
Heritage-making and Policies of Identity in the “Post-conflict Reconstruction” of Sudan

*Patrimonialisation et politiques identitaires dans la reconstruction « post-
conflit » du Soudan*

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ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ

HERITAGE-MAKING AND POLICIES OF IDENTITY IN THE “POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION” OF SUDAN

This article critically examines the political instrumentalisation of identity and cultural heritage in the Sudanese context. After 50 years of civil wars portrayed as a conflict of identities, cultural identity is supposedly being used in an opposite way. The peace implementation process following the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, invokes cultural identity for a wide societal project of reconciliation through the recognition of cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity through a policy of cultural heritage-making. Museums are being constructed and new fields of heritage, such as intangible heritage, are being created. Through the assessment of the concept of heritage as a mean of political recognition, it will be possible to understand how the Sudanese authorities, as well as dissident groups, are using the heritage-making process as a political resource and a means for pacification or, on the contrary, for political contestation.

PATRIMONIALISATION ET POLITIQUES IDENTITAIRES DANS LA RECONSTRUCTION « POST-CONFLIT » DU SOUDAN

Cet article analyse l'instrumentalisation à des fins politiques du patrimoine et du concept d'identité culturels dans le contexte soudanais. Après la signature de l'Accord de paix global en 2005 mettant fin à 50 années de guerres civiles décrites comme des conflits d'identités, le processus de paix mis en œuvre invoque l'identité culturelle pour servir un vaste projet sociétal de réconciliation. Celui-ci prévoit la reconnaissance de la diversité culturelle, religieuse et linguistique du pays à travers une politique de patrimonialisation. Des musées sont en cours de construction et de nouveaux champs patrimoniaux, comme le patrimoine immatériel, sont inventés. En analysant le concept de patrimoine comme un moyen de reconnaissance politique, il sera possible de comprendre comment les autorités soudanaises, ainsi que des groupes dissidents, utilisent le processus de patrimonialisation comme une ressource politique : comme un moyen de pacification ou au contraire, de contestation politique.

HERITAGE-MAKING AND POLICIES OF IDENTITY IN THE “POST- CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION” OF SUDAN

INTRODUCTION

“The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common; and also that they have forgotten many things.”
Ernest Renan, *What is a Nation?* (1882)

According to the definition of nation given by Ernest Renan, talking about nation in the case of Sudan is intricate. Sudan is the largest African postcolonial country and is characterised by broad geographical, ethnical, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity. The country has been split by several civil wars running since the independence of 1956 until 2005, when a North-South *Comprehensive Peace Agreement* (CPA) was signed. The wars revealed cleavages between the South and North of Sudan, and also shaped the boundaries of conflictive identities. The CPA provides a national framework for peace until 2011 when a referendum would eventually give its independence to Southern Sudan. In the 2005-2011 interim period, one of the goals of the CPA implementation process along with political and economical stakes, is to challenge the negative effects of the previous instrumentalisation of identity, through the promotion of cultural heritage as a means of recognition and intercultural dialogue. The aim of this article is to examine critically the political use of cultural heritage in the “post-conflict” context of Sudan.

The starting point of this article is the analysis of the narratives on conflictive identities developed by both of the belligerents to justify the violence of the war. On the one hand, the historical reasons of the North-South opposition have been portrayed, by belligerents and some analysts, as an opposition of identities.¹ The understanding of identity as the root cause of civil wars in

1. Deng, 1995.

Sudan is considered as a given fact. On the other hand, the CPA proposes to challenge the negative effects of the instrumentalisation of identity, allocating it a positive role in the peace construction process. The CPA implementation process is endorsing this vision through the promotion of cultural heritage policies. Taking into account these two symmetric visions on identity, how is cultural heritage being promoted in Sudan?

This article analyses how the concept of cultural heritage is being assessed and implemented as a positive image of identity, in contrast with the former negative assumptions on identity. Therefore cultural heritage appears as a political argument used by national authorities to supposedly consolidate the policies of recognition of minorities. But cultural heritage as a political argument had been also used by the opponents to the current political regime to affirm their cultural rights, as it will be exemplified by the case-study of the popular resistance to the Merowe Dam construction.

The first part of this study briefly provides some theoretical inputs on the relationship between cultural heritage and identity. The second part highlights the use of the concept of identity in the context of civil wars in Sudan. The third part discusses the policy of heritage-making for peace as a mirror effect of the narratives on conflictive identities. Finally, the fourth part analyses the subversion of the concept of heritage as a means of recognition of cultural rights.

THE PARADOXES OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE-MAKING

Heritage does not exist *per se* but is invented or created
“through metacultural operations that extend museological values and methods (collection, documentation, preservation, presentation, evaluation and interpretation) to living persons, their knowledge, practices, artefacts, social worlds and life styles.”²

This process of invention or creation of cultural heritage is what is referred as *heritage-making* in this article. The central argument here is that heritage is the outcome of the strategic interests of the different actors involved in the process of heritage-making. The article attempts to understand who the actors are and to analyse their respective interests in the specific context of heritage-making in Sudan.

2. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006, p. 161.

Cultural heritage and identity

According to Meskell, heritage involves questions of identity, locality, religion and economic value.³ From the outset, a nexus between identity and cultural heritage overshadows the concept of heritage. Other authors also highlight that the concept of heritage is a cultural product as well as a political resource.⁴

The concept of heritage was introduced in Europe in the context of the creation of nation-states during the 18th and 19th centuries.⁵ The invention of heritage, similar to the invention of tradition examined by Hobsbawm and Ranger, “seek[s] to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past”⁶ and somehow ‘thickens’ the existence of a nation. Therefore, following the fundamental Western conceptualisation of heritage, the concept appears as an “instrument in the ‘discovery’ or creation and subsequent nurturing of a national identity”.⁷ Further, the concepts of national identity and cultural heritage have been globalised along with those of the nation-state in the colonial and post-colonial periods.⁸ In the case of Sudan, the conceptualisation of a Sudanese national identity is by itself problematic: the multiculturalism has resulted in a historical pattern of division between sectors of the Sudanese population, thus preventing the creation of a single national identity.

More recently, the issue of multiculturalism seems to have brought adjustment to the concept of heritage: becoming globalised, the concept is nowadays also related to identity rights and recognition of the rights of minorities. Therefore, as stated by Weiss, there is a “paradox of multiculturalism”⁹ which can be seen in the contradictory visions of heritage as a resource for national identity and, simultaneously, as the recognition of sub-national (ethnic, local or religious) identities. This article attempts to understand this paradox in the context of the Sudanese heritage-making policies. Through the assessment of the concept of heritage as a means of recognition, it is possible to understand how the Sudanese authorities, as well as the dissident groups, have been using the heritage-making process as a political resource.

3. Meskell, 2002.

4. Graham et al., 2005, p. 30.

5. Poulot, 2005; Choay, 1993.

6. Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p. 1; see also Anderson, 1991, chapter 10: “The Map, the Census, the Museum”, p. 163-185.

7. Graham et al., 2005, p. 27.

8. Appadurai, 2001.

9. Weiss, 2007, p. 415.

Strategies and institutions of heritage

Heritage can be understood as a political resource by several actors across space and time. Actors in the heritage-making process assign diverse cultural meanings and socio-political functions to heritage, and heritage may become a component of broader economic and/or political strategies. Through the analysis of the process on institutionalisation of heritage, this study focuses on museum policies and the more recent creation of alternative fields of heritage, such as the intangible heritage.¹⁰ The institutionalisation of heritage unravels the actors' sense of how to manoeuvre with and/or against institutions. Actors are the individuals or institutions involved in the creation and implementation of heritage policies. Institutions are the museums, as well as national and international institutions in charge of the cultural heritage management. However, heritage itself can also be considered as a social institution.¹¹

Buntix and Karp introduce the idea of "tactical museologies" stating that "this sense of maneuvers (which Gramsci termed a 'war of position') is simultaneously the product of the alternative and provisional standing of these museums and their often frictional and antagonistic relationship either to established museums and/or the broader social order."¹² Based on these assumptions, this article identifies the actors involved in the heritage-making process in the Sudanese context in order to disentangle the utilisation and instrumentalisation, as well as the strategies and the frictions, surrounding the institution of heritage as a representation of certain political orders and cultural visions on identity.

POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN SUDAN

This section aims to analyse the use of the concept of identity in the Sudanese context in the period between the 1950's and today, in order to introduce the main elements for a further discussion of heritage-making in Sudan. The North-South Sudanese civil wars have often been considered as a "war of visions"¹³ based on the question of identity. The idea of competing visions has been promoted by the belligerents and the analysts to explain the several conflicts that took place in the Sudanese territory during the last decades.

10. Graham et al., 2005, p. 30.

11. Douglas, 1986.

12. Buntix and Karp, 2006, p. 207.

13. Deng, 1995.

The diverse actors involved in Sudan's civil wars have developed narratives on competing identities, which fixed some points of reference in terms of religion, race, and geography, to categorise the different groups. The narratives have stipulated two main boundaries: on the one hand, Muslim and Arab populations in Northern Sudan and, on the other hand, African and non-Muslim (Christian or animist) populations in the South. These categories have been opposed in the following manner: North *versus* South, Arab *versus* African, Muslim *versus* animist or Christian. Next, the article's overview of the Sudanese civil wars aims at articulating the definition of competing identities and the evolution of the political discourse. It also highlights the emergence of the idea of a conflict for political and economic power, in which the lines of conflict would be the margins *versus* the centre.

First civil war (1955-1972)

The civil war opposing between the South and the North began a few months before the independence of the country in 1956. The rivalry between an Arab-Muslim educated elite in the north and a southern elite increased as the state became weaker after the withdrawal of the British colonial power.¹⁴ The Northern Arab elite emerged as the ruling power and have since led a policy of arabization and islamization of the South.¹⁵ The Southern elite based their political position on the resistance of this assimilation.¹⁶

Political tension increased until 1960 when the southern elite began to be influenced by newly independent countries south of Sudan, and established links with other African independentist movements of the British Eastern African Empire.¹⁷ The southern discourse has since then assumed an anti-imperialist rhetoric portraying the North as the new colonial power that is pursuing another 'civilising mission' on the South.

The Anyanya guerrilla movements took over in the most southern regions and later spread until the central regions of Sudan. The seized territories have become what is commonly considered as Southern Sudan.¹⁸ Thus, the geographical borders between North and South appear to be a by-product of this civil war, consequently raising the idea of a "divided nationalism".¹⁹ In 1969, the revolution led by Nimeiri, the would-be President of Sudan, was based

14. Johnson, 2006, p. 21 et *passim*.

15. Holt and Daly, 1988, p.178.

16. Idris, 2001, p. 105.

17. Woodward, 2003, p. 39.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

19. Deng, 1995, p. 101.

on an Arab and African anti-imperialist ideology, which also aimed at conflict resolution at the national level and at the economic recovery of the country.²⁰

Addis Ababa peace (1972-1982)

The socialist regime of Nimeiri, which came to power in 1969, has promoted the idea of a “recognition of the cultural differences of the North and the South” based on the belief of a “united Socialist Sudan”.²¹ A Peace Agreement was signed in 1972 in Addis Ababa between the Nimeiri regime and the leaders of the South. The peace agreement asserted a certain degree of autonomy to the South and attempted to seal a new political vision on the Sudan. At the time, President Nimeiri exhibited a vision of the country as an “Afro-Arab entity”²², and this vision came as a reaction to the processes of arabization and islamization and appeared to be an effort to conceal the two major identities in the country.

As Nimeiri’s regime weakened throughout the 1970’s, the paradoxical situation of Sudan and the feeling of dissatisfaction towards the unlikely unity of the country increased during this period. At the beginning of the 1980’s, the President formed a number of alliances with the northern Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. In 1981, Nimeiri virtually abrogated the Addis Ababa agreement by dissolving the Southern Regional Assembly.²³

At the same time, the economic decay of the country led to explosive turmoil in the South and social tension increased.

The second civil war (1982-2005)

The conflict resumed in 1982, and the second civil war was initiated in 1983 as a direct consequence of the imposition of the *Shari’a* (Islamic law) to the entire country. The Southern People Liberation Army (SPLA) and its political wing, the Southern People Liberation Movement (SPLM), appeared on the political landscape issuing a manifesto in July 1983. The Manifesto on the “question of nationality and religion” addressed the questions of racism, tribalism, and ethnicity²⁴, denounced the current and historical situation of the country’s disequilibrium and declared the aims of the SPLA/M of unifying all the Southern guerrilla movements. The SPLA/M leader John Garang soon after

20. Woodward, 2003, p. 43.

21. Stevens, 1976, p. 248.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

23. Woodward, 2003, p. 50.

24. Johnson, 2006, p. 63.

took control of the rural areas in the South, expelling the governmental control and forces from these areas. The first victories of the SPLA were facilitated by the weaknesses of the Socialist regime.

A *coup d'état* perpetrated in 1985 switched the socialist regime to an Islamic fundamentalist military regime in Khartoum, and step by step reinforced Hassan al-Turabi (1989-1993) and Omar al-Bashir (Chief of State 1989-1993, and President since 1993). The central issue of the new government concerning the national political system had been the implementation of the *Sharī'a*. In the early 1990's, the civil war took a new ethnic character in terms of discourse and strategy. The ruling elite of Khartoum began to use the ethnic argument to divide the SPLA. The main strategy of the regime of Khartoum had been the support of tribal rivalries against the Dinka-oriented SPLA, thus launching a counter-offensive on the South.²⁵ Simultaneously, Garang called for solidarity of minorities against the hegemonic Arab-Muslim ruling elite of the North.²⁶ The SPLA, as well as the opposed factions, intensified their recruitment and all the groups enrolled children in their armies and used the attacks on the civil population as threats and a means of pressure on their enemies.²⁷ This period was the most violent period of the war. International organisations estimate that approximately 6.1 million people were internally displaced and 550,000 refugees fled to neighbouring countries.²⁸

The dissemination of wars on the margins (1991-nowadays)

Economic factors have also played a role in the several conflicts in Sudanese territory. The economic gap between the North and South deepened considerably during the wars and the socio-economic wealth issue appeared strongly in the political discourse of the South in the last period of the conflict. John Garang, the SPLM/A leader has repeatedly denounced the underdevelopment of the remote regions in Southern Sudan and expressed his plans for an economic solution in his radical project of the "New Sudan".²⁹ Based on the idea of integration of "marginalised" minorities in the framework of central power, Garang called for a connection between the Southern region and other "deprived and exploited" regions of Sudan: all should unite to challenge the

25. Johnson, 2006, p. 111.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

27. Idris, 2001, p. 130.

28. For more information see: UNHCR, "Urgent Needs for Planned South Sudan Repatriation", 11th of April, 2005.

29. Largely diffused, for example: Garang J., *al-Itizâm bi-l-Wahda: Raw'yya al-Sudan al-Jadîd* (The Engagement for Unity: The Concept of the New Sudan), Khartoum, Cairo, 1998.

minority, elitist, Muslim-Arab regime at the core of the country's decision-making process.³⁰ As a result, after 1991, the conflict extended to the Upper Nile province, Kordofan, and even to the Eastern region and to the Darfur in the west. War in Sudan became a "network of internal wars"³¹, involving many actors in different fronts, be they geographical or political.

Summing up, the discourse on the North-South conflict has shifted from a war against political domination from the North (centre) towards a conflict of peripheries against the centre, with the several peripheries (South, East, and West) demanding power and the sharing of economic wealth. The shift of understanding of the conflict had been an important move from the conception of a "war of visions" on identity that gave a chance to a political solution for the North-South war, confirmed by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement framework.³²

THE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT AND THE QUESTION OF HERITAGE

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed on the 9th of January 2005 in Naivasha (Kenya) by the Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and the SPLA/M leader John Garang.³³ The main goal of the CPA is to support the peace construction process in the country through a ceasefire and the explicit political recognition of Southern Sudan by the Northern ruling elite. The CPA also includes provisions for an interim period until 2011, when Southern Sudan will have a referendum to decide about the would-be secession of the region. The central question of this section is to understand how the CPA is supposedly opening a new page in Sudanese history and, at the same time, to understand the role of heritage and heritage-making in the process.

A policy of national unity

The CPA is the basic document establishing the framework for national security in Sudan, as well as a framework for power and economic wealth-sharing between the two regions. In terms of national political organisation, it envisions an interim "one State, two systems" arrangement until 2011, when

30. Woodward, 2005, p. 51.

31. Johnson, 2006, p. 127.

32. As this article is under press in September 2009, the peace process appears uncertain as internal conflicts resumed in Southern Sudan.

33. The complete text of the agreement is available on line at <http://www.unmis.org/English/documents/cpa-en.pdf>.

a referendum will give the choice to the Southern Sudanese populations on whether to remain unified with the North or to become independent (a possible case of state secession). The current “one State, two systems” is based on the creation of an autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), as well as a political representation for Southern Sudan in a Government of National Unity (GoNU). By the end of 2005, both the GoNU and the GoSS had already been established.³⁴

The political (re)construction of the country is allegedly the priority for the newly empowered authorities and their international partners, such as the United Nations, World Bank and bilateral donors. Following the signature of the CPA, in March 2005, the Sudanese authorities (GoNU, GoSS) and the international community established the “agenda” for peace implementation in Sudan. A United Nations and World Bank Joint Assessment Mission (JAM), which had been carried out in close consultation with the Sudanese authorities and other partners of the international community, issued a “Framework for Sustained Peace, Development and Poverty Reduction” in 2005. The stated goal is to promote sustainable peace based on national reconciliation and reconstruction.³⁵

The peace implementation documents focus on power and economic wealth-sharing, but also include a broad societal project of reconciliation. This specific goal highlights the construction of a nation that would overcome the negative effects of the casualties and the root causes of the wars. Hence, in addition to power and economic issues, the JAM report also describes

“a strategy and vision that will give the unity of Sudan a chance during the Interim Period by making it attractive, and through a reformed and fully developed system of governance in which all Sudanese are equal stakeholders”.³⁶

In the same fashion, the CPA had already stated the aim to pursue

“values of justice, democracy, good governance, respect fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, mutual understanding and tolerance of diversity”.³⁷

The language seems very similar to that of other international documents on peace and reconciliation all around the world. The same will be observed in the documents about heritage policies for the country, as will be discussed in the following section.

34. El Obeid, 2006, p. 2 et passim.

35. JAM, 2005.

36. JAM, 2005, p. 3.

37. CPA, 2005, p. 2

Cultural diversity and heritage for peace

The recognition of cultural diversity also appears to be of significance in the Sudanese nation-building, as the framing texts (namely the CPA and the JAM report) state identity as a main issue in the process of conflict resolution and peace implementation. Thus, the goal of peace implementation had allegedly been established in order to overcome the rhetoric of identity clashes and, at the same time, to promote cultural diversity as the basis of Sudanese national identity. The first chapter of the CPA, corresponding to the Machakos Agreement signed in 2002, states the following principles in order to promote the unity of the country:

“1.5 The people of Sudan share a common heritage and aspirations and accordingly agree to work on : 1.5.1 Establish a democratic system of governance taking into account the cultural, racial, religious and linguistic characteristic and gender equality of the people of the Sudan [...]”³⁸

In the same line of thought as the CPA, the JAM proposes the implementation of a framework based on national identity and the resolution of the conflicts of identity developed during the wars. The JAM report includes the principle of recognition of cultural diversity as a priority of the peace agenda, as the following statement exemplifies:

“A sense of common ownership of the shared heritage and the various cultural components of the population can also be restored by strengthening intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and developing protection of the national heritage.”³⁹

The JAM report, as in this statement and similar ones, highlights that heritage has become an issue in the construction of national unity, in which “culture and tradition are the basis for national identity and should be regarded as a fundamental element for reconciliation”.⁴⁰ The JAM uses the conventional “language of heritage”⁴¹ that deals with notions of ownership and property. This conventional perception of heritage, as that promoted by the JAM, implies some automatic policies related to institutions of heritage.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

39. JAM, 2005, vol. 1, p. 30.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

41. Meskell, 2002, p. 567.

An agenda for heritage-making

The JAM formulates recommendations for the implementation of cultural policies, with a proposal that includes two different sets – one for Northern Sudan, and another for Southern Sudan, according to the principle of “one State, two systems”.

For Northern Sudan, the first recommendation is the development of “joint studies, debates, and discussions about the country’s cultural heritage, customary law and traditional structure [are required to create] a better mutual understanding among all Sudanese”.⁴²

The second recommendation focuses on

“the capacity building and training, specifically [...] for the conservation of the ancient cultural structures and their preservation and presentation on their original sites or in museums [...] as part of the efforts to promote reconciliation”.⁴³

For Southern Sudan, the JAM report deploys a commonly accepted relationship of modernity and traditions that in the case of Sudan had been formulated as early as the 1970’s by Francis Deng.⁴⁴ The JAM report highlights the need of recognition of cultural diversity in order to drive the country on the way to “‘modernization’ [sic] on the basis of solid knowledge and understanding of the past”⁴⁵, which would supposedly make possible a specific administration of the Southern populations according to their own “customary law and traditions”.⁴⁶ According to the report, the construction of this “solid knowledge” could be part of the process of harmonisation of the diverse customary laws in order to enhance the role of traditional chiefs, but at the same time to proscribe traditions which supposedly do not correspond to international standards, such as the UN Human Rights Declaration.

The rhetoric of tradition and modernisation assumed by the JAM report reflects the conventional system of values attached to heritage as formulated

42. JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 65.

43. *Ibid.*

44. The JAM report justifies the importance of heritage by a quotation of Francis Deng’s *Tradition and Modernisation* (1971): “For peace to be genuine and sustainable, it must address the deep-rooted crisis of national identity. This will mean balancing between the rigidity of self-perceptions about identity, which would entail recognizing racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversities, and building on the fluidity of self-identification to forge a new sense of an all-embracing national identity.”

45. JAM, 2005, vol.3, p. 65.

46. *Ibid.*

by the conventions of the UNESCO.⁴⁷ These conventions deploy a specific language of heritage that involves notions of values and rights, and ownership and property. In the formulation used in the JAM report, the notion of ownership leads to a subsequent value of appropriation of heritage. The JAM report eventually proposes an application of this conventional understanding to Sudan. The JAM recommends: (1) extensive studies on heritage, archaeology and ethnography; (2) rehabilitation and strengthening of “key cultural heritage institutions like museums and site orientation centres”⁴⁸; (3) inventory of archaeological sites, to document and manage cultural heritage; and (4) provision of training to support and promote capacity building of the staff in charge of this historical legacy.

Through these recommendations, the JAM report tends to define the main lines in terms of heritage-making policies for Sudan. The document had been presented to the international and bilateral donors at the Oslo Donors’ Conference, in May 2005, apparently with concrete results in terms of investment in Sudan. In the specific field of cultural heritage, a total of 4 million US dollars had been allocated on a total of 4.5 billion US dollars.⁴⁹ These numbers show the relative importance of heritage-making in the process of reconstruction. However, the question remains on how to move forward from the idea of making peace to making heritage in the context of a post-conflict situation in Sudan? And, who will be the actors responsible for managing and/or creating this heritage?

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE SUDANESE CULTURAL HERITAGE

This section throws light on the current national and external actors involved in the cultural and heritage policies in the context of Sudan, and their diverse interests, responsibilities and actions in the process. Through the observation and analysis of this process, it will be shown that the current institutionalisation of cultural heritage in Sudan is mainly focusing on the political recognition of national diversity rather than in the construction of heritage itself.

47. See UNESCO, 1954, 1972, 2003 and 2005a.

48. JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 66.

49. United Nations, 2005.

National and global institutional actors at work

At the Sudanese national level, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) is in charge of the management of heritage,⁵⁰ and its mission is to manage antiquities and museums. This conceptualisation of national heritage management is embedded in an old-fashion conceptualisation of cultural heritage, which conceives archaeological antiquities as the main object of heritage, and museums as its main institution. This highlights the inadequacy of the NCAM to accomplish the mission in terms of implementation of the heritage policies as proposed in the CPA and JAM documents. In order to support the NCAM in its renewed mission, UNESCO is currently financing, training and monitoring the transition period for the extension of the heritage policies.

At the 33rd UNESCO general conference held in Paris in 2005, the General Conference adopted a resolution on “Strengthening of cooperation with the Republic of Sudan”.⁵¹ This cooperation would provide a framework and expertise for joint actions in Sudan, encouraging cooperation of international institutions and stakeholders with the Sudanese authorities. UNESCO intervenes on the heritage management policies as a UN agency in accordance to the rules of collaboration defined by the CPA. UNESCO aims to “contribute to address the root causes of the conflict and reshape the future of the country”.⁵² As a trade-off, Sudan appears as ‘proving ground’ for UNESCO’s ongoing reforms and programs.⁵³

As a result of the peace agreement, UNESCO became more present in Sudan. It first, opened a second office in Juba, which was in addition to the existing one in Khartoum, following its own reform on institutional decentralisation. Second, UNESCO’s intervention in Sudan came in line with the 2005

50. As a result of the CPA implementation, this institution was reconfigured as part of a broader reform of the national institutions, after the implementation of the Government of National Unity in 2005. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been divided into two ministries: the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the new Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. Heritage management remains an attribution of the Ministry of Culture and the pre-existing NCAM remains the tutorial institution of heritage in the country.

51. UNESCO, 2005b.

52. UNESCO, 2006b.

53. A decentralisation process of UNESCO offices was initiated in 2000. Some multi-country offices have been created in countries of the group E9 (the nine most populated countries of the world), less developed countries and post-conflict countries (UNESCO, 2006b).

agency's general program, on "post-conflict reconstruction and development" to be applied in several world regions and countries facing post-conflict situations.⁵⁴ This program focuses on the fields of culture and education, and aims to work on the restoration of the educational systems, the promotion of independent media, the protection of the environment and biological diversity, as well as the promotion of cultural diversity through the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2005c). UNESCO's "post-conflict reconstruction" program was later included in the "United Nations 2006 Work Plan for Sudan."⁵⁵ Hence, in terms of inclusion of heritage in the Sudanese peace implementation process, the role of UNESCO is to work jointly with the NCAM on the development of tangible heritage as well as on the promotion of intangible heritage.

An official policy of decentralisation and reconciliation

Aware of the poor conditions suffered by the existing museums in Sudan, the NCAM planned in 2005 the construction of several museums constituting a network. According to a senior official of the Ministry of culture, this plan includes: (1) Renewal of existing museums (National Antiquities Museum in Khartoum and Jebel Barkal Site Museum in Karima, in the Northern State); (2) Creation of museum educational programs for schools and children; and (3) Creation of museums in capital regional states (fig. 1).

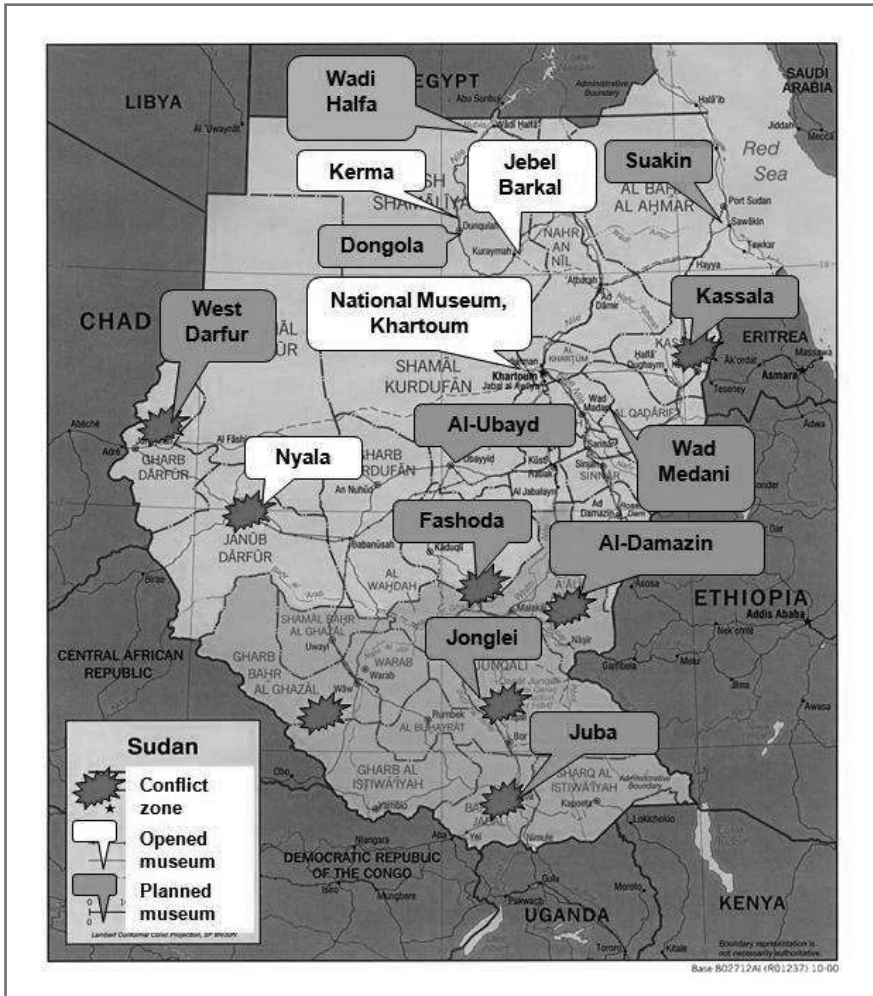
The map on the opposite page shows the current situation of museum planning in Sudan, and depicts the three existing museums currently operational in three cities – Khartoum, Jebel Barkal, and Nyala (in white on the map). The map also includes the planned museums and their respective locations (in grey on the map), as will be mentioned in this section. Further, the relationship between the location of the planned museums and conflict flashpoints will be discussed.

The National Museum in Khartoum and the site museum of Jebel Barkal are the two existing museums of Sudan which exhibit archaeological objects found in main sudanese sites, namely the Jebel Barkal and the Napatan region.⁵⁶ These two museums have undergone restoration as an outcome of

54. UNESCO, 2005c and 2006b.

55. The United Nations agencies mediate the stakeholders through a strategy of regulation and development of the decentralisation.

56. On the archaeological sites, see Ida Dyrkorn Heierland's article in this volume. Most of the other museums are concentrated in Khartoum. Several other museums are in charge of the NCAM: Khalifa House in Khartoum or the Museum of Kerma inaugurated in 2006. Some other private institutions such as the Ethnographic Museum are displaying national heritage.



1. Map of the existing and planned museums in Sudan (2007-2009) (Jean-Gabriel Leturcq, 2009)

a UNESCO project (UNESCO Preservation of Endangered Objects Project – Sudan National Museum, Khartoum, and Jebel Barkal) that ran from 2004 to 2006.⁵⁷ Another museum was also opened in 2006 in Nyala, the capital of Southern Darfur. In addition, two other museums created in the 19th century still exist : the Khalifa House Museum in Omdurman (Khartoum State)⁵⁸ and the Ali Dinar Palace in al-Fasher (Northern Darfur state).

Other museums are now under construction or are being planned in the capitals of some of the Sudanese regional states, such as in Dongola and Wadi Halfa⁵⁹ (Northern State, Nubia, under construction)⁶⁰; Juba (capital of Southern Sudan, construction in progress); Kassala (capital of the eastern region, also in progress); El-Obeid (capital of Kordofan, to be started); and Wad Medani (capital of the Gezira region). In addition, museums are also planned for Fashoda (Blue Nile state) and Geneina (Western Darfur state).⁶¹

The construction of museums in the regional capitals seems to follow the logic of the national policy of decentralisation, allegedly being followed by the Sudanese government in other policy areas. However, a relevant question arises: considering the general state of underdevelopment of these cities, why is the construction of museums a priority? The map highlights part of the answer: the map of the planned museum overlaps the map of the conflicts' hotspots, and surprisingly (or not) the first museum which was inaugurated is located in Nyala, the capital of Southern Darfur, which still remains a conflictive area even after the peace agreement was signed in May 2006.

It can be argued that museums are being built by the Sudanese authorities as a matter of political reconciliation, and as such are supposed to materialise and exhibit the official recognition of all the minorities of the country. The current policy is thus promoting the museums mainly as State infrastructures, and the implementation of these institutions does not necessarily mean the implementation of heritage itself. Rather, the authorities continue to face a scarcity of collections to exhibit inside these would-be museums. The collections issue

57. UNESCO, 2006a.

58. On the Khalifa House Museum and the importance of Mahdya's period in terms of heritage, see the article of Iris Seri-Hersch in this volume.

59. On the Wadi Halfa Museum, see the article of Costanza de Simone in this volume.

60. A museum whose construction was patially supervised by the NCAM, opened in Kerma, 60 km north of Dongola.

61. While this article goes under press, other museums are being planned in Begrawya (5th Cataract), Suakin (Red Sea state), Gedaref (Gedaref state) and Sennar (Sennar state) following Sennar dam elevation plans.

in itself leads to a significant question: how does this museum policy contribute to the definition of Sudanese heritage(s)?

The dichotomy of the Sudanese heritages

The map also calls to attention the two axes of development of heritage-making in Sudan – one axis is devoted to the development in the Northern capitals (Jebel Barkal-Karima, Dongola, Kerma, Wadi Halfa), the second axis concerns the Southern capitals (Juba, Jonglei, Fashoda) and the ‘marginal’ regions (Nyala, El-Damazin, Kassala). This partition of heritage is rooted in the system of thinking with regards to Sudanese heritage since the colonial period. On the one hand, the Northern Nile valley is devoted to archaeologists; on the other hand, Southern Sudan and regions such as Darfour are relevant for anthropologists.

The archaeological expeditions in the Nile Valley began in the early 19th century, in line with Egyptian archaeology.⁶² During the British colonial occupation, archaeological data had been used to confirm the historical power of Egypt over Nubia (at the time considered the region located between Aswan and Khartoum). Moreover, the paradigm of evolutionism dominated the archaeological approach used for research in Sudan. Contrary to this, the Southern Sudanese region was considered backward. The region was for the most part considered ahistorical and, as a result, no specific studies were carried out there before the beginning of the 20th century. It was during this time that the British administration ordered the undertaking of anthropological studies in order to understand and rule the region in a more comprehensive manner. It marks the period of the emergence of African anthropology, including the major contribution of Evans Pritchard’s studies on the Nuer and their neighbouring social groups.⁶³

It is also during the colonial period that the major ethnographic collections were constituted in the European museums. For example, one of the most important collections of Sudanese artefacts is until now conserved in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. There is actually no collection of Sudanese ethnographic artefacts available in Sudan itself except at the small museum of ethnography in Khartoum. Moreover, there are just a few contemporary studies on the material culture of the Southern regions. Thus, the major problem remains to determine what exactly will be exhibited in the planned museums. As museums are institutions aiming to exhibit collections valorised as the heritage of the community or the nation, which kind of heritage will be promoted in these would-be museums?

62. Trigger, 1994, p. 325.

63. See Abdel Gaffar, 2003.

In brief, it seems there is a vacuum on the substance of heritage and perhaps on the definition of the cultural artefacts that constitute heritage with regards to the Southern Sudanese regions. In 2006, the Ministry of Culture described these planned museums as “museums of cultural diversity where all tribes of the State will be represented with their costumes, musical instruments, traditional occupations and way of life, handicrafts, etc.”⁶⁴ The minister’s unprecise words show that the authorities have no clear idea as to what would constitute the collections of the would-be museums in the regional states. The concept of heritage is applied in the peripheries, but is not yet, qualifying any object or artefact. Taking this into account, can these future museums still be considered as institutional means to create heritage?

The problematic creation of heritage

Currently, the archaeological material excavated from the northern part of Sudan, the so-called Nubian antiquities, are the only artefacts considered to have incontestable heritage value and are thus classified as *national* antiquities. The northern sites are already inscribed in the World Heritage list; the items are conserved and exhibited in the National Museum in Khartoum and the Jebel Barkal site. The prestige of these antiquities attracts foreign missions and attracts the attention of international museums, such as the Louvre or the British Museum. In recent years, these institutions have initiated bilateral cooperations in the field of museum and conservation planning for the National Museum and training courses of the NCAM staff. This trend shows a potential revalorisation of this given heritage, but with a limited potential in the national Sudanese context. Following the principles of decentralisation and recognition of minorities, only the populations from the Northern Sudan will benefit from the valorisation of those antiquities. Other fields of heritage must be created to compensate the absence of material heritage in the case of the Southern Sudanese regions. It is this situation that led UNESCO to promote intangible heritage according to its policy of “strengthening respect for cultural diversity towards intercultural dialogue and reconciliation in Sudan”.⁶⁵

In March 2006, the UNESCO office in Khartoum organised a set of consultations and symposiums for the recognition and conservation of intangible heritage. These consultations aimed to inscribe Sudanese intangible heritage on the World Intangible Heritage List. The main goal was to promote the recognition of languages, practices, and music as national heritage that is worth promoting on the global list. In the same symposium, the UNESCO office also

64. UNMIS, 2006, see also the article of Ida Dyrkorn Heierland in this volume.

65. UNESCO, 2006b.

convened a meeting of experts, both from Northern and Southern Sudan, to debate the methodology to be used in the inventory of intangible cultural heritage. The result was that an animated polemic took place.⁶⁶ The experts could not agree on the definition of national heritage. For example, experts from the North presented a project to register the *saqya* (water wheel) in the World Intangible Heritage List. The *saqya* was qualified by the experts as the key of the social system on the Nile Valley. The Southern delegates argued that the *saqya* was only representative of the northern social system, and they in turn presented some socio-cultural aspects of the various southern regions (e.g., Nuba wrestling and Shilluk kingship). The result was that no clear tendencies could be drawn out of this meeting, except the protracted dichotomy between a unified Northern culture and a range of diverse positions from the Southern groups.

The institutionalisation of Sudanese heritage reflects the dichotomy of the Sudanese cultural context, still characterised by a tangible archaeological heritage and, a multiplicity of regional and/or ethnical intangible heritage of the large Sudanese periphery (East, West, and South). The archaeological heritage became valorised for the “use” of the people from the political centre, i.e., riparian populations living on the Nile River banks, from where the Sudanese rulers and economic elites originated. Some of the possible effects of this increased gap might be a division reflecting general political trends – a tangible heritage of the dominant groups and an intangible heritage of the “others”.

As mentioned earlier, the policy of heritage-making under implementation by the NCAM and UNESCO aims to fill the gaps of knowledge and to exhibit a complete picture of Sudanese national diversity, including tangible and intangible heritage. The central question is then if the outcome of this policy is indeed challenging the existing paradigms of the ‘national’ identity in Sudan. Sudanese anthropologists have taken position against the dichotomy of Sudanese culture and assumed a renewed vision on the question of national history. For instance, Al-Amin proposes a vision of national history based on the comprehensive study of anthropological and historical interrelations between the diverse social groups of the country. This perspective intrinsically criticises the policy of cultural diversity, which is being nowadays implemented in Sudan.⁶⁷

A consequence of the policy of cultural diversity is the multiplication of claims for recognition of identity, and at the end of the process, the crystallisation of an official perception of a multiplicity of cultures. This official perception can in fact run the risk of promoting a cluster of identities with no apparent relationships except for their conflictive potential. Moreover all the

66. Interview with an international observer, March 2006.

67. Al-Amin, 2003.

groups are currently aware of the official concept of heritage as a means of recognition and valorisation of the “marginalised minorities”. The process of heritage-making risks being understood at a superficial level; the short-term political component of the process may interfere with the long-term process of cultural policies and the ideal of heritage as a means of pacification. The next section examines another side of the story: the subversion of the concept of heritage as a political means by opponents to the official centralised regime.

SUBVERSION OF THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL HERITAGE

The previous sections have analysed how the process of heritage-making is being used by the Sudanese official authorities as means of political recognition of local communities. However, the appropriation of that conceptualisation of heritage by local populations may also constitute a political argument eventually turned against the central government. The aim of this section is to analyse precisely the effects of the politicisation of heritage-making through the case of the Merowe dam project in Northern Sudan. In this case, it will be shown how the populations affected by the construction of the large-scale dam of Merowe have been subverting the official discourse on heritage in order to gain some national and international visibility for their own purposes, i.e., the recognition of their political rights.

The Hamadab/Merowe Dam construction

The construction of the Merowe dam at Hamadab⁶⁸, on the 4th cataract of the Nile River, is presently the largest national hydroelectric project. The dam works started 2003 and was inaugurated in March 2008. The project cost around 2 billion US dollars, financed by China’s Exim bank and various Gulf investment funds. The new dam will eventually produce 1,250 megawatts of electricity according to the Sudanese authorities, and will cover 50% of Sudan’s hydropower needs necessary to sustain the booming economic development of the country. However, the dam will have some collateral effects, in the sense that the reservoir of the Merowe Dam will flood 175 km of the Nile Valley and is expected to displace around 50,000 people and submerge

68. The dam was previously named Hamadab dam after its location. However, after some deadly clashes related with the displacement of the Hamadab people, the Sudanese authorities in charge of the project changed its name to Merowe dam, after the name of the city located in the opposite side of Karima, the capital of the Northern state, around 40 km from the dam’s site.

an area with an important archaeological potential.⁶⁹ The situation recalls the consequences of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, located in Egypt but extending to Sudan, in the 1960's. At the time, the Nubian communities both in Sudan and Egypt were displaced from their homeland. Their displacement attracted little attention from the international community, especially when compared to the massive archaeological salvage campaign in the same area and the significant world attention it received.

In the case of the Merowe dam, already by 2002 the would-be displaced local communities began pointing out the "loss of invaluable archaeological and historical sites" and denounced the unfavourable conditions of their displacement.⁷⁰ Three groups are to be displaced during the different phases of the construction of the Dam: the inhabitants of Hamadab and Amri, and the Manasir community.⁷¹ The inhabitants of Hamadab, where the dam itself is located, were displaced in 2003 as a result of conflict, and there were several cases of people suffering injuries as they opposed the army in charge of the protection of the dam construction. The resettlement of people of Amri, an upstream group of hamlets, began in 2005, and a part of the population showed their disagreement with the conditions of relocation; in 2006, clashes occurred between security forces and local people, resulting in the death of two inhabitants. The resettlement location of the Manasir community, originally located in the upstream Nile State has not yet been determined.⁷² The traditional homeland of the Manasir is exclusively located on the 4th cataract area, and according to some activists the Manasir will eventually lose the totality of their homeland.⁷³

69. The inundation actually started during the 2007 and 2008 floods period. However, the 2008 flood had been the most significant as the villages were totally being submerged by waters while the inhabitants refused to leave the place. See Al-Jazeera (2008) coverage of the issue on the 5th of August 2008.

70. Askouri, 2002, 2004a.

71. The Manasir constitute an ethnic group and refers to the area as the "Dar al Manasir" while Hamadab and Amri refers to villages whose populations are composed of diverse ethnic groups (mainly from the Sha'aygiyya group) see Haberland, 2005.

72. Most of the community claims the right to settle on the shores of the lake that will be created once the dam's reservoir will be filled. Up to now the community refused to leave the area and is nowadays living in precarious condition. It had also been common clashes between security forces and resettled population following conflict over the inappropriate conditions of living in the resettlement area. See, Sudan Tribune, 2009.

73. For more information on the Manasir, see Humbolt University Nubian Expedition 2004-2006: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/daralmanasir/>.

Destruction of cultures and conservation of heritage

At the beginning of the construction of the dam, the affected local groups in the region claimed that their concern was with the conservation of their heritage, even if the resettlement issue was more likely to have been a higher priority than the heritage issue. How can we explain then the importance given to the issue of heritage when the basic survival of the community seemed to be endangered?

In their campaign for the promotion of the rights of the local people, the Leadership Office of Hamadab Affected People (LOHAP), a local activist group supported by the international advocacy group International Rivers Network since 2004⁷⁴, have since the beginning called for the respect of international standards, such as those of human rights and community protection, as well as the internationally accepted principles applying to the construction of large-scale dams. The LOHAP have tried to draw national and international attention to the “violation of the recommendations made by the World Commission on Dams”⁷⁵ perpetuated by the Sudanese government and companies involved in the Dam project. In 2000, the World Commission on Dams (WCD) issued an extensive report developing guidelines for the planning, construction and operation of dams worldwide.⁷⁶ While recognising the role played by dams in economic development, the report highlighted the high risks usually faced by local communities. In the same report, the WCD adopted a rights-and-risks approach⁷⁷ to be taken into account in the construction of future dams. The rights-and-risks approach consists of a framework which advises and requires the consultation of all stakeholders affected by a dam’s construction, in order to assure and promote an equitable development for all. The people affected by the Merowe Dam denounced the weakness of the feasibility studies carried out by the Canadian consultant company Monenco Agra in 1993.⁷⁸ They argued that later studies had disregarded the WCD principles in the assessment

74. IRN, 2005.

75. Askouri, 2004b.

76. The WCD is an international and supposedly independent commission, financed by 54 organisations including governments, Agencies of the United Nations, development agencies, philanthropic foundations or dam construction companies. Created in 1997 by the World Bank and the World Conservation Union, its goal was to address the controversies concerning large dam construction and the resulting social, environmental and cultural damages.

77. WCD, 2000, p. XXXVI.

78. The document is regarded as confidential because of the polemic context, thus it could not be consulted during my last stay in Sudan.

studies arguing that the studies did not sufficiently include the resettlement issues, nor the environmental and cultural impacts of the Merowe dam project.

The case highlights the misunderstanding between the local populations and the governmental authorities, namely the Archaeological Salvage Mission that was actually planned in the feasibility study according to the standards defined after the Aswan High Dam construction. Krzysztof Grzymalski, the international expert in charge of the impact assessment study, highlighted the archaeological potential of the region to be flooded by the future reservoir and the little archaeological research done in the region. Therefore, starting in 1999, the NCAM and several international partners launched survey studies aiming to identify a thousand potential archaeological sites. In 2003, the NCAM launched the Merowe Dam Archaeological Salvage Project, through an *Appeal for rescuing a piece of Man's cultural heritage*⁷⁹ to the international community. Ten international missions responded to the appeal and received concessions to conduct excavations in the region for the period between 2003 and 2008.⁸⁰

In this case, the interests of the different actors involved in the heritage-making process can be easily identified. The NCAM, in order to attract foreign teams, promised an equitable share of the objects found in the 4th cataract area to be divided between the Sudanese authorities and the different international missions. In addition, for the local population, the NCAM has planned to construct a museum in one of the resettlement locations, more specifically in Al-Multaga.⁸¹ A question arises: how can one explain the denouncement of the loss of archaeological data by the local populations, while the official authorities were already organising a salvage campaign?

Cultural heritage as a weapon of the weak

The apparent redundancy between the population's claims and the NCAM campaign can be explained by the development of the resistance campaign against the resettlement policies, which was taking place in the region. The following step of the disagreement between populations and the governmental

79. NCAM, 2003.

80. The ACACIA project University of Cologne, Gdańsk Archaeological Museum Expedition (GAME), Polish Academy of Sciences, Humboldt University of Berlin, the Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient (IsIAO), the University College London, the Sudan Archaeological Research Society, the Hungarian Meroe Foundation and the University of California at Santa Barbara – Arizona State University consortium.

81. NCAM, 2003. A museum was finally planned at Merowe (on the Nile bank opposite to Karima, Northern state). Contradictory sources denounce that the Museum would be included a project of an entertainment park "Merowe Land" (personal communication with 4th Cataract residents, March 2009).

authorities occurred during the excavation seasons of 2005, 2006 and 2007.⁸² In these periods, some groups affiliated with the LOHAP blocked the archaeologists' access to the archaeological fields located in the Manasir area. For instance, in February 2007, the groups argued that the international archaeologists were working on the behalf of the government and not in the interests of the Manasir populations. Moreover they accused the foreign archaeologists of only being interested in the archaeological excavations. As a result, all the excavation teams whose concessions were located in the Manasir area were forced to return to Khartoum and discontinue their research in the region.⁸³ Back in Khartoum, negotiations between the archaeologists and the representatives of the LOHAP did not come up with solutions but actually deepened the misunderstanding between the two parties.⁸⁴ The situation became paradoxical, because the LOHAP, which had previously required archaeological excavations in the area in order to save the heritage of the region, later became responsible for stopping it. How is such a paradox explained?

The Merowe Dam case is evidence that the perceptions on the concept of heritage diverge, and this partly lies in the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the word heritage itself. Governmental authorities and local communities appear to be discussing two different things although they are using the same concept. On the one hand, the NCAM organised the salvage of archaeological *data*, and on the other hand the LOHAP is claiming property rights over their own *heritage* for the benefit of the local communities. The LOHAP claims very closely follows the discourse on identity that has been promoted by the CPA, as mentioned earlier in this article. The local communities consider archaeological objects as part of their heritage and, referring to the CPA's conceptualisation, also as part of their identity. In the case of the Merowe Dam, the claims on heritage have been used mainly to gain public visibility for the cause and other political claims of the communities affected by the construction of the dam.⁸⁵ The direct consequence of this *coup* on archaeological research has been the diffusion of the local political claims in the international media, such as Al-Jazeera⁸⁶ or Financial Times.⁸⁷

This case throws light over the ambiguous interpretations and utilisation of the concept of heritage. Here, heritage does not appear anymore as a means of pacification, as it was discussed in the previous sections on the institutio-

82. Interview with a German archaeologist, 19th of February 2007.

83. LOHAP, 2007a.

84. Interview with a field inspector of the NCAM, 20th of February 2007.

85. LOHAP, 2007b.

86. See for example, Al-Jazeera, 2006.

87. England, 2007, See also Mojon, 2007; Boulding, 2008.

nalisation of heritage and creation of museums in Sudan. Rather, heritage had been used in this case as a “weapon of the weak”.⁸⁸ As defined by Scott, the weapons of the weak are the “everyday forms of resistance”⁸⁹ and the wide range of means to protest that the peasants can use to resist a hegemon (the State or any local power) while at the same time avoiding an open conflict. The dissident group in the Merowe Dam area used antiquities and its potential power as a means of resistance to the ‘Sudanisation’ and centralisation of peripheries. The assimilation of antiquities as the heritage of a group reveals a problem of definition of the terms national, local and/or communitarian heritage. The antiquities excavated from the 4th cataract area are in continuation of those conserved in the National Museum in Khartoum. These antiquities are by essence considered as *national* heritage.

What is interesting to observe is how the discourse of the LOHAP has changed over time, from that of victimisation at the beginning to that of denouncement later. The activist group has used heritage issues as a way of denouncing the opacity of the politics related to the dam construction. At the same time, the group has also used the public and international media to threaten the central authorities with the prospect of a general uprising of the populations in the northern regions of Sudan, usually considered as the regions supporting the regime in Khartoum. At some point in time, the leader of the LOHAP Ali Askouri has been presented, not just as an activist defending local rights, but as a politician challenging the central government. Not by chance, Askouri has never denied the alliances formed with the Southern movement, the SPLM.⁹¹ In the following months, the question of heritage disappeared from his discourse which assumed a more political orientation, strongly influenced by Garang’s vision on an opposition between the country’s periphery and political centre based in Khartoum.⁹²

In conclusion, the activists on the behalf of the local populations dispossessed from political representation and economic power have used heritage as a way to access the media and claim for rights, not just cultural but political rights as well. The shift in the LOHAP’s position, from a valorisation of heritage issues to a more political agenda, can be partially explained by the fact that the movement became stronger. Nevertheless, heritage remained a “weapon of the weak” for the populations living in the 4th cataract area still to be resettled. The groups of Amri, whose position was weakened by internal divisions,

88. Scott, 1985.

89. Scott, 1985, p. 5.

90. Askouri, 2007b.

91. Askouri, 2007a.

92. Askouri, 2007c.

have welcomed some archaeological teams expelled from the Manasir area in February and March 2007.⁹³ The case of the 4th cataract is evidence for how local and marginalised groups have assimilated the concepts and discourse on heritage promoted by UNESCO and other international institutions or activists. As observed in the case of creation of museums in the regional states and heritage-making policies appear to serve the recognition of the “minorities” or the “marginalised” regions such as the 4th cataract area.

CONCLUSION

This article has analysed the current *modus operandi* of heritage-making in Sudan. It was shown how heritage had been and is being used as a political resource in the context of “post-conflict” Sudan in order to favour the so-called national unity of the country. The current heritage-making policy was designed allegedly to counter the narratives of conflictive identities that were developed during the civil wars and, at the same time, to promote cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in Sudan. Heritage-making was defined by the peace implementation documents as a process of recognition of diversity at the national level and supposedly of the diverse identities at the local level.

In this context, the national policy of heritage-making consists mainly of the construction of a network of new museums to be built in Sudanese territory. It was observed that the map of these museums overlaps with the map of the conflict areas. The problem of these would-be museums is that there is still no consensus on the collection of objects to be exhibited. Moreover, the construction of heritage itself, i.e. the identification of a Sudanese national heritage, seems to reinforce the long-lasting dichotomy of cultures in Sudan: on the one hand, the archaeological tangible heritage in the North of the country and, on the other hand, the anthropological intangible heritage in the South. Summing up, a vacuum on the substance and the definition of a Sudanese heritage has been identified.

The article has also shown that the ambiguity surrounding the definition of heritage has led to perceptions of heritage as a political tool that can be appropriated and subverted by communities at the local level. The case of the Merowe dam project in Northern Sudan highlighted how the populations affected by the construction of the large-scale dam used heritage as a “weapon of the weak”: the populations dispossessed from political representation and economic power have used heritage as a way to access the media and to

93. Interviews with locals and archaeologists in Amri, 28th of February 2007.

claim for rights, not just cultural but also political rights. A consequence of this policy of promotion of cultural diversity in Sudan is the multiplication of claims for recognition of identity. At the end of the process, this policy might lead to a crystallisation of an official perception of multiplicity of cultures. The case of subversion of the current policy of heritage-making already proves that peace is not possible without a reformulation of the narratives of identity in the Sudanese context.

The recommendation of the author of this article is that the negative image of identity should be assumed in the heritage-making policies instead of trying to compulsorily promote a positive image of identity. The relationships between groups, whether conflictive, commercial or cultural, should be stressed in order to enhance the links between the communities. Thus, the concept of cultural alterity should be used instead of cultural diversity. By cultural *alterity*, one means the recognition of the dynamics of exchange between the diverse social groups. This assumed alterity could ideally transcend the ethnic, cultural, and religious differences in the Sudanese context; and, it can promote the vision of the “many things in common” that constitutes the idea of a nation as defined by Renan at the beginning of this article.

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