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The Archaeology and History of Slavery in South Sudan in the Nineteenth Century

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IN THIS CHAPTER WE OFFER A SYNOPSIS OF THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE concerning the expansion of slavery and the trade in ivory during the Turco-Egyptian (or Turkiyya) era in the Sudan between 1820 and 1881, and a description of the results of recent and very preliminary archaeological investigations at three sites associated with this trade around the town of Rumbek in Lakes State, South Sudan (Figure 26.1). The paper begins with a brief review of the establishment of Ottoman rule in Egypt, before moving on to consider the broader geopolitical forces that gave rise to the decision by the Egyptian Khedive, Mehmed Ali, to invade Sinnar, Kordofan and adjacent areas of northern Sudan. We then discuss some of the economic consequences and legal changes following the establishment of Turco-Egyptian rule that helped create the conditions for the expansion of slaving expeditions into southern Sudan via the Bahr al-Ghazal and the White Nile (or Bahr al-Jabal), and the establishment of a series of fortified camps or *zaribas* in these areas. Following this, the history of the site of Pedit and other *zaribas* around Rumbek and the available archaeological information from these sites is considered in more detail. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further archaeological research on this topic.

Ottoman Egypt

Egypt was brought under the remit of Ottoman rule in early 1517, following the defeat of the Mamluk sultanate army at Raydaniyya on the outskirts of Cairo in late January by Sultan Selim I's forces, and the subsequent capture and execution of the Mamluk sultan Tumanbey at the end of March.¹ By 1520 all revolts against the Ottomans had

¹ Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2005), 110.



Figure 26.1. Map showing the location of Rumbek, South Sudan and other places mentioned in the text.

been suppressed, and the remainder of the Mamluk elite were either banished or chose to swear allegiance to the Ottoman sultan. Egypt now changed from being an independent empire to a dependent province under the authority of a viceroy appointed by the Ottoman sultan. The viceroy held the rank of pasha, was the supreme commander of the army, and was personally responsible for protecting the empire's interests. Each viceroy was appointed initially for only a year, although it was common for the appointment to be renewed for another two or three years. In administering the province, he was assisted by a council of state, or *diwan*, which met four times a week.

Ottoman policy towards their provinces was generally one of restrained intervention in matters that were not of direct concern to the empire. As the empire's largest province with huge economic and strategic value, Egypt seems to have been treated as a special case, since the *timar* system² applied elsewhere did not operate in the province.³ Instead, a regime of tax collectors, known as *amins*, was used initially. These were 'appointed from Istanbul and delivered the revenues they collected directly to the governor's treasury'.⁴ During the course of the seventeenth century, this system was gradually replaced by a system of tax farming, under which local officials, military commanders and notables (*beys*) competed with one another for the right to collect taxes over a particular area or enterprise. This encouraged personal factionalism, especially between *beys* and regimental officers. Nevertheless, these new political structures coupled with the demands for Egyptian produce in the Ottoman heartland also facilitated the growth of a mercantile economy, with many merchants forming strategic alliances with the more powerful households,⁵ while at the same time members of the military also developed trades as artisans, shopkeepers and merchants.⁶

Throughout the period in question there was a permanent Ottoman garrison based in Egypt, comprising seven corps or *ocaks* totalling about 10,000 men made up of Janissaries, an *azeb* infantry corps and a number of smaller cavalry and infantry units, that included riflemen (*tüfenkçiyân*) and 'volunteers' (*gönüllüyan*). Given the size of the province, the Ottoman garrison was relatively small and its main role was largely defensive, with responsibilities for such tasks as guarding the capital, ports and the hajj caravan, although on occasion small Egyptian contingents joined Ottoman

² On the operation of the *timar* system, see Metin Hepper, 'Center and periphery in the Ottoman Empire: with special reference to the nineteenth century', *International Political Science Review*, 1 (1980), 81–105.

³ This was despite the existence in the Mamluk sultanate of a somewhat similar system of cavalry-supporting assignments of usufruct, or *iqtas*: see Jane Hathaway, 'The military household in Ottoman Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27 (1995), 39–52.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44–7. See also Gabriel Piterberg, 'The formation of an Ottoman Egyptian elite in the eighteenth century', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 22 (1990), 275–89.

⁶ André Raymond, 'Soldiers in trade: the case of Ottoman Cairo', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18 (1991), 16–37.

expeditionary forces on other frontiers.⁷ Despite being defeated by Selim, the Mamluk military oligarchy was retained as part of the garrison,⁸ and over the next few centuries, especially following a series of revolts during the latter decades of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, a *mamluk* elite, dominated by Caucasian (and especially Georgian) households, steadily re-established itself politically, economically and militarily. In the eighteenth century, the Kazdağlı household (which was rooted in the Janissary corps) and its associates became pre-eminent, partly as a consequence of the Janissaries' control over the coffee trade from Yemen, the Alexandria customs and the agricultural tax farms. From c.1730 they were the *de facto* rulers of Ottoman Egypt, especially under Ali Bey Bulut Kapan (1760–73) and subsequently Mehmed Bey Abu'l-Dhahab (Ali Bey's former *mamluk*), until the latter's death in 1775, when there was a revival of factional disputes.⁹ Ottoman authority was briefly re-established, but following the French invasion and occupation of Egypt (1798–1801), a political vacuum emerged which was exploited by the Macedonian Mehmed Ali following the Anglo-Ottoman invasion to re-capture Egypt in 1801. Having arrived as second-in-command of the Albanian contingent of *başıbozüks* sent to assist the Ottoman invasion, following a mutiny prompted by the failure of the newly installed governor Hüsrev Pasha, Mehmed Ali became their commander in early 1803. In 1805 he was nominated *vali* or governor by the Sultan, but quickly came to wield considerable power and to act independently of Istanbul, contriving to remove any threats to his rule by ordering the massacre of the remaining *mamluk* elite following a banquet at the Cairo Citadel in 1811.¹⁰

Slavery in Ottoman Egypt in the Nineteenth Century

At the time of the Ottoman conquest, the Mamluk Sultanate extended across much of what is modern-day Palestine, Israel, Syria, the Hijaz, the eastern Libyan Desert, the Egyptian Mediterranean seaboard and Nile delta, and the Nile Valley to about the Third Cataract (Lower Nubia, or Berberistan as it became known to the Ottomans).¹¹

⁷ Michael Winter, 'Ottoman Egypt, 1525–1609', in M. W. Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, II: *Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7–17.

⁸ For a discussion of some of the reasons why this happened, see David Ayalon, 'The end of the Mamlūk Sultanate: (Why did the Ottomans spare the Mamlūks of Egypt and wipe out the Syrian Mamlūks?)', *Studia Islamica*, 65 (1987), 125–48. See also F. R. C. Bagley, 'Egypt and the eastern Arab countries in the first three centuries of the Ottoman period', in H. J. Kissling (ed.), *The Muslim World: A Historical Survey*, III: *The Last Great Muslim Empires*, trans. F. R. C. Bagley (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 50–96.

⁹ Daniel Crecelius, 'Egypt in the eighteenth century', in Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, II, 73–6.

¹⁰ For more detailed historical background see Afaf Lufti Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Khaled Fahmy, 'The era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, 1805–1848', in Daly (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, II, 139–79.

¹¹ P. M. Holt, 'Egypt and the Nile Valley', in J. E. Flint (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, V: *c.1790 to c.1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 13–50.

The Red Sea coast of what is now the Republic of Sudan, including the important town of Suakin, which had been annexed by the Mamluks in the early fifteenth century, was also brought under Ottoman control, as were the ports of Massawa and Zayla following an attempt in 1557 during Süleyman I's sultanate to capture Abyssinia.¹² By contrast, the Sudanic kingdoms immediately to the south, notably the Keira sultanate of Darfur, the Funj sultanate of Sinnar, and the Taqali kingdom of southern Kordofan, were left undisturbed and trade between Egypt and these Sudanic states continued more or less as before. While raw materials and produce, such as coffee, were among some of the commodities traded, slaves were an equally significant component.

Slavery and slave trading in Egypt and the Sudan have a long history among various Christian, Muslim and pagan communities, extending back at least to Pharaonic times.¹³ By the seventeenth century, the use of slaves as agricultural labourers, house servants or concubines was common across much of the Arab world and Africa, including Egypt, where slaves were valued according to a hierarchy based on a combination of colour and sex. In the nineteenth century, Circassian women were at the top of this hierarchy and tended to be found mainly in the wealthiest households and most prestigious harems. Other African women and also men were lower in the hierarchy. The Mamluks themselves were also of slave origin and following their defeat by Selim, *mamluks* continued to be bought and sold in Ottoman Egypt by the new elite. 'Abbas I (1848–54), who succeeded Muhammad 'Ali as khedive, is said to have owned 500 *mamluks* as part of his slave retinue,¹⁴ for example, and the practice of obtaining new slaves from Central Asia and training them for military and political service continued during the era of Ottoman rule. Other white male slaves originated as prisoners of war captured during various military campaigns, and white female slaves of Circassian, Greek or Georgian origin were highly prized as concubines and as domestics. Ethiopians ranked next in the slave hierarchy, with Ethiopian females, who were greatly prized for their beauty, being more highly valued than Ethiopian males.¹⁵ Agricultural slavery was also practised, and male slave labour was used on large cash-crop estates, especially during periods of increased economic production such as the cotton boom of the 1860s, when there was a large influx of slaves from the Caucasus, where agricultural slavery was common.¹⁶ By far the greatest number of slaves in nineteenth-century

¹² Bagley, 'Egypt and the eastern Arab countries', 58; cf. Chapter 11 by John Alexander in this volume.

¹³ Peter F. M. McLoughlin, 'Economic development and the heritage of slavery in the Sudan Republic', *Africa*, 32 (1962), 355–91; Rex S. O'Fahey and Jay L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London: Methuen, 1974); Robert O. Collins, 'The Nilotic slave trade: past and present', *Slavery and Abolition*, 13 (1992) (Special issue: *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*), 140–61; John Alexander, 'Islam, archaeology and slavery in Africa', *World Archaeology*, 33 (2001), 44–60.

¹⁴ Gabriel Baer, 'Slavery in nineteenth century Egypt', *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), 417.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 419.

¹⁶ Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 81.

Egypt, however, originated from other parts of Africa. Like slaves from other geographical areas, they were engaged in a range of different tasks. Some African males worked as agricultural labourers, some were eunuchs (as also in Ottoman Turkey),¹⁷ while others served as attendants to wealthier families and as assistants to artisans, shopkeepers and merchants. The majority of domestic slaves and menial household slaves were African females.¹⁸ Military slavery, that is the use of slaves as soldiers,¹⁹ was also a common practice in the later Muslim states, and from the nineteenth century the greater proportion of Ottoman Egypt's slave soldiers were drawn from areas south of the Sahara.²⁰

Slave Trading in the Sudan

Up to the nineteenth century, much of the trade in slaves in the Sudan was conducted at a regional level and was especially geared towards meeting a variety of local domestic, agricultural and military needs. However, there was also a flourishing export trade especially from Sinnar where, in 1700, Theodoro Krump witnessed a vibrant slave market, with caravans arriving regularly from Dongola, Nubia, Darfur and Bornu bringing slaves, and departing to the Fezzan, Cairo and further away including India.²¹ Slaves were also central to the economy of Darfur sultanate under the Keira dynasty,²² from whence they were exported north to Egypt along the overland route to Asyut via Baris and Kharja oasis (the so-called Forty Days' Road, or *darb al-arba'in*), and eastwards via Sinnar and across the Red Sea through the port at Suakin. Initially, most slaves came from groups living in the lower and middle Nile Valley and Kordofan, especially the Nuba Mountains. The area along the Ethiopian border also became an important source of slaves, especially for Sinnar.²³ While there is evidence to indicate that Dinka and some other southern peoples were captured following raids by the Baggara and ended up in Darfur, and some appear to have been recruited as merce-

¹⁷ Ehud R. Toledano, 'The imperial eunuchs of Istanbul: from Africa to the heart of Islam', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20 (1984), 379–90.

¹⁸ Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, 56–7.

¹⁹ Daniel Pipes defines a military slave as 'a person of slave origins who is acquired in a systematic way, trained for military service, and spends most of his life as a professional soldier': Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 5.

²⁰ Douglas H. Johnson, 'Sudanese military slavery from the 18th to the 20th century', in Léonie J. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (London: Routledge, 1988), 142–56.

²¹ Gabriel Warburg, 'European travellers and administrators in the Sudan before and after the Mahdiyya', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41 (2005), 59.

²² Rex S. O'Fahey, 'Slavery and the slave trade in Dār Fūr', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 29–43.

²³ M. Abir, 'The origins of the Ethiopian-Egyptian border problem in the nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), 443–61.

naries into the Sinnar army by the late eighteenth century,²⁴ the regional strength of the border peoples, notably Shilluk²⁵ and Dinka, prevented major incursions into southern Sudan until the mid-nineteenth century.

This situation changed following the Turco-Egyptian invasion of northern Sudan in 1820–1, when there was a rapid intensification in the trade, and state-sponsored organised raids, or *razzias*, by Turco-Egyptian forces soon became an annual event with the first recorded *razzia* (on the Shilluk Kingdom) occurring in 1826.²⁶ The following year, Dinka living to the east of the White Nile were targeted, and around 500 taken captive.²⁷ Slaving parties also began to penetrate further and further south, especially following the successful penetration of the marshy swamps of the Sudd in 1839–40 by Selim Kapudan, a Turkish naval officer whose expedition was sent by Mehmed Ali. Figures concerning the number of boats leaving Khartoum each year for the south provide an indication of this increase in trading and slaving. In 1852 twelve boats are recorded as sailing to Gondokoro, the trading station established on the east bank of the White Nile close to what is now the modern town and regional capital of Juba. By 1856 this figure had risen to over forty, by 1859 some eighty boats left Khartoum for the southern Sudan, and by 1863 the number had reached 120 per annum.²⁸

There was a variety of factors behind this intensification. A primary reason was Mehmed Ali's decision to invade the Sudan, which was motivated by two core objectives²⁹—the need to obtain slaves for his newly established army, the *Nizam al-Jadid*, and the hope to gain control over various mineral resources, especially the gold deposits in the Ethiopian border area.³⁰ These motivations arose, in turn, from his imperialist ambitions and the increasing number of wars in which the Turco-Egyptian forces were engaged, especially in Syria and Arabia. During the early nineteenth century, there was also a revival of European interest in the Red Sea area, which Mehmed Ali sought to contain by establishing Egyptian control over the ports of Suakin and Massawa in 1843, by entering into a treaty with the Sultan of Lahj in southern Arabia

²⁴ Andrew N. M. Mawson, 'The Triumph of Life: Political Dispute and Religious Ceremonial among the Agar Dinka of the southern Sudan' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989), 70.

²⁵ Patricia Mercer, 'Shilluk trade and politics from the mid-seventeenth century to 1861', *Journal of African History*, 12 (1971), 407–26.

²⁶ Robert O. Collins, 'Slavery in the Sudan in history', *Slavery and Abolition*, 20 (1999), 69–95.

²⁷ Richard L. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820–1881* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 63.

²⁸ Richard Gray, *A History of the Southern Sudan, 1839–1889* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 76–8.

²⁹ Egyptian historians have until recently emphasised other motives than those discussed here, including a desire to wipe out the residual community of Mamluks who had fled to Dongola in 1811 after Mehmed Ali's rise to power, and also the latter's wish to restore order and civilisation to the region, following the collapse of the Funj kingdom. For a review of these arguments, see Gabriel R. Warburg, 'The Turco-Egyptian Sudan: a recent historical controversy', *Die Welt des Islam*, n.s. 31 (1991), 193–215.

³⁰ Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 62–4. See also Alice Moore-Harell, 'Economic and political aspects of the slave trade in Ethiopia and the Sudan in the second half of the nineteenth century', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 32 (1999), 410–13.

in 1822 so as to provide the garrison for Aden, and by launching expeditions to conquer southern Yemen and the Bedouin of 'Asir in Arabia.³¹ All of these developments helped fuel Mehmed Ali's need for more slaves and more mineral wealth.

Furthermore, although the Egyptian army that invaded Sinnar initially consisted mainly of Turks, Albanians, Kurds, Circassians and Greeks, they were not well suited to the climate and quickly became insubordinate. In response, recruitment soon began to focus, therefore, on the local populace. As early as 1821, a training camp was set up in Aswan, where captured Sudanese were vaccinated, instructed in Islam and trained by military officers, most of whom were Europeans.³² Initially, these slave soldiers came mainly from tribes in old slave catchment areas of the Nuba Mountains and the Ethiopian border lands, but by the 1840s raiding had expanded into the White Nile and Sobat basins. Some individuals also appear to have joined voluntarily. With the opening of a route through the Sudd on the White Nile, traders steadily moved further south, mounting expeditions to the west of the river. Also in the mid-1850s, traders became aware of the Bahr al-Ghazal channel flowing into Lake No from the west. The river was navigable as far as Meshra er-Rek, where a river port was established, which in March 1863, as described by the Dutch explorers Mrs and Miss Tinne³³ consisted of 'a small pond or lagoon, in which were crowded together, in the utmost confusion, twenty-five vessels of various descriptions'.³⁴ By the 1860s merchants had extended their activities throughout the many tributaries to the south that feed into the Bahr al-Ghazal, with more and more captives being drawn from the southern groups, such as the Dinka, Nuer, Bongo and Jur.

Figures concerning the size and composition of the Egyptian army in the Sudan give a further insight into the intensification of slaving during this period. In 1832, for instance, the army consisted of just one infantry unit of under 3,000 soldiers and a number of irregular cavalry and infantry. By the following year, the Governor of Sinnar

³¹ Abir, 'Ethiopian-Egyptian border problem', 444–6; see also Janet J. Ewald, 'Crossers of the sea: slaves, freedmen and other migrants in the northwestern Indian Ocean, c.1750–1914', *The American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 69–91.

³² The first training camp was established in October 1820 at Esna for young Mamluks destined to become officers in the new army. The camp at Aswan established the following year appears to have been intended from the outset for training black Africans from further south: see Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan*, 24–8. See also Alice Moore-Harell, 'The Turco-Egyptian army in Sudan on the eve of the Mahdiyya, 1877–80', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31 (1999), 19–37.

³³ Baroness Harriet Van Steengracht-Capellan, second wife of the Dutch merchant Philip F. Tinne, and their daughter Alexandrine Petronella Francina Tinne; they were also accompanied by Alexandrine's aunt, Theodor von Heuglin and Dr Hermann Steudner: see Penelope Gladstone, *Travels of Alexine* (London: John Murray, 1970). Reports on their expedition were published by Theodor von Heuglin, *Die Tinnésche Expedition im westlichen Nilgebiet 1863–1864* (Gotha: J. Perthes, 1865), and *Reise in das Gebiet des Weissen Nils* (Leipzig: C. F. Winter, 1869).

³⁴ Mr Tinne, "A communication from Mr Tinne relative to the Dutch ladies' expedition from Khartum up the River Bahr-el-Ghazal", commencing February 26th at a point on the White Nile', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 8 (1863–4), 12–18.

had 5,000 regular infantry and a few thousand irregular cavalry; while by early 1838 the Egyptian army comprised five regular infantry regiments and several irregular cavalry and foot-soldier units, numbering in total around 20,000 men. Forty years on, by the beginning of 1877, the regular and irregular army in the Sudan is estimated to have numbered between 30,000 and 35,000 troops in total.³⁵ By then there were at least 3,000 black slave soldiers serving in the Egyptian army in Egypt, and other regiments had been sent abroad, including to Mexico to assist the French in the 1860s and to Turkey to aid the Ottomans in the war against Russia in 1877.³⁶

Aside from the demand for slave soldiers, other factors also helped drive the intensification of slave trading in the Sudan following the Turco-Egyptian conquest. These included changes in local taxation practices in the north and its impact on land tenure. Prior to Turco-Egyptian invasion, land tenure among the northern riverine Sudanese was predominantly communal in nature. Although private ownership was permissible, individual landholding was only recognised where land was being used regularly for cultivation or some other productive activity. If unused for a number of years, it reverted to communal ownership.³⁷ The system was thus based on the principle that cultivators had a right to a share in the fruits of the land, but not the land itself. This applied equally to land used for rain-fed agriculture and to land where cultivators had invested in elements of landesque capital, such as waterwheels and irrigation ditches.³⁸ Tithes, payable in produce from the land or otherwise in kind, were levied by the government. The amounts varied according to whether a particular piece of land was simply rain-fed, irrigated, or in the zone inundated annually during the Nile floods, and in bumper years surtax was also levied. The government was expected to provide a range of services, including protection against commodity speculation and relief during drought years in return.³⁹ Following the imposition of Turco-Egyptian rule, the system of taxation was changed, in no small part because of the failure on the part of the new colonial power to locate the kind of vast mineral resources that had partially prompted the invasion. Taxes were now payable either in cash, or some other commodity needed by the Ottoman state, including ivory and slaves. Since not all northern Sudanese had the same access to these resources, the changes to the taxation system stimulated changes in the growth of private ownership and the pattern of land tenure (notably increased fragmentation of rights and ownership). This in turn resulted in the marketplace becoming the main mechanism whereby rights in land were transferred,

³⁵ Moore-Harell, 'Turco-Egyptian army in Sudan', 23.

³⁶ See Douglas H. Johnson, 'The structure of a legacy: military slavery in northeast Africa', *Ethnohistory*, 36 (1989), 72–88.

³⁷ Hassan A. A. Ahmed, 'The Turkish taxation system and its impact on agriculture in the Sudan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 16 (1980), 105–14.

³⁸ See especially Jay L. Spaulding, 'Slavery, land tenure and social class in the northern Turkish Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15 (1982), 4–7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

supplanting older systems based on kinship and rights of usufruct. As more land came to be held by the merchant class, so a demand for labour to work the land was created, which was met by a rapid upsurge in the supply of slaves.⁴⁰

The *Zariba* System

In the first few decades following the establishment of Turco-Egyptian rule, slave raiding remained a monopoly of the state. In 1853, however, Muhammad Sa'id (1854–63), who had replaced 'Abbas I as khedive, gave in to European pressure and abolished government raids, and private merchants from Egypt, Khartoum, northern Sudan, other parts of the Ottoman Empire and Europe rapidly assumed control of the trade,⁴¹ resulting in the establishment of a series of networks of *zaribas* across large parts of southern Sudan. *Zaribas* (pl. *zara'ib*) were fortified enclosures established by slave and ivory traders for use as temporary holding camps, as entrepôts from which to conduct slave raids and ivory collection expeditions, as garrison posts, and as more permanent settlements.

Alphonse de Malzac, a French diplomat turned hunter and trader, was the first to break out of the restrictions the Egyptian government had imposed on ivory traders working along the Bahr al-Jabal. From a base at the river port of Shambe, he created a network of strategic alliances with the Cic and Agar Dinka in 1854–6, founding his first *zariba* at 'Ronga' among the Agar (or 'Rol') Dinka, near the modern town of Rumbek. De Malzac exploited tribal feuds and inter-tribal wars to penetrate the interior and expand his trading network. Using musket-armed Arab Sudanese retainers as the backbone of his military force, he allied with specific groups of Dinka against their local enemies. Cattle taken in these raids were used to feed his own troops, reward his allies, and trade for ivory. Captives taken in these raids were given to his retainers as slaves. Thus the connection between ivory-trading and slave-raiding was forged.⁴² De Malzac also established the first set of rules for the internal administration of *zaribas*. These were adopted by later commercial companies for running their *zaribas* and became known in Arabic as the *qanun Malzac* (Malzac's laws). The Austrian botanist-explorer Dr Georg Schweinfurth provides a synopsis of these in his account of his travels in the region between 1868 and 1871:

First of all, the territories immediately dependent [around a major *zariba*] were distinctly designated. Then it provided that the approaches to a meshera (river port) should only be used

⁴⁰ Jay L. Spaulding, 'Slavery, land tenure and social class in the northern Turkish Sudan', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15 (1982), 5–13.

⁴¹ P. M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan: From the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1961), 64.

⁴² Gray, *History of the Southern Sudan*, 47–9.

by those who could establish a claim to it. Nearly every Seriba [*zariba*] has its separate avenues, upon which it levies a toll, and an avenue without tolls is not a legitimate highway. . . . Each separate company had its own route and its own train of captains, who purchased ivory and procured a market. No new-comers were allowed to intrude themselves into an established market, or to infringe upon its trade. Fresh marts could only be established by pressing farther onwards into the interior.⁴³

De Malzac did not live long enough to enjoy his commercial success, however, dying in Khartoum in 1860 after a long illness. His commercial interests in the south were bought up by Franz Binder, a Transylvanian merchant.⁴⁴ The *zariba* system, which has since been associated with such famous northern Sudanese Arab slave-merchants as Zubayr Pasha, and other Khartoumers such as Andrea Dobono from Malta, and the Turk Küçük Ali,⁴⁵ was thus initiated by European traders, assisted by local Dinka allies.

Zaribas varied in size, according to whether they were temporary way stations along a caravan route, or small outposts, or long-term permanent settlements. The earliest examples were probably simple thorn-enclosed squares containing no more than about twenty huts, but by the late 1860s the average-sized *zariba* had about 250 armed men, plus their women, children and slaves.⁴⁶ Most (if not all) *zaribas*, even the smallest such as the one at Ayod on the Duk Ridge in current Jonglei State, were fortified by a trench with earthen embankments. (In fact, abandoned *zariba* sites can be located on the Sudan Survey 1:250,000 maps wherever the place name Khandaq, Arabic for trench or ditch, is found.) According to Schweinfurth, the palisade at one *zariba* he witnessed being built in 1871 was constructed from hundreds of tree trunks 'erected side by side and close together in a deep trench; the trench was afterwards filled in with earth', and the whole measured 'a hundred feet square'.⁴⁷

The major *zaribas* developed into large, stratified settlements, provisioned in part from land cultivated within a four to five mile radius, and partly through regular cattle raids on neighbouring communities—of whom the Dinka and Jur were some of the most heavily affected. 'Each "great trader" had a number of stations, each under an agent, who in turn presided over the soldiers, their private slaves, itinerant *djellaba*, or merchants, who supplied the *zariba* with a variety of goods, and the allied "chiefs" of the indigenous villages in the district claimed by the great trader.'⁴⁸

Some *zaribas* contained many houses, or huts; others may have been less heavily built on. Describing his approach for the first time towards the chief *zariba* under

⁴³ Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa from 1868 to 1871*, trans. Ellen E. Frewer (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 1: 226.

⁴⁴ Richard Hill, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Sudan* (London: Frank Cass, 1967), 229.

⁴⁵ Collins, 'Slavery in the Sudan', 77.

⁴⁶ Douglas H. Johnson, 'Recruitment and entrapment in private slave armies: the structure of the *zarā'ib* in the Southern Sudan', *Slavery and Abolition*, 13 (1992) (Special issue, *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*), 170.

⁴⁷ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2: 195.

⁴⁸ Karen Sacks, 'Causality and chance on the Upper Nile', *American Ethnologist*, 6 (1979), 443.

Ghattas's⁴⁹ authority, Schweinfurth observed that from a distance 'there was hardly anything to distinguish it from any of the villages of the Dinka', but on getting closer he could make out that 'the area in the centre of the huts was surrounded by a lofty square palisade' with a narrow gateway.⁵⁰ The actual *zariba* Schweinfurth estimated to be 'about 200 paces square [and] . . . crammed with huts'.⁵¹ The combined population of the *zariba*, including those residing outside the palisade, he estimated to be at least 1,000.⁵² Berlioux's 1872 description is briefer, but informs us that typically *zaribas* were square 'intrenched camps' measuring 'eighty-four paces, surrounded with palisades, in the interior of which there are a certain number of conical huts, used often as habitations, or for merchandise and provisions'.⁵³ Later descriptions of the *zariba* at Rumbek (see below) by the Italian soldier of fortune and ex-Garibaldini, Romolo Gessi, who visited in 1878, and that provided by Emin Pasha,⁵⁴ who was based at Rumbek in 1880 or 1881 while employed by Turco-Egyptian authorities as Governor of Equatorial Province, also indicate that huts were packed closely together. Writing about the chief *zariba* of Küçük Ali, near the Jur River, on the other hand, Schweinfurth recounts that the 'store-houses and the governor's dwelling stood alone on an open space within the palisade; around the exterior, at a considerable distance, were ranged the huts assigned to the soldiers and other dependants'.⁵⁵ He goes on to describe these as 'innovations', introduced by the governor of this particular *zariba* as measures to prevent disease and the outbreak of fires.

Since *zaribas* varied in size and importance, it is difficult to give precise figures concerning their population and inhabitants. The overall impression from the historical sources, however, is that the bigger ones rapidly became quite cosmopolitan. In 1862, for instance, the *zariba* at Adael/Ayak, believed to have been near the modern village of Karic south of Rumbek (see below), is said to have contained 112 'men from Khartoum' and 'six elephant hunters',⁵⁶ while two decades later Emin Pasha stated that the non-southern Sudanese population alone totalled 151, comprising seven 'pedlars', fifty-seven tax-payers (*ushurie*), thirty irregular soldiers and fifty-seven 'persons with-

⁴⁹ Ghattas was an Egyptian Copt and one of the great Khartoum traders.

⁵⁰ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1: 173.

⁵¹ Ibid., 178.

⁵² Ibid., 174.

⁵³ Etienne F. Berlioux, *The Slave Trade in Africa in 1872, Principally Carried on for the Supply of Turkey, Egypt, Persia and Zanzibar* (London: E. Marsh, 1872), 22–3.

⁵⁴ Emin Pasha was the name taken by the German traveller and naturalist Dr Eduard Schnitzer, who joined General Gordon's administration of Egypt's equatorial provinces in 1876, having previously assisted the governor of Ottoman northern Albania. By the time he joined Gordon, he was already known as Emin Efendi, and was later promoted to the rank of pasha around 1884, by which time he was Governor of Equatorial Province: see Georg Schweitzer, *Emin Pasha: His Life and Work* (London: A. Constable & Co., 1898).

⁵⁵ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1: 189.

⁵⁶ John Petherick and Katherine Petherick, *Travels in Central Africa, and Explorations of the Western Nile Tributaries* (London: Tinsley Brothers 1869), 1: 224.

out employment'. Emin Pasha reckoned that these alone owned between them 1,500 slaves, while there were also present seventy-three *basingers* (or *bazinqir*—armed slaves/retainers) and their slaves, 'a large number of Nyam-Nyam, Monbuttu, Bongo, Mittu etc.', all of whom also had slaves.⁵⁷

Precise figures concerning the numbers of slaves exported are even harder to obtain. Some estimates for the late 1830s put the number of slaves from Sudan as a whole at around 2,500,⁵⁸ which is probably far too low, given estimates of the numbers exported from Darfur alone in an individual year during the 1780s and 1790s between 4,000 and 5,500.⁵⁹ Collins gives a figure of 30,000 slaves being procured during 1822 and 1823 for the Egyptian army,⁶⁰ and of an estimated 15,000 slaves being sent 'down the Nile and another 2,000 overland in 1868'.⁶¹ Southworth, who visited in 1871–2 also mentions the difficulty of obtaining exact figures, although he estimated that around 25,000 slaves were extracted annually from the Blue and White Niles, and a further 15,000 were obtained from among the Galla, and from Darfur and Kordofan. He cites General Kirkham, at the time commander-in-chief of Emperor Johannes' army, claiming that some 90,000 slaves were also obtained on an annual basis from Ethiopia, making a total of 130,000 per annum.⁶² For the same period, Millingen estimates that there were around 30,000 African slaves in Istanbul and its suburbs, averaging one slave for every two houses; not all of these, however, would have been derived from the Sudan.⁶³ Even after the formal abolition of the trade, Emin Pasha released 567 slaves from Rumbek in just one day,⁶⁴ indicating just how widespread slavery, in its many guises, was. This is also supported by data provided by Schweinfurth who, in 1870, estimated that the total immigrant population in the *zaribas* of the twelve great Khartoum trading companies in the Bahr al-Ghazal amounted to about 10,000 men:⁶⁵ soldiers, merchants, clerks, itinerant traders, holy men, and other adventurers. In addition to this the camps

⁵⁷ E. Schnitzer (Emin Pasha), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa. Being a Collection of His Letters and Journals*, ed. G. Schweinfurth, F. Ratzel, R. W. Felkin and G. Hartlaub (London: George Philip and Son, 1888), 336.

⁵⁸ Baer, 'Slavery in nineteenth century Egypt', 420.

⁵⁹ Ralph A. Austen, 'The Mediterranean Islamic slave trade out of Africa: a tentative census', *Slavery and Abolition*, 13 (1992) (Special issue, *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade*), 214–48.

⁶⁰ Collins, 'Nilotic slave trade', 141.

⁶¹ Collins, 'Slavery in the Sudan', 77.

⁶² Alvan S. Southworth, 'The Soudan and the Valley of the White Nile', *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*, 5 (1874), 99. Using this total of 130,000 slaves and an estimated value of \$60 per head, Southworth calculated the annual value of the trade to be \$7.8 million. It is not clear if he is referring to US or Maria Theresa dollars, however.

⁶³ Frederick Millingen, 'On the Negro slaves in Turkey', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8 (1870–1), lxxxvi.

⁶⁴ 'In one day I set free and sent home 165 Monbuttu, of whom 41 were taken from the hut of the chief of this district, a certain Mula Effendi, a Dongolaui, [and] 400 Agar, Kich and Atwot slaves; these numbers are proof sufficient of the state of matters': Schnitzer, *Emin Pasha*, 336.

⁶⁵ Southworth, 'The Soudan', 99, gives the following estimates for some of the individual Khartoum traders: Agate 5,000 plus; Cushik Ali (Küçük Ali) 4,000; Gatase (Ghattas) 4,000; Bizzelli 800.

included a total of 5,000 to 11,000 slave soldiers, 40,000 to 60,000 personal slaves, and about 190,000 subject population settled around the camps and along the caravan routes, who were neither slave nor fully free, and were employed as porters, labourers and agricultural workers.⁶⁶ The proportion of slave to free residents in the *zaribas* was thus between 4:1 and 6:1, while the proportion of combined servile and subject population to free immigrants was more like 26:1.⁶⁷ This division between free, slave and subject populations was probably represented spatially in the organisation of the *zaribas*, whereby merchants, soldiers, and probably their personal slaves resided within the entrenchments, while the subject population lived around it.⁶⁸

Later History of Rumbek

By the late 1860s and 1870s the Turco-Egyptian state, trying to establish its authority over the area, had taken over these camps and Rumbek became a government station and the base for a *mudir* or governor, who was supposed to administer the district which was called Rhol, after the local river (Röl, now Na'am). In 1878 Romolo Gessi used it as his base to defeat the revolt of the itinerant traders, or *jallaba*, in Bahr al-Ghazal, led by Zubayr Pasha's son, Sulayman Zubayr. Gessi was not enamoured of Rumbek, however, writing later that his life there became insurmountable and that:

One cannot imagine a more monotonous village; the huts crowded and the air pestilential. All the neighbourhood was full of filth. The upper floor of the hut is used by the master and his family, though the last in a separate *tukul* or apartment; the lower floor serves as a kitchen and sleeping place for the slaves. I am so disgusted that, if fate ever brings me to these parts again, I will do my best to avoid Rumbek.⁶⁹

The town was also visited in 1880–1 by another Italian, Gaetano Casati, who accompanied Emin Pasha, and described it as 'a very populous village,⁷⁰ shut into a narrow space, with huts erected upon piles or short posts. The part below the habitation, which is not enclosed, is used for the purpose of household services.'⁷¹

It is quite possible that the houses Gessi and Casati saw resembled a style of Dinka and Jur housing that is still in use today. We should note, however, that their descrip-

⁶⁶ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 2: 427.

⁶⁷ Johnson, 'Recruitment and entrapment', 167.

⁶⁸ For a possible analogue of the spatial organisation of the territory around a major *zariba*, see Dennis D. Cordell, *Dar Al-Kuti and the Last Years of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 84, Map 5.

⁶⁹ Romolo Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1892), 213.

⁷⁰ Estimated at around 2,500: see Paul Santi and Richard Hill (trans. and ed.), *The Europeans in the Sudan, c.1834–1878* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 124.

⁷¹ Gaetano Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1891), 1: 67.

tions are at odds with the depiction of Dinka houses provided by Schweinfurth. Emin Pasha's description of Rumbek is even more comprehensive. He noted that the town had taken its name from a local chief, Bek⁷² (*rum* being the Dinka word for forested/wooded area)—which is in line with local oral traditions—and described it as a major slave-trading centre.

At the present time the station has a very uncomfortable look, owing to the former attempt to construct a moat round the station, and the numerous trenches in the yellow clayey soil, from which clay has been taken to plaster the walls of the huts and to form the floors of platforms. Besides this, wells were constructed by means of a row of deep holes . . . In the midst of this chaos of trenches, mounds and pools the station buildings form a kind of island. They consist of a motley group of huts built upon platforms, the irregular arrangement of which defies all description. Paths about a foot broad, and covered by every kind of filth, lead through this confusion; and as the spaces underneath the platforms are occupied by crowds of slaves, who live after their own manner, the stench and dirt are prodigiously increased. . . . Water is very scarce; it is obtained from deep wells, and has a dirty colour and a nauseously earthy taste. The whole situation of the station so far from all water is a great mistake, and its formation into a central station can only be explained by its convenience for the slave trade.⁷³

At the beginning of the Mahdiyya (1881–98) the Egyptian garrison at Rumbek was slaughtered in July 1883 by a combined force of Dinka and Nuer. The official version of this defeat (reported by Emin Pasha) was that the garrison was caught outside the *zariba* when on an unauthorised raid against the Agar Dinka.⁷⁴ Emin's Italian lieutenant, Casati, claimed that the Dinka attack on Rumbek was 'preceded by a great sorcerer with the cry "Ti [sic] Sebil Allah" (By God's Mercy), the deadly invocation of the Arab, with which Mahdism had filled the air . . .'⁷⁵ In fact the assault on Rumbek had nothing to do with the inspiration of Mahdism. The Dinka and Nuer versions of the raid are much more interesting and revolve around the personality of the famous (or notorious) Agar Dinka leader Wol (or Awol) Athiang (Wuol Athiang as he is known to the Nuer).

Wol had dealings with the Egyptian garrison, as his sister was the wife (or possibly concubine and/or slave) of the Egyptian commander there. According to the Nuer, it was the Egyptians who made Wol a chief of the Agar. He therefore had inside knowledge of the *zariba*'s strengths, weaknesses and activities. As the successes of the Mahdi grew throughout 1882 and 1883 Wol contacted the Dinka's erstwhile enemies, the Western Nuer (including his immediate neighbours the Nyuong, but also attracting contingents from as far north as the Jagei, around Leer), who were led by one of their own religious figures, the prophet of the Nuer divinity Teny. Prior to launching the assault on the *zariba*, however, Wol gave a separate set of instructions to the Agar

⁷² Or 'Bekei', as he is referred to by Dinka today.

⁷³ Schnitzer, *Emin Pasha*, 334–6.

⁷⁴ Franz Stuhlmann (ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Dr. Emin Pascha* (Hamburg: G. Westermann, 1919), 2: 491.

⁷⁵ Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria*, 76.

warriors: they were to wear a strip of white cloth around their arm or body to distinguish them from their Nuer allies. Then, he said, 'As you spear the Turuk to your right, spear the Nuer to your left.' The assault was successful, the Egyptian garrison was wiped out, but either during or after the battle (the Nuer say after) the Agar turned on the Nuer, trying to rid themselves of two enemies at once. The Nuer version of events emphasises Wol's treachery, but they claim that the Dinka attack on them took place after the garrison fell. The prophet of Teny had been killed in the assault, and the Nuer were returning home with their share of the garrison's captured cattle when Wol and the Agar attacked them.⁷⁶

Rumbek was reoccupied later in 1883,⁷⁷ but following a combination of incursions by Mahdist forces into Bahr al-Ghazal and revolts at various garrisons, Emin Pasha withdrew the garrison stationed at Rumbek (and also that at Ayak) so as to reinforce that at Ramadi.⁷⁸ No foreign troops, whether Egyptian, northern Sudanese or European, were stationed at Rumbek until 1897, when a small French post was temporarily established as part of the expedition from Gabon led by Jean-Baptiste Marchand sent to establish a French foothold in the Upper Nile, and which was later to give rise to the so-called 'Fashoda Incident',⁷⁹ which resulted in the French forces capitulating to a British force led by Lord Kitchener and the end of French aspirations to establish colonial rule over the Upper Nile. When the Anglo-Egyptian forces arrived in Bahr al-Ghazal at the beginning of the twentieth century they reoccupied the Rumbek area and established the current town at some distance from the old *zariba* site. The new town of Rumbek was, like its predecessor, relatively cosmopolitan, with a population of Greeks, Egyptians, and people from all over Sudan, as well as a few Britons and a contingent of Sudanese troops. By the end of the Condominium, there were a British District Commissioner and two Assistant District Commissioners based in the town, as well as a Sudanese *ma'mur* (administrator), and the town had a population of around 3,100.⁸⁰ Wol Athiang continued an ambivalent relationship with both

⁷⁶ Douglas H. Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 249. Mawson suggests that the attack may also have been motivated by the murder by a group of traders of Kejang, the eldest son of Macot, the Agar Dinka spear-master at the time, 'Triumph of Life', 75.

⁷⁷ Robert O. Collins, *The Southern Sudan 1883–1898: A Struggle for Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 44; Gray, *History of the Southern Sudan*, 158.

⁷⁸ Schnitzer, *Emin Pasha*, 468.

⁷⁹ Fashoda was established as a landing and anti-slavery station in Shilluk territory on the White Nile by the Egyptian army in 1855, and was visited by Schweinfurth in 1869 and Junker in 1876, by which time it was a significant trading station and jumping-off point for travellers going south into equatorial Africa, where several Greek merchants had established themselves. However, when Marchand arrived, the fort was deserted and in ruins. See *Narrative of the Expedition to the Bahr el Ghazal and Subsequent Occupation* by El Karim W. Boulnois Bey (Dakhliia 112/13/84), cited by Mawson, 'Triumph of Life', 76; Marc Michel, *La Mission Marchand 1895–1899* (Paris: Editions Mouton, 1972); and David L. Lewis, *The Race to Fashoda: European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987).

⁸⁰ Mawson, 'Triumph of Life', 77–85.

the new government and his Nuer neighbours, alternately collaborating and fighting with them both. The government temporarily exiled him to Wau in 1921 and allowed him to return to the vicinity of Rumbek in 1922. He died in 1948.

Recent Archaeological Survey

As part of a broader strategy to encourage the revival of archaeological and other academic research in South Sudan,⁸¹ a preliminary archaeological survey was conducted around Rumbek town in Lakes Province, Western Equatoria over the first two weeks of February 2007.⁸² Rumbek was selected for two related reasons. Firstly, as already discussed, one of the *zaribas* to be built was established near Rumbek by Alphonse de Malzac. Secondly, the remains of a large ditched enclosure with surface scatters of nineteenth-century material survives on the edge of Rumbek town, which although now known simply as Pendit, or Old Town, is known from local oral traditions to have been associated with the nineteenth-century slave and ivory trade. This site has often been presumed to be the remains of de Malzac's base. The condition of the site also makes it suitable for interpretation to a general public, and thus it was reasoned that conducting research on the site might have the desired effects of raising local awareness of the importance and value of historical and archaeological research more generally, as well as producing tangible evidence concerning the nature of *zaribas* and the slave and ivory trades with which they were associated.

To this end, a survey aimed at locating sites associated with the mid to late nineteenth-century slave and ivory trade around Rumbek, and collecting oral information about these sites and local Dinka settlement history was carried out. The survey was constrained by limited access to a suitable field vehicle, and it was only possible to explore areas within a 25 kilometre radius of Rumbek. The published documentary sources provided the initial starting point for enquiries, with each informant being asked a series of standard questions concerning their knowledge of the site of Pendit and its history, Dinka traditions concerning the foundation of Rumbek, slavery, the trade in ivory, and exchange practices. Informants were also asked if they were aware of any other places with banks or ditches, and if they were, to name these and provide information about their location. These locations were then visited and further informants drawn from the resident population of the new area were questioned about the possible presence of a site. This strategy resulted in the location of two more *zaribas*—Meen Atol and Lol Nhom (Figure 26.2). Two other localities were mentioned

⁸¹ Paul J. Lane (ed.), *Protecting and Preserving the Cultural Heritage of South Sudan: Defining Priorities for Action*. Unpublished report on a two-day workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya 12th–13th April 2005 (Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2005), 77 pages. On file at the BIEA Library, Nairobi.

⁸² This research was led by Paul Lane.

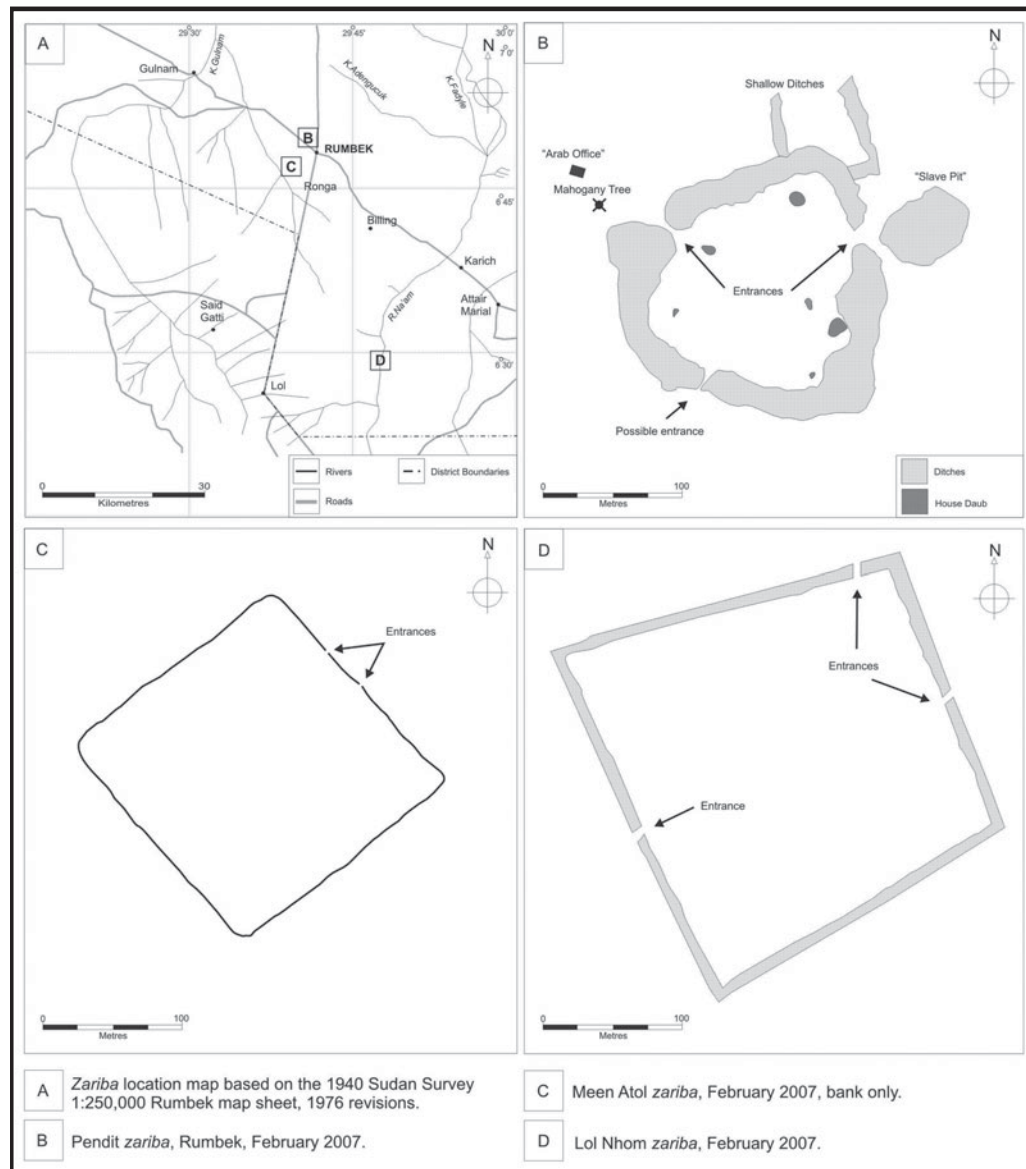


Figure 26.2. General location (A), and plans of Pendit (B), Meen Atol (C) and Lol Nhom (D) zaribas.

as possibly having similar enclosures—Langdit, near Gulnam to the north-east of Rumbek, and Wulu, to the south. Enquiries around Langdit resulted in the team being taken to a Dinka shrine with historical associations, but no one who was interviewed knew of anything resembling an enclosure similar to those found at Pendit, Meen Atol or Lol Nhom. The interviews at Wulu were more promising, and several sites were mentioned, but as this was the last day of the pilot season there was insufficient time to visit any of these.

The recording strategy at each of the three sites visited was similar, and entailed mapping the outline of the main ditch or ditches and other features where present—such as banks, collapsed buildings and house floors, using a high-resolution handheld Trimble GeoExt GPS. Digital and slide photographs were taken at each site, and walkovers were conducted in an effort to locate surface finds. Local residents were also interviewed about the site and its history. Details of the three sites are given below.

Pendit

The site now known as Pendit, which some translate as ‘old town’ (but *pandit* means ‘big village’, in Dinka), is located at N 6° 49′ 11″ / E 29° 40′ 58″, on the northern edge of Rumbek. It consists of a sub-circular causewayed enclosure, approximately 150 metres in diameter and bounded by a ditch approximately 13–14 metres wide and between 2 and 3 metres deep (Figures 26.2b, 26.3). There is no obvious bank associated with this ditch either around the outer ditch edge or its inner side. However, the centre of the enclosure is notably higher, by perhaps 50–60 centimetres, than the ground outside the ditch. There are a total of three causeways between 2 and 3 metres wide, situated on the southern, eastern and western sides of the monument. The ditched enclosure covers a total area of around 28,895 m², although the internal surface area measures only around 16,550 m². In addition to the main enclosure ditches there are at least two and possibly three shallow, banked ditches radiating out from it and, on the eastern side adjacent to one of the causewayed entrances, there is a sub-circular hollow around 2–2.5 metres deep and approximately 66 metres in diameter. In the rainy season this now serves as a water hole for cattle, but this was possibly not its original function. Local informants interviewed on site in April 2005, for instance, described it as a ‘slave pit’ where slaves were held until such time as the *zariba* commander was ready to send them north for embarkation at one of the river ports, such as that at Meshra er-Rek on the Bahr al-Ghazal, or Meshra Aboo-kooka on the Bahr al-Jabal—the latter being, according to Schweinfurth, the ‘proper place of embarkation’ for *zaribas* on the River Rol (now known as the Na’am).⁸³

⁸³ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1: 224.



Figure 26.3. Main enclosure ditch on the north side of Pendit *zariba*, Rumbek, looking east. Photograph by Paul Lane, February 2007.

There are two other external features of note, both located on the north-western side of the enclosure, opposite the causewayed entrance on this side. These features are in proximity to one another and are, respectively, a large mahogany tree, and about 20 metres away to the north-west, a low mound of grass- and weed-covered brick rubble about 1.5 metres high, beneath which the corners of a building measuring, minimally, 8.20×5.30 metres can just be discerned. The bricks used here are in the Egyptian style, being flatter and wider than European-style bricks. According to local informants interviewed at the site in early February 2007, the brick building was the main office used by the Arab who controlled the site, and the nearby mahogany tree is named Ater Madat. Ater is the Dinka word for mahogany. Madat is the name of a Dinka man who was one of those captured and brought to Pendit.⁸⁴

Traces of at least six wattle-and-daub structures are visible in the interior of the enclosure, one of which, near the west side, appears to have been rectangular in plan. The shape of the other structures could not be discerned from the surviving surface remains, however. There is also a low-density background scatter of artefacts across much of the interior, comprising mostly local pottery sherds, some of which were decorated with a variety of cord-roulette motifs (at least five different

⁸⁴ Interviews Pendit 1–2/2/2007.

types were noted, and also one possible example of the use of a carved roulette). In addition, several denser artefact concentrations were observed, especially around the causeway entrances on both sides of the enclosure ditch. In addition to local pottery, these often included fragmentary animal bones (notably cattle), glass beads and the occasional fragment of imported glazed-ware ceramics or bottle glass. Other surface finds included part of an iron knife, a stone musket ball and a possible musket flint.

Meen Atol

Meen Atol, located about 5.4 kilometres south-south-west (bearing 201°) of Rumbek at N 6° 46' 24" / E 29° 39' 49", is another *zariba* with local oral traditions concerning its use as an 'Arab' camp where Dinka were brought to be 'slaughtered', in a manner similar to those recounted for Pendit.⁸⁵ The site is markedly different from Pendit, however. Instead of being sub-circular in plan, Meen Atol is an almost square enclosure formed by a low *murram* (gravelly, iron-rich subsoil) bank, ranging between about 0.30 metres to 1.7 metres high (Figures 26.2c, 26.4). Where well preserved, this bank is approximately 4 metres wide, and there are several large doum palms growing out of its centre, suggesting that the site was abandoned some time ago. Two entrances were also noted, both on the east side. The more southerly of these is approximately 2 metres wide, while the northern one measured about 4 metres. The bank is surrounded by an outer ditch, which although currently rather hard to discern, is perhaps 3 to 4 metres wide and in places about 1 metre deep. When visited, the site was densely vegetated by a mix of doum palms, long grass and scrubby woodland, and it is evident that cultivation has occurred both within the enclosure and over the line of the bank and ditch, especially on the southern and south-western sides, where these features are now particularly indistinct. The vegetation cover restricted surface visibility and the only material noted was restricted to a low-density scatter of cord-rouletted local pottery in an area in the north-eastern part of the site that had been cultivated recently. No glass beads, imported ceramics or glass fragments were found, and neither were any traces of former structures seen, although this does not rule out the possibility that such material may occur on the site. Because of the vegetation cover, only the line of the bank was mapped by GPS. This suggests that the internal area of the enclosure is around 34,043 m² and the enclosure sides are approximately 173 metres by 168 metres.

⁸⁵ Interviews Ronga 12/2/2007, Meen Atol 13/2/2007. These modern accounts of Dinka being slaughtered need to be understood against the context of the recently ended civil war in the Sudan, and probably should not be taken too literally.



Figure 26.4. Enclosure bank on the east side of Meen Atol *zariba*, from the enclosure interior. Photograph by Paul Lane, February 2007.

Lol Nhom

The site at Lol Nhom (also known as Kalamei by Jur speakers) is similar in form and appearance to Meen Atol, although it is considerably larger and the bank and ditch are better preserved—and were possibly more substantial originally—compared with those at Meen Atol. The site is located at N 6° 28' 48" / E 29° 47' 16", about 35.3 kilometres south-south-east of Meen Atol (bearing 137°), and about 39.3 kilometres south-south-east (163°) from Pendit. It comprises a 1.6 to 2 metre high inner bank, approximately 4 metres wide at its base, surrounded by an approximately 6 metre wide ditch roughly 2 metres deep, although some sections are shallower and others are closer to 3 metres in depth (Figures 26.2d, 26.5). The enclosure has a slightly rhomboidal plan, the west side at 280 metres being about 65 metres longer than the eastern side. The total area enclosed by the bank is around 53,421 m². There are three entrances, one in each of the northern, western and eastern banks, the widest being around 4 metres. As



Figure 26.5. Southern corner of the main enclosure ditch, Lol Nhom *zariba*, looking north-west. Photograph by Paul Lane, February 2007.

at Meen Atol, large mature trees, in this case mostly mahogany, were observed in several places growing out of the centre of the ditch and bank, suggesting that the enclosure was established some time ago and that once abandoned it was not intensively re-utilised.

At the time of the survey, much of the ground vegetation had been recently burned off, thereby improving surface visibility, although the ash deposits were not always conducive to observing surface artefacts. As at Meen Atol, there were very few artefacts on the surface. The few pieces of pottery that were seen resembled material noted at Pendit and Meen Atol (and also local contemporary ceramics). A single piece of bottle glass of possible nineteenth-century date was also noted. The interior of the site is relatively featureless, apart from a few low mounds that could be the remains of collapsed mud-and-wattle houses, although no obvious lumps of house daub were seen. Since the remains of a couple of recently abandoned houses, and also a well, survive within the interior, it is possible that even if these mounds represent collapsed houses they may transpire to be of recent origin. One rather larger mound was also noted just outside the enclosure ditch, near the north-west corner. This was said by local informants to be where the 'Arabs' lived,⁸⁶ but there was little in the way of surface evidence

⁸⁶ Interview Lol Nhom 15/2/2007.

except a few sherds of local pottery to distinguish it from the mounds seen in the interior. An alternative explanation, if the mound can be shown to be of human origin, is that it represents the remains of a rubbish dump, as might be inferred from Berlioux's comment that 'the dungheaps around the Séribes send forth filthy odours.'⁸⁷

Finally, apart from its impressive size, another feature of Lol Nhom which distinguishes it from both Meen Atol and Pendit is its proximity to water, as the site lies within 150 metres of a perennial river, known locally as the Bahr Khawaja (Khawaja: White Person/European), and an area of reedy grassland that becomes inundated during the rainy season. Whether this influenced the choice of site for the enclosure is not yet known, however.

Matching the Historical Sources with Archaeological Evidence

As already indicated, there are various primary documentary sources concerning different *zaribas* in the vicinity of Rumbek, that include short descriptions of the conditions and inhabitants of the settlements at Rumbek and Adael/Ayak towards the latter part of the Turco-Egyptian era. There is also one map that shows the distribution of numerous *zaribas* across much of what is now Bahr al-Ghazal and Western Equatoria Provinces compiled by Schweinfurth during his travels between 1868 and 1871 (Figure 26.6). Schweinfurth was hosted over this period by the Khartoum trader Ghattas whose network of *zaribas* extended from the Bahr al-Ghazal/Bahr al-Arab boundary to the south-western side of the Nile watershed, which also marked the approximate edge of the Azande kingdom (see Figure 26.6). Although Schweinfurth was based for much of his time at Ghattas's principal *zariba* (marked simply as Seriba Ghattas), which was probably located to the north of the modern town of Tonj, Schweinfurth visited approximately forty *zaribas* and his map shows ten *zaribas* as being either part of, or formerly belonging to, Ghattas's network. These included some 'minor' *zaribas* on the Rol,⁸⁸ including de Malzac's, Ronga and Adael. Adael is also marked on Petherick's map of his journey through the area in 1855 on his way to Gondokoro. According to Schweinfurth, Adael was plundered and burned down by Agar Dinka in April 1870, and was not restored. However, as discussed above, Adael (if it was the same location) was clearly thriving again in 1880–1, when visited by Emin Pasha. De Malzac's *zariba* is also shown on this map as being abandoned, although marked nearby is another *zariba* named Ronga (Figure 26.7a).⁸⁹ 'Ronga' is the Dinka word for shea butter tree, and there is an area labelled thus on the 1976 revised version of the 1940 Sudan Survey 1:250,000 map of the area (Figure 26.7b). There is also an

⁸⁷ Berlioux, *Slave Trade in Africa*, 23.

⁸⁸ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1: 224.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 2: endpiece.

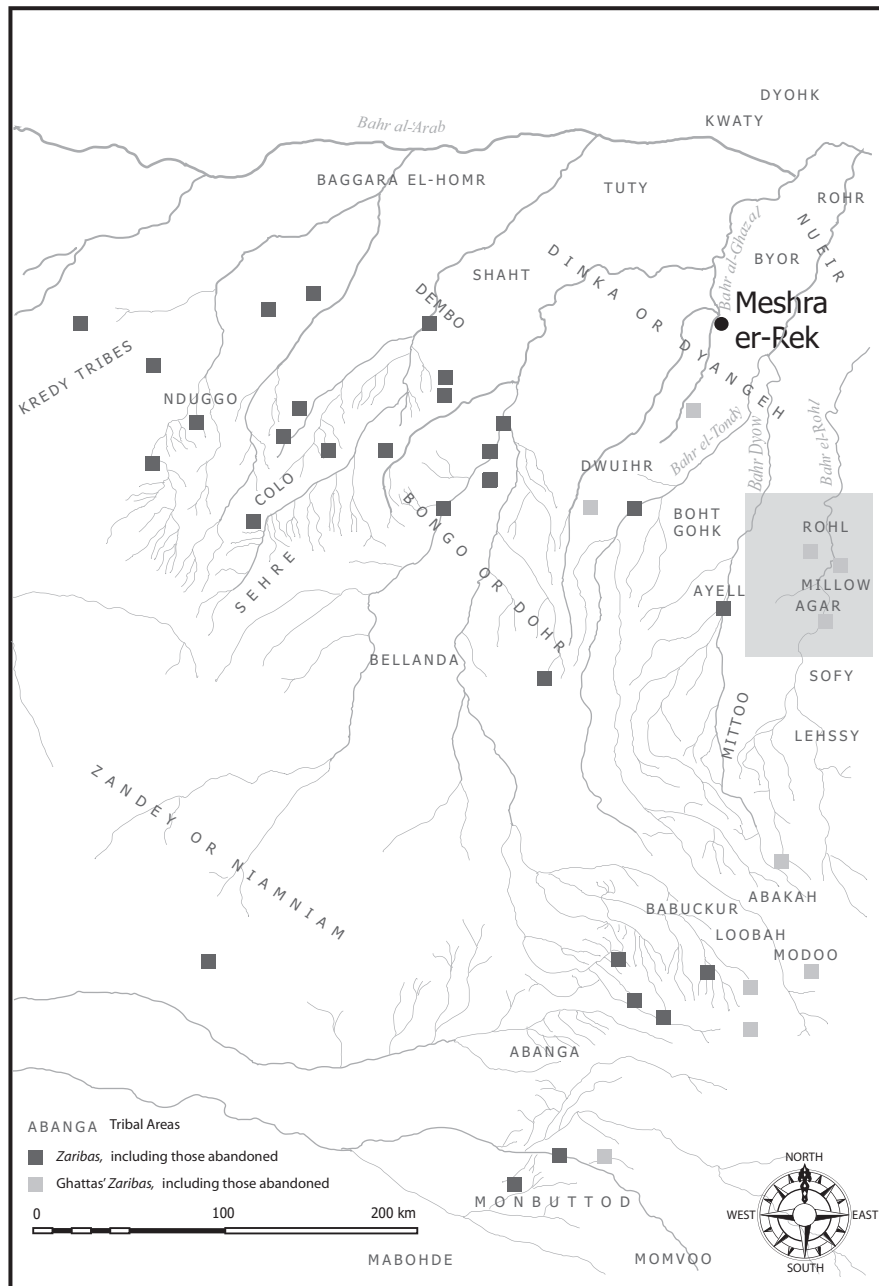


Figure 26.6. Digitised version of Schweinfurth's 1872 general map, showing the location of different *zaribas*, with those 'owned' by Ghattas highlighted. The location of Meshra er-Rek is also shown, and enlarged section reproduced as Figure 26.7.

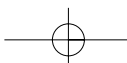


Figure 26.7. Enlarged, digitised section of Schweinfurth's 1872 map showing location of de Malzac's, Ronga and Aadael *zaribas* (a) compared with location of Pedit, Meen Atol and Lol Nhom *zaribas* as logged in 2007 (b).

area around Rumbek known today as 'Ronga', although this is situated slightly to the north-west of the area so labelled on the Sudan Survey map. The modern location of Ronga was visited during the survey and found to have many shea butter trees. Investigations failed to locate any enclosure, however, and local informants were also adamant that they knew of none in the immediate vicinity.⁹⁰

On the basis of these results, it would seem that the area in the vicinity of Rumbek known today as 'Ronga' does not correspond with general the location of the *zariba* named 'Ronga'. This is not particularly surprising, since place names are by no means constant, especially where populations are relatively mobile. Schweinfurth encountered similar difficulties and observed that because of the high level of population mobility, settlements were 'rarely . . . permanent beyond a period of at most ten years' making it 'very difficult to fix on the maps names and localities'.⁹¹ The problem of linking archaeological sites to historically documented names becomes even more acute when, as in this case, the place name is derived from the local vegetation. Specifically, there are many places where shea butter trees grow in abundance, and each would seem as likely to be named 'Ronga' as any other.

Nevertheless, the documentary sources are not entirely consistent. Specifically, whereas Schweinfurth's map implies that the *zariba* known as Ronga was distinct from the *zariba* associated with de Malzac, other sources (notably Franz Binder's account of his arrival to take possession of de Malzac's *zaribas* following the latter's death), seem to imply that de Malzac's first *zariba* in 1854–6 was at a place called Ronga which later became known as Rumbek.⁹² Matters are further complicated by the fact that the surviving *zariba* in the modern town of Rumbek is known only as Pendit. Additionally, when comparing the position of de Malzac's, Ronga and Adael as shown on Schweinfurth's map, with the locations of Pendit, Meen Atol and Lol Nhom as located in the 2007 survey, it is not clear whether the latter two sites correspond with Ronga and Adael (see Figures 26.7a and b). To start with, Lol Nhom is some distance from the modern settlement of Karic. Adael, on the other hand, is said to have been situated close to Karic⁹³ (although interviews here in 2007 failed to produce anyone who knew of a ditched enclosure nearby). Similarly, Meen Atol is on the wrong side of the Na'am (Rol) river compared with Ronga. This said, since Schweinfurth appears not to have visited any of these *zaribas*, it is quite possible that his map is inaccurate—or, rather, more inaccurate than his understanding of the relative geography of those areas he did

⁹⁰ The same informants, however, were able to tell us of the existence of the ditched enclosure at Meen Atol situated about 4 kilometres away from the area known today as Ronga and 5.4 kilometres from the site of Pendit.

⁹¹ Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, 1: 194.

⁹² See Gray, *History of the Southern Sudan*, 48: ' . . . on de Malzac's death in April 1860, his stations were bought and visited by Franz Binder . . . When after a week Binder reached the settlement at "Ronga" (Rumbek) he was greeted by many chieftains . . . A few days later at "Ronga" four chiefs of the Cic, Agar and "Agjel" Dinka tribes came . . . '.

⁹³ Mawson, 'Triumph of Life', 71–2.

visit, since even in these areas he managed to get the position and orientation of a number of topographical features, including rivers, quite wrong. Moreover, an archival source cited by Gray⁹⁴ implies that Ronga was about two miles south of the modern town of Rumbek.⁹⁵ This could imply that the enclosure now known as Meen Atol may well have been once known as Ronga, but if so then on Schweinfurth's map the position of Ronga relative to 'Ancient seriba Malzac' (i.e. Rumbek) is wrong.

At this stage, all that can be said with certainty is that the area round Rumbek contains three ditched enclosures, two of which conform in terms of their plan with the standard layout of a *zariba* (although both are larger than the figures that are quoted in the historical sources), while the site of Pedit is significantly smaller in area and of a quite different plan to that normally ascribed to a *zariba* (although this may be the result of changes to the original defences as part of the settlement biography of the site). That this site was the focus of more intensive trading activity is suggested by the higher proportion of surface finds of a non-local nature, although this would need to be confirmed by excavation at all three sites. Finally, the absence of any material evidence for the practice of slavery or the presence of slaves should also be noted—although given the almost universal low archaeological visibility of slaves, perhaps we should not make too much of this.

Conclusion

The Turco-Egyptian invasion of northern Sudan in 1820–1 and the subsequent expansion of trading and military power across Equatoria and Bahr al-Ghazal introduced a number of changes that had profound consequences for the subsequent history of an area that lay beyond the southern frontier of the Ottoman Empire. As Richard Gray observed over forty years ago, just how significant these changes were is a matter of interpretation and perspective.⁹⁶ Gray's comments notwithstanding, as discussed in this paper, one outcome of the Turco-Egyptian invasion was the establishment of a network of fortified trading bases across a vast area of the lands occupied by Dinka, Jur, Nuer, Bongo and other southern Sudanese peoples. However, instead of developing the entrepreneurial activities of local communities, the traders instead exploited 'tribal jealousies and divisions . . . and raids for cattle and slaves became the economic basis of these settlements, the cattle being used to purchase ivory and the slaves to pay for the soldiers'. In due course, this created a context in which violence was established 'as a normal relationship' between southern Sudanese and the outside world.⁹⁷ As Gray

⁹⁴ Gray, *History of the Southern Sudan*, 47, citing a letter from von Heughlin to Petermann, July 1862.

⁹⁵ See also Mawson, 'Triumph of Life', 70.

⁹⁶ Richard Gray, 'The Southern Sudan', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6 (1971), 109–10.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

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also observed, the majority of records available for scrutiny concern the activities of foreigners, who included individuals of Arab, Egyptian, northern Sudanese, European and Ottoman origin. As demonstrated in this chapter, the archaeological traces of the places that acted as the focus of the activities of these outsiders still survive. It is also highly probable that many more *zaribas* and related centres, such as the remains of the river ports, could be located through more intensive archaeological survey, especially if conducted in conjunction with the available documentary and cartographic sources, and it is hoped that such surveys will be conducted in the near future. Excavation at some of these sites may also generate information about the range of economic activities and material culture traditions that were coeval with the utilisation of the different *zaribas*, as well as potentially providing greater detail concerning the layout and construction of these enclosures and the range of trade goods introduced into the region. Ultimately, however, if the consequences of the Turkiyya for the southern Sudan are to be more fully understood, such surveys and excavations will need to be extended to the wider area, in tandem with the collection of clan and lineage histories, so as to locate and investigate those places lived in, attacked and abandoned by the local inhabitants of the region as they were drawn inexorably into contacts with the outside world that were often brutal and violent, but which also offered new opportunities that could be manipulated for political and economic advantage.

Note. The archaeological research on which this chapter is based was funded by the British Institute in Eastern Africa, and conducted at the invitation of the Government of South Sudan. Particular thanks are due to Mr John Luk Jok, Minister of Culture, and Governor of Lakes State, for facilitating research clearance. Thanks are also due to Mr Deng Mabor, Ms Harjot Hayer and Ms Sophie Butler for assistance in the field; Dr Justin Willis, BIEA Director and his staff in Nairobi for help with logistics; John Ryle and Dr Stephanie Wynne-Jones for assistance with references; Philip Owiti for preparing the main location map; and Geoff Arnott for preparing Figures 26.2, 26.6 and 26.7.

