

## Economic activity in the Western Sudan region (Darfur) 1907-1924

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### ABSTRACT:

Sudan occupied a vast geographical area in the African continent that amounted to about (2,000,000) million square kilometers, which constitutes 8% of its area, as for the western region of Sudan (Darfur), which was named by this name in relation to the oldest people inhabited by the Fur people, who Its name has become a note on it, which is the subject of study, and it is located within the vast Sudanese belt extending across Africa from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and which is bordered by the Sahara Desert on the north and the evergreen tropical forests from the south, thus representing the western part of eastern Sudan or Sudan Valley The Nile, and in this way the region is the farthest from the geographical point of view, that is, in the far west of Sudan, and the natural location of the region, with rain, temperatures, humidity, and its terrain, including mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes, gave a kind of economic distinction to the region. Economically, the region possesses many natural environmental factors, and this has been reflected in the trends and economic activities of its various regions due to its location on the trade and caravan route between the North and the South. The fall of rain during the summer and autumn seasons on the diversity of agricultural and pastoral activities. Commercially, the Darfur region was the center of the intersection of transit trade routes and their convoys to the east, west, north, and south.

### Keywords:

Western Sudan region, Darfur, trade routes, regions

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### A- Agricultural activity:

The impact of the region's climate on its economic activities that depend primarily on agricultural and pastoral potentials. Consequently, livelihoods and means of life have diversified due to the abundance of rainfalls in the region during the summer and autumn seasons, or those that descend from the heights in various directions, forming fertile valleys and many rivers. (1), and as a result of this diversity and climatic variation of the region, which is characterized by high temperatures in the north with a tendency to decline in the south, and the diversity of natural plants and herbs as annual trees grow that are able to withstand thirst, the most famous of which are acacia and acacia. Fruit trees, including palms, lemons, bananas, and other types, are characterized by their ability to retain rainwater and benefit from storing it in its stems and thus are able to resist drought (2), so the western region of Sudan (Darfur) is considered as one of the regions of Sudan rich in its resources, which led the agricultural activity in both parts

Vegetation and livestock play a major role in it, but they form a basic and vital element in the movement of the economy, in terms of vast and arable lands and the diversity of environments that allow diversification of agricultural crops (3). In turn, on the diversity and multiplicity of human activity, as follows:

1- The northern region: This region is distinguished by its diversity, as the desert is interspersed with valleys and hills on which heavy rains fall, and then the valleys covered with plants with permanent greenery are spread, and therefore it has become a suitable pasture for camels, sheep and livestock of all kinds (4).

2- The Central Region: It is in the middle of Mountain Marra with its moderate climate and environment suitable for plant growth, so human activity is based on diversified agriculture, and Mountain Marra climatically divides the region into two parts (east and west), which creates a kind of diversity in population density and human activity, especially in raising livestock such as

cows and livestock. In addition, the cultivation of plant products and various agricultural crops (5).

3- The southern region: It is distinguished by its natural resources and fertile agricultural lands as well as fertile valleys and plains as a result of the abundant rains that help the growth of long weeds suitable for raising livestock and then it is distinguished by the huge livestock (6), which is the mainstay of the life of the people of the region, and it can be said that the various climatic factors The topography, the nature of the land, and the climatic factors combined have helped to improve the agricultural fields (7) and revitalize the operations of grazing cows, sheep and sheep, while some areas, especially those north of the 13th North Line, face scarcity of rain and drought in some cases, so they are distinguished by the operations of grazing camels only (8).

The agricultural activity played a major role and an essential and vital element in the economic movement in the western region of Sudan (Darfur) during the period of condominium rule (9), where the diversity of crops and the consequent revival of the trade movement. For example, there were many crops such as:

1- Millet: millet represented during that period the main food for the people of Darfur, as more than 90% of the region's population depended on It (10). The cultivated area of it was estimated at the time about 54% of the total land, while the thin corn (mealy) was the second food crop in Territory (11).

2- Wheat: its cultivation during that period was confined to the slopes of Mountain Marra in the water valleys due to the availability of the conditions for cultivation, as it depended on rain, as well as the areas around Kikabiya and Kobe, but with the exception of these areas, it was not cultivated in the western Sudan region (Darfur).

3- Gum Arabic: During that period, the bilateral government was interested in producing gum to meet the needs of its factories, as the Darfur

directorates were within the producing areas of gum Arabic in Sudan because of its natural growth of Hashab forests (12).

4- Tobacco: The people relied on this crop mainly to revive their economy, as it was cultivated in valleys and waterways, especially in Wadi Shakra, Tawila area west of El Fasher, and Shangil Tobay area on Nyala El Fasher, Al Malam and Kass in South Darfur, and there were markets in El Fasher dedicated to the tobacco trade. Indigo was exported to various regions of Sudan (13).

There were some crops that were grown for self-sufficiency in order to provide food and clothing only that were grown in the plains on the slopes of the mountains, such as corn, fruit and rice (14), and citrus fruits and oil crops such as peanuts, sesame and melon, and the agricultural process was often carried out in a frame of Cooperation between farmers without obtaining wages for those works, meaning that the movement of economic growth was limited (15), and since the main purpose of agriculture was self-sufficiency only, the dual government authorities left the task of distributing lands to the Native Administration, as the lands were distributed to farmers in the ways that The National Administration deems it appropriate, as the buyers and sheikhs used to put their hands on most of these lands while the farmers acquire specific areas, or the Sharati and sheikhs give the lands to the farmers residing in their homes only or for a fee to the strangers and in all cases the agriculture did not go beyond the traditional phase, as there was no of agricultural experts and extension agents who provide advice and guidance to farmers (16), with the exception of several agricultural stations that are distributed to the various centers of the region to improve the level of crops for each region. As follows :

- 1- El Fasher Center: Experiments were conducted in this center on the cultivation of (tobacco), which is used for smoking in Wadi Qalou.

horses	Cows	Donkeys	Lamb	Goats	center	s
2500	49000	7000	10150	1550	North Darfur	1
1800	12900	1000	12000	1600	South Darfur	2
1100	28000	7000	16000	5500	West Darfur	3
2400	35000	7000	54000		Masalit House	4
1200	27500	1500	42000	2650	East Darfur and El Fasher	5

**Table No. (1): shows a census of the number of livestock in Darfur (26)**

2- Kutum Center: Experiments were conducted to cultivate date palms to find out which variety is suitable for being the first to take care of (17).

3- Zalingei Center: In West Darfur, experiments were conducted on cultivating cotton in the Arula Valley, wheat at the top of the mountain in the Kalamaj area, and coffee in the Ganayin Nerti and Zalingei regions.

4- Nyala South Darfur Center: Two stations were established in this center, the first on sandy lands near Al Daein to grow crops, including beans, sesame, corn and millet, while the other station was on the clay lands south of Buram area for the cultivation of cotton and wheat.

5- Dar Al-Masalit Center: The cultivation of mangoes and beans has been improved by bringing in new types of them, and the government has also introduced new crops that were not familiar and unknown to the people before, such as planting potatoes in West Darfur

and introducing modern methods of agriculture, and cultivating the slopes of the mountains and cutting canals and canals. The cultivation of coffee, tobacco and citrus crops was witnessed for the first time, which reflected positively on the economic conditions in the country (18).

As for the interest in forests, forests were neglected in the Darfur directorate, as they were vulnerable to the dangers of drought and desertification, so the government took practical steps to stop the desert encroachment. Which results in desert encroachment (19). Likewise, improved seeds of pure crops were introduced to increase production and tried to move from traditional, self-sufficient

agriculture to large-scale enterprise cultivation, and to use more modern methods as an alternative to primitive methods (20).

**B: Livestock:**

As for grazing and animal husbandry, there is

no doubt that the diversity of the terrain contributed to the diversity of the economic activities of the population in this region, and also contributed to the population diversity. The south for grazing (21), while some turn in the winter to the land of the Lagoons (22), where the evergreen green vegetation cover throughout the year, and the semi-desert range limits, the Libyan desert to the north. While the "Wadi Howar" is considered a watershed. As for the south of it, vegetation cover extends, irrigating the seasonal rains, and there are many valleys that helped revitalize agriculture and grazing in the region and provided good economic resources (23). Other livestock, and in light of what has been presented, the western region of Sudan (Darfur) enjoys tremendous potentials of disparate natural resources and compared to what Sudan had of livestock in general, the Darfur Directorate was known to be the richest in Sudan in terms of its possession of livestock. In Sudan in (1917-1924) there were more than 105 million heads of cows, 202 million heads of sheep, 2 million goats, and 401 thousand heads of camels, and that the Darfur

Directorate had a large share of this wealth.(24) . Of course, this distinction is due to the fact that the people of Darfur practice grazing alongside agriculture, especially the inhabitants of villages and valleys. As for livestock and the percentage of their distribution in the various regions in Darfur, the following table shows a statistic of livestock for the Darfur Directorate (25) These percentages may be much less than the actual numbers of livestock, and this may be due to two reasons: The first: for fear of high taxes that may be incurred by livestock owners, and the second: is the fear of the eye of envy, according to the belief of the people of Darfur, and the dual government authorities have made many efforts through The Department of Animal Production in the Darfur Directorate to combat endemic animal diseases and epidemics such as rinderpest (Abu Dama), Qanit, dairy, septicemia, and coal fever resulting from different natural conditions due to the geographical, climatic and plant diversity, by providing

preventive medicines and the provision of specialized animal disease staff to treat them (27). By establishing veterinary clinics in Kadada and Tawisha in the center of El Fasher, and six clinics in the center of South Darfur in Al Daein and Buram in each of Mellit, Kikabiya, Ambro, Karnoy, El Sereef and El Geneina in Dar Al Masalit and Zalingei in West Darfur (28) How much a veterinarian has been assigned to travel with the nomads to the northern regions of the directorate to follow up on the sickness of animals, and there is no doubt that the concern for animal health has led to an increase in their numbers and thus an improvement in the economy balance in the region (29), and in the context of preserving pastures, the dual government authorities worked in Western Sudan region (Darfur) to generalize these systems all over the Baggara regions, as it worked to distribute the pits in a way that avoids the overgrowing pastures to the extent that they are responsible for, and purifies the weeds that are exposed to the grazing process (30), and to improve breeding, the Veterinary Department established the isolation project, which is divided One of them is concerned with improving the offspring of different types of animals, such as cows, horses, and sheep in terms of their suitability for the production of meat, then milk, and the second is for improving pastures of all kinds and keeping them from fire and eradicating weeds that are not suitable for animals or that harm them, and we can say that animal activity in the Darfur Directorate, which is the second economic resource after Agriculture has witnessed a kind of development as the British administration was keen to pay attention in terms of providing the appropriate environment for animal husbandry and concern for animal health Irrigating pastures, providing water and improving birth control (31).

#### C-Commercial Activity:

Trade appeared in the beginning in the western Sudan region (Darfur) in a simple and primitive way in its practice, as in its content it was limited

to the exchange of benefit, so the merchant brings the commodity from a place where it is available to another place where the need for that commodity is motivated by what he gets from He won, and the western Sudan region (Darfur) had commercial relations with its neighbors, such as Chad, Central Africa and Egypt, where the usual trade routes and by virtue of the location and history, the Sultanate of Darfur was a center for the intersection of transit trade routes and their convoys in the east where the kingdoms and central Sudan, and the west where Chad, and the north where the lands Libya, south and central Africa, that is, it was a stop for the merchants from the Red Sea and the Hijaz in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and from the equator in the south to the shores of the Mediterranean, and it was a safe house to rest from the long march of the Muslims of West and Central Africa towards the Holy Land, and it was in Each year represents the starting point for two caravans with symbolic connotations that transcend local relations and ties: the first is a caravan carrying the Holy Kaaba's cladding in charity and blessing, and the second: the caravan of Ataw Sultan of Darfur to the Sultan of Muslims in the Sublime Porte (32).

Trade in Darfur was linked by three main roads, the first of these roads and the most famous one is the Darb al-Arbaeen, which was said to have been in use since the Pharaonic eras (33) and which was described by the traveler and historian Muhammad Omar al-Tunisi (34) and described it accurately and mentioned that it starts from Assiut in Egypt to Darfur (35) and the distance was estimated from Assiut and even Kobe, the commercial capital of Western Sudan (Darfur), and the last stop of the convoy on a road of about (1117) miles, which could be cut in forty days. , Ostrich feathers, gum arabic, copper, and India dates. The Jellaba, and they were the merchants who were practicing trade between Egypt and Sudan, and the majority of them were from the people of the sea, such as the Danqah, the Shaikiyah and the Jaliites (36). As for the second

road, it is the road that leads to the western Sudan region (Darfur) from the countries of Western Sudan, especially Bruno and Waday, to the station(37). The last one in Kabkabiya and from there to other areas in the western region of Sudan (Darfur) and then to Kordofan, which was known as the Hajjaj Road, Darb Al Arbaeen, or Arbaeen Road (38), and the third road that connects the Western Sudan region (Darfur) to the outside is the road that passes through the desert Al-Kubra connects it with Tunisia and Morocco, which is the road through which some Arab tribes came to Darfur, most of which belong to what is known as the Banu Hilal group (39).

As for the two desert roads that have been known since ancient times, they are: the Arbaeen Road and the Libyan-Trabelsi Road. These two roads have remained a means of commercial and civilized communication (40) between Western Sudan (Darfur), Egypt and Tripoli throughout the ages, as the railway extended from Khartoum to the city of El Obeid, Finally, to Nyala, the means of transport changed, and the use of these two ancient roads was stopped (41), in addition to the main old roads. There are other roads, including: the eastern road to the Kingdom of the Funj, or what is known as the caravan route that connects African countries with Darfur and the South African region to the Congo, and another road From the lakes plateau to the western Sudan region (Darfur) and the road between El Fasher and Nyala, the round road around Mountain Marra that connects all the big markets and the main road between the city of El Fasher and the city of El Obeid (42) and all of these roads are connected to each other as they work to facilitate the commercial and agricultural movement and development Livestock and capital collection, by means of these routes that most of the commercial caravans used to take to and from the Western Sudan region (Darfur). Commercial exports have diversified in the western Sudan region (Darfur). In the forefront of which were agricultural crops such as gum arabic and peanuts. As for livestock, it was mainly sheep, goats and camels that were



collected from the local markets within the region (43), and they reached internal markets such as the White Market, the Indians, Omdurman, and foreign markets in Egypt via the Arbaeen Trail, which was designated To export livestock, there were also large quantities of camels, agricultural products, gum and leather, which were smuggled by traders to neighboring countries, which used to lose the countries a lot of tax owed money (44), and the region that extended from Bir al-Natrun in the Sahara Desert in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south was formed, and from Kordofan in the east to Libya and Chad in the west is a link between the central Sudan region (Chad and Central Africa) and between Sudan and the Nile Valley. Therefore, the region was considered one of the most important commercial centers from the Middle Ages until the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, the states of Western Sudan (Darfur) can be divided according to their economic importance as follows:

a. Northern Darfur State: This state is considered one of the richest states of Darfur and Sudan with its diverse natural resources and includes the following:

1- Agricultural resources: it enjoys vast, fertile agricultural lands suitable for the production of various crops, as the cultivated area is 7,700,000 dunams.

2- Water resources: it enjoys annual rainfall (100-600 mm), as well as surface and underground water (45).

3- Pastures and forests: The area of pastures is estimated at about (7 thousand dunams), while forests are estimated at about (5 thousand dunams).

4- Livestock: about (12,000 heads) of cows, sheep, goats and camels.

5- Mineral wealth: the most important of which are iron, lead, chrome, marble, building materials and minerals (46).

B. Western Darfur State: This state has multiple natural resources, including the following:

1- Agricultural lands: The area of arable lands is (8 thousand dunums) and used (3 thousand dunums). Horticultural crops grow on the heights of Mountain Marra, and the most important agricultural projects in them are the Habila project with an exploitable capacity (4000 thousand dunums) and Khor Ramla with an exploitable capacity (6000 dunums) Zlo exploited capacity (4500 dunums) (47).

2- Livestock: includes cows, sheep and camels, with an estimated (4,500 thousand head) ...

3- Water resources: In addition to the annual rains, there are many valleys, the most important of which are Wadi Kaja, Bari, Azum, and Tilolo, which descend from the heights of Mountain Marra and this works on the availability of surface water, and underground water reservoirs are also available such as the water-rich Disa reservoir, as The average water resources in the state exceed (3 billion m3) annually (48).

4- Forests: There are Al Haraz, Al Hili, Hashab, Al Mashra, Mahogany and other trees, and the most important products are gum arabic, wood for furniture and fuel, and forest fruits. Forests cover 75% of the area of the state, and among the most important agricultural development projects are the apple crop cultivation project in Mountain Marra, and the Habila project, Hawergla. Almonds, Azni, Umm Khiz, and others, and there is huge investment potential in all agricultural and crafts fields (49).

C. Southern Darfur State: This state was distinguished by its huge resources, as it has a large area of land especially for agriculture, amounting to (40 thousand km<sup>2</sup>), good soil for agriculture, and the amount of rain that is sufficient to use that area of land in the cultivation of various agricultural crops, and from its natural resources that should be noted:

1- Agricultural lands: Its agricultural lands are estimated at about (24 thousand dunams), which is equivalent to (12%) of the total arable land in Sudan, and of which it is currently used (6600 thousand dunams) only (50).

2- Livestock: it is estimated at about (9800) head of cattle, sheep and camels. The pasture area reaches (2700) million dunams.

3- Water resources: they are multiple resources. The abundant rains (200-1000 mm) flow in wadis and their total annual revenues reach (344) million m<sup>3</sup> unused, in addition to groundwater (51), the most important of which is the Baggara Basin, which covers an area of (18) thousand square meters. It has a total storage capacity of one million cubic meters, with an annual feed of 17 million cubic meters, and the annual withdrawal does not exceed one million cubic meters.(52)

4- Forests have an area of 22,700 thousand hectares in this state, and the Radom enclosure (a national reserve) covers about 3400 thousand hectares.(53)

5- Mining: There are many mineral ores in the state, including copper, iron, limestone, caroline (54), sandstone, and cement ore, and oil is concentrated in the eastern parts of the state in the fields of Abu Jaber and others (55). The trade relations of Western Sudan (Darfur) have continued. With its neighbors such as Chad, Central Africa and Egypt without interruption during the period of condominium rule, where the usual methods of communication such as the Darb al-Arbaeen and the Eastern Road to the Kingdom of Funj, the caravan route linking the African countries with the western Sudan region (Darfur) and the South African region to the Congo and including the region (56) and another route from The lakes plateau to the western Sudan region (Darfur). In the era of dual rule, the internal roads were repaired, the road between El Fasher and Nyala was opened, the round road around Mountain Marra was developed, which connects all the large markets in the foothills with the main

road, and the condition of the main road between El Fasher and El Abyad (57) was paved with stone. The purpose of that was to link the cities of the region to each other to facilitate the commercial movement, especially after the interest in agriculture and livestock, bringing in capital, and establishing security. Many cultural centers have emerged. Which has become a commercial weight in the western region of Sudan (Darfur) (58) such as El Fasher, Melit, Kikabiya, Kutum Al Geneina, Nyala, and Akobiozalingi, where commercial capital and financial institutions were concentrated. Its exports were of agricultural crops and included gum arabic, tobacco and peanuts, while its exports of livestock included cows and sheep, goats, camels and skins, and these goods go out from the local markets within the district to internal markets such as the Al-Abyad, Al-Nahud and Omdurman market, and from there to the foreign markets in Egypt through the Darb Al-Arbaeen, while there were large quantities of camels, agricultural products, gum and leather that traders smuggle into neighboring countries (59). We can say that trade during the period of the dual rule was popular as a reflection of the availability of security, the reform of internal roads, the development of agriculture and livestock, which was reflected in the encouragement of the people to practice trade to improve the economic situation.

#### H-Crafts and industries:

Although the industrial and crafts activity is considered a quasi-traditional activity in the western region of Sudan (Darfur), it formed a number in the map of the economy and it developed relatively during the era of the condominium in order to meet the daily needs of the people of Darfur. Many factors contributed to the spread of these simple craft industries, including mixing Darfurian tribes with African tribes, which led to the transfer of some experiences and the creation of some industries and the failure to adopt modern means of production in various fields in addition to other

social factors, adherence to inherited customs and traditions and the preservation of traditional ways of life (60).

The development in the field of agricultural and pastoralism also produced a surplus in production, which led to the movement of trade and industrial and crafts development. Development in the field of agriculture and pastoralism led to the existence of a surplus in production, which led to the development of trade, industry and other professional crafts that were known in Western Sudan (Darfur), so he produced goods for consumption. The local industry did not exist before, such as the manufacture of war tools, swords, shields and knives, and the extraction of copper helped to use it in household utensils, and it was also used as currency in some regions, as well as the manufacture of clusters (61) and woodwork (62), and besides that, leather goods that depend on tanning leather. (63), And the city of El Fasher and El Geneina was famous for that industry, as it was an important economic resource. Women also practiced some craft industries such as making pottery vessels, including pottery, incense burners and jugs .... etc. There was also the manufacture of soap from some types of trees known as (Haglij and ash) and some materials in Mountain Marra were known as dye, but the local soap was not substitute for the use of soap imported from Omdurman (64)

The western region of Sudan (Darfur) witnessed the manufacture of spinning and weaving from cotton from Mountain Marra and the use of simple mechanisms known as the loom and weaving, as well as the spread of the oil industry that is extracted from beans and sesame, but in the field of palm fronds industries (in relation to palm fronds) the manufacture of ropes, broches, bags and pratel was widespread In the region, carpets were made of goat hair, as well as pillow, bedspreads, decorations and necklaces from camel hair (65).

In addition to those industries, there were other industries such as the manufacture of wines and

local drinks, goldsmithing and some tourist goods made of ostrich feathers and ebony wood. The relative development of these industries has led to a commercial boom and to a new type of social division of labor where artisanal classes appeared that did not exist, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, tanneries and whistlers (66), and accordingly it can be said that both commercial movement, agriculture and herding represented the first basis on which the economy depends Western Sudan region (Darfur), such as the manufacture of war tools, swords, shields, and knives. The extraction of copper helped to use it in household utensils. It was also used in the manufacture of shoes known as boats, which were famous for their manufacture in both the cities of El Fasher and El Geneina, which were an important economic resource for the condominium (67), Also, the manufacture of soap from Al-Heglij tree, ash and some materials flourished in Mountain Marra, which was known as dye (68).

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