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THE TOPOSA QUESTION, 1912-1927

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The modern history of the Toposa who inhabit the wastelands of the southeast corner of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan remains virtually unknown in African historiography. This state of affairs is not surprising: during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the Toposa never attracted their own anthropologist, so their culture history was the literary monopoly of Captain Geoffrey Redaway King, District Commissioner Eastern District, Equatoria Province.¹

While King's monopoly consisted of a brief description of Toposa society in 1938, little else was published, and the record was comprised of official correspondence concerned primarily with the arrival of the incomers, African and European alike, in the twentieth century.² Nor does the situation improve after Sudan's independence in 1956. For 16 years (1956-1972) disturbances virtually closed the Southern Sudan, preventing scholarly inquiry at a time when historical research was flourishing elsewhere throughout Africa. Moreover, what documentation exists in British archives is fragmentary, while much of the local materials in the district files in Torit, Nagichot, and Kapoeta has been lost during the troubles in the Southern Sudan. Those documents that remain in the Regional Archives at Juba and the Central Records Office, Khartoum, are more numerous but hitherto have not been used to construct a mosaic of events in the remote and isolated Toposa region in the first half of the twentieth century. To compound these disadvantages the Toposa Question consists of a maze of competing complexities through which the researcher seeks in vain to apply widely accepted interpretations to explain the interaction between the Toposa and their African and British neighbors.

Relations between the Toposa and the nearby Africans--the Turkana, the Murle, the Dassanetch, the Nyangatom, and the Tirma--are disarmingly practical, revolving around cattle, grazing rights, and waterholes. Those between the Toposa and the Ethiopians and poachers are more complicated but concern themselves principally with ivory, firearms, and territorial claims. Toposa-British relations unfortunately are not so simple and refuse to conform to the interpretation of African-European interaction put forward during the past decade by a host of the historians of Africa. This interpretation deals with the role of African resistance as a form of proto-nationalism which provides the link between the original reaction to European encroachment and modern mass nationalism. Indeed this interpretation has been refined to distinguish "primary" and "secondary" resistance conducted by a new class of rulers and new institutions which derived from traditional African society to defy the Europeans. In their reaction to British encroachment the Toposa simply do not fit this model. They resisted, but their struggle represented no link with modern Sudanese nationalism. Moreover, their resistance was led by the traditional leaders employing traditional means. No new rulers, no new institutions emerged in the confrontation with the British, to whom the Toposa were little more than a nuisance when measured against the larger aims of imperial policy. A remote and unremunerative nuisance they may have been, but they became a problem that could not be ignored.³

While the British administration doggedly sought to consolidate their control in the heartland of the Southern Sudan east and west of the Bahr al-Jabal, they had wanted to have nothing to do with the Toposa. They were no threat to British rule at Mongalla, their country lay

beyond the mountains, and yet the British authorities could not overlook them indefinitely. Benign indifference changed to frustration and then to outrage as the complexities of the Toposa Question inexorably committed the British to an unwanted forward course in southeastern Mongalla. Hostilities between the Toposa and the Longarim, already under British protection, could not be tolerated. Hostilities between the Toposa and the Turkana were another matter. Unlike their skirmishes with the Longarim over cattle and women, Toposa warfare with the powerful Turkana was a life and death struggle for control of the sparse grazing lands and the vital waterholes in a region experiencing increasing desiccation. Moreover, the Turkana fell within the sphere of influence of Kenya and Uganda just as the Toposa lived within the authority of the Sudan Government. Any clash between these two orbits immediately found rival supporters in the Colonial and Foreign Offices in London. It would have been difficult to remain indifferent to intertribal conflict, but quite impossible when the southeastern Sudan was overrun by Ethiopian and Swahili adventurers and poachers from the highlands.

The poachers were mostly Swahili, tough customers, playing off one tribe against another, introducing large numbers of firearms, and in general engaging in activities repugnant to British sensibilities. They operated out of Maji in southwestern Ethiopia. Penefather Holland, the British Consul in Maji, described the town in 1928 as a community in which the authorities, "are opposed to, and do not recognize, their own Central Government, or any other" and who are the first to aid oppression and extortion and back any raid into British territory.⁴ Through most of the 1920's Maji was ruled by Qanyazmach Ato Muma, the Ethiopian Frontier Agent and, at various times, by a representative of the Abyssinian Bank whose money he used to arm the Swahili and send them toward the Nile for ivory, keeping them in virtual bondage by extortionate interest, seizing their women, and when necessary, throwing them into chains. Their tribulations were all the more embarrassing since the Swahili were technically British subjects who sought British protection while plundering British subjects across the border. Here the Swahili and their Ethiopian masters roamed freely, unsettling the country, encouraging tribal hostilities for profit, and trading firearms for ivory with the Africans who welcomed them. Not only did the poachers bring firearms for trade and support in tribal razzias, but they also intermarried into the clans and even introduced political ideas of "chiefship."⁵

Until the middle 1920's British officials knew little about the Toposa, although they generally had heard about the practice of the young men blooding their spears on an enemy to attain warrior (Moru) status. Officials could not even come to an agreement how to spell Toposa until 1942, and then only after a protracted correspondence spanning nearly twenty years and reminiscent of the worst scholarly affectation of Oxbridge.⁶ The Toposa first emerged in British consciousness in 1912, when the Governor of Mongalla, R.C.R. Owen, was cordially received by the influential elder Tuliabong during a punitive patrol against the Murle of the upper Pibor. Thereafter relations were characterized by indifference and neglect as the Sudan Government steadfastly refused to occupy the vast wasteland of the Toposa despite pressure from Nairobi and the British mission at Addis Ababa. At best Sudan officials envisaged a gradual advance only as the "local situation dictates and resources permit."⁷ The only contacts were chance encounters between the occasional patrol and Toposa herdsmen characterized by "truculent" behavior of the Toposa and an abortive attempt to establish a garrison of Sudanese troops at Losinga in 1920.

The withdrawal from Losinga marked the beginning of disagreement and then recriminations over what some British officials considered a policy of weakness and vacillation. Here in the southeastern Sudan the same

scenario was being repeated wherever empire had been on the move, in Africa, Asia, or the American West. Officers in the field were convinced that only a military solution would bring the Toposa under government control, whereas the establishments in Khartoum and London regarded these views with deep misgiving as the instinctive reaction of men-on-the-spot who could hardly appreciate the larger question of empire. But like the Toposa, these local officers could not be ignored, and their assertions compromised the worldly view of their superiors. Governor V.R. Woodland at Mongalla expressed the local point-of-view when he wrote:

All recent reports of "the Toposa" attitude towards the government indicate that they must be broken before they will submit to control. Nothing is to be gained by visiting them unless the government intends to occupy and administer their country...any merely temporary advance--even a route march--is to my mind undesirable. And any such advance resulting in unfriendly and perhaps insulting treatment of the troops by the local people followed by retirement would be folly.⁸

A more successful attempt to establish a foothold near Toposa country was made later in 1920 on Khor Locheriatum. There was trouble from the start. Quarrels erupted between the garrisons troops and visiting Toposa, resulting in fruitless patrols and the death of Lomoti, son of the influential elders Tuliabong. In disgust Woodland ordered the post at Locheriatum withdrawn, when water became scarce in November, and emphatically directed the district commissioner among the neighboring Didinga, J.H. Driberg, to leave the Toposa strictly alone. Unfortunately the Toposa could not be left alone. In the west they continued to threaten the Longarim and the Didinga, who were already under Sudan Government administration. In the east they were constantly struggling against the Turkana for control of waterholes and grazing. By 1924 the Toposa Question remained unsettled, increasingly complicated by past differences within the Sudan Government and its chronic financial weakness. That same year another issue emerged in the southeast to complicate the Toposa Question--the Ilemi Triangle.

The Ilemi Triangle was an artificial creation to identify that area in the Sudan between the Toposa heartland in the west (30° 31' E. Long.) to the undemarcated Ethiopian boundary in the east and the Sudan-Kenya-Uganda boundary in the south (4° 37' N. Lat.). It was named after Chief Ilemi Akwon whose village was the last Anuak settlement up the Akobo river at its juncture with the river Ajibur (34° 20' E. Long. and 6° 45' N. Lat.).⁹ The triangle was a no-man's land in which Toposa, Turkana, and peoples from Ethiopia--Dassanetch, Nyangatom, and the Tirma--competed for water and grass, while the Ethiopians and the Swahili poachers roamed freely. Ilemi became a reality at a conference convened at Kitgum in Uganda in April 1924, on the initiative of Kenya officials, and attended by representatives of Kenya, Uganda, and the Sudan. "The problem was the safety of the North Turkana," and its solution was to control the Ilemi Triangle.¹⁰ The Kenya Government was anxious to administer the Turkana, whose raids unsettled tribes as far south as the Central Highlands, and to eliminate the poachers. Nairobi's success depended upon the Sudan controlling the Ilemi Triangle across the international frontier at 4° 37' N. Latitude. If the Sudan Government did not possess the means to administer the Toposa, it could hardly assume control over the remote wilderness of the triangle, populated as it was by hostile and well-armed tribes and poachers.

Kenya officials, however, were not sympathetic to the problems of the Sudan Government, since the Crown Colony could not afford to squander precious revenue on unproductive peoples. The Kenya representative at

Kitgum suggested an obvious solution--cede the triangle to Kenya. Since the Sudan representative, Major R.G.C. Brock, Deputy Governor, Mongalla, had been instructed only to discuss military cooperation against raiders, he could not prevent the resolutions which followed from cession to Kenya; a demarcation of the Ethiopian-Sudan boundary which formed the eastern hypotenuse of the triangle; a Sudan contribution to the expenses incurred by Kenya's occupation of Ilemi; Kenya's administration of the Turkana and Sudan's occupation and administration of the Toposa west of the triangle.¹¹

Although these resolutions provided a clear, logical, and obvious answer to the Toposa Question at Kitgum, they were strictly African solutions to a problem that had now spread from eastern Mongalla northward to Khartoum, Cairo, and London, and southward to Entebbe and Nairobi. The Sudan Government was in no financial condition to occupy the Toposa, let alone contribute to Kenya's occupation of the Ilemi Triangle. But poverty was not the best excuse to remain inactive. The Sudan officials certainly did not want the triangle, but if it were ceded to Kenya, they would be obliged to move into Toposaland. To scuttle this resolution, Khantoum played its Egyptian card. As a partner in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Egypt had a proper claim to be directly involved in any negotiations and discussions to cede any part of Sudan territory, particularly to a British colony. To suggest in 1924, however, that Egypt became a party to the transfer of its territory was out of the question. Anglo-Egyptian relations had reached their nadir in 1924, with pro-Egyptian disturbances in the streets of Khartoum, the assassination of the governor-general, and the expulsion of Egyptian troops from the Sudan. Under these circumstances neither the high Commissioner in Cairo nor the Foreign Office in London was prepared to interject the wastelands of the Ilemi Triangle into Anglo-Egyptian negotiations; to cede Ilemi unilaterally to the empire was as indefensible as it was unthinkable.¹² Nor was there any enthusiasm at the Colonial Office to acquire such an unremunerative burden as Ilemi. Although sympathetic to Kenya's wish for a stable administration in Turkanaland, officials at the Colonial Office were not prepared to absolve the Sudan Government of its responsibilities at their expense, and they refused to be saddled with Ilemi.¹³ The Kitgum resolutions were dead; the Toposa and Khartoum had received a reprieve.

Sudan was content to leave the Toposa alone in the misguided expectations that they would not attack tribes administered by Kenya or Uganda. This hope was outright delusion, for it was sheer fantasy to expect the Toposa to change their traditional behavior because the Union Jack flew on the Nile at Mongalla. In November 1924 and February 1925 the Toposa carried out several devastating raids against the Turkana near Mt. Zingote.¹⁴ Much of the rustled stock was recovered by the Kenya Commissioner for Turkana, K.A. Connell, and the Kings' African Rifles, but the raids and counter-raids along the boundary precipitated additional demands from Nairobi to the Colonial Office that the Sudan Government occupy and govern the Toposa. These demands were further strengthened by reports in April 1925, of Dassanetch raids upon the Turkana in the Sudan. This time the Sudan Government permitted Kenya authorities to cross the border to exact retribution from the Dassanetch, but the Governor-General in Khartoum, Sir Geoffrey Archer, sardonically suggested that "the best safeguards for Turkana would be to stay on their own side of the Kenya-Sudan border under cover of KAR posts. In any case Sudan administration must exclude Ilemi Triangle...because of the problem of supply...and prohibitive cost."¹⁵ With the advent of the rains, Toposa-Turkana raiding ceased, but the Toposa Question remained.

The raids sharply increased the pressure on the Sudan Government to occupy the Toposa and Ilemi. There was no longer any thought about ceding the Ilemi Triangle to Kenya. The Egyptian card had been played, and Archer was forced to employ more local and practical arguments. Military operations would involve heavy expenses, £30,000 a year.

Logistics based on the Nile were quite impossible, and the Toposa would resist military occupation.¹⁶ Finally, Archer now conjured up the Ethiopians to replace the Egyptians as the principal scapegoat. He argued persuasively, and even with the support of the Kenya authorities, that any occupation of Toposaland or the triangle would certainly result in friction with the Ethiopians if the frontier was not delimited.¹⁷ As Sudan officials well knew, any demarcation of the frontier would be years in the making, providing the Sudan Government a breathing space before assuming its responsibilities. Whitehall was neither fooled nor amused.

Archer's explanation of the position of the Sudan Government was argued at the Foreign Office by Harold MacMichael, the Civil Secretary, at a meeting on 31, July, 1925. Coldly effective in such encounters, MacMichael dominated the meeting. The crucial question of occupation and control was tabled, and discussion shifted to measures of military cooperation between Kenya and Sudan to inhibit Toposa raiding. MacMichael admitted that the policy of non-interference was not working and laid the blame solely on "the presence of Swahili poachers and outlaws who are settling in Toposa and importing firearms outside Abyssinia."¹⁸ Whatever his private views, MacMichael does not appear to have questioned a policy of non-interference which already had been violated by several forays by Driberg into Toposa territory. The poachers were convenient, if not real bogeymen, certainly more satisfactory villains than a British official on the Toposa frontier whose misjudgments and emotions had transformed an official policy of non-intervention into one of "weakness and vacillation."

Jack Driberg had joined the Colonial Service in Uganda in 1912, serving as District Commissioner among the Lango; in 1921, when the K.A.R. defeated the Didinga with the blessing of the Sudan Government, Driberg was sent to establish administration throughout the Didinga hills. He was extremely successful, and so when the Didinga administration was transferred to the Sudan in 1923, Driberg joined the Sudan Political Service.¹⁹ He possessed all the characteristics of a Bog Baron: fiercely independent, iconoclastic, and disdainful of the Khartoum and London officials who did not pretend to understand the African and his ways, his affection for the African, particularly the Didinga, was paternal and real. As the father of his people, he ruled the Didinga by his compelling personality and knowledge as a patriarch completely absorbed with their way of life and even contributed a portion of his salary to their welfare. Not only was he the advocate for the Didinga to the Sudan Government, he was also their protector against the Toposa arch-enemy. To defend the Didinga he needed to neutralize the Toposa and what better way to accomplish this than to establish Sudan Government administration in Toposaland under his aegis.²⁰ His perception of the Toposa as malevolent marauders, who had to be brought under his governance in order to protect his beloved Didinga, soon became an obsession nurtured by friendly gestures from the influential Toposa elder Tuliabong and the few Toposa who had ventured into the Didinga hills to visit Driberg. This obsession led him to violate standing orders to leave the Toposa alone and to send optimistic reports to Governor Woodland at Mongalla suggesting a nonviolent solution to the Toposa Question engineered, of course, by himself. In an indiscreet moment in April 1924, Driberg predicted that the Toposa would be under his peaceful administration within two years.²¹ This distorted judgment by the "man on the spot" led Woodland to interject a ray of hope in his otherwise somber reporting to the Civil Secretary and to misinform officials in Khartoum and London of the reality in southeastern Mongalla.

Disgusted with the officials in Khartoum and London, repeatedly ill with jaundice, and very much alone, Driberg's misperceptions soon became reality. He decided to force officialdom to move against the Toposa, but to move at his direction and under his control. He wrote the new Governor, A.W. Skrine, on April 23, 1925, that "the Tapotha can be easily administered from Nagichot. In fact living as they do along the two main rivers

[Thingaita and Lokalyan] they are more accessible than many parts of the District are to Lilley [H.A. Lilley, D.C. Latuka]. I am therefore quite prepared to administer the Topotha without any additional organization."²² Driberg was quickly reminded of the government's policy and warned "that you read the 'as occasions allowed and circumstances permit' in my letter as meaning 'whenever I wish'. Had I meant this I should have written it."²³ Though he was specifically instructed that action against the Toposa should not be undertaken, Driberg was undeterred. He railed against the July 31st meeting at the Foreign Office as "conducted under a complete misapprehension of the true circumstances." The Turkana, he wrote, were made to appear as innocent angels misled by the sinister poachers from Ethiopia, when in fact they were "far from being peaceful pastoralists content with the benefits of administration. They are a nation of warriors no less ferocious than the Toposa." Driberg was particularly upset by the suggestion of Colonel Harrington that his K.A.R. move across the border to subdue the Toposa as they had the Didinga. He denounced the reality and utility of the Foreign Office conference or any other meetings so remote from the scene and closed with his characteristic disdain of officialdom. "I may add that the country is particularly noisome and will hardly appeal to the delegates of the conference as an ideal venue."²⁴

By September Driberg sought to use a different tack by employing MacMichael's principal argument at the Foreign Office in hope of extracting permission to move against the Toposa:

I understand that my present instructions are not to risk a conflict with the Topotha by visiting their country. While I appreciate the motives of this policy, I venture to submit that it is mistaken, that it leaves the Topotha completely at the mercy of the poachers in Abyssinia and the consequence is that an act of anti-British propaganda is being carried on which is bound to neutralize my attempts at peaceful persuasion, and what is even of greater importance, a large number of rifles and a quantity of ammunition is being imported.²⁵

All that he required was a platoon of Equatorial troops "to show the flag...as an escort...on the understanding that this is not a patrol and that my object is peaceful unless hostilities are forced upon me."²⁶ The Toposa, he vowed, would submit, their surrender advancing the cause of peaceful penetration and rendering Ethiopian influence harmless.

What followed was a combination of fact and fantasy. Driberg reported that the Toposa were looting Longarim cultivations and inflicting casualties. He ordered the police in hot pursuit, established a police post at Loryok to protect the Longarim, and sent an ultimatum to the Toposa to make compensation to the Longarim. If, after two months, they had not obeyed, he would enforce his demands with troops. Major Brock, Acting Governor at Mongalla, was unmoved by Driberg's request for a platoon from the Equatorial battalion. "I fear that the Toposa are most unlikely to take much if any notice of such instructions and our prestige with them, if it exists at all, will not be increased by giving them orders that we cannot enforce and the disobedience which we can only punish by taking offensive action against them."²⁷ Brock urged the Civil Secretary in Khartoum to permit either to conquer or to forget the Toposa. The vacillation created by Driberg's forays and proposed platoon action made a mockery of the pronounced policy of non-intervention. "The third time troops had entered Toposa and then [been] withdrawn, it is small wonder the Toposa desiring protection against the Turkana turned to the poachers who supply them with rifles and assist them in raids."²⁸

The truth of Brock's analysis struck home at the Civil Secretariat. MacMichael was furious at being committed by Driberg's ultimatum to an

unwanted course of action against the defined policy of the government. Argeeing with Brock, he was convinced that Driberg's demand for only a platoon was a half measure, certain to fail, eroding the policy of non-intervention and perpetuating that of vacillation in the eyes of the Toposa. MacMichael vetoed Driberg's proposed expedition and recalled him to Khartoum. Unknown to anyone but Driberg, all of his reports were fabrications of his own making: there was no Toposa raid, no police post, and no ultimatum. His only thought was "to force the government to consent to the action he desired to take."²⁹ When Driberg's request for troops was denied, Brock was disgusted and not very helpful. "Now for the Topotha, it was a messup...I was against any action--or anyhow yours--you cannot do what you want. I only hope you can find a way---perhaps by lying heavily--out of the impasse."³⁰ Although Driberg later argued that this suggestion justified his prevarications, it could hardly exculpate the whopper he reported to Brock on November 22nd, where he reported a devastating raid on November 18th, involving 600 Toposa of the Karingak section who were routed by the police. The raid enabled Driberg to remove the fictitious police post at Loryok but created further complications. Upon learning of the supposed raid, the government ordered a striking force to punish the Toposa for a sin they never committed. This was too much, even for Driberg. He confessed to Brock that his reports were inventions to enable him "to get troops with which to carry out the punitive action he desired against the Topotha...It is, of course, impossible for me to exculpate myself."³¹

Thus ended the unhappy affair of Jack Driberg. He belonged to that infamous club of the eccentrics of empire. He loved Africa and its people, particularly the Didinga, and was devoted to their welfare as he perceived it. His anthropological and linguistic research was invaluable to the Sudan and Uganda governments. Nevertheless, to the British officials at Mongalla and Khartoum dear old Jack had "gone native," and although allowance should "be made for Mr. Driberg's action in view of the peculiar type of life he has led in close intimacy with African savages," he was officially retired on full pension. His belongings were sold, and ill in body and soul he departed from Africa to Uckfield Lodge in Colborough, Sussex.³²

Ironically, Driberg's inventions were not in vain. The Governor-General, Sir Geoffrey Archer, was pressed on every side by the Colonial Office, Foreign Office, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, British authorities in Ethiopia and Kenya, and Driberg's reports of Toposa raids were the last straw. Always respectful of "any Order from the Powers That Be in Downing Street" and convinced that he could no longer postpone a decision that would ultimately have to be made, Archer authorized the occupation and administration of the Toposa country after a long meeting at the palace on December 15, 1925.³³ The occupation would be undertaken in the winter of 1926-27 by a full company of Equatorial troops equipped with machine guns. The imposition of administration would be gradual. No demands would be placed at first upon the Toposa for taxes, labor or road construction.

The most important consideration for any police or military operations in that part of the world then and today are transport and supply. Neither pack animals nor Africans could be employed, the first because of tse-tse fly, the second because the Didinga and Longarim regarded portage with the greatest repugnance. A road capable of supporting heavy trucks was the only solution, and after many delays caused by the cottonsoil of the Kidepo Valley, a poor labor supply, and engineering problems, a way was finally cleared to Kapoeta in January 1927. Few officials believed the advance would be opposed by the Toposa, but Governor Skrine prophesized "that at some future date probably a few months after occupation a crisis would arise which might call for the use of troops."³⁴

In eastern Mongallo all was not quiet. The Toposa had greeted Driberg's departure with enthusiasm. He had been unpopular with the frontier Toposa, which led Skrine to remark with weary resignation, "It is increasingly clear that most of the trouble is due to Mr. Driberg's mishandling the matter in the past."³⁵ His removal, however, seemed to revive traditional rivalries. In May 1926 the Longarim raided Toposa cattle grazing on the Locheriatum, and killed some people. On August 26 the Toposa retaliated in force; attacking at dawn, as was their custom, five hundred Toposa warriors swept down upon Longarim villages in three columns around the hills near Loryok. They were intercepted by a police patrol from Iwochi as they retired with Longarim cattle. In the running battle the Toposa suffered heavy losses from both police and pursuing Longarim anxious to avenge their own considerable losses.³⁶ Once again the British demonstrated they were powerless to prevent raids, or to bring peace to the frontier.

Finally on December 18, 1926, two companies of Equatorial troops under Captain Knollys pushed into Toposaland, reached the Thingaita river on January 5, 1927 and established a post at Kapoeta on the east bank. Knollys had two immediate tasks: first to settle the Toposa raid of August and second to convince the Toposa that British were there to stay. Although unperceived by Knollys or his superiors, a settlement of the first issue invariably compromised the second. Nevertheless, he conducted investigations and sequestered some six hundred Toposa cattle to settle Longarim claims. All appeared peaceful. MacMichael wrote to the Sudan Agent in Cairo that all the Toposa chiefs had submitted and accepted the Sudan Government. Reginald Davies, the Director of Intelligence for the Sudan Government, wrote that "the Equatorial Corps is swarming all over Toposaland."³⁷ Even the new Governor-General, Sir John Maffey, writing from Khartoum recalled his reactions. "When I left Khartoum I supposed the Toposan barometer was set fair, our occupation had achieved a rapid success and ready acquiescence...it is a surprise because the area is so big, the country so difficult and the tribes in possession so shy and untameable. Seems to be too good to be true that one Equatorial battalion should so swiftly establish such an influence."³⁸

These illusions were soon shattered. On May 12th a policeman in charge of the cattle at Kapoeta post was killed and the stock driven off. During an early morning reconnaissance three days later, Captain Douglas, the officer in charge at Kapoeta, stumbled upon 1500 Toposa warriors assembled in a khor a mile and half south of the post. Over half of the Toposa force attacked but broke and scattered before the firepower of the Equatorial troops.³⁹ After many frustrating years, local British officials sought to retaliate with the full force of their military power. Skrine wrote to MacMichael with grim satisfaction: "I consider this a punitive operation and as such entirely different from the recent one to recover Longarim cattle, and that Knollys should in no way tie the hands of the Officer Commanding troops by requesting him to avoid inflicting casualties on the Toposa."⁴⁰ The Governor-General was even more explicit. Although every effort should be made to prevent any incidents requiring more punitive action, "in the face of aggression the heaviest casualties possible should be inflicted upon the enemy...sit tight, avoid all pronouncements, let the first move (and the first mistake) come from the tribe." The Toposa should be denied access to areas controllable from Kapoeta: "Time means nothing to us, it is by patience we shall wear the tribesmen down. Ill considered action may set back the clock for years."⁴¹ Sir John Maffey had come to the Sudan from the North West Frontier of India. Even as late as 1927, he had no compunction about crushing rebellious subjects and firmly demonstrating British ascendancy.

Captain Knollys carried out his orders, and by the end of May the Toposa sections had submitted after further dramatic losses. When the rains did not come, the Toposa beseeched the government to stop the

drought which they considered part of the punishment of defeat. By September it was reported that "they appear to have realized that the government has come to stay and that they are not capable of resisting."⁴² And so the Toposa Question came to an end. Maffey may have mused in June 1927 that "we are only in the early stages," and that "the political situation was not understood by those on the spot."⁴³ But he was wrong. Peace had come to Toposaland, enforced by the redoubtable Captain King for the next twenty-five years, from 1928 to 1953. Not much happened in Toposa territory in that quarter century, but there was peace. Toposa resistance to the coming of the British was a traditional response to incomers, African or European, in order to defend their land, cattle, grazing, and water. These were the reasons which had embroiled them for generations in rivalry with their African neighbors. This rivalry in turn brought them unwittingly into an inevitable conflict with the demands of the British Empire. Toposa resistance was led by traditional leaders fighting in the traditional manner. As warriors, the Toposa accepted defeat before a superior force in the hope they might gain something under the British imperium. So the Toposa accepted British administration, some thought out of fear of the Turkana, others out of a rising level of prosperity brought about by peace on the frontier. But what the Toposa accepted was minimal administration, the *Pax Britannica*, not the instant transformation of Toposa society. The traditional way of living, the traditional institutions, and traditional rivalries remained deeply rooted. When the *Pax Britannica* was removed in 1956, these traditions re-emerged in direct proportion to the authority which, first, the Sudan Government and, after 1972, the Regional Government of the Southern Sudan could exert throughout the land.

NOTES

¹Geoffrey Redaway King, (born 11, Jan., 1897) O.B.E., M.C. Mongalla Province, 1926-36; Equatoria Province 1936-53; retired 1953.

²G. F. King in L. F. Nalder, *A Tribal Survey of Mongalla Province*, (London, 1937), pp. 65-81, A. C. Beaton published an even briefer note, "Record of the Toposa," *Sudan Notes and Records*, vol. 31, (1950), pp. 129-32. The Catholic missionary, L. Spagnolo, produced a Toposa grammar, *Grammatica Toposa*, but the Toposa have been ignored by Africanists except for John Lamphear, who, in *The Traditional History of the Jie of Uganda*, (Oxford, 1976), makes reference to their relationship with the Jie before the late nineteenth century. More pertinent are some insights into Toposa-Nyangatom relations by Serge Tornay, "Generational Age-Systems and Chronology: Exploring the Northern Groups of Central Paraniotes" for the Conference on The Archaeology and Ethno-History of the Southern Sudan, School of Oriental and African Studies, (London, 1980).

³Since no historical field-work has been conducted among the Toposa, and it appears doubtful that any will be undertaken in the foreseeable future, one must rely upon prevailing sources in an attempt to see Toposa resistance in the broader context of imperial expansion. For a discussion of this problem, see J. M. Lonsdale, "The Politics of Conquest: The British in Western Kenya, 1894-1908," *The Historical Journal*, 20, 4, (1977), pp. 841-70.

⁴Pennefather Holland, British Consul, Maji, to Harold MacMichael, Civil Secretary, Sudan Government, September 8, 1928, TURK/54, Kenya National Archives, Nairobi.

⁵Two of the principal poachers in Toposa country were Swahili by the name of Salim Nakipi Karee (alias Haji Saleh Ibn Ali) and Mukondo Bin Musoro.

⁶Toposa continues to be spelled in a variety of ways: Taposa, Topotha, Topothe, Dobosa, Tabosa, and Karakara. The Toposa are called Nyitopotha by themselves; Hume or Khumi by the Didinga; Kum or Kumi by the Murle; Akarra, Karra or Nakarra by the Dongotono and Latuka; Abo by the Acholi.

⁷Sir Reginald Wingate, Governor-General, Sudan, to Governor, Nairobi, as quoted in R.C.R. Wheatley to Private Secretary, Khartoum, Tel. 056, No. 8, 1917, Mongalla I/2/10. Central Records Office, Khartoum (CRO).

⁸Governor, Mongalla Province, V.R. Woodland to Civil Secretary, January 18, 1921, enclosed in Skrine "Note on Past Policy Regarding Topotha," Mongalla, I/6/38. CRO.

⁹The Ilemi Triangle was named after Chief Ilemi Akwon, also known as Ilembi, Melile, Olimi, Uliimi, and Chamchar. His mother was a Murle from the Boma Plateau which he visited frequently. In 1934 he joined his maternal relatives on a raid against the Kichepo who also lived on the Boma Plateau. In January 1936 Ilemi again visited his Murle friends on the Boma, when the Kichepo attacked to avenge their earlier defeat. Ilemi was killed, but the Anuak and the Murle retaliated in April defeating the Kichepo. In June 1936 the Boma was occupied by troops from the Equatorial Corps of the Sudan Defence Force.

¹⁰Major R.G.C. Brock (Deputy Governor, Mongalla), "Report on Kitgum Conference, 1924," Equatoria, II/37/130, CRO.

¹¹H. MacMichael, Civil Secretary, "Memorandum on Sudan-Kenya Border and the Ilemi Triangle," June 18, 1927, INT. I/7/30. CRO.

¹²Brock, "Report"; and MacMichael to Governor-General's Council, November 14, 1931, Equatoria, II/37/130, CRO.

¹³O.C. Commanding Sudan Defence Force (Sir H. Huddleston) to Governor-General, Sudan (Sir Geoffrey Archer), Tel. 129, June 13, 1925, INT, I/7/30, CRO.

¹⁴"Teposa Digests" February 1925, Equatoria II/37/130, CRO.

¹⁵Sir John Maffey to Governor, Kenya, June 20, 1927, Tel. 849, INT. I/7/32, CRO.

¹⁶Acting Governor-General to His Majesty's High Commissioner, Egypt (Lord Lloyd), June 20, 1927, Tel. 848, Ibid.

¹⁷Sir Geoffrey Archer, Governor-General, to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 21, 1925, Ibid. Both Edward Denham (Acting Governor Kenya) and the Governor Kenya, Sir R.T. Coryndon, wrote on July 11 and August 15, 1924 respectively that no post should be established in southeastern Mongalla until the boundaries were delimited.

¹⁸The Conference was attended by Sir E. Grigg, Sir Geoffrey Archer, Colonel Harrington (O. C. K.A.R.), Mr. Murray, Foreign Office, Mr. Bottomley, Colonial Office, Colonel Kenney, and Mr. MacMichael, Ibid.

¹⁹Jack Herbert Driberg, (April 2, 1888-February 5, 1947), was born in Assam and educated at Lancing and Hertford College, Oxford (Class II, Classical Honour Moderations; Class III, Litterae Humaniores), and was a championship heavyweight boxer. He joined the Colonial Service and served in Uganda 1912-23, first among the Lango where his interest in the African people was aroused and then among the Didinga. In 1923 he transferred to the Sudan Government service when the Didinga District was attached to Mongalla Province.

²⁰Driberg's identification with the Didinga and his consequent hostile attitude towards the Teposa is perhaps best revealed in his vivid description of a vast Teposa army outmaneuvered and beleaguered by Didinga in their beloved hills. As a student of the Classics the analogy between the Greeks and the Persians must not have been far from his mind. See: J.H. Driberg, *People of the Small Arrow*, London, 1930, pp. 9-86.

²¹Brock to Civil Secretary, October 7, 1925, Mongalla I/6/38, CRO.

²²Driberg to Governor (Skrine), April 23, 1925, Equatoria I/9/46, CRO.

²³Green to Driberg, May 13, 1925, *ibid.*

²⁴Driberg to Governor, September 16, 1925, INT I/7/30, CRO.

²⁵Driberg to Governor, September 15, 1925, *ibid.*

²⁶Quoted in Brock to Civil Secretary, October 7, 1925, INT. I/7/30, CRO.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Driberg Diary, Quoted in Skrine to MacMichael, Tel. 4, January, 1926, Mongalla I/5/34, CRO.

³⁰Brock to Driberg, November 7, 1925, in "Comments on the Case," by A.W. Skrine, January 9, 1926, Ibid.

³¹Driberg to Skrine, January 13, 1926, *ibid.*

³²Captain King was convinced that Driberg was just plain "nutty" and never really wanted to administer the Toposa. Interview with Captain King, September 26, 1962. Jack Driberg was not the man to retire at age thirty-eight. Upon recovering his health he enrolled as a student of anthropology at London University and later at Cambridge, where he was appointed Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, a post which he held until 1942. His personal charm, dedication to his subject, and idiosyncracies made him an exciting and inspiring teacher who substantially contributed to the flourishing school of social anthropology at Cambridge. Sir E.E. Evans-Pritchard wrote of him:

Jack Driberg would have been the same person in any walk of life, the classical scholar, heavyweight boxer of distinction, poet and musical critic of Oxford; the successful administrator who won the affection of those he administered, exceptional linguist and fighter of Central Africa; the inspiring tutor, stylist and brilliant talker--at his best *splendide mendax*--of London and Cambridge, and volunteer for desperate hazards in the years of war; all were of one piece, gay, versatile, lovable and adventurous--an Elizabethan. He was a rare spirit and his weaknesses were consistent with the heroic of his personality and further endeared him to his friends. The gods give us faults to make us men.

Throughout his second career at London and Cambridge he published anthropological studies begun in Uganda and the Sudan, among which were: "Lafon Hill," *Sudan Notes and Records* 8, (1925); "A Preliminary Account of the Didinga," *Sudan Notes and Records* 5, (1922); *People of the Small Arrow*, (London, 1930), *The Lango*, (London, 1923). Finding Cambridge during the war frustrating, Driberg volunteered in 1942 for a special assignment with military operations in the Middle East section of the Ministry of Information when he died suddenly on February 5, 1946. As a convert to Islam, he was buried at the Muslim cemetery near Woking.

³³Collie Knox in his *Prelude to Sir Geoffrey Archer*, *Personal and Historical Memoirs of an East African Administrator*, (London, 1963), p. xi. See: "Proceedings of meeting between the Kenya, Uganda and Sudan representatives held as instructed," January 2, 1926. There was also a special conference held at the palace in Khartoum on December 5, 1925, to discuss the Ethiopian factor in southeastern Mongalla in which the central theme was the poacher problem with whose demise "administration of the Toposa would be perfectly simple." "Report of meeting at Palace," December 5, 1925, all in INT 1/7/30, CRO.

³⁴MacMichael to Huddleston, October 22, 1925, *ibid.*

³⁵Skrine to Civil Secretary, January 21, 1925, *ibid.*

³⁶Skrine to Civil Secretary Tel. 66, September 16 and September 18, 1926, Mongalla I/6/38, CRO.

³⁷MacMichael to Sudan Agent, March 5, 1927 and R. Davies to Sudan Agent, February 3, 1927, INT 1/7/30, CRO.

³⁸Sir John Maffey "Toposa," June 11, 1927, INT. 1/7/32, CRO.

³⁹O. C. Equatoria to H. Q. Sudan Defence Force Khartoum, Tel. 296, May 16, 1927, INT 1/7/36, CRO. The Governor-General was critical of Douglas for not allowing a massed attack on Kapoeta thereby missing "a fine opportunity of inflicting heavy casualties."

⁴⁰Skrine to Civil Secretary, May 16, 1927, Mongalla I/6/38, CRO.

⁴¹"Instructions as to Future Policy," J.L. Maffey, June 1, 1927, INT. 1/7/31, CRO.

⁴²O.C. Equatoria to H.Q. Sudan Defence Force, September 15, 1927,
"Sudan Intelligence Report, No. 398, September 1927."
⁴³Maffey, "Toposa," June 11, 1927, INT 1/7/32, CRO.