Résumé
L. Kapteijns — Le sultanat du Dâr Sila à l'époque précoloniale, 1870-1916.
Au moment de la conquête du Wadai par les Français, en 1909, le souverain du sultanat dâjû du Dâr Silâ préféra éviter l'affrontement en se plaçant spontanément sous protectorat français, en échange de la reconnaissance et du maintien de sa souveraineté interne. En dépit de quoi, en 1916, après sept ans d'incompréhension réciproque, il fut détrôné et son royaume annexé. L'histoire précoloniale de ce petit État, coincé entre ses puissants voisins du Dâr Fur et du Wadai, explique son choix politique.

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Dār Silā, the Sultanate in Precolonial Times, 1870-1916

For the sultanate of Dār Silā, as for the other sultanates of the Chado-Sudanese frontier, the French conquest of Wadai in 1909 sounded the death-knell over its existence as a small independent Sudanic State. However, when Sultan Bakhit Abū Risha of Dār Silā sent a letter of submission to Fort-Lamy, neither he nor the French realized that the social and political institutions typical of a Sudanic State were incompatible with its incorporation into the French Empire and the European-dominated world economy.

In the years following 1909, therefore, each party tried to work out some form of peaceful coexistence acceptable to both. Dār Silā expected the French government to behave like its former overlords, respectively the sultanates of Dār Fūr and Wadai. Although the French were at this stage ready to limit their demands, they expected Dār Silā not only to recognize French suzerainty, but also to be responsive to some of their ideals of progress, notably the abolition of the slave trade, the promotion of 'legitimate' trade, a uniform system of taxation (in cash), and peaceful relations with neighbouring States. Since each party expected the other to act according to its own political (and economic) code, misunderstanding and distrust marred mutual relations from the beginning. From the diplomatic correspondence and administrative reports of the period, it is evident that both parties frantically tried to understand each other and to make themselves understood; nevertheless, they failed to do so and hence often misjudged each other's intentions. The French reconquest

1. In a recent article, J. Tubiana (1981) called for more research on the sultanates of Dār Silā, Dār Sinyār and Dār Fongoro and their relations with the larger States of Wadai and Dār Fūr. While preparing my doctoral thesis (Kapteijns 1982), I collected a large enough body of (mainly archival and some oral) data to reply to this call with regard to the sultanate of Dār Silā. I would like to express my respect for the French administrator-cum-scholar Henri Berre, whose El Hadj Mustapha Ould Bakhit... (1951) is indispensable to any student of Dār Silā, the country which he describes with so much sympathy and wit.

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of Dār Silā in 1916, which led to the deposition and exile of the sultan, and to the reorganization of the State, may well have been a result of this basic misunderstanding.

The present essay is primarily concerned with the political history of Dār Silā until 1916 and—as far as the sources allow—with the political and social organization of the precolonial State. While it analyses the revolutionary impact of the beginnings of French colonial rule, it stops short of a discussion of the colonial period as a whole. It bases itself on administrative reports preserved in the French and British colonial archives, the Arabic archives of the Mahdist State, the Arabic correspondence of the sultans of Dār Silā and, to some extent, on oral sources collected by the author on the Sudanese side of the Chado-Sudanese border, in Dār Für, Dār Masālît and Dār Sīyār.

Dār Silā was the southernmost State of a chain of sultanates which formed the border between the historical sultanate of Dār Für (in western Sudan) and that of Wadai (in eastern Chad). In contrast to the sultanates to its north, Dār Silā had an abundant rainfall (600-800 mm per year), and hence a rich vegetation and wildlife. Its main crops were sorghum, millet and cotton; its pastures sustained livestock of many types (but no camels). The bulk of its populations was formed by the Dājū, who gave the sultanate its alternative name of Dār Dājū ('the land of the Dājū'). However, Dār Dājū was also inhabited by a large number of nomad peoples (the Salāmāt, Terjam, Ḥaymāt, Missiriyya, Bānī Ḥalba and others) and by people of more southern extraction such as the Kara, Gula and Banda, many of whom had been brought to Dār Silā as slaves. Dār Silā's northeastern border was inhabited by the Sīyār, and by groups of Für and Masālît whose tribal homelands lay further to the cast.

The historical core of the sultanate was formed by the Dājū, who were bound together by linguistic, historical, religious, economic and political ties. Being Dājū meant first of all that a person spoke the Dājū language, which belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family and is at present used by ca. 50,000 people, 30,000 of whom live in Chad (Doornbos & Bender, ftheg.). A second element of Dājū identity was the belief in a common descent and a shared history. When the French came upon the scene in 1909, the Dājū had (and further developed) an elaborate tradition of origin. That the Dājū originally inhabited Dār Für, where memories of a Dājū empire, subsequently replaced by that of the Tunjur, have been preserved, is commonly accepted. The Dājū place their migration to

2. Dār Silā lies between latitude 11°15' and 12°15' N and longitude 22°15' and 22°45' E.
3. In 1961, Dār Silā had ca. 38,000 inhabitants, of whom 24,000 were Dājū, 3,000 Sīyār and 10,500 Arabic-speaking nomads (SHAT, Tchad, carton 20, dossier 3).
Dār Silā at the beginning of the 18th century, but their oral traditions cannot be verified beyond the reign of Sultan 'Anqrīb (ca. 1813-1851) or that of his son Muhammad Būlād (1851-1879). A third element of Dājū identity was a common religion. Today the Dājū are all Muslims, but when they became so is not known. The Dājū royal family claimed descent from the family of the Prophet, but when the Dājū came to Dār Silā they were probably still unaffected by Islam. In most parts of the Wadai/Dār Fūr region, the beginnings of Islamization are associated with the foundation of the sultanates of Wadai and Dār Fūr in the first part of the 17th century. Even then Islam remained for many years the religion of the court and the ruling elite, while the subjects were Muslims in the sense that they were subject to a Muslim ruler and hence not enslavable. On both levels of society, that of the rulers and that of the subjects, customs and beliefs of pre-Islamic origin continued to exist until the colonial period. The 'oracle of the termite-hill', consulted by the rulers to predict the future from the movements of the ants, and a harvest feast held to appease the spirit of the grain seem to have been typically Dājū customs; the belief in spirits which populated trees or water holes, and in rainmaking rituals was common in the Wadai/Dār Fūr region as a whole.

The Dājū also shared a common mode of subsistence. They were farmers, and most of the land of Dār Silā was Dājū land, that is to say belonged to Dājū clans and sub-clans, represented by their malik ('chiefs'). Even if the Dājū were not the State's richest subjects, they were the most stable inhabitants and hence more liable to regular taxation, administration of justice and demands of military service than the various nomad peoples of the country. Farmers and nomads together formed the class of the free subjects or commoners (nasākīn) of the sultanate. Below them were the slaves, above them the ruling class. The former consisted of 'Fertit' and 'Kirdi', generic names for the non-Muslim (and hence enslavable) peoples which originated from the southern marches of the Dār Fūr and Wadai sultanates. Slaves were owned by both commoners and rulers, but the latter owned many more. Their domestic slaves seem to have enjoyed a status which was one notch below that of their masters and could hence be higher than that of a commoner. However, since slaves were a major export article in Dār Silā, there were many trade slaves who were not incorporated into the social structure on a permanent basis; they formed a distinct class which ranked below that of the commoners. Intermediate in status between the domestic and

4. For a more extensive discussion of Dājū traditions of origin, see Berre 1951: ch. 1; SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila, 1912-1937; CRO, Darfur 1/33/170.

5. SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila; Bishār Yūnus to Mahmūd Aḥmad, Rabī’ I 1311/Sept.-Oct. 1893, CRO, Mahdiyya 2/37, doc. 35; MacMichael 1922, I: 74.
trade slaves, were those slaves of the nobility who were settled in special villages. These slaves were set apart from, and socially inferior to, the free subjects of the realm.⁶

The government or ruling class was predominantly Dâjû, another factor that gave the Dâjû an identity of their own. In Dâr Silâ, as in the other sultanates of the area, the position of sultan was hereditary in the male line. However, although being a sultan’s son was a prerequisite to ascending to the throne, it was not necessary to be the son of the last reigning sultan. The death of a monarch, therefore, usually caused a fierce succession dispute (and sometimes civil war) between the sons, brothers and paternal uncles of the deceased, each of whom had a retinue of armed cavaliers, consisting of close male relatives, selected commoners and military slaves. The reigning monarch often tried to predetermine the succession during his lifetime by appointing one on his relatives as his successor, and by allowing him to keep a larger number of retainers than the other members of the ruling élite. Since the entourages of the various princes and dignitaries—best compared to modern political parties—vied in power not only with each other but also with the sultan himself, the latter safeguarded his position by maintaining more foot-soldiers and horsemen than all other dignitaries combined, and by appointing slaves to important military and administrative positions. In 1911, for example, Sultan Bakhit Abû Rîsha had an army of 1,000 men, of whom 400 were horsemen. His son and heir apparent, Dhahab, had 300 men, including 100 horse, while the other major dignitaries, of whom two were slaves and at least three Dâjû princes, had together 350 footmen and 100 mounted retainers.⁷ In spite of the infighting within the ranks of the royal family, the solidarity of the royal clan of Dâr Silâ (and the other small frontier sultanates) was stronger than was the case in the larger States of Wadai and Dâr Fur. While possible pretenders to the throne were blinded (and hence forever disqualified from becoming sultan) in Wadai, and were pensioned off into obscurity in Dâr Fur, in Dâr Silâ, Dâr Masâlît, Dâr Qîmr and Dâr Tâmâ they gathered around the sultan and became the pillars of the central government.

In July 1911, a French official in Dâr Silâ wrote: ‘Il n’existe comme organisation politique que le bon plaisir du sultan entouré de ses frères, de ses fils, et de nombreux fonctionnaires.’⁸ This observation does not do full justice to Dâr Silâ’s government. It is true that the king disposed of life and death, and was accountable to no one but God. However, le bon plaisir of the sultan was strictly circumscribed by custom. The king could violate custom, for example by raising taxes, but only at the risk

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⁷ SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 11 July 1911.
⁸ Ibid.
of causing general discontent or even popular revolt. Dar Sila had
moreover a hierarchy of titled and untitled officials and a system of
administration which operated upon the same principles as in the other
States of the Wadai/Dar Fur region. By this system the country was
divided into larger and smaller districts (administrative and private
estates), which were ruled by four kamkolok in charge of the interior and
four maqdûm in charge of the frontier provinces. The reality, however,
was more complex; close relatives and favourites of the king governed
—virtually as sultans—areas which might be larger or smaller than the
jurisdictions of the officials mentioned by Berre.

The French official quoted above was right, however, in pointing out
that the most important and remunerative offices were occupied by the
uncles, brothers, sons and cousins of the sultan. They discharged their
administrative duties from Goz Beida, where their presence was required
as councillors of the king. To provide his councillors with a living, the
sultan granted them lands and villages, whose malik and inhabitants
were under their jurisdiction, and whose production was taxed by them
for their own benefit. Since the sultan provided in this same way for
dependent (female) relatives who did not have an administrative func-
tion, the area around the capital was divided up in small estates, whose
owners owed the sultan few, if any, taxes. In the outlying areas the
administrative units were larger, but there too a central government
representative (often a royal relative or military slave) was imposed upon
the local malik and nomad shaykh, and there too villages belonging
to some notable or other formed islands of immunity or small private
estates. In the larger districts the central government agent was
expected to collect taxes (the yield of which was divided between the
local chiefs, himself and the sultan), to supervise the administration of
justice by the local chiefs, to guard the borders and, in case of war, to
orchestrate a general levée.

The commoners, Daju and non-Daju alike, owed the State a part of
what they produced and some labour services. These dues, which were
similar to those levied from the commoners in other sultanates of the
area, included the Islamic taxes of zakâh and fiûra (both grain taxes), a

9. For popular reactions against royal infringements of custom in Dar Masali, 
see Kapteijns 1982: 191-193, 232-234. For the titled officials, see Berre 1951: 
ch. v; Simonet 1914. Compare for the same titles in Dar Masali, Kapteijns 
1982: 159-166.

10. Berre 1951: ch. iv; Simonet, 19 July 1914, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2;
SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier Colonne du Sila. See by comparison Kapteijns 
1982: 166-175.

11. Ibid.
tax on livestock (also called zakāḥ), and irregular levies of honey, ghee and homespun cotton cloth. The sultan had moreover a right to all runaway slaves and livestock (the ḥāmil), and to one half of the ivory procured within the State’s boundaries. The production of the slaves owned by commoners was taxed as part of that of their masters. However, the largest number of slaves belonged to the ruling class and—insofar as they did not serve as armed retainers, concubines or domestic servants—lived in slave villages. It is probable that these slaves had a larger part of their production expropriated than the commoners. In addition their offspring was freely disposed of by their masters.

The government left much of the grain and livestock which it collected as taxes on the spot, sending for part of it only when the need arose, for example, to celebrate the Islamic festivals, to entertain travellers and royal refugees, or to reward dependents, holy men and other favourites. In times of war the local grain stores were opened to the soldiers; in times of drought—and to a lesser extent in any year—the public grain was distributed to the needy. Aside from conspicuous consumption and redistribution, trade was a third use to which the income from taxes was directed. Imported goods—cloth, clothes, other articles of personal adornment, horse furniture, exotic table luxuries such as tea, coffee and sugar, carpets, crockery, gilded swords and rifles—were the badge of noble status and their possession a prerogative by which the rulers distinguished themselves from the commoners. Since the road from Dār Silā to the Mediterranean trade centres was long and arduous, and transport primitive, exports had to be either of small bulk and high value (like ivory, ostrich feathers, skins, spices, rhinoceros horns), or able to take care of their own transport (like cattle and slaves). Ivory and slaves were Dār Silā’s major exports. Since the extent to which these could be extracted from the subjects was limited, the government regularly sent hunting and slave-raiding expeditions to the south. Thus it

12. BERRE 1951: ch. iv; SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 10 Sept. 1916; SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier Colonne du Sila. It was noted that the levy of one zabak of tukkiyya (a unit of homespun cotton cloth) per able-bodied man per year had only been collected from 1911 to 1914, to pay for the tax demanded from Dār Silā by the French. For the customary taxes in Dār Masālit, see KAPTEIJNS 1982: 170-175.

13. BERRE 1951: ch. vi; SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 10 Sept. 1916; SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier Colonne du Sila. In 1916, some of the slave villages on the Bahr Azūm, a very fertile area, had between 500 and 700 huts; a number of villages had 100-200 huts, while most of them had less than one hundred huts. The villages belonged to either the sultan or other dignitaries of State. When the French reconquered Dār Silā in May 1916, many of these slaves fled back to their home countries to the south and west of Dār Silā.


15. For a full analysis of the long-distance trade in this area, see KAPTEIJNS & SPAULDING 1982 (the sumptuary laws are discussed on pp. 31-34).

procured the products which could pay for the imports brought to Goz Beida by the long-distance traders: the Fezzān, ‘Jalāba’ and West Africans. The long-distance trade was regulated by the sultan, who controlled the movements and activities of the traders. It therefore served to perpetuate the privileged position of the ruling class (Kapteijns 1982: 133-142, 178-186; Kapteijns & Spaulding 1982).

The description of the organization of the Dājū State presented above is, in broad outline, valid for the whole period 1870-1909. While the nature of the available sources does not allow a reconstruction of the development of the political and social institutions of precolonial Dār Silā, it is possible to present a more dynamic picture of the eventful political history of the sultanate.

The Age of Expansion

Wedged in between the larger sultanates of Wadai and Dār Für, Dār Silā’s independence was always precarious. Although the Dājū claimed to have migrated to Dār Silā to rid themselves of the Für yoke, the Für sultans looked upon the sultanate as a tributary State. As late as 1912 the sultan of Dar Fūr wrote to Sultan Bakhit of Dār Silā: ‘Undoubtedly you witnessed the earlier days as they were, and it must be known to you that your ancestors and fathers were subject to the government of Dār Fūr, maintaining good relations with it and living with the approval of its rulers in pleasant association with one another.’ (Kapteijns & al-Hādī 1982: 60, 68.

The Dājū sultan politely denied the Für claim by defining their relationship in different and more egalitarian terms: ‘We and you are today neighbours in God, and neighbourliness is sacred. Between us is the Book of God, and the Book is sacred. We are related by marriage, and relationship by marriage is sacred. Moreover, we are sultans, and being a sultan is sacred.’ (Ibid.: 64-65, 71.)

In statements to the British and French colonial governments the Dājū sultan denied the Für claims more explicitly: ‘I am informing your noble government so that you may fully understand that we have been an independent sultanate from the olden days. Until today no power has entered our country and—praised be the Lord and His Prophet—until the present we have remained in this State.’ (Ibid.: 61, 69.) ‘As long as we have been in this, our country, we have not paid taxes to the Für.’

17. Arabic letter from Bakhit Abū Risha to the chief of the French, 8 Ramadan 1330/21 Aug. 1912, ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 189.
Whether one regards Bakhit’s statements as truth or falsehood depends on one’s interpretation of the terms ‘independent’ (sultanah qā’imah bi nafsīhā) and ‘taxes’ (al-mīrī). In the Wadai/Dār Fūr region as elsewhere in the world, some States were more independent than others, and while Dār Silā may have regarded the dīwān (‘tribute’) it paid—now to Dār Fūr, then to Wadai—as presents to rulers of equal status, the larger sultanates regarded it as a symbol of submission. The travel accounts of both al-Tūnisī (ca. 1810) and Nachtigal (1874) refer to Dār Silā as an autonomous State which paid tribute to both big neighbours in turn, or even at the same time. There is no doubt, however, that Dār Silā was a separate State and a sultanate in its own right.18

This situation prevailed until the 1870s, which witnessed a drastic change in the balance of power in the area. In 1874 the Dār Fūr sultanate was conquered from the South by the slave troops of the merchant-king al-Zubayr Rahma, and subsequently incorporated into the Turco-Egyptian (Turkish) Sudan. The Turkish regime, which had been established in the Nile valley as early as 1821, lasted only nine years in the western Sudan. In that period it succeeded in killing a number of Fūr princes and sultans-in-exile, and in alienating the people of the area by its ruthless taxation policy and plunderings. The rulers of the western frontier—the sultans of Dār Qimr and Dār Tāmā, and the chiefs of the Jabal, Erenga, Masālīt and Zaghāwā—offered their submission and had to allow the establishment of a number of Turkish camps, from where Turkish troops collected taxes, amicably or forcibly. Alarmed by the rumours about the Turkish firearms, the sultans of Wadai and Dār Silā anxiously watched their eastern borders (Kapteijns 1982: 76-80). Since the Turkish troops never penetrated further than eastern Dār Tāmā, armed clashes with the sultanate of Wadai were avoided. The Dājū, however, acting upon the principle that the best defence is a good offence, decided to come to the aid of their eastern neighbours, the Sīnyār, and inflicted a number of (inconclusive) defeats upon Turkish garrisons in the area. It was in these campaigns that the future sultan Iṣḥāq Abū Rīsha, nicknamed ‘the Yellow Bull’, earned his spurs.19

The outbreak of the Mahdiyya, the millenarian movement which declared a holy war against the Turkish conquerors in 1882, meant the end of the Turkish regime in the Sudan. Although Khartoum, the capital, was not liberated until 1885, the surrender of Slatin Pasha in December 1883

marked the end of the Turkiyya in Dār Für. The sultans of the West, including those of Wadai and Dār Silā, sent letters of allegiance to the Mahdī. As long as this paper allegiance was all that was required, relations between the sultans and the Mahdist State remained good. However, when the centralizing policy of the Mahdī’s successor (1885-1898) began to have its impact upon the West, the western sultanates closed their ranks against the Mahdist State and staged the ‘revolt of Abū Jummayza’ (1888-89). This revolt, which began as a popular revolt against the misbehaviour of the Mahdist troops in the area, owed its name to a local faqīh (‘holy man’), Abū Jummayza. The latter became the charismatic leader of the revolt not only as the spokesman of the harried masses, but also as the figurehead around whom the sultans of the area could gather without having to subordinate themselves to each other. Under Abū Jummayza’s symbolic leadership the sultans set out to restore the status quo of before 1874, that is to say, among other things, to restore the Für sultanate to the Für sultan-in-exile, Abūl-Khayrāt. Among the eight sultans who were on Abū Jummayza’s side, was the Dājū sultan Ishāq Abū Risha (1879-1900), who sent out an army under the leadership of his son, the future Sultan Bakhīt. The western revolt caused panic in the Mahdist ranks and for a moment jeopardized the Mahdist administration of Dār Für. However, the western armies—no match for the firearms of the Mahdists, demoralized by the death (from smallpox) of their leader and divided as a result of the jealousies between the sultans—were defeated in battle in February 1889. The different ethnic contingents dispersed; Abūl-Khayrāt fled to Dār Silā. Although the Mahdist governor reported Bakhīt Abū Risha among the casualties, Bakhīt returned to Dār Silā unharmed and lived to succeed his father in 1900. The westerners paid dearly for their revolt when a punitive expedition plundered the area already stricken by drought. Only Dār Silā and Wadai, whose borders the Mahdist troops were not allowed to cross, escaped punishment.20

In spite of its military victories the Mahdist State never succeeded in completely subduing the western sultanates, let alone rule them. The power vacuum which had come into being at the fall of the Dār Für sultanate, and which neither Turks nor Mahdists had been able to fill, offered opportunities for political aggrandizement to the sultans of Wadai and Dār Silā.

When Dār Für was conquered in 1874, the sultanate fell into its constituent parts, mainly ethnic groups, none of which was a match either to Dār Für’s old rival, Wadai, or to its successors, the Turkish and Mahdist regimes. Alienated by both Turks and Mahdists, the rulers of Dār

Für's western border turned to Wadai for protection. Wadai welcomed the opportunity to extend its sphere of influence and to create a series of buffer States along its eastern frontier. On condition that the small States recognized its overlordship and paid a small tribute, Wadai was ready to restrain its own ambitions in the area, to allow independence in domestic affairs, to act as arbiter in inter-State and inter-tribal disputes, and to offer support against outside threats.

The Mahdiyya was one such threat, and the Mahdist administration was well aware of the role which Wadai played in the affairs of the western frontier. The Borqâwî, as the sultan of Wadai was called in the Mahdist correspondence, was denounced for inciting the westerners to rebellion, for supplying them with men and arms, and for following a policy of territorial expansion: 'He [the sultan of Wadai] has been tempted into something which could not be held against him before, nor against his ancestors who have been at the head of the Borqû: taking possession of the western districts which are an integral part of Dâr Fûr.'

Like Wadai, Dâr Silã attempted to expand eastward into the troubled provinces of the old Dâr Fûr sultanate. When the Dâr Fûr State began to totter, Sultan Muhammad Bûâd (1851-1879) first conquered Dâr Fongoro in the southeast, and subsequently annexed Dâr Gâlîîge and Dâr Sînyâr, which had all been integral parts of Dâr Fûr. During the Mahdiyya, when Sultan Abû Rîsha occupied the Dâjû throne, Dâr Silã tried to bring the whole area southwest of Jabal Marra into its sphere of influence. Two (undated) letters which Abû Rîsha wrote to the local chiefs of the area leave no doubt about his political ambitions:

'Know that you were formerly subject to the people of the East, but subsequently I have taken possession of my whole dâr.'

'We inform you that my son Ulma is coming to you with my letter. Don't ever trouble him, for he is the go-between between me and you.

You know, my sons, that this is how it goes in this world; formerly you had your own sultan, that of Dâr Fûr, but now things have fallen apart and you have become kingless, like goats without a shepherd. Everybody is raiding you, the Masalât, the nomads, and our people as well. Now I have chosen you for myself; you have the amân [promise of security] of God, the Prophet and myself. No one will interfere with you, and if anyone attacks you, you must let me know, for I can deal with him.

However, on the arrival of my messengers, you who are men-

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21. CRO, Mahdiyya 1/13, III, doc. 275, 8 Ramadân 1309/9 Apr. 1890.
22. For details, see SIMONET 1914; BERRE 1934; ch. III; SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila. KAPELJNS (1982) deals with the two different traditions about when and how Dâr Sila was subjected to Dâr Sila.
23. Sultan Ishâq Abû Rîsha to a number of local chiefs (mentioned by name and including the shartay of Zami and Kullî), CRO, Mahdiyya 2/5, I, doc. 46 (no date).
tioned in the letter and all the people of the districts close to you, who are with you, summon everybody and read my letter. All of you without exception must rise and come to me, together and without delay, if you want peace and quiet. By God's will you will find tranquillity.

If you refuse to come to me and disobey my present order, my sons, don't blame me but blame yourselves. Beware of disobedience and stubbornness. Greetings in conclusion.'

The period 1874-1898, therefore, which was a time of troubles for the other frontier States, was for Där Sila an age of expansion. Not only did it increase its territory as a result of its conquests and annexations, but also its population. Many slaves from the South were settled in villages along the Bahr Azūm and elsewhere; many refugees from Där Für—sometimes complete tribes—were given a habitat along the eastern border, and in and around Goz Beida. The town attracted many other foreigners as well. Large parties of pilgrims, who found the road through Där Für too hazardous or closed, turned to the southern route which led east by way of Goz Beida and Kafakingi. Aside from the pilgrims, many foreign traders were drawn in by the plentiful supply and low price of slaves.25

Emboldened by its success, Där Sila even tried to shake off the political and economic yoke of Wadai. Two incidents, recorded in the Mahdist correspondence and preserved in oral tradition, illustrate this. In the 1880s the Dâjû sultan tried to open up a trade route to North Africa which would bypass Wadai; in 1881 Abū Risha defied his Wadaian overlord by refusing to give up the booty which he had captured from the Fūr, and to which the king of Wadai claimed a right. Both attempts failed. Chastised by the Wadaian army, Abū Risha realized that he, just like the other frontier States, had to recognize Wadai's suzerainty. In 1896, after the Dâjû war with the new sultanate of Där Masālît, he promptly obeyed orders from Wadai to release his distinguished war captive, the queen-mother of the Masālît.26 In general, however, Wadai

24. Sultan Ishaq Abū Risha to shartay Riziq, Hāmid Shūk al-Balā and Ahmad 'Aqīd, CRO, Mahdiyya 2/5, II, doc. 185 (no date). Note also CRO, Mahdiyya 1/13, I, doc. 60, 11 Sha'bān 1308/17 Aug. 1890, in which Mahmūd Ahmad reported to the khālīfa that Abū Risha had appointed a man called Adam Mīr Ya'qūb of the Fūr as sultan of the area west of Jabal Marra, and that he had written to the inhabitants that he had taken possession of the area.

25. For the slaves, see Berre 1951: ch. iv; SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila; Crosen, 23 June 1910, SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier Colonne du Sila. For the refugees, see Rémond, 7 March 1917, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2 on the Banī Ḥalba. For the pilgrims, see Birks 1978: 103-104; CRO, Darfur 33/169, July 1911. For pilgrims and traders, see Simonet 1914; ANSOM, Tchad I, dossier 7, Jan. 1912.

26. For the trade route, see Kapteijns & al-Hādī 1982: 58. For the war with Där Für, see Kapteijns 1982: 132. For the war with the Masālît, see ibid.: 131. The Masālît took advantage of the power vacuum which emerged in 1874 by creating a sultanate.
and Dăr Silă operated hand in glove in this period. Dăr Silă’s relations with its other (former) overlords, the Für sultans-in-exile, were in contrast often strained.

What passed between the Dâjû sultan and Hârûn, the Für ‘shadow sultan’ during the Turkiyya (1874-1879), is not known. Hârûn came to the borders of Dăr Silă before fleeing to Dăr Qimr, where he was finally overtaken by the Turks and killed. Was Hârûn refused refuge in Dăr Silă or did he himself prefer to turn away from safety and to go north? Hârûn’s successor, ’Abd Allâh Dûd Banga (1879-1884), disputed Abû Risha his conquest of Dăr Sinyâr and Dăr Galfige. Hotly pursued by the Mahdist army, Dûd Banga had nothing but words to fight with, and soon fled to Omdurman where he was kept a hostage.27 A later ‘shadow sultan’, Abûl-Khayrât Ibrahim (1889-1891), was initially on good terms with Dăr Silă. He took refuge with the Dâjû at least twice, once before and once after the revolt of Abû Jummayza, by which he hoped to recover his throne. He was given a sizable plot of land and received a Dâjû princess in marriage, but in the end he fell afoul of Abû Risha, was defeated in the battle of Korlali and driven back to Dăr Für.28 The incident was described by Bakhît Abû Risha in a letter to the French:

‘In the time of Abû Risha, Abûl-Khayrât, sultan of Für, was expelled by Jânû and took refuge with us. We intervened between him and Jânû, and Jânû ran away and fled from fighting us. We treated Abûl-Khayrât generously, as our Prophet Muhammad told us [...]. We treated him perfectly well, but he was nevertheless out to destroy us and to take up abode in our country. He assembled his armies from among the Für, the [Ma’salât, the] Runga, and all the nomad tribes: the Banî Halba, the Fârâtîm, the Terjam, and the Salâmât, living in their midst. They contended with us in battle. My father, Sultan Abû Risha, sent me out to fight them. I came upon them in Korlali, on a Friday morning. When the [two] groups met and the parties clashed, and many were killed on both sides, Abûl-Khayrât and his party fled and ran away to their country.’29

Soon afterwards Abûl-Khayrât was killed, according to some by the hand of his distant cousin and successor, ’Ali Dînâr (1891). The latter deserted by most of his adherents, decided to throw in his lot with the Mahdist State rather than with Wadai and the western front. This was particularly unpopular with the Masâlit and the Dâjû, at whose

27. For Hârûn, see Kapteijns 1982: 77; CRO, Civ. Sec. 122/1/4. For Dûd Banga, see Simonet 1914.
29. Bakhît to the chief of the French, 21 Aug. 1912 (in Arabic), ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 189. Jânû was the Mahdist governor of Dăr Für from 1888 to 1891.
hands he suffered a fate similar to that of Abū’l-Khayrāt (al-Ḥasan [1970]: 183-185; Kapteijns 1982: 119): ‘The same [occurred] with ‘Āli Dīnār. He even left his horse behind and fled walking on foot. We took from them 200 rifles, seven kettledrums, a number of women with their children, even the knife on his forearm, even the teakettle and teacups, his crockery and all that he possessed. They escaped with nothing but their lives.’ (See fn. 29.)

Whether ‘Āli Dīnār was despoiled because he had decided to join the Mahdiyya, or whether he joined the Mahdiyya because he was despoiled of all he had, cannot be known with certainty. What is certain, however, is that the former Fūr overlords made unreliable protégés, and that the former vassal, Dār Silā, with its Drang nach Osten into Fūr territory, was a capricious and imperious protector.

The Advent of Colonial Rule

The year 1898, like 1874, marked a watershed in the history of the Wadai/ Dār Fūr region. In that year the British ‘reconquest’ of the Nile valley put an end to the Mahdist State and ushered in a new colonial period. The government of Dār Fūr was taken over by the Fūr prince and ‘shadow sultan’, ‘Āli Dīnār (1898-1910), whom the Anglo-Egyptian government recognized as an autonomous ruler paying a nominal tribute. The same year witnessed the death of Sultan Yūsuf of Wadai (1874-1898), which plunged Wadai into civil war. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Dūd Murra (1902-1909), who emerged victoriously from this war, was soon preoccupied with the French advance upon his western border.

When Sultan Bakhīt Abū Rīsha succeeded his father to the throne of Dār Silā in 1900, therefore, the international situation had drastically changed and was in flux. The restored Dār Fūr sultanate on its eastern border put an end to Dār Silā’s eastward expansion and formed a threat—admittedly distant and as yet mainly ideological—to its independence. In the north, Bakhīt had to keep a close watch over the civil war in Wadai, in order to lend support to whichever pretender would win the throne and to make the best of any opportunity which would allow him to loosen the ties of dependence. Dār Silā was not in direct danger from the British (who had conquered the Nile valley), nor from the French (who did not conquer Wadai until 1909), but both powers were already forces to be reckoned with, if only to wield against Dār Silā’s imperious neighbours, Dār Fūr and Wadai.

In spite of the fact that the Dājū, before ‘Āli Dīnār’s return to Dār Fūr, had supported another Fūr pretender, who had subsequently been deposed by ‘Āli, relations between the new Fūr sultan and Dār Silā were initially good. ‘Āli Dīnār wrote to Abū Rīsha to thank him for ruling southwestern Dār Fūr during the times of trouble, and to announce that he would now take over the administration of the area himself. The
two agreed upon their common border, which seems to have left Dar Sinyâr and Dâr Fongoro in Dar Silâ (Simonet 1914). 'Ali Dinâr moreover received in marriage a daughter of Abû Risha, Fâtimâ Amm Raqîq, to seal the pact,\(^{30}\) and the fact that he accepted the position of son-in-law, which traditionally gave many obligations and very few rights, may have reassured Abû Risha. However, 'Ali Dinâr’s humility seems to have been just a tactics to gain time. Once he had secured his throne, and after he had defeated the upstart sultan of the Masâliṭ in battle (in 1905), he changed his policy in word and deed. In his letters, he began to stress that Dâr Silâ was historically a Für dependency and that its sultan should therefore look to al-Fâshîr for guidance. His deeds were even more offensive, particularly when he began to harass parties of traders and pilgrims coming from Dâr Silâ, even when these parties included Bakhît’s own sons and were heading for the Holy Places. Bakhît, who saw Dâr Silâ’s communications with the outside world threatened, wrote to the British stating his country’s independence in unambiguous terms and requesting the British to remove 'Ali Dinâr’s roadblocks from the trade routes leading through southern Dâr Für and the Bahîr al-Ghazâl (Kapteijns & al-Hâdî 1982: 61-62, 66; Kapteijns 1982: 201-202). However, from 1909 onwards Bakhît’s hopes and fears came to focus upon the French, who conquered Wadai in June of that year.

There are two indications that Dâr Silâ tried to take advantage of the French invasion to loosen its ties with Wadai. Just before the conquest of Abesher it encroached upon Wadai’s monopoly over the ivory of Dâr Kibet, which so angered Sultan Dâd Murra that the two countries were on the verge of war when the French moved in. Moreover, rather than tying his fate to that of Wadai, the Dâjû sultan bypassed Abesher and sent a letter of submission directly to Fort-Lamy. He did this before he paid allegiance to the new puppet king of Wadai (Adam Asil), and before the first French lieutenant had visited Goz Beida.\(^{31}\) The French, however, treated Dâr Silâ as a dependency of Wadai, and this may have contributed to Dâr Silâ’s change of heart about them, which threw the second French expedition visiting Goz Beida into panic (Berre 1951: ch. iv) and called for immediate reinforcements from Abesher. The treaty Bakhît was forced to sign, however, was a treaty with the French:

‘From the Commander of the Faithful, Sultan Muḥammad Bakhît, son of Sultan Iṣḥâq Abû Risha. The reason for this document

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31. Berre 1951: ch. iv. Bakhît repeatedly expressed his wish to deal with the French directly: see Vasseur, 6 Nov. 1909, SHAT, Tchadal, carton 3, dossier 2; Bakhît to the French, Rabî’ I 1329/March 1911 (in Arabic), ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 187.
comes from the French: between us and them peace (amân), a
treaty and covenant have been concluded. There will be no war
between us and them ever. All this [has been agreed upon] with
Governor Captain (Qâbilayn), the wazîr of France.

The condition or conditions which exist between us and them
are:

To refrain from war with the tribes, except with the one that
attacks us, and [even then] with their [French] permission.

To rule justly as God—Elevated is He—has ordained; we will
abstain from deceit

The French will be the protectors and we the rulers in our
country.

The roads will be open for the traders and for all the commoners.
Slaves will not be sold anymore.

We will keep the firearms in our own possession except when
they are needed to kill a thief or aggressor.

Whenever we are harmed by neighbours, we will not attack
them unless with their [French] permission.

Whenever [the] Captain wants to count the people, he has my
permission to do so.’ (Kapteijns 1982: 209; translated from the
original Arabic.)

The treaty did not mention the tax Dâr Silâ was to pay. It was fixed
in money (5,000 riyâl or 15,000 francs per year), but was paid mainly in
livestock and sometimes in grain and ivory (see infra: 465).

Bakhît, who acted upon the understanding that he would rule a vir-
tually independent Dâr Silâ under the protection of a strong but distant
overlord, can hardly have welcomed the treaty. Its terms, however,
which neither he nor the French expected to see enforced immediately,
threw less doubt upon his policy towards the French than did the latter’s
defeat in battle at the hands of the Masâlît in January 1910. Distressed
that he might have been betting on the wrong horse, Bakhît approached
the sultan of the Masâlît assuring him of Dâjû support in future actions
against the French. At the same time, he wrote an angry letter to the
puppet sultan of Wadai, whom he reproached for having dissuaded him
from attacking the French detachment in Goz Beida in November 1909
(Kapteijns 1982: 212). Neither Bakhît nor the other frontier sultans,
however, attempted a rapprochement with Sultan ‘Ali Dinâr, whose
irreconcilable attitude towards the French made him a natural ally.
Apparently they feared and mistrusted the ambitious sultan of Dâr Fûr
as much as they did the French. The French soon recovered from their
unexpected and unnecessary defeat. In 1910 and 1911, they won a
number of battles in Dâr Masâlît, held a number of punitive expeditions,
and suppressed a serious revolt in eastern Wadai. With the surrender of
Dûd Murra, the deposed sultan of Wadai, in 1912 all effective resistance
against the impositions of their rule came to an end.
While submission to the French delivered the frontier States from the violence of the French armies, it opened the door to a host of unfamiliar and burdensome demands. In the short run the hardships caused by French demands were overshadowed by the consequences of the wrath of 'Ali Dinar, who used military and economic weapons to punish the sultanates for deserting what he regarded as his cause. However, in contrast to the small States to its north—the Masalit, Qimir and Tamara—Dar Sila kept largely out of harm's way. The French, afraid that Dar Sila might become another Dar Masalit, treated it with gloves, contenting themselves with regular protestations of loyalty and a partial payment of the imposed tax. Only in 1912, when Goz Beida received a French garrison with a resident French captain, French rule came to weigh more heavily upon the Daju. As for the Fur, Dar Sila was distant enough to be spared the violence of 'Ali Dinars armies. Even the boycott of the long-distance trade with North Africa, engineered by 'Ali Dinar and the Sanusi shaykh in the Libyan desert, had little effect in Dar Sila and, if anything, increased the volume of trade along Dar Sila's trade route to the east, which led through the British Bahr al-Ghazal. In the years following 1912, Dar Sila's relations with Dar Fur gradually improved, reaching a climax in 1916; just before both sultans were driven from their capitals, by the British troops in the case of 'Ali Dinar, and by the French troops in the case of Bakhit.33

After the advent of the French garrison in Goz Beida (and in reaction to it), a strong anti-French faction arose, which pressed for war with the French and had strong pro-Fur sympathies. This war-party, led by Bakhit's son, Dhahab, so much whipped up Daju sentiment against the infidel invaders that it came several times very close to leading a general attack of Daju tribesmen against them. On at least one such occasion Fur involvement was evident, when a trading mission from Dar Fur showed up with a surprising number of slave attendants, all armed to the teeth.34 Sultan Bakhit was wavering. In his letters to the French he denied any association with 'Ali Dinar in either past or present and protested his loyalty to the French:

'If you ask about 'Ali Dinar, his father did not have the status of sultan; but as for myself, from Sultan Bokdoru the title of sultan has come down in a continuous line from X to Y to Sultan Bakhit. In view of this, how can I—one of the sons of sultans who have

32. As Largeau put it: 'Autant de coups de fusils tirés au Sila, autant d'arguments au Caire contre notre occupation' (Berre 1951: 44). See also SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila.
34. Berre 1951: ch. v (on Feb. 1915); Gillet, 25 March 1912, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2. For other panics, see SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila.
succeeded each other in one continuous line—how can I be subject to the son of a commoner?\textsuperscript{35}

'I will not betray the French, for I asked you, wrote to you and dealt with you before you asked, wrote to and made a covenant with me. This [betrayal] would not be right and does not root itself in the mind of a wise man; it points at the false claims of oppressors who allege that I am conspiring with 'Ali Dïnâr. The Fûr and I have been neighbours, and a great battle has taken place between us so that on our side men were killed and on their side many more. We took all their weapons—you have seen the weapons with your [own] eyes—and left them neither woman nor horse nor anything, so that 'Ali Dïnâr fled on foot.

How can we, in view of this hostility, join forces with him and deceive you, while you have never killed any of my men, have never taken any of my women, and have never harmed me? Particularly you, Colonel Largeau, have treated me well. That is unforgettable. We have never heard from you a word that was false or not serious. God bless you; God bless you. I will not fall so low that I would put you to shame in front of the French.'\textsuperscript{36}

Bakhit's correspondence with 'Ali Dïnâr—preserved in particular for the years 1914 and 1915—shows how Bakhit, tactfully but uncompromisingly, continued to deny 'Ali Dïnâr's claims of suzerainty. It also shows how closely the ruling houses of Dâr Silâ and Dâr Fûr were linked; alongside matters of government and kingship, and along with private business arrangements, figure the homesick Fûr princesses in Goz Beida and Dajû royal wives sending presents (of slaves and livestock) to their beloved daughters in al-Fâshir (Kapteijns & al-Hâdî 1982). Relations between the two sultans seem to have returned to what they had been a decade before, in particular when the French, in August 1914, evacuated the garrison of Goz Beida in connection with their war effort against the Germans in Cameroun. The tone of Bakhit's letters to the Fûr sultan did not become submissive until 1915, just before the French prepared to reconquer Dâr Silâ by force of arms. When the French invasion materialized in 1916 and Bakhit fled to Dâr Fûr, however, 'Ali Dïnâr was a fugitive himself and could not be of help to him. Bakhit returned to the borders of his kingdom where he was captured.\textsuperscript{37} With his exile to Fort-Lamy the precolonial period in Dâr Silâ inexorably came to an end.

\textsuperscript{35} Bakhit to the chief of the French, 21 Aug. 1912 (in Arabic), ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 189.
\textsuperscript{36} Bakhit to the colonel, the representative of the French government, 19 Sha'bân 1330/8 Aug. 1912, ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 188.
\textsuperscript{37} For a detailed account of the reconquest, see SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier Colonne du Sila; and HILAIRE 1917.
The Initial Impact of Colonial Rule

Until the arrival of the garrison in 1912, Sultan Bakhit was pleased about having had the foresight to contact the French himself and not too worried about the treaty he had signed. It was disconcerting that the new overlords were not Muslims and operated according to a code foreign to him, but as long as they were distant overlords these novelties could safely be ignored. With the arrival of the garrison a more direct confrontation became inevitable. The presence of the foreign soldiers in their newly built fort was a serious blow to Bakhit's prestige and a check upon his actions. On his shoulders rested the odious task of conveying French demands to his followers and subjects, and of showing at least a semblance of enforcing them. Good relations with the French came to depend on whether he obeyed summons to present himself to the commander of the post, ignored the religious indignation of his faqih, acquiesced in losing his popularity with his subjects to his uncompromising son Dhahab, and sacrificed the interests of his relatives and dignitaries to the French. An incident in the marketplace of Goz Beida epitomizes Bakhit's quandary. A French lieutenant who had the arrogance and bad taste to do his market-shopping on horseback was attacked by a Dâjû man. The latter failed to put the lieutenant to the knife, but succeeded in indecently exposing him before being caught. Bakhit did not hesitate and had the man, who was the husband of his sister, publicly executed.38

Bakhit not only alienated his entourage; he also began to lose control over the nomad tribes, which tried to play the French against him and besieged the French commander with complaints about his rule. Another group, which enjoyed special French protection, was the host of foreigners (mostly West Africans) who came to Goz Beida in the wake of the troops in order to cater to French needs.39 Goz Beida became a 'Tower of Babel' (as a French officer expressed it), that is to say a foreign enclave that was in practice, if not officially, out of Bakhit's control.40 Finally there were the slaves. The French may not have abolished slavery in this period and may have reluctantly condoned the slave trade, but they did establish precedents which made it quite clear to the Dâjû nobility that disciplining their slaves was becoming more and more difficult. When ḥababa Koma, a royal wife, tried to recover slaves who

38 Guyader, 4 March 1912, SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila.
39 SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 11 July 1911. Note that Bakhit forbade the Arab tribes to participate in the slave trade (or slave-raiding) in Dār Kutī and Dār Runga, which were his monopoly. A report noted that the Fezzān, 'Jallābā' and Peul were happy to see the French garrison arrive (ANSOM, Tchad 1, dossier 7, June 1912). Note in this context also that, when the puppet king of Wadai was deposed in 1912, a board of four foreign traders and three foreign faqih was appointed to rule in his stead (SHAT, Tchad, carton 11, dossier 3).
40 Rémont, 10 Sept. 1916, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2; SIMONET 1914.
had run away, the French declared them free and refused to let her take action to recover them.\textsuperscript{41}

Bakhît’s submission to the French not only eroded his authority over his people, but also sapped his material wealth. The largest French demand was the annual tax he had to pay. This tax (\textit{al-kharāj}) had been fixed at 15,000 francs, but in reality Bakhît had made an oral agreement that he would pay half of his revenue from the animal tax, that is to say half of (roughly) one third of the animal wealth of his subjects. In 1912, the French reconsidered their policy, and Bakhît wrote them a letter to complain and explain:

‘The reason of this letter is the tax which exists between us and you. In the past [the] Colonel fixed it for us at 5,000 riyāl and we wrote you a letter because riyāl are not used by us. Subsequently you fixed our tax at one hundred excellent horses. Know that this is not part of the stipulations agreed upon with Colonels Largeau and Millot.’

All the French officials who came here or corresponded with us had only one word, Bakhît continued: ‘namely that we take one cow from [every] thirty, one goat from [every] thirty, and one donkey from [every] thirty; this is the produce of our country. Subsequently we take half for ourselves and send half to the rulers. This is what we agreed upon with them, and they told us: [...] no one will come to you for the sake of that [the tax], but only for the sake of greeting you. All this is known to God [...] Know that my country is small and that I cannot raise what you have imposed upon me [...] Why do you impose upon me something that I cannot comply with? Accept from me what we are able to raise: every year one hundred cows will come to you and one thousand goats; that is what we propose, in accordance with the well-known stipulation.

Let it be known that our country yields to us only cows from the nomads, and goats, donkeys and \textit{tukkiyya} from the Dājū, nothing more. Taxes can only come from what exists (\textit{al-kharāj mā yakhruj illsā min al-mawjūd}).’\textsuperscript{42}

If one realizes that one cow was valued at about 30 or 35 francs, Bakhît’s offer might seem to be quite reasonable.

The tax was not Bakhît’s only financial obligation to the French. Before and after 1912 he had to provide food, transport and accommodation to reconnaissance expeditions which toured the country to describe it geographically, and to locate and count its villages. He catered only temporarily for the garrison, which soon grew its own crops, bought grain

\textsuperscript{41} Simonet, 2 Dec. 1912, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2.
\textsuperscript{42} Bakhît to the French, 18 Rabi’ I 1329/19 March 1911, ANSOM, Afrique VI, dossier 187. ‘For \textit{tukkiyya}, see supra, fn. 12.'
in the market or requisitioned it from the Dājū. But Bakhīt did send occasional gifts of honey and butter, as his own Sudanic political code required.43

More important than these taxes and services was—from hindsight—the revenue which Bakhīt lost not to the French but as a result of their presence. The treaty had stipulated that ‘the roads will be open for the traders and all the commoners’. This was—whether the French realized it or not—a revolutionary demand. It officially put an end to royal control of the long-distance trade, which had until then provided the ruling class with the prestige goods distinguishing it from the commoners. Initially the loss of revenue in taxes, tolls and greeting-gifts traditionally paid by the traders may have been the most obvious result of the French measure. Soon its social impact made itself felt; when imports began to be sold and bought by anyone who had wealth (and particularly cash), the garrison and the new foreign middle class which grew up in its shadow came to possess and even to control the traditional emblems of noble status. This result of colonial occupation was not unique in Dār Silā. In neighbouring Dār Masālīt, the British occupation created a similar foreign enclave which introduced the beginnings of a cash economy into a country used to barter and to royally regulated foreign trade.

‘The immediate result [of the introduction of coined money] has been a 50% depreciation in the cash value of “tokaki” [tukkīyyā]. It is now practically true that nothing can be bought here except for cash. The standard of living has completely altered. The households of the well-paid soldiers and police are examples which give rise, in the other inhabitants, to many “wants”, formerly unfelt, which the new market, with a score of foreign traders, can supply. Those who formerly wore homespun now call for Manchester goods. Tea, coffee, sugar and other foods are craved for by people, who had barely tasted any of them a few years ago.’ (Kapteijns 1982: 254-255.)

If this was to some extent true for the commoners, it was even more true for the nobility and the sultan. While Bakhīt’s income fell in value, he had to keep up with the conspicuous consumption of the nouveaux riches. The only solution to the sultan’s penury, a salary in cash, never seems to have been considered by the French.

Slave-raiding and trading, and cattle-raiding beyond the State’s borders were other traditional sources of income threatened by the French. However, although the French presence in Goz Beida—where all news and gossip came together—cramped Bakhīt’s style, the raiding and trad-

43. For the gifts, see SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 19 Aug. 1912. Bakhīt also had to collect firearms and present them to the French commander (Vasseur, 29 June 1909, ibid.).
ing of slaves and cattle continued until after the reconquest of 1916. Bakhit gained an even firmer grip upon the slave trade, which became centred upon his palace, whence the caravans of slave merchants were escorted to the State's borders. However, the new urban middle class which was subservient to the French had no choice but to demand cash rather than slaves for its goods. The extent to which the nobility could use slaves to buy imports therefore became more limited.

The French did not always recognize the gravity of the impact of their demands. They did not realize that their treatment of Bakhit undermined the only possible alternative to direct military administration. They did not seem (or care) to take into account that the agricultural surplus of Där Silä was limited and that diverting its flow upset the traditional relations of authority. They were not aware of the revolutionary impact of their demand 'to open the roads' and of the emergence of the small foreign merchant class which they brought into being. The lack of Arabic knowledge of most of the commanders in Goz Beida made them even more distrustful of Bakhit than the latter's opportunism and wavering justified. With the exception of the policy towards slavery, and with the exception of the odd commander (such as Captain Simonet), French policy showed little vision. This lack of insight—so obvious from hindsight—may have partly resulted from the limited vision and training of the French military personnel. Its major cause, however, in the prevailing ideology of the colonial age, which presented the conquerors of Africa as the exponents of a great civilizing mission rather than as the carriers of capitalism.

Throughout the Där Fûr/Wadai region, under different (British and French) political regimes, the economic developments of the first two decades of the 20th century pointed in the same direction: the introduction of a cash economy and the incorporation of the precolonial States

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44 SHAT Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2, 11 July 1911.
45 For the lack of Arabic knowledge, see Mongelous, 19 Aug, 1912 and 8 July 1913, SHAT, Tchad, carton 3, dossier 2. For Captain Simonet’s insight, see Simonet, 19 July 1914, ibid. As for slavery, it is interesting that the French acted slowly and cautiously when they recognized the significance of their reforms. They freed individual slaves who ran away from their masters; they freed the seventy-five slaves of the Banî Halba who had stayed behind when their masters fled to Där Fûr (see ibid., 23 Feb. 1917). But even after the reconquest, the governor of Goz Beida rejected the request for freedom of the slaves of the nobility. He advised them ‘à continuer comme par le passé à travailler pour leurs maîtres, moyennant les garanties suivantes: défense de vente, défense de séparer les ménages et d’enlever les enfants, et suppression des mauvais traitements’ (Berre 1951: 59, quoting Rémont’s monthly report for August 1916); he added: ‘Que peuvent-ils désirer de plus pour l’instant [...]? Beaucoup sont propriétaires de bœufs et d’ânes.’ (Ibid.: 59-60.)
into the world economic system dominated by Europe. In Dar Sila the precolonial (and precapitalist) system was given a reprieve from August 1914 (the evacuation of Goz Beida) to May 1916 (the reconquest). After the reconquest, however, the same process (but accelerated) was set into motion again.

Although the availability of sugar, tea, cloth, etc. was one factor which drew people into the money economy, the most potent force was—in Dar Sila as elsewhere in the region—the introduction of taxes in cash. As early as 1909, Colonel Millot had insisted that taxes be paid in cash, since this was ‘le moyen le plus efficace pour déterminer l'activité des transactions et stimuler la torpeur du contribuable’. However, demanding that people pay in money did not give them money to pay with. In 1917, one year after taxes in cash had been introduced, it was reported that ‘l'argent est encore rare dans le Sila, celui dépensé par les troupes étant presque entièrement drainé par les commerçants’. Whether money was scarce or not, the Daj had to pay. Those who had an agricultural surplus (grain, livestock, cotton cloth) obtained money for taxes by selling this surplus in the market at whatever price the particular circumstances of supply and demand would dictate. Since they usually did not sell until the day to pay taxes had drawn near and the demand for money was great, they usually paid dearly for it.

The new taxation weighed heavily upon the people, partly because the traditional taxes continued to be levied on the side but mostly because it was rigid and did not have the built-in famine relief of the traditional taxes. This rigidity had grave consequences in times of crisis, such as the natural disasters and crop failures of the 1920s and 1930s, and the economic recession of the early 1930s. The inhabitants of Dar Sila

46. For an analysis of these developments in Dar Masālīt and western Dar Fur in general, see Kapteijns 1982: 238-277.
47. Millot, Situation Ouadai 1909, SHAT, Tchad, carton 8, dossier 2. Note that taxation was introduced in Wadai as early as 1911; it was mentioned as one of the causes of the Kodoi rebellion of June to August 1911 (Larueau, ANSOM, Tchad I, dossier 7).
49. SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila; ‘Ce n’est qu’au moment de l’impôt qu'on peut voir les sommes d’argent circuler sur les marchés.’ For details on the taxes levied in 1916-17, see Rémont, 10 Sept. 1916 and 23 Feb. 1917, SHAT, Tchad, carton 4, dossier 2.
50. For an explanation, see Kapteijns 1982: 262-264. The most important features of the old system were the following: (1) below a certain minimum, crops were tax-exempt. (2) Taxes were levied from the harvested crop; that is to say that taxes were automatically reduced or remitted when the crops failed. Bakhti's statement that 'taxes can only come from what exists' (cf. supra: 465) must be seen in this light. (3) In case of drought or famine, the government opened its reserves of tax grain to the people. In contrast, the French raised taxes throughout the period 1917-1931, irrespective of the droughts and epidemics that took place. Only in 1932, the third year of continuous crop failures and a year in which the world recession had made money dear, did they distribute food and sowing grain (SHAT, Tchad, carton 9, dossier Carnet du poste Sila).
responded in different ways to the new demands for cash. They tried to grow cash crops of chillies, onions or tobacco. They tried to borrow money from the traders, although the latter tended to use their economic leverage over them to increase their political power (Berre 1951: ch. vii). They left the country and fled to Dār Fūr, where taxes in cash were late in coming and, when introduced, remained lower. They tried to work for wages. Since wage labour was hard to come by in Dār Silā, they migrated east to work on the cotton plantations of the British Nile valley; they went west to work at the French railroads; or were enrolled in the French army. Until this day, labour migration has continued to be a dominant characteristic of the economy of Dār Silā and its neighbours.

The detailed analysis of the impact of colonial rule in Dār Silā lies beyond the scope of this essay. However, it is evident from the above that by 1916 colonial rule had begun to revolutionize the political and economic order of this distant corner of the French Empire, with grim consequences for rulers and commoners alike.

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