



The impact of women's singing on political and social mobilization in the Sudanese revolution

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Women's singing is a dynamic expression of cultural and political resistance in Sudanese society. More than an artistic practice or social ritual, it contributes to shaping collective awareness and formulating protest discourse. Sudanese women's singing is an extension of historical and aesthetic memory that is rooted in popular consciousness. It is connected with social and national occasions and serves as a means of mobilization, provocation, and establishing national identity in times of political movement and change. In this paper, I aim to explore Sudanese women's singing as a catalyst for political and social mobilization during the 2018 revolution by analyzing two songs by Alaa Salah and Nancy Ajaj. These singers were chosen as models of the intersection between women's voices and revolutionary acts. I used an analytical and cultural approach to textually and contextually read these songs and connect them with women's singing heritage and the political and social circumstances that surrounded the revolution. My findings revealed that the two songs reflected a deeply embedded heritage of women's singing that played an important role in provoking emotional, religious, and political meanings inspiring the participants during the revolution. By situating these two performances within wider dimensions of gender, nationalism, and postcolonial identity, I highlight the role of Sudanese women's singing in creating a living archive of resistance by bridging national folk traditions with modern political activity, thus reassessing cultural and artistic dimensions of the revolution. **Keywords:** Sudanese revolution, women's singing, feminist resistance, political mobilization, social transformation.

Introduction

The musical heritage of the Republic of Sudan intersects with a long history of in-country resistance against British colonization from the time of the Mahdist War to the revolution of December 2018. Within this extended period, singing worked as a means of social solidarity and political motivation, challenging economic policies and moral visions (Berridge *et al.* 124). Sudanese women were a central element in this movement. Their participation was prominent in transforming music into a space of power for political expression and collective healing. Through accompanying national moments of struggle, resilience, and resistance, Sudanese women's singing assumed a leading role in the revolution and in confronting the regime's security forces (Karamalla-Gaiballa 71).

For thirty years during the reign of al-Bashir, Sudanese art, and in particular women's art, was subject to repressive policies that were built on conservative religious interpretations. Their voices were deemed "awrah," which means that they could not take part in public gatherings as their voices were perceived to be a source of seduction and moral decay (Ahmed 244). As a result, women's voices were controlled socially and politically. The December 2018 revolution was a moment of renewed radicalism as women used their voices to encourage and provoke enthusiasm in social debates and public politics. Their voices became revolutionary forces that mobilized and advanced participation. Thus, women's singing became an act of actual resistance and proof that women's artistry, despite long periods of repression, was a profound means for revolutionized awareness in Sudan.

In the context of the December 2018 revolution, Sudanese women appeared as central political actors alongside their male counterparts. Their roles were not limited to symbolic mobilization and spreading of enthusiasm but rather extended to include reshaping patterns of political acts and challenging traditional gender views that had become established over the thirty years of the al-Balshir regime. Sudanese women took part in

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demonstrations not just as participants but also as leaders, singing chants and delivering revolutionary speeches, which made the revolution a women's effort (Tønnessen and Al-Nagar 496).

The intensive participation of Sudanese women in the revolution was evidence that a woman equals a man in bearing responsibility as an active member of society who suffered just like men under al-Bashir's regime and who sought freedom, peace, and justice (Al-Nagar and Tønnessen 112). The revolution proved that women's singing was a vehicle of resistance and a space for women's discourse in challenging authorities (El Melik and Abbas 78). Thus, the political and revolutionary role of Sudanese women cannot be separated from a long history of artistic and cultural repression, as their active role in the revolution was a double resistant act against political repression and the gender system, which aimed to prevent them from exercising political and cultural rights. The December 2018 revolution was a landmark in Sudan's political life, as it was distinguished by the extensive participation of women as participants and leaders with their chants and songs. They were an active element in mobilizing the protesters through their songs for justice, freedom, and dignity (Tønnessen 496). Their singing echoed the heartbeat of national resilience and defiance (Abd al-Jalil *et al.* 37–41; Al-Jak *et al.* 32–5; Abu Bakr and Al-Awad 8).

Sudanese women's revolutionary singing constitutes a gendered form of political and social work that transformed the feminist cultural performance into an active mechanism for collective mobilization, moral critique, and a symbol for feminist leadership under authoritarian rule (ElBashir 104). Unlike much African protest and revolutionary music that emerged from masculine domination, Sudanese women's singing during the December 2018 revolution was created by women. Given this context, in this article, I draw from postcolonial feminist perspectives and the theory of cultural resistance to interpret women's songs as a form of resistance. I highlight how subaltern voices, particularly those of women, helped shape hegemonic narratives of nationalism and authority (Spivak 302; hooks 33–5). I aim to investigate the role of Sudanese women's singing as a form of sociopolitical mobilization—a tool that enhanced belonging, citizenship, identity, and revolutionary movement while activating the role of women.

I explore how Sudanese women mobilized songs during the revolution. The two examples I analyze are Alaa Salah's revolutionary chant "Thawra" and Nancy Ajaj's song "Al-Neel Saleel al-Akrameen". Both show how women singers were of great importance in building national identity and belonging. Sudanese women musicians were at the forefront of the 2018 revolution, which was an extraordinary event that attracted the world's attention. In this article, I demonstrate how these remarkable women singers contributed to the Sudanese revolution. From a historical perspective, singing is used in Sudanese society as a means of oral record, and that played a role in transmitting morals, ethics, collective emotions, and narrating historical events.

During the December 2018 revolution, women's songs were a mirror for the protesters as they reflected the pains and desires of the Sudanese people. Sudanese women's singing was not just a vehicle for protest but also a confirmation of identity and belonging where the feminist voice had been chained and marginalized in the public space (Abu Bakr 43). Women's ululations, chants, and lyrics confirmed the role of women's voices in collective mobilization and challenged a society where religious and social chains constrained women's ability to express themselves (Grabska and Abdel Aziz 35; Bozbaş and Bozbaş 12).

This argument centers around three related themes that guide my analysis. First, the role of Sudanese women's singing as a tool for national identity and belonging. Second, Sudanese women's singing as a cultural expression of public resistance and protest. Third, the appearance of women's voices as symbols for political rallying, societal mobilization, and social change. Sudanese women's musical practice during al-Bashir's regime faced different forms of cultural repression due to the interference of the political authorities, which was wrapped with extreme religious discourse. Al-Bashir's regime, through the law of the public system, imposed religious views and restrictions on women's presence and participation in the cultural atmosphere. This included singing, playing music, and participating in musical events. In spite of this, the repression of women's voices was not prevented but rather translated into a symbolic tool of resistance, a means to preserve national cultural identity (Ali and Arrno 161). It became a mechanism for political protest which showcased women's singing and ensured that women's singing is not just an art but also an act of presence that directly confronted their social marginalization and exclusion.

Revolutionary Sudanese women: Historical and socio-political context

In order to evaluate the revolutionary role of women's singing in Sudan, it is important to explore its historical and sociopolitical context. The revolutionary activism in Sudan builds upon centuries of resistance and struggle, from

the times of ancient Nubian resistance against foreign rule through the 20th century movements of fighting British colonialism, to the independence movement and 21st century uprisings (Vezzadini 164; Galaleldeen 271). Women's modern singing echoes these old histories and arises from collective memories of the struggle for freedom. Modern Sudanese history is shaped by colonial legacies, civil wars, social unrest, and authoritarian rule, which all had profound consequences for gender relations and cultural expression (El-Nour 98). From the English-Egyptian rule of Sudan (1899–1956) to the post-independence period, women's voices often surfaced as vehicles of collective sentiment in weddings, lamentations, and resistance. These songs, which were known as *aghānī al-banāt* (girls' songs), historically mixed personal expressions with the voices of those who have no political power (Malik 281; Al-Kordofani 129–31).

The revolutionary traditions in Sudanese society have deep historical roots. Leaders like the Kushite king Taharqa and the warrior queens who were known as Kandakat developed ancestral narratives that continue to inspire contemporary protesters. During the Mahdist War (1881–1899), singing and chanting were used to mobilize people, and these musical forms played a role in building a social tradition in which music and faith were as utilized as tools of freedom. Later uprisings, including the 1964 October Revolution, the 1985 April Intifada, and the 2018 December revolution, reaffirmed continuities of the culture of resistance. The persistence of Sudanese women's songs within this long continuum of struggle demonstrates that the revolutionary artistic acts of Salah and Ajaj are not isolated incidents; rather, they inherit multi-generational repertoires of revolutionary expression.

The interconnection between religion, culture, and gender in Sudanese society made it difficult for women to express their art. Under Islamic and customary law, Sudanese women encountered barriers to public participation and mobility (Zink 69). In spite of this, women used singing as a delicate means for critique, communication, and addressing issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and social injustice (Rubino 752). Female singers who were associated with the revolution—Salah, Ajaj, Huda Arabi, and Shadin Hussein—represent continuity and transformation of tradition. Their singing drew on Sudanese folklore while benefiting from contemporary feminist and national discourse.

Despite the significant body of literature about women's activism in Sudan (Al-Nagar and Tønnessen 113), few scholarly publications have focused on women's political singing. Existing literature has mainly focused on women's participation in public protests and their roles in civil society but seldom discusses how singing itself was used in revolution and political mobilizing as I attempt to explore in this article. The rationale for this article is embodied in two related issues. First, situating Sudanese women's singing within the African and Arab traditions of protest music contributes to the global resistance discourse. Secondly, it points to the importance of women's singing as archives of national collective memory.

In this article, I mainly focus on two Sudanese women singers, Salah and Ajaj. Although these women have been studied, they represent a larger corpus of women's revolutionary singing that reflects the collective hopes and desires of the Sudanese people. Their voices show how music can serve as a means of documentation and resistance. Scholarship by Katarzyna Grabska and Azza Ahmed Abdel Aziz, Anita Fábos, and Saadia Malik provides the groundwork for analyzing the performative act of Sudanese women. I aim to place this article within the ongoing debates about women's creative citizenship, cultural production, and belonging in Sudan. The significance of this article stems from my attempt to understand the role of Sudanese women's singing in popular resistance. Sudanese women's voices inspired protest movements by conveying the pulse of the street and the voice of the people through chants, slogans, and songs that embodied the hopes and dreams of Sudanese society. Based on this rationale, I chose singers Salah and Ajaj because of their influence on the protesters and their ability to link national musical forms with contemporary political expressions.

Sudanese women, Islamic feminism, and postcolonial critique

This article draws on scholarship on Islamic feminism, postfeminist theory, and postcolonial critique. Islamic feminism assists with understanding how Sudanese women expressed principles of justice and equality within the Islamic framework of moral and social norms. It does not negate religion but rather considers it an area for ethical resistance (Badran 8). The songs I discuss in this article rely on religion as an ethical power that legitimizes the continuity of equality and liberty (Adrob 23). Salah's song, "Thawra", for example, condemns those who "kill and imprison in the name of religion" and confirms that religion is innocent of that. This perspective sees religion as a revolutionary power rather than a means of oppression. According to Africana womanism, which affirms principles of community, family, and religion as a means of empowerment, Sudanese women's singing is situated

within the wider framework of African feminine resistance folklore (Hudson-Weems 24–5). Sudanese women's singing in the December 2018 Revolution reflected these principles and embodied what Clenora Hudson-Weems (55) calls “self-naming” and “self-definition”. Postfeminist theory was another analytical inspiration for this essay as it advanced my analysis about how cultural performances of Sudanese women were interconnected with media and modernity (Harris 731). Modern mass media such as YouTube and Twitter have transferred women's singing from the local to the global. Postfeminism works in spaces where traditional feminism and public culture intersect, and Angela McRobbie and Ajaj exemplify this paradigm.

Ethnomusicology is the study of music as a cultural and social practice rooted in historical and living contexts of societies and not as an isolated aesthetical product (Marmone). From this perspective, music is an effective tool for social change as it contributes to building collective awareness, formalizing identities, and expressing resistance and protest. Ethnomusicology demonstrates that music had a central role in social revolutionary movements in which songs and chants became a means of transmitting political messages, unifying participants, and promoting group solidarity (Spencer-Espinosa 63). The role of music in social change appeared in the Sudanese revolutionary movement during the December 2018 revolution, when revolutionary songs and group chants in the streets and squares created a substitutional space to influence political movements and build public solidarity (Wilcock 752). Ethnomusicology studies point out that African music is not just a means of artistic expression, but also an active social practice that contributes to making change and building social resilience in the face of crises. Fraser McNeill and Deborah James' work on music and arts emphasizes that art forms play an important therapeutic and educational role in societies that are affected by AIDS (Barz and Cohen 84–6). Music contributes to breaking silence, confronting social stigma, and building a collective discourse built on hope and healing. This makes musical art a tool for social change and not just a reflection or expression of suffering.

Feminist musical performance constitutes an active means of social communication to cope with climate change when songs and dances are used to transmit environmental knowledge, enhance solidarity, and reorganize relationships between human beings and the environment in local contexts (McConnell and Jallow 703). In addition, women's songs represent a special form of symbolic authority in which music challenges parental hierarchy, negotiates control, and resists in indirect but effective ways (Hogan 8). This affirms that music in the African context works as a tool for social change, empowerment, awareness, and education, which makes it a central element in understanding social and political changes from an ethnomusicological perspective. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also discusses subaltern vocality (Spivak 283) in public discourses, and his work is relevant to the politics of representation in Sudanese women's singing.

Salah and Ajaj are educated, urban, middle-class women who, through their singing, expressed the aspirations of the marginalized. Therefore, in this analysis, I question if they were indeed speaking on behalf of the subaltern or if, instead, their singing is a mediated articulation of subaltern experiences. Sudanese women's singing may be seen as a political intervention or cultural knowledge production as performances reimagine liberty not as an imported ideology, but rather as an original practice that stems from authentic experiences.

In this article, I use a qualitative interpretive approach to analyze two songs: Salah's “Thawra” (Revolution) and Ajaj's “Al-Neel Saleel al-Akrameen” (The Nile, the descendant of the noble) (Adam). I chose these songs because of their strong presence during the December 2018 revolution and their widespread appearance on social platforms. The two songs are of distinct stylistic and ideological approaches. While Salah's song emerged from the spontaneous street protests, Ajaj's song was a professional musical production rooted in heritage and metaphorical images. My analysis of the two songs is based upon listening, journal articles, digital media coverage, and published public interviews with the two singers. I also integrated audience responses, views, and comments about the songs in my analysis. In conducting my analysis, motifs of resistance, religious critique, and national symbolism emerged in the songs.

Alaa Salah: Faith, challenge, and reclaiming the sacred

Salah appeared in the December 2018 revolution as a prominent woman who is remembered for standing on a car in a white dress. Her chants and galvanizing of the crowd made her an international symbol of revolutionary deployment and resistance (Tønnessen). Although people described her as a symbol, she maintained that she was just one of the millions who came out onto the streets to protest. In her address to the United Nations, she began her speech by introducing herself as Alaa Salah and saying that she was 22 years old. She explained that, before the revolution, she was a student of architectural engineering. Salah was widely seen as the “Kendaka of

the Revolution”, which is a name that drew on the ancient Nubian queens and reflected women’s power and ethical leadership. The public viewed Salah as a symbol of hope (Burke). Other reactions were more cautious, noting that the media was glorifying one person instead of the collective movement. Samira Ibrahim adds that Salah’s song “Thawra” is not just a song but a motivating force in the deployment and mobilization of crowds and nation-building. Her song is a strong example of Sudanese women’s political and spiritual awareness, as through the rhythmic repetition of the word *thawra*, the song became a symbol of the collective suffering of the Sudanese people. Salah sings:

قروث
 نيدلا مساب انوقرس
 قروث
 نيدلا مساب انولتق
 قروث
 نيدلا مساب انونجس

Revolution
 They stole us in the name of religion
 Revolution
 They killed us in the name of religion
 Revolution
 They imprisoned us in the name of religion

These words demonstrate how religion has been manipulated and shifted from its rightful purpose to become a tool for stealing, oppression, and injustice. The words “stole”, “killed”, and “imprisoned” make a rhythm of accusation which reflects the bases of injustice. Salah declares that religion has no relation with all these negative acts, saying: “مميءيرب نيدلا قروث” (Revolution; religion is innocent, Mother) and adding: “لوزلا لوقب نيدلا قروث” (Revolution, religion says the person who lets their right die betrays faith itself) to confirm that religion urges protest against injustice and oppression. So, Salah points to Islamic ethical principles, which are a reinterpretation of codes with principles of Islamic feminism (Badran; Wadud), to say that religion supports justice. This makes religion a revolutionary motif rather than a doctrinal tool in her discourse.

Salah criticizes how the members of the ruling party repressed the Sudanese people under the cover of religion and used religious rhetoric to steal the wealth of the nation, saying: “انريخ يف فرغيب مجسلا زوك قروث” (Revolution; the miserable man scoops up our goodness and enjoys it). The repetition of the word *thawra* makes the song a collective chant which agrees with what Judith Butler named a “performative assembly”, which is what happens when words become political action. Salah adds: “تاكسي متكني ام ركنم طلغ فاش نإ قروث” (If a person sees wrongdoing, they must not remain silent), urging everyone to not remain silent when seeing something wrong, which is a basic principle in Islamic teachings. Thus, she makes moral responsibility a public action. She also sings about how silence multiplies and becomes numerous to provoke people to resist and not be afraid to oppose corruption:

قروث
 نيتس طلغل يقبب
 قروث
 تاكسن متكنن ب ام

Revolution
 Wrong multiplies sixtyfold
 Revolution
 We shall not keep silent

National belonging and eternal relation with the Nile are portrayed in the line “اندم نم لينلا انيقسل انحن قروث” (Revolution; we watered the Nile with our blazing blood). The Nile, evoked as a symbol of life and fertility, becomes a metaphorical tool for collective sacrifice, resistance, and rebirth. Her images associate the natural geography of Sudan with an emotional geography of resistance, which in turn evokes revolutionary symbolism. The “blazing blood” is a symbol of suffering and purification:

ثروث
رياج ليمع شويف
ثروث
ساسال ميعد فوخل

Revolution
In the face of an unjust agent
Revolution
Fear is without foundation

With these words, Salah proclaims that this is a revolution against every agent who betrayed his homeland and people by serving the foreign forces of colonialism (Omer Elhag). In these words, Salah frames the Sudanese revolution as a struggle against those who betrayed their homeland by serving foreign colonial powers. Her views echo Frantz Fanon's idea of psycho-political liberation. He emphasized that true decolonization requires getting rid of internal fear, inferiority, and dependence, and facing internal agents who reinforce oppression. Salah's condemnation of traitors and her call to overcome fear reflect this psychological freeing. By invoking Sudan's old glorious past, Salah demonstrates how reclaiming cultural memory can support national consciousness, which aligns with Fanon's idea that restores collective dignity as an essential element for building a liberated future. She sings:

ثروث
اقارث يدج ان او
ثروث
كادنك يتبوح

Revolution
My grandfather is Tarhaqa
Revolution
My grandmother is Kandaka

This recalls ancestral pride as a revolutionary motive. Taharqa was a Kushite king who resisted imperial forces, and Kendaka was a Nubian queen who also resisted foreign forces. Salah's words confirm gendered and historical memory by pointing out that a revolutionary woman is not a new idea but an old one.

Salah references the young men who sacrificed themselves for the sake of revolution and positive change. Her words affirm that the deeds of those young men are a symbol of pride and glory. She says:

ثروث
ظامل لىضفل دب ع
ثروث
سارل وليشب سارف

Revolution
Abdel Fadil Almaz
Revolution
Firas; they rise heads

She declares that the youth make the revolution live while silence kills people. Her words are a strong call to rebel and never give up or keep silent. She says:

ثروث
ويحب بابشل قمى
ثروث
تيم توكسل اب ان او

Revolution
The youth are alive
Revolution
I am dead in silence

The address to the maternal member of society (oh mother) gives a very emotional motive for the revolution by linking national struggle and resistance with familial intimacy. This stimulates people to sacrifice themselves to defend and protect their families and homeland.

The contrast between revolution as a motive for living and silence as an embodiment of death is a very profound assertion. Saying that death is a rationale for nation-building resonates with Paulo Freire's concept of "conscientization," the awakening of the oppressed to their role in a changing society. The youth, both men and women who sacrificed their lives, are the vehicles of revolution, and their blood is the fuel. Salah recalls their names and immortalizes them in her song. She sings:

يروه نسو عازه
 قروث
 نيدلا يلو نميا
 قروث
 دجامو افوو مزاح
 قروث
 نييح مهلك لود

Hazza, Sanhori
 Revolution
 Ayman Wali Aldeen
 Revolution
 Hazim, and Wafa, and Majid
 Revolution
 All of them are alive

Her words affirm that these young people will not be forgotten by their death; they are alive and a motive for others to sacrifice themselves for the noble goal of freedom and justice. She again confirms that religion calls for revolution against corruption and injustice, that the youth give life to revolution, and silence is death and surrendering to fear:

قروث
 قروث لوقب نيدلا
 قروث
 ويحب بابشلا قمي
 قروث
 تيم توكسلاب ان او

Revolution
 The religion says revolution
 Revolution
 The youth are alive
 Revolution
 I am dead in silence

Salah confirms that jail is not the end of the revolution. She says that prison is for the brave ones who shall not surrender: "الاجر وسوكي ان جس قروث / ممي نجس ناك ناو قروث" (Revolution; even if it is prison, oh mother, Revolution; our prison seeks the brave). This closing line convokes patience and endurance in the face of imprisonment, unfairness, and injustice as brave and real people signify ethical fortitude and resistance against oppression with courage and integrity. Through her song, Salah transforms protest into sermon, grief into glory, and silence into speech. Her words work as an invocation and mobilization. The song is not just words, but rather an act of collective remembrance and feminist resistance. Salah's voice, which echoed in the squares and streets of Khartoum, confirms that revolution is not only a political act, but rather an act of truth and freedom.

Nancy Ajaj: National memory and the lyrics of unity

Ajaj is one of the Sudanese women singers who made a profound impact on women's national singing. Her song "Al-Neel Saleel al-Akrameen" (The Nile, the descendant of the noble) is an example of a song that uses national

landscapes to provoke national belonging and inspiration. Through several media interviews, Ajaj has emphasized the importance of the arts in supporting peace and ignoring and rejecting misleading rumours and misinformation that exacerbate social and political tension (Nancy Ajaj Official); promote hatred, fear, and the fragmentation of the Sudanese nation; and fuel conflict and division, focusing instead on national solidarity and the concerns and needs of the nation (Elsadig). The Sudanese people received her song as a national motivating force when it was first broadcast across several media outlets (Diya-Aldeen; Fadel-allah; Ibrahim; Qisas: Arab Podcast).

In her song, Ajaj focuses on national unity and social solidarity, as some sections of her song focus on the landscape of the country and use this imagery as a tool to evoke emotions of national belonging. Her repetition of “نيمركا ليل ليل ليل” (Al-Neel Saleel al-Akrameen i.e. The Nile, the descendant of the noble) turns the river into a metaphor by referring to it as the place of the descendant of the noble ones who touch the hearts of the Sudanese people and provoke in them a sense of belonging, enthusiasm, and resistance. Ajaj confirms that the Nile is very sympathetic to its people and that it is not a thief who steals their dreams in the way the corrupt regime did. She sings: “توفي لافطاً لم ح ليشب ام” (It does not carry the dream of children, and it does not slip away). She sees the Nile as an authentic life source in all its outside and inside traits. She says:

ليصل ليل
تافصو ينعم

The Nile is noble
In its attributes and qualities

As such, the river embodies the traits of patience and generosity. She refers to the Nile as a means through which the weakness of the nation, the silence of people, and the conscience that died are all exposed. Here, the Nile becomes a metaphorical mirror that shows and reflects everything. She says:

تاكسل حضيف
فوفصل يفل
فوفكل حضيف
قح اعازنب ليشب ام
مان ان يفل ريمضلاو

It revealed silence
in the rows
It revealed the hands
Those who do not take what is not rightfully theirs by force
And the conscience that slept in us

Here, Ajaj sees the Nile as a detector that reveals taboos. The line “موملا اهي فتدحوت او تاهجلا ان يب تقرفت او” (We were parted by different directions, and the worries were unified in them) shows how the Sudanese nation suffers from segregation. These worries and different directions indicate weakness. It shows how separation within the nation is a power that divides and causes sections to fight each other. She refers to the outside and inside features of the Sudanese people who live in hardship. She points to their faces, affected by strong winds, and their hearts that suffer from material and moral separation and dispersal. She says: “تاتشلا وعطق” (Their faces were scorched by hard wind; their hearts were broken by dispersion). She refers to the dreams of the nation in all parts of Sudan, including in the east and west, which are the regions of Sudan that are the most affected by war. She points to the fact that fear in the east and misery in the west affect people and make them suffer despite the great natural resources in these regions and the whole of Sudan. She says: “ان مال ح او” (Our dreams are stolen every day; fear in the west, misery in the east). She expresses her sadness over the separation of the southern part of Sudan by saying that the hearts of the people in the north were blind when they agreed to abandon the south. She says: “تامشلا يفل بولقل تميمع” (The hearts in the North have been blinded when the South left us behind). Turning her attention to the despair within the Sudanese society, she says:

حار انفسوخ ول
تابث اب فوصرم انقيرطو
حاص ةيرحلل انيشمو

If our fear faded away
And our road is paved with steadfastness
And we walked to freedom in a right way

Here, she points out that if the fear of the nation disappeared, its way would be paved with steadiness, and if the Sudanese nation walks correctly in the way of freedom, it will find itself in a better position. No matter how long the night lasts, daytime will come, and no matter how long injustice remains, the light of justice will shine one day. What is far can be close through determination and will: “وهانض ليللا لاط اممو” (and no matter how long the night lasts, the dawn is coming, and its light is a celebration). The night is a symbol of temporality, while dawn is a symbol of hope and positive change. After all these challenges and sacrifices, Ajaj confirms that national pride and contentment will flourish again. She sings:

ىضم ام يز زازع دوعنو
ىضرلا اهيوري انسوفنو
ةايحل واله مت انريمضو
تاينغال سومش قرشت

And we return proud as before
And our souls are nourished with contentment
And our conscience is filled with life
Where the suns of the songs rise

Ajaj's song is an example of women's singing and its role in mobilizing the Sudanese nation by recalling the glories of the nation's past and connecting them with the modern reality of the people. This intersection between the past and present can be a means for building the future. Nations cannot live without their past, in which they find a motive to seek positive change. Women's singing as part of the national culture remains a means of preserving heritage and provoking new generations to move and effect the desired change. These distinguished women singers have contributed to academic debate about the Sudanese revolution by offering tools for social change not as a general political slogan but as an everyday practice embodied in their voice, lyrics, performance, and direct interaction with audiences. These singers are not just representing the revolution, they are also participating in producing its meaning by invoking the national memory, deconstructing the speech of authority, and rebuilding the public sphere as an arena for symbolic negotiation over freedom, justice, and belonging. In this manner of thinking, women's singing becomes a cognitive act that presents a space for analysis and discussion that exceeds the direct political discourse to more complicated forms of social change.

What we can learn from these women singers exceeds the familiar slogans about freedom and resistance to deeply understand the strategies of resilience and cultural innovation that can be used to face tyrant authorities. Revolutionary song and women's participation in it not only galvanize people and stimulate them to take action, but also reveal tensions inside the society itself, the intersection of hope and fear, the collective and the individual, and the traditional and the modern. Through revolutionary singing, women demonstrate how public culture can be an arena to formalize and reshape collective awareness and stimulate crowds.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that women's singing during the 2018 Sudanese revolution functioned as a prominent form of public expression and of symbolic and peaceful resistance. Women's voices became a means of struggle that connected national cultural memory with political reality. Sudanese women took part in the gatherings and demonstrations in the squares and streets of Sudanese cities. They participated with their songs, chants, and slogans, and many of them were inspired by Sudanese national singing, including the folkloric songs of enthusiasm, which they reused in a revolutionary context to protest against oppression, injustice, authoritarian rule, and to call for equality and freedom.

Therefore, Sudanese women's singing in the revolution was not merely a celebratory element of the demonstrations and protests, but a collective voice that aimed to promote national solidarity, encourage participation, break the culture of fear, raise public awareness, and strengthen the determination and the will of the participants in particular, and the whole Sudanese nation in general.

Women's singing in the Sudanese revolution contributed to bringing to light the important role of women in Sudanese society. During the revolution, Sudanese women moved from being socially marginalized to being central actors and playing a major role in the revolution. Their voices became a sign of their presence and leadership.

The cases of Ajaj and Salah are evidence of how women's voices can be a central element to revolutionary expression. Through their songs, performances, and symbolic presence, they were able to mobilize and energize protesters, invoke images of the homeland and martyrs, and articulate a discourse of national dignity and freedom.

With regard to women's singing in the Sudanese revolution—with all its cultural, language, and social dimensions—future studies can be conducted on the discourse of women's singing and chanting in the Sudanese revolution by concentrating on the images of the homeland and the feminist self. Studies about women and revolutionary singing can also be expanded to explore the role of women's singing in building public awareness and enhancing social solidarity inside and outside protest fields. Comparative studies can also be conducted to examine Sudanese women's revolutionary singing alongside that of their counterparts in other Arab revolutions. Studies can furthermore investigate the role of mass media in disseminating women's revolutionary singing. Within this context, women's singing stands as a remarkable, soulful, and symbolic act of women's participation through which their voices reflect women's active presence, involvement, and leadership in revolutionary actions.

Notes

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