

Transcript for Wisier World Episode 38: Sudan & South Sudan 101 - Part 1

What is the difference between Sudan and South Sudan? How does the geography of the land shape the people who live there? What religions and customs are practiced there? What is the history of this area from the 1800s until 1978? How does the religion of Islam affect Sudan? Why was the slave trade a critical part of the history? How did the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and Egypt all influence Sudan? How does Sudan gain its independence? What happens during the first civil war in Sudan, and how does it end? When was oil discovered? We will answer these questions and many more in today's episode, Sudan and South Sudan 101, part one of three.

I can't speak for all education systems, especially in other nations, but here in the United States, it's pretty uncommon to learn a whole lot of African history at school. The transatlantic slave trade or apartheid in South Africa, those are usually taught. Absolutely. But a whole lot of African history.

Not super common. And in college here in the States, you really have to take specialty classes on African history if you'd like to learn about it. So Sudan and South Sudan, for example, have been in crisis for a long time without a whole lot of coverage or education, at least here in the States. And this is why, uh, I wanted to research it and create these episodes.

I feel that it's important we know more about this area of the world and the people who live there. And so these episodes are going to be a little bit longer for that reason. There's just a whole lot of ground to cover here. And I designed these episodes so that people who know Nothing about Sudan or South Sudan can develop a more firm foundation for learning.

So the information that you learn in these episodes is going to be basic level. I'm by no means an expert here. I'm only going to give kind of a soft glaze over of the history. Don't get me wrong. What you're going to learn here is substantial. We did a ton of research and worked months on these episodes.

But just understand, there's a lot that I'm not covering. And as always, please do independent research from other sources. If you need help to find some good options, I'll be sharing those through my Patreon, which you can sign up for at [patreon.com slash wiserworldpodcast](https://patreon.com/wiserworldpodcast). I also want to acknowledge right away that it's tricky to find information on Sudan and South Sudan outside of a Western context.

For example, there's much more written in English about South Sudan than Sudan in the North. We'll talk about the difference between the two in a second, but most of the history in the North is written in Arabic, which I do not speak. And getting written records for this area of the world prior to like the mid 1800s, even 1900s is hard because these are countries with low literacy rates.

So this obviously makes record keeping a completely different ball game. So based off of the resources that I have at my disposal, I did my best to look at multiple sides of things. And I'm certainly trying to show multiple perspectives, but I am definitely coming at these episodes from a Western lens simply because of the options that I have available to me.

I do my best to give both facts and opinions openly so you can tell the difference. And again, Just please don't let this be your only research on Sudan and South Sudan. Lastly, I want to say that some of the information in these three parts, in this three part series is pretty difficult to hear. There will be mentions of war crimes, assaults, harm being done to children, challenging topics, especially in parts two and three.

But I do believe these are critical stories for us to know. Just fair warning that I recommend giving this a listen yourself before you hand it over to teenagers. And I don't really recommend it for kids. Let's, let's get into this. Let's start off by talking about the difference between Sudan and South Sudan.

So these are different countries, but only recently. South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in 2011. So again, super recently, making it the world's newest nation as of this recording in March 2024. So naturally, South Sudan's history is deeply intertwined with Sudan in the north, so it makes sense to cover both histories at the same time.

But they are currently distinct countries, and we'll go over how they separate. If you can, right now, go to Google Maps or Find Maps, and I want you to look up Sudan. By the way, the official name of Sudan is the Republic of Sudan. And also South Sudan's official name is the Republic of South Sudan, but I'm just going to call them Sudan and South Sudan.

Anyway, Sudan is in northeastern Africa, right underneath Egypt. Part of the east coast of Sudan is the Red Sea. If you keep going east across the Red Sea, you're going to get to Saudi Arabia. So if you're thinking, Sudan. Okay, this feels like desert. This feels like Sahara. Yeah, you've got it. Okay. Sudan also shares an eastern and southeastern border with Eritrea and Ethiopia and a border with Libya in the north.

Its western border is with Chad and the Central African Republic. So lots of countries around it. South Sudan is just underneath Sudan, and it shares borders with Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So South Sudan is more of Central Eastern Africa, and it is landlocked, while Sudan in the north is landlocked.

It does have a bit of coastline. If you're still on maps, you might notice the map starts to turn green as you go down into South Sudan. This is important to notice because geography makes a huge difference in cultures and resources and definitely in the history of these two nations. So we'll get to that in a second.

The Nile River has two major tributaries that start down below South Sudan in Uganda, and they are called the White Nile and the Blue Nile, and they flow north, and they come together to

make the major Nile River that we've all heard of at Khartoum, which is the capital city of Sudan. It makes sense that the capital city would be found where two rivers meet together, right?

Civilizations throughout history have grown up around river valleys, and this is no different. Just a quick side note. The capital of South Sudan is Juba, which is also located pretty close to the Nile. But why rivers? Why are rivers so important to civilizations? Well, because of water, which humans and animals need to survive, obviously, but also because of transportation and the fertile Nile Valley and its surrounding floodplains supported agriculture and that, uh, led to trade and because of the Nile River, there is evidence of very early human communities in these areas.

There's stone age tools and pottery that have been found and it's possible that people have been living in Sudan as far back as like 8,000 BC. So very rich old history. Sudan is one of the largest countries in Africa and has both deserts and mountains. It's a pretty diverse landscape and the river, obviously.

A lot of northern Sudan is covered by the Sahara Desert, really barren sand. Further south, we have the savannah and grasslands area, which is more diverse. And the further south you go, the more tropical of a climate it becomes. This differentiates northern Sudan and southern Sudan, which will become south Sudan.

Author Zach Verton said, quote, South Sudan has a rain fed swamp the size of England, forming a formidable geographical barrier, limiting external influence for centuries in the progressively greener and more fertile South Sudan. End of quote. In 1862, explorer Samuel Baker said, quote, it is a fever stricken wilderness.

It is not surprising that the ancients gave up the exploration of the Nile. It is a heaven for mosquitoes and a damp hell for man. End of quote. So I hope you're getting a sense here that the North is much more dry and barren and much more deserts, mountains. The further South you go, you're starting to get into swampland and things change.

Now, since I'm talking about Sudan. thousands of years ago up until about 1978 in this episode. And South Sudan and Sudan didn't separate until 2011. I'm just going to call it Sudan for the rest of this episode, since that's what it was back then. They were not separated into their modern borders. So, I'm I'm going to talk mostly about Sudan as one group in this episode and just differentiate them as northern and southern Sudan because hopefully that will just make it easier to digest.

So this geographical barrier that we just talked about, these swamplands, they're the largest wetlands in Africa, and it's often called the Sud, S U D D, which is Arabic for barrier. These swamps could not be crossed easily, so most outsiders for many years couldn't even make it. Author Peter Martell wrote, quote, As almost anywhere on the planet.

End of quote. Because of the Sud, the people living in southern Sudan for generations did not establish formal systems of central government in their vast territory, but instead ordered themselves loosely kind of based on family and tribe. It was a more horizontal way of organizing rather than top down, and they lived in traditional subsistence lifestyles, mostly in cattle herding or Or seasonal agriculture and cattle herding tribes were, and still are kind of semi nomadic.

They move around, right? The agricultural tribes were more centered in specific locations and these tribal structures and lifestyles largely remain intact today. And we'll talk about how people in South Sudan and Sudan live. In part three, but let's go back up to the Northern part of Sudan for a little bit to check out some early civilizations around 3000 BC, a civilization known as Nubia developed in modern day Egypt and Sudan along the Nile, right?

Pretty advanced society with agriculture and trade into the Mediterranean world and in Egypt. And for thousands of years, ancient rulers established kingdoms in Nubia. Traded were influenced by Egyptian Pharaohs up in the North. And Sudan connected the land below the Sahara Desert to the Mediterranean world.

It was a really strategic location for trade. One of the last remnants of this time was that part of the Sahara Desert is still called the Nubian Desert, and now you know why. The Nubians were the ancient people of the land, and the Sudanese are really proud of that ancient heritage. From 350 to 600 AD, a kingdom that we now call Ethiopia conquered Sudan, and it became a big center for trade and culture.

Trade routes from the Middle East, where Christianity was born, led to more exposure to Christianity over time. Christian missionaries and traders spread Christianity to the Nubians, and Nubia became a predominantly Christian state for a time. For example, there are remnants of the Dongola Cathedral in the middle of the desert.

from the sixth century, like the five hundreds. Yeah, this is, there's like an excavated medieval Christian church in the middle of the desert in northern Sudan, which I find fascinating. The religion of Islam was formally founded in 610 AD in Saudi Arabia. And because of all of these trade routes, Arab traders and Islamic influence began to spread down the Nile during this time.

For hundreds of years, the Nubian Christian kingdoms faced a lot of pressure from Arab forces, but it wasn't until about 1500 or so that Sudan transitioned from a Christian kingdom to an Islamic sultanate. A sultanate is a government that is run by a sultan and a sultan is an absolute ruler. This term is mostly used in Arab areas or areas that have strong Islamic influence and Sudan has strong Islamic influence.

So this was the beginning of a new era because Islam spread even more throughout the region. And again, This is a huge role in the history. So for over 300 years, different powerful sultanates faced different issues from outside groups, wanting to come in and take over Sudan. For

example, the Ottoman empire, also an Islamic empire, wanted to extend its borders into Sudan, but for the most part, sultanates were able to remain separate.

Islamic architecture, law, education, all spread, especially in large towns, the Arabic language and culture blended with the indigenous traditions, Islamic schools and mosques were built. And, you know, schools and religious buildings are always really important to notice when you study history, because these become centers not only for learning, but also for social gathering and community life, right?

We, we meet around the world. Schools and religious buildings. So most of these buildings were built in the Northern part of Sudan because of the sud, right? That those wetlands that kind of separated Northern and Southern Sudan. Sufism, which is a more mystical and less Orthodox form of Islam also became really popular in Sudan and they built lodges all over Sudan.

Over time, Islam became the dominant religion in the Northern part of Sudan, which means that. The elites and the higher up merchant classes were usually, usually Muslims. In the western part of Sudan, a sultanate called Darfur started up in the 1600s, and it began to be a pretty major player in regional politics and trade for many years.

And we're going to talk about Darfur in the next two episodes because it's really important. Pretty important. But just keep that in mind. It's in the western part of Sudan. From the 1500s to 1800s, trade grew a lot, again because of Sudan's access to the Red Sea. It was also along the trans Saharan trade routes.

And these are the days of camel caravans crossing the massive Sahara, moving goods like gold, ivory, and slaves to different trade stops, like Timbuktu in Mali. So hopefully this is giving you kind of a vision of where of this area, this region. From my research, it seems as though most of the slaves that were traded out of Sudan targeted people in the southern area.

Because of the sudd, you know, that that physical swamp like barrier, right? The people in the south had a different way of life with less Islamic influence. In many ways, the north was seen as more Arab in physical features, such as lighter skin, as well as in culture. While there were different tribes and religions, Islam was definitely the dominant faith in the North.

In the Southern part, this was not the case with more tribal religions that more closely linked them to Central and Southern Africa. Also in physical features, such as darker skin, as well as cultural customs that just felt more. Traditionally African than Arab. Again, I don't love generalizing since these areas have many different ethnic groups, but I think to understand broad scale history, the basic idea is that the majority in the North felt more Arab and the majority of Southern Sudanese were felt more African.

And as we know, the Sadly, people do not always get along when they are different from each other, and that's definitely the case here. So the type of community organization that had worked for Southerners for many years also opened them up for challenges during this time. As

Zach Verton writes in quote, "in time, it also made them vulnerable to organized outsiders with big appetites. And so many generations of black Africans in the South were targeted. by part of a massive slave trade, first by Egyptian and Nubian rulers, and later by their Arab successors." End of quote. Author Peter Martell writes, quote, "Slavers used Islamic law to justify their plunder of non believers, flying black flags painted with Quranic exhortations to jihad or holy war. There was no attempt to convert people to Islam, for if the slaves were Muslim, that would prohibit their capture and so stop the dark trade." Since the north was mostly converted to Islam, by this time, the slave trade focused primarily on the south, and the Southerners obviously hated slave traders, and if they ever caught them, they enforced the greatest punishments that they could.

As Martel writes, quote, "so many from the south came through for the sale for sale in Khartoum that soon the very appearance of a southerner became associated with that of a slave. End of quote. So the slave trade was alive and well in Sudan during these Islamic sultanates, trading black southerners up into Egypt and other parts of the Middle East for manual labor, as well as service labor such as concubines, cooks, porters, soldiers.

Sadly, from what we know about slaves traded across the Islamic empires, there was double the amount of female slaves to male slaves, which indicates sexual exploitation. There's also evidence of racism. So definitely discrimination based on skin color. seems to be happening here, which is why many areas across the Middle East, darker skin was seen as an indication of slavery.

So, for about 300 years, powerful sultanates ruled Sudan. Islam became the dominant religion. Average, ordinary people are living like this. Hand to mouth this time, making what they eat, living in some urban centers, but mostly small villages run by local leaders who have strong familial and cultural ties.

There was still Christianity and other indigenous religions, yes, but Islam was dominant, especially in the north. And it's generally true that any group of people that rules for more than 300 years starts to fail over time. And this happened in Sudan. The Funj Sultanate began to decline, and in 1821, Sudan was conquered by the Ottoman governor of Egypt.

Now since the Ottoman Empire's headquarters We're in Turkey. This is often called the Turco Egyptian Conquest of Sudan because Sudan was ruled by the Ottoman Empire, but Egypt in particular ruled over Sudan, and the goal of the conquest was to control Sudan's resources. Mostly slaves and gold and ivory and also to secure the Nile.

So this here is where modern Sudanese history begins. And it's, um, already painful, but it's sadly gonna get more painful. With the Turco Egyptian administration taking things over, they now called Sudan, Egyptian Sudan. So new systems were put into place. Laws, administration of laws, taxation systems. You get it.

Likewise, Islam continued to spread the Arabic language, became the most popular language in the region, and Sudan became more linked to the wider Islamic world during this time. They also wanted to modernize agriculture, trade, infrastructure, and Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, grew in size. Ivory, sugar, cotton, all traded there.

Things were changing in Sudan during this time, even in below the sud, parts of Southern Sudan were getting more and more outside influence. If you've listened to any of my other one on one episodes, you know, by now that the 18 hundreds. Was a massive time of change and upheaval and conquest throughout the world.

And this usually leads to discontent and local resistance. Average ordinary people who aren't calling the shots in government usually don't like a lot of change, right? Largely because they're exploited by these systems. And that's definitely what happened here. The Ottoman Empire expanded the slave trade enormously during its rule.

Sudan became a major source of slave trade. slaves, especially from the South. It's estimated that from 1840 to 1860, more than 40, 000 people were sold each year from Khartoum. That's over 800, 000 people. To give this some context, the transatlantic slave trade, which took people from Africa to the Americas, had about 12.

5 million people over roughly 340 years. So if you divide that out year for year. That's about 35, 000 people a year. So the Ottoman Empire in these 20 years in Sudan, right on scale with the transatlantic slave trade. Absolutely horrific. The Sudanese communities resisted this, of course, but their revolts were brutally suppressed.

Another theme we've seen as we've studied other countries. <https://otter.ai> A lot of resistance to foreign rule, right? Nobody loves it. But it creates a feeling of nationalism, you know, accompanied with kind of a swelling of self determination from foreign rule. Because even if that rule belongs to the same religion, nobody really loves an outsider coming in and calling the shots.

And that's definitely what happens here. And that continues to grow, that Sudanese nationalism more and more throughout the years. Let's pause here for a second and talk about Egypt, because it fits into the broader history here. So, For hundreds of years, if Europe wanted to get anything shipped on a boat from India or Asia, the boat had to go all the way down underneath the tip of Africa and then back up the other side to Europe, right?

Well, in 1869, That changed. The Suez canal was completed and this canal changed everything because it allowed shipping to connect from the red sea, which goes into the Arabian sea, which is right there by India. Right. And then pop those boats right into the Mediterranean sea much faster trip. So the Suez canal is.

Like really important, which means that the British were right up in that business because it was in their best interest to have stability in that region and British control in Egypt officially began in

1882 technically Egypt was under the Ottoman Empire, but Britain really ran it. And in 1914, the beginning of World War I, Britain declared Egypt a protectorate.

So why do I tell you this? Well, let's think about this. Sudan is right there next to Egypt, right? And Egypt in the 1880s was influenced by Britain, and Egypt was influencing Sudan in Sudan in 1888, right before the British more or less started taking power in Egypt, a group of Sudanese people started a political and religious movement against Egypt and also British forces.

And they advocated for a jihad or a holy war against these powers. They wanted a golden age of Islam in Sudan called the modest state. And this is called the modest movement. And it lasts. Posted from 1885 to 1898, a British Egyptian counteroffensive ended it. This I share with you because it's the beginning of a strong anti colonial sentiment in Sudan.

This pushback against Britain, a pushback against Egypt. For the next 56 years, Sudan became a condominium of British and Egyptian rule from 1899 to 1956. This is pretty recent history. So what's a condominium? In international law, it basically means that two or more states exercise joint sovereignty over a territory.

So two states are kind of ruling over. Sudan's the territory, Britain and Egypt rule it. If you think about it, This is a tricky situation. We've got British and Egyptian interests trying to find that balancing act, but also the Sudanese are aspiring for more self determination and seeds have been planted.

They're starting to grow into plants, right? From the start, Britain had a lot more to do. control over Sudan. It was not an equal partnership with Egypt. Any uprising in the north was quickly suppressed, pacified, and modernization began a lot, began a lot more quickly in the north. While in the south, the British governors were more interested in just keeping the peace.

Then in making any serious attempts at modernizing from everything that I read, it seems like the government foundation felt more British, but the Islamic aspects like religious Sharia judges or Sharia court officials were more Egyptian taxation was fixed for the first time in Sudan's history. History during this time.

Wow. There were short bursts of resistance to all of this. Nothing was successful or long lasting. It also appears like things were quite different in the South. The Sud shielded the South from a lot of modernizations, and it was a simpler life from a governing perspective because it was very, very underdeveloped.

In both places, the colonial government governed largely through Indigenous leaders, like a Sikh in the North, like or a tribal chief in the South. I think this is a good time to stop and talk about different tribal and ethnic groups in both the North and the South, because they're going to play a big role in upcoming politics in the next two parts of this, these episodes.

So keep in mind again that Sudan is very ethnically diverse. There are 19 major linguistic groups in Sudan, but I do believe generalizations can help us to, to frame this. the history. So in the northern part of Sudan, as we've mentioned before, the term Arab is often used to describe an Arabic speaking Muslim.

There are ethnically mixed people who descend from both Arab and African tribes. While Arabic is the dominant language, there are still local languages that tie with tribal heritage. But when we're talking about modern Sudan, A lot of the things that apply to modern Sudan today also apply in the 1900s.

So I'm going to share a quote from Cultural Atlas explaining North Sudan today. Quote, historically, most Arabs were divided into tribes and sub tribes on the basis of people's descent from common ancestors. The traditional livelihoods of tribes were usually centered on agricultural production or nomadic livestock herding.

These traditional lifestyles have been dismantled mostly in cities. However, they continue in rural areas and settled villages. Agricultural tribes remain in a specific territory, usually along the central Nile. Meanwhile, tribes whose lives center on livestock rearing are generally nomads in the plains and are known as Bedouins or Badu.

Ultimately, Sudanese Arabs don't make a homogenous group. Today, the social landscape is so diverse that the term Arab can be descriptive of both a camel herder in the plain that's someone who raises camels, by the way and a businessman in the city. End of quote. Again, they're talking about modern Sudan. It applies in the 1900s, too.

There are also non Arab ethnicities in the north who speak languages other than Arabic. Some of those groups are the Nubians, the Bedja, the Fur, and the Nuba. And these groups have close ancestry to the Egyptians and the Eritreans, so their physical features are going to show this. In the South, things are a bit different.

Cultural Atlas says, quote, the further away from the Nile one travels in Sudan, the more, quote, African, the social, demographic, and customs of the tribes become. Some African tribes have adopted Islam over time. For example, the four and Zagawa people practice Islam, but also incorporate some traditions specific to their ethnicity.

However, many African ethnic tribes practice Christianity or follow a traditional animist religion instead. The vast majority of non Muslim tribes live in the Nuba mountains or the southern regions of Sudan. End of quote. So, Southern Sudan, from everything I was able to gather, is much more Christian.

South Sudan has over 60 different ethnic groups, but they are kind of under the umbrella of six main groups. The biggest ethnic group in South Sudan is the Dinka, about 35 percent of the population. And the second biggest group is the Nuer. Which is spelled N U E R, in case you're curious. That's about 16%.

There are other tribes as well, subdivisions within each group, all with different dialects and traditions. But, the Dinka and the Nuer come up the most in the history that I studied, so, I want to focus on those two major groups. Just a fun fact about Dinka people is they are often recognizable for being very tall and lean.

The average height of a Dinka person is six feet tall. And this includes women and anything under seven feet is considered like pretty standard for Dinka. And there are people who are over seven feet tall. A fun fact about the Nuer tribe is. they do tribal markings or scars across the forehead. So typically these are six lines that mark a man to be Nuer, from the Nuer tribe.

And these distinctions do come up in parts two and three, so I just wanted to point them out. Both of these tribes and other tribes in the southern region are generally cattle herders for their living, and they use cattle as a form of payment. Even today, and very much so back in the day, like a bride price is still paid through cattle, for example, tribal rivalries and territory disputes have been long standing between tribes in the South, particularly between the Dinka and New Air.

They are rivals. Let's stop there and go back to the history. So we are in Anglo Egyptian Sudan. This is 1899 to 1956. This is the time when Great Britain and Egypt are co ruling Sudan. There's a couple of big things to note here. The first is that During this time, they more or less forced the population to see themselves as a unified nation.

Before this, they were more of self governing tribes. And so circumstances birthed kind of a more Sudanese national identity. And the idea of like unified cultural things, cultural dress, for example, became a thing. While before people just wore their clothing that indicated their tribe. They still do this.

But this idea of a unified cultural Sudanese identity. Started becoming a thing during this time there again still remained a strong distinction between the north and the south But things are becoming a little bit more defined Christian missionary efforts also increased into southern Sudan during this period an Italian missionary made his way to southern Sudan and pretty intensive missionary work followed from 1901 to 1964 Christianity grew a lot in southern Sudan and again distinguished it further from its Arab and Persian Arab and Muslim population in the north.

Another key event during British Egyptian time was that major infrastructure projects developed, like the Sudan Railways. In many senses, again, that interior region of Sudan was largely unknown to outside groups. Paved roads didn't exactly grow in Sudan during the 1800s and early 1900s. So any military campaigns trying to get into central or southern Sudan were really difficult until railroads were made.

And railways allowed resources to be taken out of these areas and exported, which obviously benefited colonial powers. A direct route from the interior of Sudan to the Red Sea at Port

Sudan was a huge deal, especially as cash crops became more common. More and more important to the economy, a huge irrigation project that launched in 1911 started mainstreaming cotton in Sudan.

Cotton became the central focus of the region. All of these things I've talked about have pros and cons. It really depends on how you want to look at it, right? Railroads often disrupted local communities, cut through lands and areas that have been used in other ways for generations. It also provided more jobs.

for building railways, as well as working in agricultural cash crops. Also could be seen as a benefit. It required tribes and cultures that had not previously worked together to have more close contact, which led to conflict. Even with all of this infrastructure growth, uh, there still wasn't a whole lot of development in Southern Sudan.

And because it has no ports and it's landlocked, that made Britain and Egypt not want to invest in much into the southern part of Sudan. The British and Egyptians also wanted to reform Sudan's education system. Today, in 2024, Southern Sudan, South Sudan, for example, has the lowest literacy rate for women in the world.

Only 16 percent of women are able to read. Today in South Sudan and only 34% of all South Sudanese are literate. Think about that, right? That means 70% of South Sudanese people do not know how to read and write. Today, Sudan in the north has 60% as its literacy rate so much higher. So you can see that in the early 19 hundreds where we are in history.

It was likely worse. The British set up a system that segregated schools along racial and class lines. So the wealthy elite, which, again, were a very, very small percentage of people, were often the people who were most friendly to the British. And they were more well educated, while the larger population was not.

English was introduced in schools. They are also influenced by Egypt. Arabic became a major language spoken in the North. But speaking English immediately put a person in a higher position of power. They focused on training people in vocations that served the needs of the colonial economy, right? So agriculture and railway maintenance were a major education focus and providing a broader education was not.

This absolutely affects the people of Sudan for years to come. We'll get into that in parts two and especially in part three. Egypt also supported a lot of teacher training that spread Arabic and Islamic education throughout the country and indigenous languages or cultural traditions really were not a priority, diminished heavily.

The first college ever was established in Khartoum in 1902. Overall, the majority of Sudanese people received little to no education during this time, had a massive impact on the country and that affects the way that Sudan and South Sudan are able to compete on the world stage today, building nations and governments.

Does require literacy. Education is also a huge confidence booster. Let's be real here. Like a lack of literacy puts people in a position where they can be more easily influenced by others because it's harder to verify or question information when it's learned through word of mouth. Word of mouth information is really dependent on the trustworthiness and memory of the person passing that information.

And so I just feel like the power of independent learning granted by literacy. Right? Literacy leads to independent learning. I just think it cannot be understated. It's so important. In the middle of all of this, we have World War I, 1914 to 1918. World War I affected Sudan because Great Britain was a key player in the conflict.

Because Sudan made cotton, and that was needed for uniforms and all kinds of, you know, wartime needs, the British colonial administration really ratcheted cotton production up. This obviously affects the people. Additionally, many Sudanese were conscripted or required to join labor or military units in World War One.

Sudanese did fight in the war, mostly in the Middle East and in East Africa. If you want to learn more about the theaters of World War One, I have an episode on it, it's episode 36. But moving all of these people and resources around required a lot more infrastructure. So Sudan railways was expanded even more into the country.

There was also a famine during the war, which led to, again, bad harvests, which led to food shortages that affected the everyday life of people in Sudan. on a huge scale. Also during World War One, most of the Sudanese who had left for the war became exposed to more anti colonial ideas from other nations and brought them back to Sudan at the end of the war.

This started laying the foundation for independence movements. There was an uprising in 1919 with people showing great dissatisfaction with British policies, wanting more self determination. And as we've learned, World War I, the end of World War I led to many boundaries being redrawn and changed. We 101 episodes.

And this redrawing of boundaries kind of indirectly affected Sudan. One way was when Egypt gained independence from the British in 1922, so shortly after World War One. Separate administrations continued over Sudan, so Egypt and Britain were still running it, but it did shake things up for sure. Politics began to shift in the region, and in the 1930s, Egypt began to assert more power over Sudan, which made Sudanese nationalism grow, which made workers organize trade union movements against poor working conditions, low wages.

Again, the Sudanese felt like they were being exploited for foreign interests. And there's that pushback that we've talked about. Sudan was also drawn into World War II, which was from 1939 to 1945. Again, because of mostly the British, pretty much the same things that happened in World War I happened again.

Cotton was needed, more agricultural products were needed for the war. And so railways and roads were built to move troops and supplies from here to there. Depending on how you want to look at it. This can be seen as positive improvements to Sudan's development, but it also meant more exposure to outside ideas and lifestyles as well as local suffering as resources are diverted to the war.

The vast majority of Sudanese still had little to no contact with the outside world though. So the fact that they're getting more and more ideas as during these world wars. It's significant. After World War II, as we know from many of the other 101 episodes, this was a time of massive decolonization.

Many independence movements happened around the world after World War II, and Sudan is no different. More political activity and Sudanese nationalism all on the rise after World War II. Because of Sudan's strategic location, again, right by the Suez Canal, right by the Red Sea, it had become a logistical hub for the Allies in World War II.

And this made it tricky. Sudanese nationalists wanted more political representation, but it also wanted independence. And hopefully we know by now that they were not all in agreement on how this was to be done. Right. Just think about your country, where you live. If your country reached independence, did everyone in your country agree on how it should be done?

No, right? Different groups have different ideas on how independence should happen, what it should look like. And there was a serious divide in Sudan between. The North and the South in 1947, there was a conference in Juba under the British Sudanese leaders from the North and the South met to kind of sort out Sudan's future author.

Peter Martel said, quote, after a century of outside rule, the June 1947 conference was the first time anyone had asked the South Sudanese what they wanted. The British brought in chiefs from across the South, as well as a small but vocal crowd of the educated, including teachers and government clerks, end of quote.

This is 1947, and it's the first time that the Southerners are getting involved in the politics, on like a larger scale. The British wanted to unite the North and the South of Sudan, and the Southern leaders We're not interested in that. Unfortunately, from what I could gather, it seems like the British had basically made up their minds before the conference and the Southern Sudanese chiefs were more or less informed that the British were going to hand control of the South over to the North and that's how it was going to be.

Now the question of the North and South of Sudan had always existed, but because Britain decided to leave South Sudan relatively untouched by modernity, they didn't have a The South didn't have a unified political class. It didn't have one leader to kind of rally behind. And while Britain toyed with the idea of adding Southern Sudan to Britain's other African colonies, Southern Sudan really wasn't a high priority for the British because it was very underdeveloped.

Southerners later called this conference the abominable conference. They felt like they had not been truly consulted, and they were worried about how the northern Sudanese people would treat the southerners if the northerners were allowed to rule. National agitation continued. Political parties began forming in the north and in the south, all influenced by global trends against colonialism.

And one of these parties favored actually unity with Sudan. Egypt, Egypt was very in favor of Sudan, no longer being under British control because they wanted Britain out of the Suez Canal. And they were upset with the British because of the British involvement with allowing the state of Israel to be created.

So getting Britain out of Sudan was really important to Egypt. And in 1953, the British and Egyptian governments finally signed an agreement that they would grant Sudan the ability to self govern. And a transitional period was agreed upon that would hopefully lead to full independence in time. And Sudan held its first parliamentary elections in 1953, which led to forming kind of a coalition government.

And this government was tasked with organizing a constitutional conference and preparing the country for independence. And in October of 1954, 250 leaders from the South met in Juba, and they organized their own meeting to discuss rule by Khartoum. Like how do we feel about being ruled by the North? And again, the capital of the North is Khartoum.

They wanted Sudan to become a federal system, giving them more freedom from the North. And they decided that if a federal system wasn't possible, then they wanted full independence with Sudan being divided between the North and the South. But this did not happen. On December 19th, 1955, the Sudanese parliament unanimously passed a resolution declaring Sudan as independent from Egypt and Britain.

And this was followed by a formal declaration of independence on December 19th, 1955. On January 1st, 1956, again, that marked the end of the Anglo Egyptian condominium. And Sudan is now an independent nation. It was a pivotal moment to be sure, but unfortunately it left a lot of things unresolved, particularly again, that tenuous relationship between the Northern and Southern regions that was absolutely not resolved.

And as you've probably guessed during all of these political changes. A civil war had already erupted between the Northerners and the Southerners. January 1st, 1956, the first day of Sudan becoming an independent nation, already a civil war. From the get go, the government experienced a lot of political instability and power struggles.

There was a series of coups, that means attempted Government takeovers, multiple changes to the government, and most of it again had to do with these issues between the North and the South. And the first Sudanese civil war lasted from 1955 to 1972. So let's talk about it for a minute. The South was suspicious and fearful of rule by Khartoum, but the South wasn't very

unified because they had been left fairly, you know, untouched by modernity, except to be rated for slaves.

Right. And also because of the simple geography of the swampland that made their region much more difficult to develop. Their lives and society weren't as developed as the Northern counterpart, right? So since in the past, the North had treated them as subhuman, an independent Sudan that included the South really was never going to go well.

Southerners didn't necessarily trust each other either, but they had one common enemy, and that was the Northern Arabs of Sudan. And the beginning of the war actually came as an attack from the South you to the north. And honestly, it was pretty disorganized. In Martel's book, *First Raise a Flag*, which I've, I've quoted a few times, he talks about how there was one sergeant named Sergeant Aboyo, and he knew that he was going to be the vehicle for a Southern Revolution.

And he sent messages to others throughout the South that they should assassinate Northern officers while they slept. And there was a few problems with this plan. The foremost issue was that the Southerners didn't have access to the North. to guns. So the first shot of the first Sudanese civil war was actually a bow and arrow.

Aboyo did try to assassinate a northern officer, but he was arrested and tensions grew because the north knew that most of the south aligned with Aboyo and his opinions. A few days later, a more organized rebellion took place. Southerners against Northerners. As Northerners were shot and beaten to death by machetes.

And then Southern troops would come in and break into the armory and distribute weapons among themselves. There wasn't much of centralized leadership, just general purpose that serving the North was not going to happen. And eventually this lack of organization meant they were defeated by the Northerners and began begging the British for help.

All of this violence had really spooked the British and local British leaders in the South. They did side with the South politically. But they didn't, they didn't change the resolution that independent Sudan was going to include both the north and the south. And the northerners were ruthless in ending these rebellions.

Southern soldiers were rounded up, 150 or more were sentenced to death, thousands were imprisoned. By 1963, anger was growing even more. The politicians were demanding change, and opposition leaders in the South, uh, Joseph Oduho and William Dang wrote, quote, Open segregation marks the relationship between Northern and Southerners.

We demand nothing short of self determination, after which we shall be good friends. End of quote. You'll remember that all of this is happening during the Cold War, when the U. S. and the Soviet Union, uh, We're using other countries as proxy wars between them and Khartoum leaned toward the Soviets and Southerners leaned towards the United States over time.

The Southerners became more strategic about their rebellions, feeling like the North was not operating fairly. It was ruling the South more like a colony. And one South Sudanese rebel, rebel group called the Anya Nya started to plant explosives. And due to their lack of weapons, they started getting creative with gas bombs and blocking roads and ambushing and digging holes.

And Khartoum in the North did not like this one bit. They were quote, merciless in retaliation, captured fighters were hanged or shot and whole villages were burned. Hundreds were arrested, people disappeared and suspected fighters were tortured. One guy said, I was stripped naked. My feet tied and hung upside down, end of quote.

The USA didn't help the Anya Nya, that's again, that rebel group in the South, as much as they wanted and neither did other African nations. And so finally they went to Israel. Israel agreed largely because if you remember from that one on one series on the Palestinian Israeli conflict, Israel has a lot of enemies on all sides in the region and wanted to broaden, uh, its influence in non Arab entities in the Middle East and Africa and northern Sudan was allied with Egypt, which was not Israel's friend at the time.

And so in 1969, the Israel decided to support the southern rebel fighters and the first group of Anya Nya fighters. Again, that's the South Sudanese rebel fighters. They arrived in Israel for military training, weapons, and support. And Israel's intelligence community, Mossad, spent time during, doing trainings in Southern Sudan with these rebel armies.

And one particular man named John Garang was trained by Mossad during this time. And his name becomes very, very important in part two. Around this same time in 1969, the north of Sudan begins to be ruled by an authoritarian leader who experimented with a lot of socialist policies. Again, the north was friendly with the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, and the Soviets provided the north with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of weapons and machinery.

And This particular man's government nationalized many industries and also introduced more Islamic laws in the north in 1972, the war officially ended with what's called the Addis Ababa agreement, basically a peace agreement between the government in Khartoum in the north and the separatist southern rebels, the onion.

Yeah, and it allowed for a creation of what was called the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region, region, basically allowed for a regional assembly that could be based in Juba in the South. So the central government would still be in Khartoum, but in the South, they would have some more autonomy in their own region, could have some governing power.

That was the idea. The Anya Nya was actually integrated into the Sudanese army and police force. And while everyone was happy that it ended the conflict, most Northerners were pretty dubious about giving the South more autonomy. And they worried that other regions that they controlled might do the same thing.

In the southern, the southern region, they were generally glad they had more representation, but they felt like it wasn't enough, and they wanted more autonomy than what was given. However, over the next 10 years, there were a lot of disagreements on how this agreement would be implemented, and that caused more challenges between the two groups.

And then in 1978, Chevron, which is the U. S. oil giant of the time, discovered oil in Sudan. And most of it was found in the southern part. This cranked up tensions between the North and the South a lot. So not only did we have political and religious disagreements between the two, but now we have oil, which has the potential to bring a lot of wealth to an extremely poor nation.

That's now all on the table. Okay, let's stop there. We just covered from the dawn of time until 1978. A major gloss over. Definitely a lot to digest. Feel free to print out the transcription for this episode, which you can find in my show notes. Reread it. Listen again. Part two will be coming out in two weeks.

So if you're listening to this right away, that will hopefully give you some time to digest. But let's do a quick summary. Make sure we've got this. So the land we now call Sudan and South Sudan. is in northeastern Africa, underneath Egypt. In the north, we have desert. Further south you go, becomes more green.

Ancient civilizations existed for many, many years. Christianity spreads through the region, then Islam. Islamic sultanates rule the land for many years. There's a Turko Egyptian administration, Under the Ottoman Empire for a time during that time the slave trade which focused on southern Sudan affects everything Britain begins to have more power in the region because of the Suez Canal from 1899 to 1956 Britain and Egypt jointly rule Sudan it becomes something called a condominium.

Britain had a lot of power during this time, developed much of northern Sudan. But because of that swamp like barrier, the Sud, the southern region of Sudan becomes much less developed. World War I, World War II all happened during this condominium period. But as Sudanese people learn of anti colonial ideas, nationalism and hopes for more freedom begin to take hold.

By the end of World War II, the global order is shifting. Sudan's a part of that. And in 1955, Sudan becomes independent. Well, end of 1955, early 1956. However, a civil war, it's now called the First Sudanese Civil War, begins right away between the government in the north and the southern rebels It lasts until 1972.

After this, the South begins to have a bit more autonomy, though this wasn't handled exactly like the agreement said, and in 1978, oil is discovered in Sudan. That is the basic, basic overview. I want to end on one quote by Peter Martel. He says, quote, Sudan is a crossing point and a melting pot of people.

Between the continent and the Middle East, it is a bridge between African and Arab, Muslim and Christian, North and South. This is where two worlds collide. At the best of times, they blend

together. At the worst, and there have been a lot of bad times, they fray and split, turning differences of race, religion, language, and ways of life into violence.

End of quote. And boy does it heat up even more in the coming years that we're going to talk about in Parts 2 and Part 3. I'm going to save my personal takeaways for Parts 2 and 3 because this episode is long enough already and there are a lot more human details in Parts 2 and 3 because they cover a lot less time.

And so I'll save it. I'll save it. But if you've learned anything from this episode, please consider sharing it with someone you know. Send a text. Shared on social media. I really appreciate it. I also really appreciate reviews because they help people to find the podcast, especially on Apple podcasts and Spotify.

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