes every effort to work through proper diplomacy, yielding to the power of Khartoum, whereas in the Shuqayr narrative he barely bothered to inform Khartoum that he had prevailed. Zubayr heard no response from Bilali, and “he had sent reports to Khartoum of what Bilali was doing, but had received no answer, and in the absence of instructions from headquarters, he was bound to take the responsibility of action upon himself. He accordingly prepared for war.”⁶¹

The battle in Shaw’s narrative agreed with Shuqayr and Schweinfurth: Zubayr was outnumbered but better armed and organized, Zubayr was injured in the leg, a battle

⁶⁰ Ibid., 649

⁶¹ Ibid., 660.

ensued, and after Zubayr killed Bilali, the battle was over. A committee from Khartoum came to Bahr al-Ghazal to write a report about what had happened, so Zubayr told Shaw, though no other evidence of this committee survives, and “the terms of the report stated Bilali to have been evidently a dangerous and dishonest man, and a strong opinion was expressed that if Zebehr had acted differently the whole country would have been in disorder,” a very convenient conclusion given Zubayr was then the de facto ruler of the area. Nonetheless, as a result of the report, Zubayr was “appointed Governor of the province of the White Nile, and Bilali’s soldiers and arms were transferred to his command.”⁶²

Though it seems folly to see foreshadowing in history, the story of Bilali and Zubayr here reflects strongly in Gordon and the Mahdi later. Gordon, like Zubayr, felt that retreat was failure, and that the enemy would rule a beloved land less justly. Zubayr took the responsibility against Bilali because he had no communication with his superiors, as Gordon took responsibility against the Mahdi following a lack of communication with Cairo or London. Khartoum in this case and Cairo in the other, it seems, lacked a clear opinion on the matter, which coupled with unreliable communication networks, left the general in the field to believe his opinion was right, and to falsely expect government reinforcements at every moment.

This battle left the Khedive with a problem, for it was clear that without Zubayr, any Khedival claims over Bahr al-Ghazal would be weakened, even if Bilali had been, to some extent, appointed to rule Bahr al-Ghazal by the Khedive’s representative in Khartoum. The Khedive decided that, since history is written by the victors, Zubayr’s

⁶² Ibid., 661.

version of what had happened between himself and Bilali could stand, and Zubayr would be governor. The Khedive announced after his man lost in battle with Zubayr that Zubayr would rule the new province of Bahr al-Ghazal.⁶³

Khedive Ismail enjoyed the prestige of an empire expanding 1500 miles southward toward the source of the Nile, both trying to encompass this entire river that was critical to Egypt as virtually its only fresh water source, and impressing British elites by succeeding in this quest that had long stymied explorers. Slavery had been outlawed in the British empire in 1833, but with little enforcement in Egypt and Sudan, and abolitionism became an ever-larger motivation for the British governments and the British men, namely Samuel Baker and Charles Gordon, who worked for the Khedive in southern Soudan. Baker and Gordon made abolition a priority. Ismail, and the quick succession of powerless governors he placed in Khartoum, however, felt abolition in these regions would stymie any other state-building efforts, and that an unenforced but stated stance against slavery would help them rule more effectively.⁶⁴

Out of this tension the very beginnings of the Mahdia were also growing, and similar movements across northern Africa, as will be discussed in chapter 4. In 1873, Zubayr was approached by an ‘Abd Allahi who would later encourage Muhammad Ahmed to declare himself the Mahdi, and later ‘Abd Allahi would become Khalifa of the Mahdia. In 1873, however, ‘Abd Allahi had not met Muhammad Ahmed yet, and he approached Zubayr, urging him to declare himself Mahdi, but Zubayr dismissed him, and told him not to repeat this kind of talk. Zubayr went on to conquer Darfur, and then fall

⁶³ Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 135.

⁶⁴ Ibrahim, “The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885,” 211.

from power. ‘Abd Allahi went on to rule Sudan after the death of the Mahdi from 1885-1898.⁶⁵

Between Darfur and Bahr al-Ghazal was a region without much of a settled population, and populated instead by nomadic Arab tribes, primarily of the Rezagat and Baqqara.⁶⁶ Zubayr had been paying a “subsidy” to Rezagat tribes to ensure safe passage of caravans through their territory. Rezagat also sold cattle and butter in the market in Zubayr’s capital, Mandugba, but the subsidy and these trades did not compare with the profit they made from raiding, so that by 1872 the agreement between Zubayr and these tribes began to break down, and raiding began again. Shaw included Zubayr asking a Rezagat messenger politely and logically that they stop raiding, saying, “we have been at peace and you have been richer. Why, then, do you now break the treaty and kill and rob the people who are coming to me?” While this logic may have prevailed against simple shortsighted greed, the Rezagat perhaps knew what was coming, saying, or so Zubayr imagined, “No; this man is too strong. After a time he will come against us and conquer us as he has conquered the Bongos and the Nyam-Nyams. It is better that we should fight him now.” Even after Zubayr pointed out that he too was an Arab, therefore they should

⁶⁵ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 58; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, 44; Zulfo, *Karari*, 25.

⁶⁶ Zubayr refers to the Rezagat as Arabs. In Shuqayr uses the much less common plural ‘Arban rather than the standard ‘Arab to refer to these groups. The group was Arab in at least three senses: it used Arabic as its primary language, it identified its origins from Arabia, and it was nomadic. Sometimes he specifically refers to them as Bedoin, nomads, to be clear, but it was important to him that they were not simply nomads, but Arab nomads. It is possible that he uses the less common plural of the word Arab to designate that the Rezagat are not the more common Arabs of the river valleys, but are the less common and more specifically Arab nomadic groups. Zubayr is constantly frustrated by the Rezagat, frustrated most with their failure to stick to formal pacts. He calls them out on these failures, but not in the sort of degrading terms (corruptors and scoundrels ahl al-baghiyy, literally sons of whores Shuqayr, *Tārīkh ’al-Sūdān*, 86.) that he reserves for those who seem to him to play dishonest politics against him. Zubayr has trouble, disagreement, and battle with the Rezagat, but perhaps partly because of his pride in his own Arab identity, he retains a large degree of respect for them.

unite, the fear of a growing power motivated the Rezagat to take Zubayr on. They fought months of battles, finally yielding the town of Shakka, in southern Darfur, to Zubayr. Most of the Rezagat and Baqqara submitted to Zubayr, but a quarter fled to Darfur, inciting the Sultan of Darfur that he ought not to wait as long as they did before attacking Zubayr.⁶⁷

Tensions between Zubayr and the Sultan of Darfur had thus been brought to a head. The Rezagat and Baqqara who had formed a buffer between the two powers were forced to join one or the other. This development would be a concern not only to the governor in Khartoum but to the Khedive. If Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur were to be ruled by one man, whether Zubayr or the Sultan of Darfur, that man would be in a position to then take control of all of Sudan. This fear foreshadowed the early growth of the Mahdia in these regions and also attest to the tenuousness of Egyptian administration.

Zubayr, according to Shaw, then wrote to Khartoum asking for an administrator to come to rule this growing territory, so that he could focus on his business interests, but got in reply from the governor, Ismail Yacoub, that he did not want to get embroiled in the petty wars of the region, and so he would appoint Zubayr governor, and expect from him £15,000 a year in tribute.⁶⁸

As if the fleeing Rezagat were not enough to anger the Sultan of Darfur, he had already been smoldering for years because the development of Bahr al-Ghazal and Khartoum had been rerouting trade away from his kingdom. Until the 1840s and 1850s, most ivory and slaves that traveled from the regions between the Nile and Congo

⁶⁷ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 663.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 664.

tributaries had traveled to Egypt via Darfur and the Forty Days Road across the desert to Cairo and the Mediterranean. The cataracts on the Nile, coupled with various tribes along the Nile wanting tribute, and insecurity on the Egypt/Sudan border had made the desert a safer and more economical route for centuries. With the extension of Egyptian power to Khartoum, and then up the Nile, and finally into Bahr al-Ghazal, trade could travel safely by river nearly the entire way to Cairo, and the growth of Egyptian state control meant a clearer line between tax, tribute, and bribe. For decades, Khartoum had been in ascendancy and Darfur in decline. With the Rezagat inciting the Sultan to attack Zubayr, Zubayr's conquest of Shakka was the final push the Sultan needed to engage Zubayr militarily.⁶⁹

Zubayr did not jump to attack Darfur. If the safe passage of caravans on roads was his primary concern, wasting money on a war when cheaper diplomacy might work was foolhardy. So he appealed to the Sultan, saying that while Shakka "has been subject to you... slave-hunting has continued here, and the roads remain unsafe. You have not the power to keep order. No one can but I. Several times before me you have tried and failed. Now you want me to leave it, but I will not. I am determined to assure the safety of these roads." Zubayr criticized the Sultan for allowing slave hunting on his southern border, while Zubayr allowed slave hunting on his southern border, because to him, this was an area outside of civilization.⁷⁰

Zubayr prevailed against the Sultan after two days of fighting, largely due to his advantage in technology. Zubayr's men had French rifles of recent make, and imported

⁶⁹ O'Fahey, *The Darfur Sultanate*, 263.

⁷⁰ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 665.

gunpowder, while the Sultan's men had older Turkish flintlock muskets, and gunpowder made in Darfur. Zubayr captured the Sultan's cannons, which he said were so ancient as to have dates of manufacture from four centuries earlier, likely an exaggeration, as many of Zubayr's mentions of large numbers tend. After their capture of Algiers, French forces found the artillery used by the Bey was from the seventeenth century, so two centuries might be plausible. Shaw footnoted that claim, saying that it would have been about the time gunpowder was introduced in Europe.⁷¹

In addition to a technological advantage, Zubayr also had a psychological asset, since he employed men from the Azande. Whether or not cannibalism was practiced among the Azande, the reputation helped Zubayr's side.

One thing will horrify you that I permitted. Most of them [soldiers] came to me of course as cannibals. They were absolutely forbidden to touch human flesh in times of peace, but on active service they were allowed to eat all they killed. When I came to fight in Darfour this struck more terror into the enemy than all my discipline and arms. I am telling you this fact because we have agreed that you are to know the truth. Whatever you think of it, I will ask you to remember that the ways of such a country as Mandugba cannot be like the ways of England.⁷²

Zubayr's last point, that one cannot compare a frontier region to England at the peak of its global dominance, resonated here in a similar way to the way it resonated in discussions of slavery. This may be a tacit acknowledgement that his troops ate the dead, or merely that they were given permission to, and that the opposite side learning of this lost courage.⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., 665.

⁷² Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 583. Mandugba is the former name of Zubayr's capital in Bahr al-Ghazal, the region just south of Darfur that he ruled before his conquest.

⁷³ For a discussion of cannibalism, see discussion at the end of chapter 2, or Santandrea, *Ethno-Geography*, 121.

Zubayr subsequently took control of the area of the Rezagat on the southern edge of Darfur, which Zubayr claimed was because the Rezagat had been attacking caravans, but Gordon, as he published in his pamphlet in 1879, claimed that Zubayr's conquest of the Rezagat was to impress Ismail Ayyub, who in response pardoned him of any questionable actions, promoted him to *qaimqam* (deputy governor/lieutenant governor), and sent him more troops and arms. Gordon claims that Zubayr gradually eased his way into Darfur, making the final attack once regular trained troops had been sent to him, and conquering the Sultanate. Gordon's choice of vocabulary in describing the situation belies his bias against Zubayr. "But he (Zubeyr) still represented that he had accomplished all this with his own forces and money, although our government had forbidden it, and he had disobeyed its orders. According to what was said, he took for himself as booty the whole of the wealth and precious objects of Darfur, showing nothing to the officers who were with him, or to the regular troops." Zubayr had conquered Darfur after having been promoted by the governor and sent troops. Gordon here says that the government had forbidden his conquest of Darfur, but in only the previous paragraph he describes merely that Zubayr conquered Darfur "without orders being given for the measure," and the fact that Ismail Ayyub had promoted Zubayr in response to Zubayr's northward expansion of territory into Shakka at the periphery of Darfur might easily have led Zubayr to think that conquest of the entirety of the Sultanate would be encouraged.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582.

In Gordon's defense, however, Ismail Ayyub then named another man, Hasan Hilmi Pasha, governor of central Darfur, naming Zubayr governor of Bahr al-Ghazal and Shakka, perhaps considering that Zubayr's conflicts with the Sultan would be over, and that Zubayr would be able to rule in peace in Bahr al-Ghazal, control the copper mines at Hufat an-Nahas, and be a useful part of the Khedival government. Zubayr, however, felt robbed of Darfur, and made his fateful trip to Cairo to address this grievance with the Khedive. Ismail Ayyub was also recalled to Cairo when Gordon was placed in control of Sudan later the same year that Zubayr went to Cairo, 1875. Thus, with Bilali dead, and Ismail Ayyub and Zubayr both in Cairo, the Khedive had removed all perceived traces of the conflict and had new governors installed, a European one no less in Khartoum. Trouble from this region plagued Gordon, however, with Suleiman, described in chapter 4.⁷⁵

Zubayr's conquest of Darfur ruffled feathers in Cairo in ways Bahr al-Ghazal never had. Bahr al-Ghazal was rich with physical resources, but it was a province created anew, populated by disunited pagan tribes. Darfur, on the other hand, had for four hundred years been led by a united Muslim state, fully acculturated into the domain of the faith. Darfur had a formalized treaty with the Ottoman Sultan. Zubayr reneged on that agreement, in the name of the Egyptian Khedive who worked in the name of the Ottoman Sultan, though the agreement with and title from the Khedive meant fairly little, for titles were cheap and the Khedive was merely acknowledging realpolitik, allowing Zubayr to rule what he ruled rather than spend money to take him on. Nonetheless, while Zubayr's

⁷⁵ Ibid.

actions in Bahr al-Ghazal were applauded, his similar actions in Darfur led to his imprisonment.

Darfur, however, was not the divided place that Bahr al-Ghazal was. Darfur had one dominant ethnic-linguistic group, the Fur, one dominant religion, Islam, and a hundreds-year old history of political unity, stable trade, and economic success. Bahr al-Ghazal was a geographical region with many ethnic-linguistic groups, many religions, and no history of political unity or stable trade routes. Darfur was a prize to be coveted; Bahr al-Ghazal a mess to be cleaned up. Zubayr's conquest of Darfur, R. S. O'Fahey argues, was "a climacteric in modern Sudanese history:" Darfur was an independent sultanate for four centuries up to 1874, and since 1874 it has been more or less part of Sudan, despite the separate identity that it has revived since.⁷⁶

The struggle between Ismail Ayyub and Zubayr over Darfur appears in Shaw and Shuqayr to be a struggle for power, but 'Izz al-Din Ismail, whose 1998 work on Zubayr is nearly entirely a translation,⁷⁷ made a telling comment in his brief analysis. He argued, "The struggle between Zubayr and the Hukumdar was a symbol of the struggle between the Sudanese Islamic consciousness and the Turkish-Egyptian consciousness." This scholar felt that Zubayr was Sudanese and Muslim, more independent of Egypt, whereas Ismail Ayyub was philosophically and administratively part of the Turkish Egyptian ruling elite. By example, he pointed out "Zubayr wanted to lighten taxation and the requirement of the Zakat that was required by religious law, and the Hukumdar wanted to milk this cash cow, even if the cow had little milk." This argument seems to have been

⁷⁶ O'Fahey, *The Darfur Sultanate*, 261.

⁷⁷ 'Izz al-Din Ismail translated Jackson back into Arabic, for Jackson was a translation of Shuqayr from Arabic into English.

that the Turkish-Egyptian governing elite were overly concerned with short-term excessive taxation. That taxation, he failed to mention, was a result of the pressure of Europeans, and if Zubayr's efforts were for lighter taxation, it was only because his profits were mostly from trade rather than taxation.⁷⁸

If Zubayr had stayed in Sudan, he would either have had to create an independent government in western Sudan, or battle Ismail for leadership of the Sudan as a whole. While both of those courses of action would have been within his charismatic and capable character, Zubayr showed his mortality, if not humility, by leaving the Sudan. Zubayr went to Cairo to face the Khedive with the hope that the Khedive would take his side and send him back to Sudan empowered, but the Khedive had other plans, as will be detailed in chapter 4.

This section, the Bilali incident and the subsequent conquest of Darfur and exile to Cairo, has shown the end of the old regime of broadcasting power, loose overlapping and concentric empires, and slavery being an aspect of political control. This old regime worked via outlying peripheral powers to broadcast power further, those outlying peripheral powers using even further outlying more peripheral powers to broadcast their power further, and so on, Zubayr's empire being a loose grouping of small kingdoms, each of which had its own periphery, and those peripheries had their own peripheries in which slaves were raided for, further south and east across the Congo watershed border. Capturing slaves was not so much a form of production, but the lowest form of political control. In turn Zubayr's empire was very peripheral to the Khedive who was himself

⁷⁸ Ismā'īl, *al-Zubayr Bāshā wa-Dawruhu Fī al-Sūdān Fī 'Aṣr Al-ḥukm al-Miṣrī (Zubayr Pasha and His Role in the Sudan During the Period of Egyptian Rule)*, 180 Translation mine.

peripheral to London, and still, Paris. The entrance of Bilali, and the centralizations of power under Charles Gordon, Romolo Gessi, and Ismail Ayyub in this section, show the beginning of the end of this loose system, and the shift toward a less layered and more centralized system.

Conclusion

The period in which Zubayr ruled a country was on first glance the most significant part of his life. It was the peak of his career, the widest extension of his political power and the time of his greatest ability to tax. Zubayr's country, however, existed for a single decade. The methods and philosophies that Zubayr used to rule that country were an extension of his time as a nomadic trader, which in turn were an extension of the milieu in which he worked.

Slavery was essential to his domain and he broadcast his power through its workings. Broadcasting power involves disempowering ancient regimes, either by dissolving them or encompassing them. Frontier societies are areas of temporal chaos. Mutual dependence describes both center-periphery and slaver-enslaved relationships. Frontier regions are not merely peripheries, but are peripheries of peripheries, colonies of colonies.⁷⁹ Frontier regions are zones of interface and diffused authority, where the future is up for grabs.

This chapter used these frameworks to describe three phases in the transformation of Zubayr's company to a small empire. First Zubayr's company conquered a small kingdom. Second, that kingdom expanded its power over the diverse isolated peoples to

⁷⁹ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 52.

its south. Third, the small empire expanded northward to territories of the Rizayqat and finally overthrew the Sultanate of Darfur.

The issues discussed in this chapter, including slavery, conquest, Bilali, and Darfur resonated on Zubayr's arrival in Cairo in 1875, and for the rest of his life.

Southerners

Here you have ivory, and feathers, and skins; and you want cloth, and beads, and knives. In the countries of other men they have cloth, and beads, and knives; and they want ivory, and feathers, and skins. Let them come amongst you, bringing those things which you want, and carrying away things which they want; and thus all men are the richer.⁸⁰

Zubayr's neighbors to the south were of two kinds: those who were easy prey and those who were competition. Zubayr profited from slave raiding, if only through taxing the transportation of slave caravans through his territory. Zubayr had to protect those profits by enforcing the rule of law in his territory, including buying and selling of slaves but not stealing or raiding for them. In order to protect those profits Zubayr also had to eliminate competition. Since kingdoms to his south were outside of the Egyptian-Sudanese sphere of influence, taking over these kingdoms was of no concern to authorities in Cairo and Khartoum. This raider/trader format was repeated along the Muslim/non-Muslim frontier, in Darfur just before Zubayr, and in Wadai just after Zubayr.⁸¹ The area of Equatoria, however, along the main route of the Nile from Lake

⁸⁰ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 576.

⁸¹ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 15.

Victoria, and to the east of Bahr al-Ghazal, was considered of more international importance, and so the Khedive put Samuel Baker in control of it.

The fact that the Khedive used Zubayr as a local cipher for nominal control, before actual Egyptian expansion, and earlier used Samuel Baker and Charles Gordon to do the same, causes some pause in the description of the border as a Muslim/non-Muslim frontier. Baker and Gordon were European Christians in the employ of an Turko-Albanian Muslim. Power was being broadcast into central Africa, power that at its essence was neither European, Christian, Turkish, nor Muslim, but was simply a manifestation of competition for profits and security.

This section jumps back in time a bit, or more accurately parallels the previous section in chronology. I kept it for afterward to not allow the issue of slavery to dominate my discussion of political relations to the north. It is that obsession with the slaving aspect of Zubayr's rule that has distracted previous scholars, and, I argue, kept them from seeing greater issues. Slaving was important, however, and understanding its role in Zubayr's career is important, and this section should help explain it.

This section discusses slavery more directly than other sections and other chapters, but even here slavery is shown to be an expression of political domination, imperialism on the more immediate and personal level. Slavery was a long-standing tradition in Sudan, slaves traditionally being exported to Egypt, Turkey and the Gulf as domestic servants, eunuchs and concubines, roles for which it was advantageous to have more complete control over an employee, even if it would have been cheaper and simpler to hire a peasant than purchase a slave. Slavery expanded in the nineteenth century as trade networks were improved and the economies of northern Sudan and Egypt

expanded, and more people could afford servants. It was this frontier moment, between economic expansion and before political centralization, that exhibit an expansion of slavery before it could be controlled. This frontier was more of a time than a place. It was the moment between the old loose system of broadcasting power and the newer system of political borders.

Zubayr, as portrayed by Shuqayr, broadcast power toward the south. “It was written to me that eight of the most powerful kings of the Namanim that were in the battles were still fighting each other, and in fact they were hunting each other like bird hunters,” but Zubayr brought civilization and “when I began ruling them I criticized these actions and wrote to them and made a simple peace throughout them and they came to respect one another and buy and sell and marry with one another.”⁸² The lack of criticism of this hubris marks Shuqayr’s view that the Arab/Muslims civilizing mission was self-evident: one might simply write a letter to warring sides explaining that peace was more beneficial than war, and the simpletons might be saved from barbarity.

On Shuqayr’s frontier, however, sometimes force was necessary when letters did not work. Zubayr had befriended King Tikma when he came to trade in his small kingdom as an independent trader, and Tikma gave Zubayr his daughter in marriage. Later, when both Tikma and Zubayr had expanded territories, a frontier appeared between them. In 1872, Tikma began chipping away at Zubayr’s territory. Zubayr initiated a correspondence by messenger, according to Shuqayr, aiming at peace. Tikma responded in this correspondence by threatening Zubayr if he did not go back to being only a trader. Zubayr responded, “I do not give up my kingdom that I established myself

⁸² Shuqayr, *Tārīkh ‘al-Sūdān*, 68.

for a mere threat or menace. If he saw me as so small, let him try to use the powers he was so proud of over the pagan kings.” Tikma had broadcast his power over “pagan kings,” those of even lesser technology and organization, had been an imperial conqueror making himself emperor over kings. Zubayr then, with more advanced technologies and better organization, fought against Tikma’s larger armies, finally killing Tikma and broadcast his empire over Tikma’s.⁸³

Zubayr had not been bothered by Tikma’s growing empire on Zubayr’s border, until it threatened his sovereignty, at which point Zubayr swallowed Tikma’s territory; In the same way Cairo was not bothered by Zubayr’s growing independent empire on Egypt’s border, until it threatened its sovereignty, at which point the Khedive swallowed Zubayr’s territory. In the same way London was not bothered by Cairo’s growing independent empire on the border of British influence, until its difficulties indirectly jeopardized British economic stake in the Egyptian cotton trade, the Suez Canal, and Egypt’s debts. These were significant portions of the British global economy, and as much as empire on the cheap was desirable, a threat to Egyptian cotton (particularly during the American Civil War), to Suez trade (particularly Indian cotton), and to debt collection were threats to essential British interests, threats to Britain. So Britain took closer control of Egypt.

British imperialism was changing in this period, from a period of the aggressive expansion of the second British empire to a period of failed attempts at disentanglement. Egypt and its Sudan found their way into the British imperial sphere nearly in spite of

⁸³ Ibid., 68.

British interests, and certainly in spite of Gladstone's goals as prime minister.⁸⁴ This was much later than the second British empire that Bayly describes, and perhaps that goes to show that this period of expansion was even more a period of globalizing centralization than imperial expansion.⁸⁵

In a similar vein, Denis Judd argues that "far from the sum of the Empire being greater than its parts, generally the opposite was true." He argues that the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was the primary motivation for increasing British involvement in Egypt and Sudan, an argument which has been criticized for being limited,⁸⁶ if for nothing else than for concerns about Ottoman integrity, but which should not be overlooked entirely.⁸⁷ Judd's argument, despite his capitalizing the E in empire, contributes to those of others, mentioned earlier, who argue that the empire was more a face of a broader globalization than a force on its own.⁸⁸

To add to recent scholarship criticizing the reification of a British empire that in actuality was far from substantial, Zubayr's empire gives a clear example of Gallagher and Robinson-style collaborators to Zubayr's empire, people and tribes volunteering to join Zubayr's empire. "It was heard that from among [the newly conquered peoples] were

⁸⁴ Paul Knaplund, *The British Empire, 1815-1939* (New York: H. Fertig, 1969), xix, 416.

⁸⁵ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

⁸⁶ Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 17.

⁸⁷ Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 1, 92.

⁸⁸ Porter, "Empire, What Empire?" or, Why 80% of Early- and Mid-Victorians Were Deliberately Kept in Ignorance of It"; Phimister, "Empire, Imperialism and the Partition of Africa"; Darwin, "Globalism and Imperialism: The Global Context of British Power, 1830-1960"; Adas, "Imperialism and Colonialism in Comparative Perspective."

fire-worshippers/pagans⁸⁹ who heard of my justice and desired what others under my sovereignty had of security and peace and breadth of life, so they began to come to me from far-off places presenting their obedience, asking that the workers I had trained rule over them.” To Shuqayr, Zubayr’s argument that they came simply for the benefits of civilization rather than out of fear of being violently conquered and enslaved is almost incredible, though Zubayr continues, “I answered that my kingdom was very wide and very strong in all the four directions.⁹⁰ His kingdom being wide and strong was at the same time a comfort that those who joined were “worshipping the rising sun,” per Charles Gordon’s philosophy, but also a threat that they had little choice but to join.

Egyptian Sudan expanded not in “all the four directions,” but rather straight southward toward Lake Albert, into Ekuatoria and Uganda, not into the southwest into Bahr al-Ghazal or the west into Darfur. This movement toward the equator was the thrust of Egyptian Sudan, and Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur were essentially sideshows.⁹¹ Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur did little to stoke the flames of European adventuring obsessed with discovery and control of a mythical source of the Nile.

Zubayr understood the European fixation on civilizing and worked tirelessly to present himself as part of this mission: ““In the countries and among the peoples that I have described to you,’ he said, ‘one man can do little; but what he can do is to open the door to civilization, and civilization will do the rest.’”⁹² In order to make his case clear, he presented the state of the people who he ruled over as the antithesis of civilized: “They

⁸⁹ مجوس *majjuus*, English plural *magi*, as in the three magi of the Bible.

⁹⁰ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 68.

⁹¹ Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire* compare maps pp.xi, xii.

⁹² Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 575.

were nearly all blacks, and most of them cannibals... The slave-trade was already flourishing in the outlying provinces, and man-hunting was everywhere a common practice, whether for purposes of eating or selling... Their ignorance was indescribable. They were without even the most elementary notions of trade or agriculture.”⁹³

The Azande were known among the other tribes of Bahr al-Ghazal by the Dinka word Niam-Niam, also pluralized Nianim, meaning cannibals, but it is unclear how much the word reflected reality or determined the way they were seen. Not only the Azande/Niam-niam, but also the Gabu, Banda, Nzakara and other groups of western Bahr al-Ghazal were known to have formerly participated in cannibalism, particularly with regards to war captives, but they did not anymore. It was unclear how long ago that had been, whether back so far as to be a time of mythology, or only a generation or two.⁹⁴

The issue of whether the Azande were practicing cannibals might be illuminated by a comparison to similarly less-developed peoples in southern Africa. The least developed peoples that the Zulu conquered were referred to as *buzimuzimu*, a word generally translated as cannibal. Carolyn Hamilton challenges this translation, arguing that the word meant something closer to uncivilized or in a state of anarchy. One misunderstanding she points out is that the stealing of crops was often referred to among the Zulu as a form of cannibalism.⁹⁵ It is unclear what word Zubayr said to his translator Hamed on Gibraltar. At times he made it very clear that he meant men who eat human

⁹³ Ibid., 569–70.

⁹⁴ Santandrea, *Ethno-Geography*, 121.

⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 212.

flesh, but at other times he likely used a more vague term, like متوحش ' which can mean either *savage* or *cannibal*, much like *buzimuzimu*.⁹⁶

While in Shuqayr he emphasized the primitiveness of the people before he got there, and let the civilizing speak for itself, he convinced Shaw that “he had all an enlightened trader’s faith in trade as a civilizing medium. He believed that where trade flowed unimpeded, peace, order, knowledge, and every blessing of organized society must follow in its train; and that which he spoke of most definitely, with a modest and yet contented self-respect as the achievement of a not altogether wasted life, was that he had opened new channels for the commerce of the civilized world.”⁹⁷

What is more, Shaw was convinced that not only did Zubayr think it was morally good to have civilized, but that Zubayr’s inner anthropologist brought him to seek out new peoples: Shaw wrote that Zubayr “was always ready to defend the interests of stability and civilization, not so much I sometimes think, to make the world more civilized, but because those people who he considered less civilized I think were also more interesting to him, always surprising him, like any imperialist traveler.”⁹⁸ Zubayr was, to Shaw, like “any imperialist traveler,” motivated by curiosity as well as moral, financial, or egomaniacal aspirations. Zubayr presented himself as nearly European in his character to a British readership, and then as typically Arab Muslim to an Arab audience, and he was both. He was Arab and European not only because Bahr al-Ghazal was ambiguously on the line between Arab and European influences, but because the two

⁹⁶ The use of *savage* to mean *cannibal* might be a way to hide a term for politeness, as with the use of *sleep with* to mean *have sex*.

⁹⁷ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 569–70.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 584. Emphasis mine.

kinds of imperialism were nearly identical beyond language, dress, and other ornamentation. One can hear hesitancy from Shaw's tone, however, when she qualifies this message with "not so much I sometimes think": perhaps she was both excited to compare Zubayr so directly to other "imperialist travelers" and nervous that such a comparison exceeded the credulity of the *Pall Mall Gazette* readership.

These "imperialist travelers" were only just beginning to penetrate Africa at the time of his rulership in the south of Sudan. When Zubayr began his rule in the south, European colonialism in Africa was limited mostly to coastal ports and trading through local middlemen. By the time he arrived on Gibraltar, however, nearly all of Africa was in the process of being divided between European powers, fueled by the same faith in civilization and desire for trade and wealth as Zubayr. Civilization required state structures, colonial or independent, so Zubayr set out setting up a state. But the imminent Scramble was not only to divide Africa between Europeans but to give them legitimacy to push out competitors like Tippoo Tib and Zubayr.

Zubayr worked to establish trade in other products that could provide longer-term profitability, but for his predecessors and contemporaries, a series of quick voyages for region, were better business opportunities. Encouraging the escalation of chaos increased opportunities for those wishing to capture behind the thin cloak of warfare contemporary readings of Islamic law required for the capture of slaves. "All the employés here owned a number of men slaves, whom they kept and armed These fellows then installed themselves in the negro villages, and forthwith obliged inhabitants to pay them an impost in produce. These slaves remitted a portion of these imposts to their masters."⁹⁹ The

⁹⁹ Georg Schweinfurth, "Upper Egypt," *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, August 1882, 223.

slaves, then, were tax farmers in regions with which a permanent war was set up, so that there was no limit to the amount of tax demanded. These imposts would likely have been paid in children or slaves captured in raids deeper into the Congo basin, so that slaves could not only own slaves, but slaves of slaves could own slaves.

What set Zubayr apart from other traders was his distinction of slave raiding from slave transporting. He understood the vast increase in the capture and trade of slaves as an ephemeral opportunity, brought by the difference in technological weaponry between the traders and southerners. Once southerners were armed with muskets, or state control came to temper the chaos of the free market, the opportunity would lapse. “Such was the White Nile trade when I prepared to start from Khartoum on my expedition to the Nile sources. Every one in Khartoum, with the exception of a few Europeans, was in favor of the slave trade, and looked with jealous eyes upon a stranger venturing within the precincts of their holy land; a land sacred to slavery and to every abomination and villainy that man can commit.”¹⁰⁰

Everyone, Samuel Baker describes, who could be, was a participant in the slave trade, and it was such an integrated portion of the local economy that slaves were a common form of currency. Baker published his travel narrative in 1869, after traveling in Sudan from 1861 to 1865, and as a traveler it was easy to be critical of the corruption around him. When he returned on request of the Khedive to suppress the slave trade and bring the Equatoria region within the Khedive’s control, Baker found it, particularly on the small budget allowed him by the Khedive, quite difficult to run a bureaucracy without

¹⁰⁰ Baker, *The Albert N’Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 24.

participating directly or indirectly in various forms of corruption himself. “The Egyptian authorities,” Baker wrote, before becoming employed by them, “looked upon the exploration of the White Nile by a European traveler as an infringement of their slave territory that resulted from espionage, and every obstacle was thrown in my way.”¹⁰¹ Baker experienced those obstacles by local authorities even after being employed by the Khedive.¹⁰²

“An attack or razzia,” Baker wrote, again in 1866, “generally leads to a quarrel with the negro ally, who in his turn is murdered and plundered by the trader--his women and children naturally becoming slaves.”¹⁰³ It seems here that Baker saw one *razzia*, was perhaps told it was typical, and extrapolated that others were similar. It is difficult to say if attacks *generally* led to local allies being murdered, but slaves and allies were often interchangeable to Zubayr and other slavers. Alliances in this dynamic period were constantly shifting, and the line between killing in battle and murder was even fuzzier than it is otherwise, so his generalization is not without merit. “Charmed with his new friends, the power of whose weapons he acknowledges, the negro chief does not neglect the opportunity of seeking their alliance to attack a hostile neighbor.” Such a chief is not simply charmed by his new friends and their weapons, but fears that should he not point them to a new source of slaves, his people might be enslaved, so he does what he must, taking his well-armed hosts to another unsuspecting village, which the northerners rain musket fire upon, causing utter chaos. “Panic-stricken, the unfortunate victims rush from

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 62.

¹⁰³ Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 22.

their burning dwellings, and the men are shot down like pheasants... while the women and children, bewildered in the danger and confusion, are kidnapped and secured.”¹⁰⁴ In some circumstances, the men would be captured and either sold or taken as soldiers, but it seems in Baker’s particular experience or experiences they were not of economic use.

The women and children are then fastened together, the former secured in an instrument called a sheba, made of a forked pole, the neck of the prisoner fitting into the fork, secured by a cross piece lashed behind; while the wrists, brought together in advance of the body, are tied to the pole. The children are then fastened by their necks with a rope attached to the women, and thus form a living chain, in which order they are marched to the headquarters in company with the captured herds.¹⁰⁵

Occasionally such women and children might be liberated by relatives who had earned money by working for the traders, “should the relatives of the kidnapped women and children wish to ransom them, the trader takes them from his men, cancels the amount of purchase, and restores them to their relations for a certain number of elephants’ tusks, as may be agreed upon” but this was rare. Many more it is assumed would die on the way to the markets. Once the women, children, and cattle were taken, the village would also be plundered for ivory and iron hoes, and copper or iron bracelets could be chopped from the arms of the dead. The cattle, the most valuable possessions of the tribe, were taken as the prize of victory in this poor excuse for a battle.

In case the chief who led the party to this village should feel guilty, “they present him with thirty or forty head of cattle, which intoxicates him with joy, and a present of a pretty little captive girl of about fourteen completes his happiness.”¹⁰⁶ The cattle that had

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 22.

been captured would be difficult to bring all the way back to market, so this allied chief would likely purchase them in exchange for ivory, “a tusk for a cow.”¹⁰⁷

“The slaves and two-thirds of the captured cattle belong to the trader, but his men claim as their perquisite one-third of the stolen animals. These having been divided, the slaves are put up to public auction among the men.”¹⁰⁸ After the chaos of the raid, in which robbery was valid, an organized auction took place; northerners, and those within their sphere, considered anything within their sphere of control to have rules of commerce and law, but outside their sphere to be outside of the law. In short, the world within the sphere of the trader was like a portable state. As far as interactions between the trader and tribes, these had no rules of conduct. Baker interestingly mixes terms for legitimate and illegitimate commerce, since what he sees is both, using *trade, take, steal, booty, sell, purchase, plunder, capture, and taken* among others.

Baker estimated a value of five or six pounds per slave, at least when they arrived in Khartoum.¹⁰⁹ Slaves could be sold at various points along the way to Khartoum, at increasingly higher prices due to transportation and tax collection formal and informal. Most of the purchasers, Baker reported, were Arabs, by which he probably means nomads. They would then be sold to traders bringing them to Cairo, to Istanbul, and to the Arabian Peninsula, where these slaves from Bahr al-Ghazal might form a majority of the slave imports to all of these places. Many would stay in or around Khartoum for “every house in Khartoum was full of slaves, and the Egyptian officers had been in the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰⁹ One Egyptian or British pound from the period was worth between 50 and 100 British pounds today, so this would be in the ballpark of £250-£600 or \$400-\$900 per slave today.

habit of receiving a portion of their pay in slaves” even though officials had to pretend to be enforcing abolition.¹¹⁰

Slavery expanded under Zubayr, but neither the cruelty nor the customs around it may have changed dramatically when Zubayr took power. "According to the traditions handed down from the ancestors," historical ethnologist and Catholic priest Stefano Santandrea, who lived in Bahr al-Ghazal from 1828-1856 argues, "Zubeir's rule was not that of an extremely cruel tyrant. There were, of course, the three customary tributes to comply with; food, labour and conscription. Only occasionally, and probably in connection with the third and most deeply felt servitude, wanton man-slaughter took place."¹¹¹ Father Santandrea understood those traditions as well as any scholar. Conscription, he says, was a customary tribute, so in this Zubayr and even others of his generation were nothing new, and perhaps the "wanton man-slaughter" connected to conscription was nothing new either. Santandrea fails to say if the slaughtering was in reference to the gathering of conscripts or the work of these men after conscription, and that ambivalence is telling. Conscription, and all military work, in Bahr al-Ghazal, outside of developed state control, was an undisciplined affair, full of not only manslaughter, but wanton manslaughter.

Slavery was practiced among the Azande to Zubayr's south, who forced men from a variety of ethnic groups into their armies in the nineteenth century, though perhaps not before.¹¹² It was also, as has been mentioned, was practiced by the Fur to

¹¹⁰ Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 24.

¹¹¹ Santandrea, *Tribal History*, 73.

¹¹² Stephanie Beswick, "The Ethnicity of Bondage in the Valley of the Upper Nile: Slavery and the

Zubayr's north for generations before Zubayr, and even by the Dinka, the largest tribe of Southern Sudan, to Zubayr's north and east, and likely to some extent or another by most every tribe of Sudan at one point or another. The Shilluk, to his east, were known from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries as raiders even of sedentary Arab populations of central Sudan, and the fate of the Shilluk was only changed in 1861 after being conquered by Muhammad Kheir, a merchant along the lines of Zubayr but further east.¹¹³ The change that happened in the mid-nineteenth century was not one of the introduction of slavery, or of slave raiding, but of scale. The scale of raids by Khartoumers was unprecedented in the region, and threw it into tumult, even if the custom of slavery was nothing new. Modernity did not so much bring new traditions, but accelerate their scale dramatically.¹¹⁴

After a cargo of slaves was taken northward, the remaining group of the trading party could then form a semi-permanent zariba and continue trading and capturing through the wet impassable season, collecting more slaves and ivory as well as gum arabic and ostrich feathers, awaiting the return of their compatriots the following dry season, when they would swap with them more arms and ammunition and more beads for trading.¹¹⁵

Slave Trade through the Eyes of the Possessed,” in *Race and Identity in the Nile Valley: Ancient and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and Kharyssa Rhodes (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2004), 117.

¹¹³ Patricia Mercer, “Shilluk Trade and Politics from the Mid-Seventeenth Century to 1861,” *The Journal of African History*, 12, no. 3 (January 1, 1971): 407–426.

¹¹⁴ Ahmad Sikainga, *The Western Bahr Al-Ghazal Under British Rule, 1898-1956* (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1991), 4.

¹¹⁵ Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza, the Great Basin of the Nile, and Explorations of the Nile Sources*, 23.

Schweinfurth divided the slaves taken from the south into two vast categories: those to be used as merchandise, and those to be kept as private slaves by Sudanese. The latter he divided into four categories: boys, bazingers, women, and laborers. In reference to the discourse on the four-part division of Middle Eastern slaves,¹¹⁶ Schweinfurth included in the category of women a spectrum from concubine to domestic servant, and introduced the category of boys, which might otherwise be thought of as apprentice military slaves. He describes boys “from seven to ten years of age, who are employed to carry guns and ammunition: every Nubian soldier possesses at least one of these juvenile armor-bearers.”¹¹⁷ The most critical portion of Schweinfurth’s description is his category of *farookh*, which in other sources is referred as *bazinger*. Shuqayr also calls this category *unorganized soldiers* as opposed to the more highly trained *organized soldiers*: “These black soldiers constitute nearly half the fighting force in all the Seribas, and play a prominent part in time of war. It is the duty of the Farookh to scour the negro villages in search of corn, to assemble the bearers, and to keep under coercion any that are refractory in the wilderness.”¹¹⁸ The bazinger, then, is of southern ethnicity, black. He says they “accompany the natives” which leads me to believe that the bazingers were, despite being black, not considered quite natives, unless Schweinfurth uses native to refer to people still living in isolated tribes. Bazingers were armed, but were effectively the pawns in battle.¹¹⁹ Reginald Wingate, who was director of intelligence in the Kitchener campaigns

¹¹⁶ See page 17. Middle East historians divide slaves into four categories: military/administrative, domestic, harem, and agricultural.

¹¹⁷ Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 421.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.

¹¹⁹ The origin of the word may be from a small tribe from which they were recruited, or another theory goes that the word is a variant of Bazaine, after Marshal Bazaine, under whom many southern

that brought down the Mahdia from 1896-1898, and later became governor-general of the Sudan, though he seems alone in this theory, wrote that *bazinger* “was originally the name of a tribe from which Zobeir Pasha drew his slave-raiding soldiers.”¹²⁰

Employing slaves as troops was the standard political-military practice along the Muslim-pagan frontier in Africa throughout the nineteenth century. Darfur had bazinger slave-troops, Zubayr had them, and all the Khartoumer merchants who came to the south had them.¹²¹ Black slave troops were also held further afield, along the Swahili coast, by Tippoo Tib based in Zanzibar, and Abdullah bin Salim in the Tabora area of today’s Tanzania. One of Tippoo Tib’s former slaves, Ngongo Lutete, brought his slave army into the Congo basin to carve out a territory. Rabih, one of Zubayr’s former slaves, brought his slave army into Wadai in today’s Chad to carve out his territory. Even further west, in Borno, Al-Kanemi had a slave-troop army that briefly challenged the Sokoto Caliphate.¹²²

The comparison to Tippoo Tib is critical: while Tippoo Tib was not against slaving, neither was he directly a slaver, just as Zubayr. Tippoo Tib was viewed by travelers and later scholars to be responsible for the destruction and violence caused by slave raiding, a slight but critical misinterpretation. It was the followers of Tippoo Tib, a disorganized group not under his direct supervision, that were responsible for the

Sudanese troops fought in Mexico. The employment of Sudanese to maintain Napoleon III’s control of Mexico, and the employment of American Civil War veterans of both sides to maintain Egypt’s control of Sudan are more than curiosities. They show that the motivation of soldiers often was professional and not nationalistic, which helps explain bazingers in Bahr Ghazal. I would like to go into more detail comparing these stories at some point, but feared it would distract from the focus of this dissertation. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 140, n.2.

¹²⁰ Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, 28, n.1.

¹²¹ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 18.

¹²² Fisher, *Slavery in the History of Muslim Black Africa*, 243–246.

violence. This group and Tippoo Tib used one another. The raiders used his networks to get their products to market, and he profited mightily from the trade. While Tippoo Tib might have refused to sell their wares, he was not powerful enough to prevent a replacement for himself to appear with such a great economic opportunity available.¹²³

Just like Tippoo Tib, Zubayr might have refused to allow slaves to be sold through territory he controlled, but his power derived from the financial and military support of the slavers, any one of which could have replaced him. It was not merely, as Ribblesdale argued later, that Zubayr was like the chairman of the army and navy stores, not a gunmaker or a grocer (see chapter 5), but rather, Zubayr argued to Ribblesdale, that he would lose power if he quickly destroyed the economic basis of society, and would have been more successful in reducing violence by very gradually regulating the trade. He used his political power to set up a kind of franchise system. His wealth and prestige derived from this, which made his kingship/governorship critical to his prospects.¹²⁴

Muhammad ibn Ali al-Senussi has also been described as a later example of someone in the mold of Zubayr, in the sense that he broadcast territory and though states were forming in Tunisia and Egypt and Sudan, Senussi ruled something more like a small empire, and he did little to prevent slave caravans from passing through his territory.¹²⁵ Like Zubayr and Tipoo Tib, Senussi broadcast control over a huge sparsely populated region, one that would take many further decades to come under anything approaching modern state control. Enforcing abolition against the economic well-being of the local

¹²³ Melvin E. Page, "The Manyema Hordes of Tippu Tip: A Case Study in Social Stratification and the Slave Trade in Eastern Africa," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7, no. 1 (1974), 69–84.

¹²⁴ Ribblesdale, "Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar," 940.

¹²⁵ Santandrea, *Tribal History*, 39.

power structure was impossible for Senussi in Libya, Zubayr in Bahr al-Ghazal, and the British in the Sokoto Caliphate, and indeed in Sudan under the early Condominium, as will be discussed in chapter five.

Schweinfurth argued that Northern Sudanese, Nubians, were employed alongside bazingers in Bahr al-Ghazal, despite requiring higher wages. “If the controllers of the Seribas had a sufficient number of these Farookh, they might well dispense altogether with their Nubian soldiers, except for one reason, to which I have already referred, viz. the constant danger of their running away, a risk that makes them practically less reliable than the Nubians, who never think of such a thing, and even if they did, would only join another company.”¹²⁶ The occurrence of bazingers escaping and Nubians changing loyalty shows the chaotic nature of trade and rule in Bahr al-Ghazal.

Despite being soldiers and slaves, the status of bazinger allowed relative prosperity: “The Farookh have wives, children, and land in the Seribas, and some of the elder amongst them have even slave boys of their own to carry their guns.”¹²⁷ An owner might encourage his slave-soldiers to have families and land in order to discourage escape and have less responsibility for their care and feeding. Even more critical for this division is the commonplace of men volunteering for slave service:

Their ranks are largely increased after every Niam-niam expedition, as numbers of young natives will often voluntarily attach themselves to the Nubians, and, highly delighted at getting a cotton shirt and gun of their own, will gladly surrender themselves to slavery, attracted moreover by the hope of finding better food in the Seribas than their own native wildernesses can produce. The mere offer of these simple inducements in any part of the Niam-niam lands would be sufficient to gather a whole host of followers and vassals, and during our journey I myself received proposals to join our band from young people in all parts of the

¹²⁶ Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 421.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 421.

country. I mention this circumstance just to illustrate my opinion of how easily the Egyptian Government might, without using any compulsion, enlist here as many soldiers as it required. I am persuaded that, without any difficulty, whole regiments of Nizzam troops might be raised from amongst the Niam-niam in the course of comparatively a very few days.¹²⁸

His description of them is highly contentious: he very clearly includes them as a category of slaves, yet he argues that they are overwhelmingly voluntary.

The Islamic institution of the slave soldier was unique, involving “peculiar ambiguities in the distinctions between freedom and servitude, power and powerlessness.”¹²⁹ The slave soldier was most essentially a soldier, Johnson argued, and only a slave because soldiers were necessarily slaves. Even when a state collapsed, its military slaves maintained their affiliation, as that identity was a sign of power. The Sultan’s slaves were close to the Sultan, culturally and politically.¹³⁰ The soldier-slave framework helps lend credence to Zubayr’s description of the role of slaves in society being higher than that of many free men: Affiliation with power lent social power.¹³¹ Zubayr took what initially seems a delicate line in arguing against slave capture but not slave ownership. These *jihadiyya* slaves, soldiers recruited for life, were important in both Egypt and Sudan throughout the nineteenth century. While a clearer distinction might be made between soldiers and slaves when a soldier’s tour is limited, this distinction becomes much more tenuous with a lifetime tour of duty.¹³²

¹²⁸ Ibid., 422.

¹²⁹ Douglas H. Johnson, “The Structure of a Legacy: Military Slavery in Northeast Africa,” *Ethnohistory*, 36, no. 1 (Winter 1989), 76.

¹³⁰ The class distinction between Ottomans and Turks within the Ottoman Empire speaks to this: Ottomans were of the courtly class and spoke Turkish with many borrowings from Persian and Arabic. Turks were peasants who spoke a simpler language.

¹³¹ Johnson, “The Structure of a Legacy,” 76.

¹³² Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, 25.

The institution of slavery in which Zubayr was raised was a Middle Eastern one, an African one, a Muslim one, and an Egyptian one, but much more specifically, it was a Funj institution. Little is known of the Funj sultanate other than it was the first conquest by Egypt in what would become Sudan, but Funj identity might have formed the core of the modern Sudanese nation.¹³³ James Bruce, the adventurer who claimed to have been the first European to reach the source of the Blue Nile, visited the Funj capital Sennar on the return voyage, in 1772. “Slavery in Sennaar,” he wrote, “is the only true nobility.” Bruce wrote that the Funj leadership had converted to Islam in order to more easily trade with Egypt, and took the title *slaves* to connote power. “Upon any appearance of your undervaluing a man at Sennaar, he instantly asks you if you know who he is? if you don't know that he is a slave, in the same idea of aristocratical arrogance, as would be said in England upon an altercation, do you know to whom you are speaking? do you know that I am a peer? All titles and dignities are undervalued, and precarious, unless they are in the hands of one who is a slave.”¹³⁴ This extreme value of slavery did not follow to most circumstances of enslavement in the Nile Valley, but the understanding that the title of slave could be in certain circumstances associated with peerage was well understood not only among the Funj but also throughout the Middle East.

Bruce might have wrongly assumed that the word *mamluk* (“one who is owned”) was synonymous with clearer Arabic words for slave, ‘*abd* and *riqq*.¹³⁵ The Funj elite

¹³³ Wendy James, “The Funj Mystique: Approaches to a Problem of Sudan History” in R. K. Jain (ed.) *Text and Context: The Social Anthropology of Tradition*. Philadelphia: Institute of the Study of Human Issues, 1977.

¹³⁴ James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile: In the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, & 1773*. Edinburgh, UK: George Ramsay and Co., for Archibald Constable and Co., 1813), vol. iv, 459.

¹³⁵ The word *mamluk* in Arabic means one who is owned. In English when uncapitalized it refers

could have been formed by military slaves like the Mamluks of Egypt, or from Egyptian Mamluks who had left Egypt, or some combination. The use of foreigners as military troops had a long history in the Middle East.

The terms ‘*abd* and *mamluk* were used with great inconsistency, as Eve Troutt Powell points out. Troutt Powell, through a careful reading of ‘Ali Mubarak’s *Khitat*, published originally between 1886 and 1889, finds that he used the term *mamluk* to refer to any white slave, and ‘*abd* to refer to any black slave.¹³⁶ This usage surprised Troutt Powell, who expected that at that time the word *mamluk* would be used only to refer to those who were taken as Christians and formed into *buyut*. ‘Ali Mubarak (in Troutt Powell) refers to Circassians expelled from the Caucasus toward the end of the Caucasian War of 1817-64 as *mamalik* as well.¹³⁷

The word *buyut* that Eve Troutt Powell refers to above also contributes to an understanding that slave-soldiers were organized, or organized themselves, into orders and affinities in a way that much more resembles understandings of military contexts elsewhere than understandings of slave contexts elsewhere. Slave-soldiers were *de jure* slaves and *de facto* soldiers, both among mamluks in Egypt and among Zubayr’s slave-soldiers.

The word mamluk is both particular and general. It refers, when capitalized in English, to the rulers of Egypt between 1250 and 1517. These Mamluks, like other

to a large category of military slaves, mostly of Turkic or Caucasian origin, employed throughout the Middle East. When capitalized in English, Mamluk particularly refers to the most politically successful group of these soldier/administrators, who formed an empowered Turkish-speaking class who ruled Egypt from the time of the Crusades until around 1800. Since Arabic has no capital letters, this distinction is by context.

¹³⁶ Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, 14.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

mamluks, were slave soldiers. To make the difference between slave soldier and slave clear, Mamluks very clearly earned regular pay, seven kinds of pay to be precise: regular monthly pay, special pay on the eve of a campaign or the accession of a new sultan, sheep distributed for Eid, and pay for dress (yearly or half-yearly), meat (daily), grain (twice weekly), and horses and camels (irregularly). Regular statements were kept of payments, and when government coffers were small, payment was still given regularly to each Mamluk, though in small amounts.¹³⁸

Egyptian Mamluks were captured in the Caucasus, and in particularly Georgia. The reason for this was the same as the reason for Zubayr's capturing the Azande: they resided in the frontier region between empires. In the same way, the disintegration of the Safavid empire and a 1724 Russian treaty giving the Ottomans control of all of Georgia made this an especially excellent slaving ground for the Ottomans.¹³⁹ Georgia, and the Caucasus in general, lying in the contested region between Ottoman, Safavid, and Russian Empires, played a very similar role to the Azande of the late 1800s who lived in the contested region between the Congo Free State and Egyptian Sudan.

The word mamluk in the more general sense, Sean Stilwell defines as “a very particular kind of service to the state: the enslavement, training and promotion of elite slave soldiers.” He argues that mamluk is such a useful term that it can be used by scholars writing in English to describe this type of slavery even when the term was not used in the region being described. “The word “mamluk” was not used in Kano, but I use

¹³⁸ David Ayalon, “Payment in Mamluk Military Society,” in *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt (1250-1517)*, Variorum Reprint ; CS62 (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), 257–296.

¹³⁹ Jane Hathaway, “‘Mamluk households’ and ‘Mamluk factions’ in Ottoman Egypt: a reconsideration,” in Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann, *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 116.

it to highlight the fact that royal slaves under parallel processes of acculturation and socialization... These mamluk often used their positions and military strength to install their own puppets, or in some cases themselves, as rulers.”¹⁴⁰ Sir John Glubb, former commander of the Arab Legion, and a sort of latter-day Cromer in Jordan, argues that especially considering Egyptian Mamluks, the word slave is problematic in descriptions of the Middle East. “It is true that the English word “slaves” is misleading. For slaves in the East were normally almost adopted into the family. To be a slave was near to being a son or daughter – a more honourable status than that of a paid employee.”¹⁴¹

Mamluks were an essential part of dynasty formation in the larger history of the Arab world. “The first purpose of a dynasty,” wrote Albert Hourani in the introduction to his chapter on the formation of cities, “was to maintain itself in power, and the ruler therefore lived somewhat apart from the city population, surrounded by a court which was largely of military and alien origin: his family and *harim*, his personal *mamluks* – black Africans or converted Christians in the Maghrib, Turks, Kurds or Circassians further east – and high palace officials, largely drawn from these *mamluk* groups.”¹⁴² Hourani argues that not merely speaking of the Mamluks of Egypt, but of the generality of Arab history, *mamluks*, slave-soldiers, who are not of the same ethnic group as their owner, and many of whom have a great deal of political power, were basic to any dynasty’s power in the Arab world. Slave soldiers were, in Zubayr’s Sudan, in the same

¹⁴⁰ Sean Stilwell, “The Development of Mamlūk Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate,” in *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, by Paul E. Lovejoy (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 88.

¹⁴¹ John Bagot Glubb, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Story of the Mamlukes* (New York: Dorset Press, 1988), 453.

¹⁴² Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 130.

tradition that slave-soldiers had been in Arab and Islamic history for centuries, even if the practice had all but died out in most of the Arab worlds by Zubayr's time.

Slavery in the Nile Valley had developed gradually, more for social status symbol than economic power, as can be seen by the constant differentiation of white and black slaves. The great distinction between the plight of Middle Eastern slaves and those in the trans-Atlantic trade made it difficult for Schweinfurth to write about slavery without either making the two forms seem parallel or defending slavery in Egypt and Sudan as less brutal, neither of which he felt comfortable with. He argued that "whilst Europeans have looked upon their slaves as little better than useful domestic animals, the Oriental slave is a mere object of luxury" since very few slaves were involved in agriculture or physical labor. Schweinfurth, ironically, argued that this lack of labor was demeaning. "The European, although he deprived the negro of his ordinary rights, still compelled him to become a useful member of society; the Oriental allows him a portion of his rights, but trains him up to general incapacity; the occupations of filling pipes, handing water, boiling coffee, and holding a salver, are not employments worthy of a man."¹⁴³

Schweinfurth is quick to point out that, however, in addition to the entire lack of free choice, before gaining a position as a slave, captured peoples had to walk across deserts, suffering if not dying in the process, as well as "be exposed to the contagion of disorders, such as their fresh blood, pure with the simplicity of a life of nature, is especially liable to imbibe...to decimate their ranks."¹⁴⁴ Hence the expression popular in

¹⁴³ Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 437.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

nineteenth century Egypt that “a blow which scarcely makes an Arab stagger knocks down a slave.”¹⁴⁵

Neither the government in Cairo, nor the merchants in Cairo could genuinely control the trade, and they all suffered from the vicissitudes of the markets for any item, especially one liable to escape or die of disease. Slaves imported into Egypt from Sudan were costly and frail. Merchants often split the large cost of a single slave, each owning a share, if neither could afford the entire slave. Diseases that were not apparent at the time of purchase often led to court cases between buyer and seller.¹⁴⁶

The variety of types of slaves helps in an understanding of Zubayr’s particular relationship with slavery: most of his slaves were likely soldiers by a minimal definition, and those soldiers were more empowered than civilians, particularly penniless civilians harried by violent tax collectors. Enslavement is seen in other contexts as a loss of control. In the Bahr al-Ghazal of the 1860s, in which the old regime was crumbling into chaos and a new order was struggling to emerge based on slave-owning affinities, enslavement could often involve a net increase of security if not over one’s fate.

Zubayr was not alone in his desire for gradual movement in the direction toward abolition without abandoning the rule of law. To readers unfamiliar with this history abolition being against the rule of law might seem curious. The long and accepted tradition of Islamic law as understood and practiced in Egypt and Sudan and the entire Ottoman Empire and Middle East during the nineteenth century portrayed slavery as an

¹⁴⁵ John Burckhardt, *Voyages and Travels of M. Burckhardt in Egypt and Nubia: From the Calcutta Journal*. (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1819), 304.

¹⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 324; Terence Walz, *Trade Between Egypt and Bilād as-Sūdān, 1700-1820* ([Cairo]: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1978), 201.

acceptable legal institution with rules and regulations. A century later slavery was virtually unheard of in the region, but Zubayr did not live a century later.

Charles Chaillé-Long, a former Union Army soldier in the American Civil War, traveled extensively through Sudan when serving as an officer in the Egyptian Army from 1870-77. He railed against slavery, but saw the establishment of state infrastructure as the road to abolition: “Fresh from these regions, I declare that the result of the simple establishment of the Government along the Bahr-al-Abiad, south to the Equator, and westward of the Nile, both in the Niam-Niam country and Darfour, has struck a vital blow to slavery and the slave-trade.” He not only thought abstractly that slavery would be inevitably reduced by fairer labor practices, but that “in every camp and garrison a fugitive slave may seek protection and freedom, by simply declaring that he “Owse Meri’!” literally, wants protection of the Government.” If this was effective, it indeed lends credence to Zubayr’s statements that any slaves that he owned were treated well and did not want to leave his service. On the other hand, as will be outlined in Chapter 5, free slaves were a challenge to a government. Chaillé-Long wrote that the policy of freeing slaves at their will “has become a serious burden to the Egyptian Government; since freedom is interpreted by the negro as a license to laziness.”¹⁴⁷ Chaillé-Long was excited at the prospect of abolition, even if it resulted in less productivity, and was optimistic that this model of requested freedom could at some point be extended to Zanzibar where British influence was increasing.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Charles Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa: Naked Truths of Naked People. an Account of Expeditions to the Lake Victoria Nyanza and the Makraka Niam-Niam, West of the Bahr-El-Abiad (White Nile)*. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1877), 313.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

Scholars have recently investigated the question of real power exerted by slave armies in Muslim Africa and the Middle East, only a small portion of which concerns Egyptian Mamluks, and is not dissimilar in places as distant as Japan.¹⁴⁹ A true analysis of the relationship between conscription and slavery would require a better understanding of conscription than might be done justice in this dissertation. One might consider all conscription a form of slavery, but conscription and corvee labor have varied widely in historical times and places, even just within the context of the Middle East. The metaphor does not do justice to the sense of chaos on the frontier, however.

The chaos of these frontier regions left both great fear and great opportunity for the local populations. Local populations had the opportunity to earn cash for the first time, and opportunities to spend it on new technologies and imported goods, but at the same time were forced to earn this cash to pay their new tax debt, and had to earn cash in order to pay for the freedom of their loved ones who had been captured in slaving raids. Men volunteered for life service in Zubayr's army, because it was both better paying and more respectable than with other companies, the pressure on them was very great, and the fear of doing nothing and being captured themselves kept able bodied men from subsistence living. Zubayr proudly says that "My soldiers never left me till they died, and the service was so popular that the report of it spread into the distant corners of Nyam-Nyam, and young men came from far to offer themselves to me."¹⁵⁰ It may only have been popular as the least horrific of choices for employment.

¹⁴⁹ Philips and Toru, *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa*. Toru and Philips devote a chapter to comparisons to feudal Japan.

¹⁵⁰ Shaw, "The Story of Zebehr Pasha," 583.

Zubayr was upset that Schweinfurth had publically called him a slave-trader. “Schweinfurth saw many people going down,” Zubayr told Shaw, “and assumed that they were my slaves; but why did he not ask me, and I would have explained to him truthfully, as I did about all else? There were caravans of slaves, that year as always, with which I had nothing to do...It astonishes me that so wise a man should write thus hastily of what he did not know.”¹⁵¹ The difference between Schweinfurth’s and Zubayr’s interpretation of what they saw might be due simply to each one’s bias toward himself. Zubayr understood and could empathize with efforts to abolish slavery in the long duree, but could not contemplate having tried to enforce it in his own realm. “On the general question of slavery Zebehr’s mind appeared to be in the attitude which was taken by the ordinary English mind in the second decade of this [the nineteenth] century, when we had carried through successful negotiations with Spain and Portugal for putting down the slave-trade, and still refuse to contemplate the abolition of slavery in our colonies...

In those countries...especially as you get farther from centres of civilization, the natives have not learned the use of steam or water, and everything is done by means of slaves. The only motive power is slave power. If you cut off slave-power, the result would be the same as cutting off of steam and water from England...re-plunged into barbarism.¹⁵²

Zubayr claimed to have laid great importance to eliminating the slave trade in order to increase civilization and therefore trade in other goods “You will see, as I tell you of my history,” he said, “that every great war I undertook was for this end. This was the condition of every treaty with a native chief; for this I fought the Rezigats, for this I

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 584.

¹⁵² Ibid.

conquered Darfour. I had no other quarrel with the Arabs¹⁵³, I wanted nothing else from the Sultan of Darfour, than that they should put down man-hunting on their roads, and allow the caravans to pass in peace.”¹⁵⁴

Keeping the roads open, letting trade move, allowing the caravans to pass in peace, these were what made money for Zubayr, or so he claimed:

The suppression of slave-hunting was only incidental to the opening of the roads, but it was absolutely necessary.¹⁵⁵ It was not upon grounds of sentiment and morality, but as a matter of political necessity, that Zebehr first treated the question. “Any statesman will understand,” he said, “that to govern a country in which slave-hunting is permitted is an impossibility. You must put it down before you can have either order or industry.”¹⁵⁶

Order and industry, he claimed to have believed, would make abolition possible. It is impossible to imagine that Zubayr made these claims entirely outside of a sense of self-defense and apology, but neither did he create a fiction full-cloth, and it makes sense that he would reap larger profits from skimming taxes from the increasingly large amount of trade, including in slaves, that would result from safer passage from a lack of slave-hunting on his roads.

The differences in styles of slavery and abolition were not only cultural but also political. Zubayr had his individual perspective and enforced it in the lands he ruled. The Egyptian government did likewise, as did the Ottoman government and the British government. Individual Ottoman governors, for example, often developed their own

¹⁵³ Zubayr often uses the word Arab to refer to nomadic tribes, here the Rezagat.

¹⁵⁴ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 569.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. [footnote from Shaw original:] When Gordon went down into the Western Soudan the opening of communication and the suppression of slave-hunting were the two objects at which he was especially directed to aim. It was a curious experience to hear Zebehr Pasha speak of these same things as not only the ideal, but in some degree the accomplished work of his lifetime.

¹⁵⁶ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 569.

unique methods for dealing with slave-importation and trade, particularly in remote provinces.¹⁵⁷ Though not under even indirect influence from the Porte, these unique methods were exactly what were developing in Bahr al-Ghazal and Sudan as a whole. Zubayr was concerned that abolition would be counterproductive in the larger battle in which abolition was a part, the battle for establishment of governments:

“My object,” he explained, “was to maintain communication with the civilized world. If I had oppose the passage of slave caravans it could only have been by force; for simply to have forbidden them to use my name would have been to give permission to the natives to attack them. As a consequence there would have been bloodshed on the roads; the report would have spread that my country was unsafe. I should have lost my trade. You cannot expect that I should have undermined in such a manner the result of my whole policy.”¹⁵⁸

Zubayr made many of the same decisions as European administrators in tropical dependencies, sacrificing justice for stability, abolition for order.¹⁵⁹

The word “Zebehr” became the “open sesame” of wild districts. It was identical with safe conduct, and it was used as a password by caravans which he had never seen or heard of. If asked from whom they came, all merchants answered “From Zebehr.” Slave caravans, as well as others, profited by the protection; and it is, the Pasha asserts, in this way that his wide reputation for slaving was built up.¹⁶⁰

So one way Zubayr was associated with slave trading was through using his name.

Another way Zubayr was associated with the trade was through buying soldiers. He argues that buying slaves should not be confused with trading in them or selling them:

“What I want you to understand with regard to me is, that I was a trader, and also that I bought many slaves, but that I never was a slave-trader. I might have been, but I was not. I have tried to make you understand that it is the position I held it would have been

¹⁵⁷ Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, 61.

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 583.

¹⁵⁹ Vignon, “Colonial Labor.”

¹⁶⁰ [footnote from Shaw:] See, in “Gordon in Central Africa,” account of the capture of a slave caravan, professing to belonging to “Zebehr,” which turned out to be the property of Gordon’s own men.

impossible.”¹⁶¹ The contradiction grows. He claims he could not have suppressed the slave caravans, but here he argues that to maintain peace and prosperity, native peoples needed not to fear that they would be sold.

It is not a question of whether I think the slave trade right or wrong, or of whether I am speaking the truth or not. It is a question of common sense and profit, which any one who has governed will understand; it would have ruined me to trade in slaves. I was at the head of a varied and extensive commerce, of which I have already mentioned to you the principal branches. The success of it depended entirely upon the maintenance of order in the surrounding districts, and my prosperity and native prosperity were one. Natives who had been hunted or feared to be sold would not have traded with me, and if they didn't trade with me I could not have trade with the caravans.¹⁶²

Zubayr claimed that slave hunting was suppressed in his domains. Native peoples living in his lands had no fear that they would be captured to be sold, since such acts might put the raiders at risk of some kind of prosecution. On the other hand, caravans with slaves captured outside of his domains had safe passage through his. Selling of the slaves within his domains also seems to have been allowed, since Zubayr himself bought many of these slaves.

In 1772 Lord Mansfield ruled in Somerset's case that chattel slavery was unsupported by common law, and thus was prohibited in England, beginning the process of British abolition. In 1807, the Slave Trade Act passed Parliament to abolish slave trade throughout the British Empire, still allowing slaves to be held. In 1833, the Slavery Abolition Act made all slavery illegal, apart from apprenticeships which ended in 1840, and in 1843 British subjects were outlawed from owning slaves anywhere in the world. Diane Robinson-Dunn argues that in the first generation after the elimination of slavery

¹⁶¹ Shaw, “The Story of Zebehr Pasha,” 583–4.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 583–4.

in Britain, the immorality of slavery became an implicit part of British identity and national purpose. The British were also motivated by purely economic factors to eliminate the slave trade as quickly as possible everywhere: If they could not own slaves, then slave-owning societies would have an economic advantage over them in terms of cheap labor. Partially because of this apparent inequality and lack of access to near-free labor, Africa was colonized in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. In addition, with the trans-Atlantic slave trade slowing to a trickle after slave importation became illegal in the Americas, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society directed its large influence and power to the Middle East, where slavery had only increased past its historical trickle in the nineteenth century. It was not the numbers of slaves in the Islamic slave trade that angered the BFASS, but the legitimating of the trade in contrast to the newfound British morality. The arguments given in defense of slavery by Middle Eastern practitioners were identical to those given within Britain a generation before. Abolition might result in secession of peripheral areas from civilized government, in the case of Britain fears of secession by the West Indies during the Napoleonic wars. After 1833, however, British interests had been defined, and in contrast to slavery.¹⁶³

Frank Lupton was a British official who was appointed by Gordon to be Deputy-Governor of the Equatorial provinces in 1879, and was Governor of Bahr al-Ghazal from 1881 until he was captured by Mahdist forces in April 1884 and taken to Omdurman where he died of a fever in 1888. Lupton reported that prior to his engagement the entire region was controlled by slave traders. However, he also acknowledges that the process

¹⁶³ Robinson-Dunn, Diane, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture: Anglo-Muslim Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 71–3.

of northerner slave traders (“Khartoumers”) expanding their slave trading began in earnest in the 1850s.¹⁶⁴ As early as 1872, an influx of firearms led to vast consolidation of slave-trading empires.¹⁶⁵

Zubayr would write in his memoirs that he did not deal in slaves: “I never tortured a captive nor decapitated a prisoner. Nor did I deal in slaves as some have falsely accused: am I one to lead into captivity my own kith and kin?”¹⁶⁶ His wording here might be considered specific: he says not that he never owned slaves, and not that he never encouraged the slave trade, but only that he did not deal in slaves directly. “But Zubeir was a slavedealer [sic],” argued H.C. Jackson. “Let it be admitted. So too was Mohammed Ali: so too Napoleon. Only four centuries ago... there was a slave-market at Bristol.” Jackson begs his reader to see Zubayr within a distinctive frontier society zeitgeist. “It is not just to point the finger to reprobation at Zubeir because he put to profit the spirit of the time...Rather should it be put to his credit that he treated the prisoners whom he captured so well that thousands of others flocked to him, to serve in his army and to be enrolled under his banner.”¹⁶⁷

It is not only the subtle differentiation between slave and soldier, prisoner and subject, but between ownership and rulership that is critical here. Jackson gets caught up, as does Flora Shaw, in answering the trick question “Was Zubayr a slave dealer?” To ask or to answer this question is to misunderstand the context in which he lived and worked, to draw much too clear a line between owning and employing, between dominating

¹⁶⁴ Lupton, “Geographical Observations...” (*Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol 6, no 5 (May 1884).

¹⁶⁵ Collins and Tignor, *Egypt and the Sudan*, 73.

¹⁶⁶ Zubeir, *Black Ivory*, 50.

¹⁶⁷ H.C. Jackson in Zubeir, *Black Ivory*, 110-111.

politically and dominating personally. Especially during a frontier period, in which decentralized political control met with quickly expanding markets, such a clear line and such a question are naïve. The question “was Zubayr a slave trader” was meaningless in the context in which he lived. Zubayr traded slaves, but neither he nor his contemporaries, Europeans excepted, thought of him as a slave trader. His contemporaries thought of him as a conqueror, a ruler, and a leader. This section discussed slavery more directly than others in this dissertation, and what I have demonstrated here show it to be a form of political domination during frontier period, which was quickly being replaced by a more efficient form of political domination, centralized imperialism.

Chapter 4: Reactions, 1875-1884

A few minutes' conversation with Zobeir Pasha, and a "mystic feeling" which that conversation had engendered, had led General Gordon to jump from one extreme to the other. –Evelyn Baring ¹

Yes; these are people struggling to be free, and they are struggling rightly to be free.
–Gladstone on the Mahdia ²

The course of events that resulted in Zubayr's imprisonment on Gibraltar from 1885 to 1887 was set into motion most clearly on January 26, 1884. On that date, Zubayr met with Gordon and Cromer, and at that meeting Gordon's opinion of Zubayr was transformed. Gordon then began to promote Zubayr as a powerful force in Sudanese politics. In return, Cromer and Granville began to fear Zubayr as a powerful political force, and decided to keep him where he could be more closely controlled than on the streets of Cairo.

This chapter describes the background for the events of 1884, in terms of Zubayr's life in Cairo and revolts in Egypt and Sudan. Following that, this chapter introduces the tense winter of 1884, and particularly the dialog of January 26, 1884. The final section of this chapter describes how Gordon failed in Khartoum, how Zubayr was discussed volubly in Parliament, in diplomatic correspondence, and in the press, and how in hindsight, after the Mahdia took control of Sudan, nearly all parties argued that Zubayr should have been sent to Khartoum with Gordon.

This chapter contributes to my greater arguments about the critical moment of 1885 in Sudan. Looser and layered British influence over Egypt and Sudan was failing in the early

¹ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, 459.

² HC Deb 12 May 1884 vol. 288 cc55.

1880s, most clearly exhibited here through discussions of three revolts: Suleiman's, 'Urabi's and the Mahdi's. It has been shown before that the 'Urabi revolt was an expression of the failure of the older style of British rule, and that the new regime, namely the further empowered Cromer, marked a change toward more intensive and more clearly demarcated rule. I argue here that the same process happened in Bahr al-Ghazal in regards to Suleiman's revolt and in Sudan generally regarding the Mahdist revolt. The Mahdist revolt was a loss of British control, but it was still a move toward more intensive and more clearly delineated rule, and away from the looser more layered form of broadcasting power. On the other hand, the Mahdia was a movement away from globalization and toward the legitimization of slavery. The somewhat-proven viability of this alternative universalist version of modernity helped to drive the capitalist universalist version in more intensive domination of Africa, even at greater financial loss to European governments: the Mahdist takeover motivated Europe to rule Africa in a new way. This, most particularly, because the Mahdia defended legal and explicit slavery, which was incompatible with late-nineteenth century capitalism.

Chapter four has unique problems because it contains the thorny year 1884. Any primary source material I have encountered on 1884 has been mined thoroughly in secondary sources.³ The meeting on January 26 between Cromer and Zubayr and Gordon has been underemphasized in these sources, however. This chapter proposes not so much to reveal new material on this central moment, but to put that moment in a new context, the context of Zubayr's life both before and after, rather than Gordon's life before and after. In so doing, I hope to show that the

³ Sidney Low, "Lord Cromer on Gordon and the Gladstone Cabinet," *The Nineteenth Century* LXII (1908): 674–682; Bass, "Of Madness and Empire"; Crabites, *Gordon*; Fergus Nicoll, *Sword of the Prophet: the Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2004); Brian Thompson, *Imperial Vanities: The Adventures of the Baker Brothers and Gordon of Khartoum* (London: Harper Collins, 2002); Robert Collins and Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt & the Sudan* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

motivations of both characters were neither illogical nor personal, as have been argued before, but rather symptomatic of this critical moment in which the forms of imperial power were transformed

Scholars and popular authors alike have shed the issue of Gordon's insanity in his decision to empower Zubayr, that insanity described in the Anti-Slavery Society literature and Parliamentary debates below. The insanity argument is a simple argument, and so it was particularly effective in a moment of crisis. It is logical to imagine that an anti-slavery crusader must have lost his mind to decide to empower the greatest slaver of all time. Gordon used the simplicity of this first discourse as a rhetorical tool in his original journals by portraying it as foolishly simple.⁴

Once the dust settled, literally and metaphorically, the insanity argument was little advocated, not only because Gordon without Zubayr failed, and died, but because slavery flourished under the Mahdi. The more complicated argument that has become popular is that Gordon was haughty, perhaps, and his overconfidence led him ill-prepared to take on the Mahdi, but that he soberly considered Zubayr a better partner in the anti-slavery campaign than the Mahdi would be, and that refusal of Zubayr was tantamount to choosing the Mahdi. "The plain facts of the main narrative of Gordon's enterprise [in Khartoum in 1884] show not only that as he advanced he rapidly changed his estimate of its scope and purpose but that he found he had not completely estimated the situation in which he would be placed and the difficulties with which he would have to contend." Thomas Archer wrote in his multi-volume work published already in 1886 that Gordon was poorly informed. "He did not modify his previous opinions he contradicted them. Zebehr whom he had denounced and whose restoration to power in the

⁴ Bass, "Of Madness and Empire."

Soudan he had regarded as a course to be urgently opposed he came to think was the only man who could give him effectual aid.”⁵ Cromer, detailed below, fits into this discourse. Little was written on the subject in the early to mid-twentieth century. Pakenham continued the discourse, though, arguing that “Gordon’s first choice of a successor at Khartoum seemed bizarre...[but] what *was* the alternative to Zebehr – apart from the Mahdi?”⁶

In this meeting with Zubayr in which Gordon gained a “mystical feeling” of confidence in him, and which mystical feeling led Baring to lose confidence in Gordon. I argue that previous scholars have given too much emphasis to what happened in London and Khartoum, and too little attention to this moment, which I argue sealed Gordon’s and Zubayr’s fates.

Fergus Nicoll is typical of the classical and popular way of seeing the Gordon-Zubayr relationship. He narrates with emphasis on drama and adventure: the dastardly cleverness of the Mahdi, the valiant efforts of Gordon, the sort of madness out of desperation that must have overcome Gordon to support the wily scheming Zubayr. This angle was not only prevalent in popular depictions, but is well represented in academic and primary sources, particularly the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society records and publications.⁷

Achmed Abdullah, pseudonym of Alexander Nicholayevitch Romanoff, wrote a similar dramatization of Gordon and Zubayr, in which he identifies so strongly with Gordon’s position

⁵ Thomas Archer, *The War in Egypt and the Soudan* (London: Blackie, 1886), vol. i, 71.

⁶ Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991), 219–21.

⁷ Nicoll, *Sword of the Prophet*; Farwell, *Prisoners of the Mahdi; the story of the Mahdist revolt which frustrated Queen Victoria’s designs on the Sudan, humbled Egypt, and led to the fall of Khartoum, the death of Gordon, and Kitchener’s victory at Omdurman fourteen years later.*; Waller, *Gordon of Khartoum*; Nutting, *Gordon of Khartoum*.

hemmed into Khartoum that Abdullah calls all the authorities above Gordon active, but “active with a stupidity worthy of Gentleman Burgoyne.”⁸

These depictions, including more academic depictions, gloss over Gordon’s turn to madness, as it were, for a lack of specificity. While madness is a terribly imprecise term, there was a moment in which Gordon and Zubayr overcame past conflict and became more allied, an afternoon that deserves special attention.

Chapters 2 and 3 described Zubayr’s career as a merchant in Bahr al-Ghazal, his formation of a government there, and his conquest of Darfur. Chapter 4 relates to the first period in which Zubayr was under house arrest in Cairo, before being taken to Gibraltar. I argue in this chapter that while his career as he and subsequent historians saw it was over, his reputation and influence continued to grow through this period: The period after 1875 more directly contributed to Zubayr’s arrest on Gibraltar than what he did before 1875. After introducing the period in Egyptian-Sudanese history and Zubayr’s house arrest in Cairo, this chapter goes into detail into two themes: revolts and Charles Gordon. The revolts section draws connections between Zubayr’s son Suleiman’s revolt, the Mahdist revolt, and the ‘Urabi revolt, and draws connections between each and Zubayr. The Gordon section dissects Gordon’s efforts to have Zubayr sent to Khartoum to help him resist Mahdist advances, why these efforts failed, and why the Mahdist revolt succeeded in taking Khartoum and Sudan.

Zubayr went to Cairo in 1875, where he was kept while revolts broke out around him in Egypt and Sudan. When, in 1884, the Mahdist movement became difficult for Anglo-Egyptian forces to control or suppress, Charles Gordon, leading those forces, argued that the installation of

⁸ Achmed Abdullah and Thomas Compton Pakenham, *Dreamers of Empire* (Books for Libraries Press, 1929), 357.

Zubayr as a client ruler could be a happy medium between full Egyptian control of Sudan and a Mahdist victory. His superiors, from British Consul-General in Egypt Baring to Foreign Secretary Granville and Prime Minister Gladstone, wavered in their support of Zubayr, but had no other effective opposition to the Mahdists. While the Liberal government seemed to dither, Mahdists took control of Sudan, killed Gordon, and Zubayr stayed disempowered in Cairo.

With Egyptian state affairs in chaos, the British interest in Sudan waned. British economic opportunities in Sudan seemed ever more unlikely and the cost of maintaining order was great. Egypt was meanwhile held in political flux by the confrontation between Ahmed ‘Urabi and France and Britain and with the resulting tension of military occupation after Tel el-Kebir in September 1882, Sudan became sidelined.

This chapter uses literature on the Mahdist and related revolts, and primary source material on Zubayr and Gordon. The Mahdia and other revolts provide pivotal context for the relationship between Zubayr and Gordon. Similarly, since there is a long-established literature on Gordon, and even more on Baring and Gladstone, I have avoided having Gordon, and even more so Baring and Gladstone, take center stage, and have tried to focus my use of primary sources and my analysis on the role of Zubayr, even when that role was a passive one.

This chapter falls under Benjamin Disraeli’s second ministry (1874-80) and then William Gladstone’s second ministry (1880-1885). Gladstone’s second ministry fell in June 1885, after Gordon had been killed and the Mahdi had taken Khartoum, though the ministry fell over the issue of Irish home rule, not Sudan. The Earl of Granville was Gladstone’s Foreign Minister through his first and second ministries, keeping to diplomacy and subtle uses of British power abroad whenever possible, and was regularly critical of Disraeli’s favoring the use of force.⁹

⁹ Harrison, *Gladstone’s Imperialism in Egypt*. When Gladstone began his third ministry in 1886 after a brief

Disraeli and Gladstone approached questions of empire in very different ways: Gladstone used moral imperatives to justify defending the oppressed, whereas Disraeli appealed to working-class voters in terms of national prestige and self-confidence. Gladstone's Midlothian speeches in which he laid out the philosophy he would rule under focused on a vision of smaller budgets and smaller empire, including Irish home rule.¹⁰

Imperialist Conservatives felt Gladstone was showing weakness for allowing a territory that Britain might hold onto break away. Liberals felt Gladstone was abandoning Gordon and the Sudan and humanitarianism meant rescuing them. A more nuanced view was that Gladstone held consistently throughout the experience to vision of shrinking empire. He had been thoroughly unenthusiastic about invading Egypt, and once that was done, tried to avoid British responsibility for Egypt's colonies. Sir Edward Malet, British consul in Egypt while Baring was absent from Egypt between 1879-1883, made the critical step toward British involvement in Sudan. Malet got Granville's permission to send Colonel John Donald Hamill Stewart to Khartoum for what was supposed to be an information-gathering mission. Gladstone warily gave his assent to this mission, under the condition that Britain would otherwise stay out of Sudanese affairs. Malet then advised the Khedive to send Hicks against the Mahdi. Once Hicks failed, and British blood was spilled in Sudan, it was difficult for Gladstone to disentangle his administration from it.¹¹ This would parallel Malet's exaggeration of 'Urabi's power to Gladstone, which had pushed Gladstone toward invading Egypt, after Gladstone had been swayed by Wilfred Scawen Blunt, an influential Arabist and supporter of 'Urabi. Both similarly showed increase in French-British

six month Salisbury ministry, he took Rosebery as his Foreign Minister to help with the Irish home rule crisis.

¹⁰ Timothy Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A World History Perspective* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 23.

¹¹ Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy.*, 213-14.

tension. Gladstone's need to send Seymour to bombard of Alexandria to assert exclusively British rule over Egypt paralleled his need to keep France out of Sudan. Gladstone was not eager to deepen imperial responsibilities unless France might do so first.¹²

Gladstone's position toward Sudan, then, seems to have been consistent: he wanted no part of it. Gladstone has often been seen as vacillating and inconsistent because he went some of the way toward engagement, but this seems to be more of a political tug-of-war within Parliament and his cabinet, not for Gladstone himself. Baring's position also seems to have been consistent: he wanted to prevent Mahdist forces entering Egypt proper. Baring did not seem to think that Sudan was worth the trouble of controlling. He wanted Egypt stable and productive, which either Egyptian entry into Sudan or Mahdist entry into Egypt could risk.

Not wanting to deal with the Sudan, Gladstone referred its affairs to a committee consisting of Sir Charles Dilke, Joseph Chamberlain, the Marquess of Hartington, Granville, the Earl of Northbrook and Lord Carlingford. Dilke and Chamberlain had been the main proponents of sending a military force to rescue Gordon and the British presence from Khartoum, while Hartington and Northbrook were for a bigger force and possibly an extended occupation. The main opponent to sending a force to rescue Gordon was Gordon himself, who declared that he did not need rescue. Wolseley, still confident after his success two years earlier at Tel al-Kebir, pressured the committee to act quickly, and so the committee hastily sent Gordon to Khartoum in January 1884, which Gladstone did not oppose. Wolseley was so enthusiastic about Gordon's departure, that at the train station, seeing that Gordon had no cash with him, Wolseley emptied his pockets and gave Gordon his gold watch.¹³

¹² Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 503; H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1875-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 131-7.

¹³ Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 511-513.

Colin Matthew, based largely on Gladstone's writings, argues as I do that Gladstone was supportive of sending Zubayr to Gordon, but that his cabinet was more influenced by abolitionist sentiment and stopped him. Gladstone's fear had not been Zubayr's past as much as occupying Sudan, so while he supported rescuing Gordon, he only supported sending a small force. While the Whigs enthusiastically supported sending a large force, even after the Mahdists took Khartoum, if Wolseley had taken Khartoum it would have meant, Matthew argues, the same British responsibility over Sudan as over Egypt.¹⁴

Conventional historiography concurs that Britain was sucked into defending Egypt, including Sudan, because British politicians were afraid to surrender the Suez Canal and its route to India. Robinson and Gallagher, for example, call the 'Urabi revolt and subsequent British takeover of Egypt the *Suez Crisis*.¹⁵ They also describe Gladstone as being focused on withdrawal from Egypt as soon as possible after 1882, having been reluctant to get more involved in Egypt than he had to, and that Egypt and Britain should both give up on holding Sudan. Baring, however, felt that staying in Egypt was unavoidable. Egypt would not easily give up Sudan, and if it did, the act would encourage the Mahdists to attack Egypt proper, requiring British forces to defend Egypt. Britain either had to fight the Mahdists on Sudanese soil or on Egyptian soil. Egypt was too important to Britain to give up to the Mahdists, and Egypt was too weak to defend itself. Gordon plays only a very small role in the Robinson and Gallagher version of Egyptian history, being selected to be sent to Khartoum merely because of his anti-slavery

¹⁴ Matthew, *Gladstone*, 146–7.

¹⁵ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 76.

convictions, which is how the Anti-Slavery Society saw things, and why they thought he had lost his mind in supporting Zubayr.¹⁶

W.D. Rubenstein points out that Gladstone's takeover of Egypt won him the support of younger Radical imperialists like Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Charles Dilke. Rubenstein mentions nothing of Gordon's anti-slavery sentiment, instead remarking on his evangelicalism, and his reputation for "fearless incorruptibility." Gladstone's failure to support Zubayr or send relief troops was due, Rubenstein argues, to his focus on the 1884 Reform Act, extending suffrage in Britain. I argue that Gladstone's failure to act was not merely because of being distracted, but because he disagreed with action.¹⁷

Charles Gordon had replaced Samuel Baker as governor of Equatoria province in southern Sudan in 1874. Equatoria served as a route for European control deeper into Africa reaching today's Congo, Uganda, and Kenya. In addition to business interests, colonial powers worked at stamping out slave trading. Egypt played a particular role among colonial powers, subject to pressures from Europe and employing European contractors as Egyptian officials in Ismail's effort to reimagine Egypt as European.¹⁸ When Gordon arrived to take over Equatoria, he cemented his role as competitor to Zubayr: The two were briefly colleagues as governors of neighboring provinces in Egyptian Sudan until Zubayr went to Cairo. Zubayr, however, grew to his position of power by his leadership in the slave trade and Gordon grew to his then similar position by his leadership in stopping that same trade. Baker and Gordon found it nearly impossible to do anything in their province to reduce the slave trade, and due to lack of material support had to resort to just the kind of raiding that Zubayr and the other Khartoumers did to

¹⁶ Ibid., 134–35.

¹⁷ Rubenstein, *Britain's Century*, 201.

¹⁸ Dunn, *Khedive Ismail's Army*, 82.

support their small provinces. Criticism of Zubayr for the same kinds of actions that Gordon, and to a larger extent Baker participated in contributes to the historiography of both, by showing that it was not Zubayr's actions that were being criticized, but rather his background and philosophy. When Baker or Gordon did nothing effective to reduce slavery, while explaining that he was eventually working to outlaw it, that was considered in a very different light than when Zubayr or Ali 'Amouri did the same.¹⁹

Gordon was appointed governor-general of Sudan in 1877. He only then expanded the small anti-slaving campaign that Baker had tried in Equatoria in both scope and depth. In the character of Gordon, Sudanese saw Europe, abolition, and Christianity united against them and demolishing their economy. In response was a movement as Arab as Gordon was European, as pro-slavery as Gordon was abolitionist, and as messianically Muslim as Gordon was evangelically Christian.²⁰ Both the Mahdi and Gordon were idealistic and messianic. Zubayr was greedy, but not messianic or particularly religious, having forcefully turned down the opportunity to lead a Mahdist uprising himself in 1873.²¹

Khedive Ismail was deposed in 1879, crushed under Egypt's mounting debt to Britain and France, some of which was from the payment of salaries of British officers in Egypt and Sudan. Egypt's crippling debt was mostly due to the intersection of Ismail's dream of modernizing and Europeanizing Egypt, his willful ignorance of state finances, and a class of predatory European adviser-financiers in Cairo. Facing a shriveling budget, Gordon resigned and left Sudan along with many Egyptian and British officials. Without administrative personnel and

¹⁹ Collins and Tignor, *Egypt & the Sudan*, 73.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 58; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, 44; Zulfo, *Karari*, 25.

funds from Egypt, the government of Sudan drifted into apathy and ineffectiveness. The new trading bourgeois power-base was left dependent on both a stable government and on the slave trade. This growing commercial stratum in Sudan became a classic bourgeoisie under Egyptian patronage, a newly wealthy merchant class based in Khartoum with networks and little government interference.

When Gordon was made governor-general of Sudan, he gave up his post as governor of Equatoria province, southeast of Bahr al-Ghazal. Emin Pasha, a physician from Silesia who had worked and traveled extensively in Ottoman territories, was then made governor of Equatoria in 1878, where he managed to resist Mahdist advance until Henry Stanley came via the Congo to try to rescue him in 1888.²²

While Zubayr remained in Cairo, his style of conquest nevertheless continued beyond the margins of Egyptian control - in Wadai, now in Chad. Rabih, who had worked under Zubayr and was often called Rabih al-Zubayr after his former boss, conquered tiny kingdoms, enslaved their people and created a small empire, Dar al-Kuti. Dar al-Kuti, around the turn of the twentieth century became “a periphery of a periphery of the expanding capitalist economy,” in a style advanced by Zubayr a generation earlier.²³ In the short-run, being thus doubly peripheral increased slaving: new types of guns promoted slave raiding and trade in new European machine-made goods promoted slave trading deeper into Africa. Bahr al-Ghazal and Dar al-Kuti were more than individual states in the periphery of the expanding global economy. They were part of an active frontier. Not a frontier between Christian and Muslim zones as it is too easy to imagine given the contemporary political climate, but a frontier between a globalized and

²² Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 8.

²³ Cordell, *Dar al-Kuti*, 52.

centralized Christian-Muslim-European-Arab zone and a diffuse and diverse sub-Saharan zone. This expansion in Dar al-Kuti, like in Bahr al-Ghazal, occurred through two overlapping mechanisms: trade, including arms and slaves, and Islamic teaching. Rabih ruled over a group of jallaba and faqihs, traders and religious teachers, from northern Sudan. These traders and teachers laid a framework that could be easily taken advantage of by those who used the letter of Islamic law to defend the real moneymaker: slavery. The influx of northern Muslims thus included an admixture of raiders bringing chaos and merchant-teachers promoting stability.²⁴

Rabih's empire shows Zubayr's to be characteristic of a category of small empires, pushing peripheries-of-peripheries of the expanding global capitalist economy via uniquely Arab-Muslim mechanisms. The French had a difficult time trying to exert any control over Rabih, since Rabih operated in the furthest eastern reaches of French West Africa, and Rabih's empire expanded just as French-British tensions leading to the Fashoda incident were mounting. Neither British nor French forces could easily co-opt Rabih and show European control over this periphery, and French forces even tried to enlist Zubayr's aid in this.²⁵

After Zubayr left for Cairo, the generals in his military were left without work. Some took up with Zubayr's son Suleiman, who resisted Egyptian control, as I outline in the next section. Others left with Rabih further from Egyptian control. Others were left frustrated, the immense economic opportunities that they had seen in Bahr al-Ghazal trampled by Egyptian control. These unemployed military leaders with a grudge against Egyptian rule were a great asset to the growing Mahdist movement. If Zubayr had been allowed to renew his empire, these

²⁴ Ibid., 15–16.

²⁵ R.A. Adeleye, "Rahih B. Fadlallah and the Diplomacy of European Imperial Invasion in the Central Sudan, 1893-1902," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 3 (1970).

generals might have left the Mahdist movement for Zubayr's camp, or so Gordon imagined, but no one was sure.

Meanwhile, despite the possibility of returning to Sudan, Zubayr's time in Cairo was overwhelmingly one of boredom. "The years rolled on," Zubayr reported, "with naught to relieve their monotony."²⁶ He did not consider this portion of his life part of his career, and so did not feel it worth telling and there are few records of him for this period, and little mention of it in Shaw and Shuqayr. One notable exception is his brief period fighting in the Balkans. Zubayr fought in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, in which an Eastern Orthodox coalition led by Russia worked to bring Christian areas of the Ottoman Empire to nominal independence and greater Russian influence. Other great powers stepped in to stop Russian troops from advancing on Istanbul, but Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro broke from Ottoman rule. The Congress of Berlin at the end of the war also awarded protectorates in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary and Cyprus to Britain.²⁷

Zubayr had been in Cairo for two years when he "was asked to accompany Egyptian troops" to fight "with the cavalry in the Black Mountains, and in the land of the Serbs and Bulgars" for the Ottomans against Russia.²⁸ Eager to escape boredom in Egypt and see a new country, Zubayr found the snow invigorating before it became exhausting. He found the language barrier between the Turkish commanders and his troop of Arabs disappointing after considering Arabic a lingua franca among Muslims. Zubayr also found even more corruption than he was used to in the Ottoman military: his commander once ordered a retreat after having

²⁶ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 87.

²⁷ Alexander Schem, *The War in the East: An Illustrated History of the Conflict Between Russia and Turkey with a Review of the Eastern Question*. (New York: O.H.S. Goodspeed & Co.; 1878), 119.

²⁸ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 80.

nearly won a battle after having “received from the Russians a large sum of money inside some watermelons.”²⁹ The reader can hear from his dramatic tones the pain that his first genuine winter caused Zubayr.

Then came a season of the year when the sun ceased, and the rain came down as the feathers fall from an egret’s nest when the Khameseen³⁰ blow: the rivers froze, and ice formed upon them, so that they became as the firm ground, and cannons were dragged across their surface, and we would walk upon the face of the waters as it were upon the land. And I became weak and infirm in my body by reason of the severity of the cold, and the skin wasted on my bones, so that I was in the extreme of anguish. Nor was there with me aught of those things that invigorate the heart or dilate the bosom,³¹ so that, verily, I counted myself among the people of the other world, through the violence of my sufferings. My hands indeed refused their service, and I had to hold the reins between my teeth, by reason of the intensity of the cold. I continued in this state for a length of time, meditating on the wondrous ways of God, and on the vicissitudes that befall and happen unto men, until destiny brought me—with the permission of God, whose name be exalted—between the hands of two Turks, whose breasts were bared to the icy winds of the Balkans. And, when they saw in what sad plight I was, they were moved with merriment, and broke into a roar of laughter, so that their sides were like to burst. They knew but little Arabic, but by means of a few flowery words, which they had learned from the Koran, they questioned me as to my state. I answered them in all that they required of me, and when they understood that I was an Arab from the land of the sun they had compassion on me, and brought my hard case to the notice of the authorities. So I returned to Egypt where I was healed of my pains and disorders and my spirit returned to me.³²

Zubayr’s experience in the Balkans was similar to that of other Egyptian troops. Egyptian troops there were not equipped for the cold Balkan war, with poor-quality and defective artillery, and less training than either Ottoman or Russian troops. Ottoman officials asked to send all of them home because they were more trouble than they were useful, and to keep what they could use of

²⁹ Ibid., 82.

³⁰ Windy winter/spring storms in Egypt and Sudan.

³¹ Tobacco? Alcohol? Hashish? Coffee?

³² al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 83.

their weapons in the Balkans. In April of 1878, only a year after their arrival, the 30,000 Egyptian troops began returning home.³³

Tensions between Turkish and Arab elements of the Ottoman military were not a problem only in the Balkans. The same tensions were growing in Egypt, where the frustrated Arab ranks of the poorly equipped and poorly trained military were gathering under Ahmed ‘Urabi against the Turkish elite who commanded them. Meanwhile the frustrated Sudanese were gathering under Muhammad Ahmed against the Anglo-Egyptian elite who commanded them, and Zubayr’s son Suleiman was gathering Zubayr’s disgruntled soldiers to revolt against Khartoum’s rule of Bahr al-Ghazal, under Romolo Gessi and then Frank Lupton both under Gordon in Khartoum.³⁴

Revolts

The Mahdist revolt was not isolated. Two other revolts around the same period also had great impacts in Egypt and Sudan: the revolt by Suleiman, Zubayr’s son, against Egyptian forces, and the ‘Urabi revolt of Arab Egyptians against the Turco-Ottoman the Turkish military-ruling class that had developed out of the dynastic state of Mehmed Ali and his successors. These two revolts contribute to putting the Mahdist revolt in context, as well as affecting Zubayr directly. The third revolt here is the Mahdist revolt, which began, grew, and succeeded in taking control of Sudan while Zubayr was in Cairo.

³³ Dunn, *Khedive Ismail’s Army*, 80; Schem, *The War in the East*.

³⁴ Gessi was Italian, and met Gordon while working with British forces in the Crimean War (1853-56), and befriended him there, leading Gordon to employ Gessi. Gordon’s orders to Gessi were to put down Suleiman’s revolt, though Gordon did not expect Gessi to execute Suleiman, and this came to haunt Gordon’s relationship with Zubayr.

These three revolts are essential to my argument that the early 1880s marked the moment of transition from a broadcast-type of imperialism to a more direct one. Though Suleiman's and 'Urabi's revolts both resulted in increased European control, and the Mahdist revolt resulted, at least temporarily, in the virtual elimination of European control, all three revolts resulted in the establishment of a clearer, more intensive, more modern form of rule. The Mahdia was an alternate modernity to that which historians are more familiar, but it was a form of modernity nonetheless.

Suleiman's revolt was much smaller in scale than the 'Urabi or Mahdist revolts, but was important to Zubayr because accusations that he incited his son to this action haunted him for the rest of his life. It also sheds some light on the Mahdist revolt, showing not only how discontent with Egyptian rule was simmering, but also more importantly, how men trained in battles for Sudan's expansion organized battles for Sudanese independence from Egypt. The Mahdist and 'Urabi revolts continue in a similar tradition.

Zubayr described his interactions with Suleiman:

Before I left Dara [to go to Cairo for an audience with the Khedive], I put my forces under the command of my son Suliman, but the government treated him so badly that he was compelled to revolt against it. Certain lying hypocrites, however, in Cairo slandered me, saying that, before leaving Dara, I advised him to rebel, should the Government detain me in Egypt. They even went so far as to say that I wrote him from Cairo, urging him to revolt. At that time the Governor General of the Sudan was General Gordon, who believed these calumnies against me, and ordered the confiscation of all my property in the Sudan³⁵. He even dispatched General Gessi to catch Suliman: several engagements took place, so I wrote to my son counseling him to surrender, which he did, only to be treacherously put to death.³⁶

A letter from Zubayr to Suleiman appeared in 1878, and Zubayr wrote a letter to Suleiman in 1878, but the contents did not match.. Wingate, in letters to Cromer in 1894,

³⁵ See the 900,000 pounds owed to Zubayr in chapter 1.

³⁶ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 83–5.

claimed Zubayr had, in 1894, come around to admitting having written the letter. Zubayr began this letter, “My dear son,

When HH the Khedive graciously accepted my application to come to see him in Cairo I surrendered you and gave you strict injunctions that you should obey and follow out the instructions of the government, that you should comply with all their restrictions, be they great or small; that you should avoid doing that which is forbidden and that you should in no way act contrary to the government.³⁷

The letter continues to narrate the strength and clarity with which Zubayr told Suleiman to be obedient to the government. After Gordon had taken over the governor generalship from Ismail Pasha Ayyub in 1877, Zubayr had asked Gordon to “take good care of” Suleiman, meanwhile having “clearly told [Suleiman] to obey [Gordon’s] orders.” Suleiman had led troops to the government at Khartoum to help put down a rebellion in Darfur, after which he had been titled and given the governorship of Bahr al-Ghazal, news of which had pleased Zubayr when he was in the Balkans. When Zubayr returned to Cairo he had heard of Suleiman’s leadership in raising an insurrection in Bahr al-Ghazal and had been filled with anxiety.³⁸ Suleiman openly revolted against the Khedive’s army, led by Gessi. Gessi had Suleiman shot and killed for mutiny.³⁹ Zubayr claimed that he had encouraged his son to stay loyal to Khedival forces.

Gessi⁴⁰ vindicated himself in his memoir of time in Sudan:

³⁷ Wingate at Aswan to Cromer, January 9, 1894, SAD 110/3/102.

³⁸ Ibid. Wingate at Aswan to Cromer, January 9, 1894. SAD 110/3/102.

³⁹ “Nothing is more extraordinary in the campaigns of Gessi Pasha in the Bahr el Ghazal than the facility with which the troops fought alternately on his side and on the side of Suliman Zubeir. Gessi would have one day 15,000 men in his army; but on the mere report of a stronger force begin opposed to him on the mere report that Suliman had found some means of success, 10,000 of these would be arrayed against him in Suliman’s army. And in the like manner, when he inflicted a defeat upon Suliman, sometimes even before, so keenly did they watch the scale, he would at once enroll almost the entire army opposed to him.” Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, 74-5.

⁴⁰ Gessi was hardly objective. He wrote little of Sulieman or Rabih, except to point out the large size of their respective harems. Gessi spoke of the Arabs of Bahr Ghazal in general as corrupt, particularly in being Muslim and regular drinkers. His difficulty with the Khartoumers is understandable since after having joined Gordon in exploring the upper Nile, Gordon sent Gessi on the specific mission of countering Bahr Ghazal slavers. Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan*, 294.

Among the papers which I found there was one, the last letter from Ziber to his son, which had been transmitted by a confidant, in which was the following order:-- "Free Bahr-el-Ghazal from the Egyptian troops; attack and make yourself master of Shakka." In fact the troops which marched from Dem Suleiman upon Degauna had orders to attack Shakka. All this proves that the insurrection had been long and carefully planned, and that the strings were moved from Cairo, in Ziber Pasha's palace.⁴¹

A central problem arose in the debates over the existence of any letter from Zubayr inciting Suleiman: one cannot prove the non-existence of a letter. The letter about inciting was never found. Either Zubayr wrote two letters, or translation was badly botched, or Gessi created the inciting letter.

Gordon's pamphlet against Zubayr and Suleiman that he published in 1879 as governor at Khartoum, mentioned in the previous chapter, made Suleiman seem in open rebellion to a government that he unquestionably held loyalty to, and that unquestionably had sovereignty over Bahr al-Ghazl, but between the lines it can be seen that Suleiman might have felt Gordon as the interloper and himself as defender of a limited sovereignty along the lines of overlapping lines that Herbst suggests for Africa. Zubayr had left Suleiman in control of his territories, and when elements of the old regime in Darfur attempted to wrest power, Gordon sent repeated orders to Suleiman to help government troops in Darfur. "He had imagined" Gordon argues "that if he and the troops with him should not go, quiet would not be restored at Darfur, but his father might be sent from the capital...

When he learnt that all had become quiet, and lost hope of his father's coming, he conceived to design, together with the officers of the trading mercenaries (*bāzangar*, for Turkish *bāzingyan*, merchant) who were of the brethren and relations of his father, to take their troops, go to Dara, and effect an attack on the force that was there, kill them, and take possession of it first, and then of the rest of Darfur by degrees. This appeared feasible to them in comparison with the acts that had really taken place. In effect they

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 307. Footnote in original reads: It therefore cannot be doubted that there was connivance between Ziber Pasha and the future Mahdists who revolted not long after, assisted by the same elements on which his son Suleiman had relied during the earlier revolt. - Ed. [Felix Gessi, editor.]

proceeded to Dara with more than four thousand mercenary trading troops and two pieces of artillery.

Ismail Ayyub put down Suleiman's revolt assigning Suleiman just the region of Bahr al-Ghazal, but Suleiman continued to incite rebellion. Gordon placed a new man in charge of Bahr al-Ghazal, Idris Bey Abtar. Suleiman attacked Abtar over and over, which in Gordon's mind was rebellion, but to Suleiman was probably seen as protecting his and his father's sovereignty. Gordon saw a singular line of sovereignty with all power resting in the higher reaches (Khartoum, Cairo, London), while Suleiman saw a Herbstian overlap in which it was rewarded for provincial governments to flex their limited sovereignty against their metropolises (Mehmed Ali against the Ottoman Sultan, Zubayr against Ja'far Pasha). Gordon was infuriated, calling Suleiman and his supporters "villains," and sending Gessi and a large force which fought a protracted series of battles with Suleiman's forces. Rabih, who had been near the top of Suleiman's organization, suggested to Suleiman that they move their force further from the reach of the Khartoum government, Suleiman disagreed, so Rabih took some of the troops and headed westward to form his own government in Wadai that lasted another twenty years. Suleiman and the remainder of his leadership were taken by surprise by Gessi's force at night on July 16, 1879, and all the leaders were publically put to death. Zubayr held a grudge against Gordon for the death of his son, not because he denied that Suleiman had acted against Gordon's orders, but because he felt that Suleiman was in control of a sovereign government in tense relations with Gordon's government, not a provincial leader in Gordon's government in open rebellion.⁴²

Furthermore, Gordon addressed in this pamphlet the issue of slavery directly, a technique which caused him endless trouble, in contrast to Wingate and Zubayr who took the tack of

⁴² Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582.

avoiding public proclamations against slavery as much as possible. Gordon argued, in no uncertain terms, that slavery was “a thing displeasing to God,” and that “God gives not his blessing to a place where this exists,” and therefore those who supported slavery were against not only the governments in Khartoum, Cairo, and London, but were against God:

If any one supposes that the question of slaves was the cause of [Zubayr’s exile and Suleiman’s rebellion], and the general resolve to put an end thereto, as taken by HM. tThe question of slaves is itself, by its very nature, a thing displeasing to God, - that they should carry off by violence the children and wives of the slaves/subjects and of the inhabitants who dwell in the (country of the) Gazāl River (Bahr-ul-Gazāl), drive them for sale, and ruin them. It is well known that God gives not his blessing to a place where this exists; especially as it is not pretended that these slaves are of those against whom war is a duty, and whose treatment as enemies is incumbent on those appointed to wage war against them and enslave them, so long as they remain at home busied in obtaining a livelihood. The thing is displeasing to the Government, which further considers that this practice leads to ruin of the Sūdān, since the transportation of many of its subjects leaves the taxes due from them unpaid.⁴³

Gordon’s argument is more than that simply slavery is against God; he argues that the excuse of capturing slaves as prisoners of war, as had been practiced with the Janissaries and Mamluks not merely in Sudan, was false as long as there was no active war, and those enslaved had been civilians. As Zubayr told Lord Ribblesdale while on Gibraltar, slavery in Sudan was “looked upon as sacred and as belonging to religion.”⁴⁴ So Gordon’s claim that slavery was against God might have been particularly insulting to those merchant interests with which Gordon was trying to court favor. Gordon published this pamphlet after Suleiman’s rebellion in order to try to put closure on the rebellion, but Suleiman’s revolt was part of a greater trend toward localizing power, not merely against Gordon or defending slavery.⁴⁵ The year Gordon published the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ribblesdale, “Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar,” 940.

⁴⁵ Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582. See further discussion and quotes from the pamphlet on page 195.

pamphlet, support for ‘Urabi’s movement to put more control over the Egyptian military by local Arab Egyptians was growing quickly.

The ‘Urabi revolt was a part of this larger localizing trend, but it had an ethnic Arab dimension, a proto-nationalist dimension, whereas Suleiman’s was more simply the reintroduction of local interests exerting greater autonomy. ‘Urabi fought for “Egypt for the Egyptians,” defining Egyptians to the exclusion of the Turkish-speaking Egyptian elite. The Mahdist and ‘Urabi revolts were more xenophobic than proto-nationalistic: These revolts had difficult times identifying whom they were fighting for, but not whom they were fighting against: the ‘Urabists and Mahdists were both anti-Turkish movements. Mehmed Ali’s administration spoke Turkish and French, while the vast majority of Egyptians spoke only Arabic, and this was paralleled in the military where rank and file soldiers spoke Arabic and commanders spoke Turkish, causing bitterness and division. The Turks the ‘Urabists fought against might have been many generations in Egypt, but they had kept themselves linguistically separate. That separation changed the nature both of Egyptian rule and of Turko-Egyptian rule in Sudan, giving them both a non-Arab character.

Mahdists tended to lump in the word Turk anyone from outside of Sudan: Europeans, Arabs from the Levant, and even Egyptians. Mahdists used the term Turk largely because the image of the Turkish-speaking abusive tax-collectors focused the dissent of average Sudanese.⁴⁶

The ‘Urabi revolt was both a result of an Ottoman (Turkish speaking, often Circassian or Albanian in ethnic background) military elite controlling a then majority Arab military, and the result of a crumbling Egyptian government under the weight of Ismail’s debt. This debt was to French and British private investors, with increasing intervention by the French and British states

⁴⁶ Bjørkelo, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya*, 34.

to protect their investments, for which Gladstone was accused of fighting a bondholder's war in Egypt in 1882. Ismail tried to resist gradual takeover of his government by European governments, and so was deposed for his more easily influenced son Tawfiq. While the highest ranks of business and government were taken by Turkish, English, or French speakers to the exclusion of the vast majority, the clearest example of this policy was in the military. The 'Urabi revolt centered on Colonel Ahmed 'Urabi, frustrated at the difficulty of moving up in military ranks as an Arab. 'Urabi organized frustrated military forces together and tried for a coup. Without the force to stop it, Tawfiq acceded to its demands of a new pro-Arab cabinet. Fearing the threat of a great shift in power and perhaps refusal to repay Egypt's debt, British forces invaded Alexandria and defeated 'Urabi's forces at Tel al-Kebir on September 13, 1882, beginning British military control of Egypt. The revolt had managed show the weakness of the Egyptian government in the face of both internal and external threats.

The conventional view of British motivations for invasion was that Britain could not afford to abandon Egypt primarily because the Suez railway and canal were the main arteries for commerce to and from India.⁴⁷ Juan Cole argues, however, that nothing about the 'Urabi revolt threatened Suez access, and that the British invasion of Egypt was instead due to fear that the revolt would end up creating an independent state in Egypt that would threaten European debt collection and European privileges.⁴⁸

Suez is far from Khartoum, but the Mahdist revolt began at the same time as 'Urabi, and for many of the same reasons. As Egypt splintered, Sudan became a distant worry. Africa had

⁴⁷ Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914*, 115.

⁴⁸ Juan Cole argued in his work on the 'Urabi Revolt that access through Suez was a red herring, that nothing about the 'Urabi revolt threatened that access, and that the British invasion of Egypt was due to fear that the revolt would end up creating an independent state in Egypt that would threaten European investments and European privileges. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 17.

been Ismail's dream. When Ismail was deposed in June 1879, European interests focused on regaining control of Cairo, Suez, and the Red Sea. When 'Urabi was put down, the entire Egyptian army was disbanded, and it took time to train and establish a new Egyptian army, part of the reason Wolseley was so delayed leaving Cairo, and a moment of weakness that the Mahdists took advantage of.⁴⁹ The Mahdist government never would gain control of the Sudanese coast, but at the same time, the interior of Sudan was not an immediate concern for Britain in 1879 or 1880 when the Mahdist movement began.⁵⁰

British efforts to put down the 'Urabi revolt and the Mahdia were similar to the roughly simultaneous efforts to put down Cetshwayo's Zulus.⁵¹ The Cetshwayo example is especially useful because he was imprisoned in London before being empowered again in South Africa, much as Zubayr was imprisoned in Cairo before, as Gordon hoped, he would be empowered again in Sudan. Cetshwayo's empire was destroyed in 1879, with his rivals given control of the various separated parts in an attempt to dilute Zulu power, and Cetshwayo held in London. Sir Bartle Frere, High Commissioner for Southern Africa, had not imagined the level of anarchy this would cause when each province of the Zulu empire went to battle against the others in an attempt to gain as much territory as possible. In typical British empire-on-the-cheap fashion, rather than using direct force, a local puppet was installed: Frere brought Cetshwayo back to South Africa in 1883 to try to bring his old empire under control. The effort failed when he died in a battle with one of his rivals, leaving the now smaller Zulu nation in 1884 under the titular

⁴⁹ Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*, 188.

⁵⁰ Holt, *Modern History of Sudan*, 78.

⁵¹ The Anglo-Zulu War ended at Ulundi in July 1879, and it wasn't for two more years until the Mahdi's first battle at Aba in August 1881, and not until the next month, September 1881, that 'Urabi openly disobeyed orders to leave Cairo, but Mohamed Ahmed and Ahmed 'Urabi had been gaining power since 1879.

control of his fifteen-year old son Dinizulu, entirely dependent on British forces and decisions, and the beginning of a purely symbolic Zulu royal lineage.⁵²

Africa, at least Sudan and South Africa, were similarly not like Latin America or Western Europe, and theorizations of proto-nationalism do not fit well in African cases that are more overlapping. As Jeffrey Herbst argues, and as I describe in chapter 2, traditions of rule in Sudanic Africa were more dynamic and overlapping in different ways than traditions of rule in Europe or the Americas. Early state formation in Sudan was in response to these African traditions of rule as well as to revolutions in military technology and debt structures. ‘Urabi moved Egypt along the road to greater nationalism in response to crippling state debt, and the consequent crippling state loss of sovereignty via the Caisse de la Dette, which had undermined the Khedive’s efforts toward European-backed state-building. Both Suleiman’s revolt and the Mahdist revolt moved Sudan closer to forms of proto-nationalism without necessarily seeing those forms as permanent. The Mahdist revolt can be somewhat understood in these political-economic terms, and perhaps nationalism is a form of belief as much as any religion, but the Mahdist revolt was more explicitly religious than these others. Mahdist propaganda rejected ideas that it was a nationalist movement, for it was to be a global millenarian movement, but looking at actions and results, the Mahdists expelled foreigners and created a central Sudanese state that would eventually gain a national identity. It is not a nationalist movement *per se*, but proto-nationalist.

The idea of a Mahdist movement was not isolated to Africa or to the nineteenth century, nor were revitalization movements against colonization. Movements calling themselves Mahdist appeared in the early years of Islam as well as in 1979 in Mecca and in 2003 in Iraq. The Mahdia

⁵² A. Adu Boahen, *Africa Under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935* (Berkeley; University of California Press / UNESCO, 1990), 97.

of late nineteenth century Sudan was the most successful historical Mahdist movement in terms of recognition and support. The idea of a Mahdi is messianic, and this messianic idea was originally Shi'i, and though it was never as large a part of Sunnism, it spread throughout Muslim Africa.⁵³ Despite the particular title Mahdi being Shi'a in origin; some argue that it is similar to millenarianism throughout and outside of Islam.⁵⁴ P. M. Holt wrote the standard history of the Mahdia, in which he focuses on the political forces, showing the dire economic situation of the governments at Khartoum and Cairo as contributing factors, and religious framing being a vocabulary that more Sudanese could relate to, rather than the European phraseology of liberty and nationhood, though he focuses more on functioning of the Mahdia as a state rather than the forces that contributed to its growth.⁵⁵ Sir Reginald Wingate also wrote an extensive explanation of the Mahdia during the midst of it, published in 1891, long before he was governor-general of Sudan, in which he posits that the Mahdia was not merely a Shia tradition brought into Sunnism, but that Nilotic and African Islam was more oriented around brotherhoods than other forms of Islam, so that the Mahdia as a sort of fraternal organization was familiar to Sudanese.⁵⁶ 'Ismat Hasan Zulfo, a Sudanese scholar who wrote the definitive history of the battle of Omdurman, argued that though a charismatic leader was essential to the growth of the movement, the primary causes were adverse social and economic conditions.⁵⁷

⁵³ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, "Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905-6," 219.

⁵⁴ Henry Munson, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 26; Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan*, 2.

⁵⁵ Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*.

⁵⁶ Wingate, *Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan* On the one hand, this can be seen as a sort of proto-nationalism, but it also has become in Sudan party politics, as Sufi brotherhoods in Sudan are the major political parties, if by different names.

⁵⁷ Zulfo, *Karari*, 7.

Michael Adas's study of revitalization movements against imperial control describes a variety of movements much like the Mahdist movement in Sudan in the 1880s. He defines his study as including "revitalization movements which took the form of *prophet-inspired rebellions* among *non-Western peoples* against *European-dominated colonial regimes*."⁵⁸ Adas argues that though these revolutionaries were not seeking to establish a modern state, as theorists had used the idea of revolution before him, nevertheless their aims were revolutionary, if not even proto-nationalist. His movements are, like the Mahdia of Sudan, nativist, seeking to reject foreign peoples and ideas, messianic, and led by prophets, a term he prefers over charismatic leaders for its specificity. In seeking his five similar movements, Adas chose from five movements spread over more than a century: the Netherland East Indies (1825-30), Maoris (1864-67), Chota Nagpur in India (1895-1900), Maji Maji in East Africa (1905-6) and Saya San in Burma (1930-32), making the study a stretch to use for reference to a particular historical period. It does show the global nature of these kinds of movements, even across such a long time frame.⁵⁹

The Sudanese movement might have had its direct origins to the west, in the Sokoto Caliphate of what is now northeast Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century. An exodus of thousands of Mahdists from the Sokoto Caliphate, leaving to protest their impression of false rule by that caliphate, went eastward toward Mecca. Along the way, they spread their ideas, and were especially effective since the mythology of a Mahdi was that he would come from the west. The Mahdist movement in Egyptian Sudan was inspired by but not part of that western movement. Supporters of Muhammad Ahmed and his followers, the Ansar, who were present in the Sokoto Caliphate, were concentrated in the eastern portions of Sudanic Africa nearest

⁵⁸ Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion*, xix.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xxii.

Egyptian Sudan. Those in the central Sokoto Caliphate did not recognize this Mahdi or the authority of the Ansar. Both forms of Mahdism shared dimensions of class and ethnic struggle, identifying the coming of the Mahdi with the second coming of Jesus. While much of their orientation, including anti-colonialism, unites the two branches, the political realizations and leadership separated.⁶⁰ The Mahdist revolt was typical of other Islamic messianic movements. The Mahdist movement arose in response to social, political, and economic circumstances that caused similar messianic movements in other contexts, such as the Fatimids⁶¹ and the Almohades.⁶² The Mahdist revolt was also typical of non-Islamic African messianic movements, such as the Maji Maji and Mashona rising. Nikkie Keddie framed Mahdism as only one among “several religious-political messianic movements that appeared under the initial impact of the industrialized West in the third world” including the Ahmadiyya in India, various Christian movements and the Taiping rebellion in China.⁶³

Mahdism was much more than another ‘Urabi political movement. It was an African Islamic movement, and depended on a prophet, which by Michael Adas’ definition was distinct from merely a charismatic leader such as Zubayr.⁶⁴ The term Mahdi, at least in nineteenth-century Tunisia and Algeria, was used for any aspiring apocalyptic leader who claimed to be

⁶⁰ Lovejoy and Hogendorn, “Revolutionary Mahdism and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Sokoto Caliphate, 1905-6,” 219.

⁶¹ Along with a Mahdist among the Fatimids, there was also a civil war between black slave soldiers and Turkish speaking soldiers in Cairo in 1062, which, like the Mahdia in Sudan, was not the rebellion for freedom from slavery that we expect from a western context. Rather, both these rebellions use the status of slavery almost as a rallying cry. (Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell it to My Memory*, 14)

⁶² L. Carl Brown, “The Sudanese Mahdiya,” in *Rebellion in Black Africa*, ed. Robert Rotberg (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁶³ Keddie, *Modern Iran*, 45–6. Keddie mentioned the more domestic Taiping rebellion, rather than the more anti-imperialist Boxer rebellion, perhaps because she was trying to make a point that these were more religious than (proto-) nationalist.

⁶⁴ Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion*, xxi.

impervious to bullets and gunpowder. It might be that such a belief was strategically useful in early anti-colonial resistance, but the belief was much more than that. Saints and mahdis were growing in popularity in North Africa, as they were in Saharan and Sahel Africa, in the nineteenth century as part of a series of movements, a zeitgeist of belief in magic and charisma over technology and administration.⁶⁵ Nothing less than a shift in collective consciousness was taking place within Egyptian Sudan more specifically, but also among the diverse groups of northern African peoples in response to the onslaught of modernity and foreign rule. Some might have been cognizant of this shift and used it to their advantage militarily, and the Sudanese Mahdi did just that, but equally the Sudanese Mahdi and any military personnel had their worldviews changed and were susceptible to this zeitgeist, a spirit in between mass hysteria and orthodox religious belief.⁶⁶ Michael Adas, in describing his *Prophets of Rebellion* specifies that they be religious millenarian leaders, like these other saints and mahdis, rather than the merely charismatic leadership of Zubayr and other military traders, who also needed interaction with global markets.

Zubayr might have had the charisma to become a prophet, but he declined the position for, at least he claimed, his belief system was incongruous with the role of a prophet. Abdullahi Muhammad, an itinerant religious leader, had been employed by the Rezagat tribes who battled

⁶⁵ Julia Clancy-Smith, "Saints, Mahdis, and Arms: Religion and Resistance in Nineteenth-Century North Africa," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, ed. Edmund Burke and Ira Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 66–7; See also Mamadou Saliou Balde, "L'esclavage et la guerre sainte au Fuuta-Jalon," in *L'esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, ed. Claude Meillassoux (Paris: Maspero, 1975).

⁶⁶ Though outside the chronology of this project, it was under a similar strand of Mahdism that the Great Mosque in Mecca was taken hostage in 1979 in the midst of the Iranian revolution. The Iranian revolution did not evoke the idea of a mahdi, but it also occurred in a spirit of anti-imperial fervor. The Mahdist takeover in Mecca took place after Iran had been declared an Islamic republic, but before Khomeini was declared supreme leader. Just at that moment, which was also the turn of the fifteenth century of the hijri calendar, hundreds of followers of the charismatic Juhayman al-'Utaybi declared his brother-in-law, Muhammad Ibn 'Abd Allah al-Qahtani, to be the Mahdi, and took control of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca. They were laid siege by Saudi forces and most died in the accompanying fire. Munson, *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*, 71.

Zubayr and lost, and while captured by Zubayr in 1873, Abdullahi pleaded with Zubayr to declare himself Mahdi, but Zubayr refused, claiming he did not believe in the Mahdist movement, since it was up to God to determine the end of times, not men.⁶⁷ The same Abdullahi Muhammad years later pleaded with Muhammad Ahmed to declare himself Mahdi, which Muhammad Ahmed did, in March 1881. Though Zubayr refused to declare himself the Mahdi, he did lay the groundwork for the Mahdist movement, having trained thousands of warriors and three generals who would play large roles in the Mahdist army: Zaki Tamal, Hamdan Abu 'Anja, and al-Nur Anqara.⁶⁸

Gladstone identified the Mahdist revolt as a movement by a people wishing to be free in the House of Commons on May 5 in response to an accusation by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach that the Mahdia had to be put down and Gladstone had failed at this task.

I put aside for the moment all questions of climate, of distance, of difficulties, of the enormous charges, and all the frightful loss of life. There is something worse than that involved in the plan of the right hon. Gentleman. *It would be a war of conquest against a people struggling to be free.* ["No, no!"] Yes; these are people struggling to be free, and they are struggling rightly to be free.⁶⁹

He uses the term *a people* not *a nation*, so he does not go quite as far as calling it a nationalist movement, but *a people*, as opposed to *people* should be considered a proto-nationalism.

Gladstone identified independence and national movements not only as the inevitable end of distant imperial control, but as the philosophical goal of empire. If the underlying goal of imperial policies was to pull less developed people into the modern age, proto-nationalist

⁶⁷ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 58; Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881-1898*, 44; Zulfo, *Karari*, 25.

⁶⁸ Zulfo, *Karari*, 4.

⁶⁹ HC Deb 12 May 1884 vol 288 cc55. Italics mine.

movements were the birth pangs of those peoples/nations into the modern age, and should, Gladstone argued, be encouraged, or at least not literally battled against.⁷⁰

Gladstone allowed Sudan to resist, in a sense, by virtue of his balanced budgets, but his hands were tied when it came to Egypt.⁷¹ The debate was more about the party in power versus the Opposition than about the issues at hand: Sir Michael Hicks-Beach argued for the Conservatives that a strong military force should have been sent in enough time to relieve Gordon, and that Zubayr should have led it, and that it was due to a weakness on the part of Gladstone's government that this was not done. Hicks-Beach argued that "The appointment of Zebehr Pasha was...the essential means for establishing that temporary local government without which the peaceful evacuation of the Soudan was impossible" and that if Gladstone's government wanted to reject that proposal, "they ought to have accepted any alternative proposal that was made, or to have made some other proposal themselves to carry out their policy." Hicks-Beach spoke in retrospect, of course. It was easy to argue for Zubayr once it was too late. In his rather extensive explanation, he argues that Gladstone's administration had intended to save British influence in Sudan, and that they had somehow lost their nerve. That government should have, Hicks-Beach argued, been able "to place themselves in a position to carry out their intention— peacefully, by all means, if possible; but by warlike means if the work cannot be done without military co-operation."⁷² This was a straw man, of course, trying to mold the discourse around Gladstone's ability to follow through on intentions. It was the intentions that Gladstone wavered on, whether his intention was to make a little England, extend abolition, allow independence, or bring development to Sudan.

⁷⁰ Knaplund, *Gladstone's Foreign Policy*; Harrison, *Gladstone's Imperialism in Egypt*.

⁷¹ Ibrahim, "The Egyptian Empire, 1805-1885," 214.

⁷² HC Deb 12 May 1884 vol 288 cc49.

Gladstone replied to Hicks-Beach that these assertions were too easy in hindsight, that when the issue had been debated months earlier, his Conservative colleagues had taken great offense at the idea of empowering Zubayr, and had agreed to try, at Gordon's request, more pacific methods before sending a large military force. "The right hon. Baronet has stated that a great deal could be said in favour of sending Zebehr; but," Gladstone asked, "which of these Gentlemen said so at the time?" The question of sending a military force also made perfect sense in hindsight, except that Gordon had opposed it, argued Gladstone: "I think it was from the opposite Bench that one of the leading speakers of the Opposition told me it was an insult to the House to suppose it could possibly interfere with the pacific mission of General Gordon." The Liberal position in this debate, therefore, did not concern what ought to have been done or what should be done, but the impossibility of knowing what should have been done in time to have done it.⁷³

Zubayr was in Cairo during the rise of Mohamed Ahmed, cut off from Sudan, his reputation and political presence fading while he was under house arrest and observation. Despite this, Zubayr's actions in the previous decade had laid the groundwork for the Mahdist revolt in three main ways: Zubayr trained soldiers and generals, who were at a loss for work in his absence and flocked to the Mahdi as an employer and leader; his activities had alerted the Anglo-Egyptian administration to local sub-imperial military challenge; and he spread a centralizing culture and economy in previously isolated regions. Zubayr had done as much as anyone to create a unified Sudan under Arab Muslim leadership which now included Darfur, Bahr al-Ghazal, and other peripheries.

⁷³ HC Deb 12 May 1884 vol. 288 cc62.

Zubayr contributed to opening a gaping frontier in southwest Sudan, a frontier that he tried to fill himself, but failed, leaving it to be filled by Romolo Gessi and Charles Gordon, then by the Mahdia, and then by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium regime. The three revolts outlined in this section were a reaction to the abuses available in a frontier style of loose broadcasting imperialism, and a movement toward more state-like rule. These three revolts show that this transformation happened in northeast Africa between 1880 and 1885. That change developed rapidly over those five years, but most especially during the year 1884.

Gordon's Mission

The chronology of events in the winter of 1884 vis-à-vis Gordon and his proposal to have Zubayr sent is complex, because the situation was so dependent on emotional interpretations, and reactions were often quite delayed. This section provides background to the winter as a whole and the decision to send Gordon to Khartoum in particular. The following section will emphasize the critical meeting in Cairo on January 26. The final section of this chapter describes the various timelines of reaction from January to December 1884, while Gordon was trapped in Khartoum.

The afternoon of January 26, 1884 can be seen as the critical moment of modernization in northeast Africa, because it was then that the last attempt at loose indirect rule began. It took the whole of the year 1884 for the result of that attempt to play out, for Gordon to go to Khartoum, beg for Zubayr to be sent, and to be hemmed in, and for Khartoum to be taken by Mahdist forces and Gordon killed. This section describes those actions not with the focus on Gordon that is typical of the literature, but with a focus on Zubayr, which shows how what he represented acted as a touchstone for the decay of mid-nineteenth century imperial politics.

After Gordon was hemmed into Khartoum by Mahdist forces in late 1884, more so once Khartoum was taken and Gordon killed in January 1885, it was easy in hindsight for

Parliamentarians and press alike to argue that sending Zubayr might have saved Gordon. In January, February, and March of 1884, however, the period in which Zubayr could have been sent to Gordon's aid, those same Parliamentarians and journalists saw sending Zubayr as an unnecessarily risky gamble. There is no way to know what would have happened had Zubayr been sent, other than counter-factually. We can, however, consider the reasons that sending Zubayr was seen in early 1884 both as risky and unnecessary, and how by late 1884, and especially by early 1885, it became seen as risky and unnecessary not to have sent him.

Cromer asked in *Modern Egypt*, "Were the British Government right in their decision not to employ Zobeir Pasha?"⁷⁴ The question seems misplaced, however, since the British government does not seem to have made such a decision. Gordon was sending misleading information about the strength of his position, while the BFASS was sending defamatory information about Zubayr's character, and together those two pieces of information made sending Zubayr seem, to Gladstone, to Granville, and even somewhat to Baring, premature. After Gordon's death, and as Gladstone's infamous title Murderer Of Gordon (a play on Grand Old Man) became widespread, it was easy to regret what had not been done. Gordon's misrepresentation became clear after the fact. The impossibility of enforcing abolition in any short time frame became clear after the fact, but anti-slavery lobbyists had nonetheless done their work.

The BFASS had grown to a place of great public prestige through generations of successful abolition efforts: abolishing slavery within Britain, and then in British colonies, and then bringing light to corners of the colonies that retained slavery, and finally to shining light on slavery increasingly called by other names. The BFASS had been successful in many of these

⁷⁴ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, 529.

battles, and they understood abolition, but they did not understand Sudan. In 1883 and 1884, they also worked in Morocco protecting Jews from discrimination, and protecting abused Chinese immigrants to Brazil. Earlier they had been successful in abolishing slavery in clearly British domains, because in clearly British domains they had British government support, and because most of the slave owners in these domains had been British or European, so they understood that the relatively brief historical tide of trans-Atlantic slavery had shifted as early as the 1832 Great Reform Act, and certainly by 1880. Since the slave trade in Sudan was so different, and Muhammad Ahmed in his proclamations framed slavery as resistance to British control, the BFASS had a hard time wrapping their heads around Mahdism. At the same time, the BFASS had difficulty with the islands of Socotra, off Yemen, and Zanzibar (after 1890), which were also British protectorates not colonies, and which had Arab slaving populations.⁷⁵ These protectorates were small, however.

Zubayr was seen as risky by influence from the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Zubayr was seen as unnecessary because of Gordon's overconfident portrayals of his position. The combination of these eliminated the possibility that Zubayr would be sent to Khartoum. Once Gordon was trapped, and more when Gordon was killed, his deluded pursuit of glory and exaggerated belief in his special purpose could be seen. The more difficult paradigm to overcome was the idea that the Sudanese government could affect the slave trade in any meaningful way, regardless of who ruled it. That last point will be made clearer in chapter five with analysis of the Wingate-ruled Sudan in the early twentieth century.

The standard portrayal of General Charles Gordon was that he was “a highly complex character who espoused religion in its most fundamentalist form...courted danger and glory” and

⁷⁵ *Anti-Slavery Reporter* January, March and June 1884.

was not much interested in “everyday practicalities.”⁷⁶ When he arrived in Khartoum in February 18, 1884, Gordon demanded Zubayr be sent to Khartoum while promising the residents of Khartoum that British troops would arrive in a few days, a “dangerous piece of bluff.”⁷⁷ Those troops took eleven months to arrive.

When Charles Gordon was governor-general of Sudan from 1876-1879 he had a pamphlet published and distributed explaining why Zubayr had been in the wrong in his battle with Hilali and in the way he conquered Darfur. The pamphlet is an extensive document, explaining how Hilali had permission from Khartoum to pacify Darfur, so Zubayr’s battle with Hilali was against Khartoum, and how Zubayr’s conquest of Darfur was against higher orders. Since the Sultan of Darfur had a longstanding treaty with the Ottoman Sultan, by conquering Darfur Zubayr was invading Ottoman territory, and Egypt was nominally still Ottoman, Zubayr’s invasion was not merely without permission, it was against imperial territory. The purpose of this pamphlet seems to have been to reduce the influence that Zubayr had left behind. It might have, however, had the opposite impact. By showing Khartoum’s great concern for the influence Zubayr had left behind, it might have shown the strength of that influence.⁷⁸ The relationship, however, was much different years later with Zubayr under custody in Cairo.

In the years between 1879 and 1883, Gordon had left Sudan, rested in Geneva and London, traveled in Palestine, was briefly employed on Mauritius, and nearly took charge of the Congo Free State on behalf of King Leopold when Cromer asked for him to go to Khartoum in

⁷⁶ K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 662.

⁷⁷ Holt, *Modern History of Sudan*, 87.

⁷⁸ Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582.

1883. Gordon was on his way through Cairo on his way to Khartoum when he met Zubayr on January 25, 1884. During Gordon's absence from Sudan, the Mahdia had developed from a fringe religious group to having conquered great swaths of territory. Gordon was sent with orders to first withdraw British and Egyptian troops from Sudan, and second to hand power over in the most peaceful way possible. Withdrawal, to Gordon, was defeat. Gordon creatively read his orders to include whatever military resistance to the Mahdia he could manage. In order to put up effective resistance, Gordon would need a powerful and charismatic Sudanese Muslim to help him, for the Sudanese people would not stand behind a European Christian who hardly spoke Arabic against the Mahdia.⁷⁹

Gordon, Granville, and Baring began discussing Zubayr seriously in January 1884, but by March, Mahdists were beginning to surround Khartoum, cutting Gordon off and precluding any meaningful action short of military invasion. Zubayr nonetheless remained in limbo, but 1884 turned out to be the most important of his life. This winter held the possibility of Zubayr escaping tedium under house arrest and ascend to the entire Sudan.

As early as December 1883, Baring and Granville began to consider seriously the possibility of approving Gordon's desire that Zubayr be sent to help him defeat the Mahdi in Khartoum. In January 1884, Gordon traveled from London to Cairo, where he took on Colonel Stewart as his assistant on his way to Khartoum. Stewart it will be remembered, had traveled to Khartoum on Baring's order to write a report on the growing Mahdist movement, which he had submitted on returning to Cairo. Meanwhile Zubayr was discussed publicly in both in the House of Commons and in the press, with sides being taken. In February, after arriving in Khartoum with orders to withdraw British and Egyptian troops, Gordon instead set up an administration

⁷⁹ Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 509.

and issued his strongest declaration enumerating the reasons Zubayr should be sent, the folly of withdrawal, and a method for empowering Zubayr as a tool of British security. In March, however, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS) used the issue to shame the Gladstone government, while Baring and even Granville were amenable to Gordon's Zubayr plan; meanwhile the Mahdists began to surround Khartoum.

Both Gladstone and Gordon were working above and beyond the call of duty in the winter of 1884. Gordon was sent to Khartoum with orders to withdraw British and Egyptian troops; once he got to Khartoum, he chose to defend it against the Mahdists rather than retreat. Gladstone was elected on a platform of smaller budgets and reduced overseas adventurism; once he took office, he took the more expensive choice to eventually send troops to Khartoum rather than support Zubayr and be seen as retreating from abolition. Gordon embarrassed Gladstone by refusing to retreat, hoping Gladstone would give in and approve Zubayr. Gladstone put Gordon at risk by refusing to send Zubayr, hoping Gordon would give in and retreat.

In April, Gladstone was paralyzed, both physically sick and unable to act either to send Zubayr or send troops, either choice being against his beliefs and policies, particularly his simultaneous work on Irish home rule; meanwhile Gordon was paralyzed by having the Nile cut off. By May, the BFASS had impressed their position enough that Gladstone was committed to ignoring Gordon's plea for Zubayr. In June, Zubayr, perhaps feeling his influence fading, used the last of his political capital to demand an increase in allowance. By spring, with the siege of Khartoum in place, sending Zubayr would have required an army, and if an army were to be sent, it would not need Zubayr, and so Zubayr's opportunity was lost.

By May 1884, even the *Saturday Review* could see in retrospect the difficulty Gordon had been in:

The paltry pleas that he was sent out on a pacific mission and has changed it for a warlike one is met by equally irrefragable proof that his efforts to accomplish his mission by pacific means were deliberately frustrated. He wished to meet the Mahdi face to face and arrange matters; the Government forbade it. He wished to employ the unquestioned influence of Zobeir; the Government forbade it.⁸⁰

When Gordon left for Khartoum and asked for Zubayr, or in March, when Mahdist forces began to surround Khartoum, these facts were clear to no one, except perhaps to Gordon, who exaggerated the possibility that Zubayr would be sent, perhaps even to himself.

Gordon and Gladstone were both caught off-guard by the perception that Zubayr was an enigmatic mix of rebelliousness and loyalty to British-Egyptian interests; however to Baring Zubayr was no enigma. Baring, as a practical administrator, saw Zubayr as an opportunist, a ladder-climber not a moralist, a man self-confident and “possessed of a great distrust of enthusiasm.”⁸¹ Baring was able to imagine the practical Zubayr because Baring was himself practical and collected. Gordon, on the other hand, was famous for being excitable. “I never saw or met any one” Stewart said in the midst of discussions over Zubayr, “whose mind and imagination are so constantly active as Gordon's. For him to grasp an idea is to act on it at once.”⁸² It was not that Stewart, Granville, Gladstone, and Baring clashed on what to do about Gordon and Zubayr; rather they clashed on how to consider the issue.

Gordon drastically shifted his opinion on Zubayr, from wanting to employ him, to wanting him imprisoned, to desperately wanting to employ him, not because the situation changed so drastically, but because Gordon's understanding of the situation only gradually became clear. Baring described Gordon as one who would “jump from one extreme to the other”

⁸⁰ “Egypt,” *Saturday Review*, London, March 22, 1884, 593.

⁸¹ Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*, 401.

⁸² Stewart in Khartoum to Baring, 11 March [1884?] FO 78 4194.

⁸³ Gordon's ability to change his mind and enthusiastically follow a new plan in a brief period helped enable him to be a great leader in China from 1862-64 where too balanced a view of the situation, as he knew to have neared the end of his tenure there, led to his distaste for the venture: as he grew to empathize with the motivations of the Taiping rebels, putting them down began to become abhorrent the closer he got to success. During his tenure in Equatoria, Gordon was at one moment thrilled at the success of his anti-slaving crusade, and shared this success with the BFASS, but at many other moments was frustrated at the empowerment of slavers by the government at Khartoum.⁸⁴

Understanding that maintaining Anglo-Egyptian control in Sudan was too great a task, Gordon felt the best solution was a transition to the pre-Egyptian rulers of Sudan: the dynasties of Darfur and Funj and other local authorities. From a military perspective, however, dividing a country back into the half-dozen pre-colonial entities, which had not had sovereignty in two generations, seemed hardly possible, let alone possible peacefully, particularly in the face of a popular revolt. Sir Gerald Graham traveled with Gordon on his way to Khartoum, and wrote of Gordon's treatment of a potential replacement sultan for Darfur, though he fails to mention his name:

The morning of January 27th 1884 saw four Englishmen steaming up the Nile in strange company. The four Englishmen were Gordon, Stewart, myself and aide de camp. In the same boat were the potential sultan of Darfour, two or three of his brothers with wives and female attendants, about fifty in number, a very unattractive lot. During the journey Gordon, in his playful way, proposed to make my aide de camp sultan of Darfour instead of the ill conditioned negro who aspired to that dignity, but the sight of his Majesty's domestic arrangements sufficed to check any ambition to succeed him, and the honor was declined with thanks.⁸⁵

⁸³ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, 459.

⁸⁴ Moore-Harell, *Egypt's African Empire*, 93.

⁸⁵ *Littell's Living Age*, vol. 172, Jan, Feb, Mar 1887, 479.

This was just the day after Gordon's fateful meeting with Zubayr and shows how quickly Gordon stopped taking this possibility seriously.

Baring, in contrast with Gordon's seemingly mercurial behavior, kept a more steady opinion, free of either enthusiasm for employing Zubayr or enthusiasm for imprisoning him. Baring enjoyed avoiding judgments, which at times was seen as a lack of leadership. Indeed, Baring's orders from Granville when he took the position of Consul-General of Egypt was to withdraw British troops from Egypt as quickly as possible. After taking office, however, Baring was able to argue to Granville and Gladstone that too quick of a withdrawal would lead to anarchy, an argument which convinced even Gladstone. Baring's rule in Egypt, therefore, was parallel to, albeit less dramatic, than Gordon's rule in Khartoum, in that both were given command to withdraw British forces, and both found those orders impossible to follow.⁸⁶

Gladstone and Granville had a very difficult time trying to understand a situation described to them in contrasting ways by Baring and by Gordon. Even Baring could vacillate towards Gordon, showing that on the ground Zubayr would be at least a slight advantage, Gladstone and Granville were as a result even more confused on whether to justify Zubayr against the BFASS, referred to in their letters usually as "the Anti-Slavery people." The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society had been quite successful in bringing the issue of slavery to the forefront of public discussion and in turning attention to the Middle East hand in hand with expanding British influence in each country.⁸⁷ The BFASS argument on Zubayr became increasingly polemic: Zubayr was a slaver; Britain was abolitionist; Britain could not support Zubayr. This looked to avoid supporting a slaver, as opposed to a solution that would yield the

⁸⁶ Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul*, 186–7 When Rosebery took over as Foreign Minister in Gladstone's third ministry in 1886, Baring's position changed somewhat.

⁸⁷ Robinson-Dunn, Diane, *The Harem, Slavery and British Imperial Culture*.

least slavery. The BFASS insisted not on supporting less slavery, but of opposing all slavery. As summarized above, the BFASS had experience mostly in the British Caribbean in which both slavery was clearly defined and Britain had firm control, so it was less difficult to bridge the gap between law and enforcement. While their understanding of realities in Sudan was poorly informed, it was not entirely uninformed. It was based on how Gordon described the situation to them in his enthusiastic moments in 1880. Gordon failed to share with them the extent of his discontent with the government at Khartoum.

In December 1883, Zubayr asked the Egyptian Cabinet to provide funding to employ the soldiers that he had brought with him to Cairo in 1875, to get them ready to head to Swakin.⁸⁸ He was led to believe by Gordon that his departure might be imminent.

Charles Allen, in the name of the Committee of the BFASS wrote Granville on December 4 to draw attention to “telegrams that have appeared in the daily press stating that Zebehr Pasha ... has been appointed to the command of the Egyptian army destined to proceed to the Soudan.” Allen reacted not to any trusted source, but rather to rumors in the press. In response to these rumors, the BFASS felt “bound to ask your Lordship to protest against the appointment of this man by the Egyptian Government to such a command.” Egypt could, in theory, appoint Zubayr against the wishes of Britain, but Britain would not have to protest strongly to stop them, or so Allen understood. The BFASS felt justified asking HMG to protest “from the previous character of Sebehr Pasha, who has long been known to them as the largest slave dealer in the Soudan” without a word toward the intervening decade. “Sebehr,” the letter concluded, now quoting a letter from Gordon to the BFASS, “was tried by several Pashas on the captured letters proving his complicity with [Suleiman’s] revolt,” the documents were sent to Cairo, but no action was

⁸⁸ Dar al-Wathaiq 0075-032529.

taken, and Sebehr now gets £100 a month!!”⁸⁹ The BFASS emphasized as their greatest proof of Zubayr’s wrong a quote from Gordon outraged that Zubayr could have been tried and found not guilty and given an allowance, even if the trial could have been an informal affair. Gordon was outraged because he could not imagine that Zubayr’s letters could not have proven him criminal, and the BFASS used that outrage. When Gordon learned to accept Zubayr’s innocence, even if only for political expediency, Allen and the BFASS saw the change as a loss of sanity. The BFASS could not see that Gordon’s overenthusiastic underlining and exclamation points demonstrated his mercurial understanding of the issue, even if Gordon was no more mature in his understanding in his later demonstration of overenthusiastic support for Zubayr.

Perhaps in response to the BFASS letter, Baring wrote Granville on December 9, arguing, in Baring’s usual understated optimism, “Whatever may be Zober Pacha’s faults, he is said to be a man of great energy and resolution.” Baring reminded Granville that up until that point the entire issue had been left up to the Egyptian government. The Egyptian government thought Zubayr would be helpful rallying “friendly Bedouins who are to be sent to Souakin, and in conducting negotiations with the tribes on the Berber-Souakin route.” Baring reminded Granville that Zubayr’s usefulness with those tribes was the opinion of the Egyptian government; he neither supported nor detracted it, but argued, “it would not have been just, whilst leaving all the responsibility to the Egyptian Government, to have objected to that Government using its own discretion on such a point, as the employment of Zober Pacha.” Baring was aware that employing Zubayr “may not improbably attract attention in England.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Allen to Granville, December 4, 1883, FO 78 4194, margin note: Reuter’s Telegrams Dec 3. Underlining and exclamations original.

⁹⁰ Baring to Granville, December 9, 1883, FO 78 4194.

On December 16, 1883, Baring wrote Granville again saying that even though Zubayr claimed that he had been named “Commandement en chef de l’armée Egyptienne” by the Khedive, that Zubayr understood he would be under Baker in Sudan, if he were sent.⁹¹ Meanwhile, Egyptian politics were ever more uncertain.

At the idea of abandoning the Sudan, on January 7, 1884, Sharif Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister resigned in protest. Sharif was replaced by Nubar Pasha, who put up almost no resistance to Cromer, as was famously recorded an editorial cartoon from early 1885 in *Abu Naddara*, a critical Arabic-language journal then based in Paris. In the cartoon (see appendix), Gladstone gives orders to Granville, who turns around to give them to Baring, who turns around to give them to Nubar, who turns around to give them to bowing Egyptian ministers, all under the smiling watch of representatives of European countries.

Gordon wrote Granville on January 22 asking that Zubayr be “sent for a few months to Cyprus” to prevent him from “interfering with my mission in Sudan.” As soon as Gordon had won Baring over to his side, Gordon changed his mind leaving him again opposed to Baring. This seems to have caused a collapse of Baring’s and Granville’s confidence that Gordon could not rebuild later no matter how much he struggled. Granville responded that the British government had no power to capture Zubayr, but that they would “watch” him, and that he had communicated this order to Baring.⁹² Baring argues in his autobiography that Gordon’s quick change of opinion, particularly the plea to send Zubayr to Cyprus, had caused him to lose

⁹¹ Baring at Cairo to Granville, December 16, 1883, FO 78 4194.

⁹² Gordon at sea on the SS Taylor to Granville 22 Jan 1883 fo 78 4194. This message is dated January 22, 1883, but was filed along with January 1884 documents; I originally expected the written date was an error, as easy as it is to follow habit in January and write the previous year.

confidence in empowering Zubayr. Baring's attitude was that Zubayr was as good an option as could be found, but that Gordon's fickleness made him, and hence Zubayr, untrustworthy:

I had always been rather in favour of employing Zobeir Pasha in the Soudan. The argument, however, which convinced me that, for the time being at all events, it was undesirable to employ Zobeir Pasha, was that forty-eight hours before I received General Gordon's Memorandum proposing that Zobeir Pasha should accompany him to the Soudan, I had received, through Lord Granville, a proposal, also emanating from General Gordon, that Zobeir Pasha should be deported to Cyprus. A few minutes' conversation with Zobeir Pasha, and a "mystic feeling" which that conversation had engendered, had led General Gordon to jump from one extreme to the other. . . I have no confidence in opinions based on mystic feelings.⁹³

Meanwhile the London papers were as mixed up as Gordon about Zubayr. The *Pall Mall Gazette* on January 9 ran "The proposed despatch of a force of black troops to the Soudan under the command of Zebehr Pasha has been abandoned," and on January 12 *The Graphic* ran a Reuter's telegram stating, "Zebehr Pasha's troops will leave Suez to-day for Suakin." Gordon argued to a London reporter on January 10, just before his departure for Cairo and then Khartoum, that the Mahdi was on the same side as Zubayr, since they had a common cause: "So far from believing it impossible to make an arrangement with the Mahdi, I strongly suspect that he [the Mahdi] is a mere puppet put forward by Ilyas, Zubayr's father-in-law, and the largest slave owner in Obeid, and that he has assumed a religious title to give color to his defense of the popular rights."⁹⁴ It is no surprise that the Mahdi was supported financially by slave owners for preserving their lucrative trade, and the family connection might have been enough to sway Zubayr to supporting the Mahdia for practical concerns, but Gordon learned to overlook these possibilities in a matter of weeks. On February 2, the Conservative *Saturday Review* tried to explain the "marvelous blundering of the English Government in reference to the Soudan... the

⁹³ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, 459.

⁹⁴ *Times of London*, Jan 10, 1884, p.4, article "General Gordon of the Sudan."

abandonment of the Soudan cuts General Gordon's ground from under his feet. Without men he can only act by influencing the tribes, and how are the tribes likely to be influenced in favour of Egypt when Egypt is about to withdraw and leave them to the mercy of the first comer?" The *Saturday Review* article only mentions Zubayr as the man who demolished the Darfur dynasty that Gordon wished to restore.⁹⁵

One explanation of Gordon's wavering was his tenuous belief that Zubayr had changed in Cairo, had become more pro-British, or at least more cognizant of British power. Another explanation was his wavering belief that both Zubayr and the Mahdi were defenders of popular rights against interests, be they Ottoman, Egyptian, or British. This would explain the way he prefaced this last quote: "The Soudanese are a very nice people. They deserve all the sincere compassion and sympathy of all civilized men." Desperate to fulfill his duties to the British empire but empathetic to the best intentions of the Sudanese as a people, Gordon was torn.⁹⁶

Seeing Zubayr as a failing middle ground, Gordon in January predicted in the *Times* the grim exit of Britain and his own downfall, "the impolicy of announcing our intention to evacuate Khartoum," because "the moment it is known that we have given up the game every man will go over to the Mahdi. All men worship the rising sun. The difficulties of evacuation will be enormously increased, if, indeed, the withdrawal of our garrison is not rendered impossible." All men worship the rising sun, indeed.⁹⁷ Gordon argued that the Mahdist movement was "not religious, but an outbreak of despair" due to abusive foreign rule, though he identified the abusers as Turks and Circassians, not British or Egyptians. Gordon equated the spirit of the

⁹⁵ *Saturday Review*, p.131, Feb 8, 1884.

⁹⁶ *Times of London*, Jan 10, 1884, p.4, article "General Gordon of the Sudan."

⁹⁷ It is difficult to imagine that this aphorism was original to Gordon, but I have yet to find a reference to it anywhere else.

Mahdi with the spirit of the ‘Urabi movements: “All the Sudanese are potential Mahdis, just as all the Egyptians are potential Arabis.” Gordon blamed himself for bringing a new hope to the Sudan, by having “taught them something of the meaning of liberty and justice, and accustomed them to a higher ideal of government than that with which they had previously been acquainted.”

⁹⁸ While he carefully identifies the leaders of his rebellions as prophets, Michael Adas, in agreement with Gordon’s understanding of the Mahdia, also makes it clear that the arising of prophets occurred in reference to relative deprivation: “individuals and whole groups among the colonized came to feel that a gap existed between what they felt they deserved in terms of status and material rewards and what they possessed or had the capacity to obtain. This perception of a discrepancy between expectations and capacities led to a sense of deprivation, which was both relative and collectively experienced.”⁹⁹ Adas points out that “most European observers missed the meaning that these expressions of violent protest had held for their participants.”¹⁰⁰ Gordon did not miss the meaning, but it is not clear if Cromer and others missed it or merely were not concerned with it.

Lord Granville, as Foreign Secretary, for example, defended the position of least action in Egypt. Granville was not concerned with the meaning of the Mahdia, but of the possible influence it could have outside of Sudan. He argued that Zubayr might become a danger to Egypt “either by allying himself with the Mahdi, with whom he is already supposed to have some connection, or in some other manner,” though Granville could not be specific either about the other manner or the supposed connection to the Mahdi. Granville argued that Gordon’s safety

⁹⁸ *Times of London*, Jan 10, 1884, p.4, article “General Gordon of the Sudan.”

⁹⁹ Adas, *Prophets of Rebellion*, 44.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

would be at risk if Zubayr had power over him. Gordon did not share in Granville's fear of Zubayr, or he did not worry about his personal safety.¹⁰¹

January 26, 1884

While the previous section laid out Zubayr's role in Gordon's campaign and how that was seen by various parties in London, and was critical for understanding what the Gordon-Zubayr relationship meant in previous literature, and at the time, a greater focus on the afternoon of January 26, 1884 operates to put the Gordon-Zubayr relationship into better focus.

Understanding how Gordon's opinion shifted that afternoon helps to understand not only Gordon's mentality, but with it, the changing dynamic of imperialism in late-nineteenth century Africa. Gordon realized on this afternoon that if he were to work in the old style of rule, through empowering local actors, without great military might, and on the cheap, Zubayr was his logical choice of local actor, regardless of what strange bedfellows it made of an abolitionist and a former slave trader

The letter that Zubayr might have sent inciting his son to rebellion and Zubayr's responsibility for the revolt were discussed at Baring's home in Cairo on January 25, 1884. The discussion convinced none present (Baring, Wolseley¹⁰², Gordon) of Zubayr's innocence, but was enough to convince Gordon that Zubayr could be trusted. Gordon saw this angry but open exchange not as a sign of Zubayr's distrust of him, but as a sign that Zubayr was first and foremost a businessman and practical politician and that he could put aside any emotional ties for practical advancement. Gordon's superiors, however, read this conversation and the need for it as

¹⁰¹ House of Commons Papers, 1884 volume 83, p. 120, No 177.

¹⁰² Wolseley had commanded the British troops in the battle of Tel al-Kabir against Urabi, the battle that cemented British military rule over Egypt.

evidence that Zubayr held a grudge due to Gordon ordering Gessi to kill Suleiman, and so Zubayr might not be trusted. They continued to see not the pragmatic businessman but the selfish slave trader and bitter grieving father. Zubayr told that the result of the meeting was that all admitted his guilt “only existed in the corrupt imagination of a treacherous enemy: so the meeting was dissolved and nothing done.”¹⁰³

Secondary literature on this moment marks it as a day when Gordon make peace with Zubayr, and that Zubayr told Gordon “I am your slave for life,” but rely too much on the mystical feeling that Gordon had and the cold critical eye of Baring. Julian Symons relates the story in which later that same day, Gordon refused to eat at the same table with Evelyn Wood who had organized a farewell party for Gordon. Gordon announced that if Wood could not support Zubayr, Gordon would have his soup in his room.¹⁰⁴ This gives a hint at the vast importance of this date, but Symons allows that Gordon was flighty and mystical in his temperament, rather than that Zubayr might possibly have been a wise military move.

Cromer’s narrative of the meeting is somewhat different: first Cromer says “On January 25, whilst paying a visit to [Egyptian Prime Minister] Sherif Pasha, Gordon accidentally met Zobeir Pasha. A short conversation ensued between the two, with the result that General Gordon expressed a wish that he and Zobeir Pasha should meet in my presence with a view to the latter stating his complaints.”¹⁰⁵ Of the meeting the next day, Cromer says:

The scene was dramatic and interesting. Both General Gordon and Zobeir Pasha were laboring under great excitement and spoke with vehemence. Zobeir Pasha did not deny that his son had rebelled against the Egyptian Government, but he denied his own complicity in the rebellion. General Gordon’s case rested mainly upon the letter

¹⁰³ al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 83–5.

¹⁰⁴ Julian Symons, *England’s Pride; the Story of the Gordon Relief Expedition*. (London: H. Hamilton, 1965), 36–44.

¹⁰⁵ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, p.454.

addressed by Zobeir Pasha to his son, which was found by Gessi. This letter could not be produced at the time, but I saw a copy of it subsequently. If genuine, it afforded sufficient proof of Zobeir Pasha's complicity in his son's rebellion." That genuineness, as explained earlier, is still difficult if not impossible to prove.¹⁰⁶

The notes of the meeting concluded:

Sir E. Baring.-...whatever his son may have done, he, Zubayr is not responsible for his actions; but he does not, as I understand it, specifically deny what General Gordon alleges- that his son killed those 200 men. Is that correct, Zubayr?

Zubayr.—I do not by any means deny it. I deny my responsibility for my son's conduct.

Sir E. Baring.—Then Zubayr does not deny the action of his son, but only his own responsibility for his son's actions. I do not think we need discuss these two points any further.¹⁰⁷

"After this interview was over and Zobeir Pasha had retired... All present, more especially Colonel Stewart, were opposed to sending him." Cromer goes on to describe how he had earlier been in favor of sending Zubayr, which, as stated earlier, was an easy position to take in hindsight at his writing in 1908. In January 1884, Cromer had begun to think of Gordon as unstable, since he had received two proposals from Gordon in three days, one that Zubayr accompany him, and one, via Granville, that Zubayr be sent to Cyprus.¹⁰⁸

After meeting Zubayr on January 26, 1884, Gordon wrote an extended history of his experience with Zubayr, with defense of his reasoning to have Zubayr sent to Khartoum. He laid out the reasoning that no government could substantially slow the slave trade if there was a market for slaves in Cairo and Istanbul, and that only with Zubayr's help could he fulfill his orders to withdraw British forces. His conclusion, however, is not based on reason so much as

¹⁰⁶ H.C. Jackson's book notes, based on interviews, and without references, included the following regarding this meeting: "Next day Zubeir says "I felt sure that my enemies had imposed upon you, knowing you could not read Arabic, and had shown you some Arabic paper saying it was a letter from me to my son. I am glad that this incident has occurred and that I am cleared of a disgraceful insinuation. We are now friends again, I give you my hand on it and I am you slave for life and will do anything you wish." After heartily shaking Zubair's hand, Gordon then...turned to those assembled and said "I wish Zubeir Pasha to come with me to Sudan." SAD 245/3/22.

¹⁰⁷ House of Commons Papers, 1884, vol 88, section Egypt #11, p.38, No. 33.

¹⁰⁸ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, 459.

his mystical feeling about Zubayr. “I cannot exactly say why I feel towards him thus;” Gordon explains, “and I feel sure that his going would settle the Soudan affairs to the benefit of H.M. Gov't and I would bear the responsibility of recommending it.”¹⁰⁹

Gordon and Stewart left Cairo for Khartoum on the night of January 26. Of that evening, Cromer writes, “I was not relieved of my doubts which I originally entertained as to the wisdom of employing [Gordon]. Manifestly, in spite of many fine and attractive qualities, he was even more eccentric than I had originally supposed. However, the die was cast. A comet of no common magnitude had been launched on the political firmament of the Soudan.”¹¹⁰

Cromer’s statement that “the die was cast” on that afternoon represents not merely the relationship of Zubayr and Gordon, but, it seems, the beginning of the death throes of the old political order. The Mahdist victory a year later sealed that fate.

Mahdist Victory, Gordon’s Death

Exactly a year from the date that he met with Zubayr in Cairo, Gordon was killed by invading Mahdist forces in Khartoum, and Gladstone was largely blamed for the death of this national hero. Gladstone’s attempt to limit his involvement in Sudan came back to haunt him.

Gladstone’s moniker Grand Old Man was popularly reversed after Gordon’s death to Murderer of Gordon, though of course the story was much more complicated. British influence in the Nile Valley was not through a uniform program of Britain to conquer Egypt in the nineteenth century. Britain hardly had a unified attitude toward Egypt. In the period of Zubayr’s youth, Britain’s political system underwent dramatic change from a Whig/Tory division to a

¹⁰⁹ Zebehr Pasha v. General Gordon 25 January 1885, British Library Add 51301ff150-155.

¹¹⁰ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol i, 460.

Liberal/Conservative one, creating what would be the Disraeli/Gladstone/Salisbury rivalry of the central part of the Zubayr story. The issues of free trade and empire were central to this change, as was the transformation of the franchise. Whigs had supported a strong empire to enforce newly won abolition throughout the empire. The new Liberal party grew to encourage a more limited imperial role, seeing the empire more as an enforcer of economic interests than of human rights. The Tories had wanted no part as global enforcers of virtue, but the Conservatives who succeeded them wanted global business opportunities.¹¹¹

Egyptian and Sudanese conquests and the crises of the 1880s were part of the larger political movement of late nineteenth-century British imperial politics and the governments of Benjamin Disraeli (1868 and 1874-80) and William Gladstone (1868-74 and 1880-86). The ascendancy of Disraeli and imperial expansion can be seen as part of the zeitgeist of the Scramble for Africa, though it is both geographically wider and more specific to British politics. Disraeli's expansion was in direct opposition to Gladstone's attempts toward balanced budgets and reduced empire, a small England, and particularly fewer of what he called Disraeli's "jingoistic adventures" to such places as Afghanistan, South Africa, and Sudan.¹¹²

This led him to a tight position in 1880 when he took back the government after six years of imperial expansion under Disraeli.¹¹³ Gladstone had to choose to abandon costly colonies to possible anarchy or sacrifice his principles.

Gladstone beginning in 1881 gained the popular moniker GOM, Grand Old Man, which was very conveniently reversed by Tory opinion in 1885 to MOG, Murderer Of Gordon. While at

¹¹¹ This seems a remarkably similar transformation to that of traditional conservatives to neo-conservatives in late twentieth century American politics.

¹¹² Gladstone quote from his Midlothian speeches in 1879.

¹¹³ Crangle, "English Nationalism and British Imperialism in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli, 1868-1880."

the time Gladstone had been much more concerned with Irish home rule, the issue of Gordon's death became critically harmful to Gladstone's reputation.¹¹⁴

That debacle hit its climax in February 1884, when it became clear both that Gordon followed orders from no mortal, and that Gladstone, teetering as he was owing to Ireland, depended on Gordon's success for any hope of staying in office.

After letting the January 26 meeting inspire Gordon as to Zubayr's trustworthiness, Gordon wrote his singular memorandum on February 18. After acknowledging that his original orders had been to withdraw "whites, fellahin, troops, civilian employees, women and children of deceased soldiers" from Khartoum, he began his rhetorical offensive: "to withdraw without being able to place a successor in my seat, would be the signal for general anarchy throughout the country, which though all Egyptian element was withdrawn, would be a misfortune, and inhuman." He argued that a replacement would have to be supported by a government to be effective, that the Ottoman Empire was weak and ineffective, and that Egypt was ruled by an intrigue-prone clique that would continue to abuse Sudan to its own advantage. Therefore, he argued, HMG was the only government that could effectively intervene. Since Britain "could do without responsibility in money or men," per empire on the cheap, Sudan could be analogous to the contemporary situation in Afghanistan, where Britain was giving "moral support" to the Emir and even giving him a subsidy, which Gordon thought would be unnecessary in Sudan. "H. M. Gov't would thus be giving nominal and moral support to a man who will rule over a slave state, but so is Afghanistan, as also Socotra."¹¹⁵ If Britain was already supporting states that supported slavery, no additional hypocrisy should follow by doing so in Sudan. In fact, Gordon argued, like

¹¹⁴ Matthew, *Gladstone*, 148.

¹¹⁵ Socotra is an island off of the coast of Yemen, under British protection from 1876, part of Yemen since 1967.

Socotra, keeping Sudan British would be a useful means of monitoring the Hajj in Mecca and on Egypt, though Gordon did not explicitly mention the Suez Canal.¹¹⁶

“As for the man” to be enthroned in Sudan, Gordon’s declaration continued, “H. M. Gov’t should select one above all others, namely Zobeir. He alone has the ability to rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the Soudan. He should be made K.C.M.G.,¹¹⁷ and given presents.” The terms of his nomination would be first that Zubayr’s rule would not extend into Bahr al-Ghazal, Equatoria, or Darfur. While it might be seen as ironic that Zubayr would not rule Bahr al-Ghazal, Gordon understood the tension between south and west Sudan and Khartoum (and his vision of a Sudan ruling neither Darfur nor south Sudan has not yet even today come entirely into fruition). Zubayr would also not rule over Suakin; would maintain peace with Ethiopia; would not pursue “anyone,” meaning Romolo Gessi, for suppressing his son’s revolt; would telegraph the height of the Nile annually to Cairo for a token payment; would not levy import or export duties over 4%; and “any other clauses as seem fit.” Gordon concluded with his newfound philosophy of why Zubayr was trustworthy and would save the Sudan from ruin:

Zobeir’s exile at Cairo for 10 years amidst all the late events and his mixing with Europeans must have had great effect on his character, and convinced him, if he had not known it before, of the corrupt nature of the Khedival Government. Zobeir’s nomination under the moral countenance of Her Majesty’s Government would bring all merchants, European and others, back to the Soudan in a short time.¹¹⁸

Stewart wrote Baring the following day in support for Gordon’s ideas, though with considerably less enthusiasm: “As to whether Zobeir Pasha is the man who should be nominated.

¹¹⁶ Gordon at Khartoum telegram to Baring, Feb 18, 1884, FO 78 4194.

¹¹⁷ Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, the preeminent ceremonial knighthood appointment for those working for the British empire overseas. Cannadine, *Orientalism*, 86.

¹¹⁸ Gordon at Khartoum telegram to Baring, Feb 18, 1884, FO 78 4194.

I think we have hardly yet a sufficient knowledge of the country to be able to form an opinion. It is however probable, whoever is nominated will be accepted for a time.”¹¹⁹ Stewart’s view then corresponded more with Baring’s, which was to agree with Gordon that Zubayr was at the very least a temporary bulwark against the Mahdi.

Baring wrote to Granville, also on the day following Gordon’s memorandum, that he agreed to installing Zubayr but not to trusting him. He agreed that Zubayr was the only man for the job, and that slavery would go on regardless of anything the British could do. Baring agreed with Gordon that after living in Cairo, Zubayr “understands what European power is, and it is much better to have to deal with a man of this sort than with a man like the Mahdi.” Baring added that he would be very opposed to Zubayr arriving in Khartoum before Gordon left. “I am quite certain,” he wrote, “that Zobeir feels a bitter hatred against [Gordon] and that he is very vindictive.” Baring also added that Zubayr “is exceedingly untruthful and is sure to pervert the meaning of any ambiguous expressions” in an agreement. Indeed, Baring expected Zubayr would ignore any written conditions of an agreement. Despite these strong words against Zubayr, Baring reluctantly supported installing Zubayr, but not promising him British “moral support” because Zubayr would “scarcely understand the meaning of the phrase.”¹²⁰

Meanwhile the press was not yet fully aware of Zubayr’s importance to Gordon. In February 1884, the *Contemporary Review* included an extensive section on Soudan and Gordon, but the only mention of Zubayr was in reference to Valentine Baker at El Teb near Suakin being

¹¹⁹ Stewart at Khartoum to Baring, Feb 18, 1884, FO 78 4194.

¹²⁰ Baring at Cairo to Granville 19 February 1884, FO 78 4194.

“reinforced by part of Zobeir Pasha’s niggers, who look like fighting, but are untrained...though they may make soldiers in time.”¹²¹

Baring had a great understanding of the situation, but his understanding led to such a delicate course of action that it was hard for Gordon or Granville to understand it. What would it mean for the British government to install someone to lead a country but deny him financial or moral support? That seems to not be genuine installation. Baring suggested barely installing Zubayr, so as not to be a moral or financial burden on Britain. Zubayr either would be a slightly preferable ruler to the Mahdi, or would be an opposition to weaken the Mahdi. Notably Baring did not mention the possibility of Zubayr taking sides with the Mahdi. In this, he agreed with Gordon where few in London did.

Baring was at the fulcrum of this debate. Stewart and Gordon counted on Baring to relay their opinions to Granville, and Granville relied on Baring’s interpretations. Baring’s interpretation of Zubayr did not change: he did not oppose appointing Zubayr to rule Sudan, but he was not strongly for it either. Baring did not like the alternative, but he did not trust Zubayr. What would come to haunt this conversation was conspicuously absent from Gordon’s extended declaration, but had been mentioned by Baring to Granville more than a month earlier, on December 9: that Zubayr would likely antagonize public opinion in Britain. The way Baring understood it, influencing MPs and journalists was not Baring’s job but Granville’s. Baring’s job was running his part of the empire, and his was not an elected position. Even if his policies could lose the government for the Liberals, Baring would likely have continued to support Zubayr to

¹²¹ “Sunday Review” (*Contemporary Review*, Feb. 2, 1884) 277.

rule Sudan as the lesser of two evils, but he did not feel strongly enough to put his neck out for it.¹²²

Radical Liberal Charles Dilke and the aristocratic ambitious Conservative Randolph Churchill debated Zubayr briefly on February 14 in the House of Commons. “We interfered to stop Zebehr Pasha,” Dilke admitted, in response to Churchill’s having attacked the Liberals “for having weakened General Baker's hands by stopping the employment of Zebehr Pasha, a most notorious Slave Trade advocate.”¹²³

The Conservative position was at least somewhat formed in opposition to Gladstone rather than on ideology. Salisbury on March 6 in the House of Commons exclaimed

I confess that I do regard with some surprise the acquiescence of the Government in the appointment of this man, Zebehr Pasha, to the government of the Soudan. But how is it possible that the Natives of Egypt shall believe in the sincerity of a Government in destroying the Slave Trade, when they first issue an ambiguous Proclamation regarding Slavery, and then give power to the man who, of all others, is most associated with that Trade?

Perhaps Salisbury’s overstated ingenuousness belied his hollow opposition.

Gladstone spoke directly but delicately on February 29 to the issue of Zubayr in Commons in answer to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff asking if Zubayr would be sent:

What [Wolff] asks is, whether the Egyptian authorities intend to appoint Zebehr Pasha Governor of Khartoum? My reply is that no arrangement has been made with respect to the Governorship of Khartoum, from which, at present, General Gordon—the person in authority—is conducting the great operations with which he is charged. Until the arrangements have been made, it is inclusively implied in that statement that no intention

¹²² British unwillingness to help suppress the Mahdi to a very limited extent revolved around British-Ottoman-Egyptian relations. The British choice not to be involved against the Mahdi was seen at least in certain circles as one of deference for the Sultan, since the Mahdia was a Muslim movement and the Sultan was caliph. (‘Abbas Hilmi, *The Last Khedive of Egypt*, 210). A Gladstone administration with its Little England pledges would find this a convenient logic. Tawfiq knew Egypt alone could do little against the Mahdi, being hardly sovereign within Egypt, and he knew the Sultan could also do little, so his only hope was British.

¹²³ HC Deb 14 February 1884 vol. 284 cc965.

has been formed by the authorities that Zebehr Pasha or anyone else should be Governor of Khartoum.¹²⁴

Gladstone thus dodged the issue.

There was a felt risk that sending troops to save Gordon could bring down Gladstone's government. Gallagher and Robinson argue that Gordon's "fate became entangled in the Liberals' disagreement about Egypt's future...The occupation was wrecking party unity," and they quote Northbrook's diary: "Question of immediate steps for consideration of expenditure to support Gordon deferred...I think Government will probably break up."¹²⁵

In its March issue, just as Gordon was beginning to be hemmed into Khartoum, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* printed not only a cover story on Zubayr but the entire agreement of the 1877 convention to eliminate slavery in Egypt and Sudan. The BFASS had a coherent logic: since Zubayr had been a slaver he would always be a slaver, and since slavery was outlawed slavers were outlawed, therefore Zubayr was outlawed.

The cover article began by calling Gordon's decision to employ Zubayr as "other than wise and unfortunate" considering Gordon's longstanding crusade against slavery. The article quoted in its entirety a BFASS letter to Granville stating their position:

The committee expresses no opinion on the policy of a permanent maintenance of British authority at Khartoum; but they earnestly hope that, in the event of Her Majesty's Government making an arrangement for its independent rule, the conditions will be such as shall secure the country alike from a reign of anarchy and barbarism, and from that of the Slave-trader.

The BFASS position is thus clearly in contrast with Gordon's. Gordon felt his choice was between anarchy and Zubayr. The BFASS felt that the choice of Zubayr was tantamount to

¹²⁴ HC Deb 29 February 1884 vol. 285 cc238-9.

¹²⁵ Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 141, quoting Sir Bernard Mallet, Thomas George Earl of Northbrook, G.C.S.I.: *A Memoir*, 186.

anarchy. The BFASS did not stop at stating their “lack of opinion” however, but followed it with a veiled threat toward the Gladstone administration: “The committee are unanimous in the feeling that the countenance in any shape of such an individual [as Zubayr] by the British Government would be degradation for England and a scandal to Europe.” Such scandal, not necessarily to Europe but to the British public, was the power that the BFASS had.¹²⁶

Once Gordon declared his plan to install Zubayr, the BFASS was in a delicate position, having been loud supporters of Gordon to that point. “I really do not know what to say about Gordon,” Charles Allen, BFASS chairman, wrote to Edmund Sturge, former BFASS chairman, on March 15, 1884. “I feel quite decided that the appointment of Zeubehr is a mistake,” and “Gordon ought to remain himself.” The very delicate language by these lobbyists that Gordon “ought to remain himself” evolved into Gordon as having lost his sense, and furthermore, Allen worried that Gordon’s lack of sense would spread: “I have been sorry to see the Pall Mall a little veering round to accept Zeubehr...Almost anything rather than that.” Furthermore, Allen decided that since Gladstone had not yet spoken out against Gordon’s request for Zubayr, “Mr. Gladstone seems to be afraid to face the question.” In the logic of BFASS leaders, Gladstone was weak not to speak out against Zubayr, and Gordon was crazy to suggest him.¹²⁷

In March, even while Gordon was being hemmed into Khartoum, and his pleas for Zubayr were clear, Zubayr’s name was just beginning to get more press attention. The press, it seems, like many in Parliament, were slow to realize the gravity of Gordon’s situation, largely because Gordon himself was slow to realize it. On March 8, when Wolseley had won the second battle of Teb against Mahdist forces led by Osman Digna near Suakin, the *Saturday Review* first

¹²⁶ *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, March 1884, p.45.

¹²⁷ Allen to Sturge, March 15, 1884, BFASS archives at Oxford.

mentioned “a suggestion that the great slave-hunter and filibuster Zobeir (certainly and without any irony a very capable person) shall be appointed Governor by the Power which has formally abdicated government, and with the information that General Gordon expects a servile war in the country in the country within a twelve-month” calling this a “cheerful *pot pourri* of contradictory evil tidings.”¹²⁸ On March 15, the *Saturday Review* finally considered Gordon’s “paeans of victory” to be false and that “it is clear that he must have some kind of support at Khartoum.”¹²⁹ On March 22, the *Saturday Review* saw another irony in the policy, that “It is now announced positively, though not officially, that the Government will not assent to General Gordon’s request for Zobeir as a *diadochus*. Considering that the Government asserted and reiterated that he went out with full commendation of importance, and that they have refused it, the complete darkness which rests upon their policy and intentions can only be said to have become still more palpable.”¹³⁰

By March, Gordon was increasingly desperate, arguing that his primary mission was impossible without Zubayr. “The sending of Zubayr means the extraction of the Cairo employees from Khartoum, and the garrisons from Sennar and Kassala. I can see no possible way to so except through him.” To deaf ears, Gordon repeated his plea that slavery was unavoidable: “As for slave-holding, even had we held the Soudan, we could never have interfered with it.” Similarly, to accusations that Zubayr might side with the Mahdi, Gordon took a typical contemporary British elite line, arguing that Zubayr was stronger than the Mahdi for his better breeding.

¹²⁸ “Egypt,” *Saturday Review*, London, March 8, 1884, 299.

¹²⁹ “Egypt,” March 22, 1884, 330.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 361.

There is not the least chance of Zubayr making common cause with the Mahdi. Zubayr here would be far more powerful than the Mahdi, and he would make short work of the Mahdi.

The Mahdi's power is that of a Pope, Zubayr's will be that of Sultan. They could never combine.

Zubayr is fifty times the Mahdi's match. He is also of a good family, well known and fitted to be Sultan; the Mahdi, in all these respects, is the exact opposite, besides being a fanatic.

I dare say Zubayr, who hates the tribes, did stir up the fires of revolt, in hopes that he would be sent to quell it. It is the irony of fate that he will get his wish if he is sent up.¹³¹

Zubayr subsequently recalled the situation in the Sudan in nearly identical terms as Gordon. It is entirely possible that Gordon took his logic from Zubayr and vice-versa.

It was also thought that I might join my forces to those of the Mahdi but, as for the Mahdi, I do not think that he was the appointed agent of God for, though God does indubitably speak through the inspiration of His prophets, those days are long since passed away, whereas men who profess to have inherited the divine spirit come and go like geese in the time of heat, while God alone remains unaltering and unaltered.¹³²

Baring wrote Granville on March 9, fully convinced that Zubayr would aid Gordon's orders for evacuation. He articulated in ever-clearer language that slavery was no part of the issue, since the only effective choices were total annexation of Sudan or ignoring slavery:

As regards slavery, it may receive a stimulus from the abandonment of the Soudan, but the dispatch of Zobeir will not affect the question in one way or the other. On this subject no middle course, so far as the Soudan is concerned, is possible. We must either virtually annex the country, which is out of the question, or accept all the inevitable consequences of the policy of Abandonment.

Baring was increasingly concerned for Gordon, but characteristically less for Gordon's personal fate than for the risk of having to send troops. "I am uneasy at the telegrams I receive from Gordon. He evidently thinks that there is considerable risk of his being hemmed in at Khartoum,

¹³¹ House of Commons Papers, 1884, volume 88, p. section Egypt #11, p. 145, enclosure 221.

¹³² al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 86.

and contemplates the dispatch of British troops to release him.”¹³³ It is telling that Baring saw the need for troops in early March and Gladstone did not order troops until June.

Regret over Zubayr was not expressed by Conservatives, however, for on March 25, Randolph Churchill in describing the straits Gordon was in, strongly opposed dispatching “that most abandoned scoundrel, Zebehr, the slave dealer...a wretch whose record and tale of crime could not be surpassed.”¹³⁴ By May, Churchill toned his rhetoric down significantly but still in hindsight did not wish Zubayr had been sent. It was one thing for Churchill to dramatically play party politics, but it was another thing to be seen as callous when a national hero was trapped in a siege.¹³⁵

In April, with Gordon hemmed in, the Egyptian government suddenly felt put upon for the emergency grant they had given Zubayr a month earlier when it looked that he would be sent to Khartoum, and looking at his finances felt generally put upon by Zubayr’s allowance. A year earlier the Egyptian cabinet had agreed that Zubayr’s pension would be LE 2400/year, of which the Government would deposit half in the National Bank of Egypt (LE 100/month) in advance, assuming the other half would come from interest on that half. The idea that the bank should double the Governments’ money via interest hints at the rampant inflation and reckless investment atmosphere of the time.¹³⁶ On April 3, 1884, the Egyptian ministry of finance argued to the Egyptian cabinet that since Zubayr’s pension had been raised by LE 50 in on January 25, 1883 and another 50 on April 26, 1883, and that the Cabinet had granted Zubayr an emergency

¹³³ Sir E Baring at Cairo to Lord Granville. March 9 1884 at 2:50 pm, FO 78 4194.

¹³⁴ HC Deb 25 March 1884 vol. 286 cc759.

¹³⁵ HC Deb 13 May 1884 vol. 288 cc197.

¹³⁶ Note au Conseil des Ministres from President Y. Wahba, 22 June 1918 (written when making final arrangements for his pension after Zubayr’s death). Egyptian National Archives (Dar al-Wathaiq) 0075-019941, dossier 112.19/4.

grant of LE 5000 on March 2, 1884, that Zubayr should, at least as of April 1884, be responsible for his own rent to the Ministry of Railways.¹³⁷

On April 21, one of the last of Gordon's letters was sent through the siege of Khartoum, saying, among other things, "Spy reports Shendy is wrested, if it is taken, it is entirely due to your not sending up Sebehr Pacha." This was Gordon's last mention of Zubayr.

Kitchener was sent to Khartoum in May 1884, where under Sir Evelyn Wood's command he attempted to move against the Mahdi's lines, which had already cut Gordon off, between Khartoum and Aswan. None of these moves succeeded in breaking the stalemate. Finally in August 1884 Stephenson, commander of British troops in Egypt, was ordered by Hartington, Secretary of War to move toward Khartoum for a relief expedition, still five months before Gordon's death, but it did not arrive in time.¹³⁸

Granville took on the issue of slavery in the House of Lords on May 27, responding to an accusation by the Earl of Carnarvon that it was too late to send Zubayr and did the Government regret not sending him, now that troops would be necessary to save Gordon. Granville admitted, "The Government were only deterred from [sending Zubayr] from fear of the Anti-Slavery Society and the Opposition" but that the other Lords were, before the siege of Khartoum was complete, against Zubayr as well. "How many of your Lordships would have followed him [the

¹³⁷ Dar al-Wathaiq 0075-031474.

¹³⁸ Kitchener and Wolseley had a tempestuous relationship since Kitchener had been under Wolseley's command on Cyprus, where Wolseley did not appreciate expense it required for Kitchener to conduct detailed land surveys of Cyprus. Kitchener had previously had a free hand in Palestine where he had conducted detailed surveys, presumably for the Porte and with its permission. Kitchener's hand had been so free in Palestine that he had acted with impunity, having publicly flogged boys for throwing stones in Nablus on the first of November 1877, and had then suggested that the time was already ripe for England to annex Palestine. The following year, Kitchener bristled under Wolseley's command on Cyprus where Wolseley ordered Kitchener to keep his spending in check. Salisbury supported Wolseley, and Kitchener had to keep quiet. (Magnus, *Kitchener, Portrait of an Imperialist*, 20.)

Earl of Wemyss, who had spoken in favor of Zubayr] into the Lobby in favour of Zebehr?”¹³⁹

Granville argued the Government had followed the Anti-Slavery Society against the wishes of Baring and with the wishes of Parliament.¹⁴⁰

In June 1884 the *Contemporary Review* published an extensive interview with “an unnamed “personal friend of General Gordon...unusually well-informed” who felt strongly that Gordon was safe and sound in Khartoum, if cut off from post, (two months after his death), and that if Zubayr had been sent to Khartoum “the first thing he would have done would have been to hang General Gordon.” Without knowing the critical piece of information, that Gordon had failed and died, it was easy for this speaker to feel good about not sending Zubayr and not having risked Zubayr crossing Gordon. With that one piece of information, however, the equation shifted critically. With that piece of information, those of any political stripe looked back and thought it would have been better to have sent Zubayr, since Gordon was dead anyway. The decision to send Zubayr looked very different in hindsight.

Zubayr wrote again to the Egyptian Cabinet on June 4, 1884, explaining that his pension was but a feeble LE 100, since the additional LE 50 was for his family. He reminded the Cabinet that he was owed LE 974,067 from his losses in Sudan, so he deserved at the very least LE 200 until his death. He reminded the Cabinet that just that previous January, Gordon had come to Cairo to send Zubayr to Soudan. He also reminded them that a committee of the most

¹³⁹ HL Deb 27 May 1884 vol 288 cc1453-4.

¹⁴⁰ The Gladstone government might also have simply not been strong enough to push the issue. Conservatives and other imperialist-minded politicians certainly thought of a reduced global presence as a sign of weakness; to the liberal mind releasing Britain of global responsibility was the fulfillment of the imperial dream. Gladstone’s dream was not undoing the work of empire; Gladstone and Liberals saw mature independence movements as the final success of imperialism. The imperial mission was to create nations capable of independent rule, the very existence of independence movements was proof that the imperial mission had been successful, and was no longer necessary. (Fergus Nicoll, *Sword of the Prophet : the Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 2004), 186-7.)

prestigious men of Egypt and England (Nubar, Baring, and Evelyn Wood) had come to together to confirm his loyalty toward Gordon and his poor treatment, and that Gordon had written to the Egyptian government that Zubayr was owed LE 20,000. Zubayr wrote that taking the LE 5000 he had been given from the LE 20,000 and after the debts he already owed to the government, he was still owed LE 9000.¹⁴¹ On June 14, 1884, Moustapha Fahmy, President of the Railways, wrote to the administration saying that it would be best if they could pay the rent on Zubayr's house from May 1881 to November 1883, considering the letter of 31 January 1884 to have agreed to that.¹⁴²

On July 22, 1884, Gordon's brother Sir Henry Gordon, convinced that installing Zubayr was the best hope for the fate of his brother, communicated this to Gladstone directly. On July 22, Henry Gordon met with Granville and was convinced that the order to send Zubayr should come from Charles Gordon, and they should wait for it. Four days later, on July 26, Henry Gordon met with Lord Selborne, secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who assured him that withdrawal from Khartoum would be imminent. Henry thought installing Zubayr was the best solution to getting his brother out of Khartoum, so he wrote the following day to his brother and to Zubayr. He wrote to Charles, asking him if he still wished "to have Zebehr up. If so," he wrote, "I will manage it," though it is unclear how he would. On the same day, he wrote to Zubayr, asking if he would be willing to go to Khartoum, and under what terms. Zubayr wrote back to him on August 19, misunderstanding, thinking Henry wanted to go to Khartoum, and agreeing to go as well. On September 2, Henry enclosed these correspondences in a letter to Granville. Granville responded two days later that the Cabinet was unlikely to

¹⁴¹ Dar al-Wathaiq 0075-027754.

¹⁴² Dar al-Wathaiq 0075-017672.

approve Zubayr. Though Henry's letter to Zubayr was entirely outside of government channels, Zubayr may have mistaken it for such.¹⁴³

Gladstone finally agreed to send troops before losing office to Salisbury, in June. Wolseley was put in charge of those troops, leaving London on August 31. However, those troops did not leave Cairo to travel to Suakin until January to fight their way to Khartoum. Wolseley either wanted to be sure they were properly prepared, or was stalling those months. Mahdist forces took Khartoum and killed Gordon on January 26, 1885, two days before Wolseley's troops reached the city. British troops withdrew to Suakin, which they kept for the remainder of the Mahdia.

Two of Gordon's letters from the summer of 1884 made it through the blockade. Of one, four copies made it out on scraps of paper, each saying, "We are all well for 4 months longer. Khartoum 13/7/84." The other is extensive, never mentioning Zubayr, but including this postscript:

P.S. Reading over yr telegram 5.5.84 you ask me "to state cause and intention in staying Khartoum, knowing govt means to abandon Soudan", and in answer I say, I stay at Kartoum, because Arabs here shut us up, & will not let us out, I also add that even if the road was open the people would not let me go, unless I gave them some government or took them with me, which I could not do. No one would leave more willingly than I would if it was possible.¹⁴⁴

Whether or not the Mahdist-opposed Arabs of Khartoum would have let Gordon out, he did not feel that he could leave them. Whether Gladstone or Granville expected Gordon to get out, whether Wolseley wanted to bring Gordon out or purposefully delayed his troops, whether Gordon wanted to make himself a martyr or felt his staying would succeed in bringing British

¹⁴³ FO 633 98 Zobeir Correspondence.

¹⁴⁴ H. M. Minister & Nubar Pacha 30.7.84, FO 78/5491, Gordon's Final Correspondence.

troops faster, these are all hotly debated in the literature on Gordon, on Cromer, on Gladstone, and on Wolseley, and is not of particular importance to Zubayr.

What is of importance is that without the possible middle-way of Zubayr, there remained a chasm that was never crossed between Gordon and the Gladstone administration on the true nature of Gordon's mission in Khartoum. That chasm was the chasm between the old style of imperialism, Gordon ruling Sudan loosely with a hollow claim to enforcing abolitionism, and the new style of imperialism promoted by Gladstone: a smaller empire if need be, but an empire ruled more uniformly, more directly, more modernly.

A month after Gordon's death and Mahdist takeover of Khartoum, the *Anthenaeum* mentioned Gordon's pamphlet in February 1885 in a seemingly sarcastic tone. In its "Literary Gossip" column: "One of the late General Gordon's minor contributions to literature is a brief memoir of Zebehr Pasha, which he drew up for the information of the Soudanese. General Gordon caused the memoir to be translated into Arabic, and we believe that copies of it are still in existence. It was written during the General's first administration in the Soudan."¹⁴⁵ It is likely that this is referring to the pamphlet mentioned earlier in this chapter.¹⁴⁶

'Ismat Hasan Zulfo provocatively suggests that the Mahdi ordered Gordon's life be saved specifically to bargain for "two fine men, al-Zubayr and 'Urabi," and it is for this reason only that the Mahdi was angry that Gordon was killed in the battle.¹⁴⁷ Zulfo does not footnote his source for this quote. It suggests that either Zubayr's alliance with the Mahdi is not so easy to dismiss, or that, even if Zubayr, and 'Urabi for that matter, would be resistant to joint he Mahdi,

¹⁴⁵ *Anthenaeum*, February 4, 1885, 217.

¹⁴⁶ Lithographed pamphlet published by Gordon as governor at Khartoum on Dec 6, 1879, on the issues he had with Zubayr and Suleiman. Translation in FO 78 4194, original in Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq, Cairo, microfilm 26582.

¹⁴⁷ Zulfo, *Karari*, 21.

Muhammad Ahmed would have found their fame, if not their knowledge and experience in international politics and military matters useful.

Conclusion

Gordon saw legalized slavery as the lesser evil to messianic political leadership, although he did not use these terms. This opinion makes sense in a military mindset in which inaction can mean death, so the lesser of two evils must be embraced. It made sense in the frontier region that Sudan was in 1880, and Gordon saw Sudan as still in that frontier stage. Gladstone, however, pushed to avoid this frontier mentality and replace it with more uniform governance. With the Anti-Slavery Society organizing demonstrations and newspaper articles publicly calling Zubayr a slave trader, the administration had to work toward the ideals for which they were elected, even if they were not in the broader economic or abolitionist interests of the empire. One might claim that the government made excuses for an inaction taken out of economic desperation. One might also say that the government was able to embrace democracy to its logical extent: that a people can vote for ideals above their own self-interest.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Gordon and T.E. Lawrence taught liberty with the thought that they had the unerring backing of the British government; both taught the leaders with whom they lived that they deserved independence and that the British would support them in this. Gordon and Lawrence preached ideals to justify their conquest and rule of foreign lands perhaps to a dangerous extent. Lawrence would later be ignored by the administration after his promises to the Hashemites. Gordon was ignored by the administration for wanting to maintain British diplomatic relations in Sudan. Both men encountered the weakness of the British empire at its peak.

Chapter 5: Retirement 1888-1913

I shall miss the fine old man greatly; he was a much misunderstood and much abused man, but undoubtedly he was far ahead of his time and, if the truth were known, did more to suppress the slave trade than any of our Anti-Slave Trade people at home – what a shock such a statement would be if made publicly and yet there is a great deal of truth in it. –Sir Reginald Wingate on Zubayr ¹

Taking away the slaves is associated with money...a fixed labour wage will have to be made throughout the districts. -Zubayr Pasha ²

Zubayr returned to Cairo from Gibraltar in August of 1887, stayed in Cairo until 1900, and then traveled back and forth between Khartoum and Cairo, finally settling down in Geili near Khartoum, where he died in 1913. This chapter follows chronologically after chapter 1, and continues through the fall of the Mahdist government in 1898 and well into the British-Egyptian Condominium government in Sudan (1898-1956).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first argues that Zubayr's memory persisted in the British imagination long after he was freed from Gibraltar. The second argues that once again around the Fashoda crisis Zubayr nearly had an opportunity for empowerment. The third argues that Zubayr became a trusted advisor to Reginald Wingate, who headed the Sudan Political Service, right up to Zubayr's death. Together these go to prove that while Zubayr was not wealthy nor did he have great powers, through the end of his life both his reputation and himself continued to exert influence.

¹ Wingate to Acland in London, January 21, 1913, SAD 185/1/197.

² Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories*, 147.

The end of Zubayr's life suggests that the new more uniform and more direct style of imperialism, which developed eventually into statehood, found a way to integrate the older looser forms. Slavery continued to be a sticking point for Wingate and the Anglo-Egyptian regime, and he learned, rather than getting caught up in it as Gordon and Zubayr did, to quietly free slaves complaining of mistreatment and otherwise try not to rock the boat of slave-based social relations, a more uniform policy. The last attempt by French and British forces to engage Zubayr in Fashoda incident-related issues shows how the new imperialism, with clearer physical borders, had superseded the model of a wide and vaguely-defined frontier region. Finally, the persistence of Zubayr as a dramatic figure in Britain's public memory, after he was returned to Cairo to merely gripe about money, shows that with the transition to modern imperialism, frontier imperialism stayed on in romantic nostalgia.

Diplomatic records from London and Cairo on Zubayr in this period deal mostly with three themes: Zubayr's finances, tensions leading to the Fashoda crisis, and slavery under the Condominium government. Three moments in this period led to new public examinations of Zubayr: 1887, 1908, and 1913. Eighteen eighty-seven, in a carryover from chapter 1, saw some new considerations of Zubayr with Flora Shaw's article and his return to Cairo. Cromer published *Modern Egypt* in 1908, which led to a revival in consideration of the Gordon-Zubayr crisis, which prompted Sydney Low and Lord Ribblesdale and others to publish new reconsiderations of Zubayr. H.C. Jackson published *Black Ivory* in 1913, during Zubayr's last year, and on Zubayr's death Wingate finally discussed how useful Zubayr had been to the Condominium government.

Three books were published in this period, each of which gave a very different perspective on Zubayr: Cromer's *Modern Egypt*, William St. Clair's *Zobeir*, and Babikr Bedri's

memoirs. While Zubayr's life in Cairo after Gibraltar was fairly uneventful, his public image grew in peculiar ways.

Once Zubayr was integrated into the Anglo-Egyptian imperial mission, his role was transformed from competitor to ally in the imperial race. The true enemy of empire and civilization, the case of Zubayr seems to say, was not barbarity or paganism or ignorance, but rather competing visions of empire and civilization. More, the definitions of sides in this competition were constantly changing and overlapping. Imperialist expansion into Sudan was more aligned with African traditions of rule than European, in the sense that empires overlapped and were concentric. Darfur was and was not independent of British-Egyptian Sudan, and Zubayr was and was not part of the British-Egyptian Sudanese administration.³

Though the British empire did expand dramatically in the 1880s and 1890s, "it is not altogether clear why, because Britain never had a long-term plan for expansion." Not only did the British government not have a plan for expansion, empire was not widely encouraged within the government. "There is even evidence of anti-imperial sentiment among politicians in the mid-Victorian period. Governments of all shades shared the irritation voiced by Disraeli when he referred to colonies as 'millstones around our neck.'" ⁴ While enthusiasm for empire went through cycles, enthusiasm for keeping other imperial powers out of Sudan was easier to come by. After the tensions around the Fashoda crisis, and the movement of Ethiopian, French, and even Congolese forces into the Khalifa's crumbling domains, Kitchener's attack was more to defend against the encroachment of other empires than to expand British power.

³ Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 35–9.

⁴ Martin Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain, 1870-1997*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 112.

Salisbury, who was Foreign Minister while he was Prime Minister from 1887 to 1892 and 1895 to 1900, had different motivations for empire than Gladstone. Gladstone may have already envisioned an empire “something like the institution that in the twentieth century was called the British Commonwealth,” and was frustrated that his government kept being sucked into quagmires like Gordon’s. Gladstone’s view, a popular one in Britain, was that the British people were weary of empire long before the 1880s, and it was troublemakers on the edges of empire, like Gordon, that were slowing the process of the empire evolving. Gladstone not only had to deal with the public outcry about Gordon, but he had to deal with the Queen’s constant anger over his lack of spine for imperial conquest.⁵ The empire was ready to evolve, and it was because of shortsighted subordinates like Lytton and Gordon that it was so slow to do so as to incur anti-imperial rebellions. Politicians who sought extended empire, such as Rosebery and Chamberlain were both part of the problem and part of the solution, expanding British control, but at the same time envisioning British control as a federated economic and political union.⁶

Salisbury, reacting to growing European tensions, thought of empire as a venue for European nations to play out a struggle for dominance without risking the lives of large numbers of Europeans. If giving Germany what would become German East Africa meant the good will of Bismarck, that loss of status and what little economy was there made a worthwhile trade to Salisbury. The scramble for Africa, in this sense, had little to do with Africa per se; instead, it was a diplomatic proxy war. Salisbury may have had somewhat of a change of heart about empire, at least in terms of Turkey, when, in the 1890s, he began to support new Balkan nation-

⁵ David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 137.

⁶ Pugh, *State and Society*, 112–4.

states rather than playing the empire game of supporting the Ottomans to slow the growth of Russia and Austria-Hungary.⁷

Joseph Chamberlain, Salisbury's colonial secretary, promoted imperialism to avoid class tensions among Britons.⁸ These different frameworks aside, both Pugh and Parsons argue that the empire was hardly the main issue of the day in British politics or in British society. Though from the periphery of empire the empire seems to dominate politics, from the metropole, it is one among a group of issues, and imperial policy was heavily impacted by changes in perceptions at home, which might have had little to do with the empire itself: Europeans shuffled African borders to calm European tensions. Empire was promoted to calm the tensions between rich and poor Britons. Cecil Rhodes famously argued that the purpose of empire was to "save the forty million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war."⁹

Tensions between groups in Britain would not be calmed by knowing that Zubayr Pasha, the slave king, was working hand-in-hand with Sir Reginald Wingate. Zubayr continued to play on the British imagination, so Wingate did his best to keep his relationship with Zubayr quiet until Zubayr's death. Wingate's efforts to keep his relationship with Zubayr and the extent of slavery in Sudan quiet, show that a new form of imperialism had taken over. Wingate's more direct control over Sudan did not allow for Gordon's dramatic claim of having done away with slavery, nor the empowering of slave traders. Rather, this new imperialism reduced the power vacuum of the frontier by gradually establishing effective state structures. As Zubayr had argued, the most effective means of reducing slavery was to enforce a minimum wage: "Taking away the

⁷ Ibid., 109, 116.

⁸ Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914*, 23. Porter "Empire, What Empire?"

⁹ Alamin M. Mazrui and Willy Mutunga, *Debating the African Condition: Governance and Leadership* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2004), 20.

slaves is associated with money... Later on you English may be able by degrees to do away with the present custom, but... *a fixed labour wage will have to be made* throughout the districts.”¹⁰ Zubayr’s understanding of the frontier was useful for confronting it. Zubayr had worked to establish state structures in his small empire in Bahr al-Ghazal, just as Wingate did in Sudan generally after 1898. Slavery was, to Zubayr, a symptom of a lack of state structure. Once he better understood the British perspective while on Gibraltar, Zubayr decided that the English focus on abolition confused symptom with disease: it was not, in Zubayr’s understanding, slavery that kept civilization (state structures, fixed wages) from being established, but rather the lack of those state structures that kept slavery from being abolished. Thus, Zubayr, in both trying to understand and justify, argued that by controlling and taming the slave trade he could most effectively reduce it.

In Egypt and in Memory

Zubayr’s life and reputation continued to take diverging paths after his return from Gibraltar. His name and rough versions of his story began to inspire dramatic fictional tales in Britain, while his relations with the Egyptian state consisted of complaining about small amounts of money. This section will tie those two disparate narratives together with the development of the new political relationship between the British and Egyptian states between 1887 and 1913. The following sections will particularly discuss Zubayr’s relationship with the Fashoda incident and with the Condominium government.

These two disparate narratives demonstrate that Zubayr represented the growing pains of the new imperialism. The new imperialism was more directly responsible for iniquities in places

¹⁰ Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories*, 147. Italics mine. See longer quote in appendix.

it ruled; it was not merely a spreading of influence. This new imperialism could not trust local actors who were of a foreign mentality, and Zubayr's mentality was challenging to understand.

The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society still harbored great ill will toward Zubayr, even in 1887. Their journal, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, reported on his departure from Gibraltar: "YESTERDAY, Says REUTER's telegram, ZEBEHR PASHA was released from captivity on the Rock of Gibraltar; the renowned, or notorious, Slave King pledging himself, with signed document, to behave properly for the future." The *Anti-Slavery Reporter* continued in this article to express the BFASS condescension toward Islam, Zubayr, and Arab society, caricaturing Zubayr's physical appearance and arguing that Muslims could not be trusted even when swearing over a Quran. Most of interest here is their dismissal of Zubayr's argument that the slave trade could not be effectively outlawed until replaced by other economic forces:

[Zubayr] held that the Slave-trade would flourish until the day came when Central Africa would be freely opened to the merchandise of Europe, and he expatiated, pretty eloquently, on the delight it would give him to be the means of substituting trade in piece goods for trade in "black ivory" –the Slave dealers' slang expression for their human chattels. But he would be a credulous person who believed that ZEBEHR, if he had his way in the Soudan, would prefer the humdrum occupation of a merchant in dry goods to the excitement of a man hunt.¹¹

The final argument that the BFASS seems to have rested on concerning Zubayr being untrustworthy was that they felt that the power and wealth of economic conquest would not be satisfying enough for someone like Zubayr, tainted by the thrill of slaving.

Zubayr was allowed to return to Cairo in 1887 after the Mahdist state seemed to have been stabilized, with British forces having kept coastal regions and Aswan, and Mahdist forces having kept the rest of Sudan. While the Mahdia, harnessing xenophobic anger, was able to

¹¹ "Zebehr Pasha: A Day with Our Slave King," *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (August 1887): 140–1. Quoted from *Echo*, 4 August [1887?].

conquer Sudan, the movement struggled to turn that anger into an effective state bureaucracy. At the death of Muhammad Ahmed in June 1885, the movement was replaced by a successor, the *khalifa*, under a state of continual revolution and terror. With his increasing power in Cairo, Baring felt that he could keep an eye on Zubayr, and that even if he should escape to Sudan, he was unlikely to disturb the existing equilibrium to the detriment of British interests. Baring, titled Earl of Cromer in 1892, continued to act as de jure advisor and de facto ruler over Egypt until 1906, and continued to see Zubayr as only a minor nuisance accumulating debts and burdening the finances of the Egyptian state.

Meanwhile, the Mahdist state quickly declined under the burdens of devastating drought, isolation, inexperienced administration, and continual border wars with forces caught up in the scramble for Africa: British, Ethiopians, French, and Belgians, along with subject provinces attempting to break away. Tensions between those forces, particularly French and British, came to a head in the Fashoda crisis in 1898, but had been growing since 1890. Bahr al-Ghazal figured prominently in these tensions. Throughout the 1890s, it was semi-independent and under the leadership of Sultan Zemio, mentioned in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Through Zemio and other means, Zubayr had an opportunity to involve himself once again in local politics.¹²

Beginning in 1887, Zubayr faded from the British and Egyptian public and bureaucratic imagination. He maintained prestige among Sudanese, however, especially Sudanese in Cairo.¹³ Most of the government records in this period relate to his financial matters, and as his claim to roughly a million pounds failed, Zubayr was left living beyond his means and deeply in debt. He was tempted to intrigue himself into politics, but these efforts were unsuccessful in gaining the

¹² Sultan Zemio to Zubayr Rahmat, Dec 1895, SAD 263/1/37 ff.1-77 discussed in detail below.

¹³ Bābakr Badrī, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 110.

attention of Baring or anyone else in British-Egyptian administration. Zubayr, frustrated by mundane family financial straits, took refuge in his hobby of raising horses in Helwan, a small resort town just south of Cairo.¹⁴

Sudan lost somewhere over half of its population during the Mahdist regime due to drought and famine, with limited resources exhausted on its military. Failed battles along the southeastern border with Ethiopia (which eventually empowered Ethiopia under Menelik to threaten conquest of Sudan), along the southern border with Emin Pasha's forces, and along the southwestern border with French forces left the Mahdia hemmed in and debilitated, making a mockery of its previous ambitions of redemptive expansion.¹⁵

Between 1890 and 1898, tensions grew that came to a head in the Fashoda crisis. These tensions concerned the imploding Mahdist state and the scramble for its territory by Belgian, French, Italian, and British forces. Zubayr tried to revive his fortunes in this growing tension by using his personal connections and knowledge to aid the British hand with the hope that it would help him curry favor. Zubayr's relationship with King Tikma's son Zemio, who had become sultan of a somewhat independent Bahr al-Ghazal, was potentially useful to the British to gaining a foothold in that region over the French.

British-Egyptian forces retook Khartoum and Sudan between 1896 and 1898, and set up a unique shared colony, a Condominium government, with British and Egyptian flags side by side wherever they flew, but with Egypt supplying the majority of the funds and manpower and Britain supplying the majority of the leadership and decision-making. Once this government was

¹⁴ After a train line was built between Cairo in Helwan around the time Zubayr lived there, it became increasingly considered a suburb of Cairo, particularly when fifteen stations were added to that train line and it became the first line of the Cairo Metro in 1987. Helwan was best known when Zubayr was there for thermal sulfuric baths, and is best known today for a large public Japanese garden with hundreds of Buddha statues, built between World War I and World War II.

¹⁵ Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan*, 147-155.

stable, Zubayr was allowed to travel freely between Khartoum and Cairo, and he settled down after 1905 in Geili, the family home where he was born, 30 miles north of Khartoum, where he continued to focus on equestrian concerns. However, Condominium rule of Bahr al-Ghazal and control of the slave trade were tenuous, and so Zubayr was kept close to Khartoum ostensibly to advise administrators but also to keep him out of trouble.

After years of legalized slavery under the Mahdia, the Condominium government was tasked with abolition as one of its main goals. After a frustrated half-century of British pressure toward abolition in Sudan, Sir Reginald Wingate, then governor-general of the Condominium, found the task of enforcing abolition in Sudan to be a serious challenge, even with direct control. This was not for lack of understanding of the issue: after having helped lead the failed Gordon rescue mission, Wingate spent the Mahdia working on intelligence on Sudan and then was governor of Suakin. In the final years of Zubayr's life, he became a friend and trusted advisor to Wingate on issues of slavery, abolition, and Bahr al-Ghazal, and Wingate remembered the slave king as the most useful tool he had in the fight against slavery.

The story of Zubayr Pasha in this period becomes diffuse. Zubayr was not active in his career, and biographers and historians before me have covered these fifteen years of his life in a short sentence or less: "After that Zubayr's life became free of troubles of a political nature, a well-deserved calm for a man worn out from political and military events over a long period of his life."¹⁶ 'Iz al-Din Ismail, Zubayr's most recent biographer, summarizes Zubayr's entire experience after his return from Gibraltar in these words, despite evidence of Zubayr's anxiety at such rest. Zubayr did take to the social life of Cairo, but the record shows he was constantly

¹⁶ Ismā'īl, *al-Zubayr Bāshā wa-Dawruhu Fī al-Sūdān Fī 'Aṣr Al-ḥukm al-Miṣrī (Zubayr Pasha and His Role in the Sudan During the Period of Egyptian Rule)*, 273.

frustrated by his financial concerns and lack of adventure or political opportunity offered him, particularly in such a dramatically dynamic period in the development of his birth country. This was, however, exactly the objective of the British and Egyptian political administrators who kept Zubayr under watch and house arrest in Cairo. Mahdist Sudan was never particularly politically stable, partly because it was never even remotely economically stable, and Zubayr, it was feared, could still influence Sudan, as he had done with Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur.

The substance of these debates has to do with Zubayr's rights to his property, his pension, his freedom, and a trial. As a subject of the empire,¹⁷ as opposed to a citizen, he did not necessarily have rights to these, though it certainly did not help the cause of the British imperial reputation to deny them to him, and particularly to deny him his property or freedom without a trial. The British civilizing mission, like the Egyptian civilizing mission or Zubayr's civilizing mission in Bahr al-Ghazal, was based on expanding systems of justice as well as expanding economic and educational opportunities. These missions were in competition with one another, however, and eager to suppress competing systems of justice and opportunity. Zubayr was punished not for getting in the way of the imperial project, but for having his own imperial project. France was not the only competition to British control of Africa. Zubayr and the Mahdi were competition as well, and in their time represented perhaps a far bigger threat.

In the period 1888-1913, Egypt's cultural and economic integration with Britain and Europe intensified. British desire to delay the reconquest of Sudan, 'Abbas Hilmi wrote, was attributable to economic considerations. Though British forces had won battles at Suakin and above Aswan in the Nile Valley in 1888-9, continuation of that campaign was postponed, since

¹⁷ In the Condominium period Egyptians and Sudanese must have had different statuses, and I'm not sure which Zubayr's was, or how this might matter.

the original Aswan dam, already in planning in 1888 and constructed between 1899 and 1902, had been the more important goal, and the security of Aswan had been assured. The dam was “a project that interested Great Britain far more” than control of Sudan “because of its quicker, more practical and more certain results, while the Sudan campaign was uncertain and could continue for an indeterminate time. After all, the main priority was that Egyptian agriculture should flourish so that the spinning-mills of Lancashire could be assured of an adequate supply of cotton”¹⁸ and that agricultural exports could help pay off Egypt’s debts. This analysis is a little simplistic, and represents Cromer’s perspective much more than Gladstone’s, but then Abbas Hilmi would have understood British desires through Cromer. Cromer saw his role as maintaining stability and growth in Egypt, for their own ends and to continue debt repayment, and to minimize British costs. Maintaining Egyptian control of Sudan seemed likely to cost more in stability and expenditure than it would gain. Gladstone would have seen the delay as due more to humanitarianism, desire to avoid foreign adventures, and respect for Gordon’s wishes.

As the French and British versions of civilizing missions shared much but argued themselves more civilized than the other, the Egyptian civilizing mission shared much but argued Islam more civilized than Christianity. Europeanizing included much more than hygiene and religion. Egypt considered Sudan simultaneously a colony and part of the homeland, the land part of the land of Egypt but the people not Egyptians. The simultaneous inclusion and rejection of Sudan as part of Egypt has been demonstrated most clearly in the literary realm.¹⁹

Europeanizing was much more than a way to express foreign influence. Ismail wore European dress, organized city infrastructure and city planning and inter-city roads and rail. He

¹⁸ Khedive ’Abbas Hilmi, *The Last Khedive of Egypt: Memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II*, trans. Amira Sonbol, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2006), 213.

¹⁹ Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism*, 14.

did not try to reproduce the movements toward democracy in Western Europe, but rather tried to emulate European old regimes. “Viceregal Egypt under Isma’il was developing a modern form of autocracy.”²⁰ Egypt emulated Europe in creating an empire, but did so under the thumb of an empire. Thirdly, in order to make these comparisons of any real use, a greater discussion of the complexities of British politics toward Egypt is needed.

Before discussions of Zubayr in Egyptian parliament and British press, it should be noted that his reputation grew outside of press and government circles, into two works of fiction published in London in 1899 and 1902, and other the biography of Babikr Bedri, published in Sudan not until 1961, but dealing with Zubayr’s experiences in Cairo in the 1890s.

Babikr Bedri included in his memoirs a story of visiting Zubayr in Cairo that showed Zubayr to be highly respected and even feared among the Sudanese population in Cairo. Bedri was a Sudanese merchant, a Mahdist supporter, and later founded the first women’s college in Sudan, and became known as the father of women’s education in Sudan. Bedri visited Zubayr in Cairo in 1889, giving a sense of the awe with which other Sudanese, if not Egyptians or Europeans, saw Zubayr. Zubayr had married a woman by the name of Baqi in 1888 or early 1889. Baqi had years earlier been Bedri’s wife, and Bedri had been very much in love with her, but had been pressured to divorce her by Baqi’s mother, and had agreed to divorce Baqi on the condition that she marry no one else, with the goal that he would remarry her someday. By 1889 when Bedri learned that his mother-in-law had died, he looked into remarrying his former love, but found out in April 1889 that Zubayr had married Baqi the previous month.

²⁰ Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East*, 30.

Bedri went to meet Zubayr and made a habit of praying at the same mosque in which Zubayr prayed, al-Saida Zaynab,²¹ where the two met on the way out of prayer five days later. Bedri gives a good description of the formality and confidence that Zubayr showed: “[Zubayr] was wearing European clothes with an overcoat, but had a Meccan skull-cap and turban on his head. He had a riding-whip in his hand, with which he struck his thigh as we walked along, his left hand clasping my right.” They sat down together afterward at Zubayr’s home. Bedri denied to Zubayr that he was there to regain his former wife with such vehemence that he refused to take her back from Zubayr out of shame for having to ask for it: “If you will do me a favor, and look upon me as your father,” Zubayr told Bedri “you will let me divorce her and send her to you.” Bedri replied to this, “Your Excellency, when this girl married me she thought that my house was better than her father’s; but now she had entered the house of the Pasha, the greatest of all the Sudanese today. She would not accept me now.” Such posturing continued, Bedri refusing to take his beloved back, until Bedri’s departure for Sudan. Bedri offered to bring many of the Sudanese living in Cairo back to Sudan with him, to help, Bedri said, to replace some of the large numbers of Sudanese decimated through the drought and famine of the Mahdia. A group met Bedri on his departure, among whom was Baqi, having been divorced by Zubayr.²²

Bedri’s experience with Zubayr shows not only the respect with which Zubayr was seen among the Cairene Sudanese community, but the sense of the dramatic that Zubayr’s words and actions imbued, the same charisma that took in Ribblesdale and Shaw, and later Reginald Wingate.

²¹ Al-Saida (Lady) Zaynab remains among the best-known mosques of Cairo today. Named after the granddaughter of the Prophet, who took political refuge in Cairo, it is a popular pilgrimage site, particularly for women seeing Zaynab’s blessing. The neighborhood and metro station near it take its name.

²² Badrī, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, 109–14, 133.

On the other end of public opinion from the way Zubayr was seen by Sudanese in Cairo was the way his name was carved into the British public imagination through a novel based very loosely on his life. In 1899 a novel with the title *Zobeir; or, Turkish Misrule* was published in London by a William St. Clair.²³ This novel helps to explain how Zubayr's name was reflected in popular British consciousness. It might be possible for a popular novel to have been published in the late 1800s in London about a man named Zobeir having nothing to do with our Zubayr, but it is difficult to imagine, particularly as the character of Zobeir, spelled the way Zubayr's name was spelled in the Times and other papers in 1885, is a "slaver and brigand" with English officers out to get him. The Zobeir of the novel is described on the surface as Zubayr was described in press accounts, with the same charisma illustrated by Babikr Bedri: "Zobeir was a person to attract attention, he was young, handsome, dark skinned and well dressed; his air was jaunty and excited a wish to know more about him amongst a naturally inquisitive people." The character is described as having a natural inquisitiveness that had been quelled by British government interference: "Laterly, he had felt that he was not at liberty to rove about the world and follow his trade as he used to do. The English Government had been unusually watchful, and urgent on Foreign Governments to do their utmost to suppress the Slave Trade and Brigandage."²⁴

The character Zobeir, just as the historical Zubayr, was accused of but denied participating in the slave trade: "Many suspected Zobeir of being actively engaged in this odious slave traffic; but, whist many asserted their belief in the true character of Zobeir, others as

²³ The author listed in the book is William St. Clair; the British Library database lists this as a pseudonym for William Ford. William St. Clair is also credited with similarly loosely historical orientalist works of fiction such as *Baja, the Freebooter; Prince Baber and His Wives*; and *The Slave-Girl Narcissus and the Nawab of Lalput*, the last two stories published in one volume.

²⁴ William Saint Clair, *Zobeir, or, Turkish Misrule* (London: Digby, Long & Co, 1899), 31–2.

ardently denied it, too often under the soft pressure of a bribe.” However clearly the protagonist was meant as an allegory of Zubayr, however, the author took extensive liberties to tie the story to orientalist generalizations: “Often Zobeir would disappear for a time; disguises were natural to him, he had been born and bred in an atmosphere of disguise about the Palaces of great men at Constantinople, and being naturally intelligent and gay, he grew, learnt to read and write and ape the carriage of men of breeding and position.” Zobeir was very clearly the historical Zubayr, but at the same time, he most clearly was not, particularly since the historical Zubayr never visited Constantinople, though it is unclear if the author of the novel understood this.²⁵

The story begins with the protagonist in Damascus heading for Baghdad, cities that the historical Zubayr never visited, a road along which Zobeir disguised himself in order to travel beyond the reach of civilized prosecution. “As long as the English would peer about in every nook and corner of the known world, Zobeir felt he must proceed with great caution and veil his illicit proceedings from too curious eyes.”²⁶ Zobeir is appointed governor of Damascus before being killed by a rival for that position. Greed, the novel seems to argue, is what motivated Zobeir. In the Middle East, in the novel presented as a place of searchers after wisdom and truth, Zobeir is presented as corruptly searching only after wealth and power.

It is unclear how popular this novel might have been, or how much about Zubayr the novelist understood, but the fact that a novelist chose to write a novel about *Zobeir; or, Turkish Misrule* shows that in at least one part of the British imagination the misdeeds associated with the name Zubayr was associated with an orientalist view of misrule and the crumbling arbitrary rule of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁵ Ibid., 32–3.

²⁶ Ibid., 49.

A review of the novel *Zobeir* was published by *The Saturday Review* in 1899, lambasting it: “This pointless rigmarole might have been written by a small boy in a Board school,” and mentioning that “the eponymous Zobeir is a slave dealer and we learn that he was handsome though stained with crime,”²⁷ though failing to mention the Zubayr of Gordon fame.

A similar novel published in 1902 in London stars a character named Zobeir: *The Insane Root* by Rosa Campbell Praed, an Australian moved to London. This Zobeir is the Emperor of Arabia, who acts as a puppet-master, since most of the action of the novel is in the Arabian Embassy in London. He maintains a character that seems largely influenced by stories of the character of the historical Zubayr: “Subtle, sensual, deadly in revenge, from the beginning he was my tyrant, even when he adored me and called himself my slave... Emperor or not, Abdululah [sic] Zobeir has the gift of charm. It is no wonder that he can captivate romantic women and secure the fidelity of brave men”²⁸ The novel portrays public impressions of Zubayr mixed in with stereotypes of oriental excess: “The Emperor of Arabia was but another word for Oriental sensualism, Oriental tyranny, Oriental revenge.”²⁹

A review of Praed’s *Insane Root* in *The Bookman* in March 1902 proclaims the wonder of the story for its focus on its title character, the hallucinogenic mandrake root argued to have been referenced in the Bible. The review, however, argues that “the mixing up of the personalities of the hero and the villain is fatiguing...and the manner rather grandiose.” The review does not mention Zobeir or any other human characters by name, but one can read that the author found the novel stimulating for its portrayal of this stimulating root, while the author

²⁷ “Novels,” *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* (August 26, 1899): 274.

²⁸ Campbell Praed, *The Insane Root: A Romance of a Strange Country* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1902), 342.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

found the personality she borrowed from Zubayr, which was in the background of her readership's consciousness, to be a useful tool.³⁰ *The Outlook* also reviewed *The Insane Root* arguing that the root itself was merely a method for retelling a Jekyll and Hyde tale with a new mystical bent, but that "Oriental passion and mysticism are well handled and the events of everyday life at a foreign embassy in London are so used as to give an impression of realism."³¹ As with *The Bookman*, *The Outlook* makes no connection between the Zobeir of the book and that of recent history.³²

The best understanding of the crumbling arbitrary nature of rule and the Eastern Question was probably via Evelyn Baring, the Earl of Cromer, who published his memoir *Modern Egypt* in 1908, two years after stepping down from his post. Cromer's judgment of his own actions, with his usual sobriety, acknowledges the advantage of hindsight. He argues, "reviewing the matter now, after a lapse of many years, I am still of the opinion that Zobeir Pasha should have been employed." Cromer argued that he had been of the opinion to send Zubayr, and that as soon as he came to that conclusion, he was ordered not to follow that course by London. He admitted, however, that "the favorable moment was very fleeting" and he had let discussions take too long. This does not match up with records of what happened on and around January 26, 1884, as I make clear in chapter 4, when Baring went from marginally for sending Zubayr to decidedly against, long before London sent any kind of word on the course he should take. Cromer's change of mind in hindsight seems to have been so great as to change his memory of the event.

³⁰ "Novel Notes," *The Bookman* (March 1902): 213–14.

³¹ "Books of the Week," *The Outlook* (November 8, 1902): 609–614.

³² Also see story with Zobeir character in *The Arabian Droll Stories 1929* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004).

An analysis of Cromer's *Modern Egypt* in *Athenaeum* on March 28, 1908 argued, "It is a little hard on Gladstone and Granville that Lord Cromer should describe their 'vacillation' when they no longer have a chance...of describing his."³³ *Athenaeum* (no author listed) argued that Cromer refused to send Zubayr, suddenly changed his mind in February 1884, and in hindsight wrote in 1908 that he had always been for sending Zubayr. The Gordon fiasco weighed heavily on all involved, and fault was thrown far and wide.

Cromer's final argument on the subject of Gordon and Zubayr was that the decision of the Gladstone government did not present an alternative: "My main objection to the policy of the Government was that, as so often occurred in Egyptian affairs, the British Government confined themselves to criticism on what was proposed without being able to suggest any alternative and less objectionable plan."³⁴ On this as well Cromer seems to remember to his own best image, for he had agreed in 1884 with Gladstone's policy to hold Aswan and allow the Mahdists to try self-rule, though perhaps Cromer found this alternative to be more objectionable than sending Zubayr.

As to the accusation the Government gave in to public opinion, Cromer argues that it was not a matter of abolitionist sentiment, rather was a matter of party politics, of "high party spirit." He argues that Conservative opposition was looking for issues that it could fight against in order to show Gladstone's weakness, and even if a majority of Parliament would have gotten behind sending Zubayr absent party politics, not enough felt strongly enough about the issue to cross party lines. (See chapter 4)³⁵

³³ "Modern Egypt (second notice)" (*Athenaeum*, March 28, 1908), 377.

³⁴ Baring, *Modern Egypt*, vol. i, 529–30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. i, 533.

As Zubayr faded from memory as expressed in the press, he was remembered in these three books in three very different ways for three very different audiences: For the Sudanese audience, he was remembered as a sort of semi-nobility, to the popular audience he was remembered as a criminal representative of the evils of the East, and to the educated British audience, he was remembered as a pawn, a political gamble nearly taken, which in retrospect might have pre-empted a grave and politically contentious imperial humiliation.

While he was being remembered in a wide variety of ways, Zubayr's daily life seems to have been overwhelmingly committed to living beyond the means he had, though far below the means he felt he deserved. Babikr Bedri's description of Zubayr's relatively opulent circumstance in Cairo with his group of Sudanese courtiers lends some idea of Zubayr spending beyond what the Egyptian government felt it should support.

Abdul Rassoul (see ch 1) wrote to Salisbury on January 25, 1888, with a thorough review of the great deeds Zubayr had done "by his military tactics & great services," and telling of Zubayr's current financial woe:

When the debtors have heard that Zoubair has accepted his pension, they at once aroused and have £165 cut off from that pension, with the remaining of £35, and a very little income of Zoubair's own land from Khartoum, poor Zoubair was spending his time between life and death, but when the Road of Khartoum has been unfortunately closed by the present engagement, the oppressed Zoubair has been thorough fallen in a worst poverty.³⁶

On February 28, 1888, Blum Pasha, an Austrian-born financier who was between 1880 and 1890 minister of finance of Egypt, wrote to Baring with a similar message to that of Abdul Rassoul. Blum wrote with a copy of the letter he had presented to the Council of Ministers in Cairo a month earlier. Blum reported that he had met with Zubayr multiple times for interviews,

³⁶ Abdul Rassoul to Salisbury 25 Jan 1888 FO 78 4196.

and understood Zubayr's debts to be a total of LE 26,000, which, given his LE200 monthly salary, were not likely to be paid. Given Zubayr's unusual history with respect to the Egyptian government, Blum suggested the that Council pay off Zubayr's standing debt, continue his monthly salary, and in addition cede to his request of a free piece of land of 500 feddans.³⁷ No records reflect progress on either the LE 26,000 or the land, but Baring wrote to Salisbury on the same day that Blum wrote, that Zubayr's salary had been raised by LE 25/month on top of the 200, since Zubayr's creditors were taking LE 165, which left Zubayr too little to live on.³⁸

Abdul Rassoul, now in Cairo, wrote multiple times to London in the period after 1887 requesting funds for Zubayr. On 17 March, 1888, Abdul Rassoul wrote to Salisbury asking for the return of the LE 102 that Zubayr's servant Fatima had taken on her arrival at Gibraltar, in addition to a claim that two ruby rings valued at £400³⁹ each had been taken from Zubayr's home during the raid of his papers after his being taken to Gibraltar. The claim on the LE 102 was forwarded to Gibraltar, where Harding, representing the Government of Gibraltar, responded with an accounting of the various funds Zubayr borrowed while on Gibraltar against that LE 102.⁴⁰ Baring wrote to Salisbury with the final word on these funds in on May 28, 1888, arguing about the ruby rings, "It is a very common practice with the natives of this country to put in claims of this sort...I greatly doubt whether the ruby rings ever existed." On the other hand, Baring felt that the case of the LE 102 was different, and "the actions of the Gibraltar authorities in the matter appears to have been somewhat irregular," and therefore he suggested that Her Majesty's Government pay the LE 102. Baring also asked that all future representations from

³⁷ Blum to Baring, 28 Feb 1888, FO 78 4196. A feddan is roughly equivalent to an acre.

³⁸ Baring at Cairo to Salisbury 28 Feb 1888, FO 78 4196.

³⁹The Egyptian pound was pegged to the British pound throughout Zubayr's lifetime. Sources use the two currencies interchangeably.

⁴⁰ Harding on Gibraltar to Colonial Office, April 26, 1888, FO 78 4196.

Zubayr go through him, and not through Abdul Rassoul, “who is a noted intriguer.”⁴¹ Fatima wrote directly to Salisbury about the £102 on July 15, 1888.

Sir William Marriott, the Conservative MP who had been Ismail’s counsel in a suit after his exile for monetary awards in 1888,⁴² agreed to take on Zubayr as a client in 1893 in an attempt to negotiate for a similar large sum. Marriott, in aggressive litigious form, wrote to Baring:

At the request of Zobeir Pasha and those who advise him, I have undertaken to act for him in the matter of his claims against the Egyptian Government...I have not consented to do this without serious consideration, and without first having investigated, to the best of my ability, the nature and extent of the claims and the grounds upon which they are founded. After making such an investigation, I am convinced that unless there are circumstances of which I am entirely ignorant, he has been and is the victim of gross injustice. I find that I am not alone in this opinion. I have consulted a number of people acquainted with the facts of Zobeir’s life, amongst others Sir Samuel Baker...and all give the same strong opinion that he has been and is most unjustly used and one high authority declared to me that he was the most unjustly used man of modern times.⁴³

“The most unjustly used man of modern times” is indeed dramatic language, which perhaps Marriott thought would help his negotiations. Marriott described Zubayr’s grievance against the Egyptian government in

He has been detained in Lower Egypt as an exile from his own country on parole for a period of 16 years, he has been confined at Gibraltar as a prisoner for 2 ½ years, he has been deprived of all his lands and personal property, valued at from £1,250,000 to £1,500,000, not merely without any trial but even without any accusation being brought against him, or any offence alleged. It sounds almost incredible, but no one knows better than your Lordship that it is the fact.⁴⁴

When Baring failed to respond to Marriott’s provocation, Marriott wrote again three months later stepping up the tone of his demand:

⁴¹ Baring to Salisbury May 26, 1888, FO 78 4196.

⁴² The Annual register of world events: a review of the year, Volume 130 (London: Longman, Green, 1889), 382.

⁴³ Marriott to Cromer, October 28, 1893, FO 78 4679.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

“It seems impossible that any Christian Government can decline to give Zobeir Pasha what he asks—that is a free trial.”⁴⁵

Later Wingate wrote in response to the increasingly dire circumstances of Zubayr’s finances that Baring had “choked off” Marriott’s efforts.⁴⁶

Charles Allen of the BFASS met with Zubayr in 1888 in Cairo and 1893 in Helwan, and found him a “polite, sad looking old gentleman” and “perfectly friendly to us, though he knew that as *Anti-Slavery* men and Gordon’s personal friends we were always opposed to him.”⁴⁷

Ronald Storrs, Oriental Secretary for the British Agency from 1904-1917, mentioned in his memoirs having met Zubayr, presumably on one or more of Zubayr’s visits to Cairo during the Condominium. Storrs calls Zubayr “pathetic,” seeing him when he called “almost weekly to claim an outstanding matter of some two million sterling, which, so far as I was able to ascertain, was really owing to him,” presumably being convinced by Zubayr’s logic, “but the reimbursement of which no living soul would have been prepared to discuss” presumably since Zubayr no longer had political clout and the amount was so significant, the result being that,

the discrowned King of the Sudan lived on into another epoch, with a small pension, in the suburb of Helwan, marrying an occasional wife (the cause of his gentle importunities) and leaving me the memory of his courteous patience, his rough silver turquoise ring and the deadly cold of his hands.⁴⁸

Zubayr’s travels between Cairo and Khartoum under the Condominium are contradictory in various sources, since he was no longer under official observation so records may not have been kept. One source lists his first trip back to Sudan in August 1903, return to Helwan in 1905,

⁴⁵ Sir William Marriott, MP, at Cairo to Cromer Jan 20, 1894. FO 78 4679.

⁴⁶ Wingate to [Field Marshal the Viscount] Kitchener of Khartoum, 3 Whitehall Court SW, 11 July 1911, Sudan Archive at Durham University, UK, [hereafter SAD], archival document code 301/1/13.

⁴⁷ Charles Allen, *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, March 1900, 74.

⁴⁸ Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1937), 86.

and not returning to Sudan until August 1912.⁴⁹ Anders Bjorkelo worked on this period by analyzing a series of letters between Zubayr and another Sudanese merchant, ‘Abd Allah Bey Hamza al-Khandaqawi. Bjorkelo found a letter from Zubayr in Sudan to ‘Abd Allah in Cairo from 1901, and another letter that tells of the two men going from Khartoum to Cairo together in 1912. The letters tell little of Zubayr’s life, except that he maintained business contacts in Egypt and Sudan, and that he managed to import a steam engine and grain mill from Egypt to his property in al-Mutamma in Sudan.⁵⁰

Fashoda

The Fashoda incident in 1898 was the climax of tensions that had been building for at least a decade. As the Mahdia crumbled, that vacuum became tempting for both British and French dreams of an imperial stripe across Africa, French from Senegal to Djibouti, British from South Africa to Egypt (as well as German dreams in East Africa, Italian dreams in the Horn, fading Spanish and Portuguese dreams, and King Leopold). These dramatic visions, particularly of France and Britain, were in conflict with one another, and Sudan, especially southern Sudan, lay at their crossroad (as did the upper Niger). In stark contrast to the overlapping influence that Britain and France had over Egypt earlier in the nineteenth century, this conflict shows that after the 1885 that relationship changed. In that year in Berlin the course of African colonialism was drafted, and the Mahdist revolt was part of the same zeitgeist that led to that conference: the transition from overlapping influence to geographically defined influence. When the Mahdia began to crumble, it no longer could be replaced by a kind of frontier influence shared by many

⁴⁹ Mikhail Sharubim and ‘Abd al-Wahhab Bakr, *al-Kafi fi tarikh Misr al-qadim wa-al-hadith. al-Juz 5*. ([al-Qahirah]: Matba‘at Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyah bi-al-Qahirah, 1998), 240, n 288.

⁵⁰ Anders Bjørkelo, “Networks and Partnerships: Life and Career of ‘Abd Allah Bey Hamza Al Khandaqawi Sudanese Merchant 1824-1940 [Working Title, Incomplete Draft Manuscript]” (2001).

powers, and even the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Condominium idea of government was a bit of a fiction and throwback.

Fashoda was not merely the apex of a colonial moment in southern Sudan, but was arguably the apex of the European African imperial project. Flora Shaw rode the wave of this moment as much as anyone, having a year before Fashoda published her article coining the name Nigeria during her tenure as Colonial Editor for *The Times*.⁵¹ As such an editor, Shaw became to a great extent the voice of British imperialism of the 1890s. She is better known for her simultaneously personal and professional relationships with Rhodes, Goldie, Chamberlain, and finally Lugard, but she was hardly just the woman behind great men. In addition to her role at *The Times* and before that of course at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, her tome *A Tropical Dependency*, published some seven years after Fashoda, made clear the idea that empire could not be practised merely through more delicate means of indirect rule and self-government, but, particularly in tropical Africa, needed to be under the thumb of a strong autocrat who could pacify native peoples. Her defense of rulership of natives through violence and domination could easily have either been influenced by Zubayr or have influenced her empathy for the harshness of his rule.⁵²

Tensions rose in Cairo as early as 1888, even before Shaw took the position of Colonial Editor at *The Times*, as both French and British intelligence tried to figure out exactly what they faced in southern Sudan, including Bahr al-Ghazal, and Zubayr, bored in Cairo but timid after his experience on Gibraltar, was tempted to be caught up in these tensions.

While Zubayr was trying to regain the money he felt he deserved, the French were trying to regain the territory they felt they deserved in southern Sudan, even attempting to use Zubayr

⁵¹ "Nigeria," *The Times*, January 8, 1897, 6.

⁵² Callaway and Helly, "Flora Shaw/Lady Lugard," 88–92.

to help them,⁵³ though he refused. French forces began to push into Bahr al-Ghazal in 1889, and claimed control of the town of Dem Zubayr in that year. Between 1890 and 1894, King Leopold sent expeditions throughout southern Sudan, the last of which claimed Hufat an-Nahas, the copper mines that Zubayr had once guarded so jealously. Though the Congo Free State eventually backed down in the face of French and British intervention in the region, it was Congo that in the early 1890s challenged Mahdist forces for control of Bahr al-Ghazal. In 1894, a Franco-Free State treaty called for full withdrawal of Congo Free State forces from Bahr al-Ghazal, and negotiations over the Fashoda incident called for withdrawal of French forces.⁵⁴ A clear boundary between Bahr al-Ghazal and French controlled territory was not determined until the late 1920s.⁵⁵

Zubayr requested to go on Hajj to Mecca in June 1888. Baring took the advice of Captain Fenwick, who seems to have been at least partly responsible for his surveillance. Fenwick was not especially concerned that Zubayr would try to go to Sudan after Mecca, but he was worried that “Mecca is a sort of rendezvous of all the discontented spirits in the Mohammedan world” and that it was not wise to allow Zubayr to mix particularly with Indian Muslims disaffected with British rule, pointing again to an anti-imperialist zeitgeist in the Muslim world long before the *khalifat* movement.⁵⁶ With the populations of Sudan and most of northern Africa, lands being disputed in the scramble, being overwhelmingly Muslim, early ideas that colonized peoples could influence at least which colonial powers controlled them, if not the fact that colonial powers controlled them, could easily have spread on Hajj.

⁵³ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh 'al-Sūdān*, 87.

⁵⁴ Sikainga, *Western Bahr al-Ghazal*, 20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁶ Baring to Salisbury June 21, 1888, FO 78 4196.

Abdul Rassoul tried to draw himself into growing international tensions in August 1888, when he referred to the “presence of a white-man with an armed force on the Bahr-el-Gazell” who he thought was likely Emin Pasha or Stanley, and that, according to Abdul Rassoul, this white man was ready to join forces with Rabeh Zubayr “and the Darfour tribes to crush the Mahdi” and that Zubayr should have been sent with a relief force to Bahr al-Ghazal.⁵⁷ The Foreign Office replied on September 11, 1888, that it was hardly worth considering.

An interesting foreshadowing of the relationship of Zubayr and Wingate at the end of Zubayr’s life was a meeting on March 28, 1893, at the Egyptian War Office in Cairo. At that meeting, along with Zubayr, were two members of British Parliament, though they said they were speaking as private individuals, Thomas Cave, an ex-MP, and Stephenson, current member for South Shields, along with Wingate. Notes from the meeting taken by a secretary describe Zubayr as above average in height and strength, but bundled against the cold, though there was a fire in the room and outside was sixty-four degrees Fahrenheit. He wore a red fez hat, typical of formal wear in Cairo at the time, a long dark coat, and patent leather boots. Wingate began the meeting by explaining Zubayr’s story from beginning to end, with little difference from the way Zubayr explained it in Shuqayr and Shaw, but in less detail, except emphasizing that Ismail’s motivation for keeping Zubayr was his fear that Zubayr might declare himself an independent ruler in Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur. Zubayr inserted that the letter to Suleiman mentioned earlier in this chapter and in chapter 4 was false. Wingate mentioned that Gordon was so upset the night he left, after being refused Zubayr be sent with him, that he had his dinner sent to his room, despite the dinner party being held in his honor downstairs. Mr. Cave asked Zubayr, “whether there was any peaceful way in which in his opinion his talents and influence might still be

⁵⁷ Abdul Rassoul to Salisbury Aug 11, 1888, FO 78 4196.

utilized for the benefit of his Country and of mankind.” Cave then asked Zubayr if he would consider returning to Sudan, and Zubayr replied only if “he could be persuaded that his presence would be acceptable to the tribes” and he be sent with 2,000 men. Zubayr then asked, “Would he be expected to regain and civilize the Soudan for Egypt or for England? And with what ulterior view?” Mr. Cave replied that in the hypothetical case which he had just put to him, he was only considering the welfare of the local populations, and the benefit of Egypt.” Ironically, no Egyptian representatives were present at this meeting. Zubayr seems to have been pointing to this irony, and perhaps was similarly sardonic in using the word *civilize*, since he felt his kingdom had been based on an Arab-Islamic civilizing mission (see chapter 3).⁵⁸

Wingate then approached the idea of a letter that he understood Zubayr to have received from Rabih. The letter was so difficult to deliver that the messenger had only managed to avoid it being robbed among the rest of his possessions by hiding it in the loincloth of his wife who traveled with him. In addition, the letter merely said that whatever the messenger said should be taken as truth, for the writer did not feel safe writing his wishes lest they fall into the wrong hands. The messenger stated that Zubayr would be welcome in the country of Rabih (referred to as Zubayr’s “former lieutenant” rather than by name) and would be put in charge of his (Zubayr’s) former troops.⁵⁹

Wingate stated that though he did not wish to get involved trying to ascertain what was true or not true of Zubayr’s past, he would vouch for the idea that he felt Zubayr’s assistance in a military action against Sudan would be “equal to a force of 30,000 men.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Thomas Cave, “Interview with Zubeir Pasha” (Egyptian War Office in Cairo, March 30, 1893), SAD 255/1-14.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Wingate ended the meeting very strangely. He asked the men present if they would like to meet “the man who helped Father ---- and the Italian nuns escape the Mahdi’s camp.” Wingate proclaimed this honorable thing to do, and then described the financial straits Zubayr was in, and how shameful it was that he was not supported better. The priest mentioned was probably Father Ohrwalder, who did escape from the Mahdi’s camp, but this is the only evidence that Zubayr had anything to do with his escape. Wingate was fascinated by the story and translated a rough sketch of Ohrwalder’s autobiography for publication also in 1893. It is possible that Wingate invented the connection between Ohrwalder and Zubayr, or had his facts confused, or perhaps he felt it advantageous to have Zubayr sent and alluding to a possible connection would help convince Cave and Stephenson.⁶¹

If Wingate believed that Zubayr was effective at helping to free Ohrwalder and the nuns, it was on thin evidence. In his translation of Ohrwalder’s memoir, he writes of an unusual arrival of a European at the Mahdi’s camp, then at El Obeid, on August 15, 1884. He introduced himself as Olivier Pain, “and that he was the bearer of letters from Zubeir Pasha to the Mahdi; but the fear of the English had led him to destroy them. He said that he came in the name of France, to place his nation’s submission in the Mahdi’s hands.” This seemed difficult for even the Mahdists to believe, so they imprisoned him. Later when he had the chance to talk to another European he explained that he was a reporter for a French newspaper. By November 15 of that year, from poor food and long marches, the great enthusiasm Pain arrived in Sudan with, dreaming of fortune and fame, had left him, and he succumbed to dysentery. Not only was Zubayr’s connection to Pain unlikely to be more than a complete fabrication, but Pain did nothing to help

⁶¹ Ibid.

Ohrwalder escape. If this was Wingate's only evidence of a connection, he seemed to stretch that evidence a great deal in his meeting with Zubayr, Cave, and Stephenson.⁶²

Also in March 1893, the same month as Wingate's meeting above, Wingate received a letter from Ernest Ayscoghe Floyer, Inspector General of Egyptian Telegraphs, concerning Zubayr's relationship to Charles Allen of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Floyer reported, "Zebehr had tea with me yesterday and Mr. Allen today- The former very anxious to meet the latter, the latter not very anxious to meet the former." That inequality of anxiety Floyer read as a kind of regret on Allen's part, for Floyer referred to "the mistake made in preventing Z. going to Gordon's rescue," and that "oddly enough [Allen] seemed surprised that Baring shd blame him (Allen)." (emphasis original) Allen's outrage that he might have been blamed for Gordon's death, along with his anxiety at meeting Zubayr, seem to add up to Allen feeling sheepish about the BFASS role in Gordon's failure in Khartoum.⁶³

In January 1894, Wingate wrote to Baring, then the Earl of Cromer, with a copy of what he said Zubayr claimed he had written to his son Suleiman in 1878. Wingate wrote that "The letter" (emphasis original) of former discussions (see Chapters 3 and 4) was dated December 20, 1878 and "it is this letter which Zubair denies having written." Zubayr in 1894 took credit for the letter that in 1878 he denied having written, or so Wingate's narrative went. Discussion of the letter is in chapter 4; the gist of the letter is that Zubayr asked Suleiman to "obey and follow out the instructions of the government, that you should comply with all their restrictions, be they

⁶² Ohrwalder and Wingate, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, 1882-1892*, 191-5.

⁶³ Floyer at Cairo to Wingate, March 1893, SAD 255/1/161.

great or small; that you should avoid doing that which is forbidden and that you should in no way act contrary to the government.”⁶⁴

Three interpretations of his letter seem immediately obvious: the first is that the letter was written much later, dated with an earlier year, and written to make Zubayr look innocent of inciting treason; the second is that the letter had been written on the date originally written and had been misinterpreted at the time; a third is that the letter had been written falsely at the time. All of these seem entirely plausible: Zubayr had plenty of reason to forge an old letter to improve his situation vis-à-vis the British-Egyptian government; the letter was in Arabic and neither Gordon nor Gessi read Arabic well, or they could have had it translated and interpreted the overstated tone as sarcasm; and Zubayr might have prepared his son not to pay attention to letters he might send under duress.

The following April, Cromer interviewed Zubayr at the British Agency in Cairo. After compliments and a statement of his allegiance, Zubayr discussed Rabih Zubayr, that “Rabeh's power & authority in the Lake Chad regions had now made him a factor of so much importance as to exert considerable influence for good or ill on the various European colonial enterprises now being pushed towards his territories,” mostly the French from the north and west, to a lesser extent the British via Darfur, and potentially Congo Free State from the south.

[Zubayr] pointed out that all the information he received led him to believe that his influence on Rabeh was still paramount, as the latter was hitherto untouched by outside European influences and he urged that renewed efforts should be made to place him in communication with Rabeh, in order thereby to assist British interests.

Zubayr might have been interested in being involved for the thrill of getting back into the game of politics, “though at the same time he did not argue the fact that that he anticipated

⁶⁴ Wingate at Aswan to Cromer, January 9, 1894, SAD 110/3/102.

considerable personal benefit would accrue to himself were such relations established between” himself and Rabih. Zubayr

volunteered to proceed to Rabeh via the British West African possessions, by his influence bring him into touch with the British, open the road between Rabeh and the Niger Company & he further guaranteed to secure Rabeh's forces in order that the British might utilize them either in the districts in which they are at present, or to move them back towards the Nile Valley with a view to threatening the Khalifa's possessions from the West and at the same time creating a diversion which might arrest the advance of French enterprise through the Bahr-el-Ghazal towards the waters of the Upper Nile.

These are, in short, the same kind of arguments that had been made for involving Zubayr in Sudan during the start of the Mahdia, but that had failed to gain traction while Zubayr was on Gibraltar. A full decade and famine later, the Mahdia was quickly losing its grip on power in Sudan even without invasion.⁶⁵

In chapter 3 I discuss Zubayr's relationship with a local king of Bahr al-Ghazal named Tikma.⁶⁶ After Zubayr killed Tikma, Tikma's territory became Zubayr's. After Zubayr, Tikma's son, left to Cairo, and after the Mahdia took Khartoum, Zemio retook enough territory in Bahr al-Ghazal to call himself Sultan of Bahr al-Ghazal. Zemio had never joined forces with the Mahdia, so he needed any help he could get from European forces in order to keep the Mahdia from expanding through Bahr al-Ghazal.⁶⁷

Bahr al-Ghazal, it will be remembered, formed the border between Mahdist Sudan, French West Africa, and the Congo Free State. A Franco-Congo Free State treaty in 1894 gave

⁶⁵ Resume of conversation which took place on 1st April, 1895 between Lord Cromer and Zubair Pasha, at the British Agency. SAD 258/1/798-806.

⁶⁶ Zubayr had developed a working relationship with Tikma when Zubayr was an itinerant trader, Tikma having offered his daughter to Zubayr as a peace offering. After Zubayr conquered the territory of Adoo Shukoo, Tikma became a nuisance when he refused to submit to Zubayr's rule.

⁶⁷ David Lewis, *The Race to Fashoda : European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa*, 1st ed. (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), 71; Sikainga, *Western Bahr al-Ghazal*, 18.

Free State outposts in Bahr al-Ghazal to France, after which Zemio became a French vassal.⁶⁸ Despite being beholden to France, Zemio was helpful to a Congo State Services incursion into Darfur in 1894, though this incursion failed, repelled by Mahdist forces from Shakka. Zemio wrote to Zubayr in 1895, a letter that Zubayr showed to Wingate in 1896, explaining the above and that Zemio had retaken Shakka in an alliance with French forces. Wingate then worried, on November 6, 1896, that this alliance had allowed the French to acquire “a strategical position which could tend to facilitate the execution of their much vaunted scheme of reaching the Nile Valley in the neighborhood of FASHODA.” The letter that Zemio sent Zubayr was worded considerably more subtly. Zemio wrote that he sent “this letter through the French who have entered our country and with whom we are very pleased as they are kind to us and treat us with all honour – better than before – they do us no harm and we thank God for all this,” and that he “entered your old Dem – the Dem of SHAKKU, and its people are now under my rule.” In order to ingratiate himself to Zubayr, Zemio writes of his niece, “I beg you to give me news of the daughter of TAKMA'S daughter; is she still alive and well? Should she require anything of me, I will send her anything she wants.” Zemio’s letter did not ask specifically for any political favors, but it seems likely that Zemio felt he might ingratiate himself with British-Egyptian forces via Zubayr, which might help protect his power should those forces retake Sudan.⁶⁹

Wingate saw this letter from Zemio to as one example of “two or three circumstances” which “occurred within the past year which gave me the impression that there are foreign agents at work endeavoring to secure Zobeir’s assistance to aid them in their communication with the Sudan.” Zubayr had admitted to Wingate that he was “frequently approached by interested

⁶⁸ *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* (Woking, England), vol. X, 1900, 285.

⁶⁹ Sultan Zemio to Zubayr Rahmat, Dec 1895, SAD 263/1/37, 1-77.

foreigners” but “strenuously denies that he gives them any assistance.” One of those foreigners had been the Austrian Carl Inger, who had admitted to Wingate of his conversation with Zubayr. It was only after Wingate described his conversation with Inger to Zubayr that Zubayr allowed Wingate to see the letter from Zemio, which he had received ten months earlier. Zubayr was not prepared or able to lie directly to Wingate, but neither was he forthcoming; Zubayr held his cards as long as he could.⁷⁰

The lead-up to the Fashoda crisis thus provided a unique opportunity for Zubayr to become involved in politics again. British interest in Zubayr’s connections, even if they were loose connections, with pretenders to power along the road from French-held territory to the Nile show how concerned the British were with French movements in late 1896, and how the timing aligned with Kitchener’s invasion of Sudan. Zubayr told Shuqayr vaguely “in the year 1896 some of the French, who were the highest in the land, came to me secretly by night. They remained with me until two hours after midnight, trying to induce me to make an arrangement for them with Rabeh, who they were then engaged in fighting. They offered me in return such wealth as could not be counted and the gratification of all my heart’s desire.”⁷¹ Shuqayr gives no clue as to Zubayr’s response to these French overtures, nor any other details about the scheme.

Also in 1896, Zubayr received a letter in Cairo from Tripoli in Cyrenaica, in today’s Tunisia, in response to a letter Zubayr had sent. Tunisia since 1883 had been a French protectorate while Ottoman territory, so this Tunisia letter was likely related to Zubayr’s French visitors. The letter was stamped from an ‘Irfan Abd Allah, and dated 3 Jamadi 1314 (10 October 1896). In it the author describes a caravan that had arrived to him from Sudan via Bar Nuh,

⁷⁰ Wingate to Cromer, June 11, 1896, SAD 263/1/371-77.

⁷¹ Shuqayr, *Tārīkh ‘al-Sūdān*, 87.

where it had been under the control of Rabih, who had caught it, and where it had been subject to tensions between Rabih and a people called perhaps the Zanrar (writing is unclear). The author is concerned that his messenger has not returned yet, and thus he cannot tell Zubayr exactly how things are in that country.⁷² Zubayr was concerned about the goings on of Rabih and of the French/British border in the upper Nile generally. These were once his territories, and through them was his best opportunity to involve himself to advantage growing French-British tensions.

In July 1897 it was reported in Paris and London that Kitchener had recently met with Zubayr in Cairo, asking Zubayr to participate in the reconquest of Sudan, but that Zubayr had stated he “was ready to undertake the subjugation of the Soudan on his own responsibility” but not under the command of any other.⁷³

The Fashoda incident began as British-French imperial tensions over the carcass of Mahdist Sudan, and was resolved through a small bit of diplomacy and a large bit of British military leverage under Kitchener. Zubayr was both tempted to get involved in the rise in tensions and humbled by years of imprisonment and humiliation in Cairo and on Gibraltar. His involvement in 1890s politics was much more timid than his involvement in 1884, perhaps because of the lack of a Gordon to support him, and perhaps because Gibraltar changed Zubayr. Though ten years in Cairo may not have led Zubayr to appreciate British power, two years on Gibraltar seems to have. This appreciation became very useful after 1898.

Kitchener’s army began its offensive on the Sudan in March 1896 and took Omdurman in September 1898, when the new power-sharing Condominium government was set up ruling Sudan, with British and Egyptian flags flying alongside one another. Effectively the sharing was

⁷² ‘Irfan Abd Allah in Tarabulus gharb to Zubayr Pasha 3 Jamadi 1314, SAD 101/20/4.

⁷³ “The Soudan Campaign” *The Standard* [London], through Reuter’s Agency, quoting the Cairo correspondent to *le Matin*, Paris, July 7, 1897.

not quite equal, with most funds coming from Egypt and most administrators and decisions coming from Britain. With neither Egypt nor British imperial funds flush, imperial rule over Sudan had to be on the cheap, and abolition was difficult to accomplish.

Slavery Reconsidered

Zubayr was able to maintain and trade politically and materially on his reputation until the very end of his life, maintaining close relations throughout with British officials, who treated him pragmatically, even affectionately, far from the view of metropolitan justice. Zubayr even became a “valuable counselor” to the Condominium.⁷⁴

This valuable counselor position is all the more impressive since, at least 'Ismat Hasan Zulfo argues, Wingate had been the origin of most of the decision-making of the entire Sudan campaign. Kitchener had led the army, and Cromer had communicated with London, but Wingate, as the specialist in the Sudan, was, Zulfo argues, the “mastermind” behind reconquest. If that is indeed the case, perhaps Wingate’s relationship with Zubayr, often also described as a sort of mastermind, makes sense.⁷⁵

Condominium administrators erred on the side of maintaining the status quo when they had to choose between stability and effectively outlawing slavery. The semi-sovereignty of Darfur between 1899 and 1916 contributed to this problem, since Ali Dinar’s government in Darfur felt free in giving lip service to abolition while using slave labor extensively for military purposes in addition to agriculture. The same conflict between the Rizayqat and Darfur that had

⁷⁴ Richard Leslie Hill, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan* (London: Frank Cass, 1967).

⁷⁵ Zulfo, *Karari*, 93.

been festering in Zubayr's day remained, each capturing slaves from the population of Bahr al-Ghazal to use as soldiers against each other. These battles virtually annihilated the Rizayqat.⁷⁶

As Wingate was taking control of Khartoum, Cromer wrote him from Cairo, in March 1900, to bring his attention to the rise in slavery in Sudan after the installation of the Condominium regime. Wingate wrote, "Circumstances alter case in anti-slavery as in other circles. Keep your eye on the slave-trade. Mr. McMurdo [Director of the Repression of the Slave Trade Department of the Sudan] says that it has increased in the Soudan during the past year."⁷⁷ The fact of the Mahdist government accepting the legality of slavery and the Condominium government being nominally abolitionist might have less impact on the ground than a strong tradition of slavery, desperate poverty, and a new government with less control than the old.

In February 1900, Zubayr, still at Helwan in southern Cairo, requested for the first time to return to Sudan. Zubayr had tried and failed in 1900 to get an audience with the Khedive, even just to send his Ramadan greetings. Though he failed to get an audience with the Khedive, Zubayr's letter to Cromer achieved its aim, and Zubayr was given permission to return to Condominium Sudan.⁷⁸

In March 1900, in honor of Zubayr's being freed to return to Sudan, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society began to come around to Zubayr's new role. "The recent decision of Lord Cromer to allow the former Prince of Slave-raiders to return to the Soudan, after an exile of nearly five and twenty years," wrote Charles Allen, "has been received with apparent indifference by the press and the people of England, who are almost oblivious to the wonderful

⁷⁶ Sikainga, *Western Bahr al-Ghazal*, 38.

⁷⁷ Cromer at Cairo to Wingate, March 1890, SAD 270/3/29 [underlining original].

⁷⁸ Zubayr to Cromer, Feb 1910, SAD 270/2/32-24. Date in letter is unclear, but reference to death of King Edward VII is, so it must be 1910. His operation perhaps explains Wingate's extended absence from Sudan while Governor-General.

power and influence once held by this extraordinary man.” Allen’s choices of adjectives, *wonderful* and *extraordinary* mark his coming around to the idea that a man powerful within the slave trade need not fit neatly on one or another side of the issue of slavery. Allen preserves the word *harmless*, however, for duplication: “He is now perfectly harmless, for the generation in which he was a power—and not for good—has passed away...we now certainly wish him a harmless and peaceful life in his old home.”⁷⁹

A year later, Charles Allen wrote in a much more defensive tone about the historical position of the BFASS vis-à-vis Zubayr. Allen wrote in response to an article in *The Financial Times*, of October 10, 1900. The *Financial Times* article, duplicated in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, accused Gladstone and Granville of bowing to Edmund Sturge, former BFASS chairman. After Gladstone and Granville and Baring had all agreed to appoint Zubayr to help Gordon, Granville had received a letter from Sturge, a man “unknown except for a small group of Quakers,” pointing out the fact that Zubayr had been famous for slave trading. At this point Granville

did not do what any statesman would have done—put Mr. Sturge’s letter in the waste-paper basket—but actually reversed the policy advised by General Gordon and Sir Evelyn Baring and approved by his own Cabinet, and followed the dictation of this irresponsible Mr. Sturge and the equally irresponsible society he represented, and withdrew his approval of the appointment of Zebehr. It seems incredible; but there is no doubt about the fact, and the disastrous results are only too well-known.

Mr. Allen’s reply to the editor of the *Financial Times* argued that “a large body of the press and the public generally were at one in protesting against placing Gordon in the power of his bitter foe, Zebehr Pasha” and that the author had not “any right to attribute the loss of 5,000,000 lives and endless disaster in the Soudan to the well-intentioned action taken by Mr. Sturge and the

⁷⁹ Charles H. Allen, “Zebehr Pasha: A Reminiscence,” *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (May 1900): 73–4.

Anti-Slavery Society.”⁸⁰ After Cromer’s *Modern Egypt* and Ribblesdale’s article were published in 1908, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* published a more nuanced view of their role in the Gordon-Zubayr relationship, describing Gladstone and Granville as being on the fence about Zubayr, a portrayal more in line with other evidence than either the defensive tone of the *ASR* or aggressive tone of the *Financial Times* in 1900.

In 1902, the Condominium government released a memorandum that “slaves should remain with their owners as long as they were well treated and adequately fed and clothed,” and that runaway slaves should be returned to their owners, and that slaves should be registered to that end. Owners were persuaded to take back their runaway slaves as paid servants. As much as fear of upsetting slaveholders, Wingate’s Condominium government feared that runaway slaves would fill the streets with vagrants and prostitutes, and empty the agricultural lands of labor. Therefore, in 1905, the Vagabonds Ordinance allowed unemployed runaway slaves in towns to be prosecuted, and a Central Labor Bureau was tasked with discouraging slaves from leaving their masters without sufficient reason. Meanwhile, of course, the same Wingate government reported back to London that it was working to abolish slavery.⁸¹

Wingate meanwhile was growing closer to Zubayr. Jackson tells a story in his book notes of when in 1904, Zubayr put himself physically between Wingate and a crowd in Alexandria, not telling him why, then later telling Wingate that there had been a plot to assassinate him and Zubayr wanted to be ready to take a bullet. Zubayr felt indebted to Wingate, and Wingate felt trusting of Zubayr.⁸²

⁸⁰ Charles H. Allen, “Edmund Sturge and Zebehr Pasha,” *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (February 1901): 19–21.

⁸¹ Ahmad Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 47.

⁸² From SAD 245/3/30, Jackson’s book notes, no source listed: “Zubeir and Alexandria: About 1904 W and

By 1907, the exportation of slaves from Sudan had slowed, but reducing domestic slavery still proved too much for the Condominium government. Cromer wrote Wingate warning him that the BFASS would be in his hair since a report had been made bringing attention to domestic slavery.

If the Anti-Slavery people got hold of this, they would make a great fuss. To say the truth, I do not exactly know how you are treating the question of domestic slavery. You had better write to me on the subject and explain, and then I must consider how far it is, or is not, desirable to take the public into one's confidence in the matter. It is, I know, a very delicate subject to treat.⁸³

Indeed the pressure of “the Anti-Slavery people” still rankled many, and motivated Sidney Low, a Conservative journalist, to publish an aggressive critique of Gladstone’s inability to have resisted BFASS influence in 1884. Low’s article, from April 1908, argued that Gladstone had been remiss in following the oscillations of Gordon’s mind. Gordon, in the opinion of Low, was a hero trying to fill a role that needed a bureaucrat. A bureaucrat would have forced the assignment of Zubayr through the bureaucracy regardless of public opinion, because Zubayr made bureaucratic sense. Gladstone and Granville, in bowing to public opinion and the BFASS, were, in Low’s opinion, shortsighted:

Public opinion is a shifting abstraction...who knew or cared what Zobeir Pasha was? Possibly, if the appointment had been made, there would have been some violent speeches in Parliament (there were plenty of them as it was), and some angry leading articles in the press. In three days the newspapers would have been writing about

Lady Wingate going on Leave. A large crowd at Cairo railway station to see them off including Zubeir. On arrival at Alex Z. stepped out of adjacent carriage. I thought I'd said good bye to you. Oh said Z I though if you didn't mind I would see you as far as the steamer. Warehouses on one side and large crowds roped off to allow passage way for passengers on the other. Z kept walking just ahead of me and between me and the crowd. I thought this rather strange as Z was usually so polite. I asked him on board for a coffee and cigarette and just before the steamer left Z said he wished to apologize to me for his apparent rudeness and said there was a plot to assassinate me and that it was determined that no bullet should reach me without passing through his body.” This story is also included, nearly verbatim, in Jackson’s *Behind the Modern Sudan* (London: Macmillan, 1955) 107.

⁸³ Cromer at Cairo to Wingate, January 22, 1907, SAD 280/1/98.

something else; in three months...everybody would have approved—and probably forgotten—it.⁸⁴

It is strange that anyone would rehash the event with such virulence a quarter-century after the fact, and this was not what inspired Lord Ribblesdale to write his response to Low in the same journal later that year. Ribblesdale's article, it will be remembered, provided the narration of Zubayr's earlier life mentioned in chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation. Ribblesdale was inspired to write that article by Low's generalization that Zubayr "like all other Sudan magnates... was a slave-owner on a large scale."

These novels express the growing discomfort of a generation in Britain over the Eastern Question and the increasingly overlapping powers of European governments, non-European governments, and indigenous middlemen. Zubayr represented a type of indirect rule that had spread throughout British Africa through the medium of re-invented pseudo-indigenous tradition. The philosophy of free trade had led to empowering non-Europeans as well as dominating them.

"Mr. Sidney Low," Ribblesdale wrote, "tells us that Zobeir Pasha was not a slave dealer, and that Zobeir had himself assured him that this was quite a mistake. Perhaps not- to the extent that the chairman of the Army and Navy Stores is not a grocer or a gunmaker or that a director of a gold mine is not a pick-and-shovel miner," but that "Zobeir regulated and protected and policed and indirectly financed, the slave trade in the Equatorial Provinces" and Zubayr's revenues were primarily from taxing slave caravans. Ribblesdale seemed to have been trying to balance the dichotomy of Zubayr as slaver and Zubayr as not slaver, because the discourse of the day did not have room for arguing for different types of slavery in different contexts. Ribblesdale was trying to put space between Zubayr and slavery by pinning on him the lesser crime of supervising

⁸⁴ Low, "Lord Cromer on Gordon and the Gladstone Cabinet," 682. Low was a historian, author of *The Governance of England* (1904), *Egypt in Transition* (1914), and co-author of *The History of England During the Reign of Victoria* (1907) among others.

slavers, but Zubayr's lesser crime, it can be seen now, was not merely that he was able to profit without getting his hands dirty. Zubayr's lesser crime was participating in slavery in a context in which slavery was not only legal but also nearly inevitable. Ribblesdale took as proof of this Zubayr's argument for eventual abolition: "Later on you (the English) may be able by degrees to do away with the present custom," but that first it would have to wait until it had support from religious authorities, because slavery was "looked upon as sacred and as belong in to religion," and also, "then will have to be paid much compensation" to slaveholders. Beyond this, though, one absolutely critical and difficult task would have to be accomplished before abolition could be enforced, Zubayr argued, which was that a minimum wage, "a fixed labour wage will have to be fixed throughout the districts" and enforced. In short, Zubayr argued that abolition was possible only after the establishment of an effective state government.⁸⁵

Edgar Bonham Carter, then Legal Secretary of Sudan, wrote to Rudolph Slatin, then Inspector General of Sudan, in 1908, both men concerned for Zubayr's well-being, writing that Zubayr was "getting old and falling into the hands of his sons and his clerk," and that Zubayr "was using his position with the Government to put forward claims to land to which he had no sort of right and getting natives owing to his influence to compromise or sell him their lands." Bonham Carter did not mention where these lands might be, whether in Bahr al-Ghazal or nearer to Geili where Zubayr was living at the time. Zubayr's "position with the government" was not made clear in the documents, except to say that he had one.⁸⁶

Wingate received a letter from the Slavery Department at Khartoum in delicate language showing the difficulty Condominium administrators had with the issue and how to express their

⁸⁵ Ribblesdale, "Conversations with Zobeir Pasha at Gibraltar," 940. Also in Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories*, 143-147.

⁸⁶ Edgar Bbonham Carter at Sudan Club, Khartoum, to Slatin, June 16, 1908, SAD 438/681/3.

difficulty officially. Mundo, then in charge of the Department, complained of an inspector telling too much of the truth. He complained of “what I am always preaching to my inspectors” and that “I am very sorry indeed that the mud has been stirred up in this way,” and that “I can only attribute it to... over zealousness and ignorance.”⁸⁷

In a very similar vein, Slatin complained to Wingate about Cromer not being subtle enough in his declarations concerning slavery: “I think if you explain to old Cromer who may have forgotten a good deal about it, he cannot do much harm, but I prefer it always if the Sudan is left alone. However, unfortunately it is not so.

If Cromer doesn't like to make a literary fuss and keeps to the truth he won't do much harm. He has to state that after conquering the Sudan we declared the abolition of slavery – and that every former slave could leave his master and get his freedom. The consequence was that the greater part of slaves even born through generations left their masters. But realizing that life wasn't easy and daily bread had to be earned a small portion of them went back to their former masters and made private arrangements for their future – i.e. because servants -sometimes – under contract – such servants are enlisted in Gov't books and checked by handlist inspection- who make inquiries – about behavior from both sides and possible complaints. Those who didn't return willingly to their masters and prefer to be thoroughly independent became workmen -and as many of them were living an immoral lazy life and became a danger to the public – we started a Labour Bureau – to have a sort of central one those who are not landowners or permanent cultivators.⁸⁸

The idea that freed slaves in Sudan would be lazy, at least one scholar argued was due to an attempt on the part of the freed slaves to emulate their masters, for their masters seemed to be rewarded for avoiding doing any physical labor.⁸⁹

Tensions grew between Cromer and Wingate as the BFASS, then the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, continued to put pressure on Cromer to more effectively block the slave trade between Darfur and Tripoli, which would have been hampered not only by the

⁸⁷ Mundo at Slavery Department, Khartoum to Wingate, Feb 4, 1908, SAD 282/4/10.

⁸⁸ Slatin to Wingate, 1909 [no day or month] SAD 288/2/94.

⁸⁹ Sharkey, “Domestic Slavery in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Northern Sudan,” 102.

difficulty of stopping any trade across a vast desert, but by the nominal sovereignty which Darfur was allowed after reconquest of Sudan by the British, and by the fact that Tripoli was Ottoman and then Italian territory, never Egyptian.⁹⁰

An undated letter from Wingate to Zubayr in Cairo, presumably from the period around 1910 due to context, shows Wingate especially courteous to Zubayr, which lends credence to the argument that Zubayr became a helpful adviser to Wingate. “Lady Wingate & myself,” he wrote, “were much touched by your kind words, and cordially tender you our sincerest thanks.” Wingate apologized for not responding earlier, due to recovery from an operation, and thanked Zubayr for his wishes for Wingate’s speedy recovery. Wingate appreciated Zubayr’s condolences on the death of King Edward VII, and concluded “Lady Wingate & I look forward with great pleasure to finding ourselves once again in the Sudan next autumn, when we hope to meet you in good health & strength.” It is always a challenge to separate affection from the polite formalities of a former age, but Wingate here seemed to go out of his way toward Zubayr.⁹¹

By 1911, Wingate and Kitchener had become concerned more with Zubayr’s well-being than the inconveniences he had caused. Wingate wrote that Kitchener was “interested in the Zubeir case and did your best to help him.” Zubayr had asked Wingate his “views as to whether he should employ an English Lawyer to take up his case. As you know, many years ago he got the late Sir William Marriott to go into the matter and the latter came out to Egypt and was about to institute proceedings against the Egyptian Government on the understanding that he was to receive 30 percent of the proceedings, but he was choked off at the last moment by Lord Cromer.” Wingate’s tone is, for the first time, neither businesslike nor frustrated, but he seems to

⁹⁰ Wingate to Gorst, 31st July 1909, SAD 288/2/103.

⁹¹ Wingate to Zubayr at Helwan, Feb 1900, SAD 100/8/3, original. Typed copy (100/8/4) is fragmented.

think Kitchener would also be interested in brainstorming how to make Zubayr's situation better, despite Cromer.

I think it would be better if Zubeir refrained from renewing these [legal] tactics, but, on the other hand, I really feel something ought to be done for him so as to put his affairs on a sound footing before he dies. We have to some extent turned his private property into a Wakf. I am inclined to think that about L20,000 would satisfy his creditors and enable him to die in peace. I should much value your views before I reply.⁹²

Zubayr's final estate yielded little. His lands and properties were nearly worthless, debts owed him of 6000 LE were largely from bankrupt debtors, and debts he owed were about 27,000 LE, 9000 each to the National Bank of Egypt, the Sudan Government, and otherwise. Half of his 200 LE monthly pension was going to pay his debt to the National Bank of Egypt. An agreement stated that the remaining 100 LE was to be split between his widows and direct heirs, and on the death of any of them his portion would go to the National Bank of Egypt.⁹³

Jackson met Zubayr in the last couple of years of his life researching gaps left in Zubayr's life after translating Shuqayr's story of Zubayr published in 1900. He had to base his conclusions on the last part of Zubayr's life on what he saw as much as what Zubayr told him, however, since Zubayr seems to have committed himself to equating the story of his life to the story of his career that ended in 1875.

Jackson described Zubayr as an "A tottering and uxorious old Arab," using the tender word *uxorious* to contrast the absence of romance in Zubayr's story to his visible affection for the women in his life. Jackson seems to have used the word condescendingly as much as tenderly, as neither he nor other bureaucrats found the place to mention any of Zubayr's wives

⁹² Wingate to "Kitchener of Khartoum", 3 Whitehall Court SW, July 11, 1911, SAD 301/1/13.

⁹³ Sudan Legal Secretary to Wingate, September 23, 1913, SAD 187/3/171-77.

by name, at any point in Zubayr's life, with the unitary exception of a passenger list to Gibraltar.⁹⁴

Jackson wrote that Zubayr, then in 1912, "occasionally pays a visit to his house at Omdurman, when he wearies of his husbandry at Geili, or is satiated with the delights and dalliance of Cairo," and that "It is difficult to realize that this hoary veteran of at least eighty winters, this venerable, courteous old gentleman is the hero for hundred hard-won fights, who conquered, and held, a country that was larger than France."⁹⁵ Jackson's conclusions, like those of Shaw or even Wingate or Cromer, in the end boiled down to the overly simple statement that Zubayr was, for lack of a better word, a gentleman:

To few has it been given to experience so many favours or so great reversals at the hands of chanceful fortune; yet, neither intoxicated by her smiles nor depressed by her frowns, he has kept throughout his life the balance of a well-ordered mind. Not overelated by a sudden bestowal of her favours, nor dejected by their withdrawal, he remains, at the end of his variegated career, a courteous and polite old Arab, whose quiet and gentle manners would earn him, were it not somewhat banal, the title of a perfect gentleman.⁹⁶

Perhaps toward the end of a long life it becomes easier to show respect and harder to show anything else, but the kind of respect that Jackson showed to Zubayr, and the kind with which Zubayr was showered in the *Sudan Times*, and by Wingate, below, belie more than politeness:

The funeral of El Zubair Pasha Rahmat, who died at El Geili on Sunday night, was conducted on the following afternoon with the pomp which the fame of the man and his high standing among his countrymen deserved... There were also present the Grand Cadi, Grand Mufti...and hundreds of others, including officials and prominent foreigners and natives...A military band and half a company of troops were sent by the Government to take part in the funeral...The death of El Zubair Pasha removes one of the greatest men

⁹⁴ Jackson mentions that Zubayr claimed to have seventy sons, though one of his sons claimed that the total of sons and daughters was merely forty-nine. al-Zubair and Jackson, *Black Ivory*, 105.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

whom the Sudan has produced. Next to the names of the Mahdia and Khalifa, his name was more widely known than that of any other native of the Sudan.⁹⁷

“Poor old Zubeir,” Wingate wrote just after Zubayr’s death, “was ill only a few days and we did all we could for him, but the poor old man was clearly at the end of his tether.” Wingate’s tone, particularly “poor old man” is peculiar considering the invulnerable exterior that Zubayr managed to express to nearly every recorded observer, including Jackson, above, only a year earlier. “And now,” Wingate continued, “innumerable sons, daughters, wives, &c., are struggling over his more or less bankrupt estate.

I shall miss the fine old man greatly; he was a much misunderstood and much abused man, but undoubtedly he was far ahead of his time and, if the truth were known, did more to suppress the slave trade than any of our Anti-Slave Trade people at home – what a shock such a statement would be if made publicly and yet there is a great deal of truth in it.⁹⁸

Wingate’s words here are at first glance jarring. The idea that the slave king would be considered by the top British authority to be a “fine old man” rings as nearly a fantastic emotion. This was, it seems, more than Cannadine’s respect for martial races and native hierarchies.⁹⁹ Wingate seems to have been taken in by Zubayr’s logic, a logic that was in the framework of Europeans idiomatic at first. Indeed, such a statement would make quite a shock at home, because to understand this statement one would need more of an understanding not only of the way things worked in Sudan, but the way things worked on the periphery of empire; those looking at the periphery simply as periphery could not understand periphery as metropole to its own empire. Nearly thirty years after Zubayr and Gordon, the Mahdia come and gone, British policy in the Sudan mimicked the way Zubayr and Gordon proposed to rule Sudan.

⁹⁷ “Zubair Pasha,” *Sudan Times*, [n.d., clipping], SAD 245/3/11 SAD 245/3/11.

⁹⁸ Wingate to Acland in London, January 21, 1913 SAD 185/1/197.

⁹⁹ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 124–8.

"You would be perfectly right in saying," Wingate wrote Cromer six months after Zubayr's death, "that in so far as the Sudan is concerned we were most careful to avoid any references to the abolition of slavery in proclamations or laws. We went quietly to work."¹⁰⁰ Bonham Carter, then Legal Secretary of Sudan, having been similarly questioned by Wingate and Cromer about slavery in Condominium Sudan, wrote Wingate the following month that no coherent policy had yet been found: "The treatment of slaves is a matter as to which I have been intending to write to you for some time and I hope to do so before the end of my leave. There is considerable doubt amongst Governors as to the policy to be followed, and in consequence much variety in practice."¹⁰¹

Zubayr's relationship to the Condominium power structure toward the end of his life is a good example of how the Condominium functioned to bring stability to Sudan that was chaotic before and largely since. The Condominium was a uniquely federal system. Not only was power shared among layers of bureaucracy from local to regional to national, but was shared at the top between two different colonial powers. The Condominium was empire on the cheap, perhaps for the better for the loose structure, albeit backed up ultimately by one of the most powerful militaries in the world at the time, provided Sudan the benefits of Pax Britannica while preventing the development of a strong national government. It did not matter much if Bahr al-Ghazal or Darfur were part of Sudan, if ultimate sovereignty resided not in Khartoum but in Cairo and London.¹⁰² When the Condominium government ended in 1956, and sovereignty over southern Sudan and Darfur began to reside at Khartoum, the problems that have plagued Sudan

¹⁰⁰ Wingate to Cromer, July 27, 1913, SAD 187/1/235.

¹⁰¹ Bonham Carter to Wingate in London, August 1913, SAD 187/2/1.

¹⁰² As it hardly matters if Catalonia is part of Spain if Brussels controls them both.

since then accelerated themselves, including a quarter century-long civil war with the south, gross brutalities in Darfur, and the division of the country in 2010.

Conclusion

Though he was harangued by financial difficulties in the latter part of his life, and did not manage to procure himself any meaningful involvement in the scramble for Africa, the very last days of his life led Zubayr Pasha to a new sense of respect as British authorities failed to achieve with the might of the British empire what they expected of him alone. While previous authors on Zubayr have overlooked or barely touched on this period, considering it retirement and therefore not part of Zubayr's story proper, this chapter has proven that Zubayr in retirement gained a certain amount of respect from authorities. Newfound respect for Zubayr was not due to any change in Zubayr, but due to the experience of the Condominium administration that enforcing abolition required much more than belief that slavery should be abolished. Abolishing slavery in Sudan was nearly impossible for Wingate even as late as 1913, which shed new light on Zubayr's experience half a century earlier. This final stage in Zubayr's life adds a particularly poignant ending to a life in which his reputation shifted drastically through new interpretations of the same actions.

Epilogue

The Mahdist revolt in Sudan in 1884 provides a quandary: why did Africans revolt in defense of slavery? This study approaches the issue by analyzing the life of Zubayr Pasha, most well-known of Sudanese slave-traders in the decades leading to the Mahdist Revolt. What I found in interviews with him, parliamentary debates over him, articles about him, and proclamations concerning him, was that the emotional responses to his story show different perspectives on the processes of overlapping imperialisms, voluntary slavery, and a host of integrated issues. To himself he was a trader, a businessman working within the letter of the law; to others he symbolized either native brutality or realpolitik.

When Charles "Chinese" Gordon, who had helped put down the Taiping rebellion, began to doubt abolitionist imperialism and support Zubayr Pasha, he was seen by both politicians and the press as ignorant, atavistic, and mad. I argue in this dissertation that he was not mad, but rather understood Zubayr and Sudan too well to see slavery and imperialism as necessarily oppositional forces. Gordon understood what Zubayr understood, that imperialism and slavery are forms of exploitation, that slavery in its mildest forms and imperialism in its harshest were barely distinguishable, and that the Mahdist revolt had a clear internal logic: imperialism was the most destructive force in Sudan, and keeping localized slavery was helpful in freeing Sudan from its masters.

The misunderstandings surrounding Zubayr point to the moment in which a shift from a looser catch-as-catch-can form of imperialism was being replaced by a hegemonic form of imperialism. It was difficult for anyone on one side of that moment to understand those on the

other side, leading to confusion in the Commons, confusion at the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, confusion in the Foreign Office, confusion for the Khedive, and confusion for Zubayr.

The implications of this work are a new understanding of slavery and imperialism as more subtle and more related concepts than they are usually given credit for, making the Mahdist revolt less mysterious, and leading to a new understanding of the very different ways in which imperial power can be expressed.

I began this project in 2006. The ten years since then have been dramatic ones in South Sudan. South Sudan, including Bahr al-Ghazal, became part of Sudan through the process described in this dissertation, the process by which Zubayr brought the rule of Arabic speakers upon the non-Muslim non-Arab southerners. That Sudan existed between about 1875 and 2011. The Sudan that exists today, after Southern Sudan seceded, is more similar to the Sudan that existed between 1820 and 1875. South Sudan is again a place without a clearly dominant ethnic group, and while much more integrated into global networks of trade and information than it was in 1875, South Sudan is one of the most isolated, poorest, and least formally educated places on the globe.

This is not to say that South Sudan's fate as an independent nation was determined by its history, but as it happens political alignments mirroring ethnic differences have torn this newest and poorest nation into a new civil war. One reading of the current situation might lead one to see the work of Zubayr Pasha as having helped force unity and development on a region that is not capable of it alone. Another reading would say that the damage done by Zubayr Pasha has kept the region from developing at its own self-motivated pace, drained it of what little resources

it had, and stunted its growth. So it is with the history of the colonization of sub-Saharan Africa generally.

A more interesting argument, I think, would be to couch this not in the singular linear historical mold of the development paradigm, but in seeing development and imperialism as parts of the same process. I have shown in this dissertation that imperialism is a more complex process than merely periphery and metropole. Imperialism includes peripheries of peripheries, metropolises controlled by greater metropolises, and myriad ad hoc power sharing agreements between metropolises. The process is so dynamic as to be nearly incomprehensible. Did the Spanish and Portuguese empires decline as British and French empires grew, or would it be clearer to see these all as aspects of a singular European imperial project?

If we see European imperialism as one project, from Bartholemeu Dias, or perhaps from the Crusades, and into the current American period, then the development of South Sudan and Africa in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries can be seen not as a singular linear process, but as one of various cycles of imperialism in which parts of Africa have been integrated into empires. The ancient Egyptian empire lasted far longer than this European imperial period, and included Eritrea and Sudan among other places. In order to understand imperialism better, we need to understand that European imperialism is only one example of it. Zubayr's and the Mahdi's empires fit into different molds.

Appendices

Gordon's Plan for Zubayr

Gordon at Khartoum telegram to Baring, Feb 18, 1884, FO 78 5195, my 3542.

In a previous memorandum I alluded to the arrival of an epoch when whites, fellahin, troops, civilian employees, women and children of deceased soldiers – in short the Egyptian element in Soudan, will be removed; when we shall be face to face with the Soudan administration; and when I must withdraw from the Soudan. I have stated that to withdraw without being able to place a successor in my seat, would be the signal for general anarchy throughout the country, which though all Egyptian element was withdrawn, would be a misfortune, and inhuman.

Also, I have stated that even if I placed a man in my seat unsupported by any government, the same anarchy would ensue.

Of the three governments which could give moral countenance and support, that is to say, nominal sovereignty without expenditure of money or troops, or any responsibility, we have the choice of Her Majesty's government, of the Khedive's government, and of the Sultan's government. As for the Sultan's government, it is out of the question. As for the Khedive's government, to me it would be very unwise to allow the clique at Cairo to have anything to say to the Soudan, for it is certain that this clique would intrigue even in the Soudan and would influence the governor general of the Soudan, by insidious means, to do what the Cairo clique wished. Also, but letter and by emissary, they would be even working against him, and interfering with him in such a manner as to force him into a line of action which suited them. Therefore I would pronounce against my successor having his commission, as my successor, from the Khedive.

There thus remains Her Majesty's government, who, I think, could do without responsibility in money or men, give the commission to my successor on certain terms which I will detail hereafter. If this solution is examined, we shall find that a somewhat analogous case exists in Afghanistan, where H.M. Gov't give moral support to the Emir, and even go beyond that in giving the Emir a subsidy which would not be needed in the present case.

I distinctly state that if H. M. Gov't gave a commission to my successor, I recommend neither a subsidy nor men being given. I would select & give a commission to some man, and promise him the moral support of H.M. Gov't and nothing more.

It may be agreed that H. M. Gov't would thus be giving nominal and moral support to a man who will rule over a slave state, but so is Afghanistan, as also Socotra.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Socotra is an island off of the coast of Yemen, under British protection from 1876, part of Yemen since

Seeing the inevitable break-up of the Turkish empire, it would seem to be most important to have such a large proportion of Arab speaking lands nominally under our control, as the Soudan; more especially as it effects all the Hejaz owing to its proximity to Mecca.

Our hold on Egypt would be strengthened by such a Protectorate. This nomination of my successor must, I think, be direct from H. M. Gov't. The Khedive's Government should be plainly told that any question between the Soudan and itself, must be through H. M. Gov't. As for the man, H. M. Gov't should select one above all others, namely Zobier. He alone has the ability to rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the Soudan. He should be made K.C.M.G.,¹⁰⁴ and given presents. The terms of the nomination should be as follows:

Engagement not to go into Equatorial or Bahr Gazelle provinces, and which I should evacuate.

Engagement not to go into Darfour.

Engagement, on payment of L200 annually, to telegraph height of Nile to Cairo.

Engagement to remain at peace with Abyssinia.

Engagement not to levy duties beyond 4 percent on imports or exports. Of course he will not have Sawakin or Massowah [Red Sea ports].

Engagement not to pursue anyone who was engaged in suppressing his son's revolt.¹⁰⁵

Engagement to pay the pensions granted by the Egyptian government to old employees.

To the above may be added other clauses as seem fit.

Post Scripture: I think the decision of any Council of Notables for the selection of candidates for the post of my successor would be useless.

Zobeir's exile at Cairo for 10 years amidst all the late events and his mixing with Europeans must have had great effect on his character, and convinced him, if he had not known it before, of the corrupt nature of the Khedival Government. Zobeir's nomination under the moral countenance of Her Majesty's Government would bring all merchants, European and others, back to the Soudan in a short time.

Gordon

I have asked Stewart to give his opinion independently of mine, in order to prevent a one-sided view. He is a first-rate man. Gordon

1967.

¹⁰⁴ Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, a typical ceremonial knighthood appointment for those working for the British empire overseas.

¹⁰⁵ See section on Suleiman Zubayr.

Ribblesdale's analysis of Zubayr and slavery

Ribblesdale, *Impressions and Memories*, 143-147.

It will be remembered that at this time in England much turned upon Zobebr's antecedents as a slave-dealer. Some people declared he was not a *bona fide* slave-dealer. Well, perhaps not—to the extent that the chairman of the Army and Navy stores is not a grocer or a gunmaker, or that a director of a gold-mine is not a pick and shovel miner. But there can be little doubt that Zobebr had regulated and protected and policed, and indirectly financed, the slave trade in the Equatorial Provinces; that his settlement—Dem-Zebehr—was, as it were, the metropolis and the clearing-house of the slave industry; that the considerable revenue he administered during the years of his power and rule in the Soudan was mainly levied on duties of different kinds and degree imposed upon slave-dealers and caravans—Arab and Egyptian alike; and that his influence was due to his aptitude in systematizing a common and lucrative interest. No doubt Zobebr was a large trader in other things—in ivory, gums, ostrich feathers, gold dust, precious stones, and I think, rubber and hides to a small extent; but the pulse of the machine was the slave trade.

...[then goes off topic to describe Zubayr's beginnings in business and his love of tracing his ancestry dozens of generations]...

Zobebr Pasha had definite notions of the actual causes of the revolt in the Soudan. The slave question was at once religious and economic. To paraphrase and summarize what he told me (I again have recourse to my private notes): Taking away the slaves is associated with money, stopping the trade with religion. For instance, Reouf Pasha had slaves taken away from him by force, and many others, the owners not only being compensated, but being thrown into prison: to get out they had to pay ransom. As to the second matter—religion—by the Mohammedan religion slaves are allowed; their position is laid down by the Koran, so trade is allowed. Later on you (the English) may be able by degrees to do away with the present customs, but these at present are looked upon as sacred and as belonging to religion. The owner will have to be paid much compensation, and a fixed labour wage will have to be made throughout the districts.

Pall Mall Gazette articles

ZEBEHR OR GORDON?

[*Pall Mall Gazette* 10 March 1884]

The problem of the future government of Khartoum and the Niles can no longer be shirked. It must be aced, and faced at once. General GORDON's position is compromised by postponement. The rescue of the garrisons is imperiled. The whole of the ministerial policy in the Soudan is in danger of a disastrous catastrophe. In a remarkable communication, which in one sense may be regarded as an ultimatum, General GORDON has communicated to the Government and to the public a demand for an immediate decision. Its substance is that he can do no more to extricate the garrisons until he is permitted to begin to establish a permanent Government at Khartoum. He is, in short, checkmated, owing to the indecision of the Government. The whole game is thrown into the Mahdi's hands. The Mahdi would be a nonentity outside Obeid if it were not for England's refusal to allow General GORDON to establish a permanent Government at Khartoum. As it is, the Mahdi, through his emissaries, is now all-powerful, and they will probably raise the tribes between Khartoum and Berber, thereby severing both the garrisons' line of retreat and their communications with the base of supplies. Until England allows him to establish a permanent Government at Khartoum nothing can be done.

This is a very serious intimation, and one that will no doubt receive the immediate and careful consideration of the Cabinet. Their policy hitherto—and it is the only part of their Egyptian policy which has been attended by any considerable measure of success—has been to trust General GORDON. By a curious coincidence, on the day on which General GORDON was communicating his views to the Times correspondent, Ministers were asseverating in both Houses their implicit confidence in their representative at Khartoum. “Was it possible,” asked Lord KIMBERLY, “to conceive an operation of greater difficulty than that in which General GORDON was engaged, or one in which they must more completely trust the man they employed? It was out of the question for the Government at home to devise the exact measures by which he was to succeed.” This is sound doctrine. Now the time has come for its application. The Government completely trusts General GORDON, but it checkmates him, and throws the game into the hands of the Mahdi, by refusing, in spite of his urgent representations, to allow him to take any effective step towards the establishment of a permanent Government at Khartoum. The reason for this is notorious. The Ministry would gladly see a native Government established at Khartoum, but it cannot bring itself to accept the only native ruler whom General GORDON believes would have a chance of success. In other words the Government recoils in horror from making ZEBEHR, “the scourge of Central Africa,” Sultan of the Soudan. This is very natural, although very illogical. Ministers have not yet decided who is to have the Soudan. They have only decided that it is no longer to belong to the Egyptian Government. But from that negative decision they must proceed without delay to a positive declaration in favour of some mode of government in place of that which they have sent General GORDON out to destroy. Otherwise, General GORDON tells them plainly, everything will miscarry, and therefore he insists, with his customary uncompromising directness that he must be allowed to appoint ZEBEHR. The Government therefore must either allow him to appoint ZEBEHR or suggest a practical alternative. They can no longer let matters drag on in the hope that something will turn

up. There is no chance of “dawdling out of it somehow,” to quote a phrase with which the Foreign Office is not unfamiliar. They must decide in favour of ZEBEHR or of some one else, and the decision must be taken at once.

Now, we say quite frankly that we do not think the English public will stand for ZEBEHR. It is the logical outcome of the policy which they have accepted, but the nation is not logical, and it will not have the King of Slave-traders at any price. What, then, must Ministers do? Their policy leads directly to the appointment of ZEBEHR, but upon that appointment there is placed the interdict of public opinion. Hitherto they have shirked the question. They can do so no longer. They must either veto ZEBEHR or accept him. If they veto his appointment, they must put forward an alternative ruler. That they will veto ZEBEHR we believe is a foregone conclusion. Who, then, is their alternative man? Alternative native there is none. Khartoum has been Egyptian for seventy years. There is no dispossessed Sultan to be restored. There is no local authority competent to take over the government of the capital of the Soudan and the control of the Niles. After all that has been said about the horrors of Egyptian rule, we cannot send either Turk, Kurd, Anatolian, or Circassian to lord it over the Soudanese. The alternative, therefore, is either ZEBEHR or European, and ZEBEHR being ruled out as impossible the appointment of a European becomes Hobson's choice. If this be at once firmly grasped, there will be no difficulty in coming to a conclusion as to who the European ruler of Khartoum must be. There is only one man competent for the post, and that man is already on the spot. In other words, the Government when they forbid the establishment of ZEBEHR will have to request General GORDON to undertake the formation of a permanent Government at Khartoum of which he must be the head.

General GORDON of course will object. He does not want to stay at Khartoum. His heart is on the Congo. But General GORDON is not a man who does what he likes when it conflicts with the imperative call of duty. He does what he ought; and that he ought to remain, if an opportunity is at once afforded him, is as clear as the sun at noonday. “I would lay down my life for these poor Sudanese,” he has repeatedly declared; and for their sake he will be willing to forego for a time even the realization of his plans for the Congo expedition. There is a great, an unequalled opportunity before him of establishing a civilized empire in the heart of Africa, where he would reign absolutely uncontrolled, as independent of England as of Egypt. He will not destroy of his own will the only chance of saving the Soudan. For the Soudanese, even General GORDON must admit, it would be better to be ruled by him with the duty which he wishes to thrust upon ZEBEHR they need not fear that he will prove unworthy of the post. And he would be unworthy of it indeed, if when such a duty was imposed upon him he were still to insist upon handing over “his poor flock in the Soudan” to the tender mercies of ZEBEHR, the King of the Slave Traders and the Scourge of Central Africa.

ZEBEHR FOR THE SOUDAN

[*Pall Mall Gazette* 7 March 1884]

In both Houses of Parliament last night there was a good deal of discussion about the future of Khartoum and the Eastern Soudan. The meaning of the total evacuation of Khartoum is beginning to be understood, and both Ministers and Opposition recoil from the logical alternative of the policy which has been forced upon the Egyptian Government. But Ministers should have the courage of their opinions, and carry out the policy to which they are committed to its logical conclusion.

ZEBEHR for the Soudan! That is the logical alternative to the complete evacuation of Khartoum. We are entirely in favour of the evacuation of the Soudan by the Egyptian troops, even if it involves the establishment of ZEBEHR as Emperor at Khartoum, unless it is distinctly understood that, in the future, Egyptian administration is to mean Anglo-Egyptian administration, not for to-day or to-morrow, but in perpetuity. That is to say, we do not believe that if Egypt were ours as India is ours we would listen for a single moment to a proposal to abandon Khartoum and the control of the Nile highway into Central Africa. The region between the Niles and that which stretches from Khartoum to Abyssinia is one of the most fertile countries in the world, and if it were once in our possession we should never dream of letting it go. The Egyptians, however, cannot govern it. They only make matters worse by adding Bashi-Bazoukery to the slave trade, and as the official theory is that they are before long to be freed from English tutelage, it is better to get rid of them as the first step towards the amelioration of the condition of the Soudanese. That is General GORDON's opinion. His memorandum on which Mr. GLADSTONE rightly laid great stress starts from the position that "her Majesty's Government have come to the irrevocable decision not to incur the very onerous duty of securing to the peoples of the Soudan a just future Government." That being the postulate, he heartily concurs in the policy of evacuation. But if that "irrevocable decision" were modified so far as to allow him a free hand to use private Englishmen in securing the peoples of the Soudan "a just future Government," we may depend upon it that General GORDON would very speedily modify his views about the morality of abandoning the Eastern Soudan to the general scramble. "It would be a pity," he wrote in 1880, "to lose a country like the region of the Upper Nile, and it is just as important to govern the Soudan well as it is to govern Egypt well—the one being the head and the chest, the other the stomach and the legs. Insist on the control of the Soudan. Do not lose the Soudan, that is my prayer." When he was at Southampton no one could have denounced more energetically the proposal to abandon Khartoum and the Upper Nile, and that we fully believe represents his real opinion. It is only because he thinks the stopping of Bashi-Bazoukery a clear gain, that he heartily co-operates in the policy of the Government. As for his view that the Soudan is not worth keeping—give him a chance to keep it, not for he Turks and Egyptians, but for such a civilized Government as he could set up independent of England, but under the control of Englishmen, and see what he thinks of it then.

Sarawak the Soudan. That is the true solution, and the only solution which has yet been suggested for saving on of the greatest waterways of the world from passing into the control of the slave traders. But at present we fear that the Government shrink from adopting this solution. When the Egyptian garrisons leave the Soudan, General GORDON is to come away as well, and the Soudan is to be left to the Soudanese. That is the policy which General GORDON is sent out to

execute. He is “to cut off the dog’s tail” *coute que coute*. But from the consequences of handing the Soudan over to the Soudanese without creating any strong power at Khartoum to maintain order among the petty Sultans whom he is setting up along the banks of the Nile General GORDON recoils in horror. It would mean universal throat-cutting tempered by constant slave raid. Each petty Sultan would organize man hunts on his neighbor’s subjects, and the valley of the Niles would be the cockpit of a continent. To give the new arrangement any chance of success, the ruler of Khartoum must be a strong, capable man, and, as the establishment of an Englishman appears to be excluded, General GORDON, with his customary fearlessness and contempt for “ill-informed Europe,” insists upon the appointment of ZEBEHR, as the ablest and most powerful of the Soudanese, as ruler of the Soudan. In this he is strictly logical and absolutely right, and grave indeed will be the responsibility of any Government which, while vetoing the continuance of General GORDON’s own rule, vetoes at the same time the appointment of the only native whom General GORDON finds capable of preventing universal bloodshed.

IN an address which the Positivist Society have just issued they appeal to all true patriots and really religious people to come forward and encourage Mr. GLADSTONE in doing what is right in Egypt. And this is what the Positivists say is right: “We should limit ourselves to ascertaining with all speed what elements of force exist in the country and to installing the ruler who most represent them.” If this be right at Cairo it is still more imperative at Khartoum. Now, there is no doubt who most represents the elements of force existing in the Soudan. The only natural elements of force left when the garrisons clear out are the slave traders. Soudan for the Soudanese is only an euphemism for Soudan for the slave traders. That is the declared policy of the Government. Why not, then, install the King of the Slave-traders as Sultan of the Soudan? If we stand aside and leave him free, he will fight his way to the top. It would be more sensible and much more humane to ace him there at once. He will be none the more a LEGREE because we have spared the Soudan the preliminary bloodshed of the process of natural selection. He will make the Nile the great route of slave caravans, and he will make Khartoum the great slave mart of Eastern Africa. That is of course. But all that, and worse than that, will follow the other policy to which the Government seems to incline. The true way out is to allow Gordon to remain an independent Lord Protector of Khartoum and of the Nile Highway; but, if that is rejected, then let the unpopularity of sending out as Sultan of Khartoum its natural ruler, ZEBEHR, tiger though he be.

Letter from Zubayr to Suleiman

Letter from Zubayr to his son Suleiman¹⁰⁶

translation of a copy of a letter written by Zubeir Rahmat Pasha el Abbasi in Cairo to his son Suleiman in the Bahrel-Gahzal dated 25th el Higga 1295 (20th Dec 1878)

My dear son

You remember that when HH the Khedive graciously accepted my application to come to see him in Cairo I summoned you and gave you strict injunctions that you should obey and follow out the instructions of the government, that you should comply with all their restrictions, be they great or small; that you should avoid doing that which is forbidden and that you should in no way act contrary to the government – in order that it may be entirely satisfied with you and thus increase in honour and praise. I explained to you all that was needful as that when we parted, effect certain that you had long ago accepted my advice and that you would act up to it and fulfill it even better than other sons carry out the command of their fathers and this because I educated you well and because of my paternal right over you which are recognized in many passages of the Holy Koran.

Again, on my arrival in Cairo and again the departure of Ismail Pasha Ayub from the Sudan, of the appointment of Gessi Pasha to the position of Governor General in his place, I asked Gordon Pasha to take good care of you. I had clearly told you to obey his orders, cautioned you against contradicting him and impressed upon you that his satisfaction was the same as the satisfaction of HH The Khedive as was also his dissatisfaction.

I spared no advice wherein I considered tended to your purposes and welfare.

On the arrival of the government at that capital he went to you to detain the troops necessary to quell the insurrection in Darfour. If you had your duty and complied with his wishes and at the head of 400 men you yourself proceeded to meet him in Darfour, so I heard, and on meeting him and when he took over the soldiers from you and dismisses you, you went by my advice and in obedience to his orders; and in so during the government wishes to put your loyalty to the test, for, on your return to Shakka he at once followed you there and gratified you by granting you the rank of Kaminkam, appointing you wakil amm (governor general) of the Bahr el Ghazal & Rohl-. He also reported your good conduct and obedience to the Cabinet of HH the Khedive, and on account of his report HH the Khedive thanked you for your loyalty. When I heard of this in the country of the Turks I was as greatly pleased – I thanked you and felt pleased with you that you had followed my advice.

¹⁰⁶ FO 78/4679, also a copy in SAD 110/3/102.

But on my return from the country of the Turks [the Balkans] to Cairo, I received a telegram from Mohammed Bey el-Akkad, (he having been instructed by the government to do so) in which he reported to me your disobedience of the orders of the governor general of the Sudan and asking me to write to you to tell you to desist from your disobedience – if what has been reported of about you is true- and letting me send a letter to you through him – I have therefore written this to you which contains all that is needful and I shall dispatch it this day to Muhammad Bey el Akkad in Khartoum, so that through him and by means of the government it will reach you, and by that time may it be found that all that has been reported of about you is false and that you are in a state of prosperity obeying the orders of the governor.

But the information communicated to us by the telegram from Mohammed Bey el Akkad caused me great anxiety and made me full of sorrow and I immediately sent you a telegram through the said Bey telling you briefly that was needful and asking you to clear yourself of the accusations made of about you by slanderers who are evil-doers in the world.

And if – God forbid! - you have done anything wrong, you must immediately desist from doing so- abandoning all such ideas, by showing submission and asking the pardon of the governor-general – and if you do not comply with our order to you by showing obedience and absolute submission to the orders and restrictions of the government in accordance with the wishes of Gordon Pasha, then may the anger of god and of myself fall upon you!

Whilst hoping to hear good news of you- news which would please me and for which I hope day and night – I hear from a good source that your servant Idris Ebter the Dongolawi, had attacked you in your station with a military force of over 3000 men – regulars and irregulars and owing to his pride, transgression and infraction in fighting the head and salt and favors we bestowed upon him,- God frustrated him and he returned unsuccessful – But in so doing, he has made a great breach between you and the government and you are sure to suffer harm from this (“We are God's and to Him we must return!) - I was indeed greatly surprised to hear of this, for it is a false step and one which would never have been taken by a man of sound mind and good heart. It would only have been taken by one who has been led astray from the right path and has shut his ears to God's words.

But what you yourself have done, even though you were forced to do it by circumstances, and in self-defense is a great thing and is full of dangerous results – specially as it has emanated from one like you, O Suleiman! Who has been brought up in the service of the government in which your father and grand-father have served before you and have been honored and received high ranks – moreover you and I have served His Highness in loyalty and faithfully by our good conduct and high character so that our names became celebrated far and wide. - After all this, would it then be wise for us to dare to take such a step which would bring us down to the ground – Do you know that the government is great, its hand is stretched out and it can seize him whom it desires to catch. Several armies who have opposed it have even been defeated – and those who have extended their powers by ambition have been brought low.

What then do you mean by taking such an ill-advised step and what do you expect will be its result. - If these evil imaginings are the creation of your own mind, then cast them aside as they are valueless; if they have been put into you by evil-doers who have represented to you by false reports that your father has been imprisoned in Cairo and then killed -God forbid that such

should be the generosity of the government! Indeed I am still living in great honor and held in high respect by H.H. The Khedive this honorable man and in the palace destined for the Khedive's guests, where I and my followers and my servants are in complete tranquility. Believe this to be true, know it to be a fact and cast aside the tales of scandal-mongers, do not listen to such reports which may result in a degradation to myself as well as to yourself and to all our followers. But what is ever a greater mistake, is not listening to my advice to you to obey the government and fulfill all its injunctions.

I have fully cautioned you not to be disobedient; for in accordance with God's laws it is said "Obey God, obey the Prophet, and obey your Governors." -What then would be the answer before God in the Last Day – there is now way in which to be saved.

Consider therefore what best tends to your honor and to my honor, and cast aside all your intuitions for no good will result from these.

And in order to be certain that you will alter your conduct and in order to make you quite at ease as regards myself, I have detailed from there as a messenger to you your own brother Mohammed Adam and have sent him with this letter, as I am anxious that it should reach you and I expect that, as soon as you receive it, you will act in accordance with its contents. You may also converse with the above mentioned brother regarding the contents of this letter concerning my health and perfect comfort here. You should at once come with him to see Gordon Pasha, the governor general of the Sudan, wherever he may be in Darfur or Khartoum – and when he sees you he will be pleased and will treat you in a kingly manner -as the honor of the British Government and his good character will bind him to hold good my request to him concerning you – as I have handed you over to him and placed you entirely in his hands when he last left Cairo for the Sudan as governor-general – God is the witness of all I say – in Him is all prosperity and good.

(sgd) Zubeir Rahmat Pasha el-Abbassi.

Enclosed in Lord Cromer's Dispatch no 14 of January 26, 1894.

Images

Image 1: Portrait of Zubayr from late in his life.

Sudan Archive at Durham, SAD 001-022-071



Image 2: Zubayr at an Anglo-Egyptian ceremony.

Sudan Archive at Durham, SAD photo A27-84



Image 3: Zubayr's signature and seal.

National Archives of the UK, FO 78 4196

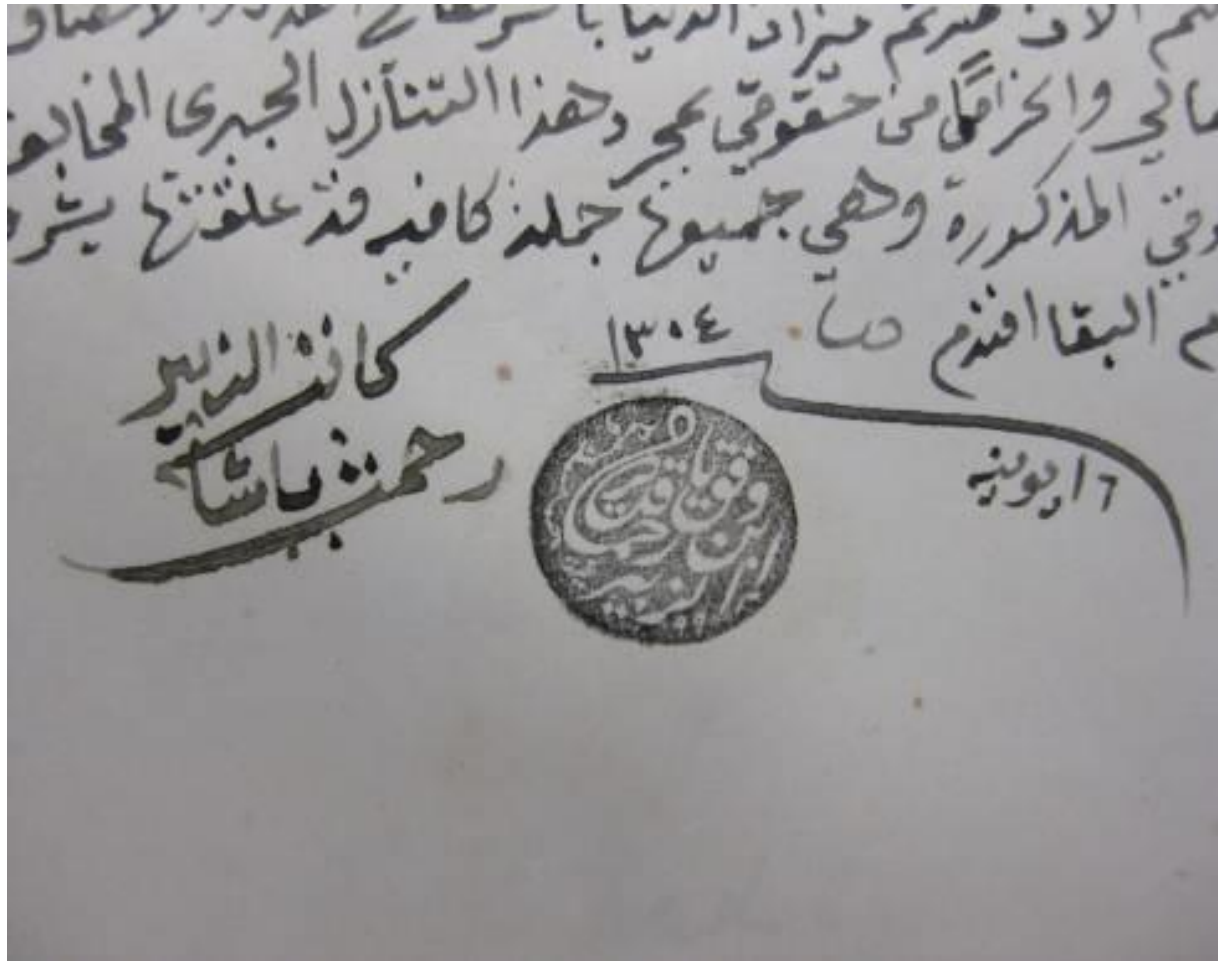


Image 4: Map by J.T. Wills,
 included in letter in which he advised against Zubayr's release from Gibraltar, March 1887
 National Archives of the UK, FO 78 4196

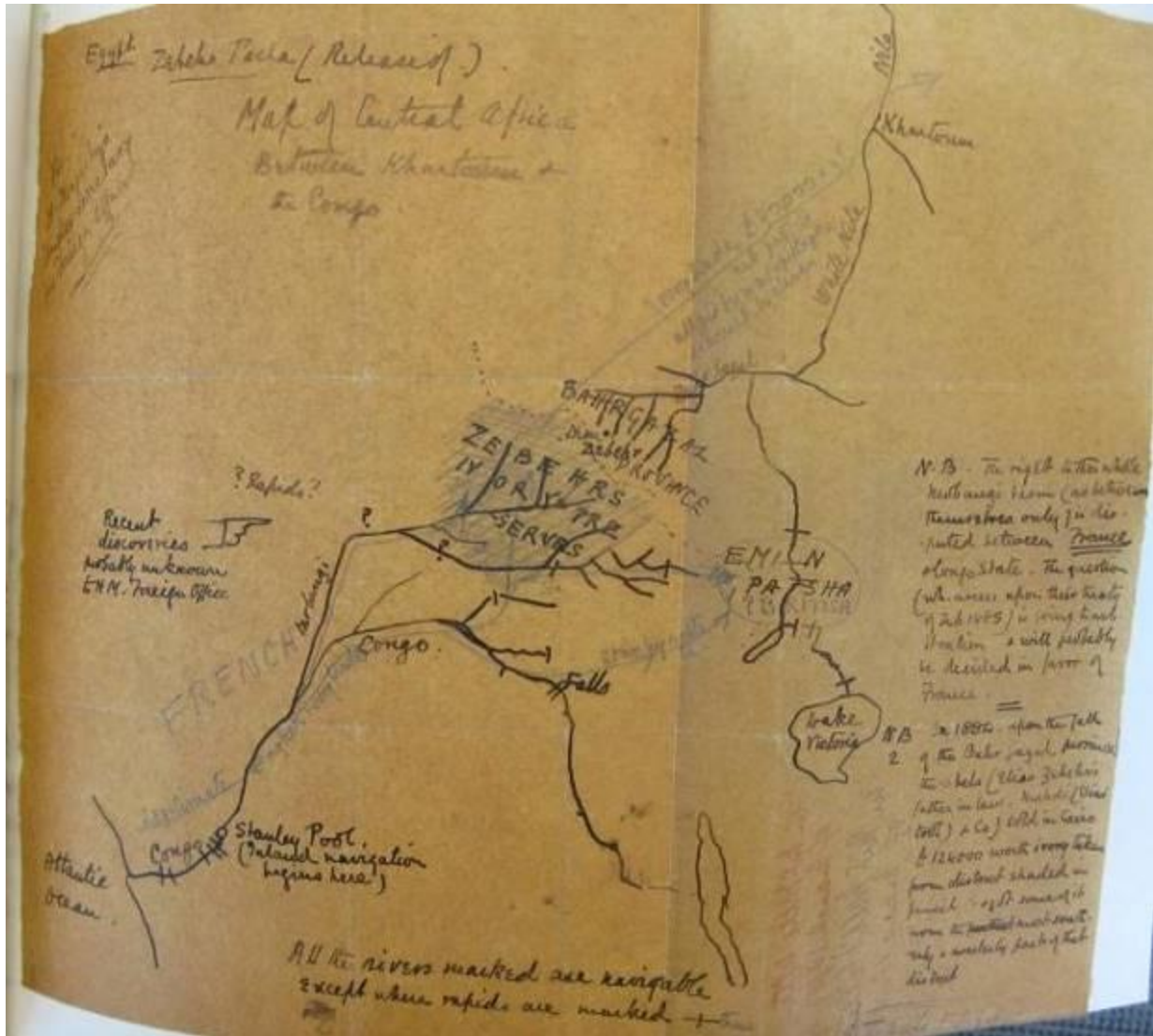


Image 5: Lord Ribblesdale in his 1902 portrait by John Singer Sargent

National Gallery of the UK, accession number NG3044



Image 6: 1913 Letter from Sir Reginald Wingate,

Sirdar of the Sudan, to Theodore Dyke Acland, his medical adviser, 21 Jan 1913.

Sudan Archive at Durham, SAD 185/1/197

Poor old Zubeir was ill only a few days and we did all we could for him, but the poor old man was clearly at the end of his tether, and now innumerable sons, daughters, wives, &c., are struggling over his more or less bankrupt estate. I shall miss the fine old man greatly; he was a much misunderstood and much abused man, but undoubtedly he was far

ahead of his times and, if the truth were known, did more to suppress the slave trade than any of our Anti-Slave Trade people at home - what a shock such a statement would be if made publicly and yet there is a great deal of truth in it.

Image 7: BFASS statement on Zubayr

UK National Archives, FO 4194

British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society
27, New Broad Street,
LONDON, E.C., 4th Dec^r 1885

To the right Honorable
The Earl of Granville, Kt. &c &c
Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs Secy

My Lord,

The Committee of this Society beg to
call the attention of your Lordship to the
late telegrams that have appeared in the
daily press stating that Sebehr Pasha
(variously spell in different telegrams but
whose real name is Sebehr-Rubama-
Gyenne - Abel) has been appointed
to the command of the Egyptian Army
destined to proceed to the Sudan

The Committee of the Anti-Slavery
Society feel bound to ask your
Lordship to protest against the
appointment of this man by the
Egyptian Government to such a
command; In this step they
consider themselves fully justified

2 1885 3

*Recd in Telegrams
Dec 5.*

Image 8: Gordon's pamphlet on Zubayr (first page only)

Dar al-Kutub at Bab al-Khalq microfilm 26582

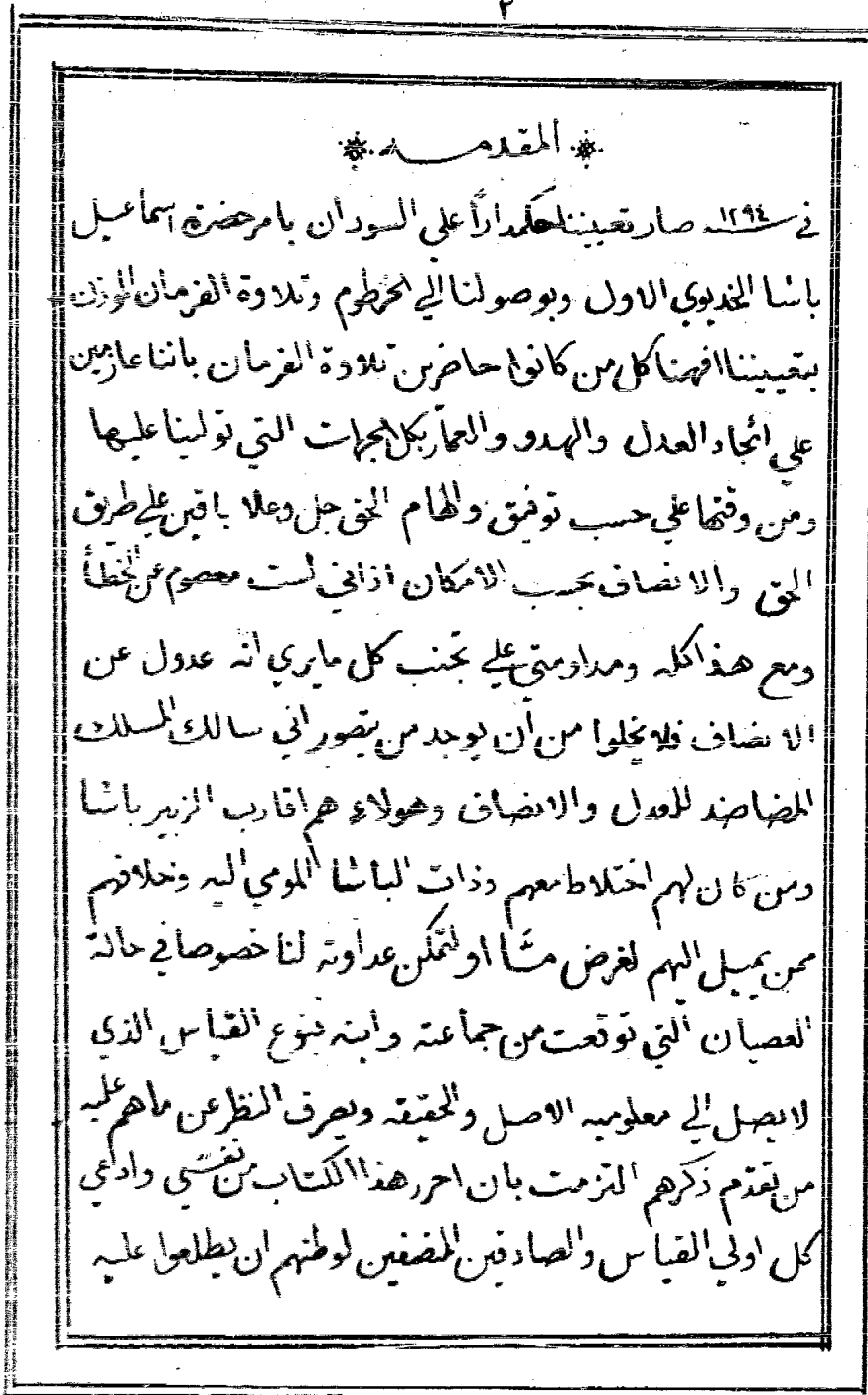


Image 9: Letter from Zubayr offering a horse to Sir Reginald Wingate as a gift in 1896.

Sudan Archive in Durham, SAD 261/1/261

261/1/261
يوم الخميس الموافق ١٩ مارس ١٩٠٠

الى عالي المعالي الوافد بالسلامة والرحمة من الامير العليم جناب الامير الاكبر محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن فيصل بن عبدالعزيز
بعد السلام اللطيف بقلوبكم عندي كل الاحترام وهو ان قد استوفيت في زيارتي
عندكم في يوم ١٩ من تاريخ ١٩٠٠ في صديقي جواكم رسول مخصوص من دياركم في بيوتكم
طلب مخلوق كما زادوا في كل المنوية والاشواق القلبية حالاً كئيباً وكئيلاً كئيباً
بغير المخلوق الموجوده بالقرن في كمال الازمان على ذلك طلبكم حسب ما كانا كانت بمحور
مدته من يدته غير مشغول في شئ من الاعمال في يوم السبت القابل او يوم الاحد الموافق
١٩ مارس سنة ١٩٠٠ في هذا المكان من الامر المخلوق اما من خصوص امره من الخلد الجيد في نقل
قد علمت في هذا الامر في الخيرات بالتفصيل والخبر اليقين ومرتبه في حاسره وراود عوت الله تعالى بغيركم
وظهوركم علي من ايدايكم وسلفه من يسلكه بالطعام وكمال الاقتبال ويكون في عونكم ومساعدكم وعلي
هذا ومن حيث انني ياوتيد بيكر اني وحبيب صديقا قلبا وجسماد اعلمي الحقيقة لم عندكم حصان
ركوب بخلاف حصان البرية فير هو اهد خوكم وصداقت محبتكم ترسلوا عن خصوص ياخذ الحصان يداعي
الموجود ركوب عندي بخلاف الحصان فير هو اهد خوكم وصداقت محبتكم ترسلوا عن خصوص ياخذ الحصان يداعي
ويقوم برحمتكم في السفر والركابة البرية ومن عتلي في ما عليه ان يسلمد خوكم في هذه الحال المزمرة وعلايتها
منضمة علي العموم فاذا وافقت قبول الحصان المذكور من المخلوق اكون انا في رعاية هذا المنوية والرضا
التام من حيث خوكم هذا ما لزم وفيه السلام ختام اقدم في ١٩ مارس ١٩٠٠

محمد بن عبد الرحمن
بن فيصل
بن عبدالعزيز

(4411)
Box 261

Image 10: Zubayr's 1899 demand for Egyptian government help in resituating himself in Sudan

Sudan Archive in Durham, SAD 100/2/1

عن بيان ما حصل لي خاصة من صنایع المعروف وزيادة الاتعانت الملوکی بالمساعدات الجمه الذی سماع
 وذاع امرها وملا الاسماع بمصر والسودان وذلك من دولت بريطانيا العظمى والانجليزية وواسطهم حياشرة
 وزيرها الاعظم وسر دارها الاكرم حاكم عموم ممالك السودان وبيان ما ذكر من صنایع المعروف اذناه

اولا حضوري لاوطاني بجميع عابتي مفرزا مكرما على طرفه الحكومة بغاية الراحة التامة بعد سبي وجرى
 في مصر سنة هجرية بوظنة الحكومة المصرية

ثانيا بوظنة دولتكم وجبله مكارمكم الغريزية الانجليزية قد اعطيني عشرة الاف جنيه مصري لستر حاجتي
 واحوالي سلفه من البند الاهلي بنفايت في المايه مع ان الذوات اهل القبي والثره ياخذون
 من البوكة بمصر والاكندرية بنفايت في المايه

ثالثا لما صار وصولي مع عابتي هنا باوطاني قد انفت على بدوا تقديم طلب مني بمائة وخمسون روية غلال
 اكراما من دولتكم بدونا مقابل وامرنا ايضا باعطاي ما يتعين قطع حطب عمارتنا وساقية نجسرت
 من حناب ورجع بك

رابعا السلفه الثانية من البند الاهلي الذي قد رها لكم الاما وكسور بنفايت شرح قبل عند عودتي
 لمصر شري الثلاثة وابورتي

خامسا تسهيل وترحيل الوابورث الثلاثة على طرفه الحكومة مجانا من السلال الي اوطانهم

سادسا قد اعطيني اكدن مبلغ ثمان مائة جنيه مصري لتتيمم عمارتي بالسودان فلي ذك المرحة العقبه النشفة
 الملوکی اشكر دولتكم شكرا يعوق حرص ويزداد نهماه مادامت حياتي باقية مدي الدهر والزمان
 والله تعالى القادر المريد اسأله واستعين به على مكافاتكم بكل ما يمكن من التزامات التي تفرم وتجب
 رضا دولتكم على لانان بذلك كل خير واسلم من كل ضير والله نسأله الاعانة والتوفيق على ذلك
 انه على ما يشاء قبره وبالاجابة جدير اخذتم

كلان الزينو
 حسان باشا

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Image 12: Example of Abdul Rassool's handwriting.

FO 4196

25, January, 1888.

My Lord,

I take the liberty of drawing your Lordship's attention to the inclosed Correspondence and of soliciting a favourable reply to the request which I ventured to make therein,

Further, it is now well-known in the world that, merely by your Lordship's mercy and Generosity, poor *Yahya* has been carried in Cairo

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FO 4196: Turkey (Egypt): Zebehr Pasha- imprisonment and proposed employment of, June 1887-8 (vol 3)

FO 633 98 Zobeir Correspondence (yes, spelled differently than above).

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