

#### Appendix E. Producers' Boycott at El-Karra Crop Market

El-Karra is one of the markets in competition with el-Geifil market. The village lies due north of el-Geifil on the western side of a long transverse dune. Jebel Kaw is in view to the southwest. The crop market takes place in el-Karra on Tuesdays in conjunction with a general periodic market. The village is smaller than el-Geifil and lacks many of the latter's facilities. For example, it has no school, no flour mill, no bakery, no first aid station, and no Hafir (only a seasonal rain pool). Water is hauled by truck from Khor Tagget, and the people go to el-Geifil or el-Obeid to have grain ground into flour at a mill. But relative to el-Geifil, el-Karra is wealthy. It has five shops and three trucks which are used for hauling water to villages in the area. The trucks are individually owned by big farmers in the village. El-Karra's market is more active than el-Geifil's. Six trucks from neighboring villages have come regularly this year to haul crops. This is the market's first year of operation. It is said to be doing very well.\*

El-Karra market was observed by us on January 26, 1982. We were told that crop sales had fallen off at that time because farmers were storing the remainder of their sesame in underground pits as a savings for beginning the new cropping season in May and June. Adventitiously, January 26 was also the date on which an attempt was made to change the system for measuring crops and assessing taxes. The change had been ordered by the Rural Council headquarters in el-Obeid because of the potentially high tax revenues the market was capable of earning. The situation provided a natural laboratory for observing market dynamics and it showed that farmers can respond decisively to policies that they don't like.

The system of crop marketing that had been used at el-Karra until that day is called shiishna (estimation) because the producer's sesame crop is measured by volume rather than by weight and then a formula is used to estimate the weight based on the volume.\*\* This is necessary in order to assess the gibaana tax. The other major tax--called 9ushuur--is an ad valorem tax. In the shiishna system, the price of the crop is not determined in a formal auction. The 9ushuur tax is assessed according to a standard value which the People's Council at el-Obeid establishes each season. This year, for example, sesame was valued at 13.000/kantar and karkadee at 25.000/kantar. Gum arabic requires no value estimator since gum sales are not taxed by 9ushuur. The system that was being introduced that day is called mizaan because the crop is actually weighed to determine the amount of gibaana tax, and its price is determined by an auction so that 9ushuur may be assessed precisely.

The auction was scheduled to begin at 11:00 a.m. This itself was an innovation since under the shiishna system the merchants are available in the market throughout the day whereas in the mizaan system the bidding on

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\*The market clerk indicated that the tax revenues of el-Karra market equaled those of Abu Haraz.

\*\*Karkadee and gum arabic are usually sold in much smaller quantities than sesame. They are weighed on a merchant's balance.