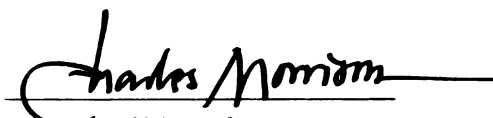This is to certify that the

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THE POLITICS OF CULTURE: THE CONCEPT OF
RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM IN THE SUDAN

By

Furhana Ahmed Bhoola

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF CULTURE: THE CONCEPT OF

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM IN THE SUDAN

By

Furhana Ahmed Bhoola

Anthropologists and historians have explained the
revival of religious activity as emanating from the increas-
ing pressure of European imperialism, and the economic, social
and political disintegration arising out of these pressures.
The problem of schisms and conflicts in the internal in-
digenous social structure has been virtually ignored in
these studies. It is argued in this thesis that an explica-
tion of the crisis situation is crucial to the construction
of a unifying theory of religious enthusiasm.

The concept of a "licensed protest" is introduced to
indicate a new dimension in the study of religious enthusi-
asm. A distinction between external and internal motivation
is drawn to elucidate the crisis situation, and to show why
it is that religious activity is frequently a characteristic
of periods of social unrest.

The theoretical perspective summarized above will be
illustrated with reference to the Mahdist movement in the

Sudan (1881-1898). The factors giving rise to the origin

and consolidation of the Mahdist movement are discussed in

relation to the above issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists have been interested in those enthusiastic religious movements which seem to develop so frequently among so-called primitive peoples after contact with European civilization. Such movements have been studied under the rubrics of cargo cults, nativistic movements, messianic movements, revitalistic movements, and millenarian movements. One of the first anthropologists who formulated a general theory of "religious revival" was A. C. Haddon (1917). Haddon emphasized that the new religious movements (cargo cults) in New Guinea are a product of the colonial encounter. While Haddon's paper has been largely neglected by others writing on such phenomena, anthropologists writing long after Haddon have merely echoed Haddon's views (R. Linton, 1943; A. F. C. Wallace, 1956; Peter Worsley, 1957; K. O. L. Burridge, 1969). Their theories have been focused upon religious enthusiasm in primitive societies, and in particular those societies subjected to Westernization and Christianity. More specifically such explanations emphasize the rejection of the external colonial order as a stimulus to such movements.

A second kind of explanation involves the notion of relative deprivation, i.e., that changes in the traditional social structure are generated by internal pressures due to incongruities between the social and cultural dimensions of a society. While both explanatory frameworks are associated with particular forms of theorizing, they both nevertheless address or attempt to account for the same sort of phenomena, namely, change in religious systems. In order to construct a comprehensive theory of religious enthusiasm, we must first assess the distinction between movements generated by a conflict between societies and those generated by dissensions within a society. For any given case this would involve an explication of the crisis situation in which the movement emerged and of the social groups from which it derived leadership and support.

Social anthropologists have neglected to look at factors other than acculturation and relative deprivation as the causes of religious movements. They have usually been content with pointing out that religious enthusiasm is characteristic of periods of social unrest and that the rejection of the external political power or cultural conflict with the whites are of primary significance. Yet a careful perusal of the literature suggests that the rejection of internal political and cultural intervention is often involved in revivals of religious ideology and upsurges of proselyting behavior.

Moreover, the main efforts of anthropologists in the study of religious enthusiasm have been limited to those societies subjected to Europeanization and Christianization. Religious enthusiasm in societies not subjected to a European colonial power or to the influence of Christianity remains largely unexplored. Some assumptions that may lie behind this neglect are revealed by K. O. L. Burridge:

> Islam yields fewer examples of
> millenarian movements. This is
> because of the very firm political
> control exercized in Islam, and
> Sunni iconoclasm and distaste for
> the emotional excesses often
> associated with millenarian
> activities, go some way towards
> accounting for the relative dearth.
> (Burridge, 1969:32).

He appears to ignore the fact that Islamic history contains many important millenarian ideas and millenarian movements: the Shia belief in the second coming of the hidden Imam, the Māhdi, who will restore the true religion and usher in the millennium has provided ideological justification for many uprisings and prophetic movements. One of the most famous prophetic though not specifically millenarian movements was the Māhdiyya of the Sudan.

The imbalance in the anthropological study of such movements has encouraged various misconceptions, i.e., that the movements are characteristic of oppressed peoples (N. Cohn, 1957; P. Worsley, 1957) and that psychologically they always recognize the integrative power of the religious experience for the distraught and disillusioned individual

in search of salvation (Wallace, 1956; Burridge, 1969).
My task in this paper therefore consists in attempting to
redress this imbalance by constructing a more comprehen-
sive theory of religious enthusiasm. I argue that the
movements are often directed less against the external
colonial forces of oppression than against indigenous
oppressive classes. In order to support this position I
will inquire into the relationship between religious
ideology and the secular political structure. Religious
revival movements will be conceptualized as a "licensed
protest." In the first chapter I will selectively survey
the anthropological and historical literature relating to
religious enthusiasm. In Chapter Two I will critically
evaluate the anthropological and historical literature.
In Chapters Three and Four I will discuss the Mahdist move-
ment in the Sudan (1881-1898). This discussion will dem-
onstrate that internal fission is a crucial factor in giving
rise to such movements; it will also serve to illustrate how
religious ideology is manipulated towards certain political
ends, and how rejection may relate to other forms of
secular politics, not solely to European dominated forms.

CHAPTER 1

RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM: A CONCEPT IN THE
DYNAMICS OF RELIGION

Like all aspects of culture, religious systems are in
constant process of alteration either in response to in-
ternal pressures within the social structure or to the
impact of acculturation. Social anthropologists have re-
cently stressed the problem of change in part because they
wished to correct the earlier tendency to assume that
primitive religion is unchanging. They have propounded
two interconnected theories both dealing with the notion of
what I will label religious enthusiasm. The first theory
assumes that religious enthusiasm is a product of the impact
of the western colonial power; this reflects an assumed
association between colonization and Christianity. The
second theory assumes that religious enthusiasm is a res-
ponse to internal pressures within the society itself.
This view assumes a situation of relative deprivation
separating one segment of the population from the rest.

Furthermore, social anthropologists have studied such
social phenomena under various rubrics, the rubric depending

on the discipline and theoretical orientation of the researcher. "Nativistic movements" (Linton, 1943), "cargo cults" (Worsley, 1957), "revitalistic movements" (Wallace, 1956), "millenarian movements" (Burridge, 1969), and "syncretic movements" (Peter Lawrence, 1954) are some of the better known labels.

I now turn to consider the anthropological literature relating to religious enthusiasm and the rationales for the various rubrics that have been proposed. Many anthropologists have regarded Ralph Linton's paper as the earliest attempt to define the essence of the phenomenon and provide a workable typology of the movements (Linton, 1943). In fact, however, one of the earliest explanatory papers on religious enthusiasm was by an English anthropologist Alfred C. Haddon in 1917. Certain basic assumptions made by Haddon have nevertheless been echoed by later anthropologists who seem unaware of his work.

Haddon's task was to explain five new religious cults which had been reported from New Guinea. Haddon argued that the new religious movements were a "reaction against the encroachment of the white man" (1917:955).

> An awakening of religious activity is
> a frequent characteristic of periods of
> social unrest. The weakening or dis-
> ruption of the old social order may
> stimulate new and often bizarre ideals,
> and these may give rise to religious
> movements that strive to sanction social
> and political aspirations. Communities
> that feel themselves oppressed anticipate
> the emergence of a hero who will restore
> their prosperity and prestige. And when

> the people are imbued with religious
> fervour the expected hero will be re-
> garded as the Messiah. Phenomena of
> this kind are well known in history
> and are not unknown at the present
> day among people in all stages of
> civilization (Haddon, 1917:455).

A forceful and succinct enough statement. Haddon adds by way of explanation that the unrest gives rise to social or political aspirations which are sanctioned by the new religion, itself a product of the disruption of the old social order. Moreover, the millenarianism with which Haddon deals anticipates that the oppression due to the "encroachment of the white man" will be ended with the appearance of a hero who will be hailed as a Messiah.

Social anthropologists, following the same line of thought as Haddon have attempted to identify and classify such movements. Ralph Linton in analyzing the Peyote and Ghost Dance cults of the North American Indians found what he took to be an effort to bolster up certain traditions of societies being swamped by European influence. With European influence, ceremonies, the authority structure, marriage patterns and so on were disintegrating (Linton, 1943). According to Linton, the origins of nativism therefore lies in a widespread nostalgia for the time before the whites came when it was thought there was a state of demi-paradise. What the natives felt was needed to restore things to their former state was a reaffirmation of the native culture and a deliberate attempt to perpetuate it.

Linton, therefore, called these movements "nativistic," a term which he described as "any conscious attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of its culture" (1943:230). Linton argues further that since the religious systems of the primitive societies typically embody the central values of their cultures; these nativistic movements almost always involved some type of religious or magical procedures as their essential elements. He therefore attempts to define and classify the types of nativistic movements that have occurred in culture contact situations and to identify the conditions under which these various types of movements arise.

Much of Linton's paper is taken up with the elaboration of a taxonomic scheme of nativistic cults. Linton divides nativistic cults by their aims: revivalist and perpetuative cults and then further divides them by their character as magical or rational cults. Both kinds of nativism can be characterized by either a magical or rational response. The magical implies the revival of a magic formula and will result in changes in the society and bring it closer to the past. Cargo cults are said to be manifestations of magical nativism (Linton, 1943:322). Underlying this taxonomic scheme is the assumption that religious enthusiasm is a rational response to the colonial situation. Linton distinguishes "rational" from "magical movements" necessitating four categories of movements, namely,

revivalistic-magical, revivalistic-rational, perpetuative-magical and perpetuative-rational. In what ways do these categories help us in identifying and explaining religious enthusiasm? Linton argues that in magical-nativistic movements the societies members are "attempting to recreate those aspects of the ancestral situation which appear desirable in retrospect" (1943:323). Rational movements on the other hand stress the past (revivalistic) or present (perpetuative) existence of the society as a unique entity.

Having outlined these categorical distinctions, Linton goes on to consider "domination" of one group by another. Linton argues that nativism can appear in the dominant group as well as the subordinate group in a culture-contact situation, although the more dramatic manifestations tend to occur in the subordinate group. Where one society dominates the other to which it feels superior the dominated society tries to assimilate the culture of its mentors. The superior or dominant group will then initiate a perpetuative movement to counteract the felt "defilement" of their culture. The inferior or subordinate group will then initiate a revivalist movement to reassert itself (Linton, 1943:324).

Like Haddon and Linton, K. O. L. Burridge interprets cargo activity among the Kanakas of New Guinea as first and foremost directed against Europeans. Burridge however introduces a new dimension to the study of religious

enthusiasm by stating that the cults are not primarily anti-
white for excluding the white man will hardly assist the
attempt to gain "moral equality" with him (Burridge, 1954,
1960). He argues that after contact the principal structural
alignment became white versus black and the stress tended
to bear on ties within the black or white community rather
than on cleavages within it. In one of his earlier papers
on cargo cults he states that the people view the relation-
ship between black and white as a relationship "lacking in
moral content" (Burridge, 1954:62). This is so because the
Europeans have at their disposal techniques for making great
wealth, yet they share neither the disposal techniques nor
the wealth with the natives.

> Intellectually bewildered, perplexed,
> their social system in which their
> beliefs are embedded partially dis-
> rupted by the impact of European culture,
> yet desirous of European wealth, Tangu
> attempts, within terms of their own
> knowledge and modes of thought, to
> grasp these techniques (Burridge, 1954:
> 240).

The cargo cults are therefore simply rationalizations of
what the natives do not understand. The view that
Melanesian religion is essentially concerned with material
rewards and the attempt to transcend the divisions between
the European world and the traditional world, is shared by
Peter Lawrence (1954). Lawrence writes in terms of
"syncretic" religious movements in which the natives
assumptions and interpretation of the white order are cast

in indigenous moulds of thought. He states that the natives

believe that the acceptance of Christianity would bring

with it the material riches of the whites. In accordance

with traditional notions it is believed that the whites

possess some esoteric secret which enables them to obtain

cargo.

In Mambu, Burridge attempts to provide an explanation

as to what the conditions were which made the situation ripe

for a cult to occur. He states that the attempts made by

the Kanakas to establish their integrity as men in relation

to the administrative officers and missionaries forms a large

part "of the story of a cargo cult" (1960:24). In Burridge's

later analysis of cargo cults this assumption is transformed

into the argument that cargo cults predicate a "new culture"

or social order coming into being (Burridge, 1969). Here

Burridge uses a psychological analysis to explain his

position. His analysis involves the concept of a "redemp-

tive process."

> Given a context determined by current
> assumptions about power the process
> whereby individuals attempt to dis-
> charge their obligations in relation
> to the moral imperatives of the
> community is no less than a re-
> demptive process (Burridge, 1969:6).

Burridge also defines religious activity using the framework

outlined above.

> The redemptive process indicated by
> the activities, moral rules, and
> assumptions about power which, pertinent
> to the moral order and taken on faith,

> not only enable a people to perceive
> the truth of things, but guarantee
> that they are indeed perceiving the
> truth of things (Burridge, 1969:6).

Here Burridge introduces another component of cargo cults, namely, the competing sets of assumptions about power.

Moreover, Burridge introduces three phases in this pattern of events: 1) the awareness of being "disenfranchized" and separated from the mainstream of power; 2) the "externalization" of the problem, i.e., to give overt and active expression to the problems; and 3) the aftermath i.e., complete victory or a retreat to phase one. In attempting to outline these phases some kind of explanation concerning religious activity may be reached; we may have learnt something of the meaning of the millennium to those who participate in these activities.

A. F. C. Wallace holds a similar view to Burridge but proposes the term "revitalization" for innovations in cultural systems.

> A revitalization movement is defined as
> a deliberate, organized, conscious
> effort by members of a society to con-
> struct a more satisfying culture.
> Revitalization is thus, from a cultural
> standpoint, a special kind of culture
> change phenomenon: the persons in-
> volved in the process of revitalization
> must perceive their culture or some major
> area of it, as a system. They must feel
> that this cultural system is unsatis-
> factory and they must innovate not merely
> discrete items but a new cultural system
> (Wallace, 1956:265).

Wallace suggests that major innovations in cultural systems variously called "nativistic movements," "cargo cults," "messianic movements," and "revolutions," are characterized by this revitalization process in terms of five somewhat overlapping stages: 1) a new steady state; 2) period of individual stress; 3) period of cultural distortion; 4) period of revitalization; and 5) a new steady state. These stages correspond closely to the phases outlined by Burridge (1969).

Moreover, Wallace has distinguished cult movements from other phenomena because they are: a) "deliberate, conscious and organized;" and b) responses to social and economic dissatisfaction. On this basis, Wallace identifies three categories of movements. The first are movements which profess to revive a traditional culture fallen into desuetude. The Ghost Dance which spread among the plains tribes of the North American Indians in the 1800's is representative of a revivalistic movement. The second are movements which profess to import a foreign cultural system. The Vailala Madness in New Guinea and cargo cults are examples of importation movements. The third are movements which profess neither revival nor importation but conceive that the desired cultural end state will be realized for the first time in a future Utopia. Ikhnaton's monotheistic cult in old Egypt is an example of this type (Wallace, 1956: 275). Wallace suggests that the most important variable

in identifying these movements is the degree of domination
exerted by a foreign society. On one hand Wallace agrees
with Linton's definition of "nativistic" movements as those
whose primary motive is to expel the persons or customs of
foreign invaders or overlords. On the other hand Wallace
points out that the situation involved is not always
acculturative (1956:269).

Wallace's basic methodological principle is that of
event analysis. It is postulated that events or happenings
of various types have genotypical structures independent of
local cultural differences. These types of events he calls
"behavioral units." Revitalization movements constitute
such a behavioral unit (Wallace, 1956:268). How then do
the people concerned perceive their situation?

> It is therefore functionally necessary
> for every person in society to maintain
> a mental image of the society and its
> culture, as well as of his own body and
> its behavioral regularities, in order
> to act in ways which reduce stress at
> all levels of the system. The person
> does, in fact, maintain such an image.
> This mental image I have called the
> "mazeway. . ." it includes perceptions
> of both the maze of physical objects
> of the environment. . .and also of the
> ways in which this maze can be manipu-
> lated by the self and others in order
> to minimize stress (Wallace, 1956:266).

The revitalization movement therefore revitalizes an individ-
ual who is under chronic stress. The individual must choose
between maintaining his present "mazeway" and tolerating
the stress, or changing the "mazeway" in an attempt to

reduce the stress. Moreover, the reformulation of the
"mazeway" seems to depend on a restructuring of elements
which have already attained currency in the society, and
which are known to the person who is to become the prophet
or leader. The prophet thus preaches his revelation to
the people in a messianic spirit (Wallace, 1956:266-267).
Wallace is suggesting that the movements occur under two
conditions: 1) high stress for individual members of the
society; and 2) disillusionment with a distorted cultural
system. What are the conditions that give rise to a
situation of "high stress?" Wallace states that it is the
continuous diminution in a cultures efficiency in satisfying
"needs" that give rise to a situation of stress. It is
therefore "functionally necessary" for every person in
society to maintain a "mental image" of the society and
its culture in order to act in ways which reduce stress.
Wallace calls this "mental image" the "mazeway" (1956:266).
Changing the mazeway therefore involves changing the
individual's mental image of self, society and culture.

Wallace is one of the few anthropologists who has
attempted to answer the question as to what was the
character of the leader of such activity. He uses Max
Weber's concept of "charismatic leadership" to describe
the type of leader-follower relationship characteristic of
the organization of revitalization movements (Max Weber,
1947). Using this concept Wallace states that as God is

to the prophet so is the prophet to his followers. The prophet is regarded as an "uncanny person of questionable authority in one or more spheres of leadership sanctioned by the supernatural" (Wallace, 1956:274). Max Weber denotes this quality of uncanny authority and moral ascendency in a leader as charisma (Weber, 1947). According to Wallace, followers defer to the charismatic leader not because of his status in an existing authority structure but because of a fascinating personal power. A small clique of special disciples clusters around the prophet and an embryonic campaign organization develops with three orders of personnel; the prophet, the disciples and the followers (Wallace, 1956: 273).

Furthermore, Wallace suggests that the historical origin of a great proportion of religious phenomena has been in revitalization movements. He states that all organized religions are relics of old revitalization movements, surviving in routinized form in stabilized cultures, and religious phenomena per se originated in the revitalization process. Both Christianity and Islam and possibly Buddhism originated in these movements (Wallace, 1956:268). Like Burridge, Wallace has attempted to introduce a new dimension in the study of religious enthusiasm mainly through his use of psychological theory.

The first attempt at a full-scale work on cargo cults was made by Peter Worsley (1957). His book represents

another landmark in anthropological attempts to formulate
the general characteristics of innovations in major cultural
systems that typically involve religious patterns. Worsley
tries to explain why the cults occur and what causes them.
In order to explain the cults, Worsley makes a dichotomy
between "activist" and "passivist." Worsley suggests that
there is "no sharp dividing line between the millenarian
cult and other related movements," that there are many
variations of form, that the basic division is not between
millenarian and non-millenarian movements but between
"activist" and "passivist" movements (Worsley, 1957:235).
He seems to suggest that passivist cults are later than
activist cults for the former evolve from the latter.
When an activist cult becomes political or is defeated the
tendency is for the religious part to take on a passivist
outlook; to postpone the coming of the millennium. On the
one hand politics have drained away the burning zeal; on the
other hand crushing defeat has stifled the hopes of an early
release from oppression. Activist cults therefore arise in
the following conditions. The first is in stateless and
highly segmented societies, societies that is which have no
overall unity, which lack centralized political institutions,
and which may lack specialized political institutions alto-
gether. Moreover, such highly segmented societies are seen
as incapable of offering resistance to the incoming
Europeans (Worsley, 1957:227). Tied to this is the view

that the "main effect" of the millenarian cult is to over-
come these divisions and weld previously hostile and
separate groups together into a new unity.

Secondly, cults can arise among the lower orders,
peasants and urban plebians who are in opposition to the
official regimes of the agrarian and feudal state.

> It is amongst people who feel themselves to
> be oppressed and who are longing for deliverance
> that they have been particularly welcomed,
> especially by the population of colonial
> countries by discontented peasants and by the
> jetsam of the towns and cities of feudal
> civilizations. Millenarian beliefs have
> recurred again and again throughout history
> despite failures, disappointments, and re-
> pression, precisely because they make a
> strong appeal to the oppressed, the dis-
> inherited and the wretched. The lower orders
> reject the dominant values, beliefs, philosophy,
> religion, etc., of those they are struggling
> against, as well as their material, economic
> and political domination. . .(Worsley, 1957:
> 225).

Worsley also states that where peasants are especially
"culturally backward" they may look up to prophets who
promise a mystical solution to their problems (1957:229).

Thirdly, activist cults occur when a society with
differentiated political institutions is fighting for its
existence by secular, military and political means.
Worsley like those social anthropologists writing before
him echoes the view that millenarian cults arise in a
situation of social and economic discontent resulting from
contact with the Europeans. Worsley, however, introduces
a different dimension in the study of religious enthusiasm

by asserting that cargo cults represent the first stirrings
of nationalism, an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist
nationalism (1957:230). Here he seems to iterate a similar
sentiment put forth by Jean Guiart (1952). Jean Guiart, in
an earlier study of Melanesian cargo cults suggests that
the cults are the "forerunners of nationalism" (1952:82).

The various perspectives outlined above all add up
to the assumption that religious activity develops in the
wake of the impact of the western colonial power and to
Christianity. I now turn to consider the anthropological
literature relating to religious enthusiasm and relative
deprivation.

Religious Enthusiasm and Relative Deprivation

Some social anthropologists have tried to resolve the
dilemma surrounding the causes of millenarism and other
movements by suggesting that the theme running through
millenarian and other cults is one of relative deprivation.
One of the earliest anthropological fieldwork monographs
tried to provide us with detailed descriptions and analyses
of the economic and political conditions in which cult
movements had their genesis. This was a study of a cult
known as the Ghost Dance among North American Indians by
James Mooney (1896). Mooney's analysis is a sophisticated
attempt to trace the Ghost Dance back to its economic
and political causes. His basic premise is that the Sioux
Indians were faced with a situation of relative deprivation

arising from the administrative incompetence of Indian affairs by the United States government. The buffalo, their staple source of food and clothing had been wiped out by hunters. The Sioux were therefore entirely dependent on government rations. The promises made to the Indians concerning education and compensation for their appropriated resources were not being carried out by the United States government. Underlying Mooney's basic premise is the tacit assumption that this situation of relative deprivation was an effect on the Sioux Indians of their contact with the white man.

Bernard Barber is also interested in the idea that messianic cults are correlated in some way with deprivation of the same sort as discussed in Mooney's account (Bernard Barber, 1941). Barber suggests that a society deprived is an unstable society and some form of messianic movement acts as a stabilizer in such situations. His thesis is that the Ghost Dance spread to the California tribes in 1870 and to the Plains tribes in 1890 because of widespread deprivation but failed to be accepted by the Navaho Indians because their life was integrated around a stable cultural pattern. He then goes on to describe the Peyote Cult as an alternative response to deprivation which, because it was essentially nonthreatening to white American culture and worked in Christian symbols, could spread and survive in areas where the Ghost Dance was forcibly exterminated.

Furthermore, Barber argues that one of the obstacles to
the assimilation of western culture by the Red Indians
is this acute sense of deprivation from which the Indians
suffered. Barber shifts the focus slightly by showing that
the Peyote cult, unlike the Ghost Dance was not actively
anti-white, but rather an expression of an attitude of
"passive resignation" to the state of deprivation (1941:660).
The social order is therefore to be transformed by radical
political and economic changes. Moreover, he argues that
the new order must also have a "new morality." It cannot
continue with the outworn indigenous ethics or the code of
its former rules, any more than it can continue with the
old tribal structure or with the colonial regime. All
prophets therefore stress moral renewal. Such doctrines
are the "spiritual concomitants" of the new life if the
political and economic changes are to be infused with any
"humanist content" (Barber, 1941:667).

David Aberle, on the other hand, suggests that de-
privation so often used as an explanation for millenarian
and other cults can be important when it is relative as
well as absolute.

> Where an individual or a group has a
> particular expectation and furthermore
> where this expectation is considered to
> be a proper state of affairs, and where
> something less than that expectation is
> fulfilled we may speak of relative de-
> privation (Aberle, 1962:209).

Relative deprivation is deprivation relative to reasonable expectations, i.e. comparing the present with the past, comparing the present with the future and comparing the self with someone else. Aberle argues that when the empirical means of rectifying the deprivation are blocked, "remedial action" may be taken. He then proceeds to test this hypothesis with reference to the case of the Navaho Indians in the 1920's. He states that the Navaho as a group experienced deprivation of possessions with respect to diet and trade goods procured through the sale of animal products. Moreover, the society was reduced to egalitarian relationships; the man who had had followers to herd for him, gratitude for generosity, and standing because of his wealth, was now almost as badly off as any other Navaho. His comparison here is to his past status in his group, not vis-a-vis the outside world. These were among the key deprivations experienced by the Navaho during the 1920's (1962:210).

Aberle also distinguishes three types of reference points for relative deprivation as well as four kinds of deprivation. Furthermore, Aberle has suggested that the doctrines of any resulting cult will be related to the kinds of deprivation they suffer (1962:211). He has shifted the emphasis from the reaction to the cause underlying the reaction, thus reaching into the heart of the matter, which after all concerns religion as a force providing hope where people perceive their lot as an unhappy one.

I now turn to consider if particular historical

explanations can provide the anthropologist with further

insights into the phenomenon of religious revival movements.

Historical Explanations and Revolutionary Chiliasm

Professor Norman Cohn is a social historian who offers

some very general ideas about the causes which set off what

he calls "revolutionary chiliasm" (Cohn, 1957). Although

Cohn is studying a much broader range of religious phenomena,

his conclusions bear closely on our anthropological concerns.

Cohn begins his analysis by trying to glean some insight

from contemporary comparisons. He suggests that the non-

historical climate of opinion in a civilization like ours

is unpropitious for revolutionary chiliasm. Cohn then takes

up A. Toynbee's idea that revolutionary chiliasm tends to

take a quasi-political form, masquerading as National

Socialism and Marxism-Leninism.

> The final, decisive battle of the elect (be
> they the 'Aryan race' or the 'proletariat')
> against the hosts of evil (be they the Jews
> or the 'bourgeoise'); a dispensation in
> which the elite are to be most amply com-
> pensated for all their sufferings by the
> joys of total domination or of total
> community or of both together; a world
> purified of all evil and in which history
> is to find its consumption these ancient
> imaginings are still with us (Cohn, 1957:
> 308).

Cohn by no means scoffs at such "primitive superstitions."

On the contrary his view is that "now as in the Middle Ages

these fantasies can function as dynamic social myths"

(1957:308).

> Expounded with sufficient passion and skill
> they can give direction and concentration to
> what was a mere welter of social discontents.
> They can unite scattered individuals and
> hitherto discrete groups in a new group,
> they can provide the new group with a pro-
> grame of purposeful action and inspire it
> with an intense and indefatigable energy
> (Cohn, 1957:308).

A similar view is also propounded by another historian

R. A. Knox who stresses the point that religious leaders

turn to ecstacy when they seek to strengthen and legitimize

authority (Knox, 1950). The above statements by Cohn try

to offer a solution to the problem of how the cults unify

from diversity, and to the further problem of what the

function of the cults is. Cohn goes on to analyze just what

they are, namely, "collective experiments in adaptation,

collective efforts to cope with situations of strain or

conflict" (1957:309). Furthermore, these collective efforts

to cope by pursuing the millennium, often display great

ruthlessness in paving the way, by killing pigs, burning

crops and throwing away money. To explain this, Cohn leaves

the historical for psychological explanations.

> The megalomaniac view of oneself as the
> Elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted
> yet assured of ultimate triumph. The
> attribution of gigantic and demonic powers
> to the adversary. . . the obsession with
> inerrable prophecies. . . constitute the
> unmistakable, syndrome of paranoia (Cohn,
> 1957:309).

Cohn at once expounds and defends his explanation in the

ensuing passage:

>At first sign it may seem paradoxical that
>paranoia, a disorder of the individual
>psyche, should help to bind individuals
>together in groups, and to stimulate them
>to collective action. . . whether in the
>Middle Ages or in the twentieth century,
>revolutionary chiliasm has flourished only
>where the normal, familiar pattern of life
>has already undergone a disruption so severe
>as to seem irremediable (Cohn, 1957:310).

I end my exposition of Cohn with his attempt to solve

the problem of what causes the cults; a problem also

addressed by a number of anthropologists (Wallace, 1956;

Worsley, 1957; Burridge, 1969). Cohn lists a number of

conditions which he suggests give rise to cult activity.

These are: a) new material wants without the means of

satisfying them; b) new social aspirations without the

institutionalized means of expressing them (e.g., when the

material and emotional support of the kin group or of chief-

ship are lost); c) the sudden wealth, or sudden impoverish-

ment which descends on a few; d) the subjection by the

whites; and e) the breaking down of authority partly by the

whites and partly because of the whites.

There is a common thread running through both the

anthropological and historical literature relating to

religious enthusiasm. This involves the assumption that

religious enthusiasm is characteristic of periods of social

unrest; social unrest is viewed as deriving from the impact

of the western colonial power. It emerges from this

discussion that the study of religious enthusiasm (under its

various rubrics of cargo cults, millenarian movements,

messianic movements and revitalistic movements), raises a number of problems of explanation for both social anthropologists and historians. I now turn to unravel these problems by providing a summary critique of both the historical and anthropological perspectives.

CHAPTER 2

ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS: CRITICISMS

AND ALTERNATIVES

The general tendency has been to assume religious en-
thusiasm has always been a response to western colonial dom-
iation and Christian proselytizing. The assumption has been
so strong that the rather simple alternative of looking for
internal tensions as a contributing factor has been virtually
ignored.

Haddon has shown how messianism, as he calls it, arises
from religious activity, where a myth of the coming of a de-
liverer hero obtains (Haddon, 1917). Haddon does not explain
how social unrest gives rise to religious activity in general.
To say that religion sanctions the political aspirations may
be true, but this only partially explains the political as-
pirations. It does not explain how the sanctioning religion
emerged. Like all functional explanations, this one is a
causal explanation, not of the antecedent, but only of the
consequent and then no more than a partially satisfactory
explanation.

Similar views have been adopted by many anthropologists
(Linton, 1943; Wallace, 1956; Worsley, 1957; Burridge, 1969).
Implicit in these writings is the view that the anti-
European tendencies of the cults are clearly due to colonial
oppression. But this creates the problem of why the reaction

to colonial oppression takes on a religious form. Have the proponents of this view provided us with an adequate explanation for cult phenomena? Why do the cults occur and what causes them?

Anthropologists and historians have suggested that the cults are characteristic of oppressed peoples (Worsley, 1957; Cohn, 1957). Tied to this is the view that the "main effect" of the cult is to create a new unity; that the "social necessity" which produces this drive towards integration is the subjection of all the separate groups to a common authority, i.e., the Europeans (Worsley, 1957:228). Despite both this assertion and Worsley's use of illuminating passages from Karl Marx, we still do not know how "social necessity" makes people do things, and why peasants should look for a mystical solution to their practical problems. The search for mystical solutions seem to be tied to their "cultural backwardness." But this tendentious phrase is equally baffling. Do only "culturally backward" people go in for religion and mysticism? We seem to be back at Tibor Bodrigi's theory that primitive peoples have a primitive class consciousness, therefore, they react with religious enthusiasm and not revolutions (Tibor Bodrigi, 1951). If this is so, then the counter examples of Medieval India and early China will have to be explained away, because they were culturally advanced societies which were nevertheless the source of much mysticism.

I agree with Worsley that segmented societies are incapable of offering resistance to the Europeans, but there seems to be a hidden assumption to the effect that societies want to resist the incursions of the Europeans. Besides, although it is a consequence of cargo cults that previously disunited peoples are welded together, to suggest that there is a "need" for such unity is absurd. After all, there is a time lag of years between contact and the rise of the cults. So how is the alleged "need" being satisfied then? Tikopia is, in itself, a counter-example to the theory that they must create new political forms of organization to give expression to this new found political unity. Tikopia is highly segmented and yet has no cult. It even according to Raymond Firth has the rudiments of a cargo cult mythology but no cargo cult (R. Firth, 1955).

Is the "main effect" of the cult really one of integration? E. E. Evans-Pritchard's study of the Sanusi of Cyrenaica focused upon the emergence of a political nationalist movement under religious leadership among the acephalous, segmentary feuding Bedouin tribes (E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 1949). The founder of the Sanusiya order was an "outsider," a scholar from the Maghrib who had also dwelt for a long time in the Hijaz. By establishing his headquarters in the oasis of Jughbub he avoided identifying his order with any one tribe or tribal section. On one hand, the order linked together the separate and often hostile tribes by basing its territorial organization on

the tribal system. Moreover, the Sanusiya and other orders
which eventually came to constitute political, administra-
tive and economic centers, as well as religious and educa-
tional establishments followed the lines of tribal segmenta-
tion but were situated near tribal or section boundaries.
On the other hand the Sanusiya movement served to exacerbate
ethnic cleavages and antagonisms while striving for political,
economic and religious power. The welding together of
separate kin or territorial groupings into a unified politics
may be just a temporary situation. Indeed, unity is strength
and integrating diverse tribal groups may serve to strengthen
the opposition to the colonial power. New elements can
provide a focus for social and cultural integration but they
can also serve as an expression of social and cultural
opposition and diversity within a society. Persons or
groups may therefore compete with each other in order to
legitimize or reinforce their social positions.

The projection of common values onto the supernatural
or religious plane against a background of lesser private
conflicts is a phenomenon of wider relevance than the study
of millenarian cults alone can show. Victor Turner in his
study of the Lunda of Northern Rhodesia shows that while
common values are accepted by groups and individuals, their
private goals and interests nevertheless still clash (V. W.
Turner, 1957). They can try to manipulate these ethical
ideals in their own interests each appealing to the same

"moral code." The values themselves are removed from the
realm of dispute by being expressed in religious terms.
Most important of all, this "subjective" removal of hostility
does not remove the real causes of internal conflicts and
fission builds up once more. Persons and groups divided
in one set of social relations are allied in other sets.
The fact that ties are established to link together people
who in other contexts are enemies, does not mean that the
"main effect" of millenarian cults is one of "unity" and
"integration."

Various factors need to be considered before one can
even speak of "unity" and "integration" as a "main effect"
of the cult. One of these factors is the immediate effect
of colonial rule which tends to vary with the attitude of
the colonizers. Policy and practice may vary considerably
among the colonial possessions of a single metropolitan
power and within the same colonial territory of different
periods. I. M. Lewis shows how this factor operates in
north-east Africa and in the horn of Africa (I. M. Lewis,
1966). He suggests that the effects of colonial rule have
inevitably been influenced by the degree and character of
attachment of the administering powers to Christianity and
to Islam, and even more significantly in practice by the
exigencies of local circumstances. One of the clearest
instances of a colonial power's direct encouragement of
Islam is seen in the history of the Italian colonies of

Eritrea and Somalia. In these territories once the work of pacification had been completed the local administrators sought to use Islam to further the metropolitan power's aggressive ambitions against Christian Ethiopia. Here, the colonial situation represented a continuation and intensification of the pre-colonial circumstances. The Italians, however, opppsed Islam in Cyrenaica in order to perpetuate their colonial rule; in Cyrenaica they had Sanusi nationalism to contend with (Lewis, 1966:75).

Furthermore, Worsley in drawing attention to Evans-Pritchard's study of the Sanusi asserts that it required the external threat of firstly the Turks, and later the Italians for the order to become a political movement (Worsley, 1957: 101; 1959:33). He argues that repression and failure cause the religious part of the cult to become passivist and the overtly political part to be syphoned off into a secular movement. Religious movements, however, may be at once both religious and political. Religious movements are far from passive; in fact messianic and Mahdist movements have been particularly "active" in trying to bring about political change in their societies. Religious ideals and political goals are intertwined.

Despite certain weaknesses in Worsley's study of cargo cults his bold theory gives future discussion a point from which to begin. I now turn to consider the assumption that religious enthusiasm is a rational response to the colonial situation.

Revivalistic and Perpetuative Cults.

Linton used the term revivalist and perpetuative to distinguish those cultural aspects which according to his definition of nativism are to be revived (Linton, 1943). Wallace retains the concepts derivation from traits which are to be revived, i.e., elements which belonged "to previous generations but are now not present" (Wallace, 1956: 267). Movements may therefore be revivalistic, i.e., stressing the readoption of customs fallen into desuetude, or they can be perpetuative i.e., seeking to maintain the existing order. Nativism then involves the elimination of alien elements. This may not be the only cause of nativism. I assume that the cause has to be more complex; enough of the new religion (in this case Christianity) has been absorbed by the natives for them to start questioning its values. Quite what Linton means by a "rational kind of nativism" is difficult to understand. For one thing he sees such nativism as attempting to compensate for the frustration that occurs in a revivalistic context. I suspect that the categorical distinctions proposed by Wallace and Linton are untenable in the light of the evidence on cargo cults. Cargo cults appear to be anti-nativistic from a cultural standpoint, but nativistic from a personnel standpoint. Situational factors are therefore important for an understanding of the course and character of the movement. On another level Wallace seems well advised to

point out that the situation involved is not always acculturative (1956:269).

I. C. Jarvie suggests that the effort to assimilate a body of new ideas and values is a factor causing the cults (I. C. Jarvie, 1963:7). This is because the whites did very little in the way of enlightening the natives in any systematic manner on the subject of their way of life and thinking. Indeed, the "encroachment of the white man" may have had some impact on the peoples concerned. It is unlikely, however, that the people moved in the direction of a magico-religious explanation primarily to explain the coming of the white man. I assume that even in these early movements there are expectations of benefits which are in no sense part of the traditional order. I feel that the validity of analysis in terms of revivalism (stress on the past) or perpetuation (stress on the present) will leave a great deal unaccounted for.

The movements may also symbolize a looking forward to new prospects. Such a view is taken by Worsley who makes it clear that the millenarian cargo cults are oriented to the future and are non-nativistic (Worsley, 1957:267). The acceptance of traits is the indicative element with reference to non-nativistic; the people concerned do not completely reject European culture. Again, it is only certain of the features of the traditional order that are revived, and since they may be revived or perpetuated under changed social

conditions they may have a changed social significance. It
is independence of political control and not isolation
from cultural achievements and material wealth of the
whites which the natives may be striving towards. I suggest
therefore, that to call these movements "nativistic,"
besides being theoretically awkward does not fit the
particular ethnographic facts. The concept of nativism
fails to account for many cult elements such as specific
doctrinal beliefs and modes of organization, which may be
quite foreign to the traditional order. The movements may
very well be forward-looking, the order of the future being
the inversion of the present. I find it more satisfactory
to view these movements as the creative attempts of a people
to reform their own institutions to meet new demands or to
withstand new internal pressures. These may be attempts to
solve problems posed not merely by the external colonial
force but also by the internal indigenous force.

There is evidence to suggest that cults have arisen
during conditions of stress not immediately triggered off
by contacts with a foreign culture. The millenarian move-
ments of the Middle Ages in Europe were not nativistic and
certainly had no acculturative overtones. Another example
is provided by the cargo cults of the central New Guinea
highlands where cults have arisen without the natives ever
having being subject to European influence. In view of
this I am less apt to accept nativistic as either the only

one or most inclusive of cult categories. As Worsley has
said, "It lays too much emphasis on the regressive back-
wards looking aspects of the movements" (1957:242).

Linton also argues that nativism is brought about by a
social situation of one group dominating another in which
relationships and attitudes of superiority and inferiority
have sprung up. Linton suggests that when we turn to consider
dominated groups we stand on "firmer ground" and that a
clear analysis can be presented (1943:323). The firmness of
the ground disappears when classification is attempted. He
states that a "dominated superior" group will normally
develop rationalistic nativism, but that very often such
nativism "will acquire a semi-magical quality" (1943:324).
Moreover, the rational movement may be either revivalistic
or perpetuative, but is most likely to be a combination of
both. Linton states that "fully developed magical revival-
istic nativism is also very likely but this may be "somewhat
mitigated" (1943:325). Linton distinguishes rational from
magical movements, necessitating four categories of move-
ments, namely, revivalistic-magical, revivalistic-rational,
perpetuative-magical and perpetuative-rational. Using this
polar opposition, Linton believes that a dominated group
will develop types two and four nativism, though they often
acquire characteristics of type one and three. A mixed
type two and four is "most likely" though this too may be
"somewhat mitigated" and type one is also likely. We may

well ask how such confusion arises. Attempts to utilize these criteria break down. The differences are not too clear. These categories are not descriptions of real behavior but mere ideal types. Linton himself points out that the generalizations developed have been based upon the hypothesis that "societies are homogeneous and react as wholes to contact situations." He then observes that "very frequently this is not the case especially in societies which have a well developed class organization" (1943:324).

Linton's fundamental thesis ignores the existence of antagonistic groups and internal dissensions and strife that exist in society. This attempt to separate the component elements of the movement and place them in compartments ignores the fact that they are neither traditional nor European and that they are part of a new social synthesis. A further complication is that often a society or culture is really a combination of two or more cultures usually separated along status or class lines. Like other social anthropologists writing on religious activity Linton fails to adequately explain the origins of the particular religious cults and doctrines. He fails to explain why one society has a millenarian cult and another does not. Nevertheless, Linton's paper is important because it attempted to come to grips with the problem of explaining on a comparative basis the general phenomenon of millenarian cults.

I have argued that the categorical scheme proposed by Linton raises various problems. Should our analysis of religious activity therefore be confined to particular categories of movements? Marian W. Smith suggests that our view of religious activity should be confined to cult movements (M. W. Smith, 1959). This begs a host of questions and limits our inquiry to that which is overt. We may categorize as nativistic, revitalistic, millenarian, and syncretic those movements in which both European and traditional elements are combined. Can we say that these descriptive terms also refer to types of activities that are mutually exclusive? If we call the Ghost Dance a messianic movement, why should we not also call it a reformative or revivalistic movement? Clearly, messianic, millenarian and revolutionary characteristics may appear in various combinations in all kinds of movements. None of these categorical distinctions are ideal systems.

Some anthropologists have had the impression that cult movements labeled variously as "nativistic," "revivalistic," "messianic," and "millenarian" have a certain unity, and have been dissatisfied with the inability of these terms to single out the common thread running through them all. They have tried to make a contribution toward solution of the dilemma by suggesting that the theme running through the cults is one of relative deprivation. I now turn to consider in what way religious activity is correlated with relative deprivation.

Ideology and Discontent

What good is relative deprivation theory for the analysis of millenarian and other movements? Social anthropologists writing in this vein have failed to sift the comparative evidence on messianic movements to see whether any have occurred in non-deprived communities. It is all very well to have a hunch that deprivation has something to do with messianism. An explanation of what this something is should be provided if the correlation is to be significant. I assume that deprivation although perhaps a necessary condition for messianism is by no means a sufficient condition because there are alternative responses. The problem still remains: in what sort of situations do people become so engrossed in their own or other peoples dreams that they consider it worthwhile to spend time and energy in joining and helping sustain a cult centering on them? The notion of deprivation is much too vague to explain all this.

Can one really predict the type of deprivation that leads to certain ideological formulations? Aberle suggests that the doctrines of any resulting cult will be related to the type of deprivation they suffer (Aberle, 1962). But is this so? The usual practice in the application of this concept has been to examine a movement and its beliefs, to discover that they point to a gap between the actual and the desirable and to conclude that this disparity was experienced by members prior to their joining. Can we

decide the type of deprivation on the basis of the movement's ideology or vice versa? To state that a movement offers "x," hence the recruit must be deprived of "x" risks tautology. The fact that a movement is millenarian is a totally insufficient basis for deciding what type of deprivation is important. Jean Guiart has shown that not all oppressed or deprived peoples join in cults (Guiart, 1952). There is no reason why only the deprivations of peasants and why only hunger and landlessness need be considered as bases for deprivation, or why the fact that it was not the peasants that were involved is any reason not to look further for the deprivations of groups that did participate.

Moreover, Aberle argues that when the empirical means of rectifying the deprivation are blocked, "remedial action" may be taken (1962:211). But how and why is "remedial action" to be taken? Aberle does not provide us with an answer to this issue. I assume that remedial action is necessary in order to regain the lost status of the group. The theory of relative deprivation is applied in such a way as to disallow particularly any interpretative role in the understanding of the character of the movement joined. The movement and its ideology are seen as unambiguous stimulus objects with precisely the same impact on all those deprived in the appropriate way and with similar background beliefs. But this is merely to genuflect at voluntarism. If individuals interpret the same social conditions in different

ways, we must allow them to interpret the same social move-
ment and its message in different ways. It is clearly
mistaken to look at the objective circumstances of social
groups and the movements ideology as the basis of a claim
that the actors concerned are experiencing relative depriva-
tion.

The deprivation theorists fail to demonstrate by such
methods that either: a) the relevant category from which the
movements recruits actually did experience the circumstances
in which they found themselves as deprived;or b) that it was
those who experienced them in this way who formed or joined
the movement. It might, after all, conceivably be the case
that while some members of the category or group experience
deprivation, it is the rest who indulge in religious enthu-
siasm. The social anthropologists failure to produce re-
levant evidence leads them close to the speculative psychology
which Evans-Pritchard, in another context described as the
"If I were a horse fallacy" (Evans-Pritchard, 1965). The
requirement that for something to be a religious or social
movement means that it involves relative deprivation does
not entail that this deprivation must be experienced by all
who join.

The above discussion leads me to consider the following:
what were the conditions which made the situation ripe for
a cult? Some anthropologists have used psychological
analysis to provide an answer to this question (Wallace,

1956; Burridge, 1969). Wallace suggests that the movements
occur under two conditions: 1) high stress for individual
members of a society; and 2) disillusionment with a distort-
ed cultural system (1956:271). What are the conditions
that give rise to a situation of stress? Wallace states
that it is the continuous diminution in a cultures efficiency
in satisfying "needs" that give rise to a situation of stress.
But considered from its usual background among religious
phenomena, revivalism refers less to such situations of
stress, than to those which Wallace refers to in his dis-
cussion of personality-transformation.

Burridge introduces another component of millenarian
movements, namely, the competing sets of assumptions about
power (1969:6). I agree with Burridge that antagonistic
groups or "underprivileged" groups may vie with each other
to gain power and authority. But what are the factors that
give rise to this inequitable distribution of power?
Furthermore, why should the "traditional sources of
authority" be rechannelled? On the one hand Burridge
argues that some participants see the activities as a
vehicle of "spiritual salvation." On the other hand others
seem more concerned for their own immediate material
advantage (1969:32). Indeed, this may be the case but how
does the "redemptive process" channel religious activity?

In the above discussion I have tried to spell out a
number of theoretical and methodological objections to the

general manner in which the idea of relative deprivation is employed. What about the historians perspective? In what ways can the use of historical data by anthropologists provide us with a deeper insight into the study of revolutionary chiliasm. This is an issue to which I now turn.

History and Anthropology.

Cohn has suggested that when the structure of a society is undermined the people are less able to cope with a calamity (Cohn, 1957). I question the assumption that change is only possible in a society devoid of any orderly structural arrangements. Change, radical or transformative can take place in the presence of structural regularities. I do not quarrel with what Cohn says about the "function" of revolutionary chiliastic movements. But to point out the unintended consequences of the cult movements does not and cannot explain anything except the unintended consequences of the cults. Moreover, Cohn fails to analyze the social situation of the anonymous individuals and groups which will enable us to understand particular forms of responses to situations of "social disruption." We are not told how paranoia actually causes people to behave in the way they do. Why do we get cargo cults and not Mau Mau? The crucial step in the argument from psychological universals to cargo cults is never taken.

Cohn's theory about social myths directing, concentrating and uniting people depends, if it is to explain the

problem, on their being "expounded with sufficient passion and skill." It looks as though he has here solved the problem in a socio-political way; the prophet, aimed with a dynamic social myth, is the agent who manages to break through language barriers and ancient hostilities to unite enemies. Quite how the passionate and skilled prophet sets about this we are not told. Such historical explanations cannot explain why, in other places, or at different times, under the same general conditions, millenarian activities did not take place. Moreover, what is naively treated are the specific relations of these movements to extant social classes, and the prevailing social and other conditions.

In mainly historical explanations, that which is prior in time is thought of as "cause," and that which comes after as "effect." The historians preoccupation with the concrete events prevents an appreciation of the logic of social relations. Millenarian and other religious movements clearly indicate situations of conflict which are part of a continuing historical process, nor are these conflicts, or their sources, necessarily resolved by a political regime which puts an end to the movement itself. History does provide us with some basis for saying why there have not been many more movements. But it cannot tell us why particular movements should have occurred when they did. The historical perspective shows these movements to be in some way symptomatic of an overall developmental process.

We have to think of the possibilities and probabilities which seem to be inherent in the general pattern of developing social relations. Within this context a particular history is vital. I suggest that it is necessary to isolate the particular social and other conditions which encourage the development of religious enthusiasm.

Some anthropologists have recognized that historical analysis can provide us with some further insights into the problem of religious enthusiasm (Evans-Pritchard, 1950, 1951b, 1961; I Schapera: 1962). Social anthropology is in fact "much more like certain branches of historical scholarship. . .than it is to any of the natural sciences." (Evans-Pritchard, 1950:119). Social anthropology should therefore proceed along much the same lines as does social history or the history of institutions, and seek not "scientific laws," but "significant patterns." (E. Evans-Pritchard, 1951b:3). Evans-Pritchard further condemned the functionalist view that we can understand the structure of a society and the functioning of its institutions without knowing anything about its history. He suggested that the social anthropologist should model themselves instead on those social historians, "who are primarily interested in social institutions, in mass movements and great cultural changes, and who seek regularities, tendencies, types and typical sequences, and always within a restricted historical and cultural context." (Evans-Pritchard, 1961:10).

Isaac Schapera suggests that the relevance of history, and the kind of history used, depend upon the nature of the problem with which we are concerned (1962:146). The anthropologist should therefore, supplement his study with a study of the history of a society, and the order and manner in which different aspects of "civilization" were introduced into their lives. The social anthropologist, so long as fieldwork continues to be an essential part of his personal research, must of necessity be concerned with the present, with the description and discussion of social institutions. But his understanding of those institutions will admittedly be more complete if he can learn not only how they function, but how they developed. He should seek knowledge of the past for the purpose of illuminating the present. The historian too can learn from the anthropologist. The historian, studying religious movements, is not concerned with religious activity as such, that is, with its manipulation and desired efficacy. Moreover, the historical literature has tended to obfuscate the actual significance of the part played by diverse ethnic groups in relation to their role in particular movements. The anthropologist can provide an insight into these issues, by looking at the process of fission and fusion in societies given over to religious enthusiasm. I believe that the use of both historical and anthropological data can help us construct a unifying theory of religious enthusiasm.

It is apparent from the above discussions that the anthropological and historical literature pose particular problems to our understanding of chiliastic and other movements. In order to clarify these problems I suggest that we view the distinction between external and internal motivation in a dialectical sense. This would involve an explication of the crisis situation in which these movements emerged. This is an issue to which I now turn.

Leaders and Followers.

I suggest that an explication of the crisis situation should take into account the following issues: 1) the prevailing cultural, political, social, religious and economic climate in which religious activity emerged; and 2) the character of the leader of such activity.

One of the few anthropologists who has tackled the issue of leadership is Wallace. Wallace used Max Weber's concept of "charismatic leadership" to describe the type of leader-follower relationship characteristic of revitalistic movements (Wallace, 1956). Weber seems to have been uncertain whether to regard charisma as an unusual quality in a leader which is recognized and rationalized by his adherents or whether to regard it as a quality ascribed to the leader by followers and hence as being a quality of their relationship to him determined both by the observed and the observer in the perceptual transaction (Weber, 1947).

The concept of charisma has generated widespread discussion and controversy among scholars. Some have critized it for its elusiveness; others have openly challenged its utility as an analytical tool (K. J. Ratman, 1964; P. M. Blau, 1963; Carl J. Friedrich, 1961). Whatever the leaders personal qualities, the fact remains that these were acceptable to his followers and proved instrumental in convincing them of the truth of his message. I suggest that the analysis of a particular "charismatic" relationship should center on the objective identification of the leaders qualities and maxims, and the reasons for their popular acceptance. I have raised the issue of leadership, in order to help identify and analyze the various component units of a crisis, and to gauge the intensity of the crisis situation as best as possible. We need to understand the interaction between the leader's message and the crisis situation, and the relationship between the leaders formative experiences and his subsequent behavior as a "revolutionary." Social scientists have failed to take into account the role of the leader, the "prophet" or "Mahdi" in religious revival movements. Many problems are confused and left unanswered in the literature, particularly those connected with prophets and the similarity of the scattered cults. The problems may be cited as follows: 1) the causes of the cults are not separated from the preconditions of the cults; 2) the causes of unrest are not clearly separated from the causes of millenarianism;

and 3) the motives of the prophet are not clearly separated
from his aims.

Moreover, the leader can only reinforce his "identity"
by convening and propogating a particular ideology. We
need to ask: what makes an ideology effective at a given
period of time? The political functions of religious
movements may be clear enough. The contribution of revol-
utionary ideologies to new political and social initiatives
in the 19th and 20th century in Africa has been decisive.
But why do the movements take on a religious form? The
assimilation or rejection of certain cultural elements is a
factor that needs to be considered to further explicate the
crisis situation.

Conversion and Proselytization

I suggest that particular religious movements emerge
in societies which have been fairly Islamized or Christian-
ized over a period of time, and who therefore have a well
established body of beliefs on which to draw. The initial
conversion of a people and later revivalism may therefore
have different consequences in the development of religious
activity. I introduce two models relating to the concept
of conversion in Africa in order to elucidate this point.

Robin Horton introduces the idea of a basic African
cosmology which has a two tier structure (1971). The first
tier being that of the lesser spirits and the second that
of the supreme being. The lesser spirits underpin events

and processes in the microcosm of the local community and
its environment, whilst the supreme being underpins events
and processes in the macrocosm, i.e., in the world as a
whole. Moreover, Horton suggests that where the way of life
is dominated by subsistence farming and commerce is poorly
developed, the social relations of the people of a particu-
lar area are likely to be largely confined by the boundaries
of their microcosm. This sort of situation is likely to
favor a religious life in which a great deal of attention
is paid to the supreme being. However, where there is a
development of factors making for wider communication, (the
development of long distance trade) the social life of those
involved will no longer be so strongly confined by the
boundaries of their microcosm (Horton, 1971:218-219). In
this situation, religious life will take on a different form.
Less attention will be paid to the spirits, and more to the
supreme being. This scheme, he argues, provides us with
the various forms that religious movements may take.
Horton's scheme does provide us with the basis for under-
standing the outcome of the exposure to Islam or Christianity.
What is accepted or rejected will be largely determined by
the structure of the basic cosmology of the people con-
cerned, and by the limits which this structure imposes on
their potential for responding to social change. However,
we see that Islam is not simply a way of explaining things
"intellectually" at the conscious level; it is also a source

of spiritual solace, and a set of rules that can be manipulated towards certain ends.

Horton's theory evoked a vigorous critical response from the Islamist Humphrey Fisher (1973). Fisher believes that Horton has over estimated the survival of original African elements of religion, and has underestimated the willingness and ability of Africans to make even more rigorous Islam and Christianity their own.

> The fundamental theme is neither the vigorous reconstruction of traditional African belief, nor the effective transplanting of Islam, but rather the development of a higher religious awareness which transcends and subsumes current religious formulations (Fisher, 1973: 27).

Fisher overvalues the influence of Islam as a transcendental spiritual force, and underestimates the significance in covversion of traditional religious beliefs and institutions.

Fisher's approach is largely diffusionist. In this vein, Fisher follows the leading British authority on Islam in Africa, J. S. Trimingham, whose three stage model of conversion (germination, crisis, and gradual reorientation) he transcribes as "quarantine," "mixing," and "reform," (Fisher, 1973:34). These phases may indeed seem to characterize a gradual process of acculturation or enculturation from the perspective of the outside observer. They do not necessarily convey what the people so characterized consider themselves to be, i.e., Muslim or non-Muslim.

The limitation of this "diffusionist" approach and of
Horton's "intellectualist" perspective are highlighted
if we ask how they could possibly explain the contemporary
Black Muslim movement in America.

Moreover, the ideologies of some African messianic
movements have been derived from a non-African prototype.
That of the Kitawala in the Congo and adjacent territories
were derived from the "Watchtower," (George Shepperson,
1964). But often, (in the African context), it would seem
that the ideology has been worked out afresh by the move-
ments through the application of certain basic concepts
drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition of a Messiah, and
of salvation as an event in historic time. There is also
the interdependence of religious and political ends. The
aspiration to set up a "Congolese church" cannot be separat-
ed from the aspiration to set up a "Congolese state" detached
from all forms of European control (George Balandier, 1955).

The above discussion leads us to certain important
questions: What during this phase of history, the period
of the break up of indigenous pre-colonial states and the
imposition of European dominated colonial systems, was the
nature of the crisis which led to the emergence of Messianic
and Mahdist movements? Why have they played a particularly
significant part in the history of some societies and not
of others? At what point do the "oppressed" decide that
oppression is no longer endurable, and turn to a revolution-
ary millenarian ideology for a way out? In this connection,

it is worth asking how important is the possession of a local tradition of popular protest? It may help towards an understanding of the nature of the crisis which have given rise to religious movements to note the distinction which Lanternari draws between "movements generated by a conflict between societies or by the clash with an external force, and those generated by dissensions within the pattern of one society,". (V. Lanternari, 1963:309).

I have criticized the commonly held view that religious activity is a product of the western, christian colonial encounter. I now turn to construct a more comprehensive theory of religious enthusiasm which seems to me to be a profitable one for the inspection of millenarian and other cults.

Mahdist Movements in Islam

I have argued that to interpret religious activity as a response to a culture contact situation, in which the people suffered from western dominance leaves much unaccounted for. The panoply of difficulties which lie in the way of identifying and classifying such social phenomena seem to spring from two main sources, namely, the variety of the kinds of explanation available and the nature of the activities themselves. Anthropologists have generally tended to disregard religious activity in societies not subjected to a European colonial power or to christianity. This has led Burridge to suggest that societies not subjected to a European

power or to Christianity may not produce millenarian or other movements (Burridge, 1969:32). Many problems are confused and left unanswered in the literature. The utility of these different approaches to movements in non-western, non-christian settings must also be questioned in the ways already indicated.

In order to construct a more unifying theory I propose to add a new dimension to the study of religious enthusiasm by including in this melange of rubrics those movements occurring in different cultural settings. I will illustrate this dimension with reference to the Mahdist movements in Islam. Because they have emerged in different types of cultural settings there has been a tendency for Mahdist and messianic movements to be treated as quite different phenomena. It is clear however, that they have important characteristics in common: a) the central role of the leader, the prophet or Mahdi; b) the rejection of the established authority both religious and secular, and the rejection of internal indigenous forces as oppressive; and c) the use of certain symbols to express the common purposes, beliefs and distinctive character of the movement. There are, of course, some significant differences between movements generally described as Mahdist, and those described as messianic, revivalistic or nativistic. In particular Mahdist movements have emerged in societies already effectively Islamized. They have, therefore, usually had a well established

body of Mahdist beliefs on which to draw. Moreover, there
are attitudinal differences about institutions between
messianic and other movements in non-Muslim contexts and
Mahdist movements. Mahdist theory always regards _jihad_
as the method whereby perfected social order must be produced.
Messianic movements on the other hand assume the expected
transformation of society will be dependent upon some
cataçlysmic external event which it is people's duty simply
to await. Then too, Mahdist movements are committed to the
idea of a Mahdist state, i.e., a perfected Islamic state.
Messianic movements are not necessarily committed to state
building.

Throughout history, clearly, movements expressing
millenarian expectations have provided the "deprived"
(though not necessarily oppressed) in societies dominated
or strongly influenced by Christian or Islamic ideologies
with a particularly effective vehicle of protest. In such
contexts, a coherent, intelligible and relevant system of
revolutionary beliefs has been so to speak, ready to hand.
But such movements have also been important in societies
in which what may be loosely termed "traditional systems of
belief" have been dominant and Islamic and Christian in-
fluences would seem to be neglible. In this connection,
Terence Ranger's discussion of the part played by millena-
rian beliefs in the ideology of the Shona revolt of 1886-
1887, and John Illiffe's study of the comparable aspects

of the Maji Maji Rebellion of 1905-1907 are of particular interest (T. Ranger, 1967: J. Illiffe, 1967).

It seems that in order to construct a more comprehensive and unifying theory of religious enthusiasm certain questions need to be raised: why is it that religious activity is frequently a characteristic of periods of social unrest? How do these "new and often bizarre ideals" arise from social disruption? How are these ideals channelled into religious activity? Why are these ideals channelled into messianic movements, nativistic movements, revitalistic movements, millenarian movements and cargo cults as opposed to other modes of expression?

I suggest that in order to construct a more comprehensive theory of religious enthusiasm an analysis of the internal indigenous social structure is of primary significance. Internal conflicts and rivalries centering on religious divisions may play a vital role in determining the form religious activity may take. I also introduce another dimension to the study of religious enthusiasm: the conceptualization of religious revival movements as a "licensed protest." Protest against the internal and external social structure is licensed by an ideological justification created by a revival of particular elements of religious ideology which sanctions the claim to the quest for power and authority by those religious leaders proselyting the "new" religion. This "licensed protest" exhibits the

inherent conflicts which exist between antagonistic groups.
Conflicting religious attachments and not merely between
Islam and Christianity but also within Islam itself have
sometimes served to entrench traditional differences,
leaving many denominational conflicts unresolved at the
time of colonial rule. My proper concern is with patterns
of social relations and the workings of the internal social
system, however these may be contingently or culturally
expressed. I now turn to consider the Mahdist movement in
the Sudan (1881-1898) in relation to the above framework.

CHAPTER 3

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE MĀHDIST REVOLUTION IN

THE SUDAN (1881-1885)

The Mahdist movement's history lasting a mere twenty
years shows a rapid political development from the proclama-
tion and establishment of a messianic Islamic community to
the creation of an autocracy based on the hegemony of one
tribe. To a large extent these two phases of the Mahdia
were the respective achievements of its two leaders, the
Dunqulāwī Muhammad Ahmad b. 'Abdallāh who proclaimed himself
Mahdi in 1881 and the Ta 'ishī 'Abdallāhi b. Muhammad who
succeeded to the sovereignty of Mahdiship with the title of
Khalifat al Mahdi in 1885.

In order to construct a comprehensive and unifying
theory of religious enthusiasm, I suggest that: 1) the
causes of the movement must be separated from the precon-
ditions of the movement. The conditions which make the
situation ripe for a movement to occur do not necessarily
emanate from the presence of an external colonial power;
2) the causes of unrest have to be clearly separated from
causes of millenarianism; and 3) Mahdist movements can only
emerge in societies which have been islamized over a period

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of time. Such societies have a well established body of Mahdist beliefs on which to draw in order to legitimize their claims to political and religious power.

I define "causes" as those antecedents invariably and unconditionally followed by the Mahdist revolution. These are the factors or circumstances immediately preceeding the Mahdist revolution. The "causes" postulated for the Mahdist revolution should be adequate motives or reasons for justifying that which is to follow, namely, the revival of Islam in the Sudan. By a "precondition" I mean a prior condition that must be fulfilled beforehand; the circumstances that determine what form the movement will take. I define "unrest" as a disturbance (a revolt) arising from incongruities in the social structure of Sudanese society. By "millenarianism" I mean the symbolic (ideological) justification to purge the society of that which goes against its philosophy of a perfect social order, and which strives towards a period of good government, and prosperity (in the case of the Mahdiyya a perfected Islamic State).

The evidence to substantiate the above will be derived from a systematic analysis of the Mahdist revolution in terms of: (1) the explanations of the Mahdist revolution provided by British, Egyptian, and Sudanese historians; (2) the social composition of the Mahdist movement; and (3) the process of Islamization in the Sudan and its overall implications.

I now turn to consider the historical literature on the Mahdist revolution in the Sudan. Historians have attempted to explain the rise of the revolution in terms of its causes (F. R. Wingate, 1891; A. B. Theobald, 1951; Richard Hill, 1959; P. M. Holt, 1970; L. A. Fabunmi, 1964). The causes usually attributed to the rise of the Mahdist revolution are: (1) the suppression of the slave trade; (2) the cruel, oppressive system of the Turco-Egyptian regime; (3) Sudanese nationalism; and (4) religious fanaticism. P. M. Holt's study has been acclaimed as the most authoritative statement on the Mahdiyya, and his views are shared by other historians writing on the Mahdiyya (Holt, 1970). Holt argues that the attempts made by the Turco-Egyptian regime to suppress the slave trade was the decisive factor in giving rise to the Mahdist revolution. He therefore calls this period the "Eve of the Mahdiyya" (1970:32). To support his claims, Holt argues that these attempts by the Turco-Egyptian regime to suppress the slave trade struck at an important source of wealth, since the slave trade was the basis of the domestic and agrarian economy. Historians have generally supported Holt's argument that the policy of the Turco-Egyptian regime towards the slave-trade constituted a more specific and immediate cause of discontent (Wingate, 1891; Theobald, 1951).

A polemic centers around the above issues. Certain questions need to be raised at this stage: (1) are the

conditions necessary for the rise of a movement always to be found in the nature of the society preceeding the revolution? and (2) are the causes of the movement and the preconditions of the movement one and the same thing? Specific events in the Sudan at the time of the Egyptian administration may serve to clarify the above issues.

How did the slave trade begin? Richard Gray states that trade in slaves began as a consequence of trade in ivory (Gray, 1961). The merchants of Khartoum established settlements of their agents and followers around the Upper Nile and Bahr al Ghazal. To obtain grain when provisions failed, or cattle to exchange for tusks, raids were made on the neighboring tribes, the Khartoum merchants frequently being in alliance with local chiefs. The prisoners captured in these raids became the slaves of merchants and before long the prospect of a successful slave trade became apparent. The camp settlements of the ivory merchants provided stages by which the professional slave traders from Kordofan and Darfur could penetrate these regions and send back their captives (Gray, 1961).

How then did the actions taken by the Turco-Egyptian regime to suppress the slave-trade contribute to the rise of the Mahdist revolution? Holt discusses the slave-trade in relation to the various attempts made by the Turco-Egyptian regime to suppress the slave-trade. Khedive Ismail who ruled from 1863-1879 sought not only to extend the

dominion of Egypt to the south and west but also at the same time to suppress the slave trade in the Sudan. The conquests of his grandfather's time (Muhammad Ali Pasha) had facilitated and expanded the trade; to bring it under control a further increase of empire was necessary. On the pretext of suppressing the slave trade across the Red Sea Ismail obtained with British support the cession in 1865 of the ports of Suakin and Massawa from the Ottoman government. Two years after the deposition of the Khedive Ismail the Mahdia began (Holt, 1970:3).

Sporadic actions against slavery and the slave trade had been taken by earlier viceroys. Theobald states that in 1855 Sa'id Pasha opened up an anti-slave trade control area on the White Nile. In 1856 he promulgated an order forbidding the slave trade in the Sudan. This was implemented with some measure of success in 1863-1865 forcing out many slave traders from the southern Sudan (Theobald, 1951). Slaves from the White Nile were however still being sold in Khartoum, Holt acknowledges the fact that sporadic demonstrations against slavery had been made by earlier viceroys; he argues nevertheless that the most prolonged and concerted attempts at suppression derived from the initiative of Khedive Ismail (1970:33). At the time of Khedive Ismail's accession to the governor generalship the two major areas of the slave trade were the Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal. These areas were the sphere of operations

of great companies organized in Khartoum and directed by
Sudanese (notably Danaqla), Egyptians, Syrians and Turks.
The government granted these companies trading rights in
certain areas (Holt, 1970:33). I wish to point out here
that Holt's assertion that the slave-traders were primarily
Egyptians, Sudanese, Turks and Syrians is incorrect. There
is evidence to suggest that many slave-traders were
Europeans. Among the Europeans was John Petherick who later
became British consul in Khartoum (Wingate, 1891).

Khedive Ismail attempted to suppress the slave-trade
in various ways. In 1865 he attempted to restrict the trade
by police action through establishing a patrol on the Upper
Nile. He confiscated the trader's boats, established a
number of military posts on the Upper Nile and levied a
heavy poll tax on the employees of the traders (Holt, 1970:
33). By 1869 Khedive Ismail's policy had been reasonably
successful in the Upper Nile but to the south of this
district and in the Bahr al-Ghazal the power of the slaves
was almost unchecked (Holt, 1970:34).

Moreover, Holt states that the extension of Egyptian
rule and the measures taken against the slave trade were
associated with an increase in European official personnel.
Holt argues that this diminished the prestige both of the
Egyptian officials and of the Khedival government in the
eyes of the Sudanese;at the same time it aroused the jealousy
of the Egyptians and their dislike of an onerous policy

backed by European public opinion (1970:35). Khedive
Ismail offered Sir Samuel Baker the command of the
Bahr al-Jabal expedition to facilitate the abolition of the
slave-trade. In 1877 General Charles George Gordon was
offered the governor-generalship of the Sudan by Khedive
Ismail. Gordon took entire responsibility for enforcing the
policy of suppression and became harsher and less cautious
in his methods. Feeling unable to rely upon Egyptian
officials, Gordon dismissed a large number of them and
appointed Europeans and Sudanese in their places (Holt,
1970:38).

Furthermore, an extensive trade had been carried on
by the Jallaba of Kordofan and Darfur by means of which
the deputy of these districts was supplied with arms and
ammunition in exchange for slaves. Gordon ordered the
Jallaba to evacuate all districts south of the route from
El Obeid to Dara in southern Dafur. When this order was
ignored Gordon resorted to the harsh expedient of instruct-
ing the tribal shaikhs of the area to seize the Jallaba and
expel them to government posts. This order was received
with enthusiasm by the nomads who, in spite of their ties
of commercial interest with the traders were still hostile
towards these riverain tribesmen.

Moreover, Holt states that whereas British opinion
saw in Gordon the liberator of the slaves, to the northern
Sudanese he was the man who had sapped the foundations of

their prosperity and ruthlessly harried the Jallaba (1970:
87). In 1880 Gordon resigned from the Egyptian service.
In 1884 Gordon was again sent to the Sudan to deal with the
Mahdist revolt. The Egyptian administration argued that it
was undesirable to appoint a christian to the Sudan where
the revolt was of a religious nature. The British govern-
ments recommendation to evacuate the Sudan was confirmed in
a peremptory fashion on 4 January 1884. Exposed to this
pressure to accept a policy which they were anxious at all
costs to avoid, the Egyptian ministers submitted their
resignations (Holt, 1970:88).

Holt has argued that the actions taken by the Turco-
Egyptian regime was the cause of the Mahdist revolution.
To what extent is this a plausible explanation for the
Mahdist revolution? Indeed, the harsh measures taken by
Khedive Ismail may have aroused indignation among the slave
merchants on whom fell the burden of the tax. It is doubtful
whether these measures taken against the slave trade were
the decisive factors giving rise to the Mahdist revolution.
Although such measures may have restricted the activities
of the slave traders it did not halt their activities
altogether and they soon learnt to elude the government
patrols.

An examination of the post-Gordon period (1877-1879)
immediately preceeding the rise of the Mahdi, serves to
refute the claim that the suppression of the slave trade

was the linchpin of the Mahdist revolution. Whereas Gordon's governor-generalship was characterized by a revolt in Darfur and the Bahr al-Ghazal, the period 1879-1881 was a relatively peaceful one. The new Governor-General was Ra'uf Pasha who adopted a laissez-faire policy which practically revived the slave trade. Ra'uf Pasha also dismissed Gessi and Messadaglia as Governors of the Bahr al-Ghazal and Darfur respectively. They were responsible for the suppression of the slave trade in their provinces. These offical actions implemented by Ra'uf Pasha found commendation among the slave-traders. Ra'uf Pasha's policy could also be viewed as a sign of reactionism against measures taken over the last thirty years or so. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that the attempts made by the Turco-Egyptian regime to suppress the slave-trade succeeded. If the post-Gordon period was not only a relatively peaceful one, but also favorable to the revival of the slave trade, how is it that the attempt to suppress the slave trade by the Turco-Egyptians was the cause of the Mahdist revolution?

I agree with Holt that the appointment of Christian officals such as Sir Samuel Baker and General Gordon to suppress the slave trade may have aroused the religious resentment of the Sudanese. More importantly, slavery was an institution sanctioned by Islam; this factor should take precedence over the fact that it was a Christian who was involved in actions to suppress the slave-trade. In

no way am I suggesting that by the mere fact of slavery still being practiced that anti-slavery measures had no bearing on the events which followed. I do not agree with Holt that the actions taken by the Turco-Egyptian government to suppress the slave-trade was the cause of the Mahdist revolt. After all attempts had been made earlier in the 1850's to suppress the slave trade. Why did the Mahdist revolt not emerge then? Surely we ought to consider other factors as well in order to explain why the Mahdist revolution occurred when it did rather than positing single causal explanations.

Another factor that is greatly emphasized in the historical literature is the cruelty and injustice meted out to the Sudanese. Holt states that "Egyptian rule was unpopular, not merely by its faults but by its very nature since it was alien, unremitting, and exacting" (1970:17). Holt does not elaborate this point any further. It is clear from his analysis that this statement is tied to the slavery issue. Similar arguments are also propounded by Wingate (1891) and Lord Cromer (1908). Wingate argues that Egyptian cruelty and injustice became prevalent only after Gordon's resignation in 1879 as Governor-General of the Sudan. Wingate states that the Mahdist revolution "swept into force on the withdrawal of all semblance of Gordon's government" (1891:7). No mention is made of the harsh treatment meted out to the Sudanese by General Gordon.

One sees here the subtle influence of the ideology that the Egyptians were incapable of governing the Sudan. The significance of this body of literature has to be understood in the context of Britain's political position in this region during the period of Egyptian occupation in the Sudan. Britain had acquired a position of dominance in the Middle East in general, and in Egypt in particular. Her dominance in Egypt gave her the right to enforce her authority in the Sudan.

Egyptian historians have been quick to point out that their administration of the Sudan "was not as bad as it is often represented by British critics" (L. A. Fabunmi, 1960: 24). L. A. Fabunmi has argued that British interference in the Sudan mainly through the appointment of European officials, offended the religious sensibilities of the Sudanese, thereby giving rise to the Mahdist revolution. He argues that slavery was an institution permitted by Islam, and the appointment of a Christian to suppress the trade aroused the religious resentment of the Sudanese. This diminished the prestige of both the Egyptian officials and the Khedive government in the eyes of the Sudanese. At the same time it aroused the jealousy of the Egyptians and their dislike of an onerous policy backed by British public opinion (Fabunmi, 1960). Britain's policy in the Sudan was seen as detrimental to the successful administration of the Sudan by Egypt. Egyptian historians support this argument

with reference to a statement made by Samuel Baker who was in charge of the British expedition of Bahr al-Jabal:

> My chief endeavor was to work for the interest
> of Egypt, at the same time that I sustained
> and advanced the influence of England. General
> Gordon who succeeded me was actuated by the
> same desire, and died in the hope that England
> would reach Khartoum (Mekki Shibeika, 1952:63).

Indeed, British imperialism was extended to include the Sudan.

Historians have also pontificated that the rise of the Mādiyya is to be found in the destruction of the traditional social structure of Sudanese society. J. L. Spaulding has made some breakthrough in his study of the Mahdiyya through ingenious use of private family papers. He discusses the destruction of the traditional social order as being one of the causes contributing to the rise of the Mahdiyya (Spaulding 1982). His analysis is primarily in terms of the land tenure system. The basic factor underlying the process of the social transformation of Sudanese society was the colonial policy of imposing taxes on agricultural land in coin, rather than in kind. This is said to have set in motion a process of monetarization of resources favorable to the concept of private property including land. Spaulding states further that the ensuring network of capitalist relations undermined the concept of the communal ownership of land. In this process the successful bidders drove out the losers. The losers were driven to seek land in the southern mainland areas. Others went to the southern Sudan to trade in ivory and slaves.

Moreover, Spaulding states that the colonial policy
of taxing agricultural land on the basis of waterwheels
induced many landowners to replace the waterwheels with
slave labor. Whereas in precolonial times slaves were re-
latively few and were employed in military and bureau-
cratic functions, during the colonial period they increased
in number, and were instead employed in agricultural pro-
duction (Spaulding, 1982:5). This statement further supports
my argument that the attempts made by the Turco-Egyptian
regime to suppress the slave trade was not a sufficient con-
dition giving rise to the Mahdist revolution. The slave
trade still persisted despite attempts to eradicate it. Is
the taxation system then a sufficient condition that may
have given rise to the Mahdiyya? I assume that it may have
been one of the underlying factors; however, to what extent
it aided in the "destruction" of the traditional social
order is questionable. There is evidence to suggest that
it was frequently evaded by the flight of the victims from
their homes to remoter districts where the authority of the
government was less felt (R. Gray, 1961).

Sudanese historians on the other hand do not conceive
of the suppression of the slave trade as the major cause of
the Mahdist revolution. M. O. Beshir is one of the pro-
ponents of this view (1974).

> It was more complex than that implied in the
> traditional stereotype of 'Arab' exploiters
> and negroid victims. Some groups were indeed
> enslaved almost to the point of tribal

> disintegration, but even among these some
> fortunate individuals found in enslavement
> not a life of misery but an attractive career...
> Being raided and enslaved happened once and all
> was soon over. Then you were given a home,
> food, clothes, etc., and above all a gun, you
> were a man (Beshir, 1974:15).

How many such "fortunate" individuals were there? No attempt is made by Sudanese historians at a systematic analysis of the slave trade in relation to both its domestic and external markets. Perhaps their glowing inferences about the slave trade emanate from the religious justification that slavery is an institution sanctioned by Islam.

Sudanese historians have postulated entirely different causes of the Mahdiyya. The first of the these relates to Sudanese nationalism. The Turco-Egyptian regime is said to be alien and foreign; therefore, the Mahdist revolution was nothing short of a nationalist uprising against foreign rule (Beshir, 1974). This view is supported with reference to the "oppressive" system of the Turco-Egyptian regime. Oppression is therefore described as having inspired a nationalist uprising in the form of the Mahdist revolution. Dr. Ja'afa Ali Bakheit is quoted in agreement by Professor Mohamed Omer Beshir as stating:

> Mahdism was in a sense the first Sudanese
> national movement against imperial rulers
> although its form and spirit were traditional
> and Muslim rather than modern and secular
> (Beshir, 1974:15).

Dr. Ja'afa Ali Bakheit gives nationalism a different meaning in the context of the Sudanese Mahdiyya. Underlying his argument however, is the tacit assumption that

the Mahdist revolution was directed solely against the external colonial power. Subsequent discussions will serve to show that the Mahdist revolution was aimed less so at the external colonial forces of oppression, and more so at the structure of the indigenous tribal system.

The second cause of the Mahdist revolution is cited as that relating to religious discontent, emanating from favoritism accorded to the Khatmiyya sect and imposition of orthodox Islam as the official brand of religion. Two incidents are usually cited to support this assertion. The first concerns the conflict between the Majdhubiyya and the Khatmiyya tariqas in al-Damar and the Red Sea Hills. The latter sect gained influence in these two places at the expense of the former because it enjoyed government patronage. Since these areas were considered traditionally to be the domain of the Majdhubiyya, their loss to the Khatmiyya was felt serious enough for the Majdhubiyya to nurture ill feelings against the government. The Majdhubiyya's support of the Mahdist cause when it broke out was seen as partly inspired by its desire to avenge this loss (Beshir, 1974: 85).

The second incident concerns the conflict within the Isma'iliyya suborder of the Khatmiyya tariqa in El Obeid. One section won control of the suborder because it received government support. The other section therefore supported the Mahdist revolution (Beshir, 1974:96). Indeed, the

Turco-Egyptian government's policy of imposing orthodox Islam on a people among whom Islamic Sufism was the most popular mode of religious expression meant alienating them, especially the religious leaders. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that it was this deep-seated religious discontent which made the traditional religious leaders susceptible to the call of the Mahdi. I therefore argue that the underlying cause of the Mahdist revolution arose out of religious discontent and the fissiparous nature of religious rivalries in the Sudan. The evidence to support this argument will be further built upon and substantiated in subsequent sections.

In general, historians have not been concerned with explaining the manipulation and desired efficacy of religious activity. As a result of this neglect, not much attention has been paid to religious divisions as a primary motivating factor in the rise of the Mahdist revolution. Furthermore, British, Egyptian and Sudanese historians have failed to provide us with convincing evidence to show that the Mahdiyya actually arose out of a situation of the administrative incompetence of the Egyptians, to suppression of the slave trade, or to Sudanese nationalism. This is because they have failed to isolate the causes of the Mahdist movement from the preconditions of the movement, and the causes of unrest from the causes of millenarianism. Purely historical explanations of events in terms of their

antecedents tend to obfuscate the actual causes that have
given rise to religious revival movements. I now turn to
consider the process of Islamization in the Sudan, for it
relates significantly to the question as to why it is that
religious activity is characteristic of periods of social
unrest.

The Agents of Islamization in the Sudan

J. S. Trimingham outlines three stages that mark the
process of conversion: germination, crisis and reorienta-
tion (1968:43). The first stage of germination is said to
lead to a crisis.

> Germinating in the deeper levels of in-
> dividuals in society and in the collective
> consciousness, the seed eventually forces
> the shock of crisis. This results in a new
> attitude which in time profoundly modifies
> individual and social behavior (Trimingham,
> 1968:44).

This stage refers to contact of some sort, settlement of
traders and clerics and leads to the breaking down of
barriers and the adoption of certain material aspects of
Islamic culture and of wearing Islamic amulets and dress.
How does this first stage relate to the Sudan? From the
7th century Islam began to infiltrate with trade from the
east, through the Red Sea ports of Badi, Aydhab, and Suakin.
Later, a western stream of influence through Darfur assumed
some importance (J. H. Greenberg, 1946). One can assume,
however, that these two distinct lines of Muslim contact
pale into insignificance in comparison with the impact of

the main channel of early Islamization from Egypt and the north. J. H. Greenberg shows that following the Arab invasions and conquest of Egypt from the 7th century onwards, Arab immigrants began to move south into the northern Sudan in an ever-increasing tide (1946:12).

The spread of Islam in the Sudan belt began with the upsurge of Berber Murabitun peoples (1050-1750) and the dispersion throughout North Africa o f Arab nomads of the Bani Hilal. The spread of Islam into the Northern Sudan came through the work of Berber traders, clerics in the west and an influx of Arabs in the east. Darfur was brought into touch with Islamic centers and there began the process of Islamization. Sulaiman Solong (1596-1637) the Fur ruler introduced <u>fekis</u> from the east to instruct the people in Islam (Trimingham, 1949).

Greenberg identifies the spread of Islam in the eastern Sudan as commencing in the 14th century, when the fall of the Christian kingdom of the Maqurra left most of the northern and central regions open to Muslim penetration. Arab tribes who gained control of the eastern Sudan were not moved by religious zeal, but by the need to wander in search of pasture. The nomad Arab tribes made no attempt at proselytization. The spread of Islam in this period was mainly through penetration, intermarriage, a strategic policy of winning chiefs and group leaders, trade and the appropriation of slaves. More importantly, conversion to

Islam connected the convert with the Arab tribal system as
a client. By the time of the Egyptian conquest the Arab
tribal system was almost universal in the Sudan belt. The
cohesion of individual tribes was inconstant, depending on
variable factors such as climatic conditions and the per-
sonality of the shaikh. A weak shaikh resulted in the trans-
er of border elements, or to the rise to power of a raiding
tribe like the Shā'iqiyya (Greenberg, 1946:33).

Another important element in the spread of Islam during
the Funj regime was the migration of groups of Mahas on the
Blue Nile. These groups adopted the Arabic language and
traditional training in jurisprudence. They also establish-
ed themselves as miracle-working feki families, deeply in-
fluencing the life of the indigenous tribes in the Funj con-
federation. The pilgrimage also took many Sudanese to the
holy cities. On their return they established themselves
as fekis. The activity of these fekis from their zāwiya
centers fermented internal missionary activity leading to
the revival of Islam in Nubia and Sennār, and also to the
conversion of the Beja and negroid pagan tribes who had
been incorporated into the Funj sultanate (Greenberg, 1946).

I agree with Trimingham that cultural and commercial
contact is one of the strongest influences aiding the
spread of Islam. It is in the interest of the Muslim trader
to proselytize. The process of conversion in the Sudan
shows that Islam always spread along the trade routes.

This process appeared to have first claimed the detribalized and the nomadic tribes. The camel-owning nomads provided a vital link with the wider Muslim world through the caravan trade they monopolized. The nomads influenced the spread of Islam less through religious zeal than through their alliance with a reformer and his small nucleus of devoted followers. The sedentary tribes on the other hand did not have the same needs as these nomadic tribes, and as long as the group remained intact, they strongly resisted islamization.

Far outweighing the magnitude of the changes brought about by commercial traders, was that of the introduction of a body of hold men from the hijāz. They were responsible for the islamization of the riverain and Jezira tribes. The main result of this connection with the holy places, Mecca and Medina, was the bringing of a living religion to the Sudanese in the form of saint worship and the religious orders. Trimingham states that individual holy men came at the invitation of the Funj sultanate to settle in their kingdom (1949). They initiated their followers into the Sufi path they themselves followed. Sufism at this time period was at a very low ebb, for mysticism in Islam is not only its highest but its most degraded form. In discussing the Sufist doctrine, Trimingham asserts that Sufism was materialized in the cult of the mysterious powers, now islamized in the form of baraka, therefore personal

allegiance and abject reverence to the <u>shaikh</u>. These for-
eigners from the <u>hijāz</u> became influencial guides to the
Funj kings, in both spiritual and political affairs. They
found a fertile soil among the sedentaries of the Sudan,
and easily won the hearts of the intellectually backward
masses with their devotional fervor and miracle mongering.

The overriding significance of the <u>hijāzian</u> influence
was the introduction of the Religious Orders or <u>tarīqa</u> the
Qadiriyya and the Shādhiliyya, whose mystical teaching was
then in a degenerate but popularized form. These orders
when established in the Sudan were not centralized and all
religious authority was canalized into the hands of the
various teaching <u>shaikhs</u> (Trimingham, 1949). Sudanese Islam
therefore became "cellular" in the literal as well as the
metaphorical sense, the <u>zāwiya</u> being the nucleus of the
embryonic Islamic civilization in a pagan environment. So
saint worship became the most powerful religious influence
in the Sudan and a hagiography developed in which Sudanese
saints eclipsed the most exulted figures in Islam. More-
over, Sufism provided a philosophy of life which was adapted
to the needs of the masses by the orders. Why was this so?
T. W. Arnold has suggested that this appeal lay in the
Sufist doctrine (1950). The Sufi saints taught that God
had given every soul the potentiality of union with him,
but this cannot be developed except under the guidance of
one already illuminated. The aspirant had to attach
himself to such a <u>shaikh</u>.

These orders therefore became the institutional expression of Sufism or Islamic mysticism, an aspect of the religion which grew from ascetic and gnostic roots. The introduction of the religious orders at this relatively early stage in the conversion of the Sudanese leads me to argue that the fission between Sufism and orthodox Islam representative of the Turco-Egyptian regime, was the most crucial factor giving rise to the Mahdist revolution. This provides us with an insight as to why it is that: (1) social unrest was channelled into religious activity; and (2) why it is that loyalty to Islam is the driving force of a revolt against a Muslim regime.

Trimingham identifies a second stage in the process of conversion as one of crisis which involves:

> The assimilation of real elements of Islamic religious culture, ritual prayer and recognition of certain categories of permitted and prohibited. They are at this stage religious dualists, but these changes are accompanied by a weakening of the indigenous culture, until eventually the community reaches a point of crisis (Trimingham, 1968: 45).

With the introduction of the religious orders, the assimilation process had already begun; fragments of the old belief system were however still incorporated. There is a propaganda less direct and slow, but continuous, based less on beliefs than on example and initiation of ritual gestures. I agree with Trimingham that at this stage the Sudanese were "religious dualists." Evidence suggests that they incorporated pagan rites and islamic social customs with complete

freedom (Greenberg, 1946:86). The people therefore remained animistic under Islamic forms. The islamization of the people outside the Funj sphere of influence remained dormant until after the Egyptian conquest of the Sudan. Trimingham attributes this religious dualism to the character of African Islam.

> The character of African Islam is such that its acceptance causes little internal disturbance to the natural man and his social life and customs, for Islam takes over the central features of paganism through syncretism. The pagan customs are retained whilst the spirit of the custom is lost (Trimingham, 1949:249).

Sufism may have found a ready response among the Sudanese masses because of its mystical aspects; it could therefore be easily incorporated into their animistic form of worship. Loyalty to the Sufist doctrine had far greater consequences.

Trimingham suggests further that when tribal institutions become undermined by conquest or by infiltration, the higher social prestige of the muslim African begins to attract others. The purely Islamic religious factor only exists in the background, and does not come into focus until Islam has been long established (Trimingham, 1968). I therefore suggest that a Mahdist ideology and doctrine could not be expected to emerge in any constructive way until Islam had become fairly widely diffused among the Sudanese masses.

This leads me to consider Trimingham's third stage of conversion, that of reorientation when Islam is really

beginning to take root in the society. In this stage "religious dualism" receeds into the background, and the "old" religious authority is consciously rejected. Priests of communal cults lose their power, and the shaikhs take their place as the guides for the religious and social Iife (Trimingham, 1968:48). The Sudanese may have offered little resistance to this process of cultural islamization. Nevertheless, the dynamism of religious conversion in the Sudan owed much to the Sudanese themselves. They remodelled Islam considerably and preserved not only a foundational Sudanese "racial" element, but also their own "nationalism" in their indigenous customs. The factors fostering or hindering the spread of Islam in the Sudan derived from both the historical conditions of penetration and the nature of Sudanese society. The Sudan provided a fertile ground for the development of certain eschatological beliefs current in Islamic countries at the time which formed a revolutionary undercurrent, and when given certain political and economic conditions were to burst out into a great conflagration of the Mahdist revolution. The Sudan was also the only region in which an effective Mahdist state was able to establish and maintain itself for a substantial period of time. It is therefore surprising that one of the leading authorities on the Mahdist revolution should have described it as "an apparently isolated and anachronistic

phenomenon" (Holt, 1970:23). In fact, it was far from isolated and not in any intelligible sense anachronistic.

The process of the conversion of the Sudanese people have helped us to understand the nature of the crisis that stimulated the transformation of latent Māhdism into active Māhdism during the period from 1880 onwards. I now turn to consider religious divisions and religious rivalries during the Turco-Egyptian administration of the Sudan. This will further substantiate my argument that the causes of millenarianism do not derive from the causes just pre-ceeding the movement.

Egyptian Administration of the Sudan: Orthodox Islam Versus Sufism.

The Sudanese had a loyalty stronger than even tribal sentiment and incomparably more vigorous than any allegiance to the Turco-Egyptian administration. The official Islam of the Egyptian administration and the personal faith of the Sudanese revealed a great gulf. The reason for this lies in the nature of the indigenous Islam which had developed since the Funj period. I noted earlier on that Islam in the Sudan owed much to the teaching of the men from the hijāz who had been connected with one or other of the numerous religious orders found throughout the Islamic world.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw a revival of Islam in the Muslim world. This was not a single movement, nor did it have as much unity of inspiration or direction as per-haps the Reformation in Europe did. It found expression in

the careers of a number of men and the foundation of several organized movements. Although these new orders which developed in the 18th and 19th centuries were founded as reformist movements, the traditional pattern of devotion rapidly reasserted itself. Its theme was a return to the pure and "primitive" faith of Islam, purged of heresies and accretions.

Richard Hill states that the policy of the Egyptian administration towards Sudanese Islam had two aspects (1959). The first is that the conquest brought the Sudanese more closely into touch with orthodox Islam and its institutions. The Sharia or Holy Law of Islam had previously had little part in Sudanese life, although nominally the people adhered to the Maliki Madhab. Prior to Egyptian conquest, the tribal and local custom was in most respects the effective law. The Egyptians introduced a regular system of religious courts administering the Sharia according to the Hanafi Madhab. As a result, there were recurrent phases of tension between the Sufi shaikhs and the official ulama, trained as the latter were in the orthodox theology of Islam. The rise of a class of trained ulama, threatened in the long run the prestige of the older feki class (Hill, 1959). The feeble appeal of this orthodox teaching compared to the emotional power of the orders, was to be demonstrated by the success of the Mahdist revolution itself.

Egyptian rule therefore brought new and disruptive influences upon Sudanese religious life. Living on the margins of Islam, the people had been separated from the main currents of the official Sunnite tradition. For several centuries the Muslim parts of the Sudan had been the home of a colorful and popular mysticism. The administration of the Sudan by the Turco-Egyptian regime meant that Islamic orthodoxy was the official religion and enjoyed official sanction and support. Sufism was the dominant religious practice in the Sudan. The popular mystics found themselves excluded from official recognition and treated as ignorant purveyors of superstition. Moreover, the highest posts in the administration of Islamic law, were filled by men brought from Egypt. By gradual stages the new emphasis on formal religion found adherents among the few learned and politically eligible Sudanese who began to be admitted to provincial judgeships in Islamic Law. It is therefore, not surprising that this official neglect of the traditional Sudanese leaders was the key factor in giving rise to the Mahdist revolution.

The second aspect of the Turco-Egyptian policy was to use the leading religious shaikhs, such as the tribal chiefs, as instruments of the administration. The Khatmiyya sect was closely associated with Egyptian rule in the Sudan. The partiality shown by the government to the Shaiqiyya tribe and the Khatmiyya sect aroused the indignation and

hostility of the other social and religious groups. This recognition was to prove double-edged when the personal prestige of the religious leaders became involved in the fortunes of the Egyptian administration. The Mahdist revolution was to overthrow in turn the rule of Egypt, the authority of the tribal notables, and the influence of the heads of the religious orders. Yet the Mahdist state had characteristics inherited from all three of these systems of authority.

So far, I have shown that the Mahdist movement: (1) was not a product stemming solely from the administration of the Sudanese by a colonial power; and (2) social unrest or discontent, is channelled into religious activity; the social unrest or discontent itself derived from the fissiparous tendencies of the structure of the religious system in the Sudan. I now turn to consider the Egyptian conquest of the Sudan so as to further support my claims.

Egyptian Conquest of the Sudan:
Population Movements.

Historians have generally pontificated that the Mahdist revolution was a product of the impact of the colonial administration on the Sudanese people (Fabunmi, 1960; T. Hodgkin, 1971; Holt, 1970). The Sudan before the Turco-Egyptian conquest was already split up into a number of mekships, religious orders, and a number of tribal divisions. Can we therefore attribute the rise of the Mahdist

revolution solely to the Turco-Egyptian conquest and admin-
istration of the Sudan? I now turn to consider specific
phases of Egyptian expansion in the Sudan, which may serve
to enlighten the above issue.

After the Turkish conquest of Nubia in 1518, the
Egyptian influence over the Sudan almost disappeared. The
revival of it came through the imperialist ambitions of
Muhammad 'Alī Pasha. Richard Hill identifies two phases of
Egyptian expansion coinciding with the reigns of Muhammad
'Alī Pasha and Khedive Ismail respectively (Hill, 1959).
In 1820, an expedition commanded by Muhammad 'Alī Pasha's
son, Ismail Kamil Pasha, advanced upon Dongola with the
object of dislodging the remnant of the Mamluks from their
refuge, and of acquiring the gold and slaves of the Sudan.
His principal reasons for its conquest were economic. He
thought it to be well populated for the hunting of slaves
and to be rich in mineral wealth. Slave recruits were
needed for the army and an outlet for the large standing
army had to be found (Hill, 1959:60).

Secondly, the end of the Funj sultanate made the Sudan
susceptible to invasion. An Egyptian force under Muhammad
Bey Khusraw advanced from Dongola across the desert of
northern Kordofan and detached Kordofan from its dependence
on Darfur. In the course of the next few years, Khartoum
developed as the center of Egyptian administration. The
Egyptian control of the northern and central territories

were rounded off in 1891 by the conquest of Al-Tāka. Muhammad 'Alī Pasha's grandson, Khedive Ismail, sought to extend the dominion of Egypt to the south and west (Hill, 1959:63). Demographic movements significantly disrupted tribal cohesion in the north, thereby contributing to the growing instability of the area. These migratory movements had started before the Egyptian conquest of the Sudan. Shafīq Ghurbal states that in the north, the narrow strip of cultivable land along the Nile was insufficient to provide food for a growing population. This factor, combined with the pressures generated from tribal in-fighting, had been responsible for the migration of the Danaqla tribe in the 18th century, and the Ja'liyyin in the early 19th century (Ghurbāl, 1928).

The tribal structure was to a certain extent modified by the Egyptian conquest of the Sudan, which further stimulated the migration of northerners. Holt and Hill have shown that with the advent of Turco-Egyptian rule, these northern tribesmen moved south as far as the Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal. Some set up flourishing commercial houses in Khartoum and participated in the slave trade. Others formed the private soldiery of traders in the White Nile and Bhar al-Ghazal (Hill, 1959; Holt, 1961). Another population movement which also existed long before the Egyptian conquest was that centering around the slave trade. This population movement began as a result of the

opening of the Upper Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal to slave-traders. Trade in slaves began as a consequence of trade in ivory. The camp settlements of the ivory merchants provided stages by which the professional slave traders from Kordofan and Darfur could penetrate these regions and send back their captives. This as it existed on the eve of the conquest was described by J. L. Burckhardt from his observations at Shandī, at that time the focal point of the Sudanese slave-trade. According to Burckhardt, the slaves were drawn from two main regions, the non-Arab territories bordering on Darfur and around Abyssinia. Many slaves went on to Arabia or Egypt (Burckhardt, 1819). This scholar leaves out of account the very large numbers of slaves who were absorbed into the social system of the Sudanese Arabs by concubinage and service in the fields. This assimilation and absorption had been going on for generations.

Indeed, the Turco-Egyptian conquest and administration of the Sudan may have exacerbated and reinforced the tribal hostilities and divisions that were already present in Sudanese society. It is therefore unlikely that the population movements described above, could have contributed in any significant way to the rise of the Mahdist revolution. Moreover, when the Mahdist revolution began Sudanese society was still basically tribal.

Nevertheless, during the sixty years of Egyptian rule an elaborate bureaucracy developed in the Sudan. Attempts

at decentralization were made to prevent the excessive
accumulation of power and influence in the hands of the
governor-general. Throughout most of the Turco-Egyptian
period, the provinces were combined under a governor-
general who bore the Turco-Persian title of hukumdar, a
term which originally meant a monarch or ruler (Trimingham,
1949). The strength of the Egyptian administration lay in
two spheres, its fiscal system and its armed forces. The
army was more successful in winning and retaining the loyalty
of the Sudanese they recruited. They were the southerners
and the Nuba of slave origin. When the Mahdist movement
commenced, troops of both these classes showed considerable
devotion to the Khedival government, even when its cause
was hopeless (Theobald, 1951). Theobald states further
that there was no attempt to eradicate the tribal loyalties.
In regard to the nomads in particular, a mode of indirect
rule developed in which the chiefs became the agents of
Egyptian administration and were the medium for the
collection of tribute (Theobald, 1951). Side by side with
the new administration there therefore survived in large
part an older system which had a more immediate appeal to
Sudanese emotions. Loyalty was felt towards the tribe
rather than towards the tribal chiefs. The chiefs personal
authority rested upon his prestige as a leader rather than
upon the inviduous support of the alien administration.

In this chapter I have attempted to clarify certain fundamental issues in the study of religious revival movements. I have separated the causes of the Mahdist movement from the preconditions of the movement to show that religious revival movements are not necessarily solely aimed at the external colonial power. The main approach to the Mahdist movement has been largely historical. One of our aims as social anthropologists should be to try to understand the actions of individuals and groups in joining or leading revolutionary movements, the ends they pursued and the meaning which their behavior and their actions had for them and their society.

In the next chapter the following issues will be discussed: (1) the leadership and support of the Mahdi; (2) the rise and fall of the Mahdist revolution; and (3) the aftermath of the Mahdist revolution. These issues will help to clarify certain basic misconceptions in the anthropological and historical literature relating to the social composition of religious revival movements.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MĀHDIST STATE

IN THE SUDAN

Within the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim commmunities
of Europe and the Middle East a recurrent pattern of phases
of belief in an Expected Deliverer may be discerned. There
has existed since, long before the beginning of the Muslim
era, a mass of floating beliefs in a Deliverer whose coming
will restore the Golden Age. Elements of these beliefs have
been traced to a variety of sources, Jewish, Christian, and
Iranian (E. J. Hobsbawm, 1954). In Islamic societies be-
liefs and movements of this general pattern are best de-
signated "Māhdist," since the title generally given to the
Expected Deliverer is that of the Māhdi, the divinely guided
one. Muhammad Ahmad b. 'Abdallāh (1843-1885) a Donqolāwī,
the son of a boat-builder, was the symbol and leader of the
Māhdist revolt in the Sudan.

Historians writing on Māhdist movements have identified
some distinctive characteristics of the Māhdi: (1) the con-
cept of a crisis, during the period preceeding the end of
time in which the Māhdi will appear. Upheavals and dissens-
ions will divide the Muslim community, thereby leading to

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political strife, social disorder and moral degeneration;
(2) the idea that the Mahdi, as the divinely guided one in
direct communication with God and His Prophet, can exercise
a special revolutionary initiative in his interpretation of
the Quran and the Sunna, unrestricted by the established
Madhabs; and (3) the idea that the Mahdi as Imam, has the
responsibility of conducting a jihad, particularly against
nominal and backsliding Muslims who reject his mission, so
as to ensure the universal triumph of Islam (Muhammad al
Hajj, 1967:101). I now turn to consider how these character-
istics manifest themselves in the Mahdi of the Sudan.

I have identified the crisis situation in the Sudan as
emanating from religious discontent, as a result of the
imposition by the Turco-Egyptian regime of an orthodox
form of Islam on the Sudanese people. How then did Muhammad
Ahmad b. 'Abdallah manifest himself as Mahdi of the Sudan?
Sir Rudolf C. Slatin has suggested that his assumption of
the Mahdiship could only come from inner conviction in the
form of a vision (1896). The Mahdi communicated the secret
of his divine election first to 'Abdallahi b. Muhammad (who
later succeeded him) and then to his other disciples and
adherents in March 1881 (Slatin, 1896:38). This communica-
tion of the Mahdist vision to a small circle of trusty
followers was the first stage in the declaration of the
Mahdiyya. The foundations of Mahdist propaganda were then
laid during his journey to Kordofan. Slatin suggests that

the Mahdi visited Kordofan with the object of testing opinion in the Western Sudan, and discovering a place for the nascent Mahdist community (1896:132). It is interesting to note that this was a very calculated move on the part of the Mahdi for he did not immediately intend to communicate his vision to the Sudanese masses. It was only on June 29th, 1881, that the Mahdi first publicly declared his mission.

The Mahdi's written propoganda took the form of a letter of warning to unbelievers that contained the essential features of Mahdist propaganda. It also contains an account of the vision in which the Prophet declares Muhammad Ahmad b. 'Abdallah to be the Mahdi. The other participants in the visionary colloquy are two of Muhammad Ahmad's followers, and some Sufi saints (Holt, 1970:105). Two features of this letter are of particular interest. The Prophet Muhammad is said to have told the Mahdi of two symbolic tokens, the mole upon his right cheek, and the banner of light. The Prophet is also represented as saying, "You are created from the light of the core of my heart" (Holt, 1970:106). The symbolic meaning of the above should be discerned for it is the first insight we have of the Mahdi's manipulation of religious ideology in order to realize his political aims. Trimingham states that reference to the "light" echoes the Sufist doctrine that God created a handful of light before all worlds. This light became incarnate in Adam, and the prophets after him until the time of

Prophet Muhammad (Trimingham, 1949:188). By mentioning the
Light of Prophet Muhammad, the Mahdi emphasized his status
as successor of the Prophet Muhammad. This form of the
Mahdi's initial manifestation formed a psychological weapon
of enormous effect on the Sudanese masses.

Holt states, however, that the devoted followers of
Muhammad Ahmad and the simple cultivators in Aba and
Kordofan knew only vaguely of this doctrine. When Muhammad
Ahmad claimed that he was the Mahdi, it seemed to them a
natural explanation of his visions, his miracles, and his
saintliness. Henceforth, he was their acknowledged guide
and to follow him was an additional religious duty. To
appeal to a wider circle of followers, a more developed form
of propaganda was necessary. This was done in November 1881,
and contains all the principal elements of future Mahdist
propaganda. The letter opens with a passage deploring the
abandonment of the Sunna, and describes how Muhammad Ahmad's
early summons to reform passed unheeded except among the
poor and pious men (Holt, 1970:110).

The lines of defense of Muhammad Ahmad's claim to the
Mahdiship were always supported with reference to his
divine sanction from God and Prophet Muhammad. The emphasis
of his letters, however, varied with the recipients for whom
the letters were intended. At El Obeid he visited the
notables. Here he declared his Mahdiship to the educated
religious men, supporting his assertions with evidence of

his visions and with reference to the traditional token of the Māhdi. To the common people he confided that the divine sanction of Māhdi had been conferred upon him by the Prophet Muhammad. To Hick's army or the people of the besieged towns he advanced his past victories as proof of his divine mission. In his letter to the head of the Sanūsīya order, the visionary material was extended to give divine sanction to the nomination of his chief disciples and the addressee as the successors of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (Slatin, 1896:133). Fixed in its outlines the Māhdist propaganda was capable of adaptation to various audiences.

Religion gave divine sanction to Muhammad Ahmad's claim to be the Māhdi, the saviour of the Sudanese people, who had come to purge the world of unbelievers and to restore the unity of Islam. From the above I have deduced that: (1) ideological justification provided by a revival of Islam sanctions the claim to the quest for power and authority by religious leaders and groups proselyting Islam, but who are still neglected by the Muslim regime; and (2) the conflicts generated by this revival of Islam could only therefore be pursued as a holy duty. I therefore conceptualize the Māhdist revolution in terms of a "licensed protest." To further substantiate my argument I now turn to consider specific symbolic forms utilized and manipulated by the Māhdi.

The Mahdi called upon his adherents to rally to him.
Evidence suggests that initially he urged his followers to
take up the duty of the hijra, the flight for the Faith
from among the Infidels to the Mahdi(Holt, 1970; Trimingham,
1949). The call to the hijra is the earliest example of a
conscious parallel between the career of the Prophet and
that of the Mahdi, of which we shll find other examples
during his mission. This hijra with the faith was a
sanctified version of a traditional Sudanese reaction to
social unrest or oppression, the mass emigration of a
tribal group to the confines of Egyptian power. Naum
Shoucair (quoted in Holt) gives an excerpt from a letter of
the Mahdi summoning his followers to make the hijra with
him in Ramadaan (Holt, 1970:55). This suggests that the
timing of the manifestation in Aba was carefully planned.
A month was long enough to allow his scattered followers
to prepare themselves. The bureaucracy in Khartoum would
hardly be able to organize effective counter-measures in
time. Moreover, administrative and military action would
be retarded by the fast in Ramadaan. In that year Ramadaan
coincided with the height of the rainy season. In these
circumstances the lightly clad tribesmen who formed the bulk
of the Mahdi's supporters would have the advantage of
mobility over the troops of the Egyptian administration.

The Mahdi's use of prophetic parallels was not a
blind antiquarianism. He was deliberately enacting in his

own person the suffering and triumphs of the Prophet Muhammad in the early days of Islam. Furthermore, the Mahdi made highly intelligent use of prophetic precedents to guide him in the difficulties of his earlier career. It is important to note that at this initial stage in his propaganda, the Mahdi did not stress the idea of a jihad against his opponents. Ivor Wilks has shown that the sequence of hijra and jihad was, however, characteristic of West African Islamic movements in the 19th century (Ivor Wilks, 1966:318).

The call to the hijra was eagerly taken up by Muhammad Ahmad's followers, who successfully defeated the Egyptian troops at Qadir (Theobald, 1951). It was only after this first victory of the Mahdist revolt that the Mahdi claimed his obligation to lead the jihad against the unbelievers. Theobald states that it was at this time period that he contemplated an attack on Khartoum and El Obeid, the provincial capital (Theobald, 1951). The Mahdist rising was now not merely a civil rebellion but a jihad, a holy war, and as such it claimed the support of all Muslims. In his letters to the shaikhs of the various religious orders, he increasingly emphasized a call to jihad. This was an imperious summons to all true believers to forsake all and join him. The Mahdi defined his claims to jihad, as stating that it was authorized by the Prophet.

> The information was given that preaching will
> not purify the Turks, only the sword will
> purify them. . .The Prophet informed me that
> the Muslim community shall be guided by
> me. . .The Prophet gave me the good tidings
> that my companions are as his companions
> (Holt, 1970:110).

In the history of Islam, a claim to be the Mahdi had always meant revolution; the cry of jihad went together with the claim to be a Mahdi. The call to jihad was the one above all that uplifted the heart and stirred the Muslims into revolution. To die in jihad meant immediate reward with the joys of heaven. The Mahdist revolution was a "licensed protest," for it was a holy war in the name of God.

It was only after the Mahdi's call to jihad and his several victories over the administration that the Egyptian regime and the British began to perceive that his movement was far from being politically innocuous. Mekki Shibeika states that its genuine spiritual fervour was at first under-estimated by the British and dismissed as fanaticism, as an irrelevancy to the political circumstances of the 19th century (Shibeika, 1952). The Mahdi was to prove them totally wrong. Muhammad Ahmad's claim to be the Mahdi and his call to jihad underwent severe criticism from the established ulama. It was in evident conflict with the established Islamic authorities of the Sudan and challenged their legitimacy. The very fact that he proclaimed himself Mahdi, could only be viewed as a revolutionary act by the regime. In Islamic societies such religious hereticism was tantamount to political opposition. The Mahdi for his part

was uncompromising towards those who by rejecting his claims, excluded themselves from the elect community of his followers. The stigmatization of the Mahdi's opponents as infidels created a dangerous schism among the Sudanese Muslims.

It is difficult to distinguish the Mahdi's political thought from his religious teachings, for to him they were indivisible; in the Sudan, religion and politics went hand in hand. Various factors substantiate this point. The interconnection of the religious motive with local political and social grievances is shown in a proclamation of the Mahdi.

> Verily these Turks. . .thought that theirs
> was the kingdom and the command was in their
> hands. They transgressed the command of
> (God's) apostles and of His Prophets and of
> him who commanded them to imitate them.
> They judged by other than God's revelation
> (i.e., The Quran), and altered the Shari'a
> of our Lord Muhammad, the Apostle of God,
> and corrupted the faith of God and placed
> poll-tax on your necks together with the
> rest of the Muslims (Holt, 1970:86).

The Turks were therefore accused as defilers of the Faith and as such they had forfeited their political legitimacy as rulers in the Islamic system. He, therefore, called to oppose militantly the existing degenerate Islamic state. He denounced not the injustice, oppression or corruption of the Turks as government officials, but their lack of faith and improper observances as Muslims.

The relationship between the Mahdi and the British officials present in the Sudan at the time, also show the

intertwining of his religious and political aims. When
the British perceived that the Mahdist revolution was in-
deed a political threat, the Governor-General started
counter propaganda measures. Several anti-Mahdist mani-
festos were distributed warning the people against following
him. They were concerned to defend the legitimacy of the
existing administration in the Sudan (Holt, 1970:110). The
intertwining of religion with politics is further demon-
strated with reference to the Mahdi's relationship with
General Gordon. The Mahdi's answer to Gordon's letter of
5th March 1884 offering him recognition as sultan of
Kordofan presents several points of interest (Holt, 1970:
112). He addresses Gordon as the "Azīz of Britain," azīz
being a title (in the Quran) bestowed on Joseph as the
Minister of Pharoah. Throughout he writes to Gordon as a
Christian whose conversion is at stake. He asserts that
his call is from God and the Prophet, and that unlike the
rulers of this world, he has no earthly ambitions. Gordon
has said that he wishes to reopen the Pilgrimage route, but
for the Mahdi this is an impropriety on the part of an un-
believer. Rather, he states that Gordon should first accept
Islam. Moreover, Gordon has said that he wishes to establish
a mutual friendship with the Mahdi; according to the Mahdi
no friendship is possible with unbelievers, a position which
he supports with evidence from the Qurān. Gordon also seeks
the release of the Mahdi's Christian prisoners, but the

Mahdi asserts his duty of bringing them salvation. The Mahdi therefore rejects Gordon's offer of the sultanate of Kordofan.

He summoned the rulers to accept Islam and threatened them with war if they failed to do so. Religion alone provided the needed impulse and active expression of the Mahdi's political ambition, i.e., to establish a theocracy in the Sudan. In this sense, religion provided the necessary stimulus to which the economic and political conditions determined the response. The Mahdi's message was powerful, simple and appealing. By meekness and humility, by strict and fervent application to the stern but just codes of Islam, the faithful Muslim could prepare himself for the reward of happiness in paradise. To the poor, the ignorant and the oppressed such a message was a comfort and an inspiration, for their poverty and dreary toil were no longer things to regret but were cause for pride and joy. The patched jubba, which was the Mahdist uniform was a symbol of poverty, and further substantiated the Mahdi's claims and unearthly ambitions.

Something needs to be said of the Mahdi's strength as a revolutionary and his appeal in influencing the Sudanese masses. Using Max Weber's concept, we can identify the Mahdi as a charismatic leader (Weber, 1947). In discussing the relative importance and interaction of the psychological and social aspects of charismatic authority, Weber

emphasized the former, the leaders possession of a "gift of grace" independent of the social context. I will treat charisma as deriving from both the _social_ and _historical_ context, as a relationship between leader and followers rather than merely an attribute of the leader. In the Mahdi's propaganda, there is continuity between the old and new. He selectively, at all stages of the revolution invokes history, myth and religion to reinforce the sanctity of his mission. It was no mere accident that at every junction of the operation of the revolution, the Mahdi simulated the activities of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Indeed the conscious enacting of the traditions of the Prophet aimed at reinforcing the popular legitimacy of the nascent charismatic. At every stage of the progression of Muhammad Ahmad's life from dervish to _shaikh_ to Mahdi, the message and performance components of leadership were maintained in a mutually reinforcing interaction. I view this crucial unity between doctrine and practice as constituting one of the greatest strengths of the Mahdi. In the pre-Mahdist period the appeal of his puritanical message had been powerfully reinforced by his personal life of uncompromising asceticism and sacrifice. Moreover, a leader's possession of exemplary qualities is mostly determined by his own society, according to its peculiar culturally derived criteria. In terms of his own milieu, the potential charismatic is an

outstanding personality, endowed with great dynamism,
sensitivity and resourcefulness. These personal gifts
become instrumental in imparting to his followers the values
and maxims of the message. The Mahdi was also a leader
thrown up by the times.

The Mahdist movement was revolutionary in character.
It was the tie of faith alone which could prevail over tribal
bonds and feuds so that concerted action could be taken. I
now turn to consider the social composition of the Mahdist
movement in order to demonstrate that oppression does not
necessarily derive from the impact of the external colonial
power.

The Social Composition of the Mahdist Movement.

Historians have failed to discern the crucial signi-
ficance of the role played by various tribal groups in the
Mahdist revolution. This neglect has led to a farrago of
contradictory pieces of evidence that have raised more
questions than answers. The questions that need to be rais-
ed are: (1) are religious revival movements characteristic
only of oppressed peoples? (2) are these movements there-
fore directed solely at the external colonial power? and
(3) is the "main effect" of the movement one of creating
a unity between diverse tribal groups?

The nature of the elements which formed the Mahdist
revolutionary army may be deduced from what has been said
of the religious nature and discontents of the Sudanese.

The first of these and the original nucleus of the revolt
were the ascetic pietists who desired to affect a radical
reform of doctrine and manners. They regarded the
Egyptian government and its administration in the Sudan
as an institution which had departed from Islamic principles
and which could no longer claim the allegiance of the
Muslims. The Māhdi and his original disciples formed the
core of this group. Secondly, were the various groups
associated with the slave trade, who since 1865 had been
harassed by the government (H. A. MacMichael, 1912, 1934).
The slave trade was never extirpated; these slave traders
still retained their vocations and their old prosperity and
prestige. MacMichael shows that the northern traders dis-
persed throughout the Sudan and into the half subdued
regions of the south and west (MacMichael, 1934:42). One
would assume that they would be natural allies of any
movement which threatened the alien government. The Māhdi's
call to jihād would obviously appeal to these groups who
were prone to warfare. These men were few in number but
were the potential leaders of revolt in their districts.
Why did they join the Māhdist movement? In their slave
soldiers they found the nucleus of a force skilled in
raiding and warfare. The interests of the bāzinqir were
bound up with those of their masters. To the slave mer-
chant they were a valuable possession and they shared in
the proceeds of the raids. Since emancipation meant the

breaking of this nexus of interest and, in many cases, the conscription of freed men into the bedraggled and penniless Egyptian army, the slaves had as little reason as their masters to welcome the change. Moreover, these northern Sudanese tribes may have looked back to the era of the Funj sultanate and would welcome any weakness in the central administration which provided a return to their old automomy.

Another group which welcomed disorder was the Fur. MacMichael states that the annexation of Darfur had been followed by a sense of disturbances in which pretenders to the sultanate continued to defy the Egyptian administration (MacMichael, 1912). The Mahdist doctrine held little attraction for the Fur but a time of unsettled administration favored their cause. The fall of the Dafur sultanate had also affected the position of the Baggara tribes in the south. Hitherto they had been virtually autonomous, owning the nominal suzerainty of the sultan of Dafur. Potentially, they were useful allies for a revolutionary force, being skilled in the technique of raids and desert warfare. When the Mahdist revolution broke out they were its mainstay. MacMichael, Holt and others do not explain how and why this was so. I suggest that an explanation can be found in the victories of the Mahdi based upon his summons to jihad. The paucity of the Mahdist forces in the early stages of the movement were no indication of its actual potential. When the news of the Mahdi's earlier

victories reached the tribes between the Niles, his agents
found a growing response to the jihād. The Baggara tribes-
men lent increasing support to the Mahdi as his success
became more apparent. There was no fear of the consequences
of armed revolution against the all powerful regime. The
jihād became even more attractive. The acquisition of
booty may have also commanded the attention of the Baggara.
Moreover, the Mahdi had bound the Baggara chiefs to him by
an oath of allegiance or bay'a (Trimingham, 1949). The
oath summarized the noblest aspects of the Mahdi and the
protest that gave birth to the movement.

The victories of the Mahdist movement also brought him
more followers from other tribal groups. The fall of El
Obeid opened to the Mahdi the prospect of a series of
apocalyptic victories throughout the heartlands of Islam
in the Sudan. The Mahdist cause in the eastern Sudan was
provided with a ready made revolutionary army in the ad-
herence of the Majādhīb, notably the Hadanduwa tribe of
Beja. The people of the district were at the time divided
by religious alliances. The Majādhīb were exposed to the
powerful rivalry of the newer order of the Khatmiyya con-
trolled by the Mirghani who were favored by the Egyptian
administration. The Majādhīb were therefore inclined to
an alliance with the Mahdi once his revolt showed signs of
success.

One would assume that should a revolt occur, backed by these unsubdued elements in Sudanese society, there could be little doubt that sooner or later the milder riverain and settled peoples would rise en masse stirred by long memories of a lost freedom, as the Egyptian administration affected them most. But they were not the leaders of the movement, and joined the revolution at the later stage. The malcontent sedentaries who joined the movement, mainly the Ja'aliyyīn and the Danaqla were not affected by the Egyptian administration and were not oppressed by them. Individuals who were not particularly noted for their piety and who had no specific grievance against the Egyptians, became supporters of the revolt because of their kinship with the Mahdi. The main adherents of the Mahdi were to be found among those who were less vulnerable to the forces of the administration. This refutes the claim made by anthropologists and historians that religious revival movements are particularly appropriate to the oppressed (Worsley, 1957; Hodgkin, 1971). Religious revival movements do not necessarily draw their adherents from among the oppressed. In its first stage, the Mahdist movement was aimed more so at the indigenous tribal system.

Moreover, in none of his circulars does the Mahdi refer to the Turks as oppressors. Where he does refer to oppression, this was usually meant to underline a religious injunction. In preaching about the value of humility he states:

> Follow this example, and do not lead the
> example set you by your oppressors the
> Turks, who live in luxury and exultation,
> and who fire their guns and rifles through
> pride and haughtiness (Wingate, 1891:39).

Indeed, the existence of an indigenous tribal structure in the Sudan meant that oppression and internal conflict was an inherent part of the system. This is not to say, however, that the various tribal groups did not nurture any kind of hostility towards the Turco-Egyptian regime. The Mahdist revolution was not however, directed solely against the Turco-Egyptians, but rather more so at the indigenous oppressive system. Holt states that the first effect of Mahdist control was that all _tariqas_ were abolished since the leaders denied his claims to the Mahdiship (Holt, 1970: 135). In districts where the _tariqas_ were strong the people were not immediately prepared to accept a belief which abolished their deep-seated belief in saints and sub-stitute that of God and His Mahdi alone. The _shaikhs_ then either joined the Mahdi, opposed him or fled the country. The Mahdi himself at first a _shaikh_ of the Sammaniyya order refuted all who thought that he was founding a _tariqa_. He wanted to be looked at as the initiator of a new world order. He therefore changed the name of his followers to the _ansar_ (equivalent to the Prophet's _ansar_). Again we see the use of a term which is loaded with religious symbolism.

The Mahdi aimed at establishing an Islamic State in the Sudan; the abolition of the religious orders was therefore

his first move in this direction. Those tribes who adhered strongly to their religious orders opposed a system which abolished their inherent tribal constitution. Anthropologists have propounded the argument that there is a "social necessity" towards integration and unity (Worsley, 1957). Historians suggest that whatever the motives for diverse tribal and ethnic groups to join a movement, such movements have an extraordinary unifying effect and that tribal loyalties are abolished (Holt, 1970). The Mahdi's revolutionary army was composed of various tribal troups, yet they were by no means united. Tribal memories were long and cherished. Baggara and slaves fought under the same banner but tribal loyalties were never totally abolished. The historical literature suggests that internal conflicts did exist. The Ja'ali had little liking for the Dunqulawi and both disliked the Shaiqi. Furthermore, relations between the northerners in general and the Baggara had been tense, since Gordon had ordered the harrying of the Jallaba. The settled tribes were hostile towards the nomads. The Beja were set apart from the other northern tribes by their ignorance of Arabic, which caused them to be despised. The Egyptians had used these deep-seated rivalries to strengthen the hold of its comparatively feeble administration, using slave-trader to fight against slave-trader, tribe against tribe, and one leader against another within a tribe. The fact that all these diverse groups fought

under the Mahdist banner may to a certain extent indicate some form of unity. The triumph of the Mahdia had been achieved through their combined efforts. Nevertheless, tribal loyalties and divisions were never abolished. Indeed, the crystallization of the Mahdist revolution into a political entity was based largely on the tribal structure of the Sudan. The Mahdist movement served to exacerbate tribal cleavages and antagonisms, while striving towards religious and political power. I now turn to consider how the Mahdi administered the Sudan according to Islamic principles.

Religion and the Mahdist State.

During the four years which elapsed between the manifestation of the Mahdi in Aba and his death in Omdurman in 1885, the Mahdiyya developed from a movement of religious protest into a powerful militant Islamic state. The Sudanese provincial administration sank into confusion as the revolt grew in momentum. To speculate whether Egypt hampered by her own state insolvency, her own nationalist revolt, and British occupation could have held the Sudan in the face of militant Mahdism is difficult. The success of the Mahdist revolution may be attributed to certain factors: (1) the strength and power of the revolutionary army, an institution sanctioned by Islam; and (2) the administration of the Mahdist state according to the rules of Islam.

The revolutionary high command fulfilled a double function: (1) of disseminating propaganda which articulated the discontent of the people, while at the same time initiating a renewed social and political order; and (2) of organizing revolutionary activities evoked by this propaganda. The Mahdist victories against the Egyptian and British forces owe much to the well co-ordinated revolutionary activities of the army. Theobald and Holt have shown that the conquest of Kordofan, the fall of El Obeid, the fall of Omdurman, and the fall of Khartoum brought a great accession of wealth in the form of arms, slaves, beasts, goods and money. The fall of El Obeid gave the Mahdi territorial sovereignty over much of the western Sudan. The development of a financial system became noticeable from this point onwards. The precedent was set for the division of booty in accordance with the Sharī'a or Islamic law. According to this law, a fifth went to the Mahdi as Imam of the community and the rest was divided among the warriors. The remainder was sent to the treasury (Theobald, 1951: Holt, 1970).

Moreover, the establishment of Mahdist sovereignty over the tribes of the west, was followed by the imposition of a tax authorized by the Sharī'a. This was the zakāh and was levied on cattle and grain. Crops were tithed for the zakāh. Taxes were largely paid in kind, and the use of coined money was rare, except among the townspeople and merchants. Furthermore, the title of Khalīfā which the

Mahdi conferred upon his three assistants is rich in meaning
and religious association. Trimingham states that it was
used by Abu Bakr al Siddig after the Prophet's death in the
form of Khalīfat Rusūl Allāh or "Successor of the Apostle
of God" (1949:110). The Mahdi made his appointments in
accordance with the instructions in the prophetic vision.
In his appointment of the Khalīfat he intended to break up
traditional local loyalties of the tribal system, while at
the same time preserving regional interests.

A body of emergency legislation came into being by
which the legal transition of the Sudan from a dependency of
Egypt to a Mahdist state was accomplished. Holt shows
further that the Mahdi asserted a unique authority in matters
of law. The emergency legislation of the Madhi was chiefly
concerned with the status of women and the ownership of
land. The siege and capture of El Obeid and Khartoum had
given rise to many broken marriages and irregular unions.
The general intention of his decisions were to affirm the
invalidity of a marriage between a Mahdist and non-Mahdist,
and to facilitate the marriage or remarriage of unprotected
women (Holt, 1970:155). The Mahdi attempted to restore
stability to a society in dissolution.

There were also problems relating to land-ownership,
which did not arise until Mahdist rule was established
over the riverain territories. The Mahdi claimed that the
landowners were not to claim rent for land they could not

exploit personally "since the faithful are as one body" (Holt, 1970:130). Persons who had acquired land under the Egyptian administration through enforced sales were nevertheless confirmed in their title as against the previous owners, unless the full selling price was repaid.

Much of the Mahdis legislation was aimed at modifying or abolishing Sudanese customs which were opposed to the Shari'a. The revolution and the war against the Egyptians had shaken the basis of the social order. The Mahdi had recourse to these measures in an attempt to maintain discipline among the large and ever-changing tribal forces upon which he depended. Religion and politics were indivisible at the time of the Mahdi's reign. The vicissitudes of the Mahdist regime however became apparent after his death. In the reign of 'Abdallahi the Mahdist movement is directed more at the external colonial powers than at the indigenous system. In this stage too, religion and politics begin to drift apart. Why is this so? I now turn to consider why this sudden change of events came about. The following discussion will serve to conclude the arguments set forth so far.

The Khalifa's Rule and Changing Tribal Alliances and Allegiances.

The Mahdi died when his movement had reached a critical point. To his successor fell the dual task of consolidating the gains of the revolution in the Sudan by building a state

on the Islamic model, and of waging the universal jihad
beyond the borders of the Sudan. The first aim required
a community constantly practicing the Islamic way of life.
The second, an overwhelming military force. The fall of
the Mahdist state has to be explained with reference to
'Abdallahi's failure to achieve these aims. This is because
the threat to the Mahdist state in these years derived more
from the external colonial powers and only to a lesser ex-
tent from the internal tribal system.

The revolution had stimulated the inherent anarchy and
intractibility of the tribes, while linking them together
only by the body of loyalty to Mahdist ideals. The Khalifa
could only carry on the religio-political programme of the
Mahdi by maintaining the unity of the Mahdiyya. Under his
rule, however, centrifugal forces such as tribal jealousy
often outweighed this essential unity. Following the pre-
cedent set by the Mahdi, the Khalifa expressed his policy
in the form of prophetic visions. This divine sanction did
not get him the support of the various tribal groups. Why
was this so?

There was a tendency, once the leadership had to con-
front the problem of constructing some kind of continuing
system, and preserving it against increasing external pres-
sures, to revert to reliance on those same traditional ties,
loyalties and institutions that the revolution had sought
to transcend. Holt points out that the revolt of Madibbu

had revealed the dangerous power of the great tribal leaders (1970). The outlying provinces were still a potential source of danger. Abdallahi's policy therefore rested on three bases: (1) the overthrow of the traditional tribal heads; (2) the transfer to Omdurman of the tribes whose allegiance to the Mahdi was doubtful; and (3) the exploitation of old rivalries to weaken the tribes.

To consolidate his rule he had to crush the riverain Danaqla, Ja'aliyyin, and Jezira tribes who had been the Mahdi's chief followers. To enforce his will on the recalcitrant he made frequent use of the hijra, which had now come to mean in practice the enforced visit of a tribe or of individual notables to Omdurman. The Khalifa induced his own tribe and other Baggara by bribes and force to emigrate to Omdurman, where they plundered others being without their herds (Theobald, 1951:83). The calling in of the Baggara upset the tribal and economic balance of the country and lost him the support of the riverain peoples. They were under the Khalifa's control and subject to incessant propaganda. The Khalifa's motive in summoning the Baggara seems less a desire to shower the luxuries of the riverain provinces on his nomad kinsmen, than a wish to have tribes whose incorrigible love of anarchy he knew, safely under his control. Holt states that once they were brought to Omdurman, they were bribed to stay with preferential

treatment (Holt, 1970:150). The Khalīfa had to depend in-
creasingly upon the support of the Baggara in political
affairs while he attempted to restore the administrative
system, by bringing back the methods of the old regime and
thereby much of the corruption and oppression. His policy
of depopulation by a call to the hijra was given prophetic
authority; this had no impact on the people. Furthermore,
he abandoned the call to jihad which was a great stimulating
force at the time of Muhammad Ahmad's reign. The movement
of nomads into sedentary lands may be marked as the end
of the Māhdist state.

Furthermore, the Khalifa's tyranny alienated the
allegiance of the Māhdi's most devoted followers. The
Baggara and Fur had assisted the Māhdi to break the Egyptian
yoke; having done so they were by no means ready to serve
the Khalifa. He threatened them with destruction if they
did not obey his orders.

> If you have power to fight the Māhdi,
> then make ready, and you shall not avail,
> for you are weak and lack might. You
> have seen what the Mahdia has done to
> those who are stronger and more numerous
> and wealthier than you, so what of you,
> in your fewness and weakness and lack
> of might (Holt, 1970:113).

The Māhdi had aimed at the end of all forms of oppression,
not merely those specific forms of oppression associated
with external domination or the colonial state. The
Khalifa's rule was essentially autocratic, and did not rest

fundamentally on the power of the religious system, despite his many justifications to prophetic authority.

Changing alliances and allegiances became a prominent feature at the time of the Khalifa's rule. Theobald notes the desire of the local tribes for the restoration of Egyptian rule in the Tukar district and the decline of Mahdist power. The victory of the British forces at Tushkī, on 3rd August 1889 had been gratifying to the British military authorities, for it marked the end of the Mahdist movement (Theobald, 1951). The Khalifa's position was therefore externally threatened. The imperialist powers had already encamped on the frontiers. Evidence suggests that the riverain tribes had lost their former influence, and their goods, lands and lives were at the mercy of the Baggara. They had economic grievances as well. The lands of the cultivators were liable to confiscation, while the grain tax nominally a tithe amounted to a half. Merchants resented the repeated dues levied on goods in transit. Boatmen complained of the seizure of some of their boats and the tax laid on the rest. Camel owners objected to the tax on their camels, while all who dwelt by the river had a daily grievance in the ferry tolls (Holt, 1970:165).

To the British it was a dogma that the Khalifa's rule was an unbearable tyranny from which with foreign aid the Sudanese were anxious to free themselves. It is unlikely, however, that the tribal groups really welcomed British

rule. The Khalifa's attempts to establish an Islamic state and continue in the fold of the Mahdi failed. European writers show him as a hypocrite who put on a face of religion and used the language of the Mahdi to forward his own ambitions. This attitude owes much to Sir R. C. Slatin (1896). Mohamed Omer Beshir states that the Mahdi's name is still held in reverence, not only by the sect which follows his descendants, but also by other Sudanese as a man of outstanding piety, and a pioneer of national independence. The Khalifa's name is by contrast under a cloud since it is felt that under him the universal religious aspirations of the early Mahdiyya were changed into ambition for mere earthly sovereignty over the Sudan. Moreover, the Mahdi died at the height of his triumph before the weaknesses in the movement had become apparent. The Khalifa lived to see his armies defeated and his capital taken while he himself died a hunted fugitive in battle in 1899 (Beshir, 1974). Furthermore, after the overthrow of the Khalifa, the people rejected Mahdism which they had joined from religious enthusiasm or expediency, and returned to their old tribal allegiances. The nomad tribes were reconstituted. The riverain and Jezira cultivators renewed their loyalty to their tribal shaikhs. The Baggara longed for a return to the old times, while certain groups maintained their allegiance to Mahdism.

The Mahdist Movement and Its Implications.

The outbreak of the Mahdist revolution in the Sudan in 1881 and its rapid ouster of the Turco-Egyptian regime was a momentous feat in the 19th century history of the Sudan. We have seen that there was a period of recrudescence during the second phase of the Mahdist movement. Thereafter, a form of neo-Mahdism also took root. The son of the Mahdi, Abd ar Rahman was regarded by many as the unmanifested Nabi Isa; a new form of Mahdism was once again initiated (Behsir, 1974). Nationalism in the Sudan began to take on a different form and the influence of this neo-Mahdism moved into other channels. The millenarian messianism of Mahdism has been diverted from the idea of a restoration of a golden age of Islam into a modern political and social messianism aimed at grasping the dynamic culture. At the level of ideology itself the conceptual scheme of Islam, if sufficiently secularized can readily be transposed into that type of modern nationalism which is representative of Pan-Africanism. I therefore regard the Mahdist movement in the Sudan (1881-1899) as the first stirrings of modern nation-alism. The ideal universal state ruled according to the precepts of Islam in which justice, equality and brother-hood shall prevail, is transposed into the fissiparous structure of Sudanese society. This accomodation to new circumstances and needs suggest certain important implica-tions of the Mahdiyya in the Sudan. The Mahdist revolution

had aimed at transcending sectarian _tariqa_ loyalties.
Beshir states that the divisions between those who looked
to the religious leadership of his descendants and are
known as the _Ansar_, and those who adhere to the Khatmiyya
Order, remained one of the most important factors in the
religious and political life of the Sudan (1974).

Abner Cohen states that although a regime may come to
office and maintain itself for some time by force, its
stability and continuity are achieved mainly through the
symbolism of authority it manipulates (1969:216). The
stability and continuity of the regime are made possible
through a complex system of symbolism that gives it legiti-
macy by representing it as a natural part of the celestial
order. In the Sudan the _jihad_ became institutionalized as
the main instrument of usurpation and dynastic rivalry.

I believe that the Religious Orders played a signifi-
cant role in the development of modern nationalism in the
Sudan. As far as Muslim participation in nationalist
movements is concerned, in all areas where the Religious
Orders were strongly developed they played a significant
role. In the Sudan, political developments have to a
certain extent been moulded by the Religious Orders.
Religious Orders by their very nature as organizations
dedicated to promoting a wider sense of communal identity
than that based on ethnicity, have therefore facilitated the
growth and development of modern nationalism. Where they

have come to be of importance in modern politics their interdenominational rivalries have also exerted a significant force. In strongly Muslim countries the _tariqas_ have not only contributed in various ways to the development of nationalism, but have also markedly affected the character of internal politics in the pre and post independence phases.

Summary and Conclusion.

Anthropologists and historians have shown a keen interest in enthusiastic religious movements among "primitive" peoples after their exposure to westernization and christianity. These social scientists have been rather sweeping in their assumptions regarding enthusiastic religious movements. They have argued that: (1) religious enthusiasm is a product of the impact of the external colonial power; and (2) therefore the movements are directed against the external forces of oppression; these movements are characteristic of deprived and oppressed peoples. The literature on religious enthusiasm is inadequate both in its coverage of the problems outlined and so far as its having made much progress is concerned.

I have argued that in order to construct a more comprehensive and unifying theory on religious enthusiasm, answers had to be provided for the following questions: (1) why is it that religious activity is frequently a characteristic of periods of social unrest; and (2) why is social unrest channelled into religious activity as opposed to other modes of expression? I have attempted to clarify these issues through a detailed and systematic analysis of the Mahdist revolution in the Sudan (1881-1899).

Historians have almost always attempted to explain the crisis situation as emanating from the nature of the society

preceeding the rise of the movement. A survey of the
historical literature on the Māhdist movement indicated
certain weaknesses also current in the general anthro-
pological literature relating to chiliastic movements.
The commonly held view is that millenarian and other re-
ligious revival movements are solely directed against the
external colonial power. Historians writing on the Māhdiyya
attributed its causes to the cruel, oppressive rule of the
Turco-Egyptians. Historians have failed to provide us with
convincing evidence to support their claims. I have there-
fore rejected their arguments on various grounds: (1) they
have failed to separate the causes of the cults from the
preconditions of the cults; and (2) they have failed to
separate the causes of unrest from the causes of millen-
arianism. Historical explanations of movements in terms of
their antecedents have tended to obfuscate the actual
causes that may have given rise to a movement.

I have argued that the movement arose out of a more
subtle and deep seated conflict, that of a clash of religious
beliefs between the orthodox Islam of the Turco-Egyptians and
the Sufist doctrine of the Sudanese masses. Religious dis-
content was, therefore, _the_ cause of the Māhdist revolu-
tion. This is why loyalty to Islam was the driving force
of a revolt against a Muslim government. I substantiated
this argument with an analysis of the process of conversion

and Islamization in the Sudan. The initial spread of Islam in the Sudan and its later revival were not directed towards the same ends. While the initial agents of Islamization in the Sudan provided an index of "tribal identity" (based on proselytization), the revival of Islam reinforced political cleavages along tribal lines. The conflicts generated by a revival of Islam could therefore only be pursued as a holy duty. The Mahdist movement could only arise once Islam had been widely diffused among the Sudanese masses. Social un-rest was, therefore, channelled into religious activity. One of the most significant elements introduced into the Sudan through the spread of Islam was that of the Religious Orders. These Religious Orders further endorsed and rein-forced the tribal divisions inherent in Sudanese society. The Mahdi's aim had been to abolish the tribal structure of the Sudan, and to set up an Islamic State. To achieve his aims he had to abolish the Religious Orders which were an institutionalized form of tribal identity. It is a paradox-ical situation, for the Mahdi himself was the shaikh of a Religious Order. The Turco-Egyptian government did not in any way interfere with the tribal structure. Instead, they exacerbated tribal conflicts through their divide and rule strategy.

To further substantiate my argument that the movement was aimed more at the indigenous oppressive system, the crisis situation was identified with reference to the

leadership of the Mahdi and the social composition of his
movement. Evidence suggested that those groups most
affected by the Turco-Egyptian rule did not join the move-
ment. They opposed a system that aimed at abolishing their
inherent tribal constitution. If deprivation and oppress-
ion were the underlying grievances of the sedentary tribal
groups against the colonial government, they should have
been the first to join the movement. Instead, the Mahdi's
support came from nomadic tribal groups who had been un-
affected by the colonial government.

Muhammad Ahmad attempted to use the universality of
the Mahdist message as a means of overcoming conflicts and
antagonisms. The establishment of some form of continuing
organization, based upon adherence to this ideology would
ensure the success of the movement. Throughout history,
Mahdist and Messianic movements have provided the oppressed
in societies dominated or strongly influenced by Christian
or Islamic ideologies with a particularly effective vehicle
of protest. In such contexts, a coherent and relevant
system of revolutionary beliefs have been, so to speak,
ready to hand. In order to create a new dimension to the
study of religious enthusiasm, I therefore introduced the
concept of a "licensed protest." I have taken this term
to mean that religious ideology gave divine sanction to
the quest for power and authority by religious leaders and
their followers; it was a religious justification for

using revolutionary means to achieve their aim. Among universal religions, Islam is distinguished by its emphasis on war as a means of spreading the faith. Where likely to succeed such war is the duty of the faithful. It is only through the zealous prosecution of this profitable duty that Islam could triumph. The use of certain religious elements, such as the symbolic call to jihād could ensure this triumph of Islam. The Mahdi's manipulation of this form of religious symbolism enabled him to get the support of the nomadic tribes who were susceptible to the call of such an ideology. The abandonment of the policy of the jihād by the Mahdi's successor had dire consequences.

One can reasonably claim that messianic and Mahdist movements are important both in themselves and as regards their influences on the subsequent histories of their societies. Through their ideologies they tried to provide a new basis of solidarity, transcending the more restricted ties of the tribal group. The central figure, the Prophet or Mahdi, proclaimed a new religious order to supercede the old, and a new loyalty to transcend old loyalties of the tribe. The movements are therefore forward-looking, looking to the future and a regeneration of the world. Movements such as the Mahdist movement are essentially different from those forms of resistance or rebellion whose primary object is to restore the pre-colonial political and social order.

The revolution as they conceive it, must involve the total transformation of society, and of man as a social being. The assertion of a new ethic and a new basis for human relationships, and the ending of all forms of oppression, not merely those specific forms of oppression associated with external domination of the colonial state. The idea of social change in a progressive direction is seen as depending not simply upon providential guidance or some cataclysmic external event, but also upon revolutionary activism and the continuing participation of the masses in an effort to transform the actual world.

The attempts made by Māhdist and other chiliastic movements in realizing their aims have been far from otiose. The contribution of Māhdist ideologies to new political and social initiatives in the 19th and 20th century has been decisive. One needs to pay attention to the later history of these movements. There seems to be a fairly general tendency for such movements after their revolutionary phase has ended in defeat and repression to partially adapt ideologically and structurally to the new situation. The neo-Māhdist organization of the ansār in the Sudan, which during the period of the Condominium developed as a quasi-tariqa is a case in point.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that a greater understanding of religious revival movements can only come

from the use of both anthropological and historical methods and data. The anthropologist can understand the structure of a society by knowing something about its history. The historian can know more about the inner workings of the structure of a society by knowing something about the cultural traditions and symbols that are inherent in the structure of the society.

APPENDIX

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ansār: A term meaning helpers. It was a name originally bestowed upon the supporters of the Prophet at Medina. At the time of the Mahdia, ansār meant the followers of the Mahdi.

bay'a: An oath of allegiance administered by the Mahdi to his adherents.

baraka: A term meaning benediction or holiness. Baraka is possessed by saints who are revered as possessors of this active power of holiness which could be transmitted by inheritance or contact.

feki: A term used to designate a religious teacher who propogates Islam, equivalent to a dervish.

hijāz: Refers to the holy places, Mecca and Medina.

hijra: A term which means the flight for the faith from among the infidels to the Mahdi.

Hanafī
madhāb: A school of thought initiated by Abū Hanafi (A.D. 767). The Egyptian conquest of the Sudan introduced this school into the Sudan, as the official code of all courts. The Hanafi madhab was official throughout the Ottoman Empire.

Imām: The ultimate caliph of the Prophet.

jihād: This is a holy war in the name of Islam conducted against unbelievers. It is seen as essential for the establishment of God's rule.

Khaliph: A deputy of a religious order. His hierarchical rank is below that of a shaikh who is the head of a religious order.

Madhāb: Often translated as "rite" is a term applied to the four schools or bodies of legal opinion in Sunni Islam.

Mahdi: The title generally given to the Expected Deliverer in the Muslim world. He is the divinely guided one whose coming will restore the Golden Age. In the context of the Mahdia of the Sudan, it meant more than the ushering in of a Golden Age; it meant the creation of a state. Such movements are best designated Mahdist.

Maliki
Madhab: The Sudanese belonged to this school. It suggests some connection with North Africa where this Madhab predominates. The fekis of the Funj kingdom were trained in this Madhab.

Shaikh: Is the head of a religious order.

Shari'a: Islamic Law. This divine law became the symbol of group solidarity in Islam. It ruled the Muslims personal and family life in regard to marriage, inheritance, divorce, and called for certain obligations to God in the field of prayer.

tariqa: Is a religious order. These orders are the institutionalized expression of Sufism or Islamic mysticism.

'Ulama: The Islamic scholars who serve as teachers, judges and jurists.

Zakah: An obligatory tax according to Islamic law.

Zawiya: A religious center connected with a particular dervish order. Usually such a center is around a shaikhs home, and combines the function of a mosque and school.

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