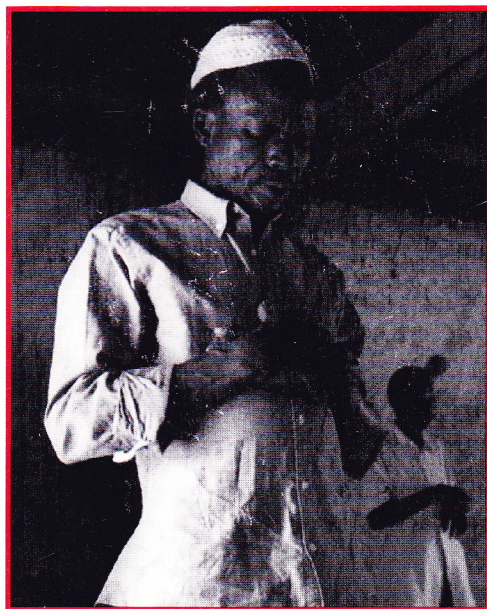


SAIS Review

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Islams



The Folly of Reductionism

H.K. Abdurrahman Wahid

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Foreign Policy Debate:
*Propaganda, the Satans, and
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Islamic Identity: Myth, Menace, or Mobilizer?

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When most Americans think of Islam, they picture the Middle East. Jilian Schwedler describes the unique place of Islam in the identity of the Arab world.

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To demonstrate the shallow thinking that drives many debates about Islam, the author delves into the history and real meaning of these three most used, but least understood, terms.

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Life in a Threatened Land

Photographs by Meredith Davenport

The Nuba Mountains are a pocket of black African culture that straddles the center of the Sudan between the Arab-dominated North and rebel-held territories of the South. They are some of the most unified supporters of the Sudanese rebel movement, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been at war with the government of Sudan for eighteen years. A total blockade and constant war have reduced the Nuba's population from three million in the 1980s to only about 250,000 now.

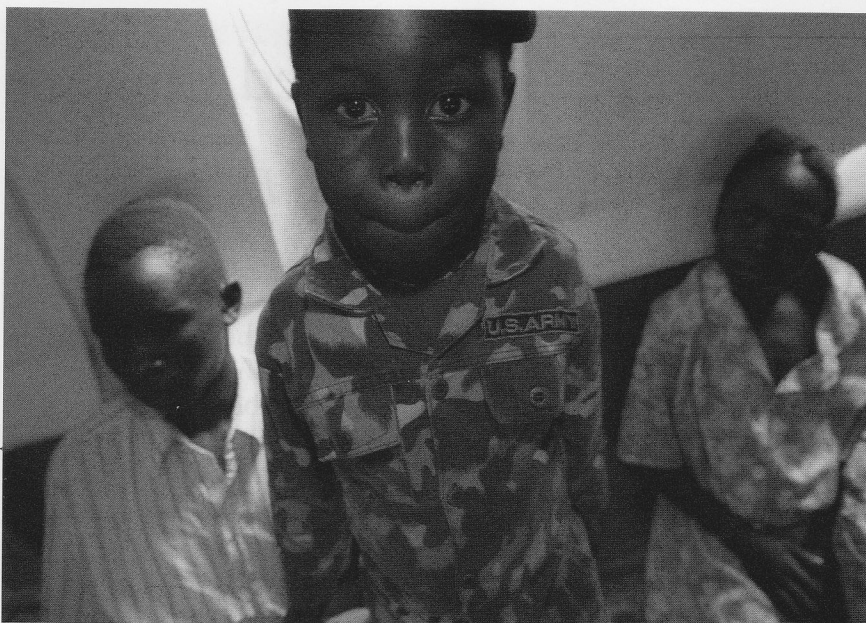
The Nuba scramble for basic items like salt, clothing, and metal of any kind. When the Sudanese government shells the area, civilians scavenge the spent ordinance for scrap metal. No fuel or spare parts get into the mountains, so the Nuba have gone back to a pre-industrial world. The Nuba are known for their religious tolerance; Christians and Muslims live side by side in peace. They are also known for their stubborn self-reliance. Each year representatives from the various regions vote to continue the war against Khartoum.

But times may be getting harder. Their home lies in the way of the Sudanese government's huge oil projects that are providing one million dollars a day for the war effort. Because their territory sticks out into the North, it is hard for the SPLA to supply and defend it. They lost their beloved leader, Yousif Kuwa, in March. Recent government attacks almost cut off the only accessible airstrip and left the Nuba without international aid.

The war in Sudan has cost more lives than those in Kosovo, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia combined, with an estimated two million dead from the conflict and related famine. The Nuba account for a large portion of the losses, and many human rights groups assert that they are facing genocide.

Meredith Davenport is a freelance photographer based in New York. From September to December 2000 she traveled in the Nuba Mountains under the auspices of a Pew Fellowship in International Journalism.

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Above: A boy wearing donated clothes is evacuated along with twenty other Nuba in a plane to Lokichokio, Kenya, the relief base for Southern Sudan. *Below:* Nuba women hide from the dust while a relief plane takes off. The Sudanese government prohibits regular access to the Nuba Mountains, so flights are few and far between and pilots must land illegally. Flights that do land risk being shot at by government troops.

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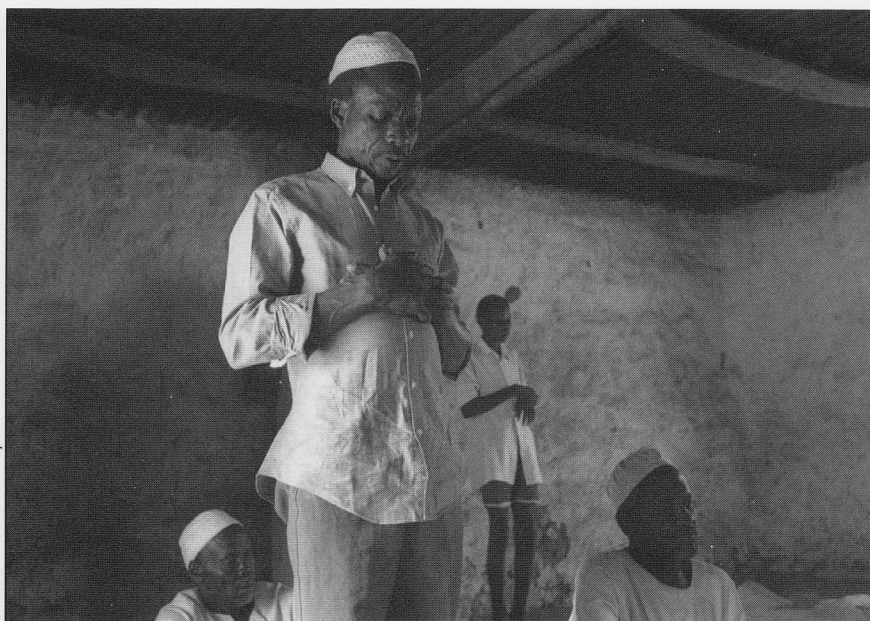


Above: Mahamud Osman, a wounded SPLA soldier, has his bandages replaced at the German Emergency Doctors (GED) health facility in Kauda before being sent to Lokichokio, Kenya for treatment. *Below:* He has been transferred to a cot and will be carried two hours by his family to the area's only airstrip. Osman is lucky there is an aid flight; many patients wait weeks and sometimes months to be evacuated.

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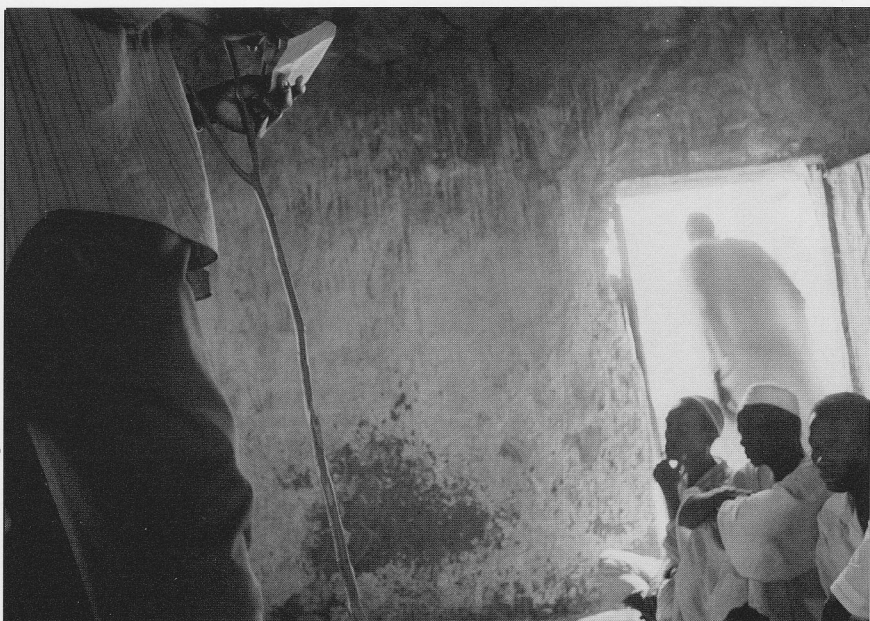


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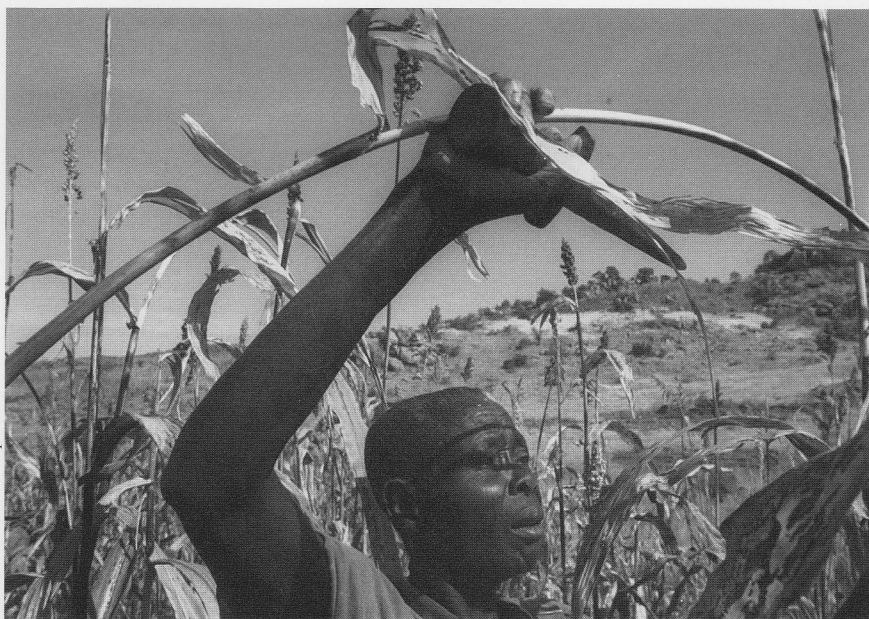


Above: Muslims pray in a small local mosque outside Kauda. *Below:* A man leaves the mosque during the weekly prayers while women pray outside. Both mosques and churches are the focus of government attacks. Dozens of the area's mosques have been destroyed, their holy books and mats burned by government soldiers.

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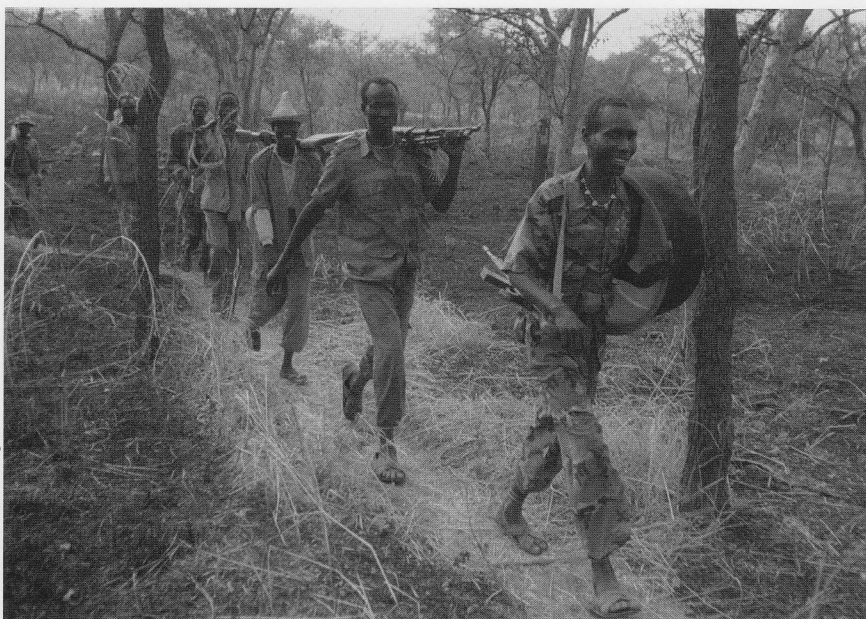
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Above: An old woman harvests sorghum near the town of Mirawi. Sorghum is the staple crop of the Nuba. People of all ages work to harvest the crops quickly once they mature, fearing raids by government troops who often burn the year's production. *Below:* A Nuba man in Serif celebrates during a local harvest festival. The festival was held to give thanks for the rains that arrived late this year and to pray for a better crop next year.

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Above: SPLA soldiers carry supplies. Government troops regularly patrol the area, so the SPLA has burned a pathway to be able to see potential ambushes. The plains are the most fertile land in the mountains, but they lie uncultivated after years of conflict. *Below:* A woman dances while celebrating the winners of a regional wrestling match near Serif. The wrestlers who won join their competitors dancing in a circle. The women dance and sing in an inner circle around a drummer.



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