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**WORKING PAPER**

**The Engendered Spaces in the  
Village at the Edge of the Capital:  
A Case Study of Al Gharaza/Sudan**



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**THE AHFAD-HUMBOLDT LINK PROGRAMME  
WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT**



**The Engendered Spaces in the Village  
at the Edge of the Capital:  
A Case Study of Al Gharaza/Sudan**

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photos: H. Knuth

## **Preface**

This research is the result of fieldwork undertaken in 2002 and 2003 by a team of Sudanese and German academics from Ahfad University for Women (AUW) and Humboldt-University of Berlin (HU). The research team for this social component of the interdisciplinary study is made up of Prof. Dr. Balghis Badri and Doz. Dr. Hardine Knuth as research leaders and Ms. Lamyia Badri as assistant researcher.

We are thankful to all the villagers, the headmaster of the school, all of other staff of Ahfad University for Women, and Mr. Mohamed Saeed who translated the interviews and meetings, and to the DAAD, which funded the trips to and from Germany, to Ahfad University for Women who supported the fieldwork trips, Humboldt-University of Berlin for facilitating the production of the study.

## **Abstract**

This research is the outcome of fieldwork undertaken between November 2002 and 2003 in Al Gharaza village part of Khartoum State - the Sudan capital.

The study focuses on identifying how spaces and times are interrelated and engendered. The forces that impact the creation of boundaries or those that direct change are analysed. How women's boundaries and spaces are defined and their interaction with them and bringing about new arrangements for spaces is discussed. How time is used, division of labour engendered, time conceptualized are highlighted. It is found that tradition and customs of exclusiveness as a value create a siege binding women spaces within the village and impact on their use of time: education is an important force that manages to crack the siege and open up to women some public space within the village. Outside forces for development or Islamization remained distant from the village; the villagers themselves desired a state of being apart from these forces. The consequence is a situation of exclusiveness from both economic development efforts and political integration. The value of exclusiveness of "others", inclusiveness from within; of the "we" and "they" have made the villagers to lead self-social development, which they desire and could afford, such as "building schools and supporting teachers". The interface between development, culture and social structures of the village life became evident. Minimal outside efforts to introduce development did not sustain. This made villagers step forward to initiate their own development, while development they doubt its consequences is resisted.

However, the more villagers think that development will make them keep their integrity and exclusiveness; it is welcomed. On the other hand, the more it will lead to changing the social structure of exclusiveness and integrity, it is resisted. Hence, they did not encourage negotiating repairing the agricultural scheme water pump for fear that it will lead to redistribution of land ownership and bringing outsiders to the village. They kept to endogenous marriage for both genders, limiting women's movement outside the village through values of protection and honour keeping, all are mechanisms to maintain exclusiveness from strangers.

The men as the key players, owners of assets and income, defined the boundaries for both genders, respected them and gave themselves the authority of decision taking both inside and outside the household and in the public arena. Both genders respect, acknowledge and seem satisfied with the social structure of defined spaces, time use and boundaries. The spaces are multidimensional and integrated with possibilities to stretch them through different direct and indirect strategies which women know how to manipulate and use.

**Keywords:** Sudan, Women in rural areas, Space and time, Gender specific division of labour, Social change in rural areas.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Der vorliegende Forschungsbericht basiert auf einer Feldforschung, die von November 2002 bis Ende 2003 in Al Gharaza, einem Dorf in Khartum State, durchgeführt wurde.

Das Ziel der Untersuchung bestand darin zu untersuchen, wie Raum und Zeit miteinander verknüpft und wie sie geschlechtsspezifisch geprägt sind. Die begrenzenden Wirkungskräfte und die Faktoren, die sozialen Wandel einleiten, werden analysiert. Es wird diskutiert, wie die Räume der Frauen und ihre Grenzen definiert sind und wie neue Arrangements entstehen. Es wird herausgearbeitet, wie Zeit genutzt wird, welche Zeitkonzepte existieren und wie Arbeitsteilung geschlechtsspezifisch geprägt ist.

Ergebnis der Untersuchung ist, dass Tradition und Exklusivität als zentraler Wert Frauen an das Dorf binden und die Verwendung ihrer Zeit bestimmen. Bildung ist ein wichtiger Faktor, Grenzen aufzubrechen und Frauen einen öffentlichen Raum im Dorf zu öffnen. Kräfte von außerhalb – wie Entwicklung und Islamisierung – bleiben fremd. Die Dorfbewohner selbst wollen sie vom Dorf fern halten. Daraus folgt ein Ausgeschlossenheit von ökonomischer Entwicklung und politischer Integration.

Die Betonung des Ausgeschlossenheit „Anderer“ und des Eingeschlossenheit innerhalb des Dorfes, die Teilung in „wir“ und „sie“ führt dazu, dass die soziale Entwicklung des Dorfes, wie z.B. das Bauen von Schulen und die Unterstützung von Lehrern, Priorität haben. Die Verbindung von Entwicklung, Kultur und sozialen Strukturen des Dorfes wird dadurch wirksam. Kleine Bemühungen von außerhalb, „Entwicklung“ in das Dorf zu bringen, waren nicht nachhaltig. Die Dorfbewohner unternehmen zwar Schritte, um Entwicklung in ihr Dorf zu bringen, leisten aber den Konsequenzen von Entwicklungsbemühungen, hinter denen sie nicht stehen, Widerstand.

Immer wenn die Dorfbewohner davon ausgehen, dass Entwicklung ihnen ermöglicht, ihre Integrität und Exklusivität beizubehalten, ist diese willkommen. Andererseits wird Entwicklung Widerstand entgegengesetzt, wenn sie das bestehende System in Frage stellt. Zum Beispiel waren die Dorfbewohner nicht daran interessiert, Unterstützung für die Reparatur der Wasserpumpen im Bewässerungssystem zu bekommen, weil sie fürchteten, dass dies zu einer Umverteilung von Land führen könnte und Fremde in das Dorf kommen könnten. Die endogame Ehe wird weiter für beide Geschlechter bevorzugt. Frauen bleiben

aufgrund der Vorstellungen von Ehre und Schutz auf das Dorf beschränkt. Alle diese Mechanismen dienen dazu, das Dorf vor dem Einfluss Fremder zu bewahren.

Männer als die Schlüsselfiguren durch ihr Eigentum an Ressourcen und Einkommen definieren die Grenzen für beide Geschlechter und schreiben sich selbst Autorität und Entscheidungsmacht innerhalb und außerhalb des Haushaltes zu. Beide Geschlechter scheinen mit den sozialen Strukturen, durch die ihre Räume abgesteckt sind, zufrieden zu sein. Diese Räume haben viele Dimensionen und bieten Möglichkeiten der Erweiterung durch verschiedene direkte und indirekte Strategien, die die Frauen zu entwickeln und zu nutzen wissen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Sudan, Frauen im ländlichen Raum, Raum und Zeit,  
Geschlechterspezifische Arbeitsteilung, Sozialer Wandel auf dem Lande.

## Content

Preface .....	ii
Abstract .....	ii
Zusammenfassung .....	iii

### Part I

#### **An overview to Sudan and village life**

(Balghis Badri)

<b>1. Sudan: An overview .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. The village: Conceptual prologue .....</b>	<b>2</b>

### Part II

#### **Introduction of the study in Al Gharaza, the village context and population composition, women spaces and the forces of change**

(Balghis Badri)

<b>1. Introduction of the study in Al Gharaza .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. The village context and population composition .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Women spaces in Al Gharaza: Multidimensionality of boundaries and forces of creating boundaries.....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 The forces creating the boundaries: The ideological-cultural context.....	13
3.2 Al Gharaza sub-culture and norms.....	14
3.3 Representation of boundaries.....	15
<b>4. The forces of change.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Forces of change: Education the spear head .....	29
4.2 The new leaders: Educated leaders .....	30
4.3 Conclusion .....	31

### Part III

#### **Use of time – an indicator for women’s spaces**

(Hardine Knuth)

<b>1. Aim, area of interest and methods .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2. The interview sample (research field).....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>3. Analysis of the use of time during the course of the day.....</b>	<b>39</b>
3.1 Calculation of time in the Sudan.....	39
3.2 About the time scaling in the course of the day of the populace .....	40
3.3 Results of the use of time (activity profile by time periods).....	42
<b>4. Division of labour and use of time.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5. Evaluation of the use of time by the women themselves .....</b>	<b>49</b>
5.1 Is the time sufficient for the household chores, for leisure activities and for sleep? ..	49
5.2 What are the most time-consuming activities? .....	50
5.3 What are the physically most straining activities?.....	50

<b>6. Temporal orientation during the course of the day .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>7. The importance of the time dimension in the women's life .....</b>	<b>52</b>
7.1 Significance of time .....	52
7.2 Response to boredom .....	53
7.3 Economic aspects of time .....	53
7.4 Time markers in the life course.....	54
<b>8. Summary and Outlook.....</b>	<b>55</b>
8.1 Influences on the use of time .....	55
8.2 Recommendations for further research work on the aspect of time use and concepts.....	55
<b>References .....</b>	<b>57</b>

## List of figures

Figure I-1: The three physical und three abstract spaces.....	9
Figure III-1: Prayer times in winter and summer .....	40
Figure III-2: Prayer times and the seven time periods during the course of a day.....	41
Figure III-3: Climate values in Khartoum in the course of the year .....	43



## Part I

### **An overview to Sudan and village life**

In this part two introductions will outline in section one an overview of Sudan land and people. While in section two a discussion of the concept of village and its characteristics will be given.

#### **1. Sudan: An overview**

Sudan has one million square miles of land and is bordered by nine countries in land boundaries and one by sea borders. These are namely Egypt to the North, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia to the East, Chad, Central Africa and Libya to the West, Uganda, Kenya and Congo to the South. Sudan is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi lingual society. The total population of Sudan estimated at thirty million in 2003 projection belongs to about six hundred different tribes and seven main ethnic categories with different beliefs, religions, laws, customs and values. The state of Sudan with its current boundaries came into existence in 1821 when the Turco –Egyptian rule dominated Sudan. The previous situation was basically a tribal system with kings, princes, chiefs heading over a specific tribe in the north, east and south. Central Sudan and western Sudan were ruled by the centralized kingdoms – that extended themselves over a large territory of land and for many years ruling a number of tribes. Amongst certain tribes in the south, they lacked a centralized system of administration or political power whereby order was maintained through different bodies and systems e.g. age sets, guard of herds, leopard chief, witchcraft healer.

The Sudan in 1821 was converted officially as ruled by a centralized modern system by the Turco-Egyptian rule while the traditional system was coexisting in the west, east and south. The northern and central part traditional system completely abolished tribal identity as a basis for administrative or political power. The Mahdist rule in 1886 continued the same trend emphasizing a centralized government. However its power was dominant in most parts while it was marginal in the south. The Mahdist was concentrating efforts to purify Islam by abolishing the “Faki” sufist system. The abolishing of the authority of the heads of tribes in west and eastern Sudan was undertaken through the allying of these heads with the Mahdist movement, particularly in western Sudan. Hence, transformation of tribalism was minimal in the south, to a lesser extent amongst the nomads of eastern and western Sudan. Tribalism was abolished in northern and central Sudan. Abolishing does not mean that identity affiliation was non-existent, but officially tribes had no clear geographical boundaries, political, legal or administrative powers. Office holding was not based on tribalism nor were land rights, however family and individual rights over property were recognized. The existence of a dual system of citizenship and rights prevail in most parts of Sudan whereby constitutional de jure rights make all citizens have equal rights while customary ones are based on a binary

opposition of exclusiveness of kinship or tribal bases of rights and those who are outside the group have no rights.

Hence rights are related to inclusiveness of those who belong to tribe or kinship group and exclusive to those who do not. This conceptualization of inclusion and exclusion will be discussed when we analyse villages and villagers' conceptualization of their identity in Al Gharaza.

The Anglo-Egyptian rule came in 1899. They maintained the characteristic of that structure by giving the tribes' chiefs in the Western and Eastern Sudan political, legal and administrative power. The nomadic groups in central Sudan were vested with similar powers. In the south, kings and princes were given similar powers. Those with no centralized system were ruled through a traditional system with a British administrator supervising the maintenance of law and order.

As far as ideology and value systems are concerned in the northern part of the country, the Islamic ideology conditioned the people's life. Different cultures and ideologies had been prevalent in other parts of the country. Mainly in southern Sudan and Nuba areas, however, despite this large cultural diversity, the patriarchal system is influential among all cultural groups. Consequently men are dominating the family and the public sphere and are the decision makers, while women are expected to be subjected to men and obedient to male relatives. Men are expected to protect women and be the main breadwinners even if wives are the main food producers, as is the case in Western Sudan. The subordinate position of women is the common characteristic though some women manage to head households and hold top positions in the civil service or in business.

## **2. The village: Conceptual prologue**

The village is a concept as well as an entity. It has a physical entity of boundaries whereby it is recognized as separate from other villages as well as having space boundaries that separate it from farm land, etc.

It is also an administrative entity whereby it is part of a rural council which is part of a province. An administrator is responsible for the rural council. The seat of the rural council is usually a bigger village in terms of services available such as a police force, a rural hospital, a secondary school, a market place. Hence, its population is larger. The rural council administration unit is a coordinating body responsible of receiving the villagers' needs for services, keeping law and order and for tax collection.

A village is also a legal entity which is recognized by the state as such and hence people could be legally associated as residents of a certain village. Village property of communal land can be theoretically registered as that of the village. However, practically that has not taken place except in cases of cooperative schemes.

The administrative and legal entities of a village are rather of a dual nature where a traditional and a modern system co-exist. The customary or traditional system usually relates a village to a tribal sect. Descendants of an imaginary or real ancestor to whom all members of that sect claim descendancy, consequently connect a kinship tie along patrilineal line to all members. In most villages people claim that they are relatives or a village is made up of two kinship groups. Homogeneity is a characteristic of the villagers. The great grandfather of the villagers is viewed as the one who led his people into the village place and is recognized as a chief or head of the village. The village is administrated by the chief<sup>1</sup> as being the coordinating figure between the village and the government. He has authority to speak on behalf of the village people and is highly respected. The office of the headship usually known as ‘Omda’, is hereditary from father to brother or son as is considered appropriate by the people, vis a vis age, wisdom, hospitality, charisma and respect.

The ‘Omda’ remains the defacto administrator while the ‘mufatish’, the government administrator, is the de jure one. The main difference also is that not all villages would have a government administrator while each one has an ‘Omda’.

As a legal entity the government recognizes individual ownership of residence and farms. However, it recognizes the customary ownership that all the village areas, including houses, farms and land in between residences and farms are villagers’ property. Consequently, the villagers consider nomads who where forced, due to loss of animals or desertification, to settle at the outskirts of villages, as strangers with no legal rights over the use of resources. However, they can be allowed to have use-rights only. This duality in conceptualization as who is an eligible citizen with full rights caused problems and conflict that the government, up till now, was unable to completely resolve as it has not legally accepted the villagers’ view nor made it completely illegal.

The source of legitimacy and rights is conflicted between the customary, which is based on a philosophy of communality and the modern, based on a philosophy of individuality.

The village concept further has a social and psychological dimension whereby those living in one village know each other, have face to face relations, kinship bond, cooperation with each other and have a lengthy chain of reciprocity and exchange of support. A common ethos of what is right and wrong prevails and endogamous intermarriage is the rule. The opposite is the exception. Villagers have a feeling of security and belongingness to each other. Villagers have pride in such a scene of collectivity and respect and obedience to customs. Villagers’ opinions greatly influence individual behavior.

The village as an entity is usually contrasted to an urban setting, a town.

The contrast is viewed by many as mainly of a demographic and economic nature that leads to the other administrative, social and psychological differences. Villagers are usually farmers and villages are of small population.

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<sup>1</sup> Chief usually given the title ‘Omda’ literally meaning head

Most urban dwellers don't engage in any agricultural activities of any nature, are heterogeneous and of larger population size. In reference to the above, without a comparison with a town, a village could be conceptualized as a socio-economic legal administrative entity.

In Sudan most rural villagers lack services of clean water, electricity, transport facilities; they are greatly isolated from forces of modernization. With no television, internet facilities, a low level of education, high illiteracy rates, poor agricultural support and technologies, one would expect that Sudanese people living in villages, particularly these distant from main towns or capitals of states, would be isolated and live in poverty.

However, rural urban migration and displacement due to wars or famine in 1985, have contributed to making many of the urban dwellers share most of the characteristics of villagers in town of the level of living and poverty while losing the positive aspects of belonging to an extended kinship and land of ancestors, the village life offers.

The case of Al Gharaza illustrates many characteristics of a village; however, it is different from many in being close to the capital and part of its rural council.

In answer to the question what is a village, more details will be discussed taking Al Gharaza as a case study in section two in the next part.

## Part II

### **Introduction of the study in Al Gharaza, the village context and population composition, women spaces and the forces of change**

This part will be divided into four main sections. The first section is an introduction of the study, problem, scope; objectives of the concepts used in this study and the conceptual framework that guide it and methodology adopted. Section two is an introduction about the village context. The third section will analyse how spaces are engendered in the village. The fourth section will discuss the forces of change that impact on their life.

#### **1. Introduction of the study in Al Gharaza**

The overall goal of this study is to be part of a wider study on Sudanese women's challenges and prospects. The study is intended to give both a detailed description of Sudanese women lives in a village in North Sudan not far from the capital, the seat of factors of social change, as well to give an analytical understanding to the changes that occurred, the forces of change and how village people, both women and men, perceive their current life style and context, and how they conceive of the future.

The overall aim of the studies will contribute to a better understanding of Sudanese women's lives in Khartoum state and help policy makers, women activist groups and the researched groups themselves to undertake interventions that would promote their lives.

#### *Study focus*

The main focus of this study is to describe and analyse the diversified women's spaces in Al Gharaza village.

How women and men use their endowments and assets to capitalise on them, to define spaces, engage within their boundaries, and negotiate to cross or change them are issues that will be dealt with.

The study will look at various spaces such as physical, economic, social, public/ political spaces of women mainly but reference to men's spaces will be indicated. The issue of women's endowments in terms of rights and property will be identified and compared to that of men. The study will focus as well on the dimensions of women's agencies to extend the boundaries or change them especially in reference to decision taking, changing norms guiding marital relations, women's community participation and women's rights over their bodies. The study will analyse the factors that maintain the boundaries and work against extending the spaces of both genders, and those that constitute new forces for change.

*The main specific objectives of this study are:*

1. To come to a better understanding of village women's lives and opportunities available to them.
2. To analyse gender relations, gender division of labour, and roles in a Sudanese village.
3. To delineate the factors that to promote or impede women's rights, opportunities and spaces.
4. To delineate the extent of women's agencies to expand their space and opportunities.

*Defining main concepts*

The concept space has been recently used in literature since the eighties to refer to a continuum that embraces social, physical, psychological, economic, political, ideological, cultural and other institutional boundaries. It is used as a tool to indicate how people, a person, a state or the global community defines the boundaries. It is an analytical tool to delineate the processes of how the spaces are created, maintained and changed. It also implies the analysis of how individuals, groups and communities interact within them, cross the boundaries, actively engage in changing them, or otherwise be satisfied to realise them as legitimate and engage within them without thinking of change. LACHENMANN (1999: 30) argued that women's social spaces have diverse boundaries defined according to division of labour, resources, responsibilities and social institutions. She maintained that during socio-economic changes these boundaries over spaces often dwindle.

NADIA ALALI (2004) describes how Iraqi women's spaces constantly changed during the 20 years of Saddam's regime in response to the various state ideologies, policies, socio-economic contexts the country has witnessed.

BOURDIEU (1990) brought to the earlier discussion the question of the legitimacy of who defines the social space and constructs it. He emphasised the dimension of the "power" of assets to enable defining and constructing the space for others. The assets as I conceive them could be diversified from those of knowledge, ideology or culture, to material of wealth, arms or body. Or they could be psychological, technological or tactical and strategizing.

The other two concepts that were linked to the social construction of space and boundaries are those of representation and agency.

It is proven that actors are not passive receivers of the constructed space; rather they have their means of assimilating in different ways creating new spaces or changing the boundaries, stretching them or actively engaging to re-define them. Bargaining or strategizing or networking, or rebellious capacities are usually conceived of as the agency of actors.

As rightly mentioned by NAGEEB (2000), the understanding and vision of women indicate the way culture and discipline are socially channelled, accepted and internalised to shape women's everyday practices. Also how women strategize to elucidate and expand their normative

ascribed spaces disclose the cycle and routes to the construction of diversified social spaces to create a relaxation from possibly strict, dominating, patriarchal norms and systems.

On the other hand spaces need to be represented in specific ways so as to be known and acknowledged as different from other spaces or so as to be changed, improved, rejected or assimilated. The bodily representation, other material representation, cultural, daily practices and interactions, institutional representations, division of labour and decision making, are all means by which each space could be defined and its boundaries created. These representations are usually socially structured practices embodied within a specific culture, economic context, state ideology, class structure or global or regional context that influence them.

The above concepts are not neutral ones but are engendered. Thus who defines the spaces, their boundaries and who controls them are usually men who have the material and knowledge assets to have the power to do so. Therefore, spaces are usually defined in a biased way favouring men and creating restrictions to women. The definition of each space represents the dichotomies between men and women and reflects the advantageous position of men. However, that doesn't mean that men's space is without boundaries, representation and actors' agency who want to change it. The same is true for women's spaces, which are not static spaces but rather could be made elastic and dynamic through different individual, collective actors or by the influence of other institutional, ideological, regional or global forces.

### *Methodology*

This study was undertaken in Al Gharaza village south of Omdurman town. The study used a qualitative method of research using semi-structured interviews with eight families. Two families were then selected for in-depth case studies and two focused group discussions were undertaken, one with 18 women and another with four men. The site of the focused group discussions was in the school at the headmaster's office.

The interviewed women belonged to different households in the village. The selection of the household was not totally purposive but depended on both snowball rolling i.e. from one household who takes us to another depending on networking neighbours and extended families. This method at the end resulted in representing, families with adult children, married children, young children and those with no children. Hence, the families represented different age groups. Further, the interviews included both families where the wife or daughters have a level of education and those without education. Some families had sons or husbands who were working abroad in the Gulf. Different occupations of husbands included farmers, teachers or government employees. Wives had some income generating activities or employment, and some were members of committees or associations.

This method was useful in a village setting which is greatly homogeneous. It made it possible to represent different categories to capture women's spaces along their life cycle.

The only category of women whom we specifically requested to interview was the nomadic families living at the outskirts of the village.

The study was undertaken in two phases: the phase one during October – November 2002 and the phase two during November 2003. The information was collected both by the researcher and the assistant. Both were Sudanese, hence using the Arabic language which is their language as well as that of the villagers.

### *The cases*

**Case No.1** is a family of spouses and 7 children. The husband and his two sons are farmers, one son is a bus driver and one is still studying. Three of the sons are married, one living with them. Of the three daughters, one is married; one is not married and did not finish elementary school. She is attending adult education classes, and she was about 18 years old. The youngest one is at school. Both spouses are illiterate while their children have some education.

They own their house. It is a big house divided into men's and women's sections, with a section as an animal pen. They have their land for cultivation as part of the Gamoia scheme.

The wife Fatima is in her late fifties and her daughter and daughter-in-law shoulder most of the household chores.

**Case No. 2:** A family of spouses and three children. There are two sons, one working in Saudi Arabia, one in Omdurman market. The daughter is about to be married. The husband is a farmer. The house is rather small and also divided into men's and women's sections with a common toilet and no animals. The wife Halima is in at her midforties and not educated. Her daughter finished intermediate school.

**Case No. 3:** The couple are young with four children, the oldest at school. They are immigrants to the village and both worked as labourers in the schemes. The house is very small and not divided into sections. His wife 'Amal' is not educated, nor is her husband.

**Case No 4:** The couple are young with three children. One child is at school, one in kindergarten, and the last is a baby. The husband had secondary education working as a nurse in Omdurman Hospital. His wife 'Aisha' has secondary education but is not employed.

**Case No. 5:** The couple are middle aged with children at different school levels. Both girls and boys are sent to school. The mother 'Heba' is educated and a member of the school friends association. The house is big and divided into several sections as it is of an extended family where three brothers are living together in the parent's family house.

**Case No. 6:** The couple did not have children. The wife 'Khadiga' is in her mid-fifties. She has an adopted daughter who is a niece, now married and living with her husband. The wife is not educated but is an active member of several associations (the school friends, the village committee and the women's union). The husband held religious positions and was a farmer before he recently died. The wife currently is a widow.

**Case No. 7 and No. 8:** Case seven and eight are middle aged. The husbands worked in Omdurman as merchants. The wives are not educated but received Quranic teaching. One



attempted to have an income generation activity of a nursery, then as food seller of sandwiches and ice cream at the school. The other tries to sell cloth and sheets brought by her husband from Omdurman market. Both of them were interviewed at the same time as Amna was visiting Mariam when the interview was undertaken. She participated in the discussion of women as mobility, income generating activities and other issues raised.

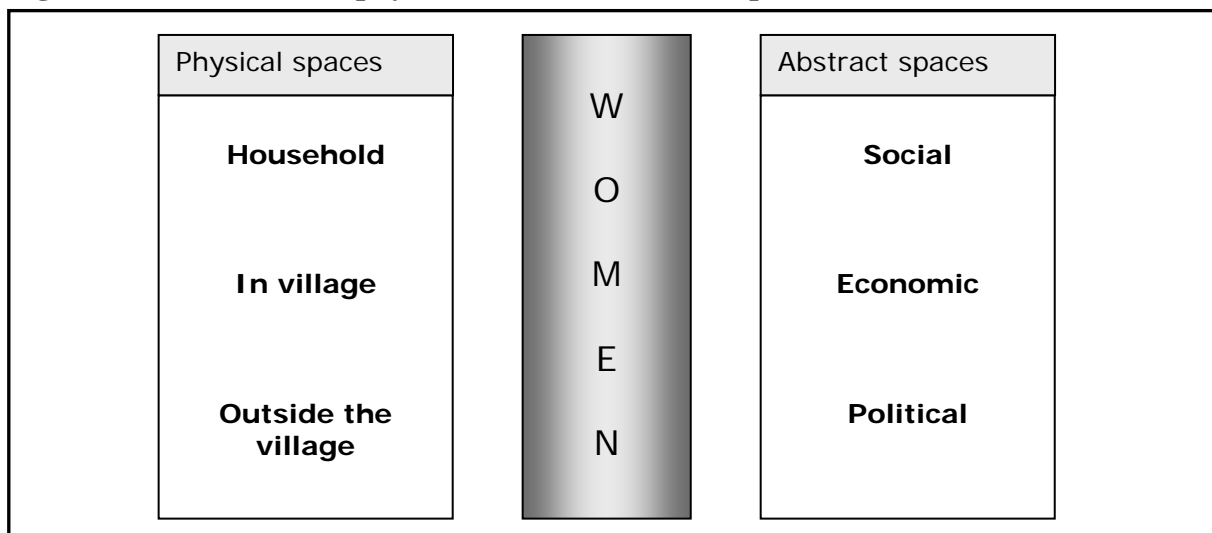
The information is analysed using a grounded theory methodology where the data and findings direct the analysis and form the analytical framework to be used. Hence, the framework that resulted could be constructed as follows.

Spouses are conceived to refer to both physical spaces with geographical/maternal boundaries such as household space, village space, outside village space. Moreover, space in this study is used also to refer to having rights over resources, assets and rights for decision taking.

Hence, data is collected on rural women and spaces in all these dimensions. Moreover, data is collected to delineate the boundaries and restrictions women face. Some have restricted space or other factors that open spaces for women. Women's reaction to defined spaces and strategies to movement to bridge the boundaries or broaden the spaces are also discussed.

Hence, the framework was compounded as the data was collected and analysis started. Then the framework as it crystallized was used at the last stage of analysis. The framework hence represented a triple complex of three physical spaces and three abstract spaces (figure I-1).

**Figure I-1: The three physical und three abstract spaces**



Source: Own figure.

The data indicated that the three abstract spaces are represented in each of the three physical spaces. Most women have more spaces at the household level, less in the village and least outside the village. Simultaneously they have more social space, then economic and least in political spaces.

*Main questions*

1. How do women spend their time?
2. What are the main activities of women in the economic, political or social spheres?
3. What movement and mobility do women have?
4. What is the extent of women's satisfaction with their mobility, activities and spending of time?
5. How do women strategize or negotiate to achieve more mobility if not satisfied, or how do they change their spending of time or activities?
6. What ownership of assets do women have, and what control over it do they have?
7. What is the women's decision making sphere and how do they influence decisions?
8. What are the factors that influence the above as women are concerned?
9. How do women react and explain their position and life opportunities?
10. How do women compare themselves with men?
11. What are the challenges women faces and what prospects do they conceive?

The queries were guided by using the Harvard Analytical Framework of gender analysis: what people do: who owns what: who decides: what are the determinant factors that influence the above, and the context of their current situation and the space framework as was developed at Bielefeld University.

*The social spaces included*

Participation in decision making for social issues such as marriage, divorce, other family issues and engaging in activities for social ceremonies:

Hence, the whole spectrum of decision making, giving permission, rights of each gender and who should decide, how decisions are taken, who influences them are within the category of social spaces. Also included is engagement in social activities. Images, identities, social education and positioning are all encompassed in social spaces.

The economic spaces included economic activities, control over income, ownership, assets and the economic resources.

Political or public spaces are interchangeably used in this study. These include membership in associations, committees or political parties.

The public term used does not indicate a concept of a dichotomy between the public and private. It is suggested that the binary opposition is not relevant, as many social or political activities are done in the household and classified as private. The two concepts don't hold as relevant analytical tools. Hence, for this study the public term here is used to refer to all sets of community/service oriented activities of an organizational nature.

### *The analytical framework*

The analytical framework was guided by the conceptualization of women's spaces. The concept space is defined and used as a concept tool by LACHENMANN (1999) and NAGEEB (2000), with modification to identify different spaces.

These spaces were divided into sectors for analytical purposes only. Interlink between them was indicated, concluding that demarcation, polarization or identity of spaces were not possible. Rather, a holistic, integrating approach is meaningful.

## **2. The village context and population composition**

Al Gharaza is a village 23 Kilometres south of Omdurman town. Omdurman is part of the capital of Sudan, Khartoum. Al Gharaza is made up of three towns connected by bridges and divided by the Blue and White Niles that converge to make the Nile at the juncture of the boundaries of Khartoum with Omdurman. Khartoum rests on the Blue and White Niles. Omdurman, to the west of it, rests facing the White Nile and main Nile, while Khartoum North lies to the north of Khartoum between the Blue Nile and main Nile River.

The estimated number of Omdurman inhabitants' ranges from 2 - 3 million according to different estimations that would include the displaced and others that do not include them.

Al Gharaza has a population of approximately four thousand original inhabitants and another one thousand displaced/nomads who are mainly from the Western part of Sudan. They settled at the peripheries of the village after the famine and drought in 1983<sup>2</sup>. All the inhabitants are Moslems, and their mother tongue is Arabic. The indigenous inhabitants of Gamoya belong to the larger group of the Arab Riverian tribes of Northern Sudan. The village is to a great extent harmonious and homogenous population complex. All data, whether secondary or first hand, state that the villagers are all sons of 'Naile' who is the father of 'Gama'a'. They make what is known as the 'Gamoya' tribe. Gam'a's offsprings are scattered along the White Nile, and the Nile but their Mayoralty (Mayor) and centre is in Al Gharaza. The new settlers belong to the Arabs of Western Sudan mainly the '*Kababish*' tribe. All of them are Gamoya or '*Kababish*' and claim an Arab descent despite their rather dark skin. The villagers of the Gamoya are proud of their descent and history as the most indigenous groups of the first residents of Omdurman area before other immigrants arrived from various parts of Sudan with the Mahadi troops. The Mahadi made Omdurman as their capital. Since 1884, Omdurman started to grow as a town, and a mixture of people from Northern, Central, Western and Southern Sudan made its population.

The journey to Al Gharaza village from central Omdurman takes around one hour by car. There is a half-paved road passing some small villages, sand and Acacia bushes. Omdurman is creeping dramatically towards Al Gharaza by the swallowing up of lands that separate it and Al Gharaza. The area was flourishing in 1980's by the Gom' aia Agricultural Scheme that

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<sup>2</sup> Information given by the rural council of Omdurman

extends to 15000 feddans in 15 kilometres from North to South along the Nile. The Nile lays to the east of the scheme while an abundance of sandy hills characterise the western part of the village. The village depends mainly for irrigation on the White Nile; however, some areas depend on the rain. The acute shortage of water, due to the break down of the main scheme water drilling pumps affected the scheme badly to the extent that it is only functioning at 25% of its full capacity. The vegetables currently produced are tomatoes, okra, brown beans, cucumber and sorghum. The village supplies some of Omdurman markets with these products. There are few who herd some livestock (5%) in their households and farms. Poultry business is not encouraged, as feeding chickens is very expensive with insufficient grains and vegetables. Most households raise goats for their milk for household consumption.

The village has one mixed primary school; however, classrooms are separated for boys and girls. In 2000 two newly secondary schools opened one for boys and one for girls. Education is very much respected and supported, and schools are considered as the 'source of light'. The schools serve the 9 villages around Al Gharaza. There is one mosque; one Quranic children school "*Khalwa*", a kindergarten, one water pump station and one dispensary that offers limited health services. The villagers depend on Omdurman hospital and health centres. Water scarcity is the biggest problem faced by the village.

Water is provided by donkey cart (Caro) and its capacity is one barrel, which costs 2000 Sudanese pounds (about 2/3 of one Euro). The barrel is 24 Jerkins (about 48 Litres), which is just enough for one day's household water use. The running cost of the well is met by the Association of rural water provision and the cost of the maintenance in case of breaking down is to be paid by shares from villagers or the agricultural scheme. 85% of the households of the village enjoy electricity service.

The Sudanese Environment Conservation Society has helped in preserving the environment by providing 50 - 60% of the households with credit to encourage villagers to buy gas-cookers and gas-slender (gas-stoves). However, people till the time of our visit are struggling to pay the installments of that debt. The Sudanese Environmental conservation society also supplied the village with trees to be planted by villagers. Scarcity of water has affected this negatively; consequently fewer trees are maintained in some households and in schools.

Of the adult males, 80% are farmers and the rest are daily labourers, civil servants, herders and merchants. 98% of the women are housewives and the rest have small businesses or are teachers at the primary schools.

The system of land owning is communal and this has helped in keeping the 'strangers' away from the village. Since, the land is recognised as communally owned by the sub-sect of Gamoya tribe and Gamia, there are no buying and selling procedures. Land is available for the villagers and can be passed from father to children only. So, no new-comer can possess land without the acceptance of the villagers and their leaders. This restriction is even tighter when agricultural land is discussed. Money cannot buy anyone land unless the villagers want that. In that way, they manage to keep all unwanted 'strangers' out of the village and preserve the villagers, rights to land. The traditional communal land tenure system is known as the '*dar*'

system and is acknowledged in most parts of Sudan. However, when the government needs land for large - scale agriculture purposes, they tend to usurp the land and compensate the original tribal owners little money.

The tribal '*dar*' land system was officially abolished in Khartoum and all of central Sudan states when the traditional administrative system was declared as legally nonfunctioning in 1970 by Nimerie's regime. Tribal people however, keep to a tradition that land is communally held as villagers' property. Private land ownership is recognised but as a right of the village people only. Hence, a modified traditional '*dar*' system prevails. Moreover, a dual system of political authority is recognised by the people. The traditional administrative system of tribal leaders prevalent in other parts of Sudan is officially abolished in the area. However, villagers recognise that the head of the village is the '*Omda*' who has authority to preserve the land rights, protect people's rights, speak on behalf of the villagers and represent them officially. He is not given such an official de jure recognition unless elected as the head of the people's committee or by administrative structure established by this regime. Villagers elect him, hence, he has both de jure and de facto status. Other social functions of the '*Omda*' include conflict resolution, mediation and consultation. Women do not hold such important positions. They remain men's exclusive domain and right and are hereditary within the kinship group of "Gami". Another key traditional figure is the "Faki", the religious priest who teaches Quran and legalizes marriage during the wedding religious ceremony called "aid". He also holds the position of leading the Friday prayers at the "Zawya", his religious space like a mosque, not properly built but attached to where he teaches Quran. He also gives other mystical services offering spiritual help to those who need it like the sick, the pregnant or students during exams, etc. This context of Al Gharaza is important to understand women's spaces and boundaries which will be discussed in section three below.

### **3. Women spaces in Al Gharaza: Multidimensionality of boundaries and forces of creating boundaries**

To a large extent Gharaza women's social positioning, identity and role, have been influenced by cultural and ideological forces.

#### **3.1 The forces creating the boundaries: The ideological-cultural context**

Social norms are centred on maintaining ethnic and community identity and power of the group. Tradition and ideology are important factors which determine gender relations and women's status. Women's low position is one of the features of the society, which is the result of heavier seclusion ideology. This ideology has been reinforced by influences of many factors; one of them is the factor of Arabisation and Islamization of the country where the culture is loaded with values that legitimize men's supremacy as a rational need and spiritual duty. Men invoke certain verses in Quran or Hadith to legitimize their supremacy.

Despite the differences between the different ethnic groups, there still are common bonds between women, which could be traced. Sudanese women in general share their subordinate

position, limited access to resources, insufficient health services, and low educational level. The literacy level of women is 38% in rural areas and 63% in urban areas and there is low participation in formal economic sectors. There is economic participation of 27% and 10% of seats for women in the parliament of 2003, 2.4% in top civil service (BADRI and BATHANI, 2003).

The religious and cultural values transmitted through the socialization process in Sudan as well as through in school curriculums and media shape most of the attitudes and practice of Northern Sudanese women. The women at Al Gharaza are not an exception. Such a socio-cultural context with a new Islamist ideology of a political Islam nurtures the continuity of an ideology that subordinates the position of women. There are several forces that define women and create their boundaries, as will be discussed below.

### **3.2 Al Gharaza sub-culture and norms**

The Gharaza villagers refer to a value system that binds them together and to which all men and women must to give due respect. The reference of that value system was not indicated to us, as based on specific Islamic teachings. It is mostly indicated in media and political Islam of the ruling party. The value system is conceived as a tradition that maintains cohesiveness and unity. These are valued as giving a person a sense of peace, security and insurance as well as a prediction of future safety and of satisfaction.

The Gharaza villagers put high value on cohesiveness and unity. They try to maintain a distance between themselves and those whom they consider as strangers. The villagers refer to a concept of unity of 'we' who share common kinship, blood, values, land, custom and norms of what is right and wrong behaviour. What are ideal images of women and men of different age groups and who is defined as child or adult? Also, what brings shame to the whole family, kinship group and hence to the village. Both men and women need to abide by such cultural components and expectations.

Furthermore, the 'we' villagers refer to a practical aspect of knowing each other, having a face-to-face relationship, visiting each other, and sharing different social occasions and religious festivals, as the "eids" end of fasting month or a pilgrimage.

On the other hand the binary opposite concept of 'strangeness' to them is stronger in its sense than the standard meaning of the word. It goes beyond that and can be better understood as 'alien' and 'rejected'. Villagers in general and women in particular are not encouraged to deal with strange people and unfamiliar behaviour. Strangers can bring unaccepted behaviour, can dishonour the village, especially women strangers can try to manipulate a situation for their own good, and can bring danger and insecurity to the village. Strangers are mistrusted and hence no social relations are encouraged with them. They have to keep a distance physically and socially. Men being the protectors, guardians, and the ones perceived as more knowledgeable and better in dealing with difficult situations, are allowed to handle 'strangers' and to classify what is considered as 'strange'. On the other hand, women are perceived as dependents and minors who are kept well protected from dealing, acting and interacting with "strange beings, individuals, groups, situations, or institutions". The culture of honour and

shame is an additional strong component that makes women the symbol of family honour. Thus, their conduct needs to be watched. In addition to these components of exclusiveness, honour and shame values include the protection of women, and maintenance of their situation in life. Women must respect their guardians, be obedient to them, serve and honour them. The patriarchal ideology supported by religion and reproduced through socialization, emphasizes women's reproductive role. Women do not have freedom for outdoor activities as men do. There is social control over women. Their conduct and virginity are symbols of honour, and impairing these brings shame to the family.

With regard to making a decision whether to marry, when and to whom, Gharaza women have still very little choice. The marital relationship is considered to be a power relationship where women are supposed to be obedient to their husbands. Women do not make decisions or actions without the consent of men or without their permission. Sudanese culture ties women's choices to that of men. Children are highly valued, since they give women social status as well as economic security and insurance. Furthermore, giving birth to a large number of children, particularly boys, will secure mothers from the risk of being neglected or of being subjected to polygamy by their husbands.

A cultural context with a physical setting of boundaries defining a village, establishes a social structure based on a kinship categorization of all belonging to some great grandfather. One tribal section makes it easy for women's spaces and boundaries to be defined. In most cases women accept their spaces, move within their boundaries, even if they have to stretch them, but never to overrule or define them as illegitimate. This will be discussed below on how the boundaries are represented in defined spaces and how women abide by them, strategize to broaden them, and look forward in certain cases for change.

### **3.3 Representation of boundaries**

#### **3.3.1 Physical spaces**

The interrelatedness of spaces and the representation of the boundaries can best be discussed when we deal with the household. As a space with its physical boundary of the walls, how women define their space within it and conceive of the household space will discuss.

Values influence the definition of the household space and impact the spaces of mobility within and outside the village. The siege of values and traditions create boundaries for women and men and define their mobility inside and outside the village. This definition of the physical mobility represents another boundary. The three spaces of: household, within village and outside the village will be discussed as part of the physical representation of spaces and boundaries.

### 3.3.2 The household spaces

The houses in the village are divided into women's and men's sections. The women's section includes mainly one room and a kitchen space attached to the room. In poorer families' houses or independently there is a spacious place of multi-purposes where both cooking and a place for family and neighbour gatherings take place. A toilet place and a tap are usually within the women's section. They have their courtyard where they sleep outside, as the weather most of the year is hot. The men's section includes usually two rooms, a room for the guests and a smaller one for the father or the head of the household. A separate toilet and bathroom are also in that section. A separate courtyard where men sleep is also available. If the family owns animals such as goats, sheep or even a cow, then a separate area is reserved usually separating the two sections. Chicken when available are kept free in the women's section.

The house is surrounded with a wall and may have one outside door or two, one for men and one for women. A low half-wall usually separates the two sections. There are no differences in the two sections in terms of building material, and there are minimal differences in furniture, as both guest rooms include beds. Usually the women's guest room beds are not laid with mattresses till the guests actually arrive, as we did. Other kinswomen are received in the kitchen or in the room without mattresses laid on the beds.

The women spend the most time in their section, doing household chores, meeting friends and neighbours, mostly kinswomen. However, it is also the place where all members of the family meet, chat and discuss different issues. The late evening tea with milk is usually taken together, which is considered as the late dinner meal.

Women go into the men's section to clean it but not to stay there. Men also move into the women's section to take food to be served to men, as well as to chat with mothers and sisters.

The lunch meal is usually taken separately as men expect guests and women are not supposed to be seen eating with men who are not members of the household, even if they are near relatives. However, chatting or drinking tea or coffee are not restricted, and near relatives can be entertained in the women's section.

The women usually serve meals to men (husband, sons who are more than seven years old, other kinsmen living with them) first. Mother, daughters and all children below seven eat afterwards. The villagers say that children below seven do not behave themselves well in eating habits and hence should not be with their fathers as guests may drop in and fathers would be embarrassed by the misbehaviour of young children in eating.

Mothers are made responsible for disciplining children of both genders till they reach age seven. Father will discipline sons after that age or elder brothers can discipline both brothers and sisters. When children reach age 12, it is very difficult to use beating as a way of disciplining, especially for girls. If an adult girl screams because she is beaten, then neighbours suspect that she seriously misbehaved and rumours will spread.



Within the household women decide how to use their time between the different household chores of cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, resting, or toileting, especially for having a time for body sauna. Body sauna is a traditional smoking sauna by burning a special type of wood, rubbing skin with thick cream and covering oneself with a blanket. It is believed that the sauna makes the skin soft and gives it a nice smell. Women also decide when to go for visits during the day before children come back from school or husbands from work.

Hence, the household and its vicinity are the kingdom of women. Deciding on what to cook, when and how much, depends on her discretion if she is the one who goes to the nearby vegetable grocer or the one who sends young boys to buy for them. If the husband brings things before he leaves for work, she has less freedom to decide on how to spend the money. Usually women prefer to be given the daily cash to buy the family needs so as to save from it a little money that could add up by the end of the month so as to buy what they personally need without asking husbands.

Women mentioned that husbands prefer to rely on women's ability to decide on daily family expense matters. The women use the household boundaries to create for themselves extended boundaries by manipulating household relations. Wives say the husband's room is the place of the father where he asks his wife to join him. 'Fatima' mentioned "we would all be sitting on the beds at evening. My husband then will say I want to discuss a specific issue with you". Then all our sons will leave the men's section but remain with their sisters till I return. These are the moments your husband discusses with you private matters. You give your opinion. Late at night you go again to the room. You spend the time together. You make up yourself; you take some thick cream with you. You rub your husband's body to make him feel relaxed. You ask for what you want. You guarantee a positive reaction. You sleep with him. He is happy, in a good mood. You win what you want. You have to know when to ask and how to do it". Hence women use sex to manipulate their husbands.

The household is their kingdom whereby women's importance for all family members is manifested. They are the main cooks, disciplinarians, socializers, and reconcilers when conflict arises between siblings. They are a go between mediating between adult sons and daughters when they need things from father. They are not the formal heads of the household, but they are the very important figures where love is needed by all members. The husband is important for services, sex and companionship, to show the children mercy and love. She believed him to be accepted to call to God to give them blessing. Mother's curse is the most avoided and feared; her blessings the most desired.

Women claim that they are satisfied in their marital relationships, in their roles as mothers, and in the close bond that unites them with villagers who are close kin. Women spend most of their time within the boundaries of the household except for an hour for visiting. It is only on times of social occasions such as weddings, mourning death days of a relative, birth naming ceremonies or visits to Omdurman that women spend more than four hours outside home. However, these are not rare occasions; women use them as strategies to extend their household boundaries.

### 3.3.3 Mobility inside the village

The available chances for mobility and the space allocated to women are currently enjoyed within the village boundaries. Women are granted a certain degree of movement and autonomy since they are dealing with acquaintances and relatives because of the trust and the agreed upon code of conducts that are shared by all village members. Women are believed to be well protected and honoured by village members. Strangers are perceived as those who can not be trusted to deal with women and the chances of molesting and misbehaving with women is higher with strangers. The locals are seen as obliged to safeguard and preserve their women-folks as it is part of the honour of the whole village. They, both men and women have been socialised in a way that they are one part of the honour and shame of the village. Accordingly, women seem more relaxed in their daily life in the village with minimal segregation customs. Women also do not use the new "Islamic" dress of the veil but rather are satisfied with their traditional "toab", a Sari that women wear over the dress to cover from head to feet. Different colours are used for the "toab". The newly introduced Islamic addition, mostly used in urban centres by the Islamists is a scarf binding the head, in addition to the "toab". This is rarely used by the village women.

The fact that they visit each other's houses and are allowed to have teas and coffees with groups of men and women neighbours and relatives indicate this relaxed gender segregation. However, when remote relatives or strangers come, then the group has to disperse into men's and women's separate groups.

Married women and young girls are allowed to go to shops in the village to get the things they ran out of but are not allowed to hang around there or to drink or eat around shops, although men can do that. Adolescent and young unmarried women have to preserve relative segregation more than married ones. The fact that young girls are not married enhances the fears of being more in danger of molestation.

The gender difference in the mobility of women and men is clearly manifested in the time limitation. Adolescent men are allowed to move within the village and stay late till 10 p. m. outside home. However, females in general at all age groups are expected to be home just after sunset. Only in cases of wedding ceremonies can they return home late, but then they must be escorted by men. This time dimension as a boundary for women space is not unique to village people but applied by many town dwellers. However, more flexibility is maintained in town. The gender difference in time limit applies in town though the ceiling boundary varies and could extend to 10 or 11 for girls and up to 2 o'clock for men in some families.

Women visit each other on social occasions as recreation, for meetings held in one household, and, as a norm, to strengthen social relationships. Moreover, close neighbours may share part of food preparation. Moreover women feel that they have an important role to play in keeping the kinship bond strong and maintaining the social system and its values. The kinship integrity is greatly maintained by women keeping close to each other, bringing other members together and influencing decisions. It is this strong relation that makes it possible for them to network for common village activities, as will be discussed later.

### 3.3.4 Mobility outside the village

Women of the village are allowed to move outside the boundary of the village to visit relatives. They have good connections with other villages surrounding them as well as Omdurman. Most of the women visit these places frequently in groups, separately, or accompanied by men. However, there must be reasons and good justification for their visits. Coming from a big tribe scattered all over the White Nile and the Nile, including Omdurman, helps in connecting them with these places. Visiting is encouraged and seen as part of strengthening their tribal ties.

Visiting each other on occasions of condolence, wedding ceremonies and sickness, being hospitalised, going to pilgrimage, travelling abroad, giving birth and a wide range of life cycle occasions are obligatory for social visits. Hence, such a value system of mutual visits emphasises and strengthens kinship bonds. It is allowed for women space to move within and outside the village and open the boundaries.

Women mentioned that they use this value on social networking with relatives as a positive strategy to open spaces for them. They take advantage of what is an accepted norm, to go to the market, attend to “Zar” ceremonies (spiritual rituals of dancing), see fortune telling women or the religious men “Faki”. These are not tolerated spaces by men for women to indulge in, but women discretely do them. They try to be within the time boundary of returning before lunchtime. Also, they try to avoid Omdurman main markets, as village men may be there. They mainly consider the advantage of visiting Omdurman as a recreation, to hear news of the Omdurmanese group, and to learn about new things in house decoration, food and fashion of their limited low class groups. They do not mix or aspire to what the middle class does. Though women use the normative to extend their boundaries, these are not extended to a large degree.

It is worth mentioning that most women have not even visited Khartoum town, the main capital city-across the Nile from their village for the market, Khartoum Fair in Khartoum North for the Fun Fair or for any Sight seeing. Further, of those who get the opportunity to be educated at university, most apply to universities in Omdurman. All female students have to observe the rule of conduct by not going to cinemas, public parks, etc., lest village men see them or hear about it. Their education at university could be disrupted. Village men have more freedom to move. However, women within this context of preserving the culture are socialised and made to believe in the honour of the family and the unwritten codes of conduct of the village. They are trusted to safeguard it even when they are living away from family in hostels. If women do not preserve the norms then there is a public sanction that can work in labelling the one as rebellious and she will be outcast, which will deprive individuals from all the informal and great social support and respect. Women themselves do not see this as restrictive, but somehow appreciate it is a means of honour and protection. They regard this sort of “policing” and self-disciplining as what makes them unique and like one big family so that each member is taking good care of the other. The idea of controlling or restricting their space has been talked about as normal and essential to keeping order, and to teach good

manners so as to establish a system. It is something desirable and one has to work hard to maintain it. One can see this like "table manners" which every one is trying hard to possess, so as to be accepted and perceived as a respected person within that system.

### **3.3.5 Women's economic spaces**

The boundaries at the physical/mobility level are closely linked to loss of assets and restricted economic spaces. These economic spaces would include women's ownership of assets, income and control over them.

#### *Women's rights over assets*

Women at the village have got defacto rights of land ownership and of inheritance. The main two sources of assets are either agricultural land or houses. Men mostly own houses because they have income to build the house. However, women have residence rights in both the houses of their family of origin before marriage, and in case of divorce or widow ship or poverty if the husband does not own a house. They have as well such rights in the house of their husband if he builds a separate house for his new family. In both cases, she has de jure rights of inheritance and use rights. However, family houses are usually not divided or sold in cases of inheritance. The fact remains that most houses are owned in the name of men and not women. Few exceptions remain when widows without children inherit husbands or some women who are the only heirs of fathers. As far as agricultural land, women have use rights and de jure rights of inheritance. This is true for men as well. However, for practical reasons, family land is rarely divided into individual pieces but rather jointly cultivated by members of the extended family. Those who use it for growing vegetables make use of its products, however, women of that extended family can help in harvesting and return with vegetables or fodder for their households.

#### *Women's economic activities*

Women prefer not to work in agriculture, but rather in individual income-generating activities as the farm do not bring money in the purse. Further, agricultural work is tough, as they say, and suits men or poor women who have no other option. There are many reasons that inhibited women from engaging in agriculture as their grandmothers used to do. One factor is the introduction of new techniques and crops such as potatoes and onions and irrigation by pumps. The women conceive of manual cultivation of potatoes as needing strength. They see irrigation by pumps needs lengthy time and staying late in the field. Both the time factor and manual strength, they claim, suit men better. Moreover, the young generation of both genders uses to help, but with the introduction of primary and secondary schools at the villages, their resources are no longer available. Education is preferred and hired labourers are used when the need arises.

When agriculture was mainly depending on rain, women used to actively participate in growing sorghum and okra. Women however, are not regretting these old times, as they

believe no cash was in the hands of women as it was basically a subsistence activity. It only added hard work for women to do both reproductive and productive activities with no private cash for women.

The women of today, as they mentioned, try different means to engage in activities that would generate income, but most of their attempts fail for different reasons. Some women try making handicrafts from straw, making prayer or sauna mats, or sweeping but these are activities that consume time and generate very little money. Hence, they are mostly done by older women. Other women tried petty trade, selling charcoal, onions or making ice cream or “*Falafel*”, selling the later to school children. The women say their main problem is market opportunity. The purchasing power of villagers is limited. Women’s lack of other skills and non-availability of credit are all impeding factors for home based income generating activities.

Consequently, women’s economic space is highly limited as well as their mobility. The village life encapsulates not only women but also men with minimal options. However, as men’s mobility is wider, most men find work in Omdurman town, while women stay within the boundaries of their reproductive role. Yet, some women try to cross these boundaries by engaging in some salaried jobs. Only a few engaged in teaching at the schools and the only outlet available for jobs as services is also limited in the village.

#### *Control over income*

Women claim that the money they get from any source is their own and they use it as they want. Husbands have no right over it and actually they do not ask about it. They know that if women gain “good” money, they will use it for the benefit of the household or children. Aisha said, “School needs are growing. We do not want children to dropout after primary education. They have to continue till secondary. If they work hard enough, they may join university. We help by our little income to make them continue till the secondary level”.

Amel said, “My husband is poor I need to work in agriculture to help him so that the children can have a better life, go to school and have decent dress like other children. He does not tell me to do so, but I notice I keep my money and use it where it is most needed and appropriate. There is no option except agricultural labour that I know of and can do. It is hard, but there is no other option in this village”.

As discussed above the women are bounded by the physical and cultural boundaries. They lack assets. This impact negatively on their economic space to make it limited.

Hence, the honour and shame culture dominate and restrict behaviour and interaction. Moreover, the culture of kinship unity and communalism is crucial as a control mechanism to keep the system sustained. The concepts of individualism and freedom are minimal in such cultural context for both genders. The embeddedness of the socio-economic spaces within a cultural milieu is further manifested in the different social space.

### 3.3.6 Women's social spaces

Women's social spaces are linked to their physical and economic spaces and boundaries. They include issues of marriage rights, marital relationships and a concept of the ideal person.

Women and men of the village have the right to consent to marriage. A man usually consults his mother and adult sisters about his interest to marry a certain girl in the village. A man said: "We consult mothers first because the bride most probably will live with them. Even if a man has his own house, he is expected to take care of his parents in old age. An undesired daughter-in-law by his mother will create problems. Then we 'men' can not have rest in life if the wife and mother are not on good terms".

On the other hand a mother can suggest a girl to her son. A mother said: "Boys these days can not be forced to marry a girl they do not want. You can only recommend but not insist lest those problems arise in the future and he makes you responsible".

Other ways are when a father learns that a brothers' daughters' hand is asked for by a distant relative. Then he would approach his son to ask for her hand. If the son accepted, then a parallel cousin marriage is more preferred.

The girls on the other side have also the above options, to be selected by the boy or recommended by his family members. She will be approached by her mother to gain her consent. In rare cases she would refuse. Usually her consent is sought when negotiations between family members start. Some girls said: "Customs have changed to some extent. Now days, a boy can show his interest by frequently coming to visit the family or coming in the women's section to greet you. You show your interest by making a nice juice for him, greeting him with smiles and being polite and nice. If you do not want him, you do the opposite. You ignore him. But now men do not have enough money to get married so you do not lose the opportunity". Another one mentioned: "Parents can not force a girl into a marriage she does not want or which is not good for her because problems will grow and she will return back to her family with children. So instead of being relieved from her, she returns with additional burdens, she laughs".

From the above it is evident the social space is limited for both but more restricted for women. This issue will be elaborated when discussing how the village defines the ideal spouse for each to delineate the possible restrictions that could be enforced on both male and females.

The men and women in a group discussion session maintained that the ideal husband characteristics are the following:

"The husband has to be responsible, with good character and income, know how to handle problems, tolerate different conditions and not be aggressive. His age is to be between 26 - 29 years". Unlike for them, the ideal wife is to be "tolerant, obedient and respectful of his family and the norms of the village. She should be understanding of her husband's condition and support him. Her age is to be between 18 - 20 years old". The ideal husband, as they stated, will be satisfied with his wife with average characteristics in reference to what is stated above,

and will not think of polygamy or divorce. Both of these are rare in the village. They say a husband (who is mostly a relative) respecting a wife is respecting her family. The mutual expectations are considered to keep the integrity of the family and the village as a whole. When I asked who the “bad husband” is, they mentioned the one who does not work hard to meet his family needs, is irresponsible, or who does not give the respect to his family by keeping close relationships with them. I asked about beating a wife, drunkenness or extra-marital relations. They all said that these are almost non-existent behaviour in the village. There is no place for making alcohol in the village, so it is not possible to drink in town and return home drunk. The people are poor and their income is just enough for one wife, with no possibility for indulging in such things. “These are not known as behaviours of village people. That is why we want to keep intact and clean from the influence of strangers, so as not to bring bad customs to our village”.

One man said, “How can you beat a wife? You lose your face in the village. All the villagers will speak and gossip about you. Others will scold you. Our wives are obedient. The maximum you can do is to yell at her and scold her”. Another man said, “If your wife became problematic, you would tell her mother. She will advise her and then she will act as you want. We do not beat wives. We need their respect and love. They are the models for our daughters and helpers in old age”.

Women say, “We serve our husbands. We are obedient to them. We try to do our best for the sake of the family stability. It is God’s will what you have in marriage. A man can think of a second wife even if the first is doing very well. Another man can tolerate a miserable wife who is not taking good care. It is all luck and God’s will. If he takes another wife what can you do? You accepted so far as he is just to you. If you have children, you tolerate it even if he is not just. What can you do? The children need a father. You never know. He may change to your side again”.

It is worth mentioning that there are only two polygamous households in the village. Men mentioned that marriage is preferred to be monogamous with a single wife. It is only if the wife did not give birth that one would have an excuse for another wife. “Sons are precious to be born. If you have more than four daughters, you may think of having another wife, but that did not happen in our village. If a wife dies and a man is healthy and not very old, then he would be encouraged to find another wife. Usually men die before wives but wives are not expected to marry again unless a widow is very young. Then she will be encouraged to marry again, probably a brother of her husband”.

From the above discussion, the social space for men’s behaviour, responsibilities, rights for selecting partners for marriage and marital relationships are bounded with social norms and tradition. Individual freedom is set to a minimum; the same is true for women. The social norms create boundaries and the physical space emphasizes those boundaries and translates them into action. Hence, the physical is embodied in the social.

The social space includes as well issues such as representation and decision taking. The husband is considered as the representative of the family. He has to seek extending social

relationships with tribes' members outside the village. The wife is responsible for telling him of occasions he has to attend and visits he must make, as she stays more in the village and knows all the news. Wives have a vested interest that the husbands maintain such social relations and representation. It seems "odd" that a wife does all the visiting and maintaining social relations while her husband is lagging behind. The sanction of ostracism is great if husbands do not represent the family well. Their behaviour reflects on the future of his children in being accepted in marriage. Men, despite their limited time compared to wives, return from work, whether in farm or in town, at sun set. Yet, their time boundary is elastic to accommodate these social obligations later in the evening. The wives are also bounded by these social obligations. They have their time during the day, as they claim. Household work does not consume all day. Especially as they say "when you have adult daughters at home, you are relieved from much of the burden of the household difficult chores such as washing and sweeping". Women's social space increases with age, and their status as representing their family also increases and is appreciated. They try to use this status for public activities as will be discussed below.

Decision taking as a social space is embedded into the norms of who has the right for decision taking. Villagers, both men and women, claim that men are vested with such rights. Women can advise husbands and elder sons, but the final word is for the men. One man said, "One of course consults with a wife in main issues of marriage or children, or other issues related to your work, but the final word is yours. A man has the final word when it comes to buying land or selling crops, but a wife has more word in buying things for the household. The kitchen utensils are her domain. Other furniture is a joint decision".

Another dimension of the social space is related to going out, granting permission and being obedient. The men expect that a wife has to tell her husband where she wants to go. If it is outside the village, permission is needed. "If he is at home, you also need to tell him that you are going out even if you are going to visit your parents, as he may ask for you and if you are not around, he gets angry". A husband does not need permission, but in most cases he would tell any member of the family that he is going out when it is in the evening. He may tell the exact place or not. He has the right as head of household to decide on his movement and the amount of time. Other members of the household, including sons, especially those who are not adults (age 10 – 16) and are still depending on father, need to ask permission. Other adult sons who are not married need to tell that they will be absent till a certain time, as parents get worried if their sons travel outside the village.

Other rights of husbands in decision making are related to family planning. It is the husband's right to accept it if the wife wants it. A wife said, "My husband works in a hospital in Omdurman. He said family spacing is good. He brought me the pills and I used them. I have four children, but there is three years gap between each. I could not have used them without his consent".

The issue of budgets and rights over own money is upheld by men. The man's income is his right to decide to use it for different family affairs and for his own use. A wife does not



interfere by asking how much he earns or how he spends it. So long as he is supporting the family and the needs of all members, there is no issue of her right to know the details. She has also similar rights over her income if she works. It is shameful if he asks for it or on how she uses it. Separate pockets are the accepted norm.

It is worth mentioning that discussion over these aspects was not referred to in the context of Islam especially by men. No *Quran* verse or prophet "Haddith" or even general reference to Islam was made especially by men. It is always in reference to "our custom", "it is a tradition" and "it is good behaviour".

Moreover, the social space of men did not include religious rituals of collecting for joint Quran recitation or joint evening prayers on a daily basis. No reference is made that they discuss social public issues during such gatherings. The mosque is not used as the site for public meetings. The school is rather having that function. The mosque is used as the place for doing the religious ceremony of marriage or the the "*agid*".

The "*agid*", whereby the bride and groom are declared married, is men's affair and social occasion. Women do not attend it. The marriage ceremony itself differs between families. If the husband has enough money, he will make an evening party with a singer from Omdurman. The men and women will dance in turn but not together. This is a new phenomenon. The general pattern is that the groom's family will have a breakfast feast, and the bride's family will hold a lunch feast. There is no bridal dancing as a tradition among the Gamoia as they maintained, "These are Omdurmanese customs. We do not have them". However, a new custom appearing is the honeymoon. A woman said; "If the husband has money after the lunch party, in the evening, he takes his wife to a hotel in Khartoum and their spend a few days or a week and return back".

So new aspects are being introduced in marriage ceremonies but not in essence of marriage. The seal surrounding the village is rather tight despite that the physical vicinity is narrow and many men commute to Omdurman for work. However, there are a very few cases of those who migrate to the Gulf. Three cases are mentioned.

The headmaster mentioned that migration is not encouraged. A lot of money is needed to get a work permit, visa etc. If people work well on their land and as traders in Omdurman, they can sustain themselves. Up till now, we did not see much of a great impact and difference from those who recently migrated to encourage others.

Those who went to Saudi Arabia are men, of course, and no women would think of working in the Gulf. Women of older age hope to go to pilgrimage. That is the hope for women who travel abroad.

The social spaces hence are bounded by gender. Women need to manipulate different concepts and situations to create elasticity in the boundaries. As they lack income their possibility for extending the social boundaries is limited. Men having such economic power managed to have wide social boundaries.

### 3.3.7 Political space

Women of Al Gharaza are relatively active in organising themselves in several organisations such as Friends of School, Women Union, the Village Committee, or People Committee (where three out of fifteen members are women), Co-operative Committee and many 'revolving thrift associations'. They are participating in most of the public activities at the village's meetings.

Married women have more spaces and access to public presence as their behaviour is seen as less threatening to family honour. Among those married, those who are more active are the women between the ages of 30 - 50 because this is the age group that managed to get some years of education or those who have less reproductive responsibilities as grown up daughters help in domestic work. Women can join freely in all village's meetings and gatherings. However, pursuing these activities beyond the village's boundaries is men's responsibilities. That is clear in their absence from central meetings of the General Women's Union in Khartoum. The women did not attend any meetings or training sessions the Union held in Omdurman or Khartoum. They maintained that they were never invited.

The involvement of women in political activities was of two types. One that was initiated in reference to meeting the village needs is the School Friends Association. This is the most active association. It is made up of six members. Two are of the age group 50 years. Two are teachers in the school, and another two are rather young, of the age group 35. One of them has her own business as a dress maker. Their main roles are the following: to make the time table for the households to prepare the daily breakfast for the school teachers, by rotation; they also ask some families to prepare a meal for visitors of the village who come to the school and hold meetings there. They prepare meals for the teachers living in the village. They help in fund raising when the school needs furniture and any support the school needs other than for new building, which would be the school father council's responsibility.

This Father council is initiated by the government to make families share in the cost of school maintenance. The women feel pleased by this role in the association and confident that they do it up to the expectation. The School Friends Committee is exclusively for women, and the Fathers' Council is exclusively for men. Financial fund raising guarantees that the academic standard is good and helps in any possible way to make students pass the final exams.

The two bodies, Women's Friends of School Associations and Fathers Council, represent how gender segregation is maintained both physically and in the type of responsibility. The women keep to the soft issues within their traditional reproductive role.

The other women associations are not as active. The Women's Union established ten years ago established a branch of the Union in the village. The women maintained that they did not get any benefit from it. They mentioned that the Women's Union Association branch ceased to function, as the main Women's Union doesn't contact them. Since it was formed by them in early 1990's only twice have they been contacted to prepare for holy war meals. They also asked them later to form a "Quran" citation association 4 years ago, which lasted for eight months and stopped.

The village committee is also a self initiated committee of both genders but there are more men. This this committee is also established to help in fund raising to meet the village needs of services. The women also have their own economic “thrift rotating association” where women save from their daily food allowance given to them by their husband. Or, a wife can ask her husband directly if she wants to join the “Sandouk” which literally means box. The money women get is usually spent for household utensils, sheets, and perfumes or for her own dresses.

Sometimes women use it to buy jewellery or save it for going on pilgrimage. The leader of the “*Sandouk*” is usually a woman of strong character who organises it to get shares and distribute the money. She has an organisational and honesty reputation and is highly respected. Usually, she is a member in other committees.

Other organisations, which are initiated as a response to the government, are the popular committee made up of fifteen members. Three of them are females. As the people believe that the government does not offer them services, they initiated their own independent one called the Village Committee. Yet, many of the leading members are in both. The women did not mention how far their involvement in the popular committee was beneficial or whether they have any contacts with other popular committees in nearby villages or connection with the rural council. They do not know the name of the rural council head or of the Omdurman governor. The men in the committee know them and have close contacts with the head of the rural council of which Al Gharaza is a part.

The women said the Gamoia never asks for help. “We did not ask the Sudanese Women Union to help us, and they did not give us any”. They said that, “We heard that there are training sessions given on tailoring, making noodles etc. We did not get any. Other NGOs we hear are in the capital. We do not know their names or places. They did not approach us. It is only the Sudanese Environmental Conservation Society that gave us help”.

This concept of dignity and not asking for help is recurs. The value system based on “we” and “they” and otherness is blocking the possibilities of interaction and development.

The women claim that they have the energy, enthusiasm, time and desire to engage in any political activity that will better the village. Their image of an ideal village is where there are the services of tap water in houses, electricity and paved roads to link with the town and a health centre. If there is water, they can engage in many activities for income generation such as making seedlings, home gardening, or engaging in agriculture. They could have money to help in serving the village better. They need water to expand the health unit. They could have developed an association for Friends of the health centre but water is expensive. They said when the Sudanese Environment Conservation Society approached them, women were enthusiastic to learn how to make seedlings. Many had ones in their houses, but lack of water made most of these seedlings die.

They maintain other things for improving the family income could be achieved once these are done. The women can organise on an individual basis to do work of home gardens, nurseries, animal rearing or, collectively, do tailoring for school uniforms.

The idea for collective work to engage in politics or a vision to link to larger NGOs by having branches in their village, or one of them to be representative of their village in rural council, Omdurman council, the capital parliament let alone the national parliament are issues beyond their thinking, wishes or vision as something desirable or beneficial. The link between engaging in any political or public activities of the civil society and development is to them far remote and never thought of or discussed. Their concern is the integrity of the village and keeping boundaries from the “strangers”. Even migration to the Gulf was not considered by women as a means to a better life.

The debate on issues of the war or peace agreement is not discussed by women. Their sons did not engage in the holy war and they did not mention any political issues as some of the problems they face. The public space of women is hence bounded within the village. When asked to give names and locations of banks, or ministries, they gave only a few names of ministries, such as those of education, health, agriculture, and defence. They gave two names of banks but could not locate them in Omdurman.

The public space including recreation and the concept of recreation outside the boundaries of social occasions is also absent from the culture. The public space, whether it is political, of civil societies or of engaging in recreation or in any other than reproductive/productive activities, needs to be further researched for village people in Sudan.

The story of encapsulation, of the exclusive boundaries in a village only few kilometres from the capital raises many questions about the interface between culture, space and development. It questions the effectiveness of the current school curricula, media and civil society abilities to crack the siege. It raises a concern as to the Islamist project as part of a modern project or rather a conservative one that intends to leave the people isolated from modern institutions as well as modern material basis.

The women rightly make a link between political participation, economic ability and availability of basic services. What the women do not articulate is their right for these services and opportunities or to demand it from the government. Their slogan is rather of self dignity and sufficiency. “The outsiders, if they came out of their own initiative, they are welcome”. However, the villagers should not go and ask for them. It is preferable to find means of how to adapt to all difficult situations. Such a cultural mentality can not open up spaces for political participation. The women did not see the formation of the Sudanese Women Union branch in their village as an opportunity to connect them with the authorities. Neither did they conceive the Village Popular Committee as a means of an outlet to link them with the outside world of the town. As mentioned above they refrained from and formed their own parallel organizations from the official ones.

However, women political space is more limited and kept within a reproductive model with a limited road for ambition. This reproductive role is replicated in the public arena as part of the Women Union activities when they prepare food for holy war. In School Friends Associations it was clear in preparing food for teachers and guests. Their productive role as well is limited

to a few economic activities to form only money savings groups. Their lack of economic power curtailed their remaining within the cultural boundaries.

After analysing how spaces are defined; boundaries created, sustained; how women manage to strategize, manipulate to stretch their horizon; we need to consider what the forces of change are that impact on the village and what prospects lie ahead for change. This will be discussed in part three below.

## **4. The forces of change**

### **4.1 Forces of change: Education the spear head**

Education has helped greatly in enhancing the well being of the villagers. It is highly thought of to the extent that the leaders and key persons of the village are those with education being men or women, unlike in the past, where the leadership was based on ascribed status. The village has undergone some changes in the last 10 years and that is mainly because of education. The primary school opened 20 years ago, with education till the fourth year. That was the end of primary education. When the government extended it to 6 years, the children had to pursue the 2 years in Omdurman. The villagers then decided to build 2 classrooms so that the children could continue and not drop out. The government changed the system of primary education in 1995 to be for eight years. The villagers needed to build another 2 extra classrooms. Further, since 2 years ago the villagers have had a high percentage of students who passed with high grades. They are keen that they should continue and not drop out after primary education, so they built the two secondary schools for boys and girls. The government does not allow mixed education of schools at secondary level. The villagers pay shares and collectively engage in building the schools, buying needed minimum furniture.

Girls are allowed to go to Khartoum and Omdurman to pursue higher education in universities while carrying with them their moral obligation of keeping the honour and code of conduct of their village. In the next few years they are expected to come back with higher qualifications to help in developing their village. Forty adult female students who pursued adult education classes opened in the school are sitting for the exams to join high secondary schools this year. The school is getting and playing an important role in the village and is described as the 'centre of light in the village'. Girls and women, compared to men, are seen as dependent rather than breadwinners. They will get the ample time and chances in pursuing their education till the end, particularly as the age of marriage is getting higher and the prospects of marriage become limited, due to the economic hardships and the low incomes.

Families mentioned that their daughters are doing much better in schools than their sons. Sons are hoping to go into the market at an early age after finishing secondary education to be able to earn money to start a family during their late twenties. However, girls aim at joining higher education if marriage is not guaranteed. Even if a girl starts university education, she could be asked to stop it to be married to a cousin of secondary education. It remains his decision to allow her to continue her education after marriage. One case is reported where a wife has a

university degree while the husband has none, but that did not belittle him, as still he is the main breadwinner. It is noticed that in the capital such marriages have started to emerge since the late 1990's. Men who became rich are looking for boosting their status or compensating for their relatively lower education by getting married to female university graduates. Some men believe that university graduate wives can lead to a better quality of life for the family and take care of their children's education better than those wives of lower education. This is not yet a pattern amongst the villagers, but if men started to find better sources of income, and girls continued to succeed in education, the new phenomena in the capital will extend to the villages within Khartoum.

#### **4.2 The new leaders: Educated leaders**

The village people mentioned that Mr. Seliman El Tayeb, the headmaster, was highly respected and was living outside the village for 20 years in Omdurman. He returned to the village and became the headmaster six years ago. It is he who started to make the village engage in public activities and work for developing services in it and linking to the government. A village man said, "The government did not approach us. They consider us belonging to the opposition party of the Democratic People Union and we are not interested in their party. They came and formed their popular committee. We did not see them again. The agricultural water pump broke; they did not help us to fix it."

Mr. Seliman El Tayeb mentioned, "When I came to the village I found that they did not have electricity. Water is a main problem. Only one school is without enough class rooms. I revived the popular committee. It is only through it that one can approach the authorities to get services. The popular committee members are respected by the people who had two sons of the "Omda", the traditionally recognized leader of the Gamoia. The fifteen members were elected. We are all relatives. We started the work to contact the authorities. I did all contacts because living in Omdurman town, as a member of a popular committee of the neighbourhood where I lived, I learnt about who the contact persons are and how to reach the authorities. We started first by engaging to introduce electricity in the village. The authorities made a feasibility study of the cost to introduce it to the village and in each household. The village committee raised the funds. We then took it to the authorities in the name of the popular committee."

"Then as a headmaster, I started to form the Fathers Council and then later the Women Friends of School Association. The village people were enthusiastic to raise funds for the education of their children to make them remain within the village. We built a house for the teachers coming from Omdurman to encourage them to stay in the village after we had electricity. School children each pay monthly 4000 Sudanese pounds (1,5 Euro) to pay for buying water for the children, teachers' house, to water the trees in the school and for extra lessons they get in the afternoon. He also mentioned that Mr. Sidig El Fadel a teacher from Omdurman liked the quiete village life and is planning to get a wife from the village. The personality of Mr. Seliman El Tayeb is very dynamic and full of enthusiasm to help his people. They trust and respect him. He mentioned that the water problem needs 35 million Sudanese pounds (10 thousand Euros) to maintain. The people are too poor to raise that much

money. The government did not help. One woman said, “we the Gamoya have dignity. We will not beg from other rich people in Omdurman to help us. This is the government responsibility to come and see what people need”. This was a reaction to my question of why did they not find help from rich Sudanese who give help or approach banks for a loan. A man responded, “We do not go to banks, as their system will lead at the end to co-sharing with us the land, or they may take it altogether. We do not trust them”. The land to them is so precious even if it has to stay without cultivation. They conceive with suspicion of the government intention to negotiate with them the revival of the scheme. The villagers are trapped within their thinking of exclusiveness. They are afraid that other people may share with them the land if main restructuring of the scheme is undertaken with introduction of a new water pump for irrigation.

However, the initiatives done by Mr. Seliman El Tayeb separated the village space from development space. His initiatives made women become engaged in village activities and paved for them the road to progress in education.

Development practitioners need to understand these spaces and their cultural embeddedness before engaging in development efforts to which the people may not respond. Al Gharaza people trusted their educated leaders, who are relatives, to link them to the authorities. They formed their parallel committee to guarantee that the money they collected will not be channelled to the government before services are granted. The village people conceive of ‘others’, including government officials, with mistrust or suspicion. The siege mentality started cracking when schools at the secondary level opened, when electricity was introduced and with the use of television. This is another force of change. More of village children will sit next year for the high school certificate exam to be eligible to go to university. University education for many of them can change their vision of the outside world. It is change from within that can lead to other changes, rather than imposed slogans. Much needs to be done by the civil society and the government to offer services to gain the trust of the people and introduce change. A change to give village people more opportunities and choices will increase the ability to make options and decisions. A change is needed to give women more economic space and use of time in different ways. To make women themselves have more bargaining power, more education, and knowledge about what limits them and the impact of that limitation on them. They need is to improve the socio-economic, political and physical spaces of women in the village.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The situation of women in Al Gharaza village as it unfolded from the description in this study could be analytically comprehended within the larger context of the state policy that includes both political as well as social-cultural components. The question that remained forcing itself on use to answer is basically; why is it that a village so near to the capital remained with minimal social development, out of the political forces of change of the Islamic regime and could be classified a typical village in Sudan that managed to drag on by the capacities of its own people and with minimal influence from the government. Though answering such a

question was not the initial focus of the study however, it became evident after the field work research that engaging in such issues to debate and find answers are crucial. In this conclusion we attempted to engage in a debate that can be a start for new future researches. It is crucial to state that women's views are not isolated debates but are part of the larger development and political debates. This will be highlighted in this conclusion.

To answer such a broad question of why social development and women empowerment were not achieved, one needs to breakdown the question into components.

1. The current regime aims and its strategies to achieve them need to be analyzed. According to the authors' understanding, it would easily be judged that the aims of the regime as stated and practiced are the following:
  - 1.1 To maintain an exclusive political power to create a political powerful ruling elite of the Islamists.
  - 1.2 To achieve and maintain an exclusive economic power, shared only with others who would function within the boundaries stated by the ruling elite and who are envisaged as causing a threat to the Islamist political power.
  - 1.3 To operationalize a 'civilization project' which they defined mainly focusing on symbolic dimension of islamization such as emphasis on women's veil, Islamic banking system, curriculum loaded with Islamic religion and culture, Arabzation and Islamization of media images, negation of western images or values, engaging male youth in marter war and values, emphasize on an ideal Islamic morality to be represented mainly by women behaviour and Islamic laws.
  - 1.4 To steer international relations to the direction which, serves the above aims and strengthen the Islamists movement worldwide, strategic relations of solidarity to be built with these countries, groups and individuals that would foster the achievement of particularly the first two aims.
  - 1.5 Within the aims of the ruling party, one would notice that a social development human centered component is lacking. This explains why social development is lagging and a stagnant situation in areas not far from the capital for such old villages as Al Gharaza is the expected condition.

The second component to answer the question is:

2. Trying to apply a socio-cultural component to the political elites characteristics, how they think, their ideologies, concepts for how things should be operated and hopes for what should be achieved, images for a future of Sudan need to be disclosed. This could be analyzed from political statements, plans, budget allocations, etc. It is beyond the scope of this study to give quotations, statistics to prove that the regime focus of the ruling elite, judgments for evaluating the current situation, images, thinking from their perspective; all are in the direction that citizens empowerment, raising citizens expectations for development, the government to be transparent to them, engaging them in a participatory way in planning or evaluation of are all conceived as threatening dimensions that should be



avoided. The citizens are considered as incapable, idols that should surrender their destiny to the ruling elites who can rightly judge on their behalf “their” own good. This understanding and image the political power elites have of their “parenting” top-down relation with the people created the cleavage between the two that was the characteristic of mistrust within regimes structures i.e. government officials, village committees stated earlier in the study. The “parental” top-down relation did not include a social development that made it less parental in the expected way and more colonial. A post colonial/neocolonial model of analysis could hence be legitimately applied.

Consequently the villages have to be left isolated, with minimal social and economic development for fifteen years i.e. a broken pump that used to irrigate the only agricultural scheme which was the source for food production and for cash for all the villagers to be left unfixed for more than a decade are all indicators for the ruling elite behaviour and image for Sudanese future. The culture of a ruling group as the representative of people to make them achieve promotion, better quality of life through enhanced education, health, income, diverse employment opportunities, production are not part neither of the civilization project, nor of the stated aims or socio-culture of the elite. Plans or budgets where by the allocated budget for education deteriorated from 12% in 1988 to 0.8% from GDP in 2005; stated as the lowest in Africa; indicate how the ruling elite behave and operate the state.

3. The political culture of the ruling elite conceive of women as the focal symbol of the islamization civilization project. To this end emphasize is on women’s reproductive role, ideal of dressing in an Islamic veil, contributing to the Jihad “martyr war”, being the protector of the morality of the country, and minors in the political and economic public sectors. Issues of gender equality, women empowerment are barely discussed and only recently did the government make political commitment for an empowerment project that entails only social development and poverty alleviation.

Issues of ratifying CEDAW, ensuring a quota system for more women representation to be part of the electoral law, party law or in the civil service law was greatly opposed by the regime though it is a demand of many of the women movement groups. Yet, the demand came from non-opponents of the regime and hence considered by the male political elite as western, out of the context of cultural Islam, external and threatening to future power exclusiveness. Women Islamists used strategic means to seem as part of an inclusive women movement, but actually they create a standpoint that would lead the women’s equality agenda to dwindle. It is because of this strategy that the non-progovernment women groups spend much time to find a pathway to achieve gains for their agenda, Hence, they are constrained neither for achieving equality nor for working in social development activities. Thus, the women elites of both sides are trapped from offering any substantial inputs to help women in villages to be economically or socially empowered. Consequently, the siege on women in Al Gharaza village could be cracked only through slow processes of social change mainly of education that took a decade and half to start a secondary level school to help women have alternative options than only a role within the private sphere.

The authors consider that both non-proponents of government agenda from the women movement and the NGO's general movement are obstructed by the regime aims and socio-cultural political process of the power ruling elite behaviour to actively engage in sustained social development. Consequently their ability to reach to the village people and influence their life to crack the siege of disempowerment and underdevelopment is minimal. The government agenda itself is to keep the siege intact so that their aims for exclusive political and economic power could be sustained for a long term.

The possibility of the hopes for Sudanese women villagers to be raised, and path ways to empowerment to be achieved are beyond realization within the Islamists regimes.

An analytical model could then be developed to be tested in future studies to analyze the role of the political context to achieve social development and women empowerment in Islamic countries where an Islamic government reign.

The model would include:

1. The political and economic agenda and aims of the Islamists government.
2. The ideology that impact on the ruling elite behaviour and image on the future they conceive for the citizens of their shared country for both genders.
3. The strategies they use in their relation with their citizens to make their aims achieved and maintained.
4. The strategies they use in out of country boundaries to make them promote and sustain their aims.
5. The non-progovernment, non-state actors' of the opposition strategies to have a breakthrough and to be engaged to influence the context need to be delineated.
6. The outcome of these interrelated forces delineated.

## Part III

### Use of time – an indicator for women’s spaces

#### 1. Aim, area of interest and methods

Another aim of the Al Gharaza study was to visualise women’s spaces by the time dimension and in that way to contribute to the revealing of the interactions between conditions, actions, strategies and development tendencies.

In the preliminary stages it had to be concertedly determined which aspects of time should be consulted for the intended fields of information: social, cultural and/or economic aspects. Additionally, it was required of the author as European, agronomist, economist and ergonomist to adapt to the differences of the local populace’s understanding of time (time culture) and awareness of time when doing research about the role of time, especially social time, within a non-European culture and on top of that in a country shaped by the Islam and Islamic law. The experience of the British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard shall clarify this difficulty. During his research in the 1930’s on the Nuer, a people living in the South-East of the Sudan, he realised with bafflement that the Nuer did not possess a single word to express “time”. This however did not mean that the Nuer did not have a concept of time. For this people certain moments governing the structure of the daily life were decisive in constituting time markers like leading the cattle to the trough or to the pasture, the return of the cattle, or the milking (<http://www.gral.de>).

This study’s expected area of interest “social time – time culture – interaction with time” was depicted by BADRI (2002) with some examples from her own experiences and studies in the Sudan:

- In the Sudan women’s time meets a different appreciation from men’s time. The men say: Women’s time is not as valuable as men’s time. (The men do not know or are not aware of how much time women spend on running the household.)
- Men are not aware of how time is a limiting factor for women in realising their own goals. Men show much more leisure time activities<sup>3</sup> than women.
- Since in the Sudan certain times of the day are considered safe for women and others unsafe, the unsafe times (time after sunset, night) usually bring limitations of mobility for women.
- During the life cycle (life span) the appraisal of time (age) leads to a different appraisal of the gender in particular age groups. Men in comparison to women stay children for a longer time, are considered adults and likewise old men at a later time. Women in contrast

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<sup>3</sup> Activities outside the time spent on income generation (may take place inside and outside the house).

are considered adult earlier, hence experience a shorter childhood and are associated with the elderly<sup>4</sup> earlier on.

- “Time discipline” – the way it is known in the Western cultures is in form of “punctuality” and the possible negative stress results. One is usually not going to encounter punctuality in the life attitude of rural women. For them in the normal daily life there is no necessity for punctuality. “In time”, however, is something students and teachers need because of their occupation areas and social integration in other systems.

Sociological or socio-economical studies with women on time and social time in the context of women’s space respectively have not been carried out in the Sudan before. There are, however, first scientific results regarding Sudanese children which have been derived at the Ahfad University for Women, Omdurman. SHAKAK (2000) for example researched 10-14 year old girls’ and boys’ gender differences in the division of labour, use of time and limitations to free space.

In the context of this sociological study, we agreed to analyse “time” mostly as a social category in terms of a structural dimension.

The researches focused on the objectively experienced time (it appears as a leading structure of social fields of action) and on the subjectively experienced time (condensed in the time awareness) (cf. FÜRSTENBERG and MÖRTH, 1986).

In addition to this, there was interest to challenge and reveal aspects of time experience<sup>5</sup> and time treatment<sup>6</sup>.

This inclusion of the time dimension in the social scientist research on women’s spaces in the rural Sudan implies a new and interesting area of research supporting the elucidation of conditions, areas of activity and activity patterns as well as boundaries, strategies and development tendencies. The following areas are considered important in present and future research:

- The rhythm of activity and recreation in women’s and men’s course of the day
- Interactions of women’s division of labour and use of time in the course of the day and the year
- Concepts of use of time by women and men
- Interactions of the use of time and admissible women’s spaces
- Impacts of the differentiated appraisal of women’s and men’s time
- Impacts women’s expenditure of time for the household has on other potential areas of activity like education and career

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. chapter 3.4: „Elderly women enjoy high esteem in the families, are a welcome source of advice to the other family members and thus in a way possess power”.

<sup>5</sup> In terms of “sensation of time” according to PLATTNER (1990) quoted in PAYER, M. (2001: 5).

<sup>6</sup> In terms of “pragmatic time management” according to Plattner (1990) quoted in PAYER, M. (2001: 5). According to PAYER, M. (2001) PLATTNER considers time something spendable.

- Time's impacts on the development of women and their spaces
- The appraisal of time during the life cycle of women and men.

The research on time conducted in October and November 2002 with women in the Al Gharaza village was incorporated into the research on women's spaces. Its main emphasis was to structure women's different activities inside and outside the house via the analysis of the use of time and to learn how the women and men respectively think about the practised use of time themselves. This way we hoped to learn more about women's spaces in a rural area.

Concerning the methods applied, we decided to use semi-structured individual interviews with women and men as well as group discussions with women and men's groups respectively. The interview guide for the individual interviews concentrated on three complexes: (1) demographic household data, (2) overview of activities and actors, and (3) space and time. The interviews and discussion moderations were carried out by Sudanese scientists in Arabic and immediately translated to German.

The questions regarding the use of time mainly focused on the mode of time-structured orientation during the course of the day, the temporal position, and the extent of the single activities, as well as the phases of recreation during the course of the day. We were interested in:

- What activities are carried out by women when, how, where, and to what extent?
- In what rhythm of activity and recreation does the women's day occur?
- How much time do women have left to themselves<sup>7</sup> (leisure, sleep)?
- Who or what influences position in time and duration of the activities?
- What restrictions do women face in their use of time?
- What role does time actually play in the life of these women?

On the other hand we were interested in the women's own individual reflection (appraisal) of use of time (in terms of time awareness):

- What esteem do women hold for their time?
- Do the women have enough time to carry out their household chores<sup>8</sup>?
- Do women in their own perception have time to themselves?
- How content are the women with their use of time?
- For what would the women like to have more time?
- What activities require the most time in the women's own experience?
- What activities bring the most physical strain in the women's own experience?

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<sup>7</sup> Time to oneself: time for personal hygiene, sleep and other self-determined activities inside and outside the house (without household chores).

<sup>8</sup> The household chores include chores inside the house (like tidying up, sweeping, cooking, laundering, caring for children, feeding cattle) and outside the house (like fetching groceries, bringing children to school, to the physician etc., fulfilling their social and familial obligations in the village and outside the village).

In the context of space and time mostly socio-cultural aspects of time were thus meant to be used to gain insight while applying the structural dimension social time as an indicator for women's spaces according to the interviewed women in Al Gharaza. Analysing the use of time during the course of the day or the year reveals structures of activities and allows for a more detailed insight in the utilised women's spaces. In regard to the social norms the analysis of the use of time, where appropriate, also enables conclusions about real livelihood circumstances and development tendencies. Through the individual reflection of time sensation, we also hoped to learn more about the women's time awareness.

We hoped to find out via the analysis of time use whether economic aspects of time<sup>9</sup> play a role in these women's lives.

## 2. The interview sample<sup>10</sup> (research field)

The following Al Gharaza results derive from eight individual interviews with seven women and one husband at their home and immediately after work in the field as well as two concluding group discussions with 18 women and four men (the headmaster of the school and three teachers) at the school.

The eight individual interviews were conducted with

- (1) ... a married woman (Suha) (approx. 38 years old) with eleven children age 4 months to 21 years. Ten children, eight going to school, still live in the household of this nuclear family. Her husband works as a merchant in the vegetable market in Omdurman all week and only comes home during the weekend. From there he also brings the most important wares. He stays home for several days during large festivities. According to her perception, her life differs "totally" from the life of the other women in the village. She possesses more decision making scope since her husband is not at home all week. During the interview three neighbour women were present.
- (2) ... a married woman (Selma) (28 years old) with three children, age 4 to 8 years, who is engaged in many social activities (e.g. women union). Three years ago, due to economic reasons, she returned to the village from Omdurman with her husband and the children. She lives in a nuclear family with close social contact with neighbouring families of two of her brothers. One of the brothers of whom one has been working as a labour migrant in Saudi-Arabia for ten years, and the other one (Osman) is going to follow him within the next few days. Selma's husband is working as a nurse in Omdurman and in the neighbouring village. Sometimes he accommodates in Omdurman. Her most urgent desire is to be employed in a gainful occupation (if possible as nursery teacher) and to attend a college. The interview was accompanied by the sister-in-law.

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<sup>9</sup> Acting in terms of „time is a limited resource“.

<sup>10</sup> All names have been made anonymous.

- (3) ...a married older woman (Hiba) (approx. 40 years old or older), who has six adult children (four sons, two daughters) and lives in an extended nuclear family with her son's family (wife and four children). This son has his own shop enterprise in the village. Her husband is working on his own land in the village. Three sons are working in Omdurman and return home every evening. The youngest daughter is currently being prepared as a bride. Hiba thinks that she is going to be missed a great deal for the household chores when she. During the interview her husband, one son, the youngest daughter and grand-children were present.
- (4) ...two female farmworkers (Dalia and Amna) who work in the irrigation fields every day from 7:00 to 11:00 or 12:00, even on Fridays, given the opportunity. Dalia (approx. 20 years old) is divorced and since then with her two-year-old son again has been living with her mother in the village. She had already been working in the irrigation fields before her marriage. Amna (approx. 37 years old) is married, has five children who go to school, originally comes from the village, and had emigrated to the Western Sudan where she married. They owned a small plot of land. During the draught 12 years ago she returned to the village with her husband and the children. She lives in a nuclear family and has been working in the irrigation fields, the same as her husband. Commuting to work requires half an hour (on foot) to travel a distance of 1 kilometre.
- (5) ...a husband (Osman, 29 years old), in the presence of his wife, the wife of his brother, and his two sisters (Selma and Ola). He has been to college and up to now has been a teacher in the village. He already had finished preparations to emigrate due to economic reasons, to his brother in Saudi-Arabia along with his brother's wife and their youngest son on the next day. He leaves his wife and their two-year-old son behind. They, along with his mother, a non-married sister Ola, and the three children of his brothers, will be taken care of by the neighbouring family of his sister Selma. Up to now he has been living in an extended nuclear family.
- (6) ...two older Nomad women of the 'Kababish' tribe (Nuha and Hamida, both grand-mothers), whose husband, non-married daughter, and sons are working in the irrigation fields. All arrived with their families almost 20 years ago from Kordofan and settled with their extended families in front of the village. The interview with Nuha was conducted in the presence of her husband, the non-married daughter, and her two children (approx. 1 and 3-year-old). The interview with Hamida was attended by her husband and one son. The interviewers were mostly interested in their course of the day and in what links they have to the village and the irrigation area.

### **3. Analysis of the use of time during the course of the day**

#### **3.1 Calculation of time in the Sudan**

The official (state-run) calculation of time in the Sudan is based on the Western (Gregorian) calendar, while the Islamic (Muslim) lunar calendar determines the daily course of the Muslims. Muslim holidays for example are the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday, the Islamic

New Year, the end of the Fast of Râmādân, and the Berium (The Pilgrimage holidays). Christian holidays includes Christmas day and Easter day. The national holiday is Independence Day (January, 1st).

The week starts with Saturday as the first week-day and closes with Friday, the only free day of the week.

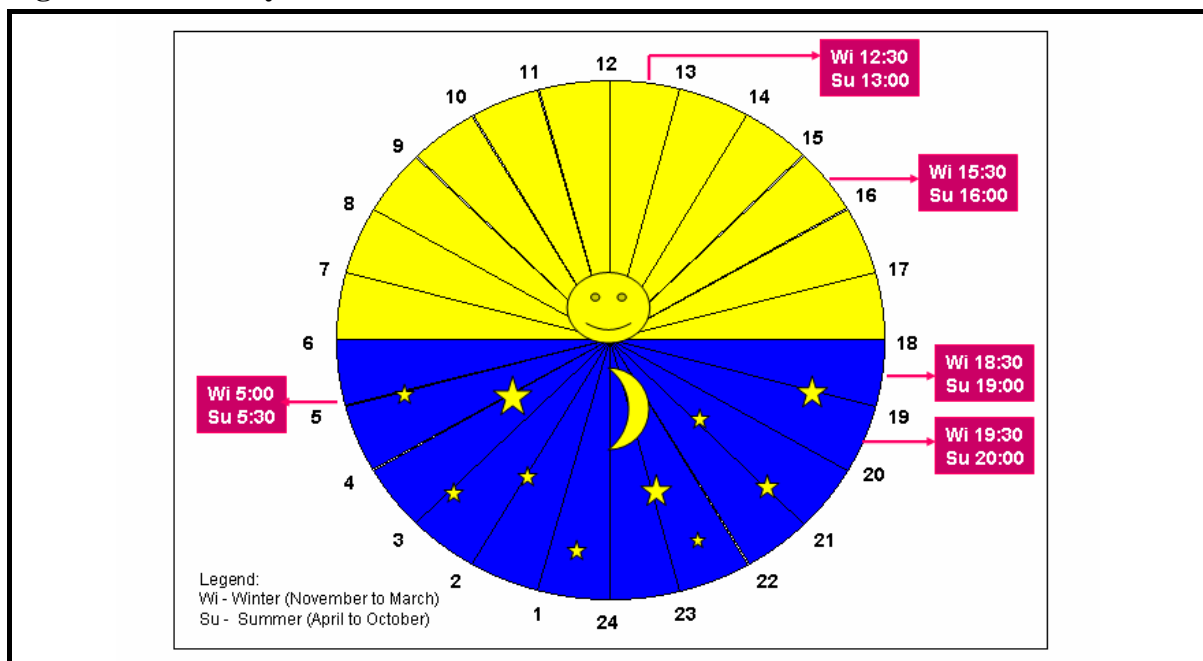
### 3.2 About the time scaling in the course of the day of the populace

The time scaling in the course of the day of the Muslim populace in the Sudan is closely linked to the five Muslim<sup>11</sup> prayer times:

- At dawn (“Sobh”),
- At noon (“Dhuhr”),
- In the afternoon (“Asr”),
- At evening (“Maghrib”), and
- At night (“Isha”).

In the households of Al Gharaza the daily course begins with the adhan’s call to the Morning Prayer. During winter (November to March) the muezzin calls to prayer around 5:00, 12:30, 3:30, 6:30 and 7:30, during summer (April to October) about half an hour later (figure 1 and 2). Additionally the sun position and the run of the shadow respectively provide for temporal orientation (sunrise approx. at 6:30 a.m., sunset approx. at 6:30 p.m.).

**Figure III-1: Prayer times in winter and summer**



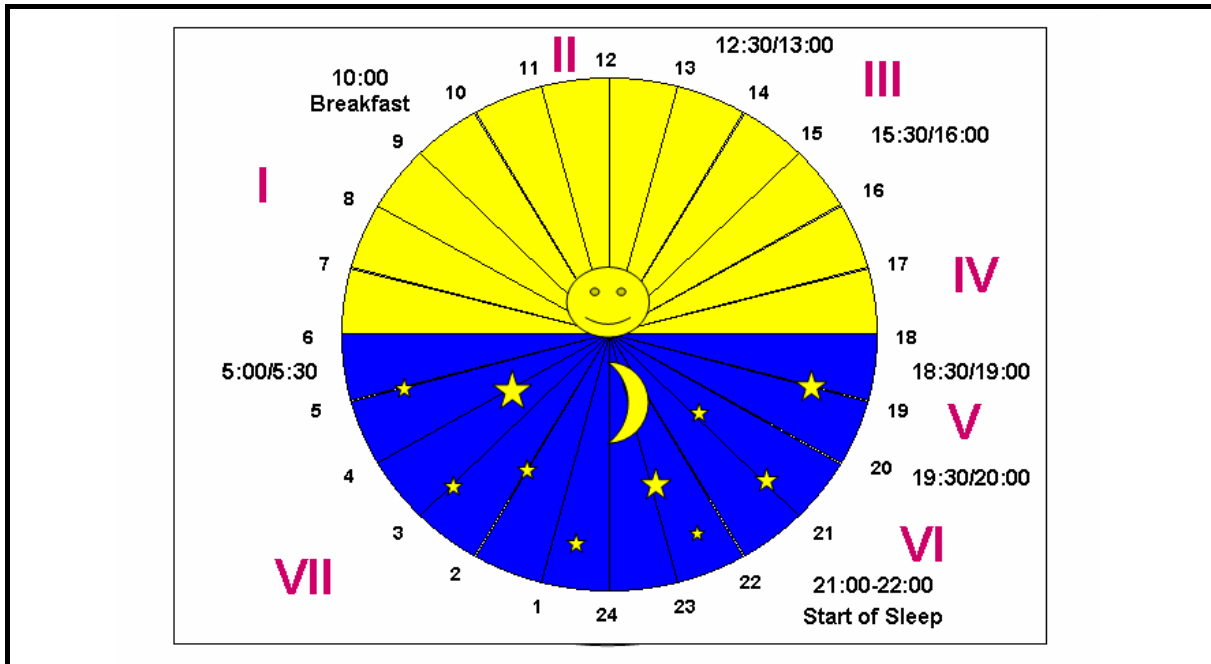
Source: Own figure

<sup>11</sup> Cf. PAYER, A. (2005) (<http://www.payer.de/islam/islam.htm>, p. 1).



The time spans between the time markers carry characteristic notations in the populace which for example are used to arrange the “time” for visits (BADRI, 2002). Hence it appeared methodologically reasonable to structure the analysis of women’s use of time during the course of the day by the same time periods which are firmly established in the daily life (cf. figure III-2).

**Figure III-2: Prayer times and the seven time periods during the course of a day**



Source: Own figure

The individual time periods I through VII carry following notations in the populace (BADRI, 2002):

I	5/5:30 till 10:00	Morning Prayer till breakfast ( <i>Morning</i> )
II	10:00 till 12:30/1:00	Breakfast till Noon Prayer ( <i>early forenoon</i> )
III	12:30/1:00 till 3:30/4:00	Noon Prayer till lunch ( <i>late forenoon</i> )
IV	3:30/4:00 till 6:00/6:30	Lunch till Evening Prayer ( <i>Before Sunset</i> )
V	6:00/6:30 till 7:30	Evening Prayer till Night Prayer ( <i>Sunset</i> )
VI	7:30 till 9:30	Night Prayer till start of sleep ( <i>early night</i> )
VII	9:30 till 5:00/5:30	Sleep till Morning Prayer ( <i>night</i> ) (9:30 till midnight <i>late night</i> )

### 3.3 Results of the use of time (activity profile by time periods)

#### 3.3.1 Use of time and climatic strain

Before discussing the results regarding the use of time, an ergonomic examination of the human capability under the climatic conditions prevalent in Al Gharaza is presented. The temporal sequence of activity and recreation in the course of the day also mirrors physical and mental responses to factors (like climate and workload) taking effect on the operative demands.

Thus at a comfortable temperature of 20°C and a relative air humidity of 50%, a healthy person is at capability peak. The organism responds to increasing air temperature, up to a range of 35°C, at first with mental disorders (discomfort, irritability, deficiency in concentration). When faced with further increase in temperature, there are psychophysiological disorders (work mistakes, loss of power due to decreasing skill), and at temperatures of more than 30°C, there are physiological disorders (fluid and saline balance disorder, increasing strain on the cardiovascular system, strong fatigue and impending exhaustion). From an ergonomic medical viewpoint, temperatures of 35 to 40°C are considered to be the highest bearable permanent limit in air temperature.

According to MARTIN (1994), the optimal arrangement of work depends on the workload at different activities air temperatures between 15 and 24°C at a relative air humidity of 30 to 70% should be sought as optimal climate conditions (OLFERT and STEINBUCH, 2001: 221). Intellectual-mental activities and easy manual labour should be carried out at 18 to 24°C. Easy manual labour while standing should be carried out at 17 to 22°C, each at relative air humidity between 40 and 70%, and peak airflow of 0.1 to 0.2 m/sec. When carrying out heavy physical labour, the temperatures should be between 15 to 21°C, the air humidity between 30 to 70%, and the airflow to 0.4 m/sec at most.

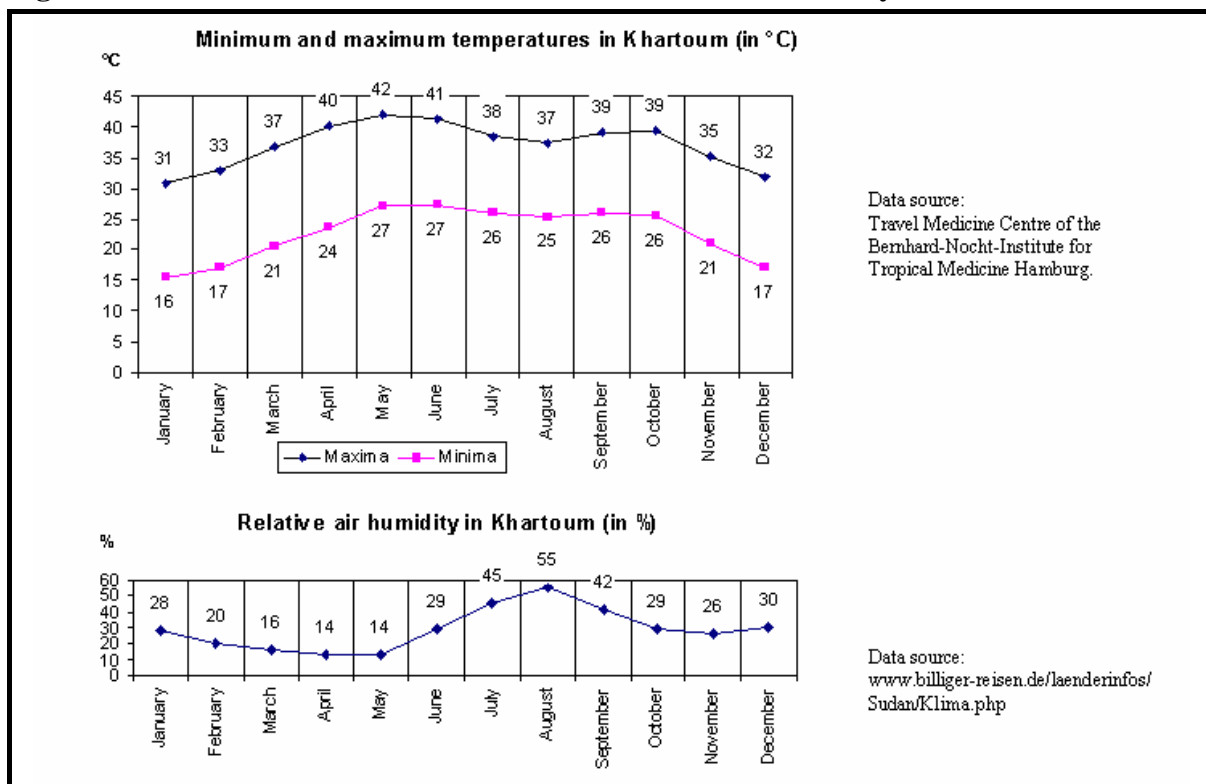
Contrary to the recommendations from an ergonomic medical viewpoint, in the region in and around Khartoum, a dry-hot steppe-climate is prevalent with an annual rainfall of 100 to 120 mm and average variations in temperature between 15 and 32°C in January and between 26 and 42°C in June, at a relative air humidity between 14 and 55% (cf. Figure 3). The extremes are 50°C in the shade during summer and 10°C on a few nights during the colder season. The sun, on average, shines between 8.7 hours a day in July and 10.6 hours in April, which amounts to 3,600 sunshine hours a year (2.3 times as much as in Germany). The climate strain in Khartoum is classified as “hot and dry” during October to June and as “sultry” during July to September by the Travel Medicine Centre of the Bernhard-Nocht-Institute for Tropical Medicine Hamburg (REISEMEDIZINISCHES ZENTRUM, 2004: 6).

The climatic conditions in Khartoum constitute a high physical strain for the populace by the climate factors of air temperature and quantity of insolation (global radiation) alone. These can be concluded on the basis of the average daily temperature in different months of the year. Another stress factor is the load of the respective activity, whereas housewives and

female farmworkers, according to our visual observations, mostly carry out easy, only infrequently medium heavy physical labour.

This high climatic strain for the women in Al Gharaza should definitely be considered. When judging/evaluating their use of time and job performance, for the rhythm of work and recreation during the course of the day, the work speed and the job performance (in quantitative and qualitative terms) also reflect an individual reaction to the combining effects of the stress factors of climate and workload. This working capability reducing fact was pointed out by BRANDT (1979 and 1980) in his study on the working capability in tropical agriculture.

**Figure III-3: Climate values in Khartoum in the course of the year**



### 3.3.2 Use of time by housewives<sup>12</sup>

The housewives with children use the time from 5:00 till 10:00 mostly for household chores inside the house. Usually at 5:00, with the call to the Morning Prayer, they get up first in the family, wake the other family members and prepare tea for everyone. In the mornings normally only tea is consumed, sporadically accompanied by a biscuit. The mothers prepare the children for school and nursery respectively. This includes washing the children, arranging school clothes, and if required, preparing and packing breakfast to take along<sup>13</sup>. In

<sup>12</sup> Women who carry out the household chores and are not employed in a gainful occupation.

<sup>13</sup> Whenever the children cannot come home for breakfast (e.g. long way to school).

Al Gharaza the school children leave home around 6:30/6:45. In this time period children also are brought to the nursery. Afterwards the women tidy up, sweep their rooms and the yard, and, if appropriate, sweep new sand on the floor of the rooms. An important chore in the morning is the preparation of the breakfast for the children returning home during school break, as well as for the husband and the other family members and the teachers in the school. The teachers usually travel a long way to the school because they are not from Al Gharaza. Hence it is customary that the women in the village take turns catering for them with a jointly financed breakfast. The respectively responsible women prepare the breakfast at home and deliver it to the school during breakfast break. Women like to use this stay at the school in order to have a tea or coffee with the teachers. The preparations for lunch also start in the morning.

Between **10:00 and 12:00/1:00** women take breakfast either with the children coming home during school break, alone or with relatives/neighbours at home or at their house. Afterwards women do the dishes, prepare lunch and, if required, fetch groceries. The shopping, however, is for the most part taken on by the grandmothers, the boys and girls (only up to an age of 10 years at most). The time between 11:00 and 12:00 often is used for visits with relatives and neighbours for a shared coffee or tea. Starting at 12:00 at least, women with school children need to be back at home, because the first children return home. In this time period laundry, ironing, sewing and repairs are carried out as well. Laundry is done by hand usually twice a week, sometimes every other day. Ironing is done more frequently (up to four times a week). Older women like Hiba use this time period, if necessary, also for recreation (lying down, sleeping).

The transition into the next time period **12:30/1:00 till 3:30/4:00** is comparatively floating. Around 12:00/1:00 normally the children come home from school. The sewing, mending and ironing may still be in the works. After 2:00, most of the time around 3:00, the women have lunch with the children. After that they relax or sleep for about an hour. Those women whose men work outside the village during the week (e.g. Suha and Selma) do not apply the meal times as strictly. They usually eat at 2:00. Illiterate women from Al Gharaza and vicinity voluntarily use the time after the end of school for the children (starting around 1:00) in order to learn reading and writing in a group with the teachers in the school building. Every Thursday the women's union offers a religion consultation mainly teaching Quran-hour between 2:00 and 4:00 in the school building for all women seeking religious advice or who want to know about Quran. According to Selma around 15 women use this opportunity.

The activities during the time before sunset (**3:30/4:00 till 6:30/7:00**) are rather multifaceted. If appropriate the children are prepared for going again to school, for revision of their studies and home work (washing the children, arranging clothes). This is also another time for Quran instructions or extra tutoring. When shade covers the yard at Suha's, for example, the children carry their beds into the yard so they can do their school homework in the shade. If possible the mothers check the homework. The caring for the domestic animals (goat, sheep, chicken) is carried out by the women before sunset as well (fetching the fodder, feeding, milking). In addition to that between 4:00 and 6:00 (before sunset) neighbours and relatives are visited for

coffee and tea. Sometimes the mothers need to be back home by 5:00 because the children return from school. The women are supposed to be home by 6:00, at the latest, however, by sunset in time for the prayer.

During winter the time before sunset is used by the women for personal hygiene (smoke sauna, applying henna etc.). During summer this happens only after sunset.

After sunset (**6:00/6:30 till 9:30/10:00**) the beds, including lay-ons (mattresses), are brought into the yard (usually by the children and the women, not by the men). The women tend to personal hygiene (sauna). The milkman every day delivers fresh milk to the doorstep (7:00 till 8:00).

According to both the women and the men in the group discussions, after sunset women must stay only inside the house, which means they are not to leave home after sunset. The time during darkness is considered unsafe for women. Men, in contrast, are allowed to make visits into the early night.

Between 6:00 and 9:00 the women provide a light supper (like milk, biscuit, rice, leftovers from lunch) for the family. The day dies away with the women sitting with the family and the children and/or guests, or watching TV together. If a TV-set is in the house the children usually watch an Egyptian TV series before going to sleep at about 10:00. The mothers bring their children to bed around 10:00, but in Al Gharaza sometimes later. They are usually the last of the family to go to bed (after 10:00). Their night sleep lasts until the call to prayer by the adhan at 5:00/5:30 at most.

Friday is recreation day. Normally one does not work. Sometimes there is an occasion for festivities (e.g. a wedding).

Altogether the daily activities are rather steadily established within the seven time periods. This also holds true for the day course of the female farmworkers during the cultivation season.

### **3.3.3 Use of time by female farmworkers**

In the Al Gharaza village only three women work in the fields of the irrigation area. According to Mr. Seliman El Tayeb (the headmaster of the school) women only work in the irrigation area when economic reasons force them to (single, divorced or widowed women with children and nomads respectively). Our interview partners Dalia and Amna from Al Gharaza badly need the recompense (paid in money and in kind) to sustain their livelihood.

The course of the day of the female farmworkers likewise begins with the adhan's call to the Morning Prayer.

37-year-old farmworker Amna takes turns with her husband in getting up first. Then she prepares tea. They consume the tea together. Amna also prepares the breakfast for the five children, for the children (all attending school) have breakfast in the school.

At 6:30 both farmworkers get started on the half-hour footway to the workspace field in the irrigation area. The 2-year-old son of the 20-year-old farmworker Dalia is being cared for during work by her mother.

The work starts at 7:00 and ends around 11:00/12:00 when the specified quantity of work has been accomplished. At the day of the interview Amna had harvested two bags of okra, which corresponds to around 20 kg. According to her own perception she is working at a normal pace. They reportedly hardly ever had any breaks. Dalia and Amna do not have any breakfast during work, but wait until they return home from work.

According to Mr. Seliman El Tayeb, in addition to the work time in the forenoons, there also is the possibility to work in the afternoon between 2:00 and 5:00; however, women supposedly seldom seize this opportunity. If there is enough labour demand in the irrigation area people even work on the usually free Friday.

Both female farmworkers report that women compared with men usually carry out easy manual labour (e.g. harvest). Hoeing considered is a very heavy labour because of the desiccated ground and thus is typical work for men, says Amna. She adds “Women do not work this hard, men work harder, if the same time at that...”

Mr. Seliman El Tayeb reports that female farmworkers receive 2,500 SP, one Sudanese thousand ponds less than the men, who receive 3,500 SP, mostly because men perform heavy labour.

Amna’s course of the day turns out to be as follows: After work she walks – usually together with Dalia – the 1 km back to the village in about half an hour. She cannot go home together with her husband, for the men normally do not work with the women. Men usually carry out heavy labour and thus often work on a different field that is usually a bit away.

When Amna returns home from the fieldwork around 12:00/12:30, usually the children are also backing from school. Then she prepares the breakfast for her husband and herself. Sometimes her husband returns home from the work before her. Then the children prepare breakfast for him, provided they are back from school. If not, he eats anything edible he can find, according to Amna’s report. With breakfast they drink tea.

Afterwards Amna fetches something for lunch, prepares lunch and cleans the house. While lunch is on the stove she does the dishes. Her husband does not do any chores at all. He relaxes during this time. She is forced to run the entire household, even if she returns home after her husband. She spends most the time on chores. If she is very tired she sends her children to fetch groceries.

Around 3:00 lunch is ready. After lunch Amna does laundry (every other day). Around 4:00 the children go back to school for extra tutoring. If she has the time, she has a short nap after lunch. She also tends to the domestic animals (3 goats, 1 sheep), fetches the fodder and milks the animals.

Sometimes Amna visits the neighbours (sisters) and has a tea or coffee with them, but again she has little time for this. In the evening the leftovers from lunch are served. According to her there are two meals a day. Meat is only had once a week. She prepares most of the time Kisra. Around 10:00 she is the last of the family to go to bed. She falls asleep quite fast. She wishes she had more time to sleep, because she works all day and hardly finds time to sleep. She always feels tired.

### **3.3.4 Tendencies of use of time in the course of the year**

For the housewives in Al Gharaza use of time seems to be pretty equal during the course of the year. Asked for exceptions the women mentioned the time of the Fast of Râmâdân and special family occasions like weddings or funerals as events implying a greater time expenditure for the household.

Although the women did not explicitly mention the time expenditure used for social obligations in the village (helping neighbours with preparations for family festivities like weddings, or in cases of birth, illness, and death), it is known from other interviews that such incidents occur quite frequently and are not negligible. Apparently this social activity is administrated quite as a matter of course (SCHULTZ, 2004). Such activities should be questioned in more detail in future research.

The time consuming strain on the female farmworkers depends on the strain by the seasonal (rain-fed) agriculture. It is especially high during crop-nurture and harvest.

### **3.3.5 Do the women possess' time to themselves?**

Most housewives believe that they have sufficient time for the household and to themselves.

In contrast the female farmworkers during the cultivation season are left with hardly any time to themselves due to the double burden of gainful occupation and household chores.

Time women use for themselves includes the personal hygiene (smoke sauna, applying henna etc.) (around one hour once a week for henna but can be three times a week for smoke sauna) and the time spent drinking tea or coffee and chatting with neighbours and relatives (one to three hours daily for the housewives, one hour at most for the farmworker Amna).

When women together with other mothers deliver breakfast to teachers in school they like to use this time for talks with the other mothers or for a tea or coffee together with the teachers and to seize the opportunity for a talk with the teachers about their own children.

#### 4. Division of labour and use of time

Division of labour and use of time in relation to gender in Al Gharaza likewise seems to be closely linked with their tribe's traditional gender roles and the resulting free space.

Managing the household is the domain of the married women in Al Gharaza. Household chores within the house (like cooking, laundry, sewing, ironing, cleaning, sweeping) and outside the house (like fetching groceries, fetching fodder, caring for the animals and milking) are assigned to them. Men, boys and young girls (up to the age of 10) as well as elderly women may take part in the household chores outside the house.

The women from Al Gharaza sometimes go to Omdurman, too. There are varying reasons: purchasing special goods (e.g. tableware), having something fixed by a tailor, visiting relatives, family festivities, illness or death of relatives. Sometimes they spend the night with relatives so they do not have to return home to the village after sunset but during daylight. In the group discussion with the men it was stressed that women and girls from Al Gharaza are neither allowed to offend against the tribe's norms when in the city, nor at home.

Children according to their age and traditional norms are systematically introduced to the household chores: Thus with increasing age girls take on more and more household chores within the house (like laundry, cooking, sweeping). At the latest by the age of 10 girls are no longer sent to fetch groceries in the village. In Suha's household (mother with ten children in the household), for example, it is customary that the eight boys keep the men's area tidy and the girl the women's area. The girl at the least does the laundry of the baby. The children carry the beds into the yard in the late afternoon to do their homework on the beds in the shade. The moving of the beds, including the mattresses, for the night sleep in the yard and the carrying the beds back inside in the morning is assigned to the women and children. No woman reported assistance by the men.

Non-married women, according to Osman's report, do not have their own area of responsibility in the house. In Osman's extended nuclear family, we got to know the non-married sister Ola (32 years old). She is responsible for sweeping the yard as a regular task. In this family it is expected that non-married women give contribute to their own livelihood. Thus, Ola produces iced-lollies and falafel at home and delivers the wares to one of the few shops in the village owned by her uncle.

With increasing age the women (grandmothers) withdraw from the household chores inside the house. At first they assign the physically stressing chores (laundry, cleaning, sweeping the yard) to the younger women in the household (children, grandchildren). We observed how Hiba (over 40 years old with almost adult children) deliberately enjoyed this more relaxed life in comparison with her earlier work-heavy life when the children were still small. According to her she does not feel as capable at her age and sleeps more. She considers this withdrawal from the household chores an alleviation. She continues to prepare the tea and sometimes lunch, does the dishes, cares for the grandchildren and sometimes also goes to fetch groceries in the village. However, she faces a new increase in chores once the youngest daughter leaves



home after marriage. Hiba's experience is: "It's better to have sons than daughters, because the sons bring women into the house". Moreover, daughters when they marry and give birth, they expect their older mothers to help them during the post-natal period for 1 - 2 months after delivery. Grandmothers must continually give support to small grandchildren.

Elderly women enjoy high esteem in the families, are a welcome source of advice to the other family members and thus in a way possess power.

The husband is expected to provide a sufficient family income by his work outside the house. Sometimes men work several days in sequence or all week outside the village (favourably in Omdurman). Since the shopping opportunities in Al Gharaza are quite limited, these men shop in Omdurman and bring home everything necessary. Women in such a situation (like Suha and Selma) on the one hand regret that their men can only be of so little assistance (e.g. in caring for the children) during the week. The same women on the other hands consider it quite positive that due to their husbands' absence they can make more decisions themselves (e.g. how to spend the household money, regarding the children, about adding or re-arranging furniture, whether to bring new sand into the house).

In Al Gharaza it is also customary that women support each other (e.g. with the preparation of festivities). Suha reports that after every birth her mother and her sister stayed at her house for two months and supported her.

## **5. Evaluation of the use of time by the women themselves**

### **5.1 Is the time sufficient for the household chores, for leisure activities and for sleep?**

The housewives believe they have enough time for household chores, leisure activities and for sleep. In the forenoons, time reportedly was scarce, and in the afternoons they had sufficient time. If they had to hurry with finishing certain household chores they would feel.

The interviewed younger women with children (Suha, Selma) reported to have plenty of time and feel restless (in the sense of boredom). After the chores are finished they would like to fill the leftover time with something sensible. By that they mean something useful inside the house or in the village. They would like to make better use of their free time to obtain additional income. Both are also willing to be trained for that purpose. Suha herself has already tried various attempts to gain additional income by her own work (e.g. plaiting baskets from palm leaves, sewing clothes and selling them). But there was no market for these products in the village, so she gave up on that.

Selma believes that she can finish her household chores in three hours from the morning till 11:00 if she works without any breaks. Afterwards she wants to commit to a recompensible work: for example work as a nursery teacher. She would very much like to enroll at one of the universities in Omdurman. The three children supposedly would be no obstacle. In such a case she would perform her household chores in the forenoons and study in the afternoons.

Her husband and her family also support her wish to study. All family members reportedly had been at a college.

In the evening the housewives normally feel tired. Hiba (over 40 years old) feels very tired when she goes to bed at 10:00 after the rest of the family. The housewives consider the time for sleep sufficient. If appropriate they relax one to two hours during the days, usually after lunch and often together with the children.

In contrast to the housewives the female farmworkers complain about lack of time for the required routine household chores as well as leisure activities and sleep. They reportedly only sometimes was time to visit neighbours or have a joint tea or coffee. They received practically no help with the chores. According to them they always feel very tired. During the day they hardly had any time to nap and the time for the night sleep was too short. Provided enough labour demand during cultivation season, they also work in the field during “weekends” (on Fridays).

## **5.2 What are the most time-consuming activities?**

Prompted with the question of what activities consumed the most time, all women spontaneously mentioned laundering and ironing. Laundry always is done by hand. Laundry is usually done 2 days a week, sometimes also every other day or even daily. Laundry usually takes two hours. Given a lot of dirty laundry, it may consume even more time. Often the older girls help with the laundry. Ironing is done more often, up to four times a week. Ironing is done with a charcoal iron.

## **5.3 What are the physically most straining activities?**

The women unanimously mentioned cleaning and laundering as particularly physically straining work in terms of heavy physical labour. These activities “make me feel very tired”. The laundry and ironing days were the most arduous, one woman voiced. She does laundry twice a week. Some women do laundry even daily.

Help or taking over of such activities by other family members (children) is temporary, but above all also a physical relief for the women. “Housework is not men’s work” could be heard from the women over and over. Just two women (Suha and Selma), whose men work in Omdurman, reported assistance by their men (restricted to child care). In these two cases the men work as a dealer or male nurse in Omdurman and in the neighboring village the whole week. As a rule, the men stay at home with their family only on the weekend. Since we couldn't question the two men, we cannot give any answer to this question at the moment: Why do these two men help their women in support of the children? Perhaps possible reasons are: the influence of the town, because the children are still small, out of love for the children, and because they can meet the children only on the weekend.

## 6. Temporal orientation during the course of the day

We did not meet a single woman in the village wearing a watch. Only the farmworker Amna was wearing a watch, which, however, was not working (no battery). The woman was capable of reading the displayed time, but immediately replied that she did not adapt to the watch. In the household she would finish one chore first before starting the next.

For time orientation during the course of the day the women in general do not make use of a clock. Sometimes there is a wall or table clock in the house in case power is interrupted and the call to prayer cannot be heard or the women need to know the exact time, but such are exceptional situations.

An existing watch is seldom used for its original intention. Suha reports with pride that she keeps her watch as a piece of jewelery in the cabinet. We visually observed how Amna wears her watch in terms of a status symbol as it was without a working battery.

In Hiba's family every adult man owns a watch; there also is radio and TV. The family does not possess any wall clocks. Hiba believes that time is important for all who work. Her man needs a watch most of all.

Only Selma, who returned to Al Gharaza from Omdurman three years ago, regularly uses a clock. In her household there is a table and a wall clock. She supposedly needed the clocks to keep the prayer times in case of power interruption and to send the children to school on time and to pay attention to their punctual return from school respectively. If the children return late she sets out to the school filled with concern. "If you have children you need the exact time".

According to their own assessment, the interviewed women have a sufficient temporal orientation even without a clock. Most of all they use the adhan's calls to prayers for temporal orientation. In addition the position of the sun and the run of the shadow provide a usable orientation aid. In their own judgement they have a good awareness of time. If they needed to hurry with their household chores they would feel it, is a frequent answer given.

Whenever the women need to know the exact time (to be punctual) they in general use radio and TV (if existing). The exact time is required for appointments outside the house (e.g. start of work, appointments with physicians, collective trips by car or van to Omdurman), in order to punctually apply medication (antibiotics) to ill children, in order to send the children to school on time and to keep the prayer times in case of power interruption preventing them from hearing the adhan's call.

According to our visual observations in Al Gharaza and other villages close to Khartoum, as well as in the city, teachers, midwives and college students, for example, rely on exact time (in terms of public time) and thus on the regular orientation by a watch. They often wear a watch and use it functionally.

## 7. The importance of the time dimension in the women's life

### 7.1 Significance of time

Without exception the women responded to our question whether time was important to them with "yes".

However, their understanding of time in terms of time awareness is different than the prevalent understanding in the Western world.

According to our observations the women's normal daily life in Al Gharaza is calm and without our well-known temporal stress. For example, when making appointments for visits or delivering invitations, one agrees on a certain time span (cf. figure 2) and not on an exact time. The invitee knows she will be welcome within this time span and is not going to have to apologize, say, for coming late as long as she sticks to the agreed time span. This kind of time culture and treatment of time feels unusual if not foreign, to Europeans, especially from a country as "time-conscious"<sup>14</sup> as Germany (i.e. like for me).

The concept of time in the Sudan has a sociocultural dimension. The interviewed women reflect "time" foremost in their current situation in life. Having time is considered pleasant by some women and unpleasant by others.

For example, Hiba likes to have more time in her increasing age due to lesser obligations in the household – in comparison to earlier times when the children were still small – and to have the opportunity to just relax during the day for once. Her time is sufficient to get everything done. She would like to contribute to the livelihood, but how? "I do not know how to stitch. All I can do is sweep."

Those women experiencing boredom who have the desire to do something about it often followed up on our question about what time meant to them with a question for the solution. What useful work could I do, then? Whereby could I contribute to the family income, then; I have tried so many things, attended to different classes, but...

For example, Selma feels guilty despite being a quite socially active woman in the village and caring for two school children and an infant; in her own opinion she has too much time and does not work in any gainful occupation. This attitude was in contradiction to other women in the village who felt at ease when they had plenty of time. Time also had an economic value for her: "When you work, time has a higher value." Apparently she values housework less than gainful occupation. It was obvious that this young woman had become aware of the limitations to her free space in the village and that she was looking for opportunities to break through these limitations. Every step on such a venture she, however, she could only take with consent of her husband.

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<sup>14</sup> According to COLLEET (1994) quoted from PAYER, M. (2001: 6-7).

Contrary to this the farmworker Amna considered the time at her disposal as already insufficient for the household chores and her own recreation.

## 7.2 Response to boredom

Regardless of age and number of children, some housewives in Al Gharaza between 20 and 40 years old feel they have too much time and they would like to do something about this. They seek a sensible occupation or task as a way out. This was also evident in the group discussion with 18 women. Their desire is to contribute to the family income with their own "work". "Work" meant to the women an occupation that generates income like "selling milk, producing butter and selling it...".

The difficulty, however, is that most interested women already have attended to various further training classes and tried many attempts to generate income (like sewing, cultivating vegetables, planting and nurturing trees, keeping different animals) and had to give up each of these. The main reasons the women reported: no market in the village, the effort did not pay off or the required water was too expensive or missing.

The women from Al Gharaza reported a range of activities for their own advanced training: to fight "boredom", for social purposes, and for increase of the family income:

- Attendance in literacy classes and adult education classes
- Attendance in further training classes (cultivating plants, healthy diet, sewing, plaiting)
- Efforts to enroll in a university in Omdurman (psychology, pedagogic, botany, rural development)
- Commitment to social issues of the women in the school and in the village
- Preparing ice cream and falafel for sale in the village shop
- Keeping animals (like pigeons, chicken, sheep).

Phrases like "What should I do then, all I can do is sweep the yard" also express helplessness or even resignation about finding a sensible activity for oneself. Income generated by work in the irrigation area fields, provided a solution to the water problem. However it was not considered an alternative by the women participating in the group discussion. Farm work is heavy and does not pay well, so it is not a preferred alternative.

## 7.3 Economic aspects of time

Using the term time as an economic category and its reflection in economically motivated activities seems to play a secondary role.

Economic aspects of time could be observed in those life situations where modernity had become a part of the women's life and brought a certain dependency on the public time with it: Separation of living and working space, separation of living and market space, means of transportation, monetary exchange of goods, measurement of time, introduction of the Greenwich Mean Time, introduction of the school clock, broadcast and TV, antibiotics etc. At

home during the course of the day the women from Al Gharaza use the calls to prayers, the position of the sun and the run of the shadow as temporal orientation. Some exceptional situations aside, punctuality is not required from them in the normal daily life. Hence they do not usually use any clocks.

Apparently it is not all too important to the women to know how long a single chore takes. This became clear when they were asked about the required time (number of hours) for single products (e.g. plait work). Most women, however, can mark the time consumed by certain routine household chores down pretty accurately (e.g. two hours to launder 12 pieces of clothing). Most time reportedly was consumed by laundry and ironing. Nevertheless it was not possible to quantify the time expenditure for the women's single chores during the course of the day based on the interview data.

Since the housewives usually have sufficient time, they hardly feel an incentive to treat time economically.

However, certain patterns in the time treatment reveal that the women unconsciously act rationally: While the food is boiling on the stove, other household chores are carried out simultaneously (ironing, laundering).

#### **7.4 Time markers in the life course**

The term "time considerations" in time horizons is also carried out. This became clear at our question about the age and their personal visions.

The women from Al Gharaza can quite accurately tell their age at marriage, how many years they have been married and in what year which child was born or how old the children are at the moment. In contrast, their own age seemingly neither interests the woman herself, nor anyone else, nor seems to be of relevance to anyone. Several times it was observed that a woman asked about her age was able to tell her year of birth but not immediately her age in years. Going by the age at marriage and the years she supposedly had been married she concluded her possible age: "I should be about ... years or ... years old" and often commented not to be quite so sure. "The others think I am 40 years old but I think older" (Hiba). Marriage and birth of children apparently are quite significant events in the life of these women and mark important periods of life in terms of "time markers".

The interviewed nomads Nuha and Hamida, who live at a rather large geographical distance from each other in their extended families, did not know their exact age and did not even try to estimate. Nuha said laughingly: "... between 37 and 70 years...". Independent from each other they told quite a bit about their life at home in Kordofan and how they got to come here: They fled Kordofan due to the drought in 1983 together with their families, and a part of the cattle and was allowed to settle outside the Al Gharaza village. With pride Hamida presented woven kelims she wove herself in earlier years. "Time" to her also is experienced history.

Between the nomads and the village people, according to the interviewed nomads and villagers there are no social contacts, not even during the work in the fields in the irrigation area. Only the school director, also mayor, associates with the nomads. When asked whether she would participate in a wedding in the village, Nuha replied jokingly “Yes, why not. But then, we are never invited.” It sure would be interesting to learn more about the culture including the time culture of this ‘*Kababish*’ people.

## **8. Summary and Outlook**

### **8.1 Influences on the use of time**

These studies on the women from Al Gharaza support the usefulness of analysing selected aspects of time in order to describe the position and free space of women in qualitative as well as in quantitative regard and to reveal interactions. Thus analysing the use of time during the course of the day reflects both the different activities and their temporal position and required time expenditure.

What restrictions do the women face in their use of time?

When evaluating the individual and group interviews, as well as some visual observations in the view of the author, the following factors seem to have an impact on the use of time:

- The (tribal) traditions in terms of general social norms and specific ones regarding female free space within the family and the village
- Type of household, household size and division of labour within the household
- The education during childhood
- One's respective educational degree
- The educational degree of the relatives
- The husband's and relatives' attitude towards the type and extent of the woman's activities inside and outside the household (support or denial)
- The possibility of coming late to the house after it is dark
- Gender, age and number of children
- Education of one's own children in regard to assumption and appraisal of household chores
- Role models (exemplars) in the family and the village
- The income situation in the family.

### **8.2 Recommendations for further research work on the aspect of time use and concepts**

The presented results regarding time derive from interviews conducted with Sudanese rural women a first time in 2002. Even though the number of interviewed women in Al Gharaza was relatively small, their statements complete the situation and development described in part I and part II.

Further and deeper analysis of selected time aspects (e.g. time as structural dimension, time awareness and treatment of time) within the framework of women's studies in the rural Sudan would be desirable.

In future sociological analysis the nomads ('*Kababish*') living near Al Gharaza should be included to hear about one more aspects of their culture (including time culture) and also the reasons for missing contacts between the nomads and the villagers (including the farmworkers).

Fields of research further reveal the women's activities in qualitative as well as quantitative regards. For example, see:

- Measuring the quantitative expenditure of time for the single activities in the course of the day and the year
- Profiles of use of time of men and women of different age and in different occupations
- Profiles of use of time of selected women (e.g. teachers, midwives, female farmworkers, women held in extraordinary esteem, reputable active women, information multipliers, female role-models)
- Profiles of use of time and future visions of female children, female youth and women married at a young age
- Showing of possibilities for the relief of the physically hard housework.
- Recommended Research Methods to be used:

In addition to the semi-structured individual interviews and group discussions applied in Al Gharaza, the following research methods would be especially suited given the special conditions of the rural area of the Sudan in order to further qualify and quantify the activities (cf. BADRI, 2002):

- Accompanying observations during the implementation of the specific activities in the household over a selected time span
- Participant observation is needed to describe the details of social relations and activities within the household.
- Keeping diaries over selected time spans
- Writing down all activities themselves during the day (for example: the women paint a specified symbol for the individual activities in the 7 time periods)
- Interviews about the activities and time use to be filled in every evening (researchers by means of questionnaire)
- Recording of biographies.



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