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The history of regional relations of the peoples of Jibal Nuba in the 16th–20th centuries

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Abstract: The article is devoted to regional relations of the tribal groups of the Jibal Nuba region of the South Kordofan province in Sudan. The Islamization of these tribes, which lasted for a period of more than a century, seriously changed the traditional way of life, contributed to demographic transformations, and contributed to the integration of local residents into Sudanese society. At the same time, one can observe deformations in the political course of local leaders who are trying to achieve a weakening of ties with the center and oppose initiatives aimed at a compromise and a peaceful solution to all regional problems. It is traced from the complex and controversial history of relationships during both the pre-colonial period and the period of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium after 1898.

Particular attention in the material provided is given to the contacts of the Jibal Nuba tribes with neighboring Arab tribes. They are ready for positive interaction at the clan and tribal level. The article also examines the history of relations between the Nuba and the state formations that arose after the consolidation of Islam as a state doctrine in the Sultanate of the Funj with its center in Sennar in the 16th century. Along with this, there were active contacts with other Muslim states, primarily with the sultanate in Darfur and small state formations in Kordofan.

Keywords: history of Arab countries; Sudan; Jibal Nuba; Kordofan; Islam; Funj

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История региональных связей народов Джибаль Нуба в XVI–XX вв.

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Резюме: В статье рассматриваются региональные связи племенных групп района Джибаль Нуба провинции Южный Кордофан в Судане. Исламизация этих племен, растянувшаяся на период, превышающий столетие, серьезным образом изменила традиционный уклад жизни, способствовала демографическим трансформациям, интеграции местных жителей в суданское общество. Одновременно можно наблюдать деформации в политических взглядах местных лидеров, пытающихся добиться ослабления связей с центром и препятствовать инициативам, направленным на компромисс и мирное решение всех региональных проблем. Это является следствием сложной и противоречивой истории взаимоотношений в течение как предколониального периода, так и периода англо-египетского кондоминиума после 1898 г.

Особое внимание в представленном материале уделяется контактам племен Джибаль Нуба с соседними арабскими племенами. Отмечается готовность к позитивному взаимодействию на клановом и племенном уровнях. В статье рассмотрена также история отношений Нуба с государственными образованиями, возникшими после закрепления ислама в качестве государственной доктрины в султанате Фундж с центром в Сеннаре в XVI в. Наряду с этим происходили активные контакты с другими мусульманскими государствами, прежде всего с султанатом в Дарфуре и небольшими государственными образованиями в Кордофанах.

Ключевые слова: история арабских стран; Судан; Джибаль Нуба; Кордофан; ислам; Фундж

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Introduction

One of the most “mysterious” regions of Sudan rich in history and identity can be considered the region of South Kordofan, where the Nubian mountains are located, better known as Jibal Nuba.



In the Soviet scientific literature, there were practically no special studies on the Jibal Nuba region, there were also very few references to this part of Kordofan in articles devoted to Sudanese issues, however, in domestic works of the last two decades, some attention was nevertheless paid to it [1].

The purpose of this publication is to clarify the historical roots of the interaction of the peoples that make up the population of Jibal Nuba with the Sudanese Muslim states of the 16th–19th centuries and Arab tribes within the state of the Republic of Sudan.

Jibal Nuba is a group of high hills and mountain ranges, no more than 1 thousand meters above the sea level, located in the southeastern part of Kordofan. They occupy an area equal to 30 thousand square miles, which is comparable to the area of Scotland. In total, there are 99 peaks in this mountainous and hilly area. To the north they are joined by the Tagal Mountains.

The toponym Jibal Nuba is translated from Arabic as “the mountains of the Nuba people”. The ethnonym “Nuba” means all the tribes living in the mountains with the same name. The Negroid African tribes of Jibal Nuba lead an isolated from each other life, which is facilitated by their economic activities. A feature of the word Nuba is that it coincides in spelling and sound in Arabic with the Nuba-Nubians who inhabit the Nile Valley. This introduces discrepancies and misunderstandings regarding their identity. The origin of the Nuba is being debated in the scientific community. In Arabic publications dedicated to the Nubians, a terminological tradition is gradually taking shape, which makes it possible to better understand which of these peoples is being referred to due to the use of various plural forms by the authors of the texts. Thus, the Nubians – the inhabitants of the Nile Valley – have the plural *Nubiyuna*, and the people of the Nuba tribe in the plural – *Nubaiyyuna*.

It may seem that the Nuba are a single people, separated by tribal borders, however, in the Jibal Nuba region itself, there is a clear division into local clans and tribal groups, which have their own names and their own characteristics: linguistic, economic, cultural. There are more than fifty of them. Tribes and tribal groups have self-names endoethnonyms and exoethnonyms, which they are called by other tribes and clans. For example, a group that is part of the Ajanj union, called Karaku, has a local name Kak. Groups of clans living to the west of the settlement of Dilling, which is the administrative center of Ajanj, join this tribal association. These clans also have their own local names, for example, the Kajuriyya have the endoethnonym Kadako, the Gulfan tribal group for local residents is known as Winko, the Kadaru are known as Kadanero. And this list can be continued.

Individual clans are often called by the names of a hill or mountain and a settlement located nearby, which, as a rule, is also an administrative center. Speaking about the origin of the peoples of Jibal Nuba, it should be recognized that the question is open and its study



has not progressed significantly in recent years. Although in the 20th century linguistic, archaeological, socio-anthropological research was carried out there. On the rocky areas of the hills, images – petroglyphs were found (Kausalib area), however, researchers, including the British scientist of Austrian origin Z. F. Naidel (1903–1956), did not connect the finds of rock paintings with the modern Nuba. The English archaeologist and Sudanese colonial administrator A. J. Arkell (1898–1980) excavated a burial site at Jabal Tir, northeast of Jibal Nuba, but there was no evidence of a connection between the past and the present. The method of burial in antiquity was completely different from what is now common throughout the region. Concerning the question of the proximity of the Nuba and representatives of other peoples inhabiting Sudan, one can note the similarity of some of them. The basis for this was the oral reports of representatives of individual tribes.

Researchers in the Jibal Nuba region have noticed that, having no clearly traced ties with distant African peoples, the Nuba tribes are culturally and linguistically close to the peoples inhabiting modern Sudan. The clans from Jabal Tir, for example, have common features with the people from Jabal al-Muru, the Shat tribal groups living in the territories south of Kadugli are similar to the peoples of Darfur, the Tima tribal groups probably originate from the Kaju region near Adiya. Nuba from Kadaru and Jabal Tabak are considered to be from the Sultanate in Sennar. The Midub and Birkid tribes in Darfur are related to the Nuba, but this ethnonym is never used for them. The Ajanj clans, as outlined in the work of the Sudanese researcher Yusuf Isaac Ahmad (originally from Jibal Nuba), may have come to this area from the north. It is permissible to assume that by their name they are close to the Anaj people, who once inhabited the Christian state of Alva with the capital Soba on the Nile [2, p. 64–65]. Sudanese scholar Ata Muhammad Ahmad Kantul reports that during personal meetings and conversations with the representatives of the Nuba tribes, there was a repetition of reports about the existence in the distant past of a connection between the Nubians of the Nile Valley and the Nuba from Jibal Nuba [3, p. 31]. With a variety of points of view about the origin of the inhabitants of Jibal Nuba, their connections with each other and the outside world, practically no one disputes the opinion that they are all mostly settlers in these lands, and not its original inhabitants. The isolation of life helped for centuries to preserve originality, at the same time did not contribute to the inclusion in the cultural orbit of the surrounding world. Thanks to this, the Nuba survived until the 20th century, being at the stage of disintegration of the tribal community. The basis of their economic well-being was cattle breeding and processing of small crops located near the hills inhabited by them. It is known that in order to replenish food supplies and increase the level of well-being, representatives of the clans raided the settlements of their



neighbors. In religious terms, we can talk about shamanism that prevailed until the first decades of the 20th century [4, p. 85].

Jibal Nuba tribes contacts since Funj to Anglo-Egyptian condominium

Historically, the closest neighbors of the Nuba were Arab nomadic pastoral tribes who came to these parts a long time ago, moving south from Egypt following the herds in search of pastures rich in vegetation. Badiriya, Jauamia, Jadidat, Shawakhit mastered the steppes and fertile valleys in Kordofan already in the 16th century. The tribes of Dar Khumr, Hamid and other pastoralists of Baqqara came to Kordofan through Dongola, following to the south. According to the prominent researcher of Sudan J. Spaulding and a number of authors, there were family ties between the Arab tribes of the Gadiyat union, who settled in Kordofan, and the Nuba from Tabak, Kadaro, Dilling and some others [5]. Hauazima tribe causes ethnographic interest. It represents an alliance between natives of West Africa – Fellata (Takarir), Hauuara - Berber group that came here from North Africa and the Arabs. However, officially the tribe declares itself as Arabic. Several Nuba clans also joined this tribal union [2, p. 30]. Within the Hauazima tribe there is a tribal branch of the Aulad Nuba. They separated out as a result of the merger of the Rauauika clan with some tribal groups from the Nuba in the south of Kordofan [6, p. 47]. Rapprochement at the family level contributed to the interchange of products, labor skills, spiritual values, and facilitated the possibility of contracts. Moreover, this testifies to the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples, at least at an early stage of their joint history.

Creation of the Sultanate of Funj in Sennar at the beginning of the 16th century led some Arab tribes to move in a westerly direction. Among them, first of all, were the representatives of the Jaalit tribal union.

From the text of the material by Yusuf Isaac Ahmad, prepared on the basis of oral traditions, it follows that before the state of the Funj was founded, the Jibal Nuba were subordinate to Ajib al-Kafuli, one of the rulers who controlled large territories in the Nile Valley and beyond. After his death in 1474, control over them, including Jibal Nuba, passed to Amara Duncas, and this is already the legendary leader of the Funj. There are oral traditions in which the mountain Nuba claim their closeness to the Funj. In the narration, according to the representative of the Nuba, Sheikh Farah at-Talib, it was reported that one of the Nuba peoples Karaku sent their leaders to the rulers of the Funj in order to get the right to rule [2, p. 41].

If we proceed from the recognition of the fidelity of the dating of the inclusion of Jibal Nuba in the orbit of the possessions of the Funj, then it turns out that "the Funj appeared in Jibal Nuba even before the arrival of the Arab tribes" [2, p. 42]. There is a possibility that



the Nuba could join the Funj troops and participate in military operations, both against the union of the Arab Abdallab tribes, and in the combined troops of the Funj and Abdallab against the Christian state of Alva. The result of the struggle was the final fall of this state and, in fact, the completion of the Christian stage in the history of the Sudanese states on the Nile.

The tradition of using Nuba warriors in armed formations was continued, and this was especially evident during the reign of the Funj Sultanate Badi II (1643–1678).

Oral reports cited in the monograph by Yusuf Isaac Ahmad mention that the ruler Badi II attacked a number of districts in Jibal Nuba, in particular, Dair, Takale, Kadara. There he captured prisoners, while most of them were from Ajanj.

Nuba prisoners underwent military training and served in the guards of the Sultan and in his personal protection. They were usually settled together with their countrymen in special settlements around the capital – the city of Sennar. These settlements were named after the tribal groups from which their inhabitants originated. So, the following toponyms appeared on the map: Kadaru, Kanak, Karaku, etc. It is noteworthy that those villages that appeared in the 18th century continue to bear these names to the present day. These names are available in the area of permanent residence in Jibal Nuba [2, p. 42].

Since the Nuba until recently remained committed to shamanism, and the stages of the history of the Nuba were measured in time spans that fell on the life of a shaman, it is not surprising that oral traditions say that the Funj attacked part of the Jibal Nuba region near Dilling during the lifetime of the fifth ancestor of the shamans who preceded the deceased in 1990 Khajur Muhammad Agbash [2, p. 42–43].

The exact date of this military campaign is not known. It is approximately dated to 1650 and this coincides in principle with the reign of the Khajur Korankoro ancestor Muhammad Agbash. As for the pretexts for the attack, as well as the reasons, they are unknown. It can only be assumed with a high degree of certainty that the purpose of the Funj campaign was to capture trophies in the form of prisoners and ensure security on the way to the gold mines in Shaybun.

The state formation that arose in Kordofan in the 17th century – Tagal – included Arab tribal groups within the boundaries of its control, at the same time, residents of the areas of permanent residence of the Nuba were subordinate to it, such as: Abu Dom, Umm Talha, Rashad, Kalkudda, Gedir, Shaybun [5, p. 371]. Tabak was considered the westernmost region of influence of the local rulers of Tagal, who in turn were dependent on the powerful sultanate in Sennar. Only the southwestern regions of Jibal Nuba were not subject to any authority. A powerful and dynamic Muslim sultanate, which took shape in the 17th century in Darfur, also sought to establish power in Kordofan. Ata Muhammad



Ahmad Kantul noted that despite the fact that the entire region of Kordofan was in the zone of influence of two powerful state entities of that time, the sultanates in Darfur and Sennar, the impact of the second was stronger [3, p. 37]. It is believed that Badi Abu Dikn, the Sennar supreme ruler, in the middle of the 17th century attacked not only Jibal Nuba, but also subjugated the state of Tagal. It remained in a dependent position until 1788 [3, p. 37].

The interaction between the Muslim tribes of the Arabs, who came to the region later than the Nuba, also gave rise to a new type of relationship that differed from those accepted among the Arabs and Muslims. It is interesting to describe the conclusion of an agreement between the Hauazima tribe and individual interested clans from the Nuba, which turned into a real fraternization by blood. This kind of union is the first and only form of social agreement between Muslims and pagans, which the Nuba were. Presumably, the history of such a ceremony dates back to the 9th or 10th century. In Sudan, it was also used in the 20th century. The contract was preceded by preliminary approvals.

The “fraternization” between the Hauazima and the Nuba took place as described in the work of Hammoud Salih Manzil Kahif, as follows: “After both parties had agreed on the provisions of the treaty that was planned to be concluded, the time and place were determined for the final ratification. On the morning of this historic day, everyone gathered at the place where the celebration was to take place, faces expressed joy, cries and exclamations of women filled the air. Whenever a group of Arabs or Nuba approached the place of celebration, their leader moved forward. The Hauazima, sitting on the backs of horses and camels, showed the famous Arab prowess, while the Nuba, beating drums, performed flamboyant African dances. Various folk groups took part in the event, playing musical instruments. They sang the birth of a new treaty in which the spirit of love and brotherhood prevails. After some time, the leaders from both sides went to the center of the square where the celebration took place, and took their respective places. From everywhere came the cries and exclamations of women. Then the leaders of each clan stood near a certain place, and the leaders of the Hauazima and the Nuba stepped forward. They embraced amiably, put their hands together and then raised them up. Then they made a sign to all who were shouting. All of a sudden everything went silent. The leader of the Hauazima asked one of his assistants to approach him, and from the group of chiefs of the Hauazima a sheikh came out, who carried with him a gourd filled with milk. And handed it to the leader, and then returned to his place. The chief of the Hauazima took the gourd and, having drunk the milk from it, handed it over to the paramount chief of the Nuba. He took the pumpkin, also drank from it and returned it to him. The leader of the Hauazima took his former place. And then the cries and exclamations of women resumed. Screams and sounds echoed in the mountains. Then, suddenly, the noise stopped. The Nuba chief took



the Hauazima chief by the hand, took out his knife, and asked the Hauazima chief to get his. Arousing everyone's surprise, he made an incision on his arm, and blood flowed from there. Then he asked the leader of the Hauazima to do the same, and he complied with the request. Chief Jibal Nuba collected a few drops of his own blood and mixed it with the drops of Hauazima chief and tasted the mixed blood with his tongue. The leader of the Hauazima did the same. In the same way as these two chiefs, who sealed their pact with blood, so did the chiefs of each clan from among the Nuba and the Hauazima. They performed the whole ceremony in exactly the same way. This union became known as the "blood union" [6, p. 279–280]. The above description of personal testimony destroys the ingrained notion of primordial and irreconcilable hostility between the Nuba and the Arabs.

It is difficult for the inhabitants of Jibal Nuba to part with the ideas about the Arab tribes as greedy and merciless slave hunters. There are reasons for this. Arab tribal detachments often raided the territory of neighboring Ethiopia or Jibal Nuba to capture slaves, and these unexpected attacks were called Jihadiya. During the period of Egyptian-Turkish rule, starting from 1821, campaigns in Jibal Nuba became more frequent. In 1824, the number of prisoners was estimated at 40 thousand people. Slave traders sent women and children to the slave markets of Egypt. Military campaigns for slaves intensified significantly during the Mahdist uprising. In the last decades of the 19th century the Nuba were forcibly driven into the army by supporters of the Mahdi, and carried out combat missions. After the defeat of the Mahdists, many Nuba returned to their native lands, bringing Islam with them, which they were forced to accept while they were a part of the Mahdi army. In addition, they became owners of firearms, which, however, they preferred to exchange with local Muslim pastoralists for cattle and return to the use of the classic tribal military arsenal – spears and swords.

The period that followed the occupation of Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian troops in 1898 saw colonial rule of the country, officially called the condominium. In fact, in this "joint" government, all power was held by the British. Guided by economic interests and geopolitical aspirations aimed at hegemony in this region of Africa, the British colonial administration began to pay serious attention to establishing stability and tranquility in the Kordofan region and, accordingly, in Jibal Nuba. Between 1898 and 1912, the region was part of the province of Kordofan. From 1913 to 1928, the Nuba received the status of an independent province with the capital in the city of Talodi. Police and administrative bodies and services were created there to control the local population. According to statistics published during the condominium period, the population of Kordofan was estimated at 500 thousand people [7, p. 521]. The former British ruler of Kordofan said the following about the Nuba: "All the Nuba living in the southern hills, often raided by the Arab Baqqara



tribes who hunted slaves and cattle, suffered terribly during the reign of the dervishes. Under the current regime of government, they gradually come to a state of rest, although from time to time they attack each other. They cultivate large areas of land, keep a large number of livestock, sheep and goats" [7, p. 524]. The condominium period brought new trends to the evolution of Jibal Nuba, which was associated with the main slogan of the colonialists - "ensuring the security" of the region. The content of this was nothing more than the establishment of British control over the rebellious areas as the first and generally pivotal direction, followed by the involvement of the most loyal leaders and shamans from the local environment in the management. A big proponent of this was Arthur Vicars-Miles, who wanted to subject the population to British colonialism, using a policy of constant police raids into the area of hills and small mountains inhabited by the Nuba. Active "patrolling" by the British military had several stages. The first fell on the period from 1905 to 1912, the second included a relatively short time period from 1917 to 1919, and the completion of the policy of active patrolling of the territories of the Nuba fell on 1945 [8, p. 92]. If in 1918 the British administrators who visited certain areas of Jibal Nuba "relied mainly on fate and luck", then already in the 1930s they "toured peacefully escorted by only three policemen – two of whom were needed to carry the co-domini's flags" [8, p. 92]. Perhaps the most actively developed by the British was the northwestern sector of Jibal Nuba, which consisted of eight large peaks that went down in history as Niima, and the population is known as Nyamang, but this area can be considered a cross-section of the overall picture of the impact on the region.

Religion in Jibal Nuba

Particular attention when talking about the Nuba should be given to the factor of religion, as perhaps the most important, in addition to tribal and ethnic, which determines the local mindset.

The Nuba became acquainted with Islam much earlier than during the period of the Mahdist uprising, when they were massively involved in the armies of the dervishes, in spite of, their own religious cults associated with shamanism remained dominant. It is obvious that the priority role in the spread of Islam in this, as, indeed, in other regions of Sudan, was assigned to the Sufis and the beginning of this was laid by Taj ad-Din al-Bahari, who arrived from Baghdad, representing the order of Qadiriyya [9, p. 42]. The Ismailiyya brotherhood, led by Sheikh Ismail al-Wali, contributed to the Islamization of Jibal Nuba. Sheikh Badui Abu Safiyya was also a spreader of Islam and an ascetic. However, perhaps the most prominent representative of Sufism, who continued the missionary traditions of the Qadiriyya, was one of the adherents of the brotherhood, Sheikh al-Barnawi, who came



from an aristocratic family that belonged to the Yemeni Hamir tribe from Bornu (modern Nigeria). Sheikh al-Barnawi performed the hajj, advancing with his companions to Muslim shrines through Sudan. In Mecca, he had the opportunity to meet with Abd al-Baqi al-Mukashafi, the preceptor of the Sudanese offshoot of the Qadiriyya at that time. It was this man who persuaded Sheikh al-Barnawi to go to Jibal Nuba. There he actively preached, and many locals accepted his ideas. This is not such a distant historical period, if we take into account that al-Barnawi died in 1967 [3, p. 67]. If we try to assess the coverage of the population by Islamic doctrine, we can notice the uneven involvement of the Nuba in Islam. Islam was most actively adopted in Kaulib, Dilling, Kadaru and Niyamanga, while in the southern and western regions - Jibal Koronko, Muru and Talashi - this religion spread with a lag. It should be taken in consideration that Christian missions were established all over the Sudan in the second half of 19th century. One of them was established in Dilling in 1875 [10, p. 128].

The impact on the population of the carriers of religious doctrines could not but affect the more active movement of the Nuba. As early as 1933, there were cases of individuals and even entire families moving to other parts of Sudan [3, p. 173–174]. At the same time, the demographic situation in Jibal Nuba began to change due to the increase in immigrants to it from West Africa: Mali, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon – many of those whom the Sudanese designate with the common ethnonym Fellata. The resettlement took place in stages, and the newcomers tried to maintain their usual way of life, being engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. According to J. Willis, in 1933, 1,000 immigrants from West Africa lived in the region [8].

Since the period of the 1930s, already well-established contacts with local Arab tribes have somewhat decreased, the reason for which was not only a more wary attitude towards Muslim Arabs, fueled by missionaries from Western countries, but also the introduction of a law on "closed areas". This prevented the establishment of the usual type of interaction and economic exchange. In this situation, the Nuba became the initiators in the resumption of contacts. In 1941, the Nuba from Jibal Tire tried to overcome their alienation. Arno Caju, the ruler of all the Nuba of this region, sent representatives to the leader of the Hauazima a proposal to meet with the envoys of his tribe in Jibal Tire and reach an agreement on new principles of relations. Among those personally present at this event from the Hauazima tribe was Sheikh Hammoud Salih Manzil. About the invitation that followed from Arno Caju, he recalls the following:

"In 1941, Arno, the ruler of Jibal Tire, sent a delegation of four Nuba representatives to the Hauazima with a request to send representatives of the Arab tribes to discuss the form of resumption of relations interrupted by the decision of the British government to



close Jibal Nuba to Arabs and Jallaba traders. Delegation invitation... was carried out on the initiative of Mak Rahma. The delegation of Mak Arno arrived at the tribe's units living in this region. At the head of the delegation was a representative of the Nuba, whose name was Omar. He spoke Arabic. Members of the delegation brought with them a written message from Mak Rahma and Arno Caju. All the Arabs at that time could neither read nor write, so they sent for the Faqih Abd al-Rahim Abd al-Karim from the Kauahla tribe and asked him to come and read the message, and also explain its content and meaning to the Arabs. Poppy Arno's messengers were guests of Sheikh Salih Manzil, who hospitably received the delegation" [6, p. 286–287]. It can be added that during the reading of the document and the discussion, there were people from the Hauazima and various clans of this tribe, as well as the envoys of the Shukairat, Kauahla and Takrur. After lengthy agreements, the Arab tribes and the Nuba tribes from the Jibal Tire region restored friendly relations and the peaceful nature of interaction continued for a long time.

In the post-independence period in Sudan, the interests of the Nuba were represented in the state parliament by several deputies. In 1958, for example, a bloc of Nuba representatives was created, headed by Philip Gabbush, who demanded that the Nuba be included in the government. During the 1970s-1980s the ruling politicians and political parties and movements in Sudan did not always properly listen to the aspirations of the Nuba and underestimated their role in state building. This was largely the reason for the entry of the Nuba into political alliances with the southerners and speeches against Khartoum.

Conclusion

Summing up some results, it is necessary to note that the Nuba ethnonym is only a general designation of tribal groups living on the territory of Jibal Nuba and there is no need to talk about their complete unity. In the same way, it is impossible to talk about their one-time resettlement to this region from other parts of Sudan and the African continent. The rulers of the Nile Valley have long perceived Jibal Nuba as a territory of military expansion and sought to subordinate it to their influence. Military campaigns in Jibal Nuba were carried out by the Funj tribes even before the formation of the state – the Funj Sultanate with its center in Sennar (1504). There are indications of this in oral traditions. Arab and non-Arab tribes from Darfur and northern Kordofan, subject to the authority of regional chiefs and rulers, also attacked the area, and it remained a bone of contention between the Sudanese sultanates for centuries.

This, however, did not mean that the region was closed and its inhabitants were not ready for external contacts. Some Arab tribes were able to establish good neighbor relations



with the Nuba and there is evidence related to oral history, stating the existence of an effective mechanism of interaction and mutual trust that has developed over the centuries. The Mahdist period contributed to the involvement of the Nuba in the fight against the colonialists and a more active acquaintance with Islam, which did not cause a general conversion of the population of Jibal Nuba to this religion.

The colonial period created conditions for greater stability and the involvement of the Nuba in public life. A number of works by Western researchers have been published about this [11]. This, however, did not mean solving the entire spectrum of problems in relations with neighbors and the authorities. Some steps of the ruling administration created contradictions on religious and ethnic grounds. The onset of independence opened up the possibility for the Nuba to represent themselves in the spheres of state power, but this was not enough to take into account their interests comprehensively. For a number of decades after independence, the Nuba showed a tendency to self-isolate and oppose the authorities in the capital, which repeatedly led to social conflicts and open military confrontation.

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