issue/ *Dotawo 8: War in the Sudan*

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has articles/

1. Preface by the Editor

As this volume on war in the Sudan materializes, there is war in the Sudan. In April 2023, armed conflict started between rival factions of the military regime in the country. The population is trapped on the battlefield between the military leaders at war with each other. We are deeply concerned for the people of the Sudan - among them are friends and colleagues. The escalation of the conflict has caused ourageous civilian casualties, and more than a million have already

become refugees. We publish the volume in a grim context, and the aspiration of our research is now to raise awareness of how destructive war is for the people and their means of living. We can only hope for the rapid restoration of peace and a peaceful transition to democracy for the country.

War has been a recurring form of violent interaction between communities in the Sudan since the Stone Age, and many chronological divisions in the history of the country are set at events such as wars, battles, conquests, and peace treaties. Still, warfare has often been an overlooked topic among researchers working in Sudan and Nubia. An explanation is possibly that periods of stability or evolving complexity are usually longer than episodes of war, which occur during relatively short time spans at irregular intervals. Another reason may be that contemporary Sudan has been a violent place, and this has possibly made war in the country a sensitive topic and restrained researchers from making warfare their research object.

The modern borders of the Sudan are a construct of war. First through the conquests by the Ottoman rulers of Egypt between the 1820s and the 1870s. Then the Anglo-Egyptian conquest in 1898, which also incorporated the independent sultanate of Darfur in 1916.[1] The borders of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium were maintained when Sudan became independent in 1956, but the northern and southern parts of the independent country thereafter fought on and off in the longest civil war in Africa. The war was terminated with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, which culminated with a referendum where the southern part of the country voted for secession. The country was split in two in 2011. Nevertheless, violent conflict and war continued as the new states of South Sudan and Sudan were fighting over territory and oil fields in the border regions. Since late 2013, South Sudan has become deeply split in a civil war that is dividing the country along ethnic boundaries with great human sufferings. In the north, Sudan had a central government at war with systematically marginalized peripheries and a suppressed population. Increasing resistance from the inhabitants resulted in the toppling of the old regime in 2019. However, the transitional government failed to install civilian rule in Sudan, and the military took full control of the government in a coup in October 2021. The Sudanese people have taken to the streets numerous times since 2019 demanding civilian rule, and their persistence brings hope for a civilian government and democratic state in Sudan.

War has deep roots in Sudan. An Upper Paleolithic cemetery at Jebel Sahaba in the far north of the country is often referred to as the earliest evidence of war in world history.[2] Around 25 victims at Jebel Sahaba exhibited injuries from attacks with bows and arrows.[3] The extremities of the earliest war and the violent conflicts in modern times demonstrate that war in the Sudan covers a great time span and various levels of organization – from violent clashes between ethnic groups to warfare between states and civil wars. However, exact evidence for violent conflict and war in Nubia and Sudan is limited for all periods. Iconography and texts are often our only indications for warfare, but these data are indirect sources and not always reliable information. Although historians have researched the wars that have ridden the country in modern times, the time is ripe to study wars in the Sudan from a broader academic perspective. I hope the articles in this volume of Dotawo will stimulate to provide more attention to warfare in scholarship on the Sudan, as this will increase our understanding of interaction between people in this land.

2. About the Issue

Despite being delayed by the pandemic and its consequences for research, we are delighted to finally publish this *Dotawo* volume on "War in Sudan". Five articles are included after three contributors were prevented from completing their articles.

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Karin Willemse (1962-2023).[4] She wished to contribute to the volume with an article from her inspiring anthropological research on gender and war in Sudan: *"Women of value, men of renown": The social construction of gendered notions of gendered personhood in Darfur and Nubia in times of duress.* Karin's contributions to Sudan Studies will be greatly missed, but we are confident that her work will continue to inspire and influence others. Our thoughts are with her family and close colleagues.

The aim of this thematic collection is to offer new insights on wars and violent conflict in the Sudan either as case-studies or as broader historical patterns.

The volume is chronologically structured, beginning with the editor's contribution on the mid-4th millennium BCE border war between peoples in Nubia and Egypt. Then follows Matthieu Honegger's presentation of the famous

archers from Kerma during the latter half of the 3rd millennium BCE. The bows and arrows in these earliest Kerma graves have never been presented in such detail before, and the appearance of the archers are linked to the emergence of the kingdom of Kerma. Next, Uroš Matić offers a fresh perspective on warfare and gender in textual and visual media during the Napatan and Meroitic periods (8th century BCE to 4th century CE), followed by Alexandros Tsakos' article on warfare terms in medieval sources (ca. 5th century CE to 15th century CE). The volume concludes with Roksana Hajduga's presentation of the art of the 2018/2019 revolution in Sudan. She explores how the war between non-violent protesters and a brutal regime caused a change in the freedom of expressions and greater creativity in Fine Arts, Street art, and online art. The volume thus covers some major chronological phases of Nubia and Sudan from the earliest Bronze Age until today.

The articles in this issue also span a wide geographical area along the Nile. The first article by Hafsaas focus on the First Cataract region in the northernmost part of Nubia and outside the borders of today's Sudan. Honegger's article on the archers is set at Kerma above the Third Cataract. In the article by Matić, we move further south to Napata below the Fourth Cataract and Merowe between the Fifth and the Sixth Cataracts. The article on the medieval era by Tsakos covers all of Nubia, while the last article by Hajduga considers the southernmost region in the volume by focusing on the capital Khartoum.

Dotawo's Open Access Commitment

Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies has been a journal with open access to both readers and authors since its launch in 2014. Since the previous volume, *Dotawo* has been even more committed to open scholarship by linking the references in the journal to records with open access, as far as possible. The aim is to give access to research to those without privileged access to institutional libraries.[5] This great work to make the research openly available has largely been undertaken by Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei, managing editor from 2014 to 2022. I am grateful to managing editor Alexandros Tsakos for the typesetting in an open-source infrastructure. Personally, publishing openly in this way is fulfilling despite the additional efforts. I hope the readers find the result accessible and appealing.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the peer-reviewers who spent their time and used their knowledge to improve the quality of the articles in this issue of *Dotawo*.

References

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Endnotes

1. Hafsaas-Tsakos, *War on the Southern Frontier of the Emerging State of Ancient Egypt*, p. 3. ↩

2. E.g., Otterbein, *How War Began*, pp. 74-5; Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, p. 15. ↩

3. Crevecoeur et al., "New Insights on Interpersonal Violence in the Late Pleistocene Based on the Nile Valley Cemetery of Jebel Sahaba." ↩

4. Gewald et al. "In Memoriam Karin Willemse (1962-2023)." ↩

5. Van Gerven Oei, "Preface by the Editor," pp. 1-3. ↩