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*Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*  
Durham University  
Department of History

# The Making and Remaking of Gogrial: Landscape, history and memory in South Sudan

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October 2014

# Abstract

This thesis is a historical study of landscape in a pastoralist region of South Sudan called Gogrial. Gogrial is known in academic studies through Godfrey Lienhardt's ethnographic research on Dinka religion, conducted there in the late 1940s. Since that time the area has suffered extensively in two civil wars. This thesis reinterprets Gogrial's recent past, from the perspective of those who live there. It contributes to studies of African landscapes by showing how the landscape of Gogrial has been constructed and reconstructed through periods of civil war and expanding and contracting state power. It argues that transforming the landscape is both a way of mediating insecurity and a central part of local historical narratives.

This thesis informs debates on how mobile populations construct landscape; it does this by focusing on how different pathways and different centres are temporally, socially and spatially constructed. It diverges from most studies of pastoralism, which stress marginalization, to show how pastoralists create their own centres. This is a local study but it is firmly situated in a wider political context, and is attentive to how the construction landscape in Gogrial has interacted with wider political transformations in South Sudan. Therefore it is also partly a study of how pastoralists engage with the state, showing how rural populations have sought to tap the state's power, while retaining distinct moral claims on the landscape.

In its broadest sense this is a study of how people live with chronic insecurity. Despite the extreme violence this region has experienced, people in Gogrial do not see their lives and their locality as defined by violence. Instead, this thesis will show how the experience of predatory states and militaries are woven into and in some cases subsumed by local versions of the past that stress different processes and different centres. This challenges much of the historiography of Sudan and South Sudan, which has presented places like Gogrial as victimized peripheries. In contrast, this thesis will explore rural agency and the creative cultural management of insecurity through making and remaking the landscape.

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# Dinka spellings and pronunciation

Dinka orthography is not standardized and current writing practice is variable. Linguists are still debating the most appropriate way to capture the complex variation in tone, voice quality and vowel length in Dinka language.<sup>1</sup> There are four major dialects of Dinka; Rek, Agar, Bor and Padang. Each is mutually intelligible but there are differences in spelling and pronunciation. The dialect used in this thesis is Rek. Plural nouns in Dinka are highly irregular, cases are indicated in the text where appropriate. This thesis adopts a simplified orthography common in most academic texts. The vowel quality is distinguished with a dieresis and vowel lengths are marked extra letters (short –‘a’; long, ‘aa’) but variations in tone are unmarked.

## Consonants

The same as in English with the exception of:

c	‘ch’ as in ‘chair’ and never ‘c’ as in ‘cook’
dh	with nasalization, spoken with the tongue touching the back of the front teeth
g	hard ‘g’ as in ‘gain’
y	similar to ‘h’ spoken from the back of the throat with the mouth rounded and slightly open
nh	with nasalization, spoken with the tongue touching the back of the front teeth
ny	as in Spanish ñ
ŋ	‘ng’ as in ‘ring’
r	trill or rolled
th	as in ‘thin’

## Vowels

a	‘a’ as in ‘father’
e	‘a’ as in ‘date’
i	‘ee’ as in ‘meet’
ɔ	‘o’ as in ‘lot’
o	‘o’ as in ‘go’
u	‘oo’ as in ‘boot’
ɛ	‘e’ as in ‘ten’

Vowels with a dieresis are pronounced with a breathy sound.

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<sup>1</sup> For a linguists recent summary see Ladd Robert, *Orthographic Reform in Dinka: Some General Considerations and a Proposal* (University of Edinburgh, 2012).



When a singular noun, which ends in a vowel or a hard consonant, is followed by an adjective, a possessive, a pronoun or a noun in the genitive case the pronunciation is changed as follows:<sup>2</sup>

‘a/e/i/ɔ/o/ε/ u’	is replaced (or followed by) ‘n’
‘p’	is replaced by ‘n’
‘th’	is replaced by ‘nh’
‘t’	is replaced by ‘n’
‘c’	is replaced by ‘ny’
‘k’	is replaced by ‘ŋ’

Nouns in this thesis retain their original form in writing, even when they undergo a transformation in pronunciation. For example, ‘wut cielic’ [the centre of the cattle camp] is written here, even though ‘wuʌ cielic’ is spoken.

Dinka orthography is always used for Dinka words, with the exception of proper nouns that are commonly spelt with all English characters. For example, the name ‘Deŋ’ is written as ‘Deng’.

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<sup>2</sup> Many nouns undergo more substantial changes.

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# Glossary

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner (British)
<i>Aken</i>	Border
<i>Baai</i>	Home, homestead, village
<i>Bäny bith</i>	Master of the fishing spear
Boma	The smallest unit of local government
<i>Cielic</i>	The centre
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
DC	District Commissioner (British)
<i>Doŋ</i>	To remain, leave behind
<i>-da</i>	[possessive suffix], our
<i>-dit</i>	[honorific suffix], old, important, big
<i>Dbieth</i>	To beget, clan
<i>Gol</i> (pl. <i>Gal</i> )	‘Smouldering dung fire’, extended family unit
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
<i>Hakuma</i>	The government
<i>Janub</i>	The South
<i>Jok</i>	Power, spirit.
<i>Luak</i>	Cattle byre
<i>Nbialic</i>	Divinity, God.
<i>Duek</i>	Tethering, sacrificial cattle post
<i>Mactbok</i>	The patriline (lit. ‘the mouth of the cooking fire’)
<i>Paan</i>	The relatives of

<i>Pan</i>	The house of
<i>Panæenda</i>	Maternal relations
Payam	Unit of local government, above Boma
<i>Piny</i>	The earth, the land
<i>Rap</i>	Sorghum
<i>Riäk</i>	Destruction
<i>Roor</i>	Forest, wilderness, 'bush'
<i>Ruüi</i>	Relatedness (through blood or marriage)
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SIR	Sudan Intelligence Report
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
<i>Toc</i>	Flood pain, dry season grazing
<i>Wei</i>	Life, breath
<i>Wut</i> (pl. <i>wuwt</i> )	Cattle camp, a grazing community, a territorial section
<i>Yük</i>	Mound shrine
<i>Yoro</i>	Forked branch placed in the centre of homesteads or cattle-camps
<i>Yöt</i>	House, hut

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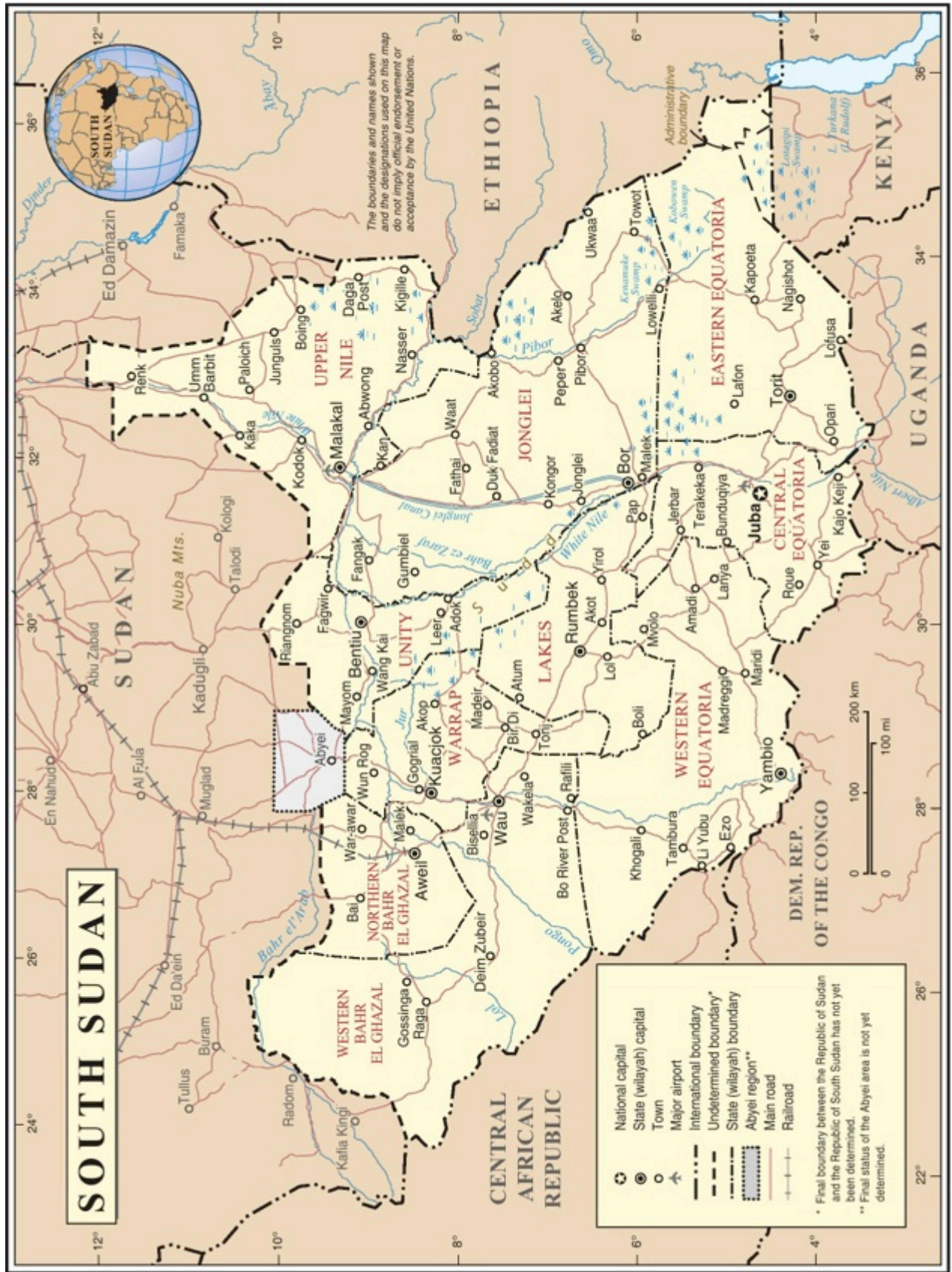
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In order to protect anonymity, some personal and place names have been changed. Of the main field sites referred to, Gogrial, Gogrial Town and Kuajok are real places; 'Cueicok' is a pseudonym.



# 1 Introduction

The Dinka speak of that time [the nineteenth century] as ‘the past when the earth was spoilt’ (*war ci piny riak*). There are no adequate records of the extent of the disruption, but it is adduced by the Dinka as an explanation of any breach in their knowledge of tradition. They think that at that time knowledge of genealogical connections was lost as people scattered in small groups to preserve life as best they could, and that numerous migrations of individuals and families took place. It is said that the mother of one of the oldest men now in the township of Gogrial married for a single sheep, so impoverished were the Dinka at that time. His son recently married with nearly a hundred cattle. Areas which are now covered as far as the eye can see with permanent homesteads are said to have returned to the wild.

Godfrey Lienhardt *The Dinka of the Southern Sudan: Religion and Social Structure* unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford. 1952

*Piny baai Sudan aci riäk banyda...Baai Sudan pienyda! pienyda!*

The land of our home Sudan, has been spoiled [destroyed], oh leader...our home Sudan, our land! Our land!

Sudan People’s Liberation Army song, c.1990s<sup>1</sup>

Fifty years after Godfrey Lienhardt had described its recovery from slave raiding, ‘the township of Gogrial’ had been reduced to rubble. During a 21-year civil war between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), Gogrial became a government army garrison and was repeatedly fought over, captured and recaptured. Again, the people of Gogrial ran for their lives and ‘scattered’ into remote areas. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2005, they began to return and to rebuild their homes.

Unsurprisingly, this often violent history has been interpreted by scholars and South Sudanese leaders alike as straightforward evidence of the marginalization of Sudan’s peripheries by successive predatory Sudanese states. The people of Gogrial are well aware of the place of their history in national political narratives of suffering and victimization. But the way that they tell history themselves is very different, and suggests

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<sup>1</sup> A mp3 version of this song was collected during fieldwork in Gogrial, 2011-2012.

that we need to think more critically not just about how marginalization, displacement and wars are experienced, but about how the production of a historical narrative is in itself a way to redress marginalization and to continually rebuild society and regain agency. This thesis challenges the straightforward centre-periphery analysis that has come to prevail in historical and political studies of Sudan, by showing how the people in the periphery have created their own centres. It also challenges that state-centric narrative of much historiography, and the dominance of civil war in scholarly and national historical narratives, by exploring how governments and wars have been woven into – and sometimes subsumed by – local histories. The thesis argues this is achieved primarily through the construction of landscape in Gogrial as a series of pathways through space and time, which link people, place and historical events. It is for this reason that war and other calamities are described as times when the ‘earth’ or ‘land’ was destroyed; as Lienhardt explained, the forced migration of people and the resulting loss of genealogical connections are expressed as a destruction or spoiling of the land itself. The construction of landscape in Gogrial is thus also the production of history, and it reveals a very different perspective on South Sudan’s turbulent past from the one that standard historical sources have produced.

Studying the history of Gogrial poses a challenge for conventional historical methods. It is an area that is paradoxically both known and unknown. Most of the government records for Gogrial and the wider Bahr el Ghazal region have been destroyed by years of conflict and neglect.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Godfrey Lienhardt’s publications on Dinka religion and political organization, researched primarily in Gogrial, have made this predominantly rural agro-pastoralist region a central fixture in academic accounts of South Sudan.<sup>3</sup> Anyone who has studied Lienhardt’s texts may initially feel a sense of academic security on arriving in Gogrial today. Much of what he wrote about can still be observed and discussed. The spearmasters (*bäny bith*), made famous in his account still practice, although their position is very different. Descendants of the chiefs whose myths are cited

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<sup>2</sup> During the colonial period, southern Sudan was divided into three provinces, Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile and Equatoria. Although these no longer exist as administrative regions, the names are still widely used to refer to different part of the county.

<sup>3</sup> His best known work are, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961). “The Western Dinka,” in *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958). For a full list of publications see Ahmed Al-Shahi, “Ronald Godfrey Lienhardt, 1921-1993: Biographical Notes and Bibliography,” *JASO: Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* XXVII, no. 1 (1997): 7-24.

in his book can also be found; many are chiefs themselves, or hold government positions.

Lienhardt's Dinka name, 'Thieny Deng' is still known in Gogrial; the government minister with whom I stayed in 2011-12 knew it well. When I first asked him about Lienhardt he told me a story about his uncle, who had worked as a research assistant to the anthropologist in the 1940s. This uncle had gone on to become a civil servant in the provincial capital of Wau. My host recounted, bellowing with laughter, that during the Torit Mutiny of 1955, when the senior northern Sudanese officials fled the town in panic, Lienhardt's ex-assistant became the highest-ranking government official in Wau and therefore, for five days was the *de-facto* governor of the province.<sup>4</sup>

This conversation nicely illustrates the many different versions of history and the plural meanings that can be ascribed them. Lienhardt's research is canonical in the history of anthropology; yet the minister's tale shows how it has also formed the basis for a piece of amusing family lore for the descendants of Lienhardt's employee. By reversing the role of the research assistant to give him a position of executive and intellectual authority, it repositions the outcomes of a classic ethnography and forms a subtle critique of power. The story illustrates how any sense of academic familiarity about Gogrial would be a false security, blind to historical change. It is impossible now to think of African societies, even rural ones, as unchanging and encapsulated.<sup>5</sup> This thesis explores these changes and different perspectives on Gogrial's history.

#### WRITTEN HISTORIES OF CONFLICT AND MARGINALISATION

The scholarly history of South Sudan has been written as one of conflict and marginalization. Academic accounts of South Sudan's history are dominated by the state and periods of violence: slavery, colonization and post-independence civil wars (c. 1963-1972 and 1983-2005). The historiography of modern Sudan is heavily focused on explaining the causes of these conflicts. The current orthodoxy is that conflicts in Sudan are due to the nature of the state itself: the outcome of a destructive centre-periphery dynamic with deep historical roots. The centre-periphery argument, most clearly

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<sup>4</sup> Fieldnotes, Kuajok 12.03.2012.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Piot, *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 22-24.

articulated by Douglas Johnson builds on earlier, simpler interpretations of Sudan's conflicts as the product of a north-south divide.<sup>6</sup> It explains that successive states have produced regional underdevelopment and cultural antagonism by replicating an exploitative and violent relationship between the political centre (in Khartoum) and the marginalized peripheries, particularly the South and Darfur.

Given this focus and the availability of written sources, most histories of South Sudan begin in the nineteenth century with the origins of Southern marginalization. Previously, the area which is now South Sudan was largely unaffected by the development of states further north.<sup>7</sup> Richard Grey, one eminent historian of South Sudan reasoned this was because of the area's natural impenetrability: the Nile swamps, Ethiopian mountains and rivers of the Bahr el Ghazal had provided a geographical barrier.<sup>8</sup> This was an area, scholars note, which has been isolated as far back as records go; even a party of the Emperor Nero's centurions and praetorian guards on a mission to explore the Nile is said to have turned back after they reached what is now South Sudan. It was apparently a place of 'immense marshes' where 'the plants were so entangled with the waters' that they were impassable.<sup>9</sup>

The territory to the south of Egypt was conquered by the expanding Turco-Egyptian state, or Turkiyya (1821-1885) which established Khartoum as its capital. In 1839-41 a Turkish naval officer called Salim Qapudan, under the instruction of Mohammed Ali Pasha (Governor of Egypt), managed to sail through the 'immense marshes' that were blocked by huge clumps of reeds called *Sudd* (Ar. blockage or barrier) up the White Nile

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<sup>6</sup> This interpretation essentializes north-south division too greatly and does not account for other conflict in Sudan (most notably Darfur). For examples Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Sudan: Contested National Identities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Francis Mading Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995); Deng D. Akol Ruay, *The Politics of Two Sudans: The South and The North, 1821-1969* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1994), 173-181; Dunstan M. Wai, *The Arab-African Conflict in The Sudan* (New York: African Publishing, 1981). For the centre-periphery argument see Douglas H Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2011), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas H Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars. First Edition* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Gray, *A History of The Southern Sudan 1839-1889* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 9.

<sup>9</sup> L.P. Kirwan, "Rome Beyond the Egyptian Frontier," *The Geographical Journal* 123, no. 1 (1957): 17. Seneca, *Natural Questions* 6, 8, 3-4; Pliny *Natural History* 6, 181-184. Robert O Collins, *The Waters of The Nile: Hydropolitics and the Jonglei Canal, 1900-1988* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 68.

to Gondokoro (near to Juba).<sup>10</sup> This new access initiated a commercial expansion up the Nile from Khartoum as there were vast profits to be made from the ivory trade. Small trading centres called *zura'ib* (Ar. enclosure sing. *zeriba*) were set up along the rivers (and some further inland) and became points of extraction and interaction between officials and the local populations.<sup>11</sup> Surviving travellers' accounts from this period describe the depredations of this trade and violent raids of people and cattle.<sup>12</sup> The Turkiyya laid down networks that were not only about commercial extraction, but were also about the formation of a new kind of relationship between a powerful central elite from the northern riverain area around Khartoum, and the exploited people of the hinterlands. Historians have argued that subsequent Mahdist and Anglo-Egyptian states in Sudan replicated this pattern and that they were a different guise of an essentially predatory style of rule.<sup>13</sup> Lengthy post-colonial civil wars are seen as the result of failure to balance power and resources between central and regional governments.<sup>14</sup>



Image 1: Dinka cattle-camp 1868-1871<sup>15</sup>. Probably near Meshra-el-Rek, in present day Tonj North, Warrap.

<sup>10</sup> Robert O Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 21.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Davies and Cherry Leonardi, "Gordon's Fort at Labore and Issues of Developing Archaeology in the New South Sudan," *Antiquity: A Quarterly Review of World Archaeology* 86, no. 334 (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa. From 1868 to 1871, Vol 1* (New York: Harper, 1874), 227-229.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 6. Martin. W Daly, *The Empire on The Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-7.

<sup>14</sup> Øystein Rolandsen, "A False Start: Between War and Peace in The Southern Sudan, 1956-62," *Journal of African History* 52 (2011): 105-23.

<sup>15</sup> Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa. From 1868 to 1871, Vols 1 and 2*, 166.



Histories of marginalization and oppression have also been central in developing the ideology of Southern political movements. William Deng and Joseph Oduho's 1963 statement on 'The Problem of Southern Sudan' analyses the malignant historical neglect and 'subjection' of the South since the nineteenth century, which they concluded was 'a clear case of Africans being oppressed for no other reason than the colour of their skin' [compared to the 'Arab' north].<sup>16</sup> The SPLA Manifesto (1983) also interpreted the history of Sudan as one of marginalization, not just of the South, but of all the peripheries.<sup>17</sup> This was the historical underdevelopment and political exclusion that the SPLA promised to redress, by force.<sup>18</sup> John Garang's vision for the SPLM was that it would unite all 'the marginalized regions of the country' into a national struggle to radically reform the state and redistribute power in Sudan, transforming marginalization into empowerment.<sup>19</sup> He characterized the history of Sudan as 'the struggle of the masses of the people against internal and external oppression'.<sup>20</sup>

If South Sudan has thus been understood as a vast periphery of the Sudanese state, Gogrial has been treated as the periphery of the periphery: one of the most remote and marginalized of all Sudanese districts, as the next chapter will discuss. This view has been reinforced by the fact that Gogrial, like much of South Sudan, is predominantly agro-pastoralist. Pastoralist societies in general have been seen, almost by definition, to inhabit marginal political and ecological environments.<sup>21</sup> As pastoral populations are mobile, they tend to be less well represented in official administrations and less able to negotiate with the state.<sup>22</sup> Governing, taxing and providing services to pastoral populations is perennially difficult for states. For this reason, pastoralist populations are often seen as out of reach and outside of modernity.<sup>23</sup> Pastoralism is continually seen as a 'marginal'

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph Oduho and Wiliam Deng, *The Problem of the Southern Sudan* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1963), 59.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Alex de Waal, *Food and Power in Sudan* (London: African Rights, 1997), 65, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Mansour Khalid and John Garang, *John Garang Speaks* (London: KPI, 1987), 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Abbink, "The Shrinking Cultural and Political Space of East African Pastoral Societies," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1997): 1-17.

<sup>22</sup> Katherine Homewood, *The Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008), 73.

<sup>23</sup> Victor Azarya, "Pastoralism and The State in Africa: Marginality or Incorporation?," *Nomadic Peoples* 38 (1996): 11.

existence, at risk from climate change, antagonistic state policy and conflict.<sup>24</sup> All these problems are particularly acute in South Sudan.<sup>25</sup>

Marginalization is an important foundation for any study of South Sudan. South Sudanese have experienced many historical injustices and the ‘centre-periphery’ exploitation model is a very powerful diagnosis of the problems of the Sudanese state. But there are problems with this narrative in a simple form (as I shall discuss further below). Equally, the idea that pastoralism is ‘marginal’ is increasingly challenged by scholars. Supposedly marginal pastoralist lands actually cover most of Africa, where 66% of land is not suitable for permanent agriculture<sup>26</sup> and livestock reared under pastoral production contribute enormously to national economies in Eastern Africa.<sup>27</sup>

There is also a danger of denying agency to those in the Sudanese ‘periphery,’ by over-emphasizing their marginality. A major problem with many of the existing historical accounts, as Douglas Johnson wrote even before the second civil war, is that they are not focused on understanding South Sudanese dynamics and agency, but on the invading forces, colonial eccentrics and state administrations.<sup>28</sup> One result of telling the past in this way is that South Sudanese are always on the receiving end of history and appear as simply ‘incapable of meeting the challenges of the modern world’.<sup>29</sup> This discourse continues to infuse representations of South Sudan as a place without its own past, emerging from a state of conflict-induced suspended animation and now being built ‘from scratch’.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> John Markakis, *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 1–14.

<sup>25</sup> Homewood, *The Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies*, 21–24.

<sup>26</sup> Maryam Niamir-Fuller, ed., *Managing Mobility in African Rangelands: The Legitimization of Transhumance* (London: Intermediate Technology Productions, 1999), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ced Hesse and Sue Cavanna, *Modern and Mobile: The Future of Livestock Production in Africa's Drylands* (London: IIED and SOS Sahel UK, 2010), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Collins' publications exemplify this kind of history, for example see Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*. Johnson's own work on the history of prophecy in South Sudan is a major exception to this Douglas H Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); A recent exception is Cherry Leonardi, *Dealing With Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Douglas H Johnson, “The Future of Southern Sudan's Past,” *Africa Today* 28, no. 2 (1981): 41.

<sup>30</sup> For example see Florence Martin-Kessler and Anne Poirer, “How to Build a Country from Scratch,” *New York Times*, Feb 2, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/opinion/how-to-build-a-country-from-scratch.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/opinion/how-to-build-a-country-from-scratch.html?_r=0).

## NEW HISTORY

The new South Sudanese state's narrative of the past is also being told as a history of marginalization, victimhood and a 'shared struggle' against oppressive, alien states. In this account, the oppression of South Sudanese began in 1821, with the Turco-Egyptian invasion of Sudan and ended in 2011 with independence, following a victorious war of national liberation. Thus, in state history, the unity and identity of South Sudanese has historically been defined in terms of what they are *not*: not northern, not Muslim, not part of the Sudanese elite.<sup>31</sup> This South Sudanese national narrative inserts Southern agency primarily through armed resistance to oppression. Resistance to different colonial states (in particular the British) has been recast as proto-nationalist political action and used as a source of legitimacy and inspiration for post-colonial resistance.<sup>32</sup> The two civil wars are glossed as a continual struggle for the rights of Southerners. A document prepared by the Bahr el Ghazal community leaders' council (based in Juba) on South Sudan's independence in 2011 captures these ideas. Ambrose Riiny Thiik, chairman of the council and former Chief Justice of South Sudan, a native of Gogrial East, writes:

This document is an expression of tens of decades of painful experiences suffered by the people of South Sudan in the hands of various foreign or colonial invaders into South Sudan. Our people have endured the pain and the suffering since the days of Turco-Egyptians, Mahdiya Arabs, the Anglo-Egyptians and finally, the Arabs of Northern Sudan, right up to our Independence on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 is therefore a culmination of all that had happened. It is a memorable day when, at long last, this generation was able to forever put to an end the exploitation, humiliation, genocide and plunder of our resources. All of which had been in process and progress since the infamous days of Arab slave trade and slave raiding in South Sudan in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>33</sup>

This historical narrative has plenty of truth for many residents of Gogrial, who have painful memories of violence and humiliation perpetrated by the Sudanese state. All South Sudanese have lost family members to the liberation struggle, all have been directly

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<sup>31</sup> Jok Madut Jok, "The Political History of South Sudan," in *A Shared Struggle: The People and Cultures of South Sudan*, ed. Timothy McKulka (Denmark: Government of South Sudan/UN, 2013), 85–89.

<sup>32</sup> For examples from the 1970s see Abel Alier, *Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonoured* (Exeter: Ithaca Press, 1990), 13–17; Lazarus Leek Mawut, *Dinka Resistance to Condominium Rule 1902-1932* (Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press, 1983).

<sup>33</sup> Bahr el Ghazal Community Leaders, *Celebrating the Independence of South Sudan: A Concept Paper Prepared by the Greater Bahr El Ghazal Community Leaders Council* (Juba, 2011), 1.

affected by violence and almost all South Sudanese voted in favour of separation in 2011.<sup>34</sup> However, this narrative of shared suffering has been promoted by the new state of South Sudan and monopolizes public and urban explanations of the nation to the point where it has sidelined the local experience, or made huge generalizations about it. This kind of narrative also serves a political function to enshrine the SPLA and the ruling party SPLM as the liberators of South Sudan. There are diverse understandings of South Sudanese nationalism that exist and which must be brought into academic and public discussion to encourage more nuanced understandings of South Sudan's history and nationhood.<sup>35</sup>

One necessary part of a more plural history is a more dynamic understanding of the role of 'ordinary people' and 'civilians' in South Sudanese history than that which is usually offered (whether in academic studies or within South Sudanese politics itself). During my fieldwork, at all public commemorative events, government officials thanked 'the community' for their role in the liberation struggle. This lengthy, but revealing quote, also from the Bahr el Ghazal leaders' statement, is a typical example of these addresses.<sup>36</sup>

Bahr el Ghazal community leaders also recall the historical role played by their traditional leaders in South Sudan during the struggle. The chiefs, kings, spearmasters and gol leaders have to be commended. They are to be thanked for exhibiting a rare political consciousness, which kept sustaining the liberation struggle since 1955 up to the time of hoisting the Independence flag. Bahr el Ghazal traditional leaders are to be particularly thanked and appreciated for their unprecedented commitment characterized by their provision of material support, their undivided stance and their political and military struggle, provision of human capital all which they gave to the struggle. They must be given special thanks for accepting to conscript their young adults, family by family, clan by clan, section by section – a process that was done repeatedly by Bahr el Ghazal for more than decade. They contributed to the struggle in a very special way compared to the rest of South Sudan. They made their communities contribute an unspecified but compulsory number of bulls during the whole length of the liberation

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<sup>34</sup> 98.83% of votes in the January 2011 referendum on secession were in favour of independence. "South Sudan Backs Independence - Results," *BBC*, February 7, 2011, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12379431>.

<sup>35</sup> This is something that one senior government official has been vocal about the need for. Jok Madut Jok, *Diversity, Unity and Nation Building in South Sudan* (Washington DC: USIP, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Bahr el Ghazal Community Leaders, *Celebrating the Independence of South Sudan: A Concept Paper Prepared by the Greater Bahr El Ghazal Community Leaders Council*, 84; Also see Salva Kiir's speech in Bentiu 2009 cited in Leonardi, *Dealing With Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State*, 1. I was explicitly told about the necessity of thanking 'the community' by the SPLM Secretary of Lakes State when I helped him draft his Independence Day Speech in July 2011.

struggle. They did it through a contribution system that was known locally as *'muun'*. They gave compulsory household *kela* contribution in the form of *dura* [sorghum], collected once and sometimes twice a year

The 'unspecified but compulsory' support provided 'family by family, clan by clan, section by section' to 'sustain[...] the liberation struggle' more than hints at the coercive nature of this relationship. It also limits the role of civilians in South Sudanese history to providers of support for the military. But ordinary people can importantly be seen as historical agents beyond giving succour to the army.

#### SPOILING AND REMAKING THE WORLD

Violence has been a major part of South Sudan's history. In his introduction to a new anthology of short stories from South Sudan, Nyuol Lueth Tong writes, 'no other force or reality has had the ubiquity in South Sudan that war has had in the last several decades.' 'War' he says, 'will continue to influence our literature and culture for many years to come.'<sup>37</sup> Nyuol's reflection on war as a literary influence touches on one of the contemporary ambiguities of conflict in South Sudan: that war has been both a destructive and a creative force.<sup>38</sup> On 9 July 2011 when South Sudan officially became an independent country, President Salva Kiir Mayardit, himself a senior veteran of both civil wars, gave a speech that touched on this ambiguity. 'We have waited 56 years for this day. It is a dream that has come true' he told elated crowds in Juba. But amidst jubilation there was also sorrow. 'It is important to recognize' he went on, 'that for many generations, this land has seen untold suffering and death. We have been bombed, maimed, enslaved and treated worse than a refugee in our own country.'<sup>39</sup> In many respects, the extent of the suffering in South Sudan really is 'untold'; there are no reliable figures for the human cost of war as violent deaths and displacement went largely unrecorded.<sup>40</sup> Yet in other ways, this suffering is 'told', accommodated and framed in

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<sup>37</sup> Nyuol Lueth Tong, *There Is a Country: New Fiction From The New Nation of South Sudan* (San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2013), 9.

<sup>38</sup> For comparison see Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: A History of Suffering* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), 247.

<sup>39</sup> Salva Kiir's speech, Juba, 9.07.2011 available at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Pojulu2008/message/6008> accessed 27.07.13

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes: Peace or Truce*, 143.

creative ways by ordinary people; but this is often done at a more local level than that addressed by Kiir.

Gogrial experienced severe periods of conflict during the most recent civil war (1983-2005). In the course of producing this thesis I struggled to understand and convey the ways that people I knew in Gogrial dealt with the ebbs and flows of insecurity in their lives: in writing I have been wary of the problems of exceptionalizing, glorifying or even turning away from violence.<sup>41</sup> I can find no better way of doing this than explaining the way in which ‘war’ was spoken about by people around me. The Dinka word *riäk*, sometimes glossed to mean ‘war’ in English, is more accurately translated as ‘destruction’ and it may take many forms – a drought, a flood, an epidemic, armed conflict and so on.<sup>42</sup> The widely used phrase ‘*piny aci riäk*’ means literally that the land (or the world) has been spoilt or destroyed.<sup>43</sup> This phrase can be used to talk about a period of war, but the meaning of *riäk* and *piny*, like many words in Dinka language, are graduated and multiple. The world has been destroyed many times and in many ways. Yet, as many times as it has been destroyed, it had also been recreated or made good (*aci piath*) again. As Francis Deng notes,

This is known to every child, the world has been ‘spoiled’ many times before, and it has ‘held’ again and again. People will die, perhaps in large numbers, but the land will remain, generations will grow, and society will thrive again.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Donald Donham, “Staring at Suffering: Violence as a Subject,” in *States of Violence: Politics, Youth and Memory in Contemporary Africa*, ed. Edna Bay and Donald Donham (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> The destruction of homes in floods is ‘absolutely usual’ Jok Madut Jok, *Militarization, Gender and Reproductive Health in South Sudan* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 81.

<sup>43</sup> This phrase is used widely across Dinka speaking areas, see Mark Nikkel, *Dinka Christianity: The Origins and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with Special Reference to the Songs of Dinka Christians* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2001), 49. Francis Mading Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in the Afro-Arab Sudan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), xvi, 132. *Piny* carries a similar meaning in other Nilotic languages; in Kenyan Luo, *piny* means ‘territory, country or nation.’ David William Cohen and E.S Atieno Odhiambo, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1989), viii.; in Acholi speaking northern Uganda, the phrase ‘*piny marac*’, meaning bad surroundings or bad lands was used to describe periods of LRA war, Sverker Finnstrom, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 10. *Piny arac* also means ‘the land is bad’ in Dinka language.

<sup>44</sup> Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in the Afro-Arab Sudan*, 8.

This also reveals what is taken for granted in many of the descriptions of the landscape and history which I heard in Gogrial, that the people and the land are connected and that the land is nothing without people: a crucial point, to which I will return.<sup>45</sup>

The spoiling and remaking of the world complicates a narrative of continual war. Some recent academic accounts have argued a similar point. In her recent study of the history of chiefship in South Sudan, Cherry Leonardi noted that her informants tended to discuss war in the context of other life events.<sup>46</sup> Likewise Brendan Tuttle observed that in Bor, the capital of Jonglei State, despite the nearby conflicts, many people's lives revolved around things that were less dramatic, such as the price of commodities, their children and their personal frustrations.<sup>47</sup> These observations resonate closely with my own conversations and attempts to find out about history in Gogrial. These conversations more often focused on family matters, marriages, local politics, music and small personal projects. War, despite its apparent near ubiquity in the media, is not always foregrounded in South Sudanese recollections of the past. Rather than definitive events, wars in Gogrial are perceived as multiple shocks and recoveries, experienced and framed in the context of other life events and everyday concerns. The challenge is to understand the serious effects of war without imposing an artificial frame in which violence become the *only* lens through which South Sudanese lives can be seen. By telling history as a process of making and remaking 'the world', people are taking control of it. Just as, conversely, the *loss* of control is expressed in terms of the land returning to the wild.

#### REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE

This thesis presents a South Sudanese history in which the state is not central and offers a new approach to histories of war and peripherality in South Sudan. It treats the local history of Gogrial not as a one of marginalization, but as a history of how ordinary

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<sup>45</sup> There is a resemblance with the Kenyan Luo word *piny*, which captures 'the conflation of physical land and social ties...a group, a place or the substance of a place, earth.' Paul Wenzel Geissler and Ruth Jane Prince, *The Land Is Dying: Contingency, Creativity and Conflict in Western Kenya* (Berghahn Books, 2013), 58.

<sup>46</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State*, 144.

<sup>47</sup> Brendan Tuttle, "Life Is Prickly. Narrating History, Belonging, and Common Place in Bor, South Sudan" (Temple University, 2013), 3.

people have created their own centres. Rural South Sudan is not disconnected from wider political and economic transformations and this thesis will show how people in Gogrial have actively engaged with these changes.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, an important question this raises, which this thesis will return to at several points, is what role the state does play in people's lives and constructions of history and how it is subsumed within other moral ideas.

Several important anthropological studies have already shown there are more complex dynamics at the local/rural level in South Sudan than the discourse of 'marginalization' suggests. Sharon Hutchinson's historical ethnography shows how rural Nuer have understood and responded to major political changes and disruption in South Sudan since the 1930s.<sup>49</sup> Hutchinson's work shows that rural communities are not isolated or disconnected from modernity. In the 1980s, rural Nuer had dealt with the cash economy by inventing a hybrid system of both 'cash' and 'cattle' economies. Their older value system appropriated the monetary economy, allowing them to use money while keeping cattle as the dominant form of value.<sup>50</sup> The primary body of Hutchinson's research was conducted in the early 1980s, over 30 years ago and before the worst onslaughts of the second civil war.<sup>51</sup> Still, her point that South Sudanese are not passive victims of the state and political change, but have creatively incorporated and re-shaped state and market structures into their own moral economies remains relevant.<sup>52</sup>

These ideas speak to a body of work that has demonstrated the innovation and creative repertoires of so called 'peripheral' people,<sup>53</sup> showing how 'margins' are not empty spaces, but can be vibrant areas where the nature and meaning of the state and power are

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<sup>48</sup> Also see Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> Dinka and Nuer share a common ancestry, speak closely related languages and occupy a common ecological zone, they have a similar agro-pastoral system of production and many cultural similarities (as well as some notable differences) Raymond Kelly, *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System* (Michigan, USA: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, "The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer, 1930-1983," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 2 (1992): 294-316.

<sup>51</sup> See Sharon Hutchinson, "The Nuer in Crisis: Coping with Money, War and the State" (University of Chicago, 1988).

<sup>52</sup> Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State*, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *In The Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an out-of-the-Way Place* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).



debated and redefined.<sup>54</sup> This picture is much more complicated than any centre-periphery model suggests. As other recent studies have shown, the state is actually being produced locally through various interactions, such as in land disputes or debates over chiefly authority.<sup>55</sup> A recent volume on the future of pastoralism in the Horn of Africa has also called for a different perspective, seeing ‘the margins as the centre’ because, the editors argue, the state is at the margins of the pastoralist’s world; it is only a matter of perspective.<sup>56</sup>

Centre-periphery analyses of Sudan’s conflicts have fixed understandings of places like Gogrial as peripheries; while there is a political-economic reality to this, it is not necessarily how people see themselves.<sup>57</sup> I will argue throughout this thesis that although Gogrial is in some ways ‘a periphery’ this does not mean that people living there consider themselves ‘peripheral’. Unlike the subjects of Tsing’s ethnography, inhabitants of the Meratus Mountains in Indonesia, who saw themselves as belonging to a ‘marginal’ culture, people in Gogrial were conscious of belonging to a large and politically powerful ethnic group.<sup>58</sup> Unlike Borana pastoralists from northern Kenya, who may think of themselves as ‘coming to Kenya’ when travelling south to Nairobi and the political core, there was no question that Gogrial was firmly a part of South Sudan.<sup>59</sup> In political debates in South Sudan at the time of my fieldwork, because the president Salva Kiir is from Gogrial, some claimed that Gogrial was a centre of political patronage in the country. One group claiming to represent ‘Nuer youth’ even dubbed this the ‘Gogrialization’ of South Sudan.<sup>60</sup> These tensions over political representation and

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<sup>54</sup> Veena Das and Deborah Poole, *Anthropology in the Margins of The State* (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*; Naseem Badiy, “The Strategic Instrumentalization of Land Tenure in ‘State-Building’: The Case of Juba, South Sudan,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 83, no. 1 (2013): 57–77.

<sup>56</sup> Andy Catley, Jeremy Lind, and Ian Scoones, eds., *Pastoralism and Development in Africa: Dynamic Change at the Margins* (London: Routledge and Earthscan, 2013), 14.

<sup>57</sup> A similar point has been made about residents of Isiolo town, part of what is considered Kenya’s northern periphery, Hannah Elliott, “Development, Devolution and the Politics of Belonging: Urban Becoming in Isiolo Town, Northern Kenya” (presented at the Reconfiguring Landscape and Bio-Cultural Frontiers in Eastern Africa Symposium, BIEA, Nairobi, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Tsing, *In The Realm of the Diamond Queen*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Hassan Wario Arero, “Coming to Kenya: Imagining and Perceiving a Nation among the Borana of Kenya,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 292–304.

<sup>60</sup> Magdi el Gizouli, “Southernization Irks,” *StillsUDAN*, January 10, 2011, <http://stillsudan.blogspot.co.uk/2011/01/southernization-irks.html>; “Nuer Youth Detest South Sudan Ministry of Regional Cooperation Appointments,” *Sudan Tribune*, January 8, 2011, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article37525>.

power were very real and fed into the outbreak of a civil war in South Sudan in December 2013.

Beyond political centres, there are many different kinds of centres – villages, cattle-camps, grazing points, families and individuals – that offer more important reference points than the state. It is important to get away from the assumption that the state is central to everyone's lives. James Scott advocates rejecting the state-centric view of the periphery as the domain of 'backward, naïve, and perhaps barbaric people [who] are gradually incorporated into an advanced, superior and more prosperous society and culture', and instead seeing these as places where people have deliberately placed themselves and crafted a world that purposefully avoids incorporation into the state's 'centre'.<sup>61</sup> This cultivation of peripherality has been observed in places where the state has been violent. Marianne Ferme has shown how rural Mende people made explicit attempts to make their area remote: some rural people facilitated the degradation of roads because this allowed them to negotiate the terms of their relationship with administrative centres. Ferme locates these actions as part of a regional history in which the relationship between the rural hinterland of Sierra Leone and the coast and Atlantic world has been violently extractive. Forests have become places where people survive in *deliberate* isolation.<sup>62</sup> Neither Scott's or Ferme's observations from Asia or Sierra Leone can be transplanted directly into South Sudan, but people have periodically used remoteness and inaccessibility to their advantage during civil war (for example by taking their cattle deep into swamps to avoid raids).<sup>63</sup>

There are very few recent studies that explore local perspectives in South Sudan.<sup>64</sup> This lacuna is due in large part to recurrent civil war making long-term field research very

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<sup>61</sup> James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Marianne Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 32–39, 48.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Joong Deng Akuien, Kuajok, 13.02.2012

<sup>64</sup> There have been numerous surveys of the structural and political changes caused by the war that affect civilians, but these are mostly not based on field research, for example see Jane Kani Edward and Amir Idris, "The Consequence of Sudan's Civil Wars for the Civilian Population," in *The Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Africa: From Slavery Days to the Rwandan Genocide*, ed. John Lanband (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007); An important work is Sharon Hutchinson's work, mainly research before the outbreak of the second civil war, but does include material from the early 1990s Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State*;

difficult. It is also partly indicative of the changing concerns of anthropology as a discipline, which has become more concerned with processes like globalization to escape perceptions of timeless bounded societies - so the Dinka and Nuer in diaspora are now more ethnographically studied than they are in South Sudan itself. It is estimated that over 4 million people were displaced from the South during the second civil war and globally dispersed family networks are now a reality for many South Sudanese.<sup>65</sup>

Wendy James' long-term work on displaced Uduk communities from Blue Nile (now on the border between Sudan and South Sudan) has shown that people are creating their history all the time.<sup>66</sup> In her first ethnography of the northern Uduk people in Blue Nile State, she takes on the question of how people make community in the face of insecurity. The Uduk she described in the 1970s were a people on a fractured and diverse borderland, who had been subject to slavery and raids from surrounding groups. They had in the recent past experienced their homes being destroyed and rebuilt. This was part of the way people saw themselves, 'their society in the past has been built up in the face of insecurity...A *wathim pa* [an Uduk person] is one who has participated in the process of creating and recreating the settlement and the homeland.'<sup>67</sup>

As James shows, narratives of reclaiming land and rebuilding society are part of the way that chronic insecurity is accommodated in local historical memory. As people in Gogrial know, the land itself has been periodically destroyed (*piny aci riäk*) and periodically made good again (*piny aci piath*). This thesis will argue that this process of loss and active resocialization of the landscape is key to understanding Gogrial's recent history. Implicit in this process is an understanding that land is nothing without its people. For it is *people* who will scatter in a crisis and it is *people* who will return, clear the forest or the rubble and rebuild their homes. In this configuration, history is not necessarily told as a chronological narrative and nor does it focus on the state (although the state frequently

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One ethnography was carried out in Gogrial during the second civil war, see Jok, *Militarization, Gender and Reproductive Health in South Sudan*.

<sup>65</sup> Dianna Shandy, *Nuer-American Passages: Globalizing Sudanese Migration* (Florida: University of Florida Press, 2007), 21.

<sup>66</sup> Wendy James, *War and Survival in Sudan's Frontierlands: Voices from the Blue Nile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Wendy James, *'Kwanim Pa: The Making of the Uduk People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 15-16.

has had something to do with periods of violence). Instead *place* and *people* are at the centre of understandings of history.

#### USING LANDSCAPE

The Dinka notion that land is nothing without its people and that the fate of people and the land is intertwined chimes with many academic theories of landscape as a historical process that is inherently socialized and entangled with people and memory. It is widely accepted in the scholarship that while there is a physical reality to landscape, no landscape is entirely 'natural' and all are socially and politically constructed to some extent.<sup>68</sup> Although studies of 'landscape' began in Europe where it was classically understood as 'a cultural image' and a way of seeing,<sup>69</sup> it has, with some provisos, also been explored (and enriched) in non-European contexts.<sup>70</sup> In particular scholars working in this area have stressed *processes* through which landscapes are created and continually reworked. Landscapes are anything but static, they are imbued and re-imbued with meaning all the time.<sup>71</sup> They are in a continual state of being 'made' through physical, social and political practice.<sup>72</sup> This expanded view of landscape reveals many of the most important aspects of human relationships with the landscape. It shows, as Barbara Bender argues, how landscape is polysemic and dynamic, both spatial and temporal, both about the past and incorporated into present political action.<sup>73</sup>

African history provides many opportunities for developing critical historical approaches to landscape. European colonial projects sought to extensively re-imagine the landscape of Africa through creation of boundaries, environmental policies and settler agricultural schemes. Studies of landscape in Africa have therefore importantly emphasized the *politics* of landscape. Zimbabwe has proved an important place for developing this

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<sup>68</sup> For example, Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion of the application of 'Landscape' to Africa see Ute Luig and Achim von Oppen, "Landscape in Africa: Process and Vision. An Introductory Essay," *Paideuma* 43 (1997): 9–16.

<sup>71</sup> Barbara Bender and Margot Winer, eds., *Contested Landscapes: Movement, Exile and Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 3.

<sup>72</sup> Luig and von Oppen, "Landscape in Africa: Process and Vision. An Introductory Essay," 7.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Bender, ed., *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 9.

approach because here relationships with land and landscape have been overtly contested and politicized. JoAnn McGregor's historical study of the Zambezi River looks at the history of conflicting claims on the river, which have bound identity to landscape and in doing so naturalized claims to power.<sup>74</sup> Such claims are legitimized through historical connections. By emphasizing power relations and historicizing competing claims to the landscape, McGregor is able to show the political the process of constructing landscape and denaturalize static and singular visions of it. In an ethnography of Bor town (another Dinka-speaking part of South Sudan), Brendan Tuttle noted how a local priest explained to him that in Bor 'the right to narrative history was a matter of privilege'. This privilege, Tuttle observed, could be gained by identifying with a place, for instance through ancestral connections. The priest explained that ultimately, 'only those who lived in a place could really know its history'.<sup>75</sup> Landscape and historical narrative are thus interconnected, and both are constructed by those with political power. Narrative authority underscores the relationship between place, people and historical memory.

In Gogrial a key element of the making and remaking of the world and negotiating its periodic destruction is about *material* transformation. Christopher Tilley argues that an essential feature of landscape is that it is experienced on a habitual basis; landscape has meaning not just because it reflects our ideas back at us (although it does do this) but because we inhabit it every day.<sup>76</sup> This means human experience of the landscape, personal and collective memories of the landscape and its history are connected.<sup>77</sup> Although there is a danger that a phenomenological approach to landscape can become ahistorical or apolitical, there are important reasons to untangle the ways that historical memory shapes the experience of landscape.

Drawing on Connorton's influential work, studies of memory in Africa have been productively attuned to how memory is felt through the body, the landscape and in social

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<sup>74</sup> JoAnn McGregor, *Crossing The Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (James Currey, 2009), 2.

<sup>75</sup> Tuttle, "Life Is Prickly." 134–135.

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

relations.<sup>78</sup> Several recent ethnographies have given a tangible basis to this idea. Marianne Ferme's ethnography of Southeastern Sierra Leone emphasises how the violent history of the area has been embedded in the landscape itself.<sup>79</sup> She traces how historical change is often narrated in stories told about changes to the landscape – like the demise of the railway line or the abandoning of a rice farm.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Rosalind Shaw's observations of the Sierra Leonean landscape and memory of the slave trade show how it was 'forgotten as history, but remembered as spirits, as a menacing landscape, as images in divination'.<sup>81</sup> There were 'authoritative' oral accounts of the slave trade, known to elite elder males, but for most people, memories of the slave trade were part of the landscape itself.<sup>82</sup> The implication, which Tim Ingold draws, is that experiencing the landscape can, in itself, be an act of memory.<sup>83</sup>

This thesis takes the view that history and memory, everywhere, are entangled.<sup>84</sup> This is partly because there is not a single history. History consists of many conflicting narratives; these multiple histories are shaped and informed by cultural and personal memories, expressed through the landscape, songs, official commemoration and ritual, to such an extent that it is impossible to make a meaningful distinction between history and memory. Thus, although the two can be distinct, to a large extent the making of memory is also the making of history. This entanglement equally applies to societies that are largely non-literate. Pierre Nora's influential essay proposed a distinction between 'modern' societies which related to the past through history, and 'primitive' societies which had memory. But all societies have both and the task is to understand different

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<sup>78</sup> Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Richard Werbner, "Introduction," in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 2–3.

<sup>79</sup> Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History and the Everyday in Sierra Leone*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–69.

<sup>83</sup> Ingold, *The Perception of The Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (Oxford: Routledge, 2000), 189; for similar empirical observations see Susanne Kuechler, "Landscape as Memory: The Mapping of Process and Its Representation in a Melanesian Society," in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, ed. Barbara Bender (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 86.

<sup>84</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The Aids Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (California: University of California Press, 1997), 4–7.

cultural repertoires through which the past is understood.<sup>85</sup> For it is ‘not only that culture is historical; it is also that history is cultural’.<sup>86</sup>

#### AN ETHNOGRAPHIC MICRO-HISTORY OF GOGRIAL

Building on these concerns, a central part of this thesis is its methodological approach. It develops an approach to interpreting oral history that goes beyond narrative, is ethnographically grounded and integrates the spatial, visual and experiential elements of historical memory. To do this, I have explored the recent history of Gogrial through interviews, images, traditional and popular songs and insights from twelve months of field research in South Sudan. I have put this material in dialogue with new and diverse archival resources, including the personal papers of Godfrey Lienhardt, which have recently been made available for consultation. There are strong theoretical reasons why historians should go further than formal interviewing and broaden their methodological approaches to historical research. As Tamara Giles-Vernick attests, relationships with history are not only expressed through narratives or in-depth interviews but also through bodily and spatial practices which locate and invoke, but don’t necessarily *verbalize* past events.<sup>87</sup> This thesis integrates oral and documentary sources with critical understandings of how people negotiate connections with ‘history’ in ways that are not discursive, but still embedded in material forms and the landscape itself.

#### HISTORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Many of the historical arguments in this thesis were developed through ethnographic fieldwork I carried out in Gogrial between September 2011 and July 2012. History and anthropology are cognate disciplines and there has been self-conscious interdisciplinary

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<sup>85</sup> Jennifer Cole, *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 104.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*; Michael Lambek, “The Sakalava Poiesis of History: Realizing the Past Through Spirit Possession in Madagascar,” *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 2 (1998): 106.

<sup>87</sup> Tamara Giles-Vernick, “Lives, Histories, and Sites of Recollection,” in *African Worlds, African Voices*, ed. Luise White, Stephan F. Miescher, and David William Cohen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 194–195.

exchange between them, particularly since the 1980s.<sup>88</sup> Anthropologists have harnessed history, to show that the societies they study are not timeless.<sup>89</sup> The discipline of African history has been particularly open to the approaches of anthropology and to utilizing a wide range of sources for interpreting the past.<sup>90</sup>



Image 2: Explaining my research to some young men near the River Jur

I cannot (and would not try to) use this thesis to present precisely what people living in Gogrial thought about their pasts. It is simply not possible to know exactly what people are thinking, or the myriad of personal and political motivations that lie behind what people tell you, in any context. This type of total knowledge is impossible to obtain and should not be the goal of ethnographic research. Just as in every conversation we do not know (nor would we want to know) everything the other person is thinking, neither

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<sup>88</sup> The discussion goes back further than the 1980s. In an 1961 lecture called 'Anthropology and History' Evans-Pritchard discussed the commonalities between the disciplines, concluding that 'anthropology must choose between being social history and being nothing' and likewise 'history must choose between being social anthropology or being nothing.' Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard, "Anthropology and History," in *Essays in Social Anthropology* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 64. For a discussion of history and anthropology in the 1980s see Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>89</sup> John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 13.

<sup>90</sup> Barbara Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History," in *Writing African History*, ed. John Edward Philips (Rochester, USA: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 191.



should an ethnographer attempt to be omniscient.<sup>91</sup> Rather, my research is a project of translating history: *translation* in James Clifford's sense of the term as an imperfect process of making something visible and valid to a different audience.<sup>92</sup>

This research was ethnographic in the sense that developing personal relationships was an essential part of the process. Sherry Ortner has said that ethnography has at its core 'the attempt to understand another life world using the self...as an instrument of knowing'.<sup>93</sup> I did this by putting myself among people and trying to understand what they said about the past and what was important to them about it, not just in formal interviews but in informal conversations and through observation. I tried to establish trust with interviewees by living, eating and talking with them. There are many imperfections and complicated power dynamics inherent in this enterprise. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes has put it, 'the ethnographer always has and always will be an imperfect instrument of cultural translation' yet this does not mean that ethnographers cannot be empathetic and produce critical and politically grounded work.<sup>94</sup> However, it is necessary to insert the researcher into the narrative of research, rather than pretend they are a neutral 'fly-on-the-wall'. The production of knowledge through ethnographic research is an intersubjective process. This kind of knowledge is produced *by experience* and *through relations* with the subjectivity of the ethnographer an integral part of conducting and interpreting ethnography. The same applies to collecting oral histories, because of the reciprocal and performative nature of their authorship. These are inescapably also *my* stories about Gogrial, elicited through the unique relationships that I built during my stay.

For most of my research I stayed with the same family; at their home in Kuajok and their home in Cueicok. Adut and Deng both had jobs in the state government, so they lived in Kuajok most of the time, but they kept homes in Deng's ancestral village of Cueicok and regularly visited. I travelled as much as I could throughout the Gogrial region. I tried to

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<sup>91</sup> David Graeber, *Lost People: Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar* (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2007), 390.

<sup>92</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 11, 39, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Sherry Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 42.

<sup>94</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995): 417-418.

see and do as much as I could and meet as many people as I could. I visited friends' relatives, interviewed and talked to them, slept in their homes and shared their food. I tried never to turn down an invitation. To get around I used local public transport, a motorbike and I walked. Walking around with people turned out to be very important strategy for me. I would ask them to explain what things were to generate conversations about the landscape. For example, it was often while travelling with people that I learned things about where old roads were, what paths had been used at what times and when roads had been abandoned. I occasionally took lifts with NGOs and I spent two weeks volunteering on seed distributions in Gogrial East county – this allowed me to see much more of the county than I would have been able to otherwise and allowed to me to meet people in Gogrial who were receiving food aid. When I felt exhausted by weeks of constant socializing and life in a busy family home, I spent a weekend in a hotel in Wau where I could enjoy electricity, running water and a glass of wine. Here I would often meet a variety of government officials, aid workers and returning diaspora, many of whom were from Gogrial, with whom I spoke about my research and the general political situation in South Sudan. Many of these conversations often provided me with useful and challenging perspectives on the material I was collecting in Gogrial.

My methodological approach was partly about establishing my own archive, following the Comaroffs provocation that historical ethnographies must begin by constructing their own archives, which go beyond documentary and official records because 'the poetics of history lie also in mute meanings transacted through goods and practices, through icons and images dispersed in the *landscape* of the everyday'.<sup>95</sup> I have also taken an ethnographic approach to interpreting oral sources. Formal interviews and song translations were an important part of my approach, but I built up equally important insights and keys to interpreting this 'formal' material through informal conversations and observations that I recorded daily in my field diary. Many of the insights of this thesis were the product of informal conversations and observations.

Cooper defines oral history as 'personal reminiscence solicited by the researcher in an interview format, and it may focus on the life history of the person being interviewed, on specific events of interest to the historian, or on the subject's perhaps idiosyncratic

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<sup>95</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 35. Emphasis mine.

memories of a family, neighbourhood, community or movement'.<sup>96</sup> No sources are objective; all are produced under specific social, economic and political conditions. However, oral histories are unlike the documentary record because they are performative; 'their tellers must intersect with a palpable audience at a particular moment in space and time'.<sup>97</sup> They are a much more relational kind of material than a document.

In Gogrial I conducted semi-structured interviews based around people's life histories and memories of particular events. There was considerable flexibility and interviews tended to focus on what interviewees wanted to discuss. I initially targeted several groups of people. The first were those considered to 'know history' who could give me accepted authoritative version of the local history. I had to create a separate category of 'elderly women' to address the problem that everyone being suggested to me for interviews was male. I spoke to religious specialists and *bäny bith*. *Bäny bith* are not specifically 'land priests' or 'rain makers', as they are sometimes glossed, but they have a broader protective role in ensuring prosperity, which is linked to environmental concerns. I interviewed war veterans because I was interested in the ways they saw liberation war as transforming the landscape. As my research continued I adopted a snowball approach to finding interviewees: as people knew the things I was interested in, they suggested particular people I should speak to and I followed recommendations that came up in conversation. This was greatly helped by the purchase of a motorbike half way through my fieldwork, which allowed me to travel between dispersed settlements easily. When I knew people better the line between 'interview' and 'conversation' very often blurred. My research followed a continual trail of referrals. There are advantages and disadvantages to this. A major advantage was that it was shaped by the participants in my research and in this sense it was collaborative – an approach that I found very productive.

Most interviews were carried out at people's homes. I usually spoke with my research assistant on the way to explain the questions I would ask. The many people who helped me translate my material were an integral part of this research. I believe that even if I had been able to stay longer and achieve a higher level of proficiency in Dinka language, I would still have used an assistant. A translator is not only there to provide a linguistic service; they are an important intermediary who sets up and mediates relationships in

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<sup>96</sup> Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History," 192.

<sup>97</sup> Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 38.

research – this alters and enriches the research in a variety of ways. For example, I worked with different ‘research assistants’, usually young men, and frequently the people I would go with them to interview were members of their extended family. There were periods in many interviews when we were talking to an uncle or grandmother of my assistant when, it seemed as though they were really engaged in their own conversation, of which I was an observer. Of course, these conversations were a result of and mediated by my presence, but they were also shaped (I think very productively) by other relationships.

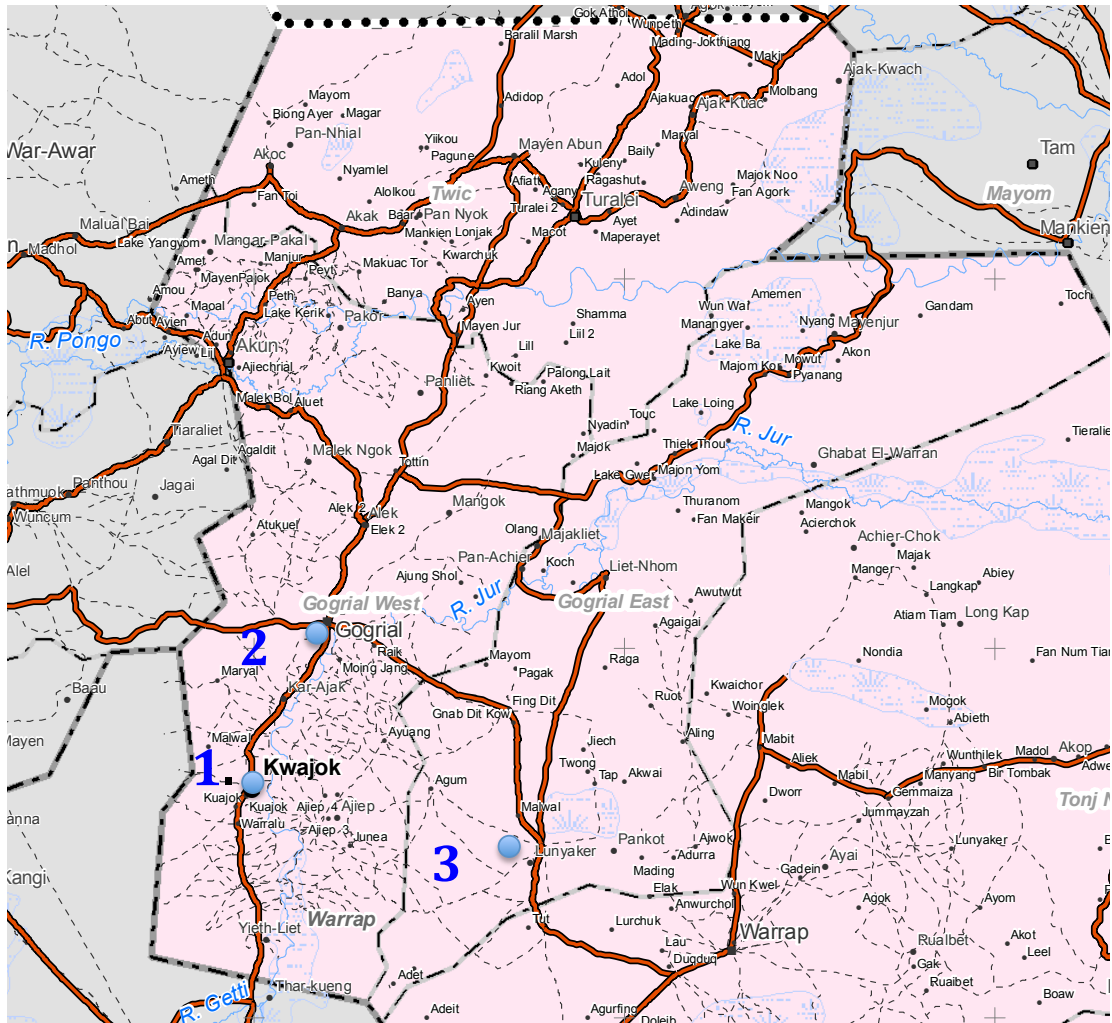
## FIELDSITES

During my research I lived and worked in Gogrial East and West counties of Warrap State. This is the area I refer to in this thesis as ‘Gogrial.’ The administrative history of Gogrial will be discussed in the next chapter.

I did not attempt to conduct research all over Gogrial. I limited my enquiries to the areas where Godfrey Lienhardt had worked and selected three main sites that I thought would be revealing and for which I could find documentary sources. I circulated between the three sites.



Map 2: Map of South Sudan with location of Warrap State and approximate area of detail.



Map 3: Detail of main fieldwork sites (major roads and paths shown).

The first was (1) Kuajok, the current capital of Warrap State (including the immediately surrounding are near the river Jur), inhabited by the Kuac section of Dinka. Kuajok has only recently been made the state capital and has grown considerably in the last five years (see chapter 3). Previously it was a small village with a mission church (the first Catholic mission among the Dinka (established in 1924) and school.

The second was (2) Gogrial Town, the historic administrative centre for Gogrial District, in the territory of the Aguok Dinka section. Gogrial town is the administrative centre of Gogrial West County, but it has been superseded in size and importance by Kuajok. Gogrial was a Government of Sudan (GoS) army garrison during the last civil war. In Gogrial town I stayed as a guest at the house of the County Commissioner.

The third was the small village of (3) Cueicok near to the market village of Luonyaker in Gogrial East County, in the territory of the Apuk Dinka section. I looked at Cueicok because I wanted to work in a place considered by residents of Gogrial to be rural. South Sudanese draw a strong distinction between ‘town’ associated with government and literate cultures and ‘the village’ associated with ‘traditional’ culture (a point which will be explored in the thesis). I wanted to gain a perspective of both these types of place. The particular choice of Cueicok was largely practical: I had connections there and it was possible for me to access it. I stayed in Adut’s house in Cueicok (Deng has six wives and they each had their own house), which was looked after by her mother.

I did not intend these sites to be representative of the geographic, administrative or sub-ethnic diversity of Gogrial: I wanted to explore the dynamics of each place and the connections running between them. The three sites are connected by the River Jur. They were close to the river and the different communities living there all took their cattle to dry season pastures in *Toc* Apuk, the flood plains of the River Jur in Gogrial East.<sup>98</sup>



Image 3. Being blessed by Jiel Yuot with my ‘mother’ and ‘father’ on the morning of my final departure from Cueicok. July 2012

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<sup>98</sup> The other section in Gogrial - Awan Chan, Awan Mou, and Tuic take their cattle to the flood plains of the Rivers Lol and Pongo.

## THE VISUAL RECORD

During my fieldwork I photographed extensively (I took over 4,000 photos), a small selection of which are woven into this thesis. I consulted historical photographs, including Godfrey Lienhardt's photographs at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, the photographic collection of the Sudan Archive in Durham (which contains over 50,000 images) and the photographs from the Gogrial missions at the Comboni Fathers Archive in Rome. I had originally intended to use historical images for photo elicitation and as memory prompts in interviews. However, as all the photographs are old (mostly dating from the Condominium period) and badly labelled it was hard for people to talk about them in detail. Instead I have used them as visual sources. Taking photographs of people and giving them printed copies was also a valuable way of building trust and reciprocating their generosity.

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

This thesis uses a variety of established and newly available archival sources. The diverse archive sources I have used reflect the very fragmented nature of the archival record for Gogrial.

In Durham University's Sudan Archive (SAD), the papers left by officials working in what is now South Sudan reveal the colonial administrative perspective on the South. Some documents from the British National Archives (TNA) in Kew were used, particularly the Sudan Intelligence Reports, for piecing together the early period of British administration. I was fortunate to be able to consult preliminarily the South Sudan National Archive (SSNA). Although it is not yet fully catalogued, SSNA contains records from the colonial period to the 1980s, including many local files. This is a very rich resource for Equatoria and Upper Nile regions but contains very few files from Bahr el Ghazal. The Comboni Father's Archive in Rome (AC) includes published material and unpublished manuscripts, diaries and photographs of priests and missionaries who worked in Kuajok and Gogrial.

Gogrial town was an administrative centre and records were kept there. In 1976, the historian Robert Collins made a visit to South Sudan as part of a historical retrieval project. On this visit, Collins went to Gogrial and, although he did not record details of

their contents, notes that he saw all the administrative files.<sup>99</sup> He also saw the Provincial files kept at Wau. Between 1976 and my fieldwork, Gogrial town was almost totally physically destroyed in the second civil war. When I went to Gogrial town in 2011, there was no trace of the files that Collins had seen: it appears that the most important documentary source for a local history of Gogrial may be lost. It is possible that the files were transferred to the former Provincial capital, Wau, and amalgamated with other files from Bahr el Ghazal. However, the Wau archives are damaged and not available for consultation.<sup>100</sup>

The anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt carried out his major ethnographic fieldwork for the classic book *Divinity and Experience* in Gogrial between 1947 and 1951. Lienhardt, a sharp-tongued chain smoker, had first read English Literature under F R Leavis on an open scholarship to Cambridge. World War Two interrupted his studies and he was sent to East Africa as a transport inspector. This ignited an interest in anthropology and he did a DPhil with Evans-Pritchard at Oxford.<sup>101</sup> He made several trips to Gogrial, lasting between three and six months for his study of Dinka social structure and religion. Lienhardt travelled extensively in Dinka areas and visited Aweil, Tonj, Rumbek and Bor as well as Gogrial. However, he concentrated mainly on Aweil and Gogrial, particularly the village of Pan Acier, in present day Gogrial East County of the border of Aguok and Apuk sections of Rek.<sup>102</sup> Lienhardt's published work and unpublished notes have been an important source for my thesis.

## TELLING HISTORY THROUGH SONG

A primary concern of this thesis is to address Dinka ways of telling and constructing history, not simply using oral history to construct a western-style historical account. The thesis' structure is based around a song that I recorded and translated during my fieldwork. This section will explain why I have done this.

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<sup>99</sup> SAD Collins 957/8/1-35 Transcript of Collins diary on visit to South Sudan as part of Historical retrieval project, 1976. Entry on 15 Sept 1976

<sup>100</sup> Photographs of a small numbers of files from the Bahr el Ghazal Provincial Archives files were given to me by Cherry Leonardi and Douglas Johnson.

<sup>101</sup> PRM Box 14/22 Description of Lienhardt in an extract from *A fighting Withdrawal: The Life of Dan Davin: Writer, Soldier and Publisher* by Keith Ovenden. In Lienhardt's personal files.

<sup>102</sup>He arrived in December 1947 PRM Box 2/1



I began working on this thesis with a concern to be attentive to how history in Gogrial was being constituted culturally.<sup>103</sup> It became clear to me, over the course of my research, that songs were an important form of historiographical discourse. I was already sensitized to this because Dinka songs are a widely celebrated medium of artistic and cultural expression and there is a relatively long history of interest in, and use of, Dinka songs in academic research.<sup>104</sup>

The song which this thesis follows belongs to a man called Deng Kuac Chol. He is a younger brother of a man called Chol who lived in the compound in which I stayed in Kuajok. I met him when he was visiting us *en route* to the home of a highly regarded composer, called Akec Bol Bol who was in the process of crafting the song for him. It is common for songs to be composed by a well known song smith. One bull is paid and the receiver will stay with the composer until they have been taught the song. When Deng arrived, Chol had approached me and told me, firmly, that if I wanted to know about history, I should listen to Deng's song, because 'it is *his history*'.<sup>105</sup> This genre of personal song is autobiographical. Deng's song contains many references to members of his family, places with significance to the family, stories about their clan's history and the local history of Yiik Adoor (in Gogrial East, where they are from).

The content of Deng's song is clearly 'historical,' but my interest in songs is not only about their content, but also about their *form*. A central feature of Dinka songs is that they poetically create a historical *space*. Songs are a central way through which landscape, place and history are publically discussed. One scholar has recently draw attention to the powerful 'place making' qualities of Dinka song, analyzing how copies of these songs are circulated in the Dinka diaspora as a way of connecting and constructing a sense of belonging and cultural memory. Angela Impey notes how 'time, place and cultural meanings are inflected in the poetic convention' of songs, as they anchor the singer and audience to a place in the landscape.<sup>106</sup> For example in this extract:

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<sup>103</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> The first Dinka song translations and interpretations to be published in an academic journal were recorded by the missionary Archibald Shaw, see Archibald Shaw, "Dinka Songs," *Man* 15 (1915): 35-36; Archibald Shaw, "Jieng (Dinka) Songs," *Man*, no. 17 (1917): 46-50.

<sup>105</sup> Fieldnotes, Kuajok 31.11.11

<sup>106</sup> Angela Impey, "Keeping in Touch via Cassette: Tracing Dinka Songs from Cattle Camp to Transnational Audio-Letter," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 2013, 7.

Majok shining like the evening star  
I brought a colourful bull with a white tail for my clan  
Like an ostrich, I brought a white and black bull for my clan

The singer's black and white bull, Majok (and by association himself and his clan) is placed in the landscape by being likened to a star in the sky. The sense of place is further emphasized by the reference to wildlife, the ostrich, which is also black and white.<sup>107</sup> This is all the more so when we consider that these bovine aesthetics have strong perceptual qualities. Cattle colour configurations are used to name and appreciate colours and aesthetics in nature. As Lienhardt wrote: "The Dinkas' very perception of colour, light, and shade in the world around them is...inextricably connected with their recognition of colour-configurations in their cattle. If their cattle-colour vocabulary were taken away, they would have scarcely any way of describing visual experience in terms of colour, light, and darkness."<sup>108</sup> In this way, songs poetically tap into a continual linguistic and cultural dialogue between cattle and features of the landscape.<sup>109</sup>

I strongly agree with this analysis and I would add that songs also have important '*path making*' qualities. Deng's song in particular strongly brings out pathways that are spatial, temporal and social. The image of the bull, a central feature of young men's personal songs, encapsulates these pathways. The bull, like other beasts in a herd, in itself conveys a unique history of human relations through the history of social transaction of cattle.<sup>110</sup> It is a carrier of historical memory and a lineage pathway. Through seasonal migration, bulls also recall movement and pathways through the landscape. This movement is performatively enhanced as young men often sing while physically walking or parading with their bulls. The image of the bull is used both metaphorically, and to emphasize the different physical, familial and historical pathways maintained in songs.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

<sup>108</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 12–13.

<sup>109</sup> Jeremy Coote, "The Marvels of Everyday Vision: The Anthropology of Aesthetics and the Cattle-Keeping Nilotes," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) especially 255–258.

<sup>110</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 22.

The structure of an account forces a particular reading or explanation of history; chronology has powerful narrative force.<sup>111</sup> Some scholars have played with structure to make a point about the construction of history. Leopold adopts a reverse chronology for his historical anthropology of West Nile – working backwards in time – to address how local ideas of history in West Nile are enacted, reclaimed and how they interact with ‘official’ history.<sup>112</sup> In a similar view, the song structure I am using is a way of threading an alternative kind of chronology through the material. It aims to destabilize the assumptions of conventional periodizations of South Sudan’s history that are tied closely to the state, wars and peace agreements. It suggests the history of Gogrial can be seen as a landscape of the pathways that are articulated in Deng’s song.

There is a further reason for using songs as a way to demonstrate the nature of ideas about history and landscape. A lot of the academic interest in them has hinged on the idea that songs contain information and can reveal truths about Dinka society and Dinka lives that are not necessarily otherwise visible. Even the British colonial government suspected a hidden potency in songs; a translation of a song attributed to Gol Mayen, a powerful spearmaster (*bäny bih*) from Rumbek was documented as evidence of the rebellious threat from the Agar Dinka;<sup>113</sup> the song file contained a note saying ‘that Gol threatened to paralyze anyone who explained its meaning to the Government’.<sup>114</sup>

Lienhardt’s monograph, *Divinity and Experience* is a very literary ethnography. Many of its ideas are developed through close readings of Dinka song texts. Lienhardt’s personal archive contains many notebooks of songs.<sup>115</sup> In his DPhil thesis he records that songs allowed him to see into the Dinka world ‘without distortion’, as through his translated texts he could glimpse a world he couldn’t otherwise see.<sup>116</sup> The scholar Francis Deng also describes Dinka songs ‘as a mirror of society.’<sup>117</sup> In his books he explicitly uses

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<sup>111</sup> Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History and Representation on an African Frontier* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 6–7.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>113</sup> At this time the Government considered the Agar Dinka to be particularly hostile to the government since a British officer had been killed near Rumbek a few years earlier.

<sup>114</sup> PRM GL Box 1/9 ‘The Song of Gol Mayen’ 1936

<sup>115</sup> E.g. PRM GL Box 3/13 (song transcripts), Box 4/8 (a book of songs from 1950), Box 5/2 (Dinka songs and texts).

<sup>116</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, “The Dinka of The Southern Sudan: Religion and Social Structure” (University of Oxford, Exeter College, 1952), 3.

<sup>117</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 95.

them to explore and illustrate Dinka cultural and moral values for a foreign audience.<sup>118</sup> Megan Vaughan has used women songs to explore the perspectives of people whose voices are otherwise left out of historical records.<sup>119</sup>

Yet the idea that songs might offer a view of ‘their world...without distortion’ is problematic. One of the characteristics of Dinka songs is that they defy easy interpretation. They are not chronological narratives and they have multiple layers of meaning.<sup>120</sup> Yet personal songs, like Deng’s, are extremely rich sources because they are ‘rooted principally in the poetic documentation and public disclosure of autobiographical information’.<sup>121</sup> As a verbal art form, they have highly paradoxical elements; frequently combining expressions of dignity, pride and satisfaction with expressions of helplessness or aggressiveness. They appear to allow people to speak the unspeakable.<sup>122</sup>

Visual imagery and association are vital qualities of song and skilful use of metaphor is essential. Good songs are those that employ a creative range of poignant associations and images; songs that are too literal lack depth or force and are considered bad songs.<sup>123</sup> It is not that songs are just ‘glimpses of truth’ but skills in interpretation of metaphor and imagery are crucial to the art of songs. Genuinely poetic strategy entails an element of ambiguity and presupposition of insider knowledge. The power of Dinka oral poetry emerges *through*, not in spite of its special form.<sup>124</sup>

The importance of this came home to me during the process of translating Deng’s song. After recording it, I spent around six months looking for a way to translate it. I knew I would need someone who understood the details of Deng’s family history to help me. I was lucky enough to meet some cousins of Deng, Mawan and Wol at a wedding. They had been refugees in East Africa and had recently returned to South Sudan. They had a

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>119</sup> Megan Vaughan, *The Story of An African Famine: Gender and Famine in Twentieth-Century Malawi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>120</sup> In their opacity, Dinka songs share many characteristics with Yoruba *oriki*, see Karin Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 27–29.

<sup>121</sup> Impey, “Keeping in Touch via Cassette,” 6.

<sup>122</sup> Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs*, 39.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>124</sup> John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana and Chigaco: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 207; Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*, 35.

good knowledge of English and of Deng's family history. In order to get a working translation of this song I spent a week in Deng's home village working with Mawan and Wol. We were helped by other friends and relatives of Deng's who dropped by to see what we were doing and added their opinions and knowledge about parts of the song.<sup>125</sup> I was able to see first hand how the meaning of the song went beyond the text; it was constantly renegotiated through the translation process by Deng's friends and family members as they debated the details, offered corrections and alternative suggestions. Because Dinka songs rely on skilful use of complex imagery and metaphor, the continual process of negotiating their meaning is integral to how songs are consumed. This ambiguity is central to the poetic effect; even insiders will disagree over the interpretation of the song – they are dialogical in the sense that meaning is jointly constituted between the singer and the audience.<sup>126</sup>

Songs thus epitomize the ambiguities and multiple meanings of history. This ambiguity brings us back to the story about Lienhardt's research assistant cited at the beginning of this essay. It emphasizes how there are different ways of understanding history. Whether something makes a foundational academic text, or makes your uncle famous, is a matter of perspective and of different relationships to different kinds of centres.

## CHAPTER PLANS

Using Deng Kuac's song as a guide, the chapters in this thesis will navigate the reader through a series of pathways to show how the landscape of Gogrial has been made and remade. Deng's song is introduced in an interlude between Chapter 2 and 3.<sup>127</sup> The subsequent chapters each begin with an extract from his song, which is connected to the themes of the chapter.

CHAPTER 2 will give an account of different attempts to understand Gogrial and Dinka society since the late nineteenth century. It is an orientation chapter, which traces the historical production and circulation of an image of Gogrial as both a remote periphery

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<sup>125</sup> Deng himself was looking after cattle at the time.

<sup>126</sup> This idea is articulated by Barber in relation to *oriki* oral poetry and is also very relevant for Dinka songs: Barber, *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow*, 36.

<sup>127</sup> A recording of Deng's song is included on a CD included with this thesis. The text can be read and understood without listening to the song.

and a place that successive incomers have tried to incorporate into different regimes of government, knowledge, belief and development. Of particular focus will be early travellers accounts, the legacies of colonial attempts to understand the society they governed, anthropological work on Gogrial and Dinka society, missionary understandings of Gogrial as a landscape ripe for conversion and recent photojournalist images of famine. The consistent image of remoteness that these accounts have generated is in part a result of the fact that they, for the most part, shared an agenda to change aspects of Gogrial. The rest of the thesis will complicate this image.

After a short interlude to introduce Deng Kuac's song, the main body of the thesis begins in CHAPTER 3. This part of the thesis begins with what I was first told when I started enquiring about local history: the stories people tell of how they first settled an area. It analyses two main features of these arrival narratives. Unlike the image of peripherality examined in chapter 2, arrival narratives are claims about the creation of centres. These assertions of centrality are a form of political-historical claim and claims of first precedence to territory and part of a history of migration and lineage expansion. Yet, they do more than this. Intrinsic to arrival narratives is the idea of socializing wild land. These narratives provide a language for communities to reclaim land that has been lost or abandoned because of the violence of civil war. This can be seen in stories about the ongoing expansion of Kuajok town.

Arrival narratives typically draw on non-state forms of authority – such as ancestry and clan history. CHAPTER 4 looks at how the process of making the landscape in Gogrial has also been the result of an interpenetration between forms of authority that are derived from the state. This is particularly exposed in disputes at administrative boundaries. As state power has periodically expanded and contracted in Gogrial since 1923, different moral claims on the landscape – state and 'non-state' – have interacted as people have attempted to tap the power of the state.

Moving in from borders, the last three chapters look at places that have been considered to be important centres: the home as a centre; an administrative centre; and grazing areas and cattle camps. CHAPTER 5 discusses the historical construction of the village home (*baai*) as both a physical place and a moral centre of Dinka society. It shows how the moral associations with 'home' and rural life have been continually renegotiated through

periods of famine and the expansion and contraction of markets in rural areas over the last fifty years. Villages are often identified with as symbols of unchanging rural tradition and even as a metaphor for the nation. This became particularly important during the civil war when the survival of a traditional way of life was at risk.

The focus of CHAPTER 6 is on Gogrial Town, the old administrative centre that was entirely destroyed during the second civil war. It shows how the destruction and memories of civil war were being mediated through the landscape. By looking at the process of rebuilding the town and constructing a memorial to townspeople who were killed in a massacre in the first war it examines the ways that some aspects of South Sudan's history were being remembered, others forgotten and others constructively adapted. It argues that this mediation of history is achieved by rendering certain events and people visible, and others invisible. The things that certain Commissioners and educated townspeople have wanted to be visible in Gogrial town intersect and in some cases destabilize the national historical narrative of liberation.

CHAPTER 7 looks at the ways that the most recent civil war turned 'the bush' and places of refuge on their head and created new landscapes of insecurity and safety in Gogrial. As a result of events and processes connected to the most recent civil war, the characteristics of areas of forest and swamp that were once offered protection in times of insecurity have changed; inter-community conflict is more deadly than it used to be, wild animals that used to inhabit forests have disappeared. This chapter traces debates about a changing landscape of insecurity in Gogrial and the divergent ways that different people in Gogrial are searching for protection in a world that has been turned on its head.

## 2 Imagining Gogrial

Remoteness is not simply a static condition found somewhere *out there* beyond the pale; rather it is always being made, unmade, and transformed.

Harms, Hussain and Shneiderman, 2014<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the images of and discourses about Gogrial and Dinka society that have informed and shaped popular and academic understandings of the region and the people who live there: from the late nineteenth century to the most recent civil war. It tells a story of evolving understandings of Gogrial as a remote and violent periphery. Remoteness is, of course, a relational concept and the construction of peripheries and remotes spaces is deeply entangled with the creation of centres.<sup>2</sup> Most of the images of Gogrial that are discussed in this chapter concern the construction of Gogrial as remote to state power.

As well as tracing the construction of Gogrial's marginality, this chapter also examines an important paradox in these images of Gogrial and Dinka society. This is that as well as constructing peripherality, government administrators, missionaries, aid workers and even anthropologists have attempted to incorporate the Dinka into various fields of power. In 1922, a British Provincial Governor revealingly described administering Dinka populations as a process of getting people to 'come in to the Government'.<sup>3</sup> The idea of bringing people in has permeated images of Gogrial: a notion that people are not only remote, but that they should be incorporated and made comprehensible.

This process of incorporation has involved attempting to break down different imagined barriers surrounding Gogrial: the geographical barrier of marshland (the *Sudd*), the political barriers to governing the population, the spiritual barriers to conversion,

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<sup>1</sup> Erik Harms, Shafqat Hussain, and Sara Shneiderman, "Remote and Edgy: New Takes on Old Anthropological Themes," *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014): 362.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>3</sup> *Sudan Intelligence Report (SIR)* April 1922,8.



epistemological barriers of understanding to make Dinka ontology comprehensible to a European academic audience, and a moral discourse of overcoming the barriers of war to ameliorate suffering.

An interventionist agenda speaks to another feature of understandings of Gogrial. The Dinka people have been seen as an archetypal noble savage and the people of Gogrial have in part been imagined as the architects of their own exclusion who were liable to take ‘their herds and families off to inaccessible marshes’ to avoid unwanted interaction with foreigners.<sup>4</sup> Images of Dinka people centre on the idea of ‘pre-modern’ pastoralism, hyper-masculinity and a threat of violence. Intervention has been seen as necessary because of the potential unruliness and primitiveness of the people. This gendered image has only changed during a time of famine, when images of female suffering were produced.

A remarkable continuity in understandings of Gogrial exists because most foreigners have come with a very similar lens. With the partial exception of Lienhardt’s anthropology, all of these representations have been connected to overtly interventionist projects that aimed at transforming Dinka society. This helps to explain why certain representations of Gogrial and ‘the Dinka’ persist. All of these images accompany different kinds of modernizing agendas. If the agenda is development and progress, or incorporation into a state system, the subjects will always appear backward and wild.

The material discussed here has been assembled from published sources and a fragmented archival record: both documentary and photographic. Administrative records from Gogrial covering the 1920s to 1980s have been mostly lost: a fraction survive dispersed between Wau, Juba, Khartoum and various parts of the United Kingdom. This account also draws on anthropological accounts, missionary records and publications, travellers’ accounts and images produced by photojournalists during recent famine and conflict. The period of colonial administration will be shown as particularly crucial in producing an image of Gogrial. My analysis focuses on the images of Gogrial that have come to define external representations of the region. It begins with attempts to understand the physical landscape; it then considers initial impressions of the people and

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<sup>4</sup> Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years’ Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa. From 1868 to 1871, Vols 1 and 2* (New York: Harper, 1874), 227.

attempts to understand Gogrial and Dinka society to trace a narrative of Gogrial's peripherality: geographically, politically and culturally.

This chapter is only able to hint at the complexity of producing images of Gogrial. These images accrue over time: external representations play into the people's own self-mythologisations, just as these external representations are drawn from real observations and are not (usually) conjured out of nothing. Asking if these images are 'correct' is the wrong question – the point is that they *both* reveal and conceal. It is the case that Gogrial has long been hard to access – both for colonial officials and for aid agencies. But these narratives must be denaturalized, because they impose frames through which the history of Gogrial is understood. These frames affect what is noticed, what is unseen and they authorize certain actions and responses. Narratives produce ways of seeing that can become the only way that a situation or a region is understood. They risk obscuring the complexities of local experiences and debates.<sup>5</sup>

#### A BARRIER

External understandings of Gogrial have been shaped from the outset by a sense of the area's geographic impenetrability and isolation. Gogrial is located in the White Nile basin: one of the world's largest wetland systems. One of the earliest and most enduring ways that Gogrial has been understood is as part of this unique and imposing ecological region. The White Nile is not one river, but many. Gogrial is part of the Bahr el Ghazal basin. It is from this river that the province, 'Bahr el Ghazal' (Ar. River of the gazelle) takes its name. The Bahr el Ghazal is immediately adjacent to the Bahr el Jebel basin and together with the Sobat basin to the east, these three sprawling rivers and their many tributaries form the White Nile.

Seasonal differences in the environment are extreme. The whole White Nile Basin is strikingly flat; in places between Malakal in the north and Bor in the south, the gradient is only 1cm per km.<sup>6</sup> This means that during the wet months (May to October) the heavy

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<sup>5</sup> Severine Autesserre, "Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and Their Unintended Consequences," *African Affairs* 111, no. 442 (2012): 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Denny, "Permanent Swamp Vegetation of the Upper Nile," *Hydrobiologia* 110 (1984): 79.

rains cause extensive flooding, as the network of rivers burst their banks and inundate the surrounding low plains (Dinka; *loc*). In the dry season (November to April) temperatures reach up to 45°C, the floodwater evaporates and the parched clay soils harden and crack, leaving water and pasture in the plains only.<sup>7</sup> A striking indication of the vast extent of this evaporation is that by the time the Bahr el Ghazal river joins the White Nile at Lake No, despite the huge area it drains, it makes a negligible contribution to the overall water content of the Nile River.<sup>8</sup>

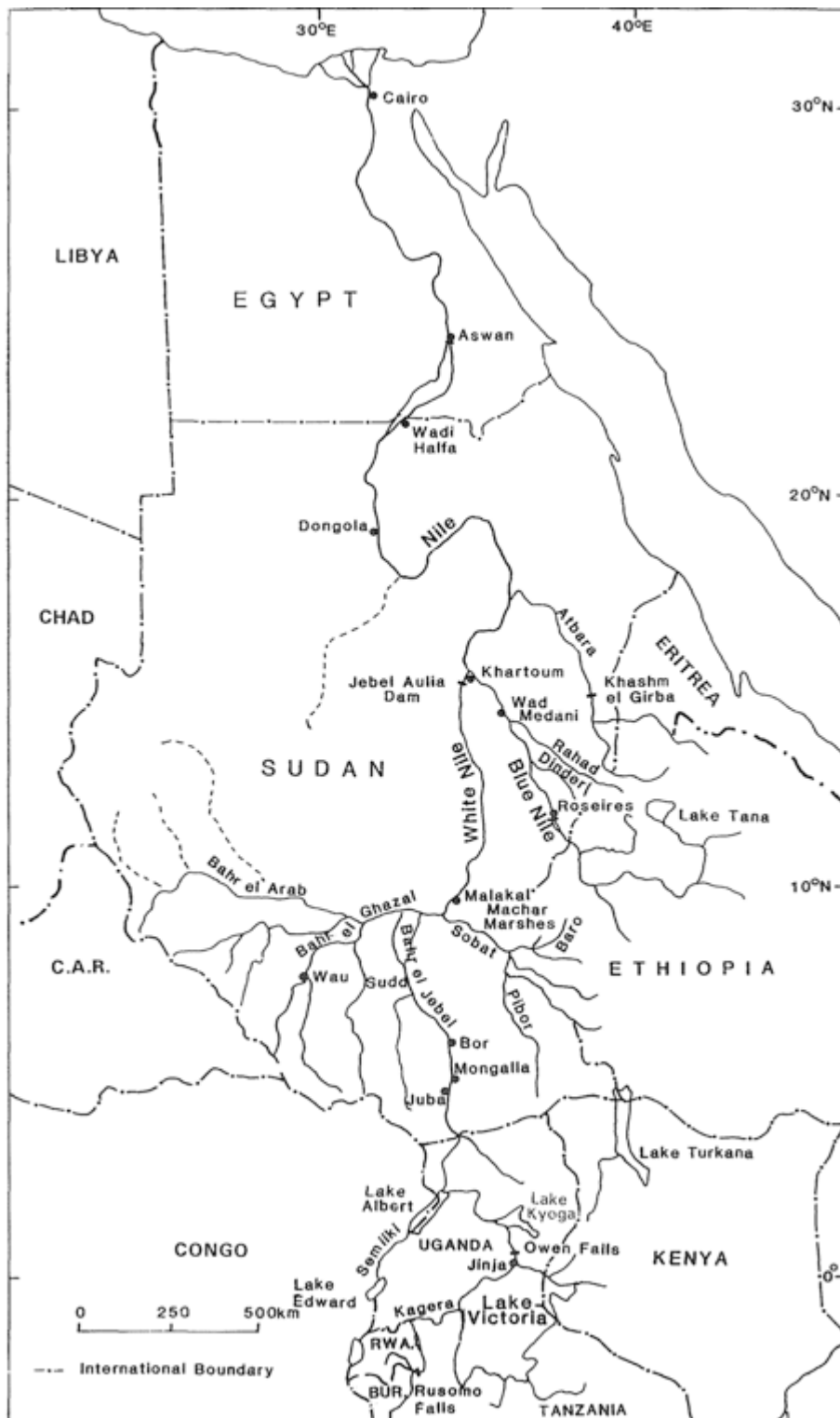
Despite extreme and unpredictable environmental conditions this is an extensively populated area. The seasonally evaporating rivers and streams that lattice the Bahr el Ghazal basin are vital to the communities of pastoralists and fisherpeople who live near them. Agro-pastoralist communities (the largest are the Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk) in regions like Gogrial, have long exploited these seasonal fluctuations and micro-topologies to thrive in this fluctuating ecological mosaic. They find water and pasture for their cattle and catch fish in the permanent swamps in the dry season; in the wet season they migrate to graze cattle and plant crops (mostly sorghum, millet and groundnuts) on elevated land. In this dynamic and unpredictable ecology, mobility and interdependence are essential.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Katherine Homewood, *The Ecology of African Pastoralist Societies* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008), 120–122.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Howell, Michael Lock, and Stephen Cobb, *The Jonglei Canal: Impact and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 28.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas H Johnson, "Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral 'Common Ecology'," *Journal of African History* 30 (1989): 484



Map 4: The Nile Basin across Sudan before separation.<sup>10</sup>

This vast river system is often called ‘The *Sudd*’.<sup>11</sup> *Sudd* is an Arabic word meaning means ‘barrier’ or ‘blockage’; this name derives from the clumps of reeds that block the

<sup>10</sup> J.V Sutcliffe and Y.P Parks, *The Hydrology of the Nile* (IAHS Special Publication, 1999), 9.

narrow channels of the White Nile's tributaries, making them impassable to large ships. The *Sudd* has entered into history books as a great obstruction, preventing access further south; even the advance of the Roman Empire was thwarted by the geography here. This only changed in the nineteenth century, when trading ships began to literally cut their way through the tangled reeds. Following Britain's reconquest of Sudan in 1898, management of these difficult rivers became a strategic necessity. Anglo-Egyptian rule was in Terje Tvedt's words primarily a 'hydraulic regime' since opening up the major rivers of South Sudan and claiming control over the Nile was essential to political claims on the river as a whole.<sup>12</sup> Massive programmes of *Sudd* clearance, which allowed ships to navigate the river were launched.<sup>13</sup> Until the mid-twentieth century, channels through these reed-choked rivers were the main routes into the South. Given this political importance it is unsurprising that accounts from this period focus heavily on controlling waterways.



Image 4: The Union Jack flying in the *Sudd*, 1902.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Technically 'The Sudd' only refers to the river basin of the Bahr el Jebel, but it is often used by non-specialists to talk about the whole White Nile Basin complex.

<sup>12</sup> Terje Tvedt, *The River Nile in the Age of The British: Political Ecology and the Quest for Economic Power* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Sudd cutting operations ran from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century. For a description see Robert O Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 20-45.

<sup>14</sup> SAD Slatin A32/112

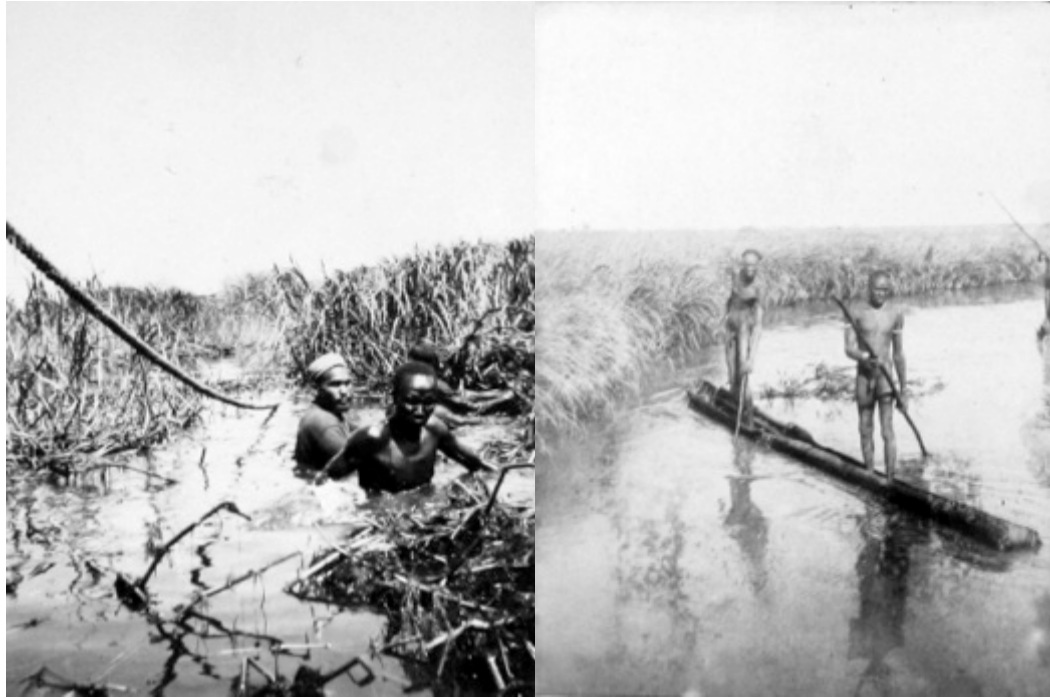


Image 5: Government workers cutting *Sudd* on the River Jur, 1900-1904.<sup>15</sup>

Image 6: Dinka men seen from the steamer on the River Jur, 1900-1904.<sup>16</sup>

The *Sudd* was routinely described as a difficult and charmless place by officials and the explorers who visited it. Distaste and even disgust were part of the way that the region was distanced from European experiences and made unapproachable. The explorer Samuel Baker recorded a journey up the Bahr el Jebel in 1870 in which he compared the river with ancient Greek visions of hell, ‘no dependence can ever be placed on this accursed river. The fabulous Styx must be a sweet rippling brook compared to this horrible creation.’<sup>17</sup> Sir William Garstin, who was a key architect of *Sudd* clearance, expressed a similar ‘indescribable’ revulsion to the *Sudd* at a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in 1908:

No-one who has not seen this country can have any real idea of its supreme dreariness and its utter desolation. To my mind, the most barren desert that I have ever crossed is a bright and cheerful locality compared with the White Nile marshland... The air is, at all times, steamy and hot, and the whole region is melancholy to an indescribable degree.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> SAD Boardman A98/99

<sup>16</sup> SAD Boardman A98/131 This image is one of the earliest photographs of a person from Gogrial that I have found.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Baker, *Ismail'ia: A Narrative of the Expedition to Central Africa for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, Organised by Ismail, Khedive of Egypt. (Volume 1)* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1874), 79.

<sup>18</sup> William Garstin, “Fifty Years of Nile Exploration, and Some of Its Results,” *The Geographical Journal* 33, no. 2 (1909): 137.

The River Jur, which runs through Gogrial was an important riverine artery because it connected Wau (the capital of Bahr el Ghazal Province) with the White Nile. It is incredibly narrow and required several years (1900-1902) of *sudd* clearance and dredging to make it passable.<sup>19</sup> Even by the 1920s the explorer Cuthbert Christie noted ‘navigation to Wau by way of the Jur River is carried on under the greatest of difficulties largely due to the peculiarities of the river itself, which in places is extremely narrow and tortuous’.<sup>20</sup> The steamers could only ever make it down the river in the wet season, as it dried up into shallow pools for the rest of the year. When British infrastructure was well established, Gogrial remained far away from the centre of power. In 1941 it still took steamers 17 days to reach Gogrial Town from Khartoum and 19 days to reach Wau. Technical problems, which were common, could delay the journey by weeks.<sup>21</sup>

Accounts of *Sudd* voyages generated the image of the White Nile Basin as a foreboding and alien place. *Sudd*-cutting was a laborious and dangerous process. Boats would frequently get stuck and Europeans died on these journeys or from illnesses contracted on them. Gessi, an Italian Governor of the Turco-Egyptian Province of Bahr el Ghazal, described a grim journey from Meshra el Rek (the most southerly navigable point of the Bahr el Ghazal river) to Khartoum, in which his boat got stuck in reed blockages; they ran out of food and he alleged his crew turned to cannibalism, so desperate were their conditions.<sup>22</sup> They were afraid to approach the ‘enemy’ villages of Dinka pastoralists living by the river, although they did eventually attack them and steal their grain stores.<sup>23</sup> Gessi himself died from a fever contracted on this journey.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*, 39.

<sup>20</sup> Cuthbert Christy, “The Bahr El-Ghazal and Its Waterways,” *The Geographical Journal* 61, no. 5 (1923): 324.

<sup>21</sup> SAD Roberts 298/5/7-15 ‘Working Timetables of Trains and Steamers’ 1941. P.36

<sup>22</sup> Romolo Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan: Being a Record of Explorations, Adventures and Campaigns against the Arab Slave Hunters* (London: Sampson Low, Marsten & Co, 1892), 401.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 400–401.

<sup>24</sup> Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*, 27.



Image 7: A post card produced in Khartoum of boats stuck, 'locked up by the Sudd'.<sup>25</sup>

#### FIERCE DINKA PASTORALISTS

It was not only geography that fed into the discourse of the remoteness of Gogrial. As Gessi's fear of seeking help from locals, even when his crew was starving indicates, the people were believed to be as wild as the landscape itself. The image of the archaic pastoralist 'other' has been central in European representations of Africa more widely. As Corinne Kratz has pointed out, this is often a multifaceted image, conferring both positive attributes of pristine traditional culture, as well as negative connotations of recalcitrance and violence.<sup>26</sup> Images of certain pastoralist groups as 'iconic' isolated people have deep historical roots, as Bollig and Heinemann have shown for the enduring images of timelessness and marginality in visual and narrative representations of Himba pastoralists in Namibia. The image of warlike pastoralists is another foundational image of Gogrial and of Dinka people more widely that has been a central part of peripheralising discourses about Gogrial.<sup>27</sup>

One of the earliest foreign accounts we have of Dinka people, dating from 1874, describe them as isolated cattle pastoralists, a mobile people who 'packed their herds and

<sup>25</sup> SAD Storrar 53/1/64 (obtained 1916-1917, production date unknown)

<sup>26</sup> Corinne Kratz and Robert Gordon, "Persistent Popular Images of Pastoralists," *Visual Anthropology* 15 (2002): 248.

<sup>27</sup> Nuer people have been represented in a similar way, see Douglas H Johnson, "The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and the Origins of a Stereotype," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 51, no. 1 (1981): 508-27.



families off to inaccessible marshes' to avoid unwanted contact with outsiders.<sup>28</sup> Early colonial officials said they belonged to a distinct 'race' of cattle-focused 'swamp negroes'.<sup>29</sup> Features of their physical appearance (principally height and skin colour) were taken as further evidence for racial purity and isolation: these striking features, it was suggested, were the result of very limited contact with outsiders.<sup>30</sup> Corporeality was also laboured in the personal papers of officers commissioned to Gogrial and neighbouring Dinka districts. One Assistant District Commissioner of Gogrial chose to describe the physical appearance and accoutrements of Dinka people at length in his letters home to his mother.<sup>31</sup>

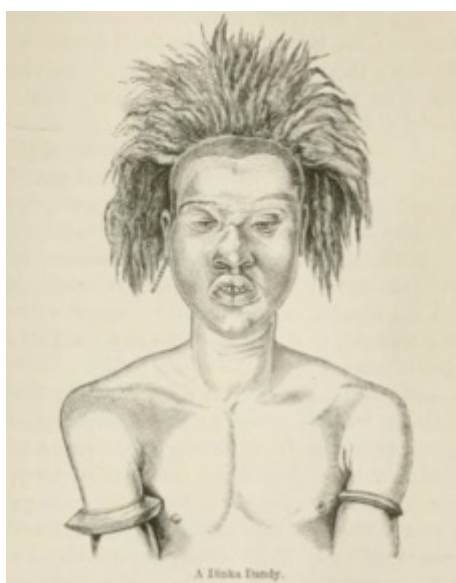


Image 8 Portrait of 'a Dinka dandy'

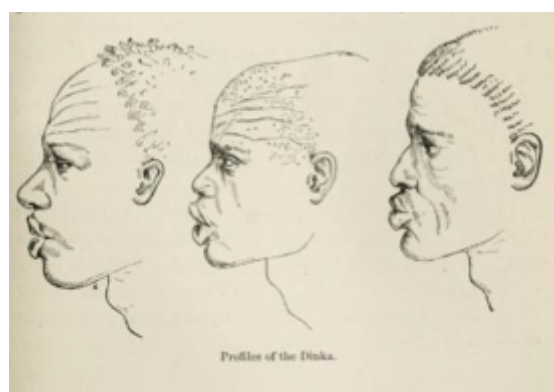


Image 9 Dinka profiles<sup>32</sup>

British colonial officials saw pastoralism as a more primitive state of society, a pre-agricultural and pre-industrial livelihood that would, in time, evolve out of existence.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*. Vol 1, 227.

<sup>29</sup> Intelligence Department, *The Bahr El Ghazal Province: Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Handbook Series*. (Khartoum: Sudan Government Publications, 1911), 30, 21.

<sup>30</sup> G.W Titherington, "The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province," *Sudan Notes and Records* 10 (1927): 177.

<sup>31</sup> V Eyre, ADC Gogrial, 1946-1949. See SAD 693/2/1-66. Cited in Zoe Cormack, "Fashion, Flirting and Fighting: Dance in 'Dinka Districts', 1929-1950," *Sudan Studies* 44 (2011): 32-47.

<sup>32</sup> Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*. Vol 1, 151; 149. For early ethnographic pictures of Dinka 'types' see Charles G Seligman and Brenda Z Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (Routledge & Sons, 1932), face p.136.

<sup>33</sup> Titherington, "The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province," 180.

To observers at the turn of the century, the primitivism of Dinka pastoralism, and their closeness to their herds was accentuated by descriptions of their distinctly pastoral appearance; they used cattle urine to bleach hair and the white ash from the dung fire that was smeared on the body, to protect from mosquitoes. This was said to make people appears as ghostly reflections of humanity: ‘like so many grey specters’.<sup>34</sup> For one visitor to Gogrial the people and their cattle even seemed to merge together. In 1936 the traveller Wyndham described how in Panamwiir (in present day Gogrial East)

The Dinkas lay in groups among their cattle, and so intimately did they lie together – these men and their cows – that it was difficult in this light to distinguish between them.<sup>35</sup>



Image 10: Young men at Pan Acier, 1933.<sup>36</sup>

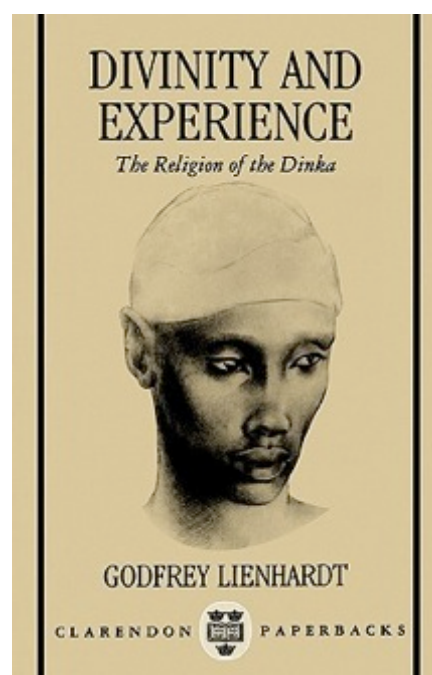


Image 11: Cover portrait: a Dinka man from Gogrial by Richard Wyndham, 1935.

Descriptions of Dinka people more widely have often focused on the body, particularly the male body, as an object of distancing. Descriptions of personal ornamentation, fashions and what the Dinka looked like, were *de rigueur* in early accounts.<sup>37</sup> The emphasis put on men’s bodies both dehumanized and fetishized their masculinity; they were

<sup>34</sup> Ewart Grogan, “Through African from Cape to Cairo,” *The Geographical Journal* 16, no. 2 (1900): 180.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Wyndham, *The Gentle Savage: A Sudanese Journey in the Province of Bahr el Ghazal, Commonly Called “The Bog”*. (London: Cassell and Company, 1936), 101.

<sup>36</sup> Powell-Cotton Museum Binoc Sudan XI.I. Pan Acier 06.05.1933

<sup>37</sup> For example see S.L. Cummins, “Sub-Tribes of the Bahr El Ghazal Dinkas,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 34 (1904): 149–150.

described as enormously tall and with skin tone so black it was faintly blue. They were said to have an ultra human aura: they were ‘swamp-men’.<sup>38</sup> Wyndham’s account dwells extensively on physicality. His sexualized descriptions of Dinka (as well as Nuer and Shilluk) people are excessively voyeuristic, even by contemporary standards:

The beauty of these tribes...makes you realise that in Europe we have no longer a conception of what the human form should look like...the savage leads an existence that is archaic: they have archaic minds, an archaic vision and they have kept their torsos of archaic sculpture.<sup>39</sup>

These descriptions and images have been incredibly influential. Travellers accounts, like those of Schweinfurth and Wyndham were clearly designed to evoke the mystery and exoticism of Africa to a reading public in Europe; Schweinfurth’s book became a best seller.<sup>40</sup> Sketches and profiles that accompanied these descriptions also served to exoticise. As was common in nineteenth century illustrations, bodily features and hairstyles were accentuated; facial features, like protruding lips, were emphasized to connote their difference from Europeans.<sup>41</sup> Wyndham’s impressions, as unpleasant as they are, have remained with us. Most strikingly through his painting of a man from Gogrial, which is the cover image for the second edition of Lienhardt’s *Divinity and Experience* (see Image 11).<sup>42</sup>

The Dinka were described as equally aggressive in their behavior as in their appearance. In 1904 Wingate, the Governor General, described them as ‘undoubtedly the most warlike and powerful tribe’ in Sudan.<sup>43</sup> Perceptions of the inherent violence of Dinka society permeated colonial accounts. As one DC commented, voicing a common sentiment among officials, ‘fighting with lethal weapons is the national pastime – only less popular than arguing about the possible ownership of cattle’.<sup>44</sup> There was always an ambiguity; the fiercely independent warrior pastoralist was not just derided – Dinka

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<sup>38</sup> Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa. Vol 1*, 148.

<sup>39</sup> Wyndham, *The Gentle Savage*. 45, 82–84 citation from p.54.

<sup>40</sup> Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 118.

<sup>41</sup> Leila Koivunen, *Visualising Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (Abingdon: Taylor Francis, 2009), 190–191.

<sup>42</sup> 95-96 description of drawing a head in Gogrial

<sup>43</sup> Martin. W Daly, *The Empire on The Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 114.

<sup>44</sup> SAD Collins 946/3 ‘Notes on Dinka cases – Central District by M.A. Richards 1926.

society had (just barely) managed to fend off destruction at the hands of slave traders. They possessed martial virtue, as was associated with Maasai and East African pastoralists. But, unlike the Maasai, in South Sudan the threat of violence ascribed to Dinka, Nuer and other South Sudanese pastoralists, has not been domesticated through touristic images.<sup>45</sup> This understanding of Dinka violent-masculinity has shaped the enduring image of Gogrial, as remote, isolated and primitive.

Another discourse connected to the perceived reluctance of Dinka people to engage with the state was the assertion that it was because people were lazy. ‘Weakened by the climate, the Dinka are incapable of hard work’ wrote the German missionary Mitterutzner in 1866.<sup>46</sup> This idea is identifiable in the notion of the unsuitability of Dinka men as porters. This is commonly recorded in the colonial record and ascribed partly to laziness and partly to pride. These lines, written by Owen, the governor of Bahr el Ghazal in a letter to his father (in 1945) captures several of these tropes:

The Dinka are not ideal carriers...used to a herdsman’s life doesn’t quite know what to do with a heavy weight. He doesn’t like carrying it on his head as this disarranges his mud and cow dung coiffure; besides women carry things on their heads and it would be insulting for a warrior to do the same.<sup>47</sup>

## BRINGING PEOPLE INTO GOVERNMENT

Dinka warriorhood may have been romanticized to some extent, but at a certain point, perceived resistance to government authority became a problem for the colonial administration. For the first 25 years of the Condominium rule (1898-1922), the area that would become Gogrial was known to officials as a violent and ungoverned area; an ‘un-administered part of Central District’, one of the six districts that made up the Bahr el Ghazal Province.<sup>48</sup> This section examines Gogrial’s violent incorporation into the state. Its establishment as an administrative region was a direct product of colonial

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<sup>45</sup> C.f. John Galaty, “How Visual Figures Speak: Narrative Inventions of ‘The Pastoralist’ in East Africa,” *Visual Anthropology* 15, no. 3–4 (2002): 347–67.

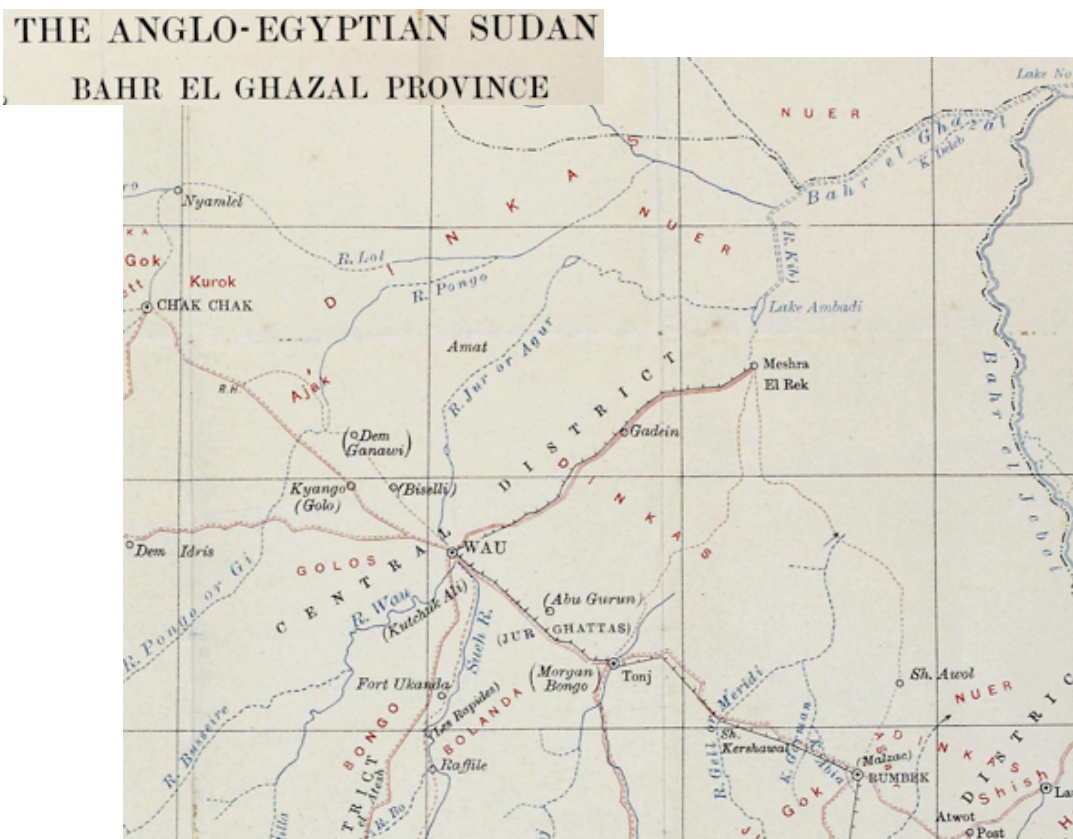
<sup>46</sup> Cited in Brendan Tuttle, “Life Is Prickly. Narrating History, Belonging, and Common Place in Bor, South Sudan” (Temple University, 2013), 76.

<sup>47</sup> SAD Owen 414/16/8

<sup>48</sup> Intelligence Department, *The Bahr El Ghazal Province: Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Handbook Series.*, 38.

‘pacification’ of its frontiers; this was an attempt to make Gogrial less peripheral. It was the perceived threat from a Dinka prophet called ‘Ariathdit’ that led to the government incorporating Gogrial into its administration. It was established as a military post in the patrols against Ariathdit (1918-1922), which was subsequently turned into an administrative centre.

In the early years of British rule, Gogrial was slightly out of reach. It was known to officials only through the Jur River, then a major artery of the southern administration, which runs through it and connected Wau, the Provincial headquarters and military garrison with Khartoum. Yet, as a geographer travelling down it in the early 1920s noted, beyond the river ‘the greater part of Dinkaland [was] unknown, practically unadministered and quite unsurveyed’.<sup>49</sup> As this detail of an early map of the Province shows, Gogrial, both as a town and a region, was not even on the map.



Map 5: Bahr el Ghazal Province detail. Gogrial (along the River Jur, north of Wau) not yet marked.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Christy, “The Bahr El-Ghazal and Its Waterways,” 316.

<sup>50</sup> SAD 430/22/9

Its absence was partly due to the continuity between British colonial geography and earlier imperial presences in Bahr el Ghazal. Condominium centres tended to be built on nineteenth century trading outposts.<sup>51</sup> Initially there were only sub-district outposts in Bahr el Ghazal; Meshra el Rek, Tonj and ‘Chak Chak’ now renamed Areyo in present day Northern Bahr el Ghazal (marked on the map above).<sup>52</sup> Both Meshra-el-Rek and Tonj had been commercial centres during Turco-Egyptian rule. Meshra, the further navigable point on the Bahr el Ghazal was a notorious transit point for ivory and slaves traded out of Bahr el Ghazal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ‘Chak Chak’, is a corruption of the name of a Malual Dinka chief who had accepted the brief French rule in 1897 and was subsequently the only important Dinka leader to initially cooperate with the incoming Condominium government,<sup>53</sup> possibly because as Dut Majak suggests, he saw it as an opportunity to boost his own political power.<sup>54</sup> There had been slave trading and commercial activity in Gogrial in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; local oral histories consistently describe a *zeriba* a short distance from the modern town, at a place called Wuntoor and several writers mention trading activities there.<sup>55</sup> But Gogrial town had not been a major commercial centre during the nineteenth century, neither was it part of the early British administration.

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<sup>51</sup> Douglas H Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan’s Civil Wars: Peace or Truce* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2011), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Intelligence Department, *The Bahr El Ghazal Province: Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Handbook Series.*, 38. On “Chak Chak”-Areyo see Damazo Dut Majak, “Resistance and Cooperation in Bahr El Ghazal 1920-1922,” in *Southern Sudan: Regionalism and Religion*, ed. Mohamed Omer Beshir (Khartoum: University of Khartoum Press, 1984), 104.

<sup>53</sup> Stefano Santandrea, *The Luo of the Bahr El Ghazal: Historical Notes* (Bologna: Editrice Nigrizia, 1968), 52.

<sup>54</sup> Damazo Dut Majak, “The Northern Bahr Al-Ghazal: People, Alien Encroachment and Rule, 1856-1956” (University of California, 1989), 210–211. Sandandrea gives his real name as ‘Awutiek’.

<sup>55</sup> Akol recounts this widely told story of “Abdel Manyiel” the slave trader based at Wuntoor see Jacob J Akol, *I Will Go the Distance: The Story of a “Lost” Sudanese Boy of the Sixties* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2005), 56; Titherington mentions the names of two traders active in the Gogrial area; Abu Miriam and Arabi Dafallah, see Titherington, “The Raik Dinka,” 178.



Image 12: 'Chak-Chak' himself. Image 13: government post at Chak –Chak in 1902.<sup>56</sup>

The government, already convinced of the inherent violence of Dinka society, found relatively widespread hostility to its presence in the Dinka areas of Bahr el Ghazal. This ranged from people refusing to work as porters,<sup>57</sup> to the killing of a British officer, Scott-Barbour, near Rumbek in 1902.<sup>58</sup> During the process of 'pacifying' these problematic areas, military patrols were exercised - intended to purge Dinka communities of the instigators of violence and stun them into accepting the new government. During of after the patrol, a fine paid in cattle to cover the cost to the government would be levied against the people (people were also often conscripted into the police or army).<sup>59</sup>

Gogrial Town, was created in the final stages of a campaign of patrols in the early 1920s against an influential Malual Dinka religious leader called 'Ariathdit.' His real name was Bol Yol and he was given the name 'Ariathdit' after he was possessed by Divinity at sometime around 1918.<sup>60</sup> He came from a village in present day Northern Bahr el Ghazal state. He was widely influential across all the Dinka areas of Bahr el Ghazal. It is clear that the British administration saw him as a destabilizing, anti-government influence. An official wrote in 1922 that he 'announced to the Dinka that Divinity had shown him a happy land where there were no governments and he could lead them to

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<sup>56</sup> SAD Slatin A32/69 and A32/68

<sup>57</sup> SAD Owen 414/16/8-9

<sup>58</sup> Collins, *The Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*, 88.

<sup>59</sup> The largest patrols were against the Agar in 1902 following the murder of Scott-Barber, against a Malual leader called Agaakir in 1913, against the Atuot in 1918 and the Aliab in 1919.

<sup>60</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 76-77.

that land'.<sup>61</sup> Ariathdit's extensive influence (from Northern Bahr el Ghazal to Tonj) led the authorities to take action against him.<sup>62</sup>

The perceived threat of violence from Ariathdit was consistent with the assumption of inherent ferocity that the government saw in Dinka society. However, other interpretations of Ariathdit dating from the 1940s have stressed that his power came primarily from being a peacemaker and as a provider of protection, rather than from violence.<sup>63</sup> When Damazo Dut Majak interviewed elders in Ariathdit's home area in the 1980s, they told him Ariathdit preached peace between sections and the government, and protection for his followers. He was said to be able to turn government bullets into water and control the rain.<sup>64</sup> Both peacemaking abilities and the control of rain are signs of spiritual and moral authority in Dinka religion. Ariathdit should be understood as a powerful religious leader who was offering the peaceful spiritual renewal of society for his followers.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless a chain of patrols against him and his adherents were undertaken. In 1922, Ayok Kerjok, an influential man from Langic, a village on the banks of the River Jur, and a supporter of Ariathdit began agitating against the government. In response, a patrol led by Major Titherington was sent to arrest him, but Ayok was killed when he attacked the patrol. As tensions in the area rose, a military post was established at Gogrial.<sup>66</sup> A few months later another patrol against Ariathdit was sent, this time to his home in Unading; the village was burnt to the ground. Ariathdit gave himself up and was exiled by the government, who feared that he might continue to hold influence.<sup>67</sup> On 9 April 1922, he was handed over to the mounted infantry at Meshra el-Rek and was imprisoned

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<sup>61</sup> Majak, "Resistance and Cooperation in Bahr El Ghazal 1920-1922," 111.

<sup>62</sup> NA, Kew FO 141/799 (18) 1921-1922. No. 14153 Operations against Chief Ariendeet of the Northern Bahr el Ghazal Dinkas

<sup>63</sup> Majak, "The Northern Bahr Al-Ghazal: People, Alien Encroachment and Rule, 1856-1956," 234-235; Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 77. C.f. Douglas H Johnson, *Nuer Prophets: A History of Prophecy from the Upper Nile in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 104.

<sup>64</sup> Majak, "Resistance and Cooperation in Bahr El Ghazal 1920-1922," 111, 117.

<sup>65</sup> Majak, "The Northern Bahr Al-Ghazal: People, Alien Encroachment and Rule, 1856-1956," 228.

<sup>66</sup> SAD Collins 946/2 microfilm 166, Dut Majak p.241

<sup>67</sup> Majak, "Resistance and Cooperation in Bahr El Ghazal 1920-1922," 121-126.



at Omdurman.<sup>68</sup> He briefly returned in 1936, but was swiftly expatriated to Tonj. He was finally allowed to return to his natal village where he died in 1948.<sup>69</sup>

In the aftermath of the Ariathdit campaign, the government tried to bring the Gogrial area into its control. The military post was transformed into an administrative post.<sup>70</sup> This was recorded in the Sudan Intelligence Report of April 1922.

A new post has been established at Gugrial (longitude 28° 08', latitude 8° 32'), on the River Jur, which will be the winter headquarters of one of the Central District District Commissioners, who will devote his whole time to administering the Dinkas of the district. This includes the area from Tonj on the east to the boundaries of the Northern District on the west, and takes in all the Dinka east of the longitude 28° up to the Kordofan boundary.

To sum up, I consider the general situation is as satisfactory as could be expected, and time must now be given to the District Commissioners to the complete settlements of their districts. The parade of such a large number of troops, the removal of Ariendeet [sic] and the peaceful policy followed, has had an excellent effect; but, as already pointed out, isolated incidents are sure to occur, but we hope with less and less frequency.

Governor Wheatley reported that following the arrest of Ariathdit, 'all the chiefs in the affected area, between Tonj in the east and Nyamlell in the west, have come in to Government'. However, 'the[ir] idea of Government was an organization for the exploitation of the Dinka' – an impression which he wished to correct.<sup>71</sup> Major Titherington, who had led the patrol in which Ayok Kerjok was killed two years previously, was made Assistant District Commissioner of Gogrial in 1923.<sup>72</sup> The Government encouraged the establishment of a Catholic missionary station and school in the village of Kuajok, a short distance from Gogrial Town (see below) Despite its recently troubled history (and his complicity in it) in 1925 Titherington described Gogrial Town in his diary as 'a jolly little place on the river'.<sup>73</sup>

In the roughly 30 years that Gogrial was administered by the Condominium it went through minor administrative changes. In 1929 Tonj and Gogrial were separated from

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<sup>68</sup> SIR April 1922 p.8

<sup>69</sup> A.C Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook* (Sudan Government Publications, 1949), 39.

<sup>70</sup> Robert O Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 37.

<sup>71</sup> SIR April 1922, 9.

<sup>72</sup> SAD Sudan Government Staff List; 01.04.1923.

<sup>73</sup> SAD Titherington 636/12/17 March 12 1925.

Central District and became Eastern or Jur River District.<sup>74</sup> In 1936, Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria were amalgamated into a single province<sup>75</sup>, Eastern District was renamed Tonj District.<sup>76</sup> In 1941, Tonj District was renamed 'Jur River District.'<sup>77</sup> Bahr el Ghazal was reconstituted as a separate province in 1948.<sup>78</sup>

#### COLONIAL ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIETY THEY GOVERNED

Pacification was a way of forcing people to 'come in to Government'. Following the patrols against Ariathdit there was a more concerted attempt to try and understand the society being governed. Officials imagined Gogrial as a traditional tribal society, which could be ruled through an appropriately designed Native Administration.<sup>79</sup> Fixed 'tribal' identities were being invented at this time (c1920-c1950). In the South, as more widely in British colonial Africa, it was taken for granted that the people were divided naturally into discrete tribes, whose territories could be ruled by chiefs.<sup>80</sup> In the South, this idea was officially enshrined in the 1930 *Memorandum on Southern Policy*, which, set out a different path of administration to that in the North. Its objective was:

To build up a series of self contained racial or tribal units with structures and organization based...upon indigenous customs, traditional usage and beliefs.<sup>81</sup>

During the colonial period a system of territorially defined chiefship was imposed in Gogrial. This was coercive, but limited in its effectiveness.<sup>82</sup> As Willis has argued in the Nuba Mountains and Leonardi has argued more widely in the South, the power of the colonial state was limited and it did not succeed in creating completely new forms of

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<sup>74</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>76</sup> SAD Sudan Government staff lists 01.06.1936.

<sup>77</sup> SAD Sudan Government Gazette 15 November 1941 p.237.

<sup>78</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 20.

<sup>79</sup> Justin Willis, "Violence, Authority, and the State in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 01 (2003): 113–114.

<sup>80</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 39.

<sup>81</sup> Dunstan M. Wai, *Southern Sudan: The Problem of National Integration* (Oxford: Routledge, 1973), 175–179.

<sup>82</sup> Willis, "Violence, Authority" 94.

authority, or the forms of ‘decentralised despotism’ described by Mamdani elsewhere in British colonial Africa.<sup>83</sup>

Early administrators of Gogrial believed that they were dealing with a society that had almost completely collapsed under the slave trade. Major Titherington (who led the patrols in Gogrial, and then immediately became its first administrator) recorded that, ‘the social system was found in a state of decay: anarchy, chaos and violence had almost abolished order and security’.<sup>84</sup> The new government believed that the inherent remoteness of Gogrial had protected people, to some extent; but that lack of ‘cohesion’ had meant great damage had been done by slave trading. In 1911 the Bahr el Ghazal administrators’ handbook stated:

The natural difficulties of their [Dinka] country have kept them immune from invasion by other tribes, but their lack of cohesion caused them to suffer considerably at the hands of the slave traders.<sup>85</sup>

The government established new chiefs, to fill the perceived political vacuum left by the slave traders.<sup>86</sup> Understanding (and uncovering) the original ‘tribal structure’ of the Dinka was of primary importance to them. This was a deeply problematic task. In the whole of South Sudan, and particularly in pastoralist areas, the administration encountered ‘a sticky web of unseen connections and allegiances’ which challenged the ideological principles of indirect rule, with its neat territorial and tribal units of people.<sup>87</sup> The elements of ‘Dinka tribal structure’ were extensively debated and reinterpreted in administrative correspondence in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.<sup>88</sup> How to maintain the

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 111; Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Titherington, “The Raik Dinka,” 164.

<sup>85</sup> Intelligence Department, *The Bahr El Ghazal Province: Anglo-Egyptian Sudan Handbook Series.*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> They believed that, in comparison to areas in the south-east, near Tonj where large numbers of traders had been present, Gogrial had been slightly sheltered from the worst effects of slavery. Titherington, “The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province,” 165.

<sup>87</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 67.

<sup>88</sup> For example in 1937, DCs were writing that Titherington’s 1927 article in *Sudan Notes and Records* (an important baseline in early discussions) had confused clans (exogamous descent groups) with ‘gol’ (extended family). See Collins SAD 946/3 Dinka Tribal Organisations TD/66.B.19 (05.10.1937)

imagined tribal order and prevent 'disintegration' was a constant feature of administrative correspondence.<sup>89</sup>

Administrators identified several 'units' as the potential bases of Native Administration in Dinka areas. These were territorial communities, which they called kraals or used the Dinka word *wut*, clans (lineage based descent groups, Dinka *dbieth*); and *gol* (extended family groups). The administrative question was which of these identities was the most effective basis for rule. The first decades of administration saw extended debate on this topic.

In the 1930s some administrators saw an evolutionary progression away from what they perceived as more arcane clan/lineage-based identity and towards modern territorial based identity. Territoriality, they felt, should be encouraged, as part of the 'natural development of Dinka life'.<sup>90</sup> Indeed by the 1940s, the government was beyond doubt that it had to use territorial groups (*wut*) with their own 'government chiefs' as the basis for native administration. A meeting of Dinka District Commissioners in 1938 recorded a clear statement of this administrative approach:

Our policy should be to foster this tendency towards territorial tribal unity as being the only means by which a Native Administration can govern the hopeless mixture of clans and family groups that constitute the Dinka tribal structure.<sup>91</sup>

The Province handbook, published in 1949, similarly stated that 'both the clan and the lineage, being to different degrees dispersed groups, were useless for administration'.<sup>92</sup>

Colonial officials wanted to imagine Dinka governance as neatly territorial. However, it proved difficult for the administration to use territory exclusively because of the constant movement of people and cattle and the 'hopeless mixture' of other forms of identity. The difficulty of tying people down to a fixed locality is revealed in the parallel use of descent groups, *gol*, in Native Administration. Officials also declared that

The extended family groups (*gol*) and its leader were the bricks with which alone an edifice of Dinka Native Administration can be built.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> NRO BG 1. 5.28 DC Lakes (Penn) to Governor Equatoria, 8.10.1938: Dinka tribal structure

<sup>90</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Extracts from Minutes of Dinka DC meeting held at Tonj 21-26.01.1938.

<sup>91</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Extracts from Minutes of Dinka DC meeting held at Tonj 21-26.01.1938.

<sup>92</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 46.

Since 1931 there had been an administrative assistant called the *nhom gol* (gol leader) who collected the taxes of his family dependents.<sup>94</sup> This institution was supposedly based on an older institution of the headman of the lineage (*raandit mactbok*), who had a general authority over the lineage - but the function of the *nhom gol*- (primarily tax collection), was different and clearly administrative.<sup>95</sup> Officials were aware that this position was a colonial invention, but it was a concession to the need for some form of lineage based governance, and some DCs even warned against allowing the *gol* leader to attain too much influence, lest this upset the 'tribal order' they were attempting to salvage.<sup>96</sup>

The confusion about Dinka tribal structure was compounded by the considerable differences that DCs observed between Dinka Districts. The Seligmans, who in 1932 had published an ethnographic survey of what is now South Sudan, pointed out that the Dinka were not strictly a single tribe and were widely dispersed 'congerie' of autonomous 'tribes'.<sup>97</sup> DCs also lamented that what was true in Aweil, was not necessarily true in Rumbek or Bor.<sup>98</sup>



Image 14: Chiefs at a meeting in Tonj, 1934-1954.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 44.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>96</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 'NO.AD.A.1' Aweil 12.02.1942. Letter to Governor of Equatoria

<sup>97</sup> Seligman and Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, 135.

<sup>98</sup> For examples of discussion of regional differences in Dinka social and political organisations see SAD Collins 930/2 Extracts from Minutes of Dinka DC meeting held at Tonj 21-26.01.1938. On differences in marriage practices and court payments see SAD Howell 767/8/26 Letter to Governor Juba on 'Arueth' Tonj TD/66.A.4 of 22.6.1937

<sup>99</sup> SAD Bloss 884/3/15

One figure with political authority in Dinka society was the *bäny bith* (master of the fishing spear). They were not directly used in the administration. This is partly because the emphasis on territorial authority also meant that the *bäny bith* could not be used as chiefs, because administrators believed they were a purely clan-based institution.<sup>100</sup> It is also partly because colonial officials regarded them as ‘priests’ whom the Dinka believed to have spiritual powers.<sup>101</sup> There was a prevailing suspicion that *bäny bith* were anti-government and a ‘Machiavellian’ influence.<sup>102</sup> On at least one occasion *bäny bith* were blamed for an upsurge in insecurity between different sections in Aweil District. DC Aweil, in a letter to the Governor of Juba in 1941 complained:

the anti-government body of the beny bith are purely magical and as a class can only thrive on sedition, unrest or distressed circumstances, which they do all in their power to foster.<sup>103</sup>

Despite the ideal of territorial/government authority, many government chiefs gained authority among ordinary people because they were members of powerful *bäny bith* families. Richards, the DC of Tonj in 1937 noted that one of the characteristics of a successful and respected chief was that he came from an important *bäny bith* family. In fact, seven of the eight chiefs of Tonj District were related to *bäny bith*.<sup>104</sup> In Tonj District there was a particular preference for the chief to be closely related to a *bäny bith*

It was noted that in Tonj district the people had or wished to have representatives of the ‘beny bith’ family as their chief who were generally of the predominant clan.<sup>105</sup>

The 1949 *Equatoria Province Handbook* stated that relatives of *bäny bith* were selected as Government chiefs because Dinka people had specifically requested that a chief was chosen in this way, although the *bäny bith* himself was very rarely (if ever) chosen to be a government chief.<sup>106</sup> In Gogrial sub-district, many of the most famous paramount chiefs of the colonial period were close relatives of *bäny bith* or *bäny bith* themselves. For

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<sup>100</sup> SAD Howell 767/10/48 ADC Mayall report on Dinka customs.

<sup>101</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Hawkesworth notes on ‘Priests and magicians’ 21.02.1941

<sup>102</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Letter to DC Tonj 10.12.1941

<sup>103</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Extract from DC Aweil Letter No, AD/15 of 21.11.1941

<sup>104</sup> SAD Collins 946/3 ‘Note of the part that the Beny Bith plays in our administration’.

<sup>105</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Extracts from Minutes of Dinka DC meeting held at Tonj 21-26.01.1938.

<sup>106</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 43–44.

example Chief Amet Kuol from Kuac was a *bäny bith*. Chief Giir Thiik of Apuk was the son of a *bäny bith*. In Abyei, 100 km north of Gogrial, Francis Deng described how even a chief who did not come from a family line with spiritual or traditional leadership, may cultivate some degree of spiritual authority over time, for example by his relatives singing songs that created such a reputation. Spiritual authority and secular authority are not entirely separate and even secular authority could be ‘spiritualized’.<sup>107</sup>

By the 1940s, some officials were saying that the government had made a mistake in not supporting the *bäny bith*. They had unwittingly undermined the basis of tribal organization. The *bäny bith* was recognized as an important part of Dinka society, ‘as vital to Dinka as clergy are to English life.’<sup>108</sup> Official understandings of Dinka society were partial and in flux during the 30 years of colonial administration in Gogrial. However, in this period certain key ideas about Gogrial were solidifying. The people of Gogrial (and Dinka society more widely) were enshrined in official understandings as violent, masculine and anarchic. The solutions to these (largely constructed) problems was to understand the ‘tribal structure’, so they could be incorporated into that states’ administrative structures. To to make people in Gogrial, in Governor Wheatley’s memorable phrase, ‘come in to Government’.

#### ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMAGINATIONS

Major anthropological research in the 1940s added significant nuanced understanding of Gogrial. The work of Godfrey Lienhardt, whose ethnography *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* has made Gogrial central in the construction of anthropological knowledge about South Sudan and the Dinka.<sup>109</sup> Anthropological accounts did play a role in constructing Gogrial as remote and ‘other’. For anthropology at this time ‘remoteness’ was an important methodological criterion for a society to be studied because it stood for isolation. This idea of isolation allowed anthropologists to construct

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<sup>107</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 69.

<sup>108</sup> SAD Collins 930/2 Note by Mr Parr for DCs meeting, Tonj- Juba 21<sup>st</sup> March 1942

<sup>109</sup> There has been a single subsequent ethnographic study in Gogrial. Jok Madut Jok, *Militarization, Gender and Reproductive Health in South Sudan* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998).

a discrete and bounded object of study.<sup>110</sup> The ‘other’ was constructed and studied through distance.<sup>111</sup>

It is impossible to separate anthropological research of this period from the concerns of the colonial state. The decision for Lienhardt to do research among the Dinka was made in conjunction with his supervisor, Evans-Pritchard and the head of the Sudan Government Anthropological Research Board, J. Arkell. The Sudan Government wanted more anthropological research to be done in the South, and Evans-Pritchard suggested the Dinka, because they were the largest ‘tribe’ in the South but had not been studied anthropologically.<sup>112</sup> It was agreed that Lienhardt should do an in depth study of one Dinka area, accompanied by an overview survey across a range of others.<sup>113</sup> The Sudan Government agreed to finance the research but official support for it was not unequivocal.<sup>114</sup> F.D. Kingdon, the Governor of Upper Nile Province, wrote that he believed ‘the money could be better expended on research into the enormous losses caused by tryps [trypanosomiasis] to the cattle of the Dinka tribe’ rather than on anthropology.<sup>115</sup> It was left fairly open where Lienhardt went (although it had to be west of the Nile). Lienhardt would later tell friends that he was directed towards Gogrial because it was considered by the government to be an out-of-the-way backwater.<sup>116</sup>

Lienhardt had read all of the government files in Gogrial, Tonj and Aweil - he made extensive notes from them in his diaries.<sup>117</sup> He discussed his research findings with P.P. Howell, an experienced administrator who had served in the South and went on to do a DPhil in Social Anthropology at Oxford.<sup>118</sup> He also received feedback on an essay about Dinka kinship from C.W. Beer (deputy Governor of Bahr el Ghazal when Lienhardt began his fieldwork).<sup>119</sup> Lienhardt, in turn wrote explanations of Dinka ‘chiefs of the

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<sup>110</sup> Harms, Hussain, and Shneiderman, “Remote and Edgy: New Takes on Old Anthropological Themes,” 365.

<sup>111</sup> Johannes Fabian, *Time and The Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>112</sup> SSNA Letter from Evans-Pritchard to J. Arkell 31.07.46 in file NKD3

<sup>113</sup> SSNA C8/12.A.1 ‘Anthropological Work’ in file NKD3

<sup>114</sup> SSNA 08/112.A.1 Letter to Godfrey Lienhardt 16.01.1947 in file NKD3

<sup>115</sup> SSNA UNP/91 B 1 in file NKD3 .

<sup>116</sup> Douglas Johnson, pers. comm.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. PRM GL Box 5/5 Notes volume 2, 1948.

<sup>118</sup> PRM GL Box 1/8 Letter from P.P. Howell

<sup>119</sup> PRM GL Box 1/3 Comments from C.W. Beer



sacred spear' and clan system for the 1949 edition of the *Province Handbook* and he was expected to provide the government with useful information.<sup>120</sup>

This shaped his understanding of Gogrial (aa will be explored further in Chapter 5). However, there were tensions between anthropologists and administrators, neither followed each other blindly.<sup>121</sup> Lienhardt had very different objectives and this is reflected in his work. He had a more empathetic perspective than government officials and while he was, to some extent, constructing an anthropological 'other', his work is a genuine and skilled attempt to make Dinka religion, on its own terms, comprehensible to an academic audience.



Image 15: Lienhardt and friends near the River Jur.<sup>122</sup>

As the Seligmans had recorded in 1932, there is not a single Dinka 'tribe'. Dinkaphone people are a conglomerate of widely geographically dispersed, autonomous sections and subsections. One of Lienhardt's instructions from Evans-Pritchard was to disentangle and clarify the significance of these regional and cultural differences.<sup>123</sup> The Dinka word for themselves is *Jieŋ* or *Muonyjääŋ* meaning 'the people' or 'the man of all

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<sup>120</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 43–47.

<sup>121</sup> Wendy James, "The Anthropologist as Reluctant Imperialist," in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. Talal Asad (Ithaca Press, 1973), 42.

<sup>122</sup> PRM 2005.51.420

<sup>123</sup> SSNA C8/12.A.1 'Anthropological Work' in file NKD3

people'.<sup>124</sup> But they are divided into distinct sub-groups. The English terminology for these groupings has not been improved on since Lienhardt. He describes the largest division of Dinka as 'tribal groups', of which there were about twenty-five across South Sudan.<sup>125</sup> The 'tribal group' in Gogrial (and other parts of Warrap State) was Rek - itself made up of smaller units that Lienhardt calls 'tribes'. In Gogrial counties the 'tribes' of Rek are Apuk, Kuac, Aguok, Awan Chan and Awan Mou. Tribes, Lienhardt wrote, had their own grazing areas and were the largest units to combine for war in the past.<sup>126</sup> These 'tribes' are composed of 'subtribes'. Apuk had nine subtribes, Kuac had six and Aguok had twelve. Subtribes were in turn made up of 'sections' (see diagram below).<sup>127</sup> Because of these smaller units, the Dinka were categorized by anthropologists as a 'segmentary political structure'.<sup>128</sup> A characteristic of segmentary lineage systems is that they have no overall political unity and no tradition of chiefly rule.<sup>129</sup> This partially explains the confusion of the colonial administrators; in searching for chiefs and territorial governance they were looking for something that was not there.

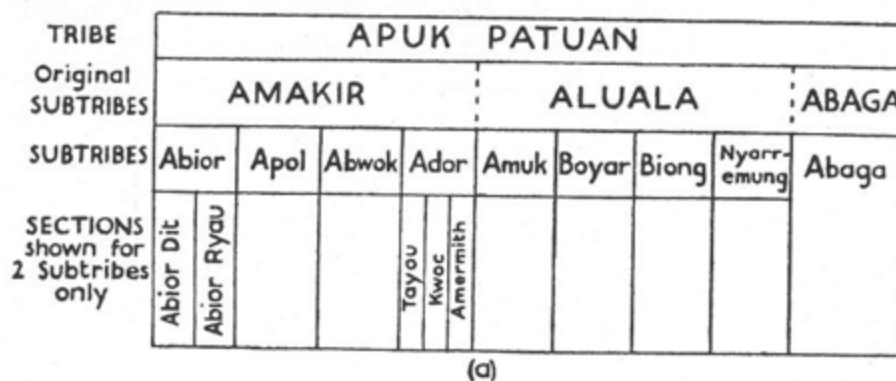


Fig 1: Lienhardt's diagram of the tribal segments of Apuk.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>124</sup> For a longer discussion on the meaning of "Muonyjäṅ" see Alëu Majok Alëu, *The New Muonyjäṅ (Dinka) Script: A Summary of the Orthographic Statement and Description Drawn from the Forthcoming Book, "Identity and Language"* (unpublished document, 2013), 4-6.

<sup>125</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958), 102.

<sup>126</sup> Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook*, 45.

<sup>127</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 102-103. Evans-Pritchard referred to similar units in his ethnographies of the Nuer as primary, secondary and tertiary tribal sections. Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 139.

<sup>128</sup> John Middleton and David Tait, eds., *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958), 2.

<sup>129</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Sudan: Aspects of the South Government among Some of the Nilotic Peoples, 1947-1952," *Bulletin (British Society of Middle Eastern Studies)* 9, no. 1 (1982): 32.

<sup>130</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 122.

The Dinka word for all these units is the same - *wut* (pl. *wuot*) meaning 'a community of people and cattle.' Smaller descent groups within the camp are *gol*, which means the group of herders who sleep around the same cattle dung-fire (*gol* is also the word for the dung-fire itself). *Wut* is used as a relative term to express the cattle-camp itself, the 'sub-tribe' and the 'tribe'. It means 'a grazing community' of various sizes.<sup>131</sup> People also belonged to a descent group, which Lienhardt termed 'clan' and which in Dinka Rek is called *dhieth*. As a verb, *dhieth* means 'to beget'. Clans are exogamous and, even though many are widely geographically dispersed, they share a common narrative of origin. To the colonial administration, the clan was just a potential instrument of rule, but Lienhardt's work captures why clan was meaningful for people. It shows the importance of *ruai*, relatedness through blood and marriage. Clan names indicate this sense of relatedness as they have the suffix 'pa-' contracted from *paan* meaning 'the people of'.<sup>132</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt gives an extended description of examples of different clans and their divinities in Gogrial in the 1940s.<sup>133</sup>

Lienhardt was working for the government, but his views were dissident. Many people who knew Lienhardt attest that he was not the sort of person who would be told what to think or swallow a line. The difference between Lienhardt's approach and the government's is particularly evident in their explanation of Dinka religious beliefs. The administrators were not interested in the nature of Dinka religion. In a note in his diary, Ranald Boyle, ADC Gogrial, wrote of this strand of the research that; 'Lienhardt is dashing about after 'Garangs' [referring to spirits] and odd Dinka things like that.'<sup>134</sup> Lienhardt took Dinka religion seriously and on its own terms. This was a significant advance in external understandings; by treating Dinka religion as something intelligible it inherently makes the people who hold those beliefs less alien and their lives closer to one's own experience.

Aspects of Lienhardt's work are problematic. Most immediately noticeable is the near total absence of women in his account. His information came mainly from men of high

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>132</sup> However, Lienhardt incorrectly translated the suffix 'pa' as from *pan* – the house of. It is from *paan* – the relatives. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 113.

<sup>133</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 104–146.

<sup>134</sup> RHM Boyle's private diary for Sudan. 16.05.1949.

status, and there is hardly any mention of what women said or did.<sup>135</sup> A more far reaching issue is that *Divinity and Experience* is a structuralist ethnography that tried to discuss a total Dinka cosmology – a unitary view of the world held by all members. It tries to reconstruct a whole, and in doing so does not give space to explore individual experience, difference and debates *within* Dinka society. His structuralism also assumed there were bounded and stable local systems. Many researchers to work in South Sudan have battled with the compelling clarity of Evans-Pritchard's (classically structuralist) work and his unflinching demonstrations of order in society. Of her confusion in the early phases of fieldwork for her ethnographic restudy of *The Nuer*, Sharon Hutchinson wrote, 'I would think back on the neat diagrams and sense of completeness that exuded from Evans-Pritchard's earlier Nuer accounts and would despair'.<sup>136</sup> Hutchinson might have been consoled by the fact that Lienhardt, Evans-Pritchard's best student, also despaired. He wrote in his diary;

“The Nuer” is beginning really to upset me – it is like the Dinka and yet so unlike (I hope), yet being a clear account and analysis it has a sort of compelling quality so that one feels as though one is compelled to find it in the Dinka.<sup>137</sup>

*Divinity and Experience* is much more historically grounded than other contemporary structuralist ethnographies (like *The Nuer*). Lienhardt makes extensive use of oral histories; he even wrote that his interviews with Giir Thiik would be useful in reconstructing the history of the Dinka.<sup>138</sup> Despite this, the account still very much takes place in the ethnographic present. Lienhardt vividly describes how political influence and spiritual authority were linked. Yet he was working in a period of huge change and while the colonial government had introduced new forms of authority, he also wrote about 'political-spiritual authority' as if it was relatively unchanging. There is very little sense of historical change in Lienhardt's work; there is even less sense of place. There is no indication of where anything is happening or where anyone is, apart from the fact that they are in 'Western Dinkaland'.<sup>139</sup> It was only on consulting Lienhardt's personal

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<sup>135</sup> Jok, *Militarization, Gender*, 7. Even the Sudan government official C.W Beer admonished Lienhardt for overemphasizing the male perspective on kinship see PRM GL Box 3/1

<sup>136</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 30.

<sup>137</sup> PRM GL Box 4/9 Fieldnotes 8.05.1948

<sup>138</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 175.

<sup>139</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 1.

archive that I was able to confirm that the majority of the research had been done in Gogrial.

Anthropology's role in constructing an image of Gogrial is complex. It was partially coopted by the colonial project of governance and control. Yet, Lienhardt's work was much more than this, it was a close and empathetic study of Dinka religion. His work has received high praise by educated people from Gogrial, partly because it represented Dinka society (in a way they approved of) to the wider world and incorporated it into the pantheon of anthropological classics. At an event celebrating his life in 1994, a praise song was sung, composed by three men from Gogrial, addressing Lienhardt by his Dinka name, Thienydeng:

That the nations of the world now know of us;  
Thienydeng has presented us so well;  
Our Dinka Nation,  
Thienydeng has presented us so well to the world;  
Our way of life and our culture;  
Thienydeng has presented us so well<sup>140</sup>

*Divinity and Experience* is an anthropological classic, which has incorporated Gogrial into scholarship. But its structural approach and ethnographic present has enshrined an image of Gogrial as a remote region outside of space and time.

#### UNREACHED PEOPLE?: MISSIONARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GOGRIAL

In efforts to bring Gogrial further into administrative reach, a Catholic mission and school of the order of the Verona Fathers (also called the Comboni Fathers' after their founder) was established at the end of December 1923 at Kuajok on elevated ground near the River Jur. The mission was established only one year after the Ariathdit campaign, when Kuajok would have been considered a dangerous place. Marc Nikkel speculates that the Fathers were ordered by ADC Titherington to start a mission in the area, although their own records claim that they had already been planning to start a

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<sup>140</sup> Nyuol M Bol, Thiik Akol Giir Thiik, and Duang Ajing Arop, "Tene Thienydeng: In Memory of Godfrey Leinhardt," *JASO: Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* XXVII, no. 1 (1997): 134-135.

mission for the Dinka <sup>141</sup> The Verona fathers wrote of their enthusiasm to begin work among the Dinka in Bahr el Ghazal who were the largest group of ‘unreached’ people in Bahr el Ghazal – this work was regarded as the frontier of missionary work.<sup>142</sup> Kuajok was selected as a site for the church and school because it was near to the Jur River so it was accessible by boat to and from Wau. They also hoped to be able to take advantage of the government vehicles that would pass them on the way between Wau and Gogrial. They were close to three Rek territorial sub-sections and major chieftaincies which they thought would enable them to expand their work.<sup>143</sup>



Image 16: working with ‘the boys’ (ragazzi) in Kuajok in 1928 (AC)

Through the mission at Kuajok and *La Nigrizia* magazine, images of Gogrial were circulated to publicise the work of the Verona Fathers mission.<sup>144</sup> Images and accounts from Kuajok, Gogrial and Southern Sudan feature very prominently on its pages. They were used to promote and raise funds for the evangelical work of the mission.

These accounts show how Gogrial was also imagined as a frontier of Christianity: if not yet Christian, potentially Christian, provided the difficulties of the environment (both natural and social) could be overcome. Christian conversion was thus another way that Gogrial could be incorporated. The articles in *La Nigrizia* stressed the difficulty of

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<sup>141</sup> See AC Buletino 25-35 (1947-1950) p.1173-1174. Mark Nikkel, *Dinka Christianity: The Origins and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with Special Reference to the Songs of Dinka Christians* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2001), 173.

<sup>142</sup> *La Nigrizia* March 1924, ‘Prima Stazione tra I Denka’.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> *La Nigrizia* means ‘the black world’. It was founded in 1883.

proselytising among these ‘proud sons of the marshes’ (*fiera figli della paludi*).<sup>145</sup> The fathers recorded that even women would hide the children from the missionaries (a fear of outsiders which the missionaries also attributed to the disruptions of the slave trade) and documented the number of converts and stories about boys who had converted.<sup>146</sup> These images are an attempt to include Gogrial in a global Catholic community – even if through only a tiny number of its young people. Gender plays an important role here too – these are notably mainly pictures of men. Between 1935 and 1942, when the monthly magazine was using large cover images, men are overwhelmingly featured - only five adult women appear on the cover for the entire period. Similarly to the travellers and colonial images, maleness and warriorhood embodied Gogrial’s image as pastoralist and remote.<sup>147</sup>

The male Dinka subject was the target of conversion (and thus incorporation): a point that is revealed in the highly composed pictures showing acts of Christian devotion common in *La Nigrizia*. The purpose of these posed and stylized images was to show that the mission was able to break down barriers and bring the people of Gogrial into the Church. The primacy of the image of a young, male Dinka convert is strikingly illustrated by the magazine’s cover image from September 1935. It depicts a shirtless schoolboy from Kuajok wearing a cross, gazing upwards. However, this image is manipulated – the cross has been added during the editing process. Versions of the same photograph exist where the young man is not wearing the cross.<sup>148</sup> A version of the same photograph, without the cross, also appears in an earlier edition of *La Nigrizia* with the caption ‘like a gladiator’ – which illustrates how the work of the fathers was also an attempt to ‘civilize’ Dinka masculinity and tame the wilderness of Gogrial.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *La Nigrizia* August 1935 *Alle Soave Memorio di Pio X* p.120

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* The article notes that 248 converts were baptized.

<sup>147</sup> For a study of the historical development of an iconic image of pastoralist masculinity see Dorothy L. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001).

<sup>148</sup> Major Titherington had a copy of this photograph, see SAD 491/5/120..

<sup>149</sup> *La Nigrizia*, June 1928



Image 17: Cover of *La Nigrizia* September 1935.

Image 18: 'Portrait of a pupil at the Roman Catholic mission in Kuajok'.<sup>150</sup>

The four *La Nigrizia* cover images below reveal the major composite elements through which Gogrial was imagined and represented by the missionaries. The first image is a reproduction of a painting from the Catholic Church at Nyamlell (in Northern Bahr el Ghazal). In it, St. Theresa of Lisieux and the baby Jesus are showering roses from above onto a group of Dinka people, who in turn welcome them with outstretched arms. In the background there is a river, palm trees: a distinctive White Nile flood plains landscape. It is, miraculously, both night and day time. These are the willing congregation in a wild, almost supernatural landscape. This sense of remoteness is carried though in other images. The second cover image is a photograph of a lone missionary shown in a dugout canoe on the river. The background is entirely forest and he appears far from settlements. The caption explains that he is 'in search of souls' (*in circa di anime*) in this wilderness. The third image shows an older man next to a grain store. It is an example of how the conventions of ethnographic photography, focusing on individual portraits and 'everyday life', influenced the missionaries – depicting 'the native' in a pristine state.<sup>151</sup> The man is positioned next to an *yoro* (a traditional shrine) with the skull and horns of sacrificed animals. Thus this man also represents the work the mission needs to do, that

<sup>150</sup> SAD Titherington 491/5/120

<sup>151</sup> Many genres of European photography in colonial Africa were influenced by ethnographic conventions, see Christraud Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History Some Methodological Considerations," *Africa in History* 13 (1986): 96.



these are still ‘unreached’ people. The final image shows a young man with an antelope and water-buck head. He is wearing a crucifix. The recurrent image of a young man or boy wearing Christian symbols (a crucifix or rosary) in *La Nigrizia* represented the potential for Christianity to tame Dinka masculinity and power of religion and education to reorient young lives towards God. In this image, this is emphasized by the juxtaposition of the crucifix and the head of a wild animal.

Image 19 January 1938

St Theresa and baby Jesus rain down roses on the Dinka (*La pioggia di rose*)

Image 20 August 1941

‘In search of souls’

Image 21 August 1942

‘A Dinka granary’

Image 22 November 1935

‘A Dinka boy’ (*Regazzo Denka*)



## NOTE ON THE INVISIBLE PERIOD AND CONTINUITY

It becomes harder to trace an image of Gogrial in the thirty-year intervening period between Sudan's Independence in 1956 and the second civil war in the 1980s. In part this is because many fewer images were produced. The missionaries were expelled in 1964 after the government accused them of inciting hostility against the regime.<sup>152</sup> Northern Sudanese administrators – even if they did share the British passion for classification and anthropological enquiry – faced a growing insurgency in the South, and Gogrial was also subsumed within the wider South in representations at this time as the civil war broke out in the early 1960s. Campaigning around the Southern cause in the first civil war by Southerners outside the country generated images of the South too. These publications focus on highlighting the atrocities of war and counter-insurgency.

In tracing the story of our evolving understanding of Gogrial it becomes clear that the colonial period was key in establishing stereotypes of Gogrial and Dinka society. The same representations are carried through from the colonial period to images of Dinka pastoralists in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Compare these images below, one from the colonial period, the other from 2011. The modes of representation have not significantly changed. Hairstyles are different, spears have been swapped for Kalashnikovs; but the idea of an isolated, violent, pastoralist and usually male Dinka subject is still very much with us. It continues to form a salient part of the historical production of ideas about Gogrial's peripherality.

If there was any doubt of continuity of this image, the accompanying words of the photographer, Pete Muller (which could equally have been written by a colonial District Commissioner), leaves none:

I am deeply intrigued by the pastoralist tribes of southern Sudan. Their way of life seems quite unchanged since its inception of these plains thousands of years ago. The social, spiritual and informal political structures within the pastoralist societies here are based almost entirely on the possession and successful retention of cattle.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> P.M Holt and M.W Daly, *A History of The Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day* (Harlow: Pearson, 2011), 122.

<sup>153</sup> Pete Muller, "The Violent Cattle Keepers of Southern Sudan's Pastoralist Tribes," *Time*, May 17, 2011, <http://lightbox.time.com/2011/05/17/the-violent-cattle-keepers-of-southern-sudans-pastoralist-tribes/#1>.



Image 23: Portrait of a Dinka man from 1934-54.<sup>154</sup>



Image 24: Portrait of a Dinka man from 2011.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> SAD Bloss 884/3/9

<sup>155</sup> Muller, "The Violent Cattle Keepers of Southern Sudan's Pastoralist Tribes."

## WAR, FAMINE AND AID

The civil wars in Sudan, which began less than 10 years after independence from Britain have defined recent representations of Gogrial. War has added another element to Gogrial's peripherality and enshrined it as a site of suffering. There are two important points to make about this. The first is that war and the aid response has produced new understandings of vulnerability and unreachability. The second is the visual representations of the war. The last civil war saw the global circulation of images of Dinka and Southern Sudanese civilians that became emblematic of famine and war in Africa. How images of poverty, violence and suffering have come to define a certain Western image of Africa has been discussed elsewhere.<sup>156</sup> I am interested in how these images fit into the longer historical development of representations of Gogrial. There are continuities in the image of Gogrial that is produced by these photographs - Gogrial as peripheral.

Gogrial was the epicentre for a major famine in Bahr el Ghazal between 1985 and 1989. The international community was criticized for failing to help civilians in SPLA-held areas. When challenged over the shortcomings of aid during this famine, in which over 500,000 were estimated to have died, a senior USAID official defended the operations by saying they were hampered by 'a total lack of information' about rural South Sudan: it was unknown and unreachable.<sup>157</sup> A new issue was that, during the civil war both the Government of Sudan and the SPLA were preventing access and aid into parts of the South. This was an acute problem in the 1980s, when there were no humanitarian agreements on access.<sup>158</sup> Gogrial and large parts of northern Bahr el Ghazal were thus 'unreachable' politically because they were SPLA held and the Sudanese Government would not grant access to relief organizations.

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<sup>156</sup> John Taylor, *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 129–156.

<sup>157</sup> David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 185–187 Citing 'War and famine in Sudan: Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Senate of Foreign Relations. 23 Feb 1989.

<sup>158</sup> See appendix C Jemera Rone, *Famine in Sudan 1998: The Human Rights Causes* (Washington DC: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

In the aftermath of the famine ‘Operation Lifeline Sudan’ (OLS) was formed, an umbrella under the aegis of the UN which negotiated access to war affected civilians with both the Government of Sudan and the SPLA. The Government of Sudan and the SPLA signed an agreement in 1989 that created limited ‘corridors of tranquillity’ into the worst affected areas (although these corridors did not extend to rural SPLA-held Bahr el Ghazal).<sup>159</sup> These efforts were intended to allay some of the problems of ‘unreachability’ that had blighted the 1980s relief efforts. However, far from international border and subject to GoS flight bans, the volatile and flood prone Gogrial remained one of the most difficult parts of South Sudan for aid agencies to reach and was plagued by access issues up until the end of the war in 2005.<sup>160</sup> Even after the worst of the interfactional fighting in the 1990s had passed, large parts of Gogrial were insecure and volatile and aid and assessment missions faced access difficulties. When a Save the Children aid convoy reached Luonyaker in Gogrial East in 1998 it was the furthest north an OLS vehicle had ever reached on the west bank of the Nile.<sup>161</sup>

The second wartime famine to hit South[ern] Sudan in 1998 also hit Gogrial hard. Journalists and photographers visited the village of Ajiep, on the east bank of the Jur River, almost exactly opposite Kuajok to document the conditions they found. Ajiep was a notorious site of starvation: regarded as the centre of the disaster. Humanitarian conditions were incredibly bad, partly because it became a relief magnet, drawing vulnerable people from a wide surrounding area in search of food and partly because the camp was also targeted by Kerubino Kuanyin Bol’s militia (see chapter 6) and there were significant failures of food distribution. Death rates at Ajiep were among the highest ever recorded.<sup>162</sup> Some of the most iconic recent images of famine were produced there. The most widely circulated photographs were taken by Tom Stoppard and Paul Lowe.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Michael Medley, “Humanitarian Parsimony in Sudan: The Bahr Al-Ghazal Famine of 1998” (University of Bristol, 2010), 91.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

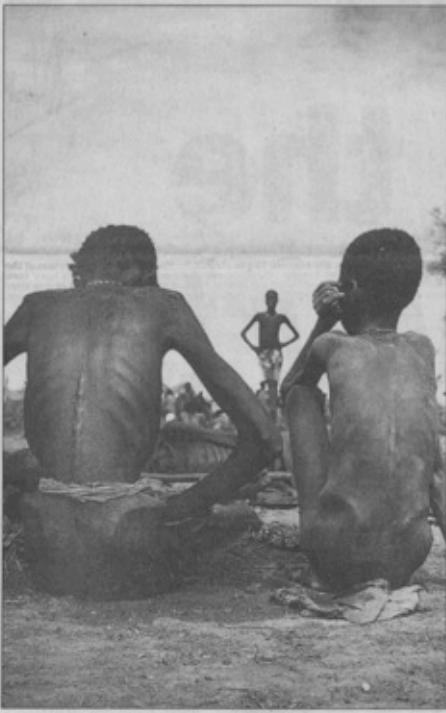
<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–47.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–63; Jemera Rone, *Famine in Sudan 1998: The Human Rights Causes* (Washington DC: Human Rights Watch, 1999) esp. “Increasing Malnutrition in Rural Areas Even After Relief Poured in”.

<sup>163</sup> Selected portfolios can be seen at “Sudan 1998 - Photo Essays by Pail Lowe and Tom Stoddart,” *www.imaging-famine.org*, accessed April 18, 2014, [http://www.imaging-famine.org/sudan/tom\\_stoddart/gallery1\\_sudan.htm](http://www.imaging-famine.org/sudan/tom_stoddart/gallery1_sudan.htm). Other photographers who visited Ajiep include Rich Addicks, “Sudan Famine,” *www.richaddicks.com*, n.d., <http://www.richaddicks.com/#a=0&at=0&mi=2&pt=1&pi=10000&s=5&p=2>; Radhika Chalasani, “Sudan Famine,” *www.radhikachalasani.com*, n.d., <http://www.radhikachalasani.com/#/sudan->



These photographs were taken by Tom Stoddart of IPG at the Médecins Sans Frontières feeding station at Ajleq in southern Sudan. Anti-clockwise from top: A child looks pitifully at a local rich man who has just taken a bag of maize from him after hours spent waiting for the meagre aid supplies; two people gather as a body is brought strenuously for burial; a young child



## Truce comes too late for unseen victims of Sudan's pitiless war

Victoria Brittain

**A** CEASEFIRE in Sudan's civil war has given new access to aid for thousands of desperate refugees. The three-month truce between the Islamic government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Army has opened the airstrip at Ajleq in the south where people have gathered for months struggling to survive on inadequate rations. But the aid has come too late for unknown thousands of other displaced people in many such rough, ill-equipped camps across the region. Aid workers fear that the high death toll at Ajleq sug-

gests that many other camps are also in the grip of a catastrophe. The refugees, mostly from generations of Dinka cattle-herding families, are the usually unseen victims of a pitiless war driven by regional and geo-political interests which go far beyond Sudan. The US has declared Sudan a terrorist state, while neighbouring Eritrea, Ethiopia, and especially Uganda, have all been destabilised for years by Sudan's proxy armies. The Dinka in Ajleq have lost their cattle, their villages, schools and clinics. They have been driven to walk for days, weeks or months, searching for food and fleeing a war waged against them from Khartoum by air and land.

Their traditional world of cattle camps, elaborate rituals and careful ornamentation is lost for ever. The potential of riches which might have brought them into the modern world are more remote than ever. Elsewhere in the south a convoy of river barges carrying emergency food supplies began a six-week journey down the Nile. "For many communities along the river, this barge is their only opportunity to get access to outside food and medical assistance," said Tesema Negash, the World Food Programme's deputy director for Africa. MSF Credit Card Hotline 0900220 222. Unicef Credit Card Hotline 0545 322 332



Image 25: Tom Stoddart's photographs in *The Guardian*, Wednesday 12 August 1998.<sup>164</sup>

famine/sudan02; Albert Facelly, "Famine Au Sud-Soudan, 1998," [www.divergence-images.com](http://www.divergence-images.com), n.d., <http://www.divergence-images.com/recherche/sudan/albert+facelly/>; Stuart Freedman, "South Sudan Famine," <http://archive.stuartfreedman.com>, n.d., <http://stuartfreedman.photoshelter.com/gallery/South-Sudan-Famine/G00003NCFS11UGYw/>.

<sup>164</sup> The full article is available online at <http://www.imaging-famine.org/sudan.htm> Last accessed 25.07.2014

In many ways, the images from the 1998 famine reproduce older images of Gogrial as peripheral, victimized and timeless. The Sunday Times was the first paper to run the images from Ajiep on 28 May 1998. It ran Paul Lowe's photographs with an article under the headline, *The End of the Road*. In August Tom Stoddart's photographs were published in the Guardian (with an article by Victoria Brittain). The photos had an immediate impact on readers; a telephone number for MSF was published alongside the photos and they received £40,000 in pledges in a single day.<sup>165</sup> The most famous of these images is of a well-fed man stealing a bag of grain from a starving boy. As Kleinman and Kleinman have argued, these images of extreme suffering create the idea that their subjects 'cannot protect their own; they must be protected, as well as represented, by others'.<sup>166</sup> People are presented as alone and isolated in their victimhood. It strips the political circumstances to produce a picture of suffering that is not linked to a particular time or a particular place. Even the map locating Ajiep in the Guardian's article is wrong (see Image 25): Ajiep (and Gogrial) is on the other side of Wau.

Scholars have argued that images of starvation in Africa and nineteenth century images of exoticized Africans have parallels because they are forms of cultural representation in which moral, commercial and political impulses are deeply interlinked and they justify certain values and interventionist responses.<sup>167</sup> It has also been suggested the exhibition of photographs of extreme suffering in Africa is an inheritance of colonial ethnological exhibitions of 'exotic' human beings.<sup>168</sup> Similarly graphic photographs of dead or dying people from Western countries would not be published. So, to Sontag, looking at these photographs is a distancing act because the subjects of these photos are 'regarded only as someone to be seen, not someone (like us) who also sees'.<sup>169</sup> Worse even, these images risk depoliticizing the context. Clare Short, who was the UK minister for international development in 1998, strongly criticized appeals for public sympathy and funding connected to these images, arguing that the solution to the situation in Sudan was only a political one; the reason people were starving was 'not lack of resources, but lack of

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<sup>165</sup> John Sweeney and Tom Stoddart, "Moving Pictures," *Reportage* Winter (1998).

<sup>166</sup> Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriation of Suffering in Our Times," *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996): 7.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>168</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Hamish Hamilton, 2003), 65.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*



[political] access.’<sup>170</sup> This was echoed by one journalist who had filmed a starving girl in South Sudan for a BBC news feature, later reflecting on his work:

I had believed that by focusing on this one child I could actually make people identify with the crisis in south Sudan. Give her name, her age, her story. The people will see that skeletal creatures are in fact individual human beings...I now wonder if the opposite did not turn out to be the case...in my report the context was overshadowed by the image of a child in agony.<sup>171</sup>

These photographs do not bring Gogrial or the experiences of the people of Gogrial closer; the effect is the opposite: their suffering has destroyed what makes them individuals and they are unknowable. The accompanying text of the Sunday Times article, describing mainly the writer’s personal reflections on witnessing starvation, crudely underlined this sense of distance:

Ajiep is where the buck finally stops...Here is the end of the longest queue in the world. “The people less fortunate than yourself”. When the Dinka look round, there is no one behind them. They are refugees in their own land wandering in an arid, featureless plain...<sup>172</sup>



Image 26: ‘A mother and child’ by Tom Stoddart.

These photographs also feature the spectacle of female suffering: images of women, children and the elderly are featured as never before in the famine photography. This is

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<sup>170</sup> Article 13 Clare Short, “Select Committee on International Development Seventh Report.” (UK Parliament, August 7, 1998), <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmintdev/872/87207.htm>.

<sup>171</sup> Fergal Keane cited in David Campbell, “Salgado and the Sahel: Documentary Photography and the Imaging of Famine,” in *Rituals of Mediation: International Politics and Social Meaning*, ed. F Debrix and C Weber (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 70.

<sup>172</sup> A.A Gill and Paul Lowe, “The End of The Road,” *The Sunday Times Magazine*, May 28, 1998, 41.

different from earlier photographs and illustrations that focused on men. This illustrates a major shift in the representations of Gogrial as a site of distant suffering. Masculine images of Gogrial (and Dinka people) were not replaced, but they were, ironically, more balanced by the famine coverage.

Although they were intended to bring the experience of famine in Gogrial closer, images of famine in Gogrial Civil war made Gogrial more peripheral. Through Stoppard and Lowe's photographs Gogrial became another kind of frontier: it came to visually represent the furthest point that human life could be pushed to.



Image 27: Ajiep in The Sunday Times Magazine, 28 May 1998.<sup>173</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Gogrial has been imagined by government officials, anthropologists, missionaries, journalists and aid workers as a remote and isolated place. Breaking down barriers, to incorporate the people and the landscape has been a consistent element in external engagements with this area. This has entailed physically breaking down the geographical barrier of the *Sudd*, breaking down barriers of understanding to incorporate Gogrial into the apparatus of the colonial state – or into a field of academic understanding. For the

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<sup>173</sup> The full article is available online at <http://www.imaging-famine.org/sudan.htm> Last accessed 25.07.2014.

Catholic missionaries this has meant breaking down spiritual barriers to conversion – to reach the unreached.

The British colonial period was central in establishing this image of isolation. Transforming society by incorporating it into administrative structures was central to project of colonial control in Gogrial. Even since this period, the narrative of a remote and violent place has remained consistent because of a shared desire, on behalf of those who have come, to change something about Dinka society.

It has been harder to trace images of Gogrial between the end of British colonialism and the beginning of the second civil war. Conflict restricted access and ‘Gogrial’ was subsumed into the wider South in accounts from this period. It has not been possible (because of time restraints and lack of access) to explore Arabic language sources on Gogrial and the South within this thesis. Although, it is arguable that ‘Islamization/Arabization’ policies also constitute an attempt at culturally and politically incorporating the South.

War photographers and journalists during the second civil war (1983-2005) also sought to artistically incorporate suffering in Gogrial into a global flow of information. These striking but difficult images enhanced the apparent isolation of Gogrial, which was portrayed as an area at the furthest reaches of human survival.

These images do tell us something about the history of Gogrial. But it is a partial image. In 1998, in a particularly polemical account in the Sunday Times, Gill described the people of Gogrial as ‘refugees in their own land wandering in an arid, featureless plain’. This thesis is going to argue the exact opposite. It will show that the landscape of Gogrial is complex, varied, and has been constructed by people through periods of war and famine.

## Making Pathways...

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na Tuong.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to Tuong.

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na wut col Nyankijo kek Yiik Adoor.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to a cattle camp called Nyankijo and then to Yiik Adoor.

*Wetwa Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.*

The cow of my father, Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Chol 'Marial', Chol Deng Baak.

*Wut col Kuoc kek Tayeu ka ok Amermiith ok acie kueth akaltok.*

The subsections of Kuoc, Tayeu and we Amermith, we don't drive our cattle in a single day.

*Na la kueth Adoor, na kueth Adoor Malek, Marialdie yin aye nyiir dai.*

And when the cattle of Adoor, of Adoor Malek are being driven (from *to*), the girls look at you, my Marial.

*Wadit Akec Mading Nyiel, Akec Col 'Marial kuei', yin abi loydu col.*

My grandfather Akec Mading Nyiel called 'Marial Kuei' you will come to pray.

*Wudum Anyuon, Wudum Anyuon Deng ok abi kaŋ yet Ajokic.*

On the way to Wudum of Anyuon, Wudum of Anyuon Deng we will first reach Ajokyic.

*Ta nbier Toch Arau ok abi gua ben nbiak le deŋ keer.*

He likes *Toc Arau*, we will hurry back because soon it will rain.

*Marialdie col ale deŋ thnak kɔu.*

The rain washes the back of my Marial.

The opening refrain of Deng Kuac's song narrates the cycle of migration of people and animals between wet and dry season pastures. It is a path-focused narrative, invoking the routes and stopping points of a complete seasonal migration. By describing the movements of Marial Kuei (his song bull),<sup>1</sup> Deng poetically merges seasonality and landscape with identity, lineage and historical path making. The name of 'Marial Kuei' itself means a pied black and white bull (a highly aesthetically regarded colour) with a white head, like the white-headed fish eagle (*keuei*).<sup>2</sup> This is a poetic use of language that, in itself, destabilizes boundaries between the natural and social world. This song describes a path that is not only physical, but also temporal and the manifestation of a social landscape.<sup>3</sup> As people and cattle move along this path they accumulate (and embody) connections, histories and memories.

In the first lines of the song, Deng and Marial Kuei return from the dry season cattle camps. It is the beginning of the wet-season and they are moving towards the higher ground cattle camps (*wut ruel*) of Manyiel, Tuong and Nyankijo. Yiik Adoor, the place of Deng's ancestral home, is where all the cattle from Adoor section are gathered in the wet-season. The prayer that he calls for from his paternal uncle, Akec Mading (who is respectfully addressed as 'grandfather') is given before leaving Yiik Adoor to protect them as they move again towards the flood plain pasture. The last lines are about the return journey from the permanent villages to the distant dry season camps.

Wudom Anyuon and Toch Arau are both very distant cattle-camps, near to the border with Unity State and the Nuer. Going to these places is dangerous, although they offer essential water in the dry months. Toch Arau is the furthest pasture and they will not stay there long, because the rains will begin and they will return with the cattle to higher ground. The last line, when he describes the rain 'washing the back' (*dej thuak keu*) of

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<sup>1</sup> Which is identified with Deng himself see Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Coote, "The Marvels of Everyday Vision: The Anthropology of Aesthetics and the Cattle-Keeping Nilotes," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 255.

<sup>3</sup> Vigdis Broch-Due, "Remembered Cattle, Forgotten People: The Morality of Exchange and the Exclusion of the Turkana Poor," in *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*, ed. David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999), 52.

Marial Kuei shows that he stays in cattle camps with his bull for the whole year and does not take him to stay in the cattle byre (*luak*) of his family's homestead.

This song is a form of historiographical discourse that is both individual and about the wider family and community. Each beast in a herd conveys a unique history of human relations.<sup>4</sup> As Deng sings about herding the cow of his father, Kuac Chol, and his grandfather, Chol Deng, it brings out a historical dimension to this movement – this is not just Deng's pathway across the landscape, it is the history of his lineage and territorial community. This wider social collectivity is invoked in his celebration of the wealth of Adoor: saying 'we don't drive our cattle in a single day' (*ok acie kueth akaltok*) – because they have so many cattle. This contrasts with references to his own bull, Marial Kuei, the beauty of which is admired by all the girls (*aye nyiir dai*) as they migrate. This is both a performance of Deng's selfhood and his position within his family and the local community.<sup>5</sup>

His song imposes poetic permanence on the landscape, which belies contemporary realities. Nyang Payam, where Wudom and Toch Arau are located is one of the least secure parts of Warrap State, where clashes and raiding from communities in Unity State are a recurrent problem. The dry season of 2011/2012 was the first year for many years that it was safe enough for people to make it to Wudom Anyuon. Deng may imagine himself 'on the way to Wudum Anyuon' even when he may not, in reality, be able to reach it.

This thesis will explore these physical, social and temporal pathways to show how the people of Gogrial have renegotiated their relationship with the landscape through periods of conflict, displacement and an oscillating state presence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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<sup>4</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Angela Impey, "Keeping in Touch via Cassette: Tracing Dinka Songs from Cattle Camp to Transnational Audio-Letter," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 2013, 9.

### 3 Arrivals

*Ok aa Pakuin ku ok aa Padiany.*  
We are Pakiun and we are Padiany.

*Yenja raan kuenj kek?*  
Who will force us to swear it?

*Ok aa miith Akuin Kom, Angok Akuin Kom ce rɔt wel bi ya Diany ya ka ŋuot buk aagam,  
gam Kuot Majok.*  
We are the children of Akuin Kom, Angok Akuin Kom has changed his clan to be  
Diany. We have accepted. We have accepted Kuot Majok.

*Kedan Bek Marol ee kedan Bek Marol yen aye ok Padiany.*  
Our charm from Bek Marol is why we are Padiany.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek doŋ piny wut den Agar Wol kua ci raan ci ben dbuk.*  
Padiany Marial Bek have remained over the land, in Agar Wol a person went and  
remained.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek doŋ piny wut den Agar Pakkam kua ci raan ci ben  
dbuk.*  
Padiany Marial Bek have remained over the land, in Agar Pakkam a person went and  
remained.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek doŋ piny wut den Abuk Ayiai kua ci raan ci ben dbuk.*  
Padiany Marial Bek have remained over the land, in Abuk Ayiai a person went and  
remained.

*Kuac Amet ɔ yic raan tok ku ee Kuot Diany Angok.*  
In Kuac of Amet there is one person of Kuot Diany Angok.

*Apuoth Yel ɔ yic raan tok ku ee Kuot Diany.*  
In Apuoth Yel there is one person of Kuot Diany.

*Ke ba lioi, yen yok lioi.*  
Simply because he was divorcing and leaving the cows.

In an early part of the song Deng describes the movement and expansion of people. He sings about the origins of his clan, Padiany, and how they spread across Dinka territory. He explains that Padiany split off from another clan, Pakuin, under the leadership of a man called Kuot Diany, a descendent of Angok Akuin Kom. Recitation of these well-known names establishes Deng's own place within his clan's history.

Kuot Diany was a troublemaker. He had killed someone and had to escape from his father's home with his siblings as reprisals were feared from the family of the murdered man. As they ran away they reached a river that was too wide to cross. The bird, Bek Marol, helped Kuot Diany across by giving him a stick that parted the river. They crossed over and arrived in a new place. Here, Kuot established a new community and the clan Padiany. The bird Bek Marol is now one of their clan divinities.

As a historical figure, Kuot Diany is something of an anti-hero. Not only did he flee from a murder, he is also remembered for his difficult personality. In the story Deng is alluding to here, it is Kuot's multiple unreasonable demands that explain the expansion of Padiany. Kuot was a difficult husband. For example, he demanded his wives find him termites in the dry season – an impossible request as termites can only be found in the wet season. He went fishing and came back empty handed, but demand his wives cook him meals with the meat of vultures, geckos or snakes.<sup>1</sup> But the meat of these animals was not eaten and when his wives refused to cook, he divorced them. In stories about Kuot Diany, he did this many times; married women, made impossible demands of them and quickly divorced them. Crucially, as the last line in this song extract says, he divorced without making the normal claim of return of his bridewealth cattle. As the exchange of cattle is the normal social determinant of paternity, this meant that his spate of marriages left many sons who retained his name and who spread the clan across the land - *kek doj piny* 'they remained across the land'. That Kuot was 'leaving the cows' – a bovine idiom of kin-relationship – expresses the intimate links between people and the landscape. This extract is about the triumph of lineage expansion, albeit under somewhat inglorious circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix p. 277-278.



## INTRODUCTION

Migration of people, arrival and appropriation of forests have a central part in historical narratives in Gogrial. The first responses I received to my enquiries into local history were often stories of how a family or a group of people had arrived in a certain place. This chapter examines these historical concerns about how a place was first settled. It does this by analyzing arrival narratives, by tracing the developing characteristics of these narratives in archival records and asking what ‘arrival’ reveals about the construction of history. It builds on the imagery in Deng’s song of the spread of his clan to explore how arrival narratives trace social and spatial pathways through landscape.

All historical claims reflect, respond to and shape the wider political contexts in which they are told. For a variety of reasons, including political decentralization, new administrative divisions and privatization of resources across the country, claims on land had become increasingly important in South Sudan following the end of civil war in 2005. In some cases, sentiments were intensified by a widespread perception that during the liberation war people had paid dearly, literally with their own blood, for the land of South Sudan.<sup>2</sup> Or, as people returned from refuge in neighbouring countries, or from internal displacement, further debates about land entitlements were created at the local level.<sup>3</sup> While many of these debates have intensified since the end of the war, the interaction between wider political changes and claims to land is not new. Throughout the twentieth century the characteristics of arrivals narratives have been shaped by dynamic political circumstances and have been linked to the construction of identity and power. This chapter begins by tracing some of these changes to put the recent arrival claims into a historical context.

Building on these historical narratives as processes, the central argument in this chapter is that arrivals and arrival narratives should be seen as ways of remaking the landscape. This is multifaceted process. In part, it is political because arrival claims inscribe

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<sup>2</sup> Cherry Leonardi, “Paying ‘Buckets of Blood’ for the Land: Moral Debates over Economy, War and State in Southern Sudan,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 215–40.

<sup>3</sup> GoSS/IOM, *State Report Warrap: Village Assessments and Returnee Monitoring*. (IOM, 2009); Peter Hakim Justin, “IDPs or Not IDPs: Conceptual Dilemmas and Contribution to Vulnerabilities of IDPs and Host Communities in Post-Conflict Settings: The Case of Yei River County in South Sudan” (presented at the Reconfiguring Landscapes and Bio-Cultural Frontiers in Eastern Africa Symposium, BIEA, Nairobi, 2014).

historical rights onto the landscape. Stories told about past arrivals allow their tellers to assert authority through descent and connection to place. Yet, the deployment of arrival narratives in Gogrial should not only be seen as political-historical claims. Kopytoff's analysis of African frontier societies has given a vivid picture of the political power of this kind of frontier expansion.<sup>4</sup> But a purely political lens does not capture the importance and depth of arrival narratives. A key feature of arrival narratives is that they are articulated as a process of converting of wild land or forest (Dinka. *roor*) into domestic and social space (Dinka. *baai*). Through this narrative of conversion and appropriation, arrival narratives are also part of a historical repertoire for culturally managing the destruction of land and society through mediating the landscape. They demonstrate the interconnections between society and the landscape. These narratives are a creative resource which allows people to articulate safety and belonging in the context of chronic insecurity and displacement.

This chapter will discuss several examples of how individuals used a narrative of *roor* to *baai* conversion to frame historical arrival claims and recent experiences of returning to areas that had been lost to forest during the civil war. These accounts highlight the experience of landscape as both socially constructed and a real material presence.<sup>5</sup> In South Sudan, where there has been a long history of insecurity, the *narrative* of *roor* to *baai* conversion is linked to *experience* of material transformation of the landscape after periods of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Political claims, the conversion of land and the restoration of society are intertwined. The main argument this chapter develops is that while there is a political element to arrival narratives, they are also a way of narrating a history of periodic violence. This in turn, continues to shape responses to insecurity and perceptions of the landscape. Through intermittent conversions of *roor* to *baai* (and loss of *baai*) the history of Gogrial is shaped a series of overlapping appropriations of land that has been lost as forest and then

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<sup>4</sup> Igor Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> David Demeritt, "The Nature of Metaphors in Cultural Geography and Environmental History," *Progress in Human Geography* 18, no. 2 (1994): 164.

<sup>6</sup> For the significance of attending to non-narrative expressions of environmental history see Tamara Giles-Vernick, "Doli: Translating an African Environmental History of Loss in the Sangha River Basin of Equatorial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 03 (2000): 390–392.

reclaimed as people's homes. Arrivals thus trace a physical and genealogical pathway through the landscape that is partly narrative and partly material.

#### MOVING ACROSS THE LAND

The oral accounts that Lienhardt collected in the late 1940s claimed that in the very distant past the ancestors of the Rek Dinka came to Bahr el Ghazal from the east, crossing many rivers, including the White Nile. In these myths of past migration, the idea of moving into new territories and crossing rivers is synonymous with survival, prosperity and the historical trajectory of society.<sup>7</sup> Deng invokes this idea in his song, when he describes how Kuot Diany crossed a river before forming his own clan. The arrival narratives discussed in this chapter should be seen in the context of this wider historiographic tradition of describing movement and expansion. There is a long history of 'arrivals' and past territorial expansions which ordinary people have narrated and also found material evidence for in the landscape. For example, in the village of Afecker in 1948, when pieces of pottery or beads that were unlike Dinka ones were occasionally found in the grass or while sweeping, people said they belonged to the *keodit* (Dinka. lit. the old people), who had lived in the area before.<sup>8</sup>

Two recent studies have attempted to reconstruct a grand history of 'The Dinka' by tracing oral historical accounts of migration. Stephanie Beswick's study of Dinka history (mainly based on interviews with displaced Dinka during the second civil war) suggests the Dinka and their cattle migrated from central Sudan in the sixteenth century, displacing indigenous societies to settle what is now South Sudan.<sup>9</sup> In an even more ambitious account (based on thirty years worth of interviews with five hundred Dinka elders), Lewis Anei Kuendit, a former Governor of Warrap, takes this argument to its extreme conclusion, suggesting that this ancient migration of modern Dinka people can

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<sup>7</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 195.

<sup>8</sup> PRM GL Box 4/9 24.04.1948 Government files read by Lienhardt during his research also noted that there were mounds at Panhomweth (present day Gogrial East) said to have been made by people who had lived in the area before the Dinka called 'Luel' PRM GL Box 2/1 22.12.1947. An Italian missionary researched a 'pre-Dinka' group called Luel who lived on mounds and who he believed were forced north in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. See Stefano Santandrea, *Ethno-Geography of the Bahr El Ghazal (Sudan): An Attempt at a Historical Reconstruction* (Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1981), 149–158.

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Beswick, *Sudan's Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity and Slavery in South Sudan* (Rochester, USA: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 29–42.

be traced back from Biblical floods, the early societies of the Fertile Crescent, through Egypt and Khartoum to what is now South Sudan.<sup>10</sup> In placing the origins of modern Dinka people in the Middle East, these studies have clearly been influenced by a Hamitic hypothesis. In Ehret's linguistic analysis of Southern Nilotic groups he proposed that the location of the proto-Nilotic community was somewhere in the lower dry regions to the West and South West of the Ethiopian highlands.<sup>11</sup> This suggestion is consonant with the view that the original Dinka migration came from the east, which is held in Gogrial and more widely.<sup>12</sup>

There are clearly many problems with the approach of both Beswick and Kuendit's studies, which rely on the unproblematized use of oral testimony as 'fact' and which project modern identities onto the past.<sup>13</sup> These works powerfully show that accounts of migrations are central to the way that many Dinka people understand their past. Yet, they ignore the ways that stories of migration, in themselves, are part of the cultural construction of Dinka ethnic identity. Stories of migration are better seen as tools through which Dinka ethnic consciousness and more localized community identities have been forged, rather than evidence that they are primordial.

#### CHANGING MEANINGS OF TERRITORIAL EXPANSION AND ARRIVAL

Although they have a long historic tradition, expressions of, and meanings attributed to, territorial expansion have changed over time. One way of capturing this is to look at the way that local histories of territorial expansion and movement of people have been told since 1923. As state administrative structures have changed the landscape of South Sudan, community leaders and ordinary people have responded to this and found new ways to articulate and assert legitimate claims. Narratives of this kind may have proliferated in the colonial period partly in response to the increasing significance being

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis Anei Madut Kuendit, *The Dinka History: The Ancients of Sudan. From Abuk and Garang to The Present Day Dinka* (Mignic Technologies, 2010), xvii.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Ehret, *Southern Nilotic History: Linguistic Approaches to the Study of the Past* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 35.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in the Afro-Arab Sudan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 122.

<sup>13</sup> For a critique of Beswick' see Justin Willis, "The Dinka and History. A Review of 'Sudan's Blood Memory'," *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 2 (2005): 340–341.

laid on territorial definitions of community by the colonial state, (a process that will be described in more detail in the next chapter).

Accounts of pre-colonial histories and oral histories from the 1940s, which survive in archives describe a process of spreading out and settling of people across the land. These are told as histories of migration, expansion, and the continual fission of people into different groups.<sup>14</sup> Divisions and movements of people were connected to the leadership of important individuals who gathered people around them and expanded into new territory.<sup>15</sup> These names and this history are both inscribed in the geography of Gogrial as places and groups of people are often named after these famous individuals (often combined with topographical descriptors). In this way past migrations – and claims – are mapped onto the landscape. The extensive use of this kind of place naming was noted among the earliest ethnographic notes made on Gogrial, by ADC Titherington in the 1920s:

Fortunately for the map-maker, every place that can be inhabited or hold a cattle-camp has a recognized proper name. The watercourses have a new name every few miles, these are taken from some old incident or natural peculiarity.<sup>16</sup>

Accounts from the 1940s record people saying that when the population became too large, or there was a dispute and someone wanted to form their own community people would migrate and claim new territory.<sup>17</sup> Several of these stories of migration survive in Gogrial's archival record.<sup>18</sup> The quotation below is from an oral history recorded by a teacher called Albert Juk for the Catholic Priest Ireneo Dud in 1949, who was conducting research on the history of the Tuic area.<sup>19</sup> The story is about how the Tuic Dinka came to occupy their home north of Gogrial. He recorded that a young man

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<sup>14</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958), 118.

<sup>15</sup> This historiography is mostly oral but several attempts have been made to record it. See Stephanie Beswick 'Sudan's Blood Memory' and Lewis Anei Kuendit 'The Dinka History: The Ancients of Sudan.'

<sup>16</sup> G.W Titherington, "The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province," *Sudan Notes and Records* 10 (1927): 161–162. Also see a discussion of the sophistication of Dinka place naming in Stefano Santandrea, "A Popular History of Wau (Bahr El Ghazal, Sudan) From Its Foundations to About 1940." (Rome, 1977), 1–2.

<sup>17</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 104. This is archetypal of what Kopytoff describes in *The Internal African Frontier*.

<sup>18</sup> Also see PRM GL 7/12 'Wel koc theer Pan Malual'.

<sup>19</sup> ACR A.114.8.1-3 'The Migration of the Dinka Tuic'.

called Ajing separated from his father and established the community of Tuic, between the River Jur and River Lol, after he suspected his father was trying to kill him:

When Ajing came to the cattle camp, he did not reach his father's home, but planned to go away with the cattle camp into far off land. He talked with his equals that he meant to go in search of other land...Ajing, followed by his followers came and settled in the actual place of the Tuic Dinka between Bahr-el-Arab and Lol River.<sup>20</sup>

The story describes the splitting of a political unit and the establishment of a new community through the process of territorial expansion. Another story, collected by Ireneo Dud in 1949, describes how the Ḍok Dinka settled in Abyei, coming from the east, led by a young man called Jok (the founder of the Pajok clan) after escaping a dispute with his girlfriend's brothers. It echoes the process of political fission through territorial expansion:

Their first leader, who brought them to their actual place, the land around Bahr el-Arab, is known by all to be Jok the son of Biardit. Biar was an important man among the Dinka Ḍok... Jok was already grown up and wanted to marry a girl, but the girl's relatives refused to recognize the marriage, despite their refusal Jok was still courting the girl secretly. So one day when Jok was tending the cattle, the girl's brothers conspired to kill Jok... Jok's sister, Acai heard about this conspiracy (sic) and informed her brother... Jok told the herdsmen of the cattle...and started [to leave] with many young men and girls...all the people went by, moving west...<sup>21</sup>

There are various ways of interpreting the presence of these oral histories in the archival record. They may have survived in the archives because, to put it crudely, they said what state authorities wanted to hear – that there was a territorial basis to community – so they were recorded and ascribed value. Yet, these narratives are so creative and so detailed that it would be hard to dismiss them as invented only for the benefit of the state.<sup>22</sup> At the very least, amidst the changes of colonial period, these stories made an important point about the interconnection between authority, migration and political geography: they resonated with moral ideas and political claims.

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<sup>20</sup> ACR A.114.8.1-3 'The Migration of the Dinka Tuic'.

<sup>21</sup> ACR A.114.8.1-3 'The Emigration of the Ḍok Dinka from the east to their actual position around the Bahr-el-Arab region in Kordofan Province by Byl Nyok Kuol for Ireneo Dud. In another version Acai is Jok's daughter and is carried off by the spirit of the water in return for allowing Jok and the others to cross a river see Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of The Sudan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 111.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Spear, "Neo-Traditionalism and Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 3–27.

In 1972 Francis Deng collected oral histories of migrations from influential Dinka chiefs living in the south. In an interview with Giir Thiik, an important chief of the Apuk Dinka from Gogrial East, the old man gave Francis Deng a detailed account of the origins of the Dinka and his own Apuk, emphasizing the expansion of people over land:

People did not come from above. People came searching for land. The land they came from, did you not find it in your travels? It's a land that could not sustain life. So they crossed territories. They came crossing the lands in search of a good land...when our group came they crossed by way of Luac and then parted...the other Apuk pass that way and went and found a small *toc* near the river...then we came that way, crossing the country until we came to a place called Lou. We lived there, but later it didn't satisfy us so we left...<sup>23</sup>

Similar accounts of pre-colonial history are still told in Gogrial. However, more recent historical accounts that I solicited in Gogrial East tended to emphasize incursion and pressure on territory rather than expansion. In some cases this can be partly explained by the recent history of conflict and displacement. For example, Gogrial East County, which is majority Apuk Dinka, was an area of relative safety during the last civil war (1983-2005). It was rural, without major roads and so large areas were inaccessible. Older people interviewed in Luonyaker (a large village in Gogrial East) stressed the perceived incursion by other Dinka sections and another ethnic group (Luo) during the civil war into what they saw as Apuk territory:

We even used to go right up to the river in Wau, but since people were displaced, those people from the other side of the river in Wau came over and settled in our area. Even Jurcol [Luo] came and settled in our area, so now people think these areas do not belong to Apuk but previously it was all Apuk... They came in and Apuk was squeezed in.<sup>24</sup>

I had collected a similar account about the territory of Apuk from a son of Giir Thiik a few months earlier. This narrative, strikingly different from his father's, told of the territorial constraints on the Apuk in recent decades. He illustrated the situation by making a drawing on the sandy ground. I copied it into my notebook.<sup>25</sup> The horizontal line is the River Jur, the roads had been used by SAF and the SPLA during the civil war

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<sup>23</sup> The full account is given in Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in the Afro-Arab Sudan*, 124-126.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with a group of elders in Luonyaker, 08.06.2012.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Akol Giir Thiik, Kuajok, 22.10.2011.

and civilians had fled away from them. The circles represent neighbouring communities; the arrows denote that they are moving further into what he believed was Apuk territory. This is a visual representation described by the Apuk elders above.

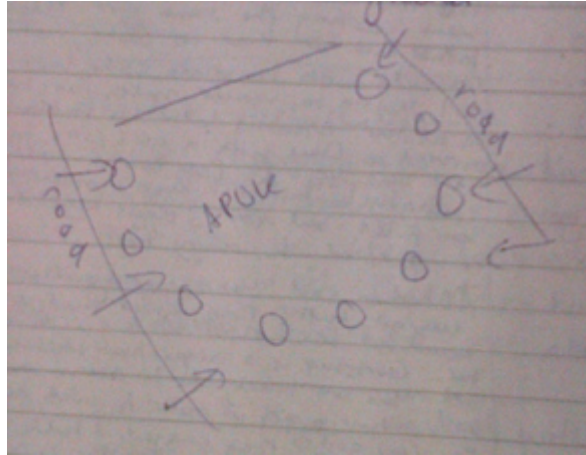


Image 28: My sketch of Akol's drawing in the sand

These recent accounts evoke a move away from a language of territorial expansion, to a language of enclosure. They expose a perception of land having become more finite than it once was. In this context, as people cannot spread out across the land, one answer to the question of how to obtain independent authority is through formation of new administrative units (a point which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Administrative units and borders are changing the terms on which territoriality is debated. They have provided a new vehicle through which the segmentary and expansionist logic of Dinka political organization can be articulated. The complex effects of the state's attempts to remap the landscape will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For the concerns of this chapter, this has produced a very different context in which arrival narratives and accounts of migration are told, compared to the 1940s. Although many old stories are still told and still hold moral weight, the political context has changed. When in the process of writing this chapter I discussed this issue with a friend from Gogrial East, I asked him about the future of grand accounts of territorial expansion. He reflected that 'now people have drawn their boundaries, such stories won't exist'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Conversation with Wol Aluk Chol. 2.11.2013.



## ARRIVALS

During my fieldwork many people in Gogrial articulated their pre-colonial history as a process of expanding over, settling in and claiming new territory. Thus, arrival narratives reveal the political importance of having been first to arrive in an area. Claiming authority from firstcoming is, Kopytoff argues, ‘quintessentially a frontier idea.’<sup>27</sup> Claiming land that was wild, therefore vacant, is part of the way that people can present themselves as the legitimate first comers on a new frontier.<sup>28</sup> In Dinka expressions of political geography, the first-comer is often spoken about as being ‘central’ (*ciellic*). Arrival and migration narratives are equally about creating centrality in a physical and a genealogical sense. The phrase used to describe the first people who settle a new cattle camp is ‘*koc wut ciellic*’ – the people of the centre of the cattle camp. Similarly, the first-settled place in a highland settlement is also called ‘*wut ciellic*’ – the centre of, and first arrived among, the community.<sup>29</sup> Centrality and first-coming both indicate preeminence, access to resources and legitimate authority.

Arrival narratives are about establishing first coming, rather than ‘pure’ indigeneity.<sup>30</sup> As many oral accounts show, many Dinka see their history as a process of expansion. This is why claims of foundational presence are frequently expressed as the cultural appropriation of wilderness. In Gogrial, narrators asserted their claim to land through the idioms of first-coming and descent. Accounts of how a place was *occupied* are central to its history. Such historical claims are usually based on a narrative of converting wild forest, ‘*roor*’ to socialized space, ‘*baai*’. This processes of *roor* to *baai* conversion, in part a consequence of the expansionary and migratory logic of local historiographies, is the basis of the arrival narratives.

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<sup>27</sup> Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, 53.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. 52–61.

<sup>29</sup> *Wut* can denote both a cattle-camp and a community of people.

<sup>30</sup> The term ‘autochthony’, has recently been deployed in writing about the politics of belonging in Africa to describe similar claims of being the original or ‘authentic’ owners of the land. The term has particular resonance in former French colonies as it was used by colonial administrators to differentiate between people and gain political importance (Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4.) However, as autochthony means arisen/created from the earth itself, I have not used it, as it potentially misleading as a description of these Dinka claims that are really about migration.

The experience of a retired government official, from Gogrial East who had been away for many years and wanted to start a farm near a place called Buagok, illustrates the pervasive use of the cultural appropriation of wild forest *roor* to make a range of foundational claims. He explained that he had been uncertain of how to claim a piece of forest (*roor*) to begin his farming project:

I first went to the County Commissioner and said, “I want to farm in this forest, how shall I do it? Who do I approach? Where do I begin?” The Commissioner said, “Go and get yourselves some axes, hire some people and let them begin to cut the trees. You will find people running to come and stop you. That is where the debate will begin.” It turned out exactly like that. I went and got about 10 axes, got about 10 people and they were cutting the trees. Oh My! People rushed! They shouted, “What is this? Who is doing this? Why?” Then I said to myself, OK, now we know whom to approach.<sup>31</sup>

Once he had established who to talk to, he opened a case to adjudicate his right to establish a farm. He explained his argument:

Buagok the village – that is our ancestral home. This forest in an extension of Buagok. Buagok is my grandfather’s place, my aunt, my uncle, my whatever had houses in this forest, because it was an extension of Buagok. Originally I am from here, I am from Nyaramong [a section of Apuk]. So what is it? Am I a stranger? What is the problem? In the end I defeated them and they agreed to go and show my people and demarcate where I am to farm.<sup>32</sup>

He convinced the court elders of his right to this area on the basis of an ancestral claim. He had shown that in the past, members of his lineage had also cut down trees and settled in the area. ‘Now I have cut the trees, I have made my claim’ he told me in conclusion.<sup>33</sup> Genealogy and historical narratives might, as the example above rather candidly shows, be used selectively and to serve the interests of the present. Telling a story about family history is a powerful form of political action.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Riiny Thiik Madut, Luonyaker 06.06.12.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. C.f. Symbolism of cutting down trees in other contexts e.g. Kikuyu use of forest clearance as moral basis for identity Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity* (Oxford: James Currey, 1992), 333. As a symbol of the persistence of shifting agricultural practices and changing gender dynamics in Northern Zambia Henrietta L Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition, and Agricultural Change in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990* (Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH, 1994), 22.

<sup>34</sup> David Graeber, *Lost People: Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar* (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2007), 130.

## INSECURITY AND REMAKING LANDSCAPE

So far, the characteristics I have described of arrivals and socializing forest space are broadly consonant with Kopytoff's thesis of the political significance of expanding the frontier. But the significance of *roor* and *baai* conversion goes beyond its political utility. It is also a way of dealing with a very volatile history.

If the arrival and claiming of land is associated with its socialization, then the loss of land to physical (and climatic) insecurity is associated with the desocialization of land and the return of *baai* to *roor*. Fleeing to 'wild' land and forests has often been a necessity to survive, and the flight 'to the bush' was a central part of many ordinary people's narratives about periods of conflict.<sup>35</sup> This was also part of the language of southern rebel movements. Referring to rebellion as time 'in the bush' is pervasive in South Sudanese and academic accounts of civil wars. In Dinka language, 'going to the bush' (*ci la roor*) is a euphemism for having joined the SPLA (it is also a euphemism for defecation).

The association between security, community and *baai* opposed to insecurity, wilderness and *roor* has a long history.<sup>36</sup> These extracts from oral histories given by two important chiefs (Kuanyin Agoth from Gogrial town and Giir Thiik from Luonyaker) and recorded by DC Hunter, a colonial official in 1948 show that at this time, memories of the disruption of the slave trade in the nineteenth century were being articulated in similar terms. People took 'to the woods', living 'as hunted things', while 'forests came back' to cover villages:

In 1873 [estimated date] the real devastation of the Aguok began. It lasted about 8 years. Women, children and cows were almost all seized. Only the stronger women who were able to take to the woods with the men survived. All that time they lived as hunted things. No houses were built.

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<sup>35</sup> These narratives have similarities with periods of insecurity associated with "dark forests" in Shangani Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor, and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: 100 Years in the "Dark Forests" of Matabeleland* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2000), 19.

<sup>36</sup> Lienhardt notes the comparison between *roor* and *baai* in the 1940s Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 63; Godfrey Lienhardt, "Notions of Witchcraft among the Dinka," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 21, no. 4 (1951): 307.

In 1879 [estimated date] the real devastation of the Apuk began. At that time they were so numerous that Pathuan was almost all homesteads with hardly a tree to be seen. They fled to their toc lands and the forest came back. It became great elephant country.<sup>37</sup>

This articulates the experience of conflict. It draws on the idea that destruction of the land (*piny aci riäk*) is associated with forests and wild place, while the land being made good again (*piny aci piath*) is linked to its re-socialization. Thus arrival narratives are part of the ongoing cultural mediation of insecurity; this is the way the memory and experience of conflict is framed in everyday conversation. In turn, insecurity is part of the context in which these ideas and narratives about the land and arrival have been formed. The *roor* to *baai* conversion narrative is partly a creative response to the experience of violence.

The protection and maintenance of ‘the homeland’ has become very important in the recent history of South Sudan. There is revealing phrase that I heard repeated several times in Gogrial town, a place with a particularly unsettled recent history (see chapter 6). It was said in the context of discussions over the local history, and illustrates the importance of ‘our land’:

*Kene ee pienyda, na cök yok thol, ke raan tok ke doŋ ke aacie leu buk pal wei ke raan det.*

This is our land, and even if you kill us, one person will remain and we will not leave it to another.<sup>38</sup>

It conveys the sense that a community of people will never be destroyed if they never lose their land. Even if many people are killed, there will be others who will ‘remain’ (*doŋ*) to defend ‘our land’ (*pienyda*). *Doŋ* is the same word used by Deng to describe the spread of his clan – they ‘remained’ in different places across the land. These sentiments cannot (and should not) be disentangled from experiences of recent civil conflict in which people experienced multiple and prolonged periods of raiding, destruction of crops and what is now seen as the enemy occupation of places like Gogrial town. Even when civilians left Gogrial during the war, they were quick to come back to it as soon as it became safe. In late March 2012, two thirds of the way through my fieldwork, there was

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<sup>37</sup> PRM GL Box 1/3 ‘History of the Gogrial Area Dinka’.

<sup>38</sup> Fieldnotes, Gogrial. 04.07.2012

a conflict on the international border with Sudan over Heglig town and oil fields.<sup>39</sup> Many people I knew responded to the crisis with highly nationalistic feelings that drew on sovereign and ethnonational claims to land. In one informal conversation, a local government minister exclaimed that in order to prove South Sudan's ownership claims (which to him were undeniable), the graves in Heglig should be dug up and the skulls bearing the indentation of Dinka scarification marks used as evidence of South Sudan's ownership of the land.<sup>40</sup> His suggestion was not a literal call for exhumation. It was supposed to emphasize the long historical claim on (and even under) the land of Heglig. The disruptions of civil wars have made the ability to 'remain' on the land hugely important. We must see historical narratives that stress the conversion of *roor* to *baai* as partly the product of ongoing processes of loss, recovery and gain; and the reassertion of first-comer claims to land in precarious circumstances.

*'OK KAD RIEL', WE CAME FIRST*



Image 29: A woman carrying firewood walks past the South Sudanese flag flying on Freedom Square, Gogrial Town, 12 July 2012.

The next part of this chapter will develop the arguments made above by discussing how arrival narratives were employed in 2011-2012. This section is based on interviews with the executive chief of Gogrial Payam, Atem Atem Abiem and *beny bith* and regular

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<sup>39</sup> BBC, "Fears Grow of Widening Sudan War," *BBC*, April 11, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-17680986>.

<sup>40</sup> Fieldnotes Kuajok, 16.04.2012.

attende of the town court, Rεεc Longar Atem. Atem and Rεεc both belonged to the same clan, Pagong, and claimed descent from a founding figure of Gogrial – Abiem Atem. The accounts they related to me concern the initial settlement of the village Pagai and the area that became Gogrial Town by the Wuny subsection of Aguok Dinka. Their accounts show how the two men were able to present the arrival in Gogrial to reinforce their families' prominent place in local history. They also show how the process of converting *roor* to *baai* is used in arrival narratives to mediate chronic insecurity.

Their narrative started with an explanation of the context prior to settlement in Gogrial town:

At some time in the past, (*wathεεr*) the people of Aguok were scattered. They collected together and stayed briefly in a place called Keragany. They had been led there by a Spear Master (*beny bith*) from the Payii clan called Mou Υεrjok. When they were gathered together he told them that they were too numerous to remain as a single group and people would have to disperse to different places. They divided themselves into the twelve sections of Aguok that exist today.<sup>41</sup>

At this point my research assistant explained to me that the name of the subsection of Aguok who live in Gogrial, Wuny, means 'the neglected people'. He said that Wuny were seen as rude and difficult and were rejected by the rest of Aguok – it was everyone else who dispersed from Kerangany, leaving them there, alone. A man called Abiem Atem took responsibility for Wuny. Under the direction of Abiem Atem, Wuny first established themselves in the village of Pagai, before extending their claim to the site of Gogrial. Both Pagai and Gogrial were described at this point as being *roor* (forest). When people arrived, they cleared the forest:

He took them place called now called Pagai. At the time, Pagai was just a forest, but they cut down trees and made it habitable. Abiem Atem called the place Pagai, which means wonder (*gai*) – because he wanted his descendants to wonder; why have the other people rejected us?<sup>42</sup>

The arrival of *Wuny* section in present day Gogrial Town happened shortly afterwards. Abiem Atem sent three men to scout out the area near the river (where Gogrial is now situated) and instructed them to bring back the head of a cypress grass (*aruor*) that grew there. They went, but they encountered a creature which was half lion, half human and

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Atem Atem Abiem, Gogrial 03.07.12

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

so they returned. Lions and shape-shifting man-lions are common in stories in Gogrial. Francis Deng and Godfrey Lienhardt suggest that this may be because they represent fierce enemies and moral violation.<sup>43</sup> In this story the man-lion might encapsulate the danger of *roor* and the moral achievement of arrival and clearing the forest in Gogrial. After the three men came back and explained they had encountered a man-lion, Abiem Atem sent them back with a strong man called Deng Magar to kill the creature. They discovered this man-lion again, this time in his full lion form and in a place just outside Gogrial and they killed him there. That place is now called Roor Atieny (because if something falls down immediately after it is killed you say ‘*aci tieny piny*’ – lit. it fell directly to the ground) The killing of the lion was reported to Abiem Atem who immediately sent a group of people to cut down trees and claim the area. While they were there they met a group of people from Alek [a village to the north of Gogrial], who asked them if they were the first people to come to the area. They replied that ‘we came first’ (*ok kaŋ riel*) so the place became known as ‘Kaŋriel’. When the British government came and established a post, they mispronounced it and the name and the town became known as ‘Gogrial’.<sup>44</sup> In this story the arrival claim and *Wuny*’s status as first comers is asserted by cutting down the trees at what is now Gogrial. The danger of *roor* is emphasized by the man-lion, which Abiem Atem’s party killed.

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<sup>43</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *Dinka Folktales: African Stories from The Sudan* (Holmes and Meier, 1984), 25; Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 171.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Atem Atem Abiem, Gogrial 03.07.12. Other interpretations of the origin of the name Gogrial exist.



Image 30: Area identified by residents of Pagai as the site of the drinking pool where ‘Upar’ was seen. (Pool now dried up) near Pagai. 5 July 2012

The arrival narratives of Gogrial are also associated with the story of a curse on the Gogrial area and *Wuny* section. This is an interesting example of the dialogue between local histories and recent experience. RËËc and Atem recalled this curse to explain the prolonged fighting over Gogrial town during the 1983-2005 civil war – which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.<sup>45</sup>

The story of the curse goes that before people had settled in ‘Kaŋriel’, there was a lion with wings that was terrorizing people in Pagai. It was called ‘Upar’. The stories about Upar, which I first heard at Kuajok and later in Gogrial, were that Upar was attacking and killing people to the extent that nighttime dances were forbidden and people cooked their evening meal early so that they could hide from Upar. One day, a small boy looking after cattle and collecting water for the elders, found the winged lion drinking at a small pool. He returned, without water, to inform the older people what he had seen. On

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<sup>45</sup> C.f. Arua Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History and Representation on an African Frontier* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 15.



hearing that the lion was at the pool Abiem Atem ordered people to go and fight and kill the lion. He sent out a party to the water pool where the small boy had seen Upar. They killed the lion and people began to play the drum and go to night dances again. Mou Y̆erjok, the *beny bith*, was more cautious, suggesting they should wait a little while; how did they know that this lion killed by Abiem's men was Upar? It could, after all, have just been an ordinary lion. But the people didn't listen, they all got the drum out, began the night dances again and no one was eaten by Upar. After some time Mou Y̆erjok was satisfied that Upar had indeed been killed by Abiem Atem's party. Because of their successful killing of Upar Mou Y̆erjok cursed the area. He said that *Wuny* section would be the place where everything bad that comes to Aguok is laid to rest. When recounting this story, R̆ec Longar used the story of this curse to explain the violence at Gogrial garrison during the last civil war. He said that the town had become the epicentre of armed conflict in the county because of this curse. <sup>46</sup>

'KENE EE ROOR', THIS PLACE WAS A FOREST



Image 31: a homestead in Cueicok

Arrival narratives told in Cueicok show the complex ways that such accounts are interwoven with family history and connections between people and land. The village of Cueicok is said to have been established by a family, following an argument about a cow in the nearby area of Yiik Adoor. This happened comparatively recently, probably in the

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with R̆ec Longar, Gogrial 04.07.2012.

1940s.<sup>47</sup> Until recently the family's migration was within living memory and accounts of the arrival in Cuiecok are still widely known. Two brothers, Jiel Yuot and Baak Yuot, both of whom are elders of the village, explained the arrival to Cuiecok. They had both spent their whole lives in the village. Baak had for some years worked in the compound of a nearby international NGO. They were both respected and seen as authorities on the family's history. Their accounts illustrate how arrival claims are articulated at a family levels and how family history can be linked to the broader local history of an area. Part of the accounts related to me concern the claim of a cattle camp that was negotiated in lieu of a payment of blood-wealth for the murder of two ancestors.

They started by explaining why they had to leave Yiik Adoor. Baak described the dispute that had led to the family's relocation to Cuiecok briefly 'Our coming from Adoor was just over the trouble of a cow.'<sup>48</sup> Jiel, added more detail. I have retained it here to give a sense of how the narrative was constructed:

He [Jiel's uncle] had a cow the colour 'gol' and his father also had a cow the colour 'gol'. Some cows fought, he threw a wooden stool (*mager*) on the neck of the cow and the cow died. Both of the cows were cows with a small calf (*apiac dhieth*). When they saw that the cow was going to die, seven of them came and took the cow of my father and told him to take the dead cow and also gave him a calf of the dead cow and they said to him, 'if it will die, then you will not get your calf again' and the son of his sister came and tried to fight, but Yuotdit told him, 'no, we can't fight seven people - they will kill us and they have already taken our cow - let them take it.'<sup>49</sup>

The disagreement escalated further and they left to live in the area which they called Cuiecok near the larger village of Luonyaker. Jieldit describes the early years of living there, emphasizing how it was dangerous and still a forest *roor*. He gave a clear illustration of the *roor* to *baai* conversion narrative, a process that the residents of Cuiecok had been engaged in for over half a century. Initially the place they had come to was dangerous and inhabited by lions, but by making it habitable, they had claimed the land as their own:

This place [Cuiecok] was a forest (*kene ee roor*). The lions were many and they ate people... We fought a lot with lions and our fathers fought a lot with them also, people would not sleep during that time at night, watching their cattle. People lit fires by their

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<sup>47</sup> Assessment based on conversation with members of Deng Mariak's family.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Baak Yuot 15.02.12, AM Cuiecok.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Jiel Yuot 16.02.12 in Cuiecok.

cattle and they stayed there until morning. In those days lions ate cows and goats under the big tamarind tree.<sup>50</sup>

Baak and Jiel's accounts dwelt extensively on detailed family history. This was also being used to build up and personalize the claims and socialize the landscape. Below is one example where the arrival narrative discusses a particular family detail, an incident involving a woman called Abang, the daughter of one of the original people to come to Cueicok, who refused to make love to her husband after an argument during the early years of living in Cueicok:

[Two of Abang's close relatives had been killed in a fight,] she said 'we are now going to give birth to our children and the children that I will give birth to, I will name them according to my family, who were lost.' Baak Riak Abek [her husband] refused to allow Abang to name her children after her dead relatives. So Abang refused to produce more children, this went on for three years. Eventually, Baak told his people that 'my wife has refused to lay with me'. And his people said 'give Abang her right of naming the children according to her family. Baak decided to do as Abang said and that was how Dhol was born and Anyaar Makuei Bet and she stopped giving birth. Baak married girls for his three sons and he told his three sons to marry girls for Abang's two relatives who had been killed.<sup>51</sup>

This apparent digression about the naming of Abang's children and the ghost marriages for her two dead relatives shows the way that family stories about arrival are tied up with the family history more broadly. It illustrates how land, belonging and people are evoked together, how it impossible to talk about claiming a place without talking about the people associated with it and the creativity of people in claiming alternative genealogical emphasis on selective ancestral identifications.

Baak also integrated the family's story into the local history of Luonyaker and Giir Thiik, the famous chief from the big lineage (*Pagbol*) in the area. By doing this, Baak and Jiel were asserting the place of their family in the local political history of Luonyaker. For example, they describe how they married into the family of Giir Thiik:

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Jiel Yuot 16.02.12 in Cueicok.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Baak Yuot 15.02.12, AM Cueicok.

Then Giirdit married Jong from Yuotdit and that is why we are staying here. *Bäny bith* [referring to Giir Thiik] has powers to take over any place and that is why Cueicok is called Cuiecok, but at first it was called *Ruop Roor* [lit. village in the forest].<sup>52</sup>

Their village was renamed, from being literally called ‘the village in the forest’ (*ruop roor*) to being Cueicok – which means ‘under the tamarind tree’. Its name captures its conversion from *roor* and local recognition as *baai*.



Image 32: two generations of men from Cueicok sit together before a ceremony to ask for rain begins in July 2012 (Jiel Yuot is seated on the far left, behind the sheep).

#### ‘I WANT PANHOM IN THE CENTRE OF TOC’

In both Jiel and Baak’s narratives, the indivisibility of cattle, people and land was emphasized in creative ways. Jiel and Baak both drew the conversation round to an account of how their ancestor Anyuon, a powerful *bäny bith* acquired an important *wut* (cattle camp) called Wutdum Anyuon in the toc of Gogrial East.<sup>53</sup> This is, in itself an interesting example of how a specific claim on a cattle camp and grazing territory is formulated. It also shows the diversity of ways that arrival claims can assert the authority bestowed in the centrality of the first-comers. It is a striking example of the ways that land and kinship can be woven together in historical accounts.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Baak Yuot 15.02.12, AM Cueicok.

<sup>53</sup> This is one of the cattle camps that Deng Kuac sings about in the opening lines of his song. See p. 95-97.

Both Jiel and Baak asserted that the cattle camp of Wutdum was claimed ‘before the time of Lual Dor’. Lual Dor is a legendary infamous man who is remembered to have committed atrocities in Apuk associated with the nineteenth century slave trade. Jiel and Baak placed these events before the late nineteenth century; conceivably over a hundred years before the move to Cueicok. Jiel’s account related a detailed description of how Wutdum was claimed through the settling of a blood dispute. Anyuon’s brothers are killed in a fight with a group called Jur Manager. Jiel describes how Anyuon refused to accept cattle as compensation for their lives and insisted instead that the land was given to him. He refused the exchange of cattle, which would have been normal practice. He insisted he be given the land in ‘the centre of toc.’ Because of his spiritual power he was able to cause a drought, which forced the elders of Jur Manager to give into his request for ‘the centre’. This is an ownership claim that is not actually based on first-coming – it is based on the spiritual power to control the environment, preventing rain, pushing the area into severe drought and destitution. Through his spiritual power as a *bäny bith* and his ability to control the rain, Anyuon is able to obtain the legitimate authority of ‘centrality’, normally bestowed through first-comer claims. Crucially though, this was not an arbitrary display of power. It was restitution for the loss of his brothers. This could be read as the ultimate expression of the socialization of landscape: the exchange of land for human life:

My grandfather was a *beny bith* and he went to *toc*. There people fought until his brothers, named Kuot Chan and Deng Chan, were killed. The two of them were killed totally! And he was angry, but he also liked the *toc* belonging to those [Jur Manager] who killed his brothers. He wanted the land to be his. He caused a drought for 6 years. People brought 60 cows (30 each) for his brothers’ compensation and two cows for sacrifice. He refused to take the cows. All the drinking pools dried up and the flood didn’t reach their land. All the people of Jur Manager were scattered. Some went to Lou, some went to Tuic, some came here to Pathuan. Their place was deserted. Anyuon called the important people of Jur Manager and asked them, ‘what do you say?’ They said to him ‘you have destroyed our home – six years without rain – now people are scattered everywhere across Apuk and other neighboring places. And we tried to give you cows, for compensation of your brothers, but you refused them’. And he said to them, ‘is it what you have decided?’ Then they said, ‘yes’. The place that he wanted was in the centre of *toc*. He said, ‘I want Panhom, I want Panhom, in the centre of *toc* for the compensation of my brothers.’ They said, ‘master, you refuse cattle and you need your brothers to be compensated with land?’ Then he said, ‘yes’ He said, ‘you go and call for me the important people of the community, if they come and agree with me to give me the land then rain will come. If they refuse, then rain will not come’ After meeting they went to collect their people from wherever they were. It was dry season when the important people came he said to them, ‘I need Panhom in the centre of *toc* for

compensation of my brothers.’ There was no water in their land and so they said, ‘ok we will give it to you.’ Then he asked them ‘do you give it to me?’ They said to him ‘yes, we give it to you’ He sacrificed some bulls and the rain fell and he named the place Wutdum Anyuon: this was how we found Wutdum. <sup>54</sup>

The claim on Wutdum had not been made by first coming, but because of his spiritual power and in retribution for the loss of his brothers Anyuon had been able to obtain the privilege of precedence. The convertibility between people and cattle is often stressed in studies of Dinka and Nuer societies, but this is a case where, albeit under exceptional circumstances, people are exchanged for land.

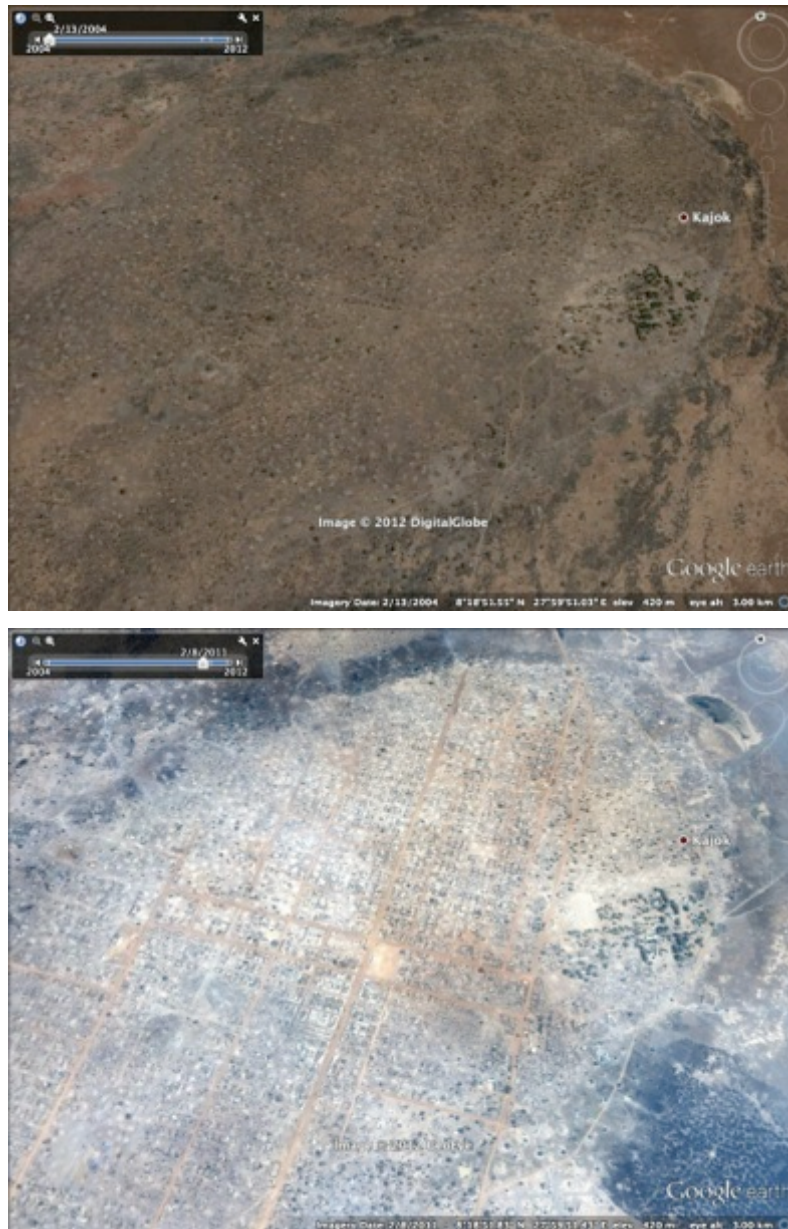
#### THE ONGOING RECLAMATION OF ROOR

One of the key arguments of this chapter is that narratives of *roor* to *baai* conversion and socialization of land are not only used in reference to arrivals in the distant past – they shape processes that are ongoing. These oral histories are infused by contemporary experience and vice versa. The following example from Kuajok involves a much more recent arrival. There are arrival narratives to Kuajok which tell of how people came across from the other side of the Jur River, found a forest with many wild animals and after the sacrifice of a bull with the colour ‘Majok’, they claimed the area. These are different versions of who the original owners of Kuajok are.<sup>55</sup> However, a more recent arrival narrative is also discernable. The old Kuajok was a village; the new Kuajok is the state capital and largest town in Warrap. It has grown astonishingly since 2005. By the time I arrived in 2011, Kuajok the town had spread far outside the territory of what was Kuajok the village and (since the 1920s) the Catholic mission. Satellite images below, from 2004 and 2011 illustrate this dramatic expansion.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Jiel Yuot 27.02.12, Cueicok.

<sup>55</sup> Interviews at the Grave of Wol ‘Kuajok’ in old Kuajok. Claims of ownership focus on who gave the land to the mission. Some people claim that it was Wol ‘Kuajok’ but there are different versions of this.



Map 6: Google Earth screen captures showing the growth of Kuajok. Above 2004, below, 2011.

When I first arrived in Kuajok I was told on an almost daily basis how rapidly the town has grown and how ‘this place used to be a forest’. In 2011-2012, it was a source of pride and also security, to assert how the town had been transformed from its violent recent history, to a place that was ‘coming up’: growing and prospering. The grid-like survey of the town was often invoked as a symbol of Kuajok’s ‘modernity’. When I walked around the town with friends they joked that a few years previously we could have seen a lion prowling in what was now a busy neighbourhood. This was partly a way of emphasizing the moral reclamation of Kuajok from the wilderness of civil war. There were various ways in which markers of progress from *roor* to *baai* were maintained in the

neighbourhoods of the town. For example, many quarters of Kuajok take their name from the old ‘wild’ places that have now been socialized. For example, an affluent area is called ‘War Alel’ [lit. stony brook] it takes its name from a small pool of water that has now been built around. An area near the market is called ‘War Abyei’ because of the *abyei* trees that grew there and were cut down to build houses. Another area is called ‘Gumel’ because *gumel* trees were cut down to build houses there. Through these names and the explanations behind them, the *roor* to *baai* conversion narrative is embedded into the geography of Kuajok town itself.

It is within the periodic flux between the socialized (*baai*) and the unsocialized (*roor*) in Gogrial that people have found ways to deal with periodic violence and recuperation. The ongoing reclamation of ‘bush’ – both as narrative and as material process are both product of and a cultural means of managing insecurity. As I was leaving Gogrial, literally on the last day of my research, I went with Adut and some members of her family to a small patch of land on the outskirts of Kuajok. She was converting it into a field, to grow sorghum and groundnuts. By cutting down the trees and converting this *roor* into usable home-space she was participating in an idea - that people could claim and shape the landscape. This is a recent historical development of the idea I have discussed in this chapter. Even if land was lost to insecurity as people scattered, it could be made good again. This is partly about narrative, and partly about the material and social construction of the landscape.



Image 33: Ongoing reclamation of *roor* - the piece of land on the edge of Kuajok that Adut was converting into a field for household cultivation, July 2012



## CONCLUSION

Arrivals narratives describe remaking the landscape in Gogrial. Remaking, in this sense is a political act through which a claim to an area is asserted. At one level this makes the control of accepted narratives very important in local political claims to land. Turning *roor* (wild land) into *baai* (socialized land) underpins arrival claims and is the basis for claims of foundational ownership and identity in a self-defined expansionist and migratory society.

But arrivals are more than this. The *roor* to *baai* conversion is a powerful restorative process and narrative. It is used as a claim to territory but also to express the effects of conflict and displacement. The very fact that a reclaiming of *roor* can be achieved exposes the force of human agency and emphasizes the connections between people and land. Thus land mediates social relations in a variety of ways. The example of Jiel and Baak's 'arrival claim' on Wutdum, in which land was given to Anyuon Deng in lieu of the cattle for compensation of his brothers death, underlines this closeness and in fact the potential convertibility between cattle, people and *land*. This is something that is too often given insufficient attention in cattle-centric interpretations of Dinka cultural processes (this point will be explored further in Chapter 5).

This chapter has emphasized the importance of narrative, but as the recent example of the expansion of Kuajok shows, the force of *roor* to *baai* is also rooted in material transformations. This means the way that people rebuild their homes and reappropriate land that was 'desocialized' by insecurity (and how they talk about this process) part of the cultural management of insecurity that people engage with in their everyday lives.

When people tell the history of an area in Gogrial, they assert the preeminence of their own claims. The lines from Deng's song quoted at the beginning of the chapter clearly render this connection between ancestry (clan) and land: 'Padiany Marial Bek have remained (*don*) over the land.' In his song, Deng poetically reinforces both how social relations, family networks and cattle exchange are essential to making claims on land and shape how people understand the configuration of the landscape and their place within it. But these understandings have also been shaped by their experience with the state over the last century, to which the next chapter turns.

## 4 Borders are Galaxies

*Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual ku yen Apuk dhoŋuan.*

Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual is from the nine [wɔt of] Apuk.

*Wut Apuk ce waadit yen akonj wɛɛt luel.*

The people of Apuk exist today because my grandfather decreed it.

*Piny aye mek wej, piny aye mek raan, raan a kaŋ wej yoc.*

You own a place with a cow, or you own a place with a person, the first person to exchange a cow.

*Wut Apuk ce waadit yen akonj wɛɛt luel.*

The people of Apuk exist today because my grandfather decreed it.

*Piny aye mek wej, piny aye mek raan, raan a kaŋ wej yoc.*

You own a place with a cow, or you own a place with a person, the first person to exchange a cow.

*Jok Tonj Agoth ka ci rin Apuk nbom tueŋ, yen ale ok Manyiel, yen ale ok ke Yiik, Yiik  
Manyiel Adoor ku na Tuonj.*

Jok Tong Agoth took Apuk forward, he got us Manyiel, and he got us Yiik, Yiik Manyiel Adoor and Tuong.

The extract is about the territory of the people of Apuk *wut* (pl. *wuot*). In these lines, Deng expresses several key ideas about borders and territoriality. Firstly, Deng describes how a man named Jok Toŋ ‘took Apuk forward’ (*Apuk nbom tuen*) by establishing three settlements; Manyiel, Yiik Adoor and Tuong. The man Jok Toŋ is an important historical figure: an influential pre-colonial *bäny bith*, who is also credited with having discovered the rich grazing land in Gogrial East, called Toc Apuk. Thus, one of the things Jok Toŋ is remembered for is as having defined the territory of Apuk. During the colonial period a man called Giir Thiik became paramount chief of Apuk. Since then, the *wut* of Apuk have taken his name, and often call themselves Apuk [of] Giir Thiik. So Giir Thiik is also remembered as having defined the territory of Apuk during the period of colonial administration. Therefore, by appealing solely to the pre-colonial authority of Jok Tong, this song extract is revealing in what it does *not* discuss. It does not mention the state’s model of territory. When Deng sings that ‘the people of Apuk exist today because my grandfather decreed it’; he is referring to the historic victory of Jok Toŋ. By association, Deng is claiming an ancestral relationship to the land as well as Jok Toŋ.

There are many overlaps with the ideas in the previous chapter about arrivals and claims on territory. As that chapter discussed, Deng is expressing a model of socialization and historicization of land and belonging. The line ‘you own a place (literally ‘the land’ - *pinj*) with a cow; you own a place with a person’ hints at complex moral and historical claims of lineages (embodied in cattle and people) over the ownership of resources. This shows how claims to land are being articulated through a history of relationships, so that territory is a story of genealogical pathways. The importance of ownership, as this chapter will explore, is key to these claims.

A crucial idea, which is subtly conveyed in these lines, is the articulation of territoriality and community embodied through specific named *points* – in this case Manyiel, Yiik Adoor and Tuong. This chapter will explain the importance of such a point-centred notion of territoriality that this conveys. Just as the comparison between the authority of Giir Thiik and Jok Toŋ implies, there are different but contemporaneous and interconnected ways of imagining territory. This chapter discusses how both state driven ideas of the border as a line and local ideas about borders as a point have developed in Gogrial in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

## INTRODUCTION

In the first year of South Sudan's independence, debates about local administrative borders were increasingly common.<sup>1</sup> A dispute at one such border, at a village called Maṅar, between Kuajok and Gogrial town, broke out during my field research. The village was known as 'the border' between two administrative units and two different territorial sections, *wuot*, of the Rek Dinka. This chapter will use this dispute and the debates surrounding it as a lens onto the historical relationships between 'state' and 'local' geographies in Gogrial. By unpicking the construction and negotiation of administrative boundaries, it will argue that people have not simply been passive victims of state violence but have had an active role in shaping the geography of the state.

Although I shall refine this, my basic argument is that underpinning this conflict were two different border paradigms and an attempt to resolve, in this case violently, competing moral claims on the landscape. This situation has arisen because successive states have attempted to accommodate Dinka political geographies into their administrative structures by mapping administrative units onto Dinka territorial sections or *wuot* (sing. *wut*). The borders of enclosed administrative units created by the state are nevertheless in tension with a different, Dinka logic of borders as a series of points rather than a line. This Dinka concept of a border is analogous with a galaxy, as this chapter will explain.

The state has attempted to make administrative borders consonant with the borders of *wuot*. As these borders are mapped onto the landscape they appear to be parallel, but this apparent commensurability masks their distinctiveness. These different logics have created a slippage in authority and meaning over what the border is. This ambiguity has led to competing claims of authority at local administrative boundaries: Dinka models of territoriality and the border, which continue to form the basis of historical claims, sit uneasily alongside the state's administrative geography. This can result in tension as people try, successfully and unsuccessfully to accommodate distinct paradigms of mapping moral questions of entitlement onto the landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Luedke, "Increasing Conflict Over Internal Boundaries in South Sudan," *A Periodic Newsletter from the SSLS* 1 (2013): 6.

This chapter will show that although these models of boundary are ultimately rooted in different logics, there has been the ongoing *interpenetration* between ‘local’ and ‘state’ geographies since the 1920s. The state is understood here as a loosely coordinated system of institutions, policies, symbols and processes that is collectively given meaning.<sup>2</sup> The administrative units that it has created partly reflect the indigenous geography, but this geography has itself been substantively transformed by the creation of administrative units. This process of interpenetration is comparable to what Beinart *et al* have argued took place as different systems of knowledge - ‘colonial’ and ‘African’ - influenced each other through their mutual encounters.<sup>3</sup> Thus examination of different models of borders provides a way of seeing how state authority interacts with claims based on lineage and hereditary rights to land. Similarly, Sharon Hutchinson has described a ‘gradual intermeshing of state and local power networks in Nuer regions’ since the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> This illustrates how people in Gogrial have appropriated the state’s attempts to reorder the landscape.

In describing these different border paradigms and their effects at places like Maṅar, this chapter will highlight the complexity of unpicking the layers of claims and narratives through which these models of the border are articulated. Rather than avoid the difficulty of conceptualizing the crosscutting link, we should recognize that interpenetrations define the struggles over these compound borders.

#### THE DISPUTE AT MADAR

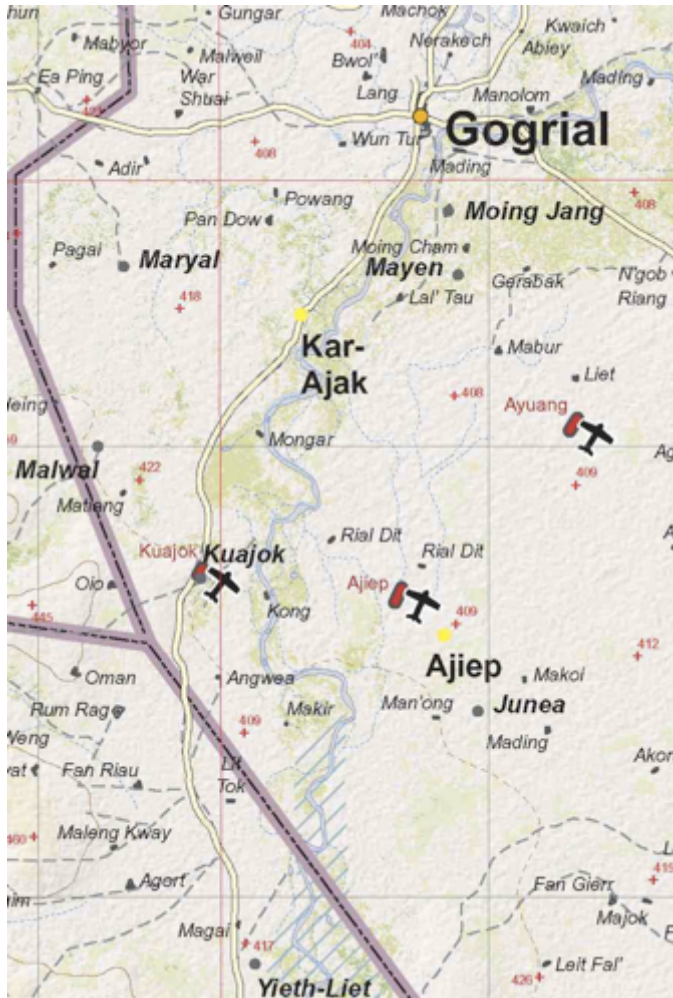
Maṅar is a village of about 2000 people. It is on the main road between Kuajok and Gogrial town, the largest of several villages on this stretch of road. It is distinguishable by a few small shops, a few concrete buildings and a school that was not functioning for most of my fieldwork because it was being used as a barracks by the SPLA. By the road, women sell bundles of grass for thatching roofs and the elite of Warrap often come here to buy this grass for their new homes at a better price than they would get in Kuajok.

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<sup>2</sup> Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, eds., *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 27.

<sup>3</sup> William Beinart, Karen Brown, and Daniel Gilfoyle, “Experts and Expertise in Colonial Africa Reconsidered: Science and the Interpenetration of Knowledge,” *African Affairs* 108, no. 432 (2009): 428.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 109.



Map 7: Location of Maṅar, spelt ‘Mongar’



Map 8: Approximate area of detail

Maṅar is known as ‘the border’ between two administrative units - Monyjooc boma (in Kuac North Payam) and Ajak boma (in Gogrial Payam)<sup>5</sup>. Maṅar is also the border between two *wuot* of Rek Dinka – the Monyjooc section of the Kuac sub-tribe and the Ajak section of Aguok sub-tribe. So it is said to have existed as a border before it was an administrative border. Ownership of ‘the border’ (Maṅar) is now claimed by leaders of both the Ajak and Monyjooc *wuot*.

On 29 and 30 December 2011 a dispute erupted in which six people were killed, including a child, and many others temporarily displaced.<sup>6</sup> The dispute was ostensibly about which community ‘owned’ Maṅar. The trigger was a letter sent on 28 December by

<sup>5</sup> Boma is the smallest local administrative division, Payam is the next largest, followed by County

<sup>6</sup> Sudan Tribune, “South Sudan: 9 People Killed in Bahr El Ghazal,” *Sudan Tribune*, January 1, 2012, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article41155>.

the deputy executive chief of Ajak boma, in which he refused to allow a Monyjoooc community meeting to take place at Maṅar, on the grounds that Maṅar ‘belonged to Ajak.’ But the meeting went ahead with several high ranking government officials from Kuac in attendance.

This letter was sent:<sup>7</sup>

Maluil Ajak Boma  
Aguok Community  
28/12/2011  
To Chair person  
Kuac Community

Ref: Refusal of the meeting of Kuac community in Maṅar Ajak-Aguok

Dear Sir,  
We the community of Ajak hereby inform you that this meeting is refused and we are saying this meeting should stop now and it should not continue anymore. If you know this area belongs to Ajak and Aguok community since time. We will try to solve this problem peacefully if you have a say about Maṅar Ajak.

Thanks  
Yours Faithfully  
[Redacted]  
Chairperson of the Committee

The community meeting, to which this letter alluded, was the latest in a series of disputes that centered on this border village. Most of these disputes concerned, in various ways, symbolic claims of ownership. The naming of the village was a particular point of contention. The ‘Ajak community’ was angry that the ‘Monyjoooc community’ appeared to be trying to change the name of the village. The village, they claimed, had ‘always’ been commonly known as Maṅar-Ajak<sup>8</sup>, but a few months earlier (at a different Monyjoooc community meeting) a new sign had been erected in the village, attempting to rename it ‘Maṅar-Monyjoooc’. Although some Ajak representatives were at the meeting, none of them could read, so they had not realised the significance of the sign.

Ajak grievances were also related to struggles over recognition of community ownership at the ‘national’ level and intersected with citizenship claims and desires to be recognized

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<sup>7</sup> A copy of this letter was included in the reconciliation meeting report. Names have been removed to protect anonymity.

<sup>8</sup> This means Maṅar *of* Ajak, it asserts ownership.

in the new state of South Sudan. It happens that Maṅar is on the road to Akon, the home village of South Sudan's President, Salva Kiir. Since 2005 he had driven through Maṅar about once a year. The Ajak community had alleged that, when the Presidential convoy had driven through Maṅar in 2010, the flag of Monyjooc boma had be raised at Maṅar and the Monyjooc community had prevented them from jumping over a bull which had been slaughtered in honour of the President. This had prevented a display of Ajak community and national pride.

On the other side, the Monyjooc complaints were that Ajak had tried to prevent them from holding community meetings at Maṅar – which they felt entitled to do. They claimed that at the last community meeting, people from Ajak community had not only written a letter trying to prevent the meeting, they had removed the Monyjooc flag and stolen the goats that had been slaughtered for guests to celebrate the occasion. They made allegations of various other unlawful activities, not all directly connected to the border, but which were articulated as 'community against community' crimes. They complained that a Monyjooc man, who had eloped with a girl from Ajak, had been killed by members of her family and no one had yet been brought to justice. And a man from Monydit sub-tribe (not from Ajak, but from another Aguok *wut*) had for the past two seasons let his cattle graze on cultivated crops in the Monyjooc area, damaging the crops.

Ten days after the violence erupted, a peace meeting was held, attended by the Commissioner of Gogrial West and the Deputy Governor of Warrap and the two communities were formally reconciled, they agreed to be disarmed and a purification ceremony was performed by spiritual leaders (*bāny biṭh*) from each side.<sup>9</sup>

Although there was a formal 'resolution' to this conflict and purification rituals were performed, the issue of the ownership of Maṅar was not fully resolved. The state authorities were not able to say to whom Maṅar belonged. The resolution committee had to recommend that 'the problem of Maṅar and who owns it is purely an administrative issue which needs to be solved peacefully with clear studies and research:' an indication

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<sup>9</sup> Details based on conversations in Kuajok Jan 2012 and 'Peace and Reconciliation Report on Monyjooc and Ajak Communities conflict' prepared by Pingkurot Group presented to the acting governor of Warrap State 11 Jan 2012



that they did not know what to do about the situation.<sup>10</sup> In the end, Warrap State and Gogrial West County authorities agreed to ‘supervise, control and monitor’ the resolutions made at the peace meetings to ‘ensure that whoever violates [the peace agreement] shall bear the consequences and be punished severely by *Nbialic* (God or Divinity) and [the] living souls of ancestors and [the] full force of the law’.<sup>11</sup>

#### UNDERSTANDING MAᅀAR

There were many layers to the Maᅀar dispute, but the central bone of contention was the question of who had authority at this border village. As the author of the letter to the Kuac community put it: to whom did Maᅀar belong? This question of authority was rooted in competing models of what the border actually was. The next part of this chapter will explain the development and significance of different border paradigms: the administrative *line* and the Dinka *points*. Places that were the borders between *wuot* are now also administrative borders. These are distinct ways of imagining territory and mapping claims onto the landscape. As a result, borders have become salient sites for the performance of identity and authority.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

The state has divided Gogrial into administrative units, based on Dinka *wuot*. This is a process that began in the colonial period. However, in the last twenty years significantly more new administrative divisions have been created, also based on *wuot*. This has not been an incremental process, but has happened in two major spurts: one by the colonial state (1923-c.1953) and the other by the SPLM/A military and GoSS administration (1994-present).

The colonial administrative system was based on large territorial chiefdoms. The primary concern was that these chiefs oversaw tax collection and road work.<sup>12</sup> Gogrial was divided into administrative chiefdoms based on the *wuot* of Kuac, Aguok, Apuk and

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Peace and Reconciliation Report on Monyjooc and Ajak Communities conflict’ p.5 ‘Resolutions and Recommendation’

<sup>11</sup> ‘Peace and Reconciliation Report on Monyjooc and Ajak Communities conflict’ p.5-6

<sup>12</sup> PRM Godfrey Lienhardt Box 1/8 ‘Minutes of the Jur River District Chiefs Meeting at Gogrial 1-4 December 1946.’

Awan (two chiefships). The Tuic Dinka, in the north of Gogrial were split into four administrative *wuot* (see map 10). The three most important colonial chiefs in the area of my fieldsites were Amet Kuol in Kuac, Kuanyin Agoth in Aguok, and Giir Thiik in Apuk. These were men who were able, or are remembered as being able, to negotiate highly effectively with the government.<sup>13</sup> Many of these chiefs were also key informants for Lienhardt.<sup>14</sup>

*Wuot* existed in Gogrial before the colonial state. Lienhardt is categorical on this point.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the colonial state attempted to create larger and more stable territorial units across Southern Sudan. This was particularly clear in other pastoralist parts of South Sudan, like Jonglei, where the presence of Dinka and Nuer groups together in the same districts resulted in initial policies to enforce boundaries and strengthen the territorial units, partly as a security measure by encouraging separate, ethnically defined grazing areas.<sup>16</sup> Attempts to separate ethnic groups that were not clearly defined created more problems and these borders often intensified security issues, so that some officials abandoned these policies.<sup>17</sup> However, there was not such strict enforcement of territorial units and boundaries in Gogrial. Gogrial was perceived as ethnically homogeneous (a Dinka district) and the government saw no need to enforce territorial divisions for security reasons. Despite the violent beginnings of administration in Gogrial, the area quickly became a model sub-district. From 1946 Gogrial was made the pilot for the new local government council system of administration that would be introduced across the South from 1951.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Amet Kuol was 'known' to the administration and he had come to Wau to talk with officials in 1904, see SAD 275/9/40 Wingate 'Sudan Notes' Dec 1904. The Comboni fathers had also negotiated with him to build the mission at Kuajok, see *La Nigrizia* March 1924, 'Prima Stazione tra I Denka'. Kuanyin Agoth's grandson described how Kuanyin was willing to talk to the government when they came to Gogrial Interview with Mabior Wek Kuanyin, Gogrial 2.11.2011. A son of Giir Thiik told me a story in which Giir had come to his chiefly position after showing bravery in the face of the government, while everyone else was afraid. Interview with Akol Giir Thiik, Kuajok 22.10.2011.

<sup>14</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), vi. Giir Thiik was a particularly important source of information.

<sup>15</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958), 103.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Howell, Michael Lock, and Stephen Cobb, *The Jonglei Canal: Impact and Opportunity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 243–244.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, Douglas H, "Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer-Dinka Relations in the Sobat and Zaraf Valleys, c.1860-1976," *The Journal of African History* 23, no. 4 (1982): 195, 197.

<sup>18</sup> SSNA EGA/1.A.4 Local Government Proposals – BeG Area – Dinka Districts, Wau 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1946

In comparison to districts like Jonglei or even neighbouring Aweil, the colonial state took a markedly less interventionist approach to demarcating boundaries in Gogrial.<sup>19</sup> Relative lack of detailed understanding seems to have characterized the colonial administration's position on these administrative boundaries. For example, greater enforcement of boundaries *between* Gogrial and Aweil District (now Northern Bahr el Ghazal State) were discussed, but never enforced. When the issue of the border between the districts was raised in 1927, it was acknowledged that 'as elsewhere the boundary is vague and Ajwong houses are found far inside what is admittedly C.D [Central District - Gogrial] and vice versa'.<sup>20</sup> Although officials acknowledged that they would need to enforce the boundary in order to collect taxes, they concluded they lacked adequate local knowledge to know where the boundary *really* was, so did not attempt to enforce it.<sup>21</sup> One District Commissioner of Gogrial told the anthropologist Godfrey Lienhardt, incorrectly, that the only border within the tribe of Apuk was the River Jur.<sup>22</sup> We know from Lienhardt's own research that, even at the time, this was an oversimplification and informants had described other sub-sectional units (*wuot*) within Apuk to him.<sup>23</sup> This exchange highlights how partial official understandings of territorial divisions were in this period.

After Sudan's independence there was a series of reforms to local government, but due to poor security and budgetary shortages, these were never properly implemented in the South.<sup>24</sup> It was not until the SPLM/A administration that local government in the South substantially changed.<sup>25</sup> The SPLM/A sought to construct 'liberated zones' which it

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<sup>19</sup> In Aweil East the colonial government influence the settling of *wuot* in strips along the river so they each had access to the river and highland. Martina Santschi, "Encountering and 'Capturing' Hakuma: Negotiating Statehood and Authority in Northern Bahr-El-Ghazal State, South Sudan." (PhD., University of Bern, 2013), 89. This pattern is still discernable on the current map of Payams. See Map 12, below.

<sup>20</sup> Note on Owen 57.B.23.4.1927 in Collins SAD 946/3.

<sup>21</sup> There were disputes when this boundary was drawn. See John Wuol Makec, *The Customary Law of the Dinka People of Sudan: In Comparison with Aspects of Western and Islamic Laws* (London: Afroworld Publishing Co., 1988), 184.

<sup>22</sup> PRM GL Box 2/1 Lienhardt's field diary beginning 1947. Entry on 26.01.1948.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. PRM Box 2/1 Entry on 11.01.1948, diagrams at the end of entry on 17-18.01.1948.

<sup>24</sup> M.W Norris, "Local Government and Decentralisation in the Sudan," *Public Administration and Development* 3 (1983): 216.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas H Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," in *African Guerillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), 67.

administered militarily (and often highly predatorily).<sup>26</sup> In some areas this was effective from as early as 1985. If the colonial state laid the foundations for territorial administration in Gogrial, then the SPLM/A's administration grew out of this system both structurally and ideologically. The SPLM/A used *wuot* and chiefs as the basis for local government. The remnant colonial administrative areas were divided and made into new administrative areas called 'Counties' and 'Payams'.<sup>27</sup> This military administration used the old chieftaincy structure integrated into a military hierarchy: chiefs and local administrators reporting to the SPLA zonal commander at the top. It was, like the colonial state, extractive; local populations were expected to provide the military with recruits, cattle and other supplies.<sup>28</sup>

In 1994, in the context of increasing factionalism and leadership disputes within the movement, the SPLM/A held its first National Convention at Chukudum and attempted to reform and liberalize its structures.<sup>29</sup> Among other things, the National Convention formally established a programme of decentralization in 'liberated areas,' dovetailing with the movement's objectives to undo the centralization of power in Khartoum.<sup>30</sup> At this time, Gogrial was formally classified as a 'liberated area' of Bahr el Ghazal Province, although it experienced insecurity and military clashes until the end of the war.<sup>31</sup> A new system of civilian administration, which was supposed to be separate from the military, was implemented (although, the experience varied hugely across the South).<sup>32</sup> One result of these structural changes was the establishment of even more Bomas, Payams and Counties.<sup>33</sup>

Since 2005, administrative divisions have proliferated. The GoSS administration also attempted to map its new administrative geography onto the territorial geography of

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<sup>26</sup> William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29–30.

<sup>27</sup> Øystein Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan During the 1990s* (Leiden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2005), 69.

<sup>28</sup> Johnson, "The Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Problem of Factionalism," 67.

<sup>29</sup> Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan During the 1990s*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 186–187.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Medley, "Humanitarian Parsimony in Sudan: The Bahr Al-Ghazal Famine of 1998" (University of Bristol, 2010), 38.

<sup>32</sup> Rolandsen, *Guerrilla Government: Political Changes in the Southern Sudan During the 1990s*, 158–159.

<sup>33</sup> In Simon Harragin and Chol Changath Chol, *The Southern Sudan Vulnerability Study* (Save the Children (UK), 1998), 42.

*wuot*. Instead of only reflecting the larger sections, as the colonial state had done, smaller *wuot* were now being used as the basis for payams and bomas.<sup>34</sup> The current local administration in Gogrial is the most comprehensive attempt to turn Dinka segmentary political structure into administrative order. In 2005 Gogrial County was split into two counties: Gogrial East (with six payams made up of thirteen bomas) and Gogrial West (with nine payams made up of twenty-nine bomas).<sup>35</sup> In the last decade, the number of administrative units in Gogrial has slightly more than doubled. The 2009 Local Government Act stipulated that the boundaries of these units should be demarcated.<sup>36</sup> As I will discuss below, this demarcation has not taken place for most of these units.

One reason why administrative units have become increasingly controversial is the perceived benefits attached to decentralization. During the war, administrative units became the focus for disputes and local populations often led calls for increased administrative divisions. The state was not providing services, but administrative units were a way to access foreign NGOs who were providing services and relief.<sup>37</sup> After the war, administrative units continued to have significant perceived benefits, including access to government jobs, community representation and development projects. In 2010 a report by Schomerus and Allen commented on the proliferation of demands for new administrative units in South Sudan and the increased conflicts at the borders of these units.<sup>38</sup> Rolandsen, also commenting on this trend, suggests an increase in tension at borders since 2002 when major local administrative revision began.<sup>39</sup> I observed people in Gogrial making calls for new counties, payams and bomas throughout my fieldwork. These appeals were often connected to people seeking to access the resources of that state. Inequalities in the distribution of government resources were the cause of

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<sup>34</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 185.

<sup>35</sup> These numbers are based on information compiled during fieldwork in Gogrial 2011-2012. It was difficult to get 'official' names and numbers of administrative units. This information is based on a list dictated to me in the Ministry of Local Government in Kuajok on 21.07.2012. crosschecked with key informants and on my behalf by Samuel Buol Malith. Names of bomas (and in some cases the numbers per payam) varied.

<sup>36</sup> GOSS, *The Local Government Act* (Government of Southern Sudan, 2009) 114 (3).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 161; Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Mareike Schomerus and Tim Allen, *Southern Sudan at Odds With Itself: Dynamics of Conflict and Predicaments of Peace* (London: LSE, 2010), 40-43.

<sup>39</sup> Øystein Rolandsen, *Land, Security and Peace Building in Southern Sudan* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2009), 24. Focus on administrative units was a central part of local debates around the 2008 census see Martina Santschi, "Counting 'New Sudan,'" *African Affairs* 107, no. 429 (2008): 637-638.

frustration for many. For example, a chief from Pakal in Alek West Payam in Gogrial West Country addressed government officials at a community meeting with this sentiment:

I feel neglected because we are left out of everything, for example: we are denied our position in the government, also all the development facilities like roads, schools and so on. Sometimes I ask myself, but I cannot get the answer, are we not part of the government?<sup>40</sup>

Conflicts can occur partly because the stakes are high. Demarcation of administrative boundaries has large implications for the control of land and access to government resources.<sup>41</sup> Even so, the conflict at Manjar in 2011-2013 was not simply a conflict over resources. There was a bigger issue at stake at this border: who had authority and what kind of authority did they have? This was a question, at a deeper level, about what a border really is.

#### BORDERS ARE GALAXIES

Pastoralists are often stereotyped as wandering nomads. Even academic studies of pastoralism in Africa stress the ‘unboundedness’ of these societies. Gunther Schlee, for example, has argued that pastoralists in Northern Kenya did not have a model of, or even a word for borders delineating surface areas before colonialism.<sup>42</sup> This Dinka case is different. A crucial point to understanding why the border at Mangar was conflicted was that this administrative border was being laid over another model of border.

There are ways of imagining territoriality and power that are different from Western, Weberian paradigms, based on European experience, where population is dense and the division and control of territory a basic mechanism of state power.<sup>43</sup> This conception of

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<sup>40</sup> Maluil Maluil Agany, Gogrial 8.3.2012.

<sup>41</sup> Luedke, “Increasing Conflict Over Internal Boundaries.” For examples of the importance of recent political and administrative changes in pastoralist areas of Kenya see Neil Carrier and Hassan Kochoe, “Navigating Ethnicity and Electoral Politics in Northern Kenya: The Case of the 2013 Election,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014): 135–52; Clemens Greiner, “Guns, Land and Votes: Cattle Rustling and the Politics of Boundary (re)making in Northern Kenya,” *African Affairs* 112, no. 447 (2013): 1–22.

<sup>42</sup> Gunther Schlee, *Territorialising Ethnicity: The Political Ecology of Pastoralism in Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia* (Halle: Max-Planck Institute, 2010), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 36.

territorial control and power is not universally shared. Several analyses have looked at paradigms of territoriality that stress the importance of centres and radii of power to contrast the Weberian focus on control of defined and bounded territory. In an influential essay, Stanley Tambiah uses the phrase ‘the galactic polity’ to describe the configuration of traditional South Asian Kingdoms. He shows that there was a model of the polity that stressed the centres of power, rather than its edges. Political units, from lineage-based societies to states, were ‘constituted according to an elaborate design of centre and satellites and of elaborate bipartitions of various kinds,’ not the enclosed unit of the modern European model.<sup>44</sup> In a complementary argument, Jeffrey Herbst argues that in African history, power was concentrated in the centre because land was never scarce, and leaders had little incentive to control outlying areas.<sup>45</sup> Gerald Mazarire similarly, argues that nineteenth-century Karanga concepts of territory in southern Zimbabwe were qualified with reference to mountains, rather than land, on the logic that each mountain was a central point from which its hinterland could be claimed.<sup>46</sup> To capture the primacy of points in pre-colonial political geographies, Reyna describes nineteenth-century Chad as a ‘series of pointillist landscapes’ in which political units of varying sizes occupy a distinct place.<sup>47</sup>

My argument draws on these studies of territoriality. It extends the idea of the ‘pointillist landscape’ to argue that in Gogrial *borders themselves* are constituted as points. This is reflected in the Dinka word for border or boundary, *akeu*. *Akeu* is also the word for the Milky Way galaxy because it is that which divides the night sky. This analogy between a border and a galaxy encapsulates my point. Galaxies are not lines; they are millions of stars clustered together, stars that appear as points in the night sky. Like the stars that define the shape of the Milky Way, borders are formed from points, rather than lines. This is different from Tambiah’s outline of ‘the galactic polity’ because the Dinka galactic border *does* emphasize the edge of territory – but the edge, itself, is a point.

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<sup>44</sup> Stanley Tambiah, “The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293 (1977): 69–70.

<sup>45</sup> Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, 41–45.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Chikozho Mazarire, “The Gadzingo: Towards a Karanga Expansion Matrix in 18th and 19th Century Southern Zimbabwe,” *Critical African Studies* 5, no. 1 (2013): 8.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen Reyna, *War Without End: The Political Economy of a Precolonial African State* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990), 69–70, 165.



Image 34: *Aken* – the Milky Way Galaxy<sup>48</sup>

In Gogrial, borders are always spoken about as ‘points’. Villages, cattle-camps or landmarks represent the border between territorial sections and subgroups of people, which often coincide with administrative units (bomas, payams and counties).<sup>49</sup> For example, if you asked someone, in 2012, ‘where is the border between Gogrial East and Gogrial West’, the answer would be, ‘Pan Acier’. This small village is also referred to as the border between the *wut* Apuk and Aguok. On the sandy road between Luonyaker and Yiik Adoor there is a village called Marol, which was always pointed out to me as the border between Pathuon East and Pathuon West Payam and, simultaneously, as the border between Adoor and Amuk *wut*.

In the pointillist landscape, expressions of the border as a point can be found everywhere, from everyday remarks, to songs, to disputes. In a well-known song about the borders of the *wut* Apuk, the border are listed as a series of named points

*Akal lek wek aken war le tok Mading Aguok ku Muonyjiang  
 Mayen Kuac, akenyda<sup>50</sup> ya  
 Nyinakou to thiok a Wan, akenyda ya  
 Ku Biok, Mayar Ayer, akenyda ya  
 Ku Mer Ayii Manyan, akenyda ya  
 Mabior Atok buk akenyda ya  
 Ku Adbildhil, Adbildhil Manjar Deŋ Kuol, akenyda ya  
 Ku Deŋ to thiok ke Nuer, ee akenyda ya  
 Ayen Tuic akenyda ya*

<sup>48</sup> The Milky Way at 5000 metres, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2008. NASA Astronomy Picture of the Day <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap080104.html>

<sup>49</sup> Cattle-camps in Gogrial East are sometimes used to refer to the border, Naomi Pendle, personal communication.

<sup>50</sup> ‘*Akenyda*’ is the plural possessive version of ‘*aken*’, i.e. ‘our border’.



I am telling you, the historic border is Mading Aguok and Muonyjiang.<sup>51</sup>  
 Mayen in Kuac is also our border  
 Nyinakou close to Wau is also our border  
 And Biok of Mayer Ayer is also our border  
 And Mer of Ayii Manyang is also our border  
 Mabior Atok is also our border  
 And Adhildhil of Maṅar Deng Kuol is also our border  
 And Ngeng close to Nuer is also our border  
 Ayen in Tuic is also our border.<sup>52</sup>

References to the border in songs sung by young men also highlighted the danger of the border as a point of interaction, particularly the borders in the *toc*, where different cattle herding communities meet in the dry season and compete for water and pasture. There is undeniable danger at the border; it is the kind of place where your cows might be stolen and shots might be fired. The border is significant precisely because it is a meeting *point*. It is precisely these points of interaction that embody the border; there is no sense of an enclosed line.

*Akeu nbom ee, akeu nbom, wuan nbiak riel ke kieu bi yin gua ben.*

At the border, at the border, tomorrow morning cries of sorrow will be heard.<sup>53</sup>

*Ok aa thär tɔŋ Arab thiäär ce tɔŋ det ee luel akai mac ee ok aci weŋda nyai akeu yic.*

We have fought ten times with Arabs: we have had our cow taken from the border.

*Ee akeu toc, wanh Tɔŋ ke Madiŋ aci Nuer Adbol biok mac bi a ben theei ku ee mac.*

In the border of *toc*, the ford (of the river) of Tong and Mading, the Nuer came and shot at us with guns: they came in the evening.<sup>54</sup>

Earlier ethnographies also record this model of the border as a point. In his 1970s ethnography of an Agar Dinka community in Rumbek East, John Ryle gives a striking example of where the border is materialized in a discrete nodal point, in this case a body of water. He describes a tour he was given of the community's territory: 'we found the northern limits some 20 miles away at a pool called *Akeu*, a Dinka word meaning 'border', where the river spreads into papyrus swamp'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> 'Muonyjiang' literally means the Dinka people, but in this case it refers to a village of the same name in Gogrial West.

<sup>52</sup> Recorded in Tit Cok, sung by Njotdit 11.06.2012.

<sup>53</sup> Song of Deng Kuac Chol. Recorded 1.12.2011.

<sup>54</sup> Song of Wol from Mawut. Recorded 14.06.2012

<sup>55</sup> John Ryle and Sarah Errington, *The Dinka: Warriors of the White Nile* (Amsterdam: Time Life Books, 1982), 32.



Image 35: Aerial Image of Lake Akeu (background).<sup>56</sup>

The idea of the border as a series of points speaks to the wider scholarship on pastoralist nodal geography. Point-centered notions of land and geography are well documented in many pastoralist societies – as cattle-keepers move between key resources like water and grazing points. Turner describes how Fulani land systems consist of ‘an unbounded, point-centred spatial pattern (nucleated) with rangeland access governed by grazing radii around tenured points... rather than bounded rangeland territories.’<sup>57</sup> This is very different from the enclosed units that the administrative logic of the state implies.

#### INTERPENETRATION

There is evidence of different governments thinking of the geography of Gogrial in terms of bounded units – discrete areas, containing communities of people who could be taxed and administered. The colonial government and the GoSS have attempted to align these units with the territories of *wadi*. But, as we can see, recent administrative divisions have not simply involved imposing a border where there was no sense of a border before. Rather, they have meant two different paradigms of a border must be negotiated: the pastoralist concept of borders as points set alongside the state’s definition of enclosed lines of administrative units. One of the critical differences is that the state lines are supposed to be neutral – a line does not connote ownership. Whereas, the point-

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>57</sup> Matthew Turner, “The Role of Social Networks, Indefinite Boundaries and Political Bargaining in Maintaining the Ecological and Economic Resilience of the Transhumance Systems of Sudano-Sahelian West Africa,” in *Managing Mobility in African Rangelands: The Legitimization of Transhumance*, ed. Maryam Niamir-Fuller (London: Intermediate Technology Productions, 1999), 108.

centred border does imply that the border point ‘belongs’ to somebody. This is the issue that was at the centre of the Maṅṅar conflict, which will be explored further below.

However, suggesting that there are different models of boundary existing in tension should not imply that these are isolated from one another and have not, in complicated ways, shaped and responded to each other. Neither should it imply that attempts to demarcate and map out lines ‘on the ground’ have been straightforward. Conversely, it is evident that although the state might imagine enclosed units and lines, these have not been easily imposed. Many of these lines have never actually been mapped. It is in this functional dissonance that you get the most interpenetration in construction of borders. The state might think in terms of lines – but how much do these lines actually become a reality? I will suggest that they have not – that borders encapsulate composite meanings, continually negotiated by ‘the state’ and local people – which are becoming increasingly contested

It is precisely their partial imposition, the parallels and discontinuities between different models of the border that make the struggles over entitlements particularly complex. These competing logics of what the boundary *is* can have violent results as communities struggle to assert legitimate authority in an ambiguous landscape. It is this ambiguity that led to the contested administrative boundary in Maṅṅar.

The GoSS’s use of *wuot* has been partly an attempt to gain local legitimacy and partly a reflection of local demands to have different *wuot* represented within the administration. The interpenetration between ‘African’ and ‘colonial’ ideas and authority has been well discussed in African history. In a follow up to his influential essay on colonial rule, Ranger argues that ‘traditional’ operatives of rule used by the state were not simply ‘invented’, but were ‘imagined’ in an iterative process between administrators and local populations.<sup>58</sup> Building on this, Thomas Spear points out that colonial territorial chieftainship had to be perceived as legitimate in order for it to be accepted.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Africa,” in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa*, ed. Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (London: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 4.

The following examples; of making maps, of a dispute over a boundary peg in 1938 and the use of idioms about ‘paper’ and literacy in making boundary claims at Maṅar will illustrate interpenetration of border concepts at the functional level, which can result in contested borders.

## MAPPING

Considering maps made of administrative units help to show that governments have conceptualized administrative lines across Gogrial, but that the practical consequences have been more complex. These two administrative maps of Gogrial, one published in Sudan Notes and Records in 1927, the other drawn by Lienhardt from government files (c.1948) reveal something about the nature of the colonial engagement with and use of *wuot*. The first map, included in an article by ADC Maj. Titherington, is among the first administrative maps of Gogrial to be drawn.<sup>60</sup> It shows the names of the main *wuot* that the government used in administration (erroneously labeled as ‘clans’). The dotted lines do not indicate boundaries between *wuot*, *but* show the major roads used by the government. The dashed line (running just north of Kuajok mission) shows the estimated position of the end of the ironstone plateau. The River Jur and Lol are both marked.<sup>61</sup> Compare this with the second map, below, drawn by Godfrey Lienhardt from contemporary local administrative files, which shows the areas of these *wuot* in the late 1940s. The numbers indicate the number of taxpayers.<sup>62</sup>

These maps illustrate the process of administrative enclosure that occurred in the first 25 years of colonial administration in Gogrial. They show a shift from an initial awareness of territorial *wuot*, to the demarcation of these units and the extraction of resources, clearly visible in the bounded units and tally of taxpayers in the second.

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<sup>60</sup> G.W Titherington, “The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 10 (1927): 17.

<sup>61</sup> A tributary between the Jur and the Lol is also drawn. Early administrators believed the two rivers were connected, this was later shown to be false.

<sup>62</sup> PRM Box 4/1 Godfrey Lienhardt ‘Notes in Order’ undated.



This second map is a hybrid. It is not only a government map; it is simultaneously part of the construction of Lienhardt's anthropological knowledge about *wuot*. Lienhardt's field notes show that he based much of his understanding on conversations with Chief Giir Thiik (and other chiefs). On occasion he specifically asked Giir to explain to him the *wuot* 'before the government came' and Giir Thiik drew diagrams of this for him.<sup>63</sup>

Lienhardt believed that the state had had relatively little impact on peoples' lives. Reflecting on his research in Gogrial he wrote:

It is because so much of the Government's place in the lives of the Dinka and others went no deeper...because traditional forms of political control were so strong just below the surface of modern government and so ready to reassert themselves that social anthropologists have been able to write a great deal about these people without dwelling on their colonial rulers.<sup>64</sup>

Much of what I am arguing in this chapter broadly supports this idea that government administration did not displace other forms of authority. But this statement does need to be unpicked. Much of Lienhardt's own understandings came from men like Giir Thiik: men whose authority was, in large part, derived from the government's system of administration. When Giir Thiik emphasized the pre-colonial character of the contemporary *wuot*, he had a vested interest in representing the system as the way things had always been. In subsequent interviews with Francis Deng in 1972, Giir Thiik continued to stress the pre-colonial nature of chiefly and territorial authority. He told Francis Deng, 'All this talk – you son of Deng, there were great men who were keeping this country...they would run their country...they would meet and talk about such things as how people should relate to each other at borders...chieftainship is an ancient thing; it is not a thing of today. A country is lived in because of a chief.'<sup>65</sup> This does not mean that there was no historical reality to his claims, but there were also reasons that such claims were hardening at this time in response to the potential power of the government. Thinking back to Deng Kuac's song, and his praise of Jok Tonj, highlights the complexity of these claims. His song reminds us that in 2011-12 the legitimacy of this state-derived authority was not always emphasized, even though Apuk now call themselves Apuk [of]

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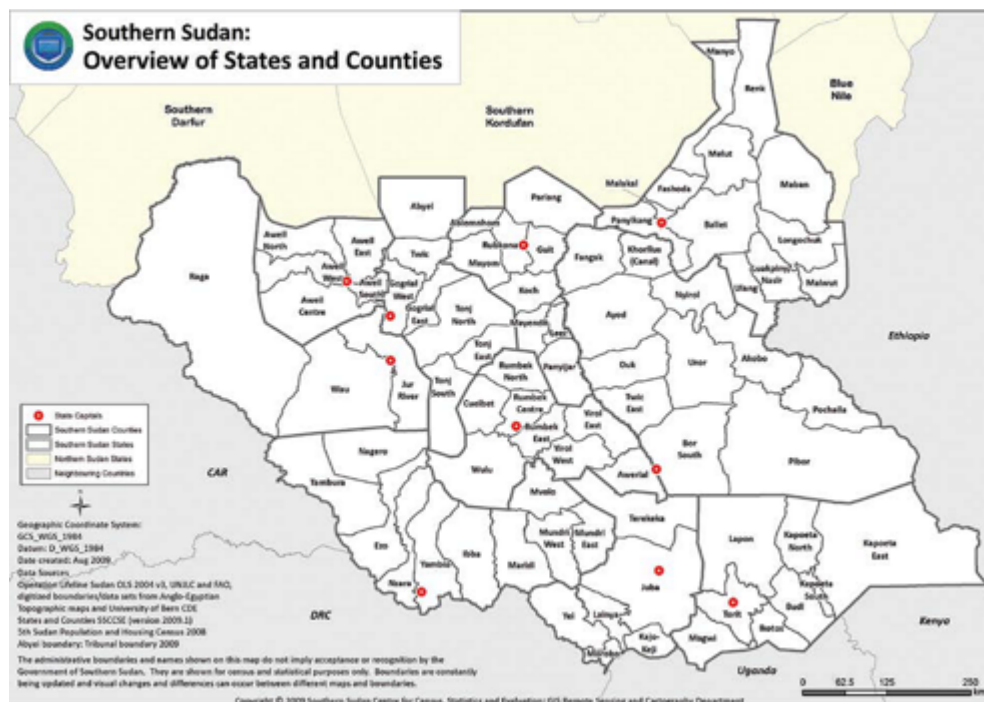
<sup>63</sup> PRM GL Box 5/5 'Notebook 2, 1948' entry on 05.03.1948. Lienhardt specifically asked Giir Thiik to tell him about the *wuot* of Apuk 'before the government came'.

<sup>64</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Sudan: Aspects of the South Government among Some of the Nilotic Peoples, 1947-1952," *Bulletin (British Society of Middle Eastern Studies)* 9, no. 1 (1982): 34.

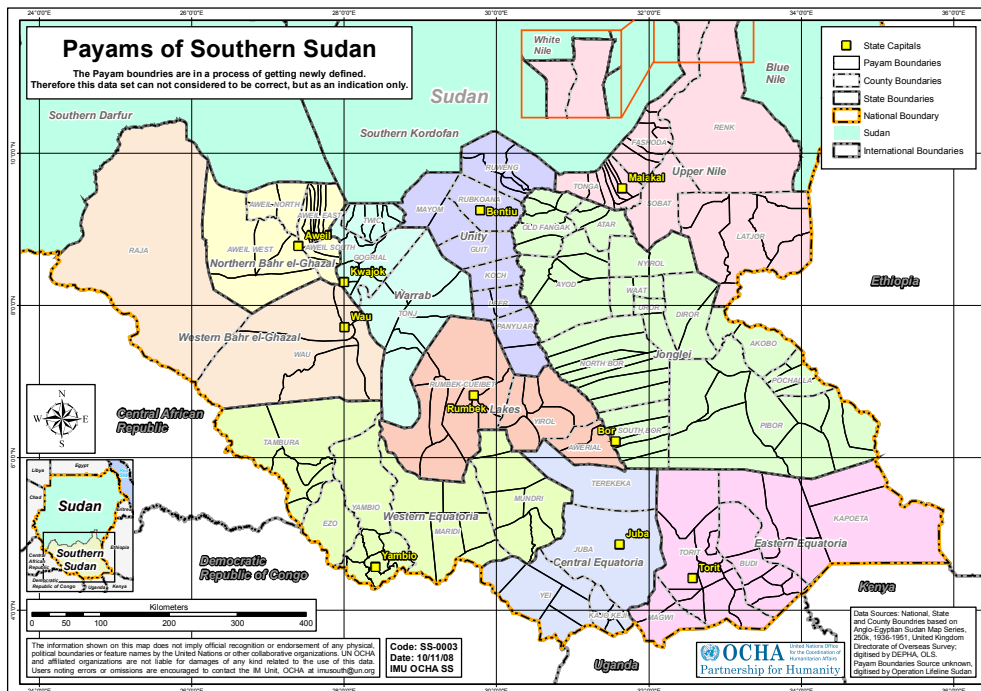
<sup>65</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *Africans of Two Worlds: The Dinka in the Afro-Arab Sudan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 114.

Giir Thiik. Some songs, like the one I cited above, are sung to emphasize the borders of the *wut* of Apuk that Giir Thiik helped to fix. Yet, Deng Kuac also sings about the *wut* of Apuk recalling Jok Toŋ and in doing so appeals to a different kind of authority figure.

No official maps of the current smallest administrative units (bomas and payams) of Gogrial have been made available. In 2009, the cartography department of Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation produced a map of the counties of South[ern] Sudan. In 2008, the UN had produced a slightly more detailed map showing the payams - but with a warning that the payams were in the process of being redefined and that the data it had used ‘could not [be] considered [...] correct’.



Map 11 States and Counties of South Sudan.



Map 12 Payams of South Sudan.

These maps are the most detailed administrative maps I have been able to locate. During my research I tried to find a map of bomas and payams in Gogrial. I asked at the Ministry of Local Government in Kuajok and I asked at payam administrator's office in Luonyaker in Gogrial East. Such a map did not appear to exist. In fact, the local administrators in Gogrial were using an understanding of the borders of administrative units which was based not on maps (these have not been drawn) but on a Dinka concept of the borders as points. The way these borders function is as compounds – they have composite meanings, borrowing elements from both the administrative line and the Dinka point.

## DEMARCATATION

Interpenetrations and tensions between that government's attempt to impose borders as neutral lines and Dinka concepts of borders as points are evident in the colonial period. One revealing case was associated with a long running border dispute between the Luac Dinka under the chiefship of Mayen Tuc in Tonj district and the Agar Pakkam Dinka under Wol Athiaṅ of Rumbek district. This is now the border between Lakes and Warrap



states.<sup>66</sup> Although this took place in the border of Tonj District rather than Gogrial itself, the records of this dispute are particularly good and help to explain my argument. In 1938, an incident of fighting followed the government's implementation of a grazing border two years previously in 1936 running through a river or lake (it is referred to as both) called Teep.<sup>67</sup> This well watered grazing and fishing area of *toc* had, at this time, been contested for over sixty years. The 1938 violence spurred a re-investigation by the colonial government into the border.

Both sides (Luac and Pakkam) claimed ownership of the grazing area and a mediation was held. The Luac claimed that sixty years previously, a wooden cattle peg (*gnek*) had been driven into the ground at a cattle camp called Tocdor, within the disputed area, and that this peg constituted the border.<sup>68</sup> The Pakkam did not accept that this peg was the border. They held that this peg was a sign of peace between the two communities; it was where a bull was slaughtered during peace making ceremonies, but it was not the border.<sup>69</sup> To help resolve the dispute, chiefs from other parts of Rumbek had been brought to hear the discussion. They sided with Pakkam argument which held that the peg was not the border. Foreshadowing some of the debates at Manjar, the chiefs argued that the real issue was not demarcation of the border, but who 'owned' it. They agreed that Lake Teep was 'the border' as the 1936 agreement suggested. The border that the government had demarcated had not worked, they explained, because it failed to say which community it belonged too. The true answer to the question of ownership was difficult to resolve, they believed, because both the Luac and the Pakkam had a historical claim because they could both claim that their ancestors had been buried there.<sup>70</sup>

The root of the conflict was about claiming legitimate authority at the border. The border *line* which the government tried to enforce was problematic partly because it was neutral and did not resolve local claims on the border *point*. This is remarkably similar to

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<sup>66</sup> And is still contested. Sudan Tribune, "New Grazing Rights Deal Between Warrap and Lakes State," *Sudan Tribune*, March 21, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> NRO EP 2/35/128 DCs Tonj and Lakes to Governor, 13.04.1939. Luac-Agar (Pakkam) fight 1938.

<sup>68</sup> The name of this cattle-camp is written as 'Tocdor' in the archival record. Its name may be 'Tocdoor' which means 'the grazing area of peace' which would indicate a longer history of dispute and reconciliation at this border.

<sup>69</sup> NRO EP 2/35/128 DC Lakes to DC Tonj, 28.03.1940 and DC Tonj to DC Lakes 13.03.1939.

<sup>70</sup> NRO EP 2/35/128 DC Lakes to DC Tonj, 28.03.1940.

the dispute at Maṅar. It is also important to note that the government attempted to accommodate 'historic' and locally meaningful border claims as it proceeded to try and map and delineate its own border. They had initiated consultations and 'trekked' in the areas before mapping the border along the Teep.<sup>71</sup> They were prepared to engage with the Dinka galactic border; if Pakkam had agreed, the DCs would have accepted the Luac claim that a peg was the border.<sup>72</sup>

#### AUTHORITY

Border disputes in *toe* are relatively frequent because of the importance of the resources (water, fish, pasture) available there.<sup>73</sup> One of the notable points about Maṅar is that it is not a grazing boundary; this was a novel kind of boundary dispute, not related to competition over shared natural resources, but to obtaining a place in a new administration. Questions about citizenship and securing a legitimate place in the new independent state of South Sudan were central to this dispute. The leaders of Ajak and Monyjoo were concerned not only with accessing the potential resources of the state, they wanted recognition as legitimate communities. They wanted literally to be *seen* as the President's convoy passed through Maṅar.

It is striking that the community leaders were explicitly drawing on symbols of state authority to make claims on Maṅar. Both communities made appeals to authority through the mediums of literacy and writing, which have been long associated in South Sudan with government authority. Through education, court proceedings or ballot papers, paper has long been a principal means to 'tap the powers of the government'.<sup>74</sup> The Monyjoo community had erected a sign with the name Maṅar-Monyjoo written on it, which had been displayed even to Ajak elders who were unable to read the words. The Ajak community contested the Monyjoo community meeting by writing a letter. The erection and removal of a flag – a clear symbol of government authority – also indicates how employing the material culture of the state was an important means through which claims were being articulated. Both sides wanted to achieve recognition, in the eyes of

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<sup>71</sup> NRO EP 2/35/128 DC Lakes to DC Tonj, 27.02.1940.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Makec, *The Customary Law of the Dinka People of Sudan: In Comparison with Aspects of Western and Islamic Laws*, 181.

<sup>74</sup> Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State*, 283–284.

the state as ‘communities’. Through the exchange of written words and papers both sides appealed to the threat of state force to make their claims.<sup>75</sup>

Part of what is happened at Maṅar was a very clear attempt of people to tap the power of the state. The fact that Maṅar is not a grazing border highlights that there is a very new set of concerns that are being worked out at these administrative borders. These are not only concerns about grazing and natural resources. These are overt attempts to be recognized and included in government structures. The ‘paper-based’ claims, using symbolic tools of the government that were being made at Maṅar underscore these concerns to be included in the state.

## BEYOND BORDERS

The implications of this process of interpenetration go beyond borders. The literature on pastoralism has stressed how colonial and post-colonial states have re-shaped and restricted pastoralist landscapes in the East and Horn Africa. Extensive geographical incursions into pastoral land have taken the form of enclosures, the imposition of grazing boundaries, controls on movement, the transferral of people and livestock, forced sedentarization and the conversion of pasture to commercial and agricultural land. Some pastoralists have been forcibly relocated.<sup>76</sup> Many authors have connected these processes with the deeply unequal relationship between pastoralists and the state.<sup>77</sup> Abbink describes this as ‘the shrinking cultural and political space’ of pastoralist societies in the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup>

The literature on the state, boundaries and pastoralism has shown that the introduction of fixed administrative boundaries, in areas where human and animal populations are mobile, has been problematic.<sup>79</sup> The colonial imposition of grazing boundaries enclosed

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<sup>75</sup> Brendan Tuttle, “Life Is Prickly. Narrating History, Belonging, and Common Place in Bor, South Sudan” (Temple University, 2013), 232.

<sup>76</sup> Lotte Hughes, *Moving the Maasai* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Maknun Gamaledin, “The Decline of Afar Pastoralism,” in *Conflict and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, ed. John Markakis (London: Macmillan, 1993), 59.

<sup>78</sup> Jon Abbink, “The Shrinking Cultural and Political Space of East African Pastoral Societies,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1997): 1–17.

<sup>79</sup> Gunther Schlee and Abdullahi A Shongolo, *Pastoralism and Politics in Northern Kenyan and Southern Ethiopia* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2011), 27–35.

and restricted the strategic mobility needed by livestock keepers to successfully exploit unpredictable rangeland environments. But in practice, as the boundary peg dispute between the Luac and Pakkam Dinka shows, boundaries are always hard to enforce. Pastoralists can instrumentalize state borders, and they are often highly entrepreneurial in using them to engage in profitable cross-border trade in livestock and commodities.<sup>80</sup> Even in places like Baringo in Kenya, which saw extensive and long running colonial development and environmental projects, pastoralists were able to selectively engage or resist different aspects of state intervention at different times.<sup>81</sup> This chapter has shown that in Gogrial local concepts of geography have not been simply displaced by the state: instead, in complicated ways, the state's geography was incorporated into existing pastoralist frameworks.

Many of the experiences that characterized the relationship between the state and pastoralists in other places are absent in the history of Gogrial – there were no colonial settlers, few administrative boundaries were rigidly enforced, there was no resettlement, no commercial agricultural projects ever existed here. Gogrial was on the geographic and political fringes of the colonial project, even in the context of Southern Sudan. Robert Collins says in 1918 the colonial state in Southern Sudan as a whole ‘could claim a tenuous authority over the population surrounding their few and far distant administrative posts... but beyond these islands of governance the Imperial aegis was unknown’.<sup>82</sup> Even later, when local administration was established it was ‘very much a low key affair’.<sup>83</sup> By 1947 there were only 42 political officers in the entire territory of Southern Sudan, an area larger than Kenya.<sup>84</sup> Gogrial town itself was only seasonally staffed by an ADC, as the ADCs were based mainly either in Wau or Tonj.<sup>85</sup> The sporadic violence of the state, exemplified in the patrols against people like Ariathdit during the period of pacification only highlight its tentative grip. As Herbst, following

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<sup>80</sup> Andy Catley, Jeremy Lind, and Ian Scoones, eds., *Pastoralism and Development in Africa: Dynamic Change at the Margins* (London: Routledge and Earthscan, 2013), 7,12.

<sup>81</sup> David Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890-1968* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 11.

<sup>82</sup> Robert O Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Andrew Mawson, “The Triumph of Life: Political Dispute and Religious Ceremonial Among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan” (University of Oxford, Darwin College, 1989), 81.

<sup>84</sup> Lienhardt, “The Sudan: Aspects of the South Government among Some of the Nilotic Peoples, 1947-1952,” 29.

<sup>85</sup> SAD Sudan Government Staff lists.

Arendt, reminds us ‘violence and control should not be confused’.<sup>86</sup> The state has often had to resort to violence because of its lack of control – force was often its only option.

Whether in spite, or because of its violent character, the state was subject to reinterpretation by ordinary people. Historians of South Sudan have frequently discussed the alien and ‘nodal’ character of the state in the south, which was first based out of *zara’ib*, then government garrisons, then government towns. More recently, the government army was confined to military garrisons during the last civil war. But however ‘alien’, the nodal state might also have made sense in terms of local geographies.<sup>87</sup> The micro-topography of Gogrial requires herders to move their cattle from point to point as the seasons progress. It is not only water and pasture that is nodal. There are many other points across the landscape – such as villages and cultivation plots. In a song, recorded by Francis Deng in the 1960s, school children sang that ‘Kuajok Mission is our summer cattle-camp’<sup>88</sup> showing that some people could express their relationship to sites associated broadly with the government, by drawing on older social geographies. That is not to say that a government station was thought to be the same as a cattle-camp, but that the particular nodal configuration of the state meant that a degree of compatibility was possible. Ordinary people could draw on this and insert the state into preexisting terms through which they imagined the geography of Gogrial.

In an interview in a small village of Angui in 2011, an old man called Bol Cuor described the coming of the British administration as the time when roads started to be made by hands (*cath cïin*), not by feet (*cath cok*).<sup>89</sup> He meant that before the government arrived, people and settlements were connected through paths made by habitual walking. When the government came, roads were instead purpose built, through conscripted manual labour. Roads, perhaps even more so than towns, are closely associated with state coercion.<sup>90</sup> Their upkeep and construction required a huge amount of labour.<sup>91</sup> The

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<sup>86</sup> Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, 90–91.

<sup>87</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 17–19.

<sup>88</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 255.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Bol Cuor, Angui, 28.10.11.

<sup>90</sup> Edward Thomas, *The Kafia Kingi Enclave: People, Politics and History in the North-South Boundary Zone of Western Sudan* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2010), 85–101; Tuttle, *Life Is Prickly*, 81.

<sup>91</sup> At the end of British colonialism, chiefs in Gogrial were expected to maintain minor roads ‘free of charge’ SAD 769/1/33 P.P. Howell Answers to Southern Development Questionnaire, 1954.

state's control in South Sudan was 'arterial' in the sense that outside of its nodal centres it focused on major river and road routes. I have suggested that the history of Gogrial can be seen as a network of pathways. These roads patterned the landscape with new and different pathways.<sup>92</sup>

One of the most striking things about Titherington's early map of Gogrial (Map 9) is just how much it resembles this construction of the landscape as a constellation of points and pathways. On it, unbounded communities are represented as points, which are intersected by roads. Of course, it was through conversation with local intermediaries, as well as through their own research that this map was drawn. Maps are technologies of rule, but this map could also be seen as an early example of a more interpenetrated construction of geography.<sup>93</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In a recent collection of essays on the history of lines, Tim Ingold writes that anthropologists (and scholars in general) have tended to assume 'non-linearity' in non-Western cultures, in contrast to Western linear taxonomies and epistemologies. He suggests that because of this, alterity is usually assumed to be non-linear. Ingold complicates this dichotomy by arguing that rather than look only for the displacement of non-linear modes, we should also recognize that there are many different kinds of linearity. Building on this he suggests that:

Colonialism...is not the imposition of linearity upon a non-linear world, but the imposition of one kind of line on another. It proceeds first by converting the paths along which life is lived into boundaries in which it is contained, and then by joining up these now enclosed communities, each confined to one spot, into vertically integrated assemblies. Living along is one thing; joining up is quite another.<sup>94</sup>

The SPLM/A and the GoSS state in Gogrial have been industrious in laying down boundaries. Many administrative boundaries in Gogrial are very recent – less than a decade old in many cases. These have produced new and different claims and struggles

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<sup>92</sup> Libbie Freed, "Networks of (colonial) Power: Roads in French Central Africa after World War 1," *History and Technology* 26, no. 3 (2010): 203–23.

<sup>93</sup> Barbara Bender, "Subverting the Western Gaze: Mapping Alternative Worlds," in *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape: Shaping Your Landscape*, ed. Peter J Ucko and Robert Layton (New York: Routledge, 1999), 31–45.

<sup>94</sup> Timothy Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), 2–3.

over landscape in the context of forging sovereignty and the new state of South Sudan. In Gogrial, the state did not simply bring boundaries into an unmarked space: it has tried to *join the dots*.<sup>95</sup> This has been a complex process. In some respects, the Dinka galactic border does have some similarities with ‘state-like’ borders, as the model does emphasize the *edges* as well as the centre of territory.<sup>96</sup> But in other ways it is very different because these are not *enclosed* territories, nor they are not rigidly defined in a Weberian sense. Recognition that there are important ideas about border in pastoralist societies is also a useful corrective to latently orientalist imaginations of pastoralists as anarchical wanderers. As well as making pathways, pastoralists are not indifferent to place.

Recent struggles over local administrative borders throw light on the complicated ways that the state has shaped the landscape in Gogrial. Struggle over local administrative borders in Gogrial reveal the compound nature of these borders. Studies of pastoralism have tended to treat ‘pastoralist landscapes’ and ‘state landscapes’ as diametrically opposed and ontologically distinct – but this compartmentalization may not be accurate or useful.<sup>97</sup> This chapter has shown that there are different logics of the border in operation, but these have shaped each other, both today and in the past. This shows that pastoralists also seek to tap the power of the state. It is not simply the case, as implied by the images of Gogrial and Dinka society discussed in chapter 2, that the people of Gogrial are antagonistic to state authority. Border conflicts, like the one at Maḅar demonstrate how people are selectively engaging with – and transforming – the power of the government. In many ways, this is a fraught process, while not all local boundaries are contested, in some cases, like at Maḅar, there are struggles over authority and legitimacy as people struggle to assert ownership and attempt to overcome the inherent ambiguity.

Administrative borders are an obvious instance in which the state and macro-political change has shaped the landscape. Gogrial is not isolated and the negotiation of the landscape always happens in the context of broader political transformations. The following chapters will move from borders to look at centres. This thesis will examine

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 74–75.

<sup>96</sup> C.f. Tambiah ‘The Galactic Polity’.

<sup>97</sup> This point was made by Elizabeth Watson, “A Hardening of Lines?’ Territoriality and Identity in Pastoral Northern Kenya” (presented at the Emerging territorialities: land, ethnicity and borders in Africa Seminar Series, Durham University, 2014).

how these different centres have been created and maintained under difficult and violent circumstances and how different people in Gogrial have asserted their own moral claims and their own narratives of history onto the landscape. The next chapter examines 'home' as a moral centre.



## 5 Establishing a Home

*Jol bei pan Apet Anyuon Joktiam.*

Come back to the home of Apet Anyuon Joktiam.

*Raan ci pande ker, raan ci pande ker wut cielic wut Tuonj Adoor.*

She established a home in the centre of the people of Adoor at Tuong.

*Kɔc arɔt ben theek kehyc.*

People respect themselves in the cattle camp.

*Jol bei pan Apet Anyuon Joktiam.*

Come back to the home of Apet Anyuon Joktiam.

*Raan ci pande ker, raan ci pande ker wut cielic wut Tuonj Adoor.*

She established a home in the centre of the people of Adoor at Tuong.

*Kɔc arɔt ben theek kehyc.*

People respect themselves in the cattle camp.

*Pagonj aa paneerden yi waadit Col Marial Kuei 'εεε'.*

Pagong are the maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei'.

*Aa paneerden yi waadit Chol Marial Kuei wut cielic, wut Anyuon Chan.*

The maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei' at the centre of the people of Anyuon Chan.

*Atheek men ta thin tene madit Anjonj Akok Majok.*

Respect goes to my grandmother Angong Akok Majok.

*Ka ok aa lɔ ηuek, ka ok aa lɔ ηuek wut cielic Adoor Malekdit.*

For we bring our cattle pegs to the centre of the people of Adoor of Malek.

*Atheek men ta thin tene madit Anjonj Akok Majok.*

Respect goes to my grandmother Angong Akok Majok.

*Ka ok aa lɔ ηuek, ka ok aa lɔ ηuek wut cielic Adoor Malekdit.*

For we bring our cattle pegs to the centre of the people of Adoor of Malek.

In his song's opening lines, Deng had described Marial Kuei's movement through the paths and points of a physical and temporal landscape.<sup>1</sup> He mentioned the villages of Tuong and Yiik Adoor as points they moved to and between. The extract above concerns the process of establishing a successful home in Tuong and Yiik Adoor. Deng Kuac sings about his maternal relatives Apet Anyuon and Aḡḡ Akok establishing their homes, and through these lines he is securing himself within this historical and physical landscape. He signifies their success through the notion of centrality. Apet and Aḡḡ's homes are located in the centre of their communities, both physically and metaphorically.

Centrality is a morally and politically important idea, which has already been discussed in connection to arrivals (see Chapter 3) and the ability to stake a historical claim over land and people. The phrase Lienhardt recorded, 'people of the centre of the cattle-camp' (*kɔc wut cielic*) describes these original people, the first-comers, who staked their claim to the best tethering spots in the cattle camp, while others gathered and settled around them.<sup>2</sup> Deng repeatedly celebrates centrality in this extract: in the maternal relations of his grandfather being at the *centre* of the people of Anyuon Chan (*paneerden yi waadit...wut cielic*) and through his family bringing their cattle to the *centre* of the Adoor section (*ok aa lo ḡnek wut cielic Adoor*). Public tethering and display of cattle is a sign of wealth and these lines weave together notions of centrality, with its connotation of original claims to an area, together with the performance of power. This is further emphasised through the statement, 'people respect themselves in the cattle-camp' (*kɔc arɔt ben theeek kelyic*) - 'respecting yourself' in this context means having been successful.

The emphasis Deng places on his maternal relatives underlines the gendered aspects of establishing a home and the importance of women in creating centres. Lienhardt also noted that the first-comers could be called the maternal uncles to the community: because they were 'the descent group whose women would be most widely distributed through other descent groups'.<sup>3</sup> But the significance of matrilineal relationship went beyond 'distribution': it was drawn from establishing a home, which this chapter will show is about creating centrality: a process that has historical, moral and political importance.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 95-97.

<sup>2</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in *Tribes Without Rulers: Studies in African Segmentary Systems* (London: Routledge, 1958), 110-111.

<sup>3</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 9.

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is inspired by Deng Kuac's pride in Apet and Anjon's success at becoming 'central'. Godfrey Lienhardt described *baai* (the home or village) in the 1940s as the physical intersection of pathways: the place where people and cattle converged in the wet season.<sup>4</sup> Sixty years later, years of war and displacement have greatly complicated this scenario. But people still treat *baai* as a centre of the family: it is the symbolic centre of genealogical pathways, where the extended family comes together to settle disputes and where the dead are buried. To show this and to show how the significance of *baai* has developed over time, the chapter will examine various different threads including gender, household production, marriage, markets and political imaginations of the nation that are stitched through *baai* as a moral idea. The overarching arguments of the thesis that this chapter will demonstrate are firstly that *baai* - meaning the village, the homestead, the ancestral home - is an illustration of how landscape is temporal and historical as well as spatial and physical: it reveals how people tell individual and collective histories through the landscape itself. Secondly that *baai* demonstrates how landscape is constructed morally.

Another point to frame this chapter, in relation to the broader literature is the question of pastoralist relationships to place. Studies of pastoralist societies in East Africa and more widely have stressed the social as well as the ecological significance of path-making, over place-making as a way of relating to the landscape.<sup>5</sup> The findings of my research also show that path-making is a very important in Gogrial. However, my research also suggests that 'path' is made much more meaningful by its relationship to 'place'. The debates about *baai* that I will describe show that pastoralists in Gogrial are involved in physical place making; and that these places interact with their paths. This is something

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<sup>4</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 101.

<sup>5</sup> Vigdis Broch-Due, "Remembered Cattle, Forgotten People: The Morality of Exchange and the Exclusion of the Turkana Poor," in *The Poor Are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*, ed. David Anderson and Vigdis Broch-Due (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1999). Kenneth Olwig, "Performing on the Landscape versus Doing Landscape: Perambulatory Practice, Sight and the Sense of Belonging," in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, ed. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 85-86.

that archaeologists working on the history of pastoralism have identified as crucial for understanding pastoralist relationships with landscape more widely.<sup>6</sup>

My point is that *baai* has come to epitomize (for some more than others, but we will get to that) morality and the moral centre of Dinka society. This observation, that *baai* is the centre, differs from previous academic analyses, most significantly Godfrey Lienhardt's, which have seen the cattle-camp (*wut*) as the centre and the defining principle of Dinka social and political organization. Therefore, in order to explain the importance of *baai*, both now and in the past, the first part of the chapter will discuss how and why Lienhardt's analysis of Dinka political organization in Gogrial obscured the significance of *baai*.

Lienhardt's explanation of the Dinka political system was based on the idiom of the cattle-camp *wut*. He described it as 'an expanding series of opposed segments' unified through 'the exploitation and defense of particular pastures'.<sup>7</sup> Village or *baai* based authority was less important in his analysis because it did not have significance for defense. Certainly, these *wut* (which have been introduced in the previous chapter) constituted an important way in which Dinka people expressed (and still do express) their political communities. However, as this chapter will explain, the fact that Lienhardt defined 'political' in essentially military terms, had the effect of marginalizing other important relationships and articulations of political and moral significance that were connected to *baai* in his work. By focusing on the patrilineal relationships that he saw at the centre of *wut*, he downplayed the importance of establishing a home (and a centre) in *baai*. This is a process that is partly gendered, and as Deng's praise of Apet Anyuon and Angong Akok makes clear, is associated with women, maternal relations, marriage and family.

The world Lienhardt described in the late 1940s is not the world of today. Forms of political authority and patterns of residence have changed since Lienhardt was writing. *Baai* has become more important because more people are living there permanently. This change in residence patterns is connected to the return of displaced people, the presence

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Lane, "Panel on Landscape and Memory in Mobile Pastoralist Societies" (presented at the TAG 2007, University of York, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 128–129.

of the market, the distribution of aid, opportunities for education, healthcare and other services, which although still very limited are important to rural people. In addition, as the previous chapters have shown, political authority in Gogrial has been undergoing a process of territorialization since the 1920s. The geographic locus of these forms of state authority is in *baai*, not *wut*, which are increasingly peripheral from state power. Therefore, *baai* actually *is* now more ‘politically’ important than it was during Lienhardt’s time – but critiques of Lienhardt are inevitably difficult because things have certainly changed since his time. There are, of course, various struggles over what the moral centre of the landscape is. The view presented in this chapter is based on months of research and living in *baai*. But it is not the only perspective. In the next two chapters I will highlight other assertions of moral centrality in Gogrial (for example by young cattle keepers).

Lienhardt describes the principle of *cieng baai*, which he translates as ‘custom’ (as a noun) or ‘to look after’ (as a verb).<sup>8</sup> Francis Deng has translated *cieng* as ‘the Dinka concept of the ideal way of doing things’, moral values that are closely linked to life in *baai*.<sup>9</sup> Because Lienhardt focuses his analysis on the military-political significance of *wut*, he did not pay much attention (beyond acknowledging that they existed) to how these moral associations around *baai* played out. The moral construction of *baai* is a key point to understanding it, and key to understanding why it continues to be such a meaningful idea and point of reference for many people in Gogrial (and beyond). This chapter will argue that because it is a moral sphere, the definition and frontiers of *baai* have been contested and they have changed over time. It has also become a focus for talking about history and change. The chapter will focus on the key examples of markets and marriage, showing how the market has become a key frontier for debating *baai* and how these debates are playing out at a household level over food production and consumption. It will explain how senior family members, who hold authority in *baai*, seek to retain their influence over younger people through sustaining marriage as a frontier of *baai*, even for those who live beyond its physical location.

The chapter ends by examining how *baai* has been transposed to political debates and become a way of understanding the rural community and even the nation itself. In

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of The Sudan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 171.

contrast with Lienhardt's insistence that *baai* lacked political significance, *baai* has become a way of imagining the embattled southern region during civil war and the new nation of South Sudan. This illuminates key points about how centrality, peripherality and the state are imagined in Gogrial.

#### WHAT IS *BAAI*?

*Baai* (and its possessive form *pan*) means 'home': the physical space of a person's homestead or the village area more generally. *Baai* also conveys the sense of a place to which one is intimately and indelibly connected. The two words *baai* and *pan* are very often used together. *Baai pandie* means 'my home': *baai panda* means 'our home' or 'our country'. *Pan ë Muonyjäñ* means the home or the land of the Dinka people and is often used colloquially to describe any rural area; *baai* is often used in the same way, to denote home and rural areas.<sup>10</sup> It carries the meaning, as discussed in chapter 3, of a domesticated space: claimed from forest through human habitation. *Baai* is very much associated with rural 'traditional' life and is very often overtly contrasted with the town or 'modern' life.<sup>11</sup>

*Baai* also conveys a particular topology; an area of higher ground that does not extensively flood and can be inhabited in the wet season and where homesteads can be built and cultivation is undertaken. Agriculture is a key aspect of *baai*. Each home is surrounded by a field/garden (*dom*) that is cultivated at the beginning of the rainy season in around May, and then harvested until around September. Different crops mature at different times, for example sesame (*nyuom*) is harvested first and the long maturing sorghum (*rap*) last. Cultivation is mainly done by hand. Both men and women participate in cultivation; both sexes hoe, plant and weed.

Authority in *baai* largely rests with senior family members. These are the people who will resolve minor disputes among and between families, arrange and oversee marriages and attend to other matters of daily business and ceremonial importance. Chiefs hold courts

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<sup>10</sup> It is possible that *pan* is an irregular possessive version of *baai*. A point which was suggested by Aleu Majok Aleu. My thanks to Stephanie Riak Akuei for discussing some of the finer details of this point with me.

<sup>11</sup> Also see Cherry Leonardi, "'Liberation' or Capture: Youth in Between 'Hakuma', and 'Home' During the Civil War and Its Aftermath in Southern Sudan," *African Affairs* 106, no. 424 (2007): 391–412.

to resolve cases and disputes that cannot be handled within families. Chiefs are part of the local government and other minor government officials (such as the Payam Administrator or the Boma Administrator) also hold positions of some executive authority. This means that although *baai* is often contrasted with urban life with the associations of state power, it is becoming increasingly difficult to uphold a complete distinction between ‘the state’ and rural areas. An ethnography of Bor from the 1970s suggested that the gateway to the village (*baai*) was marriage, because this was the point at which young people’s responsibility shifted solely from cattle management to incorporate cultivation and start their own family.<sup>12</sup> Marriage is a meaningful juncture for establishing authority in *baai* because it is the point at which young people establish their own homes and thus have an independent stake in *baai*. In principle, each village homestead consists of a husband and wife, their children and probably some members of the extended family. If a man has more than one wife then he should, theoretically, have a house for each wife. In reality there were many configurations of household and some married people may continue to live with older relatives for some time. *Baai* can be thought of as attached to a particular stage of life. This is significant when thinking about the kind of moral claims that are attached to *baai* and who is in a position to make these claims.

A typical homestead might consist of two or three circular huts (*yöi*); usually a bigger one (*yöt dit*) where women and children sleep and a smaller one (*yöt thii*) where men sleep. There may be one hut used as a kitchen (*atnok*); a raised, mud and dung platform in the centre for sitting and where people sleep in the dry season (*baai cielic*) a high wooden platform for storing grain and other items (*kat*); a cattle/goat barn (*luak*) and possibly an altar/shrine (*yöro*). Most homes were built with mud and thatch, although some people are experimenting with bricks and other new materials. Women do much of the maintenance and repair. A home is not considered to be technically complete until it has a *luak* pl. *luek* (usually translated as ‘cattle byre’). The *luak* is a symbol of a completed home. Building a *luak* is a big task and it remains, as Lienhardt recorded, a social enterprise.<sup>13</sup> *Luek* require a huge amount of work and materials to be built. Mud walls must first be constructed. The structure of the roof is made from wooden poles, which are tied together with palm tree leaves. Struts must be woven horizontally and diagonally

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<sup>12</sup> Sj. M Zanen and A.W van der Hoek, “Dinka Dualism and the Nilotic Hierachy of Values,” in *The Leiden Tradition in Structural Anthropology*, ed. R. de Ridder and J.A.J Karremans (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), 175.

<sup>13</sup> PRM GL Box 2/1 19.01.2948 Fieldnotes Pan Acier

together. There is a structurally re-enforcing ring near the top of the lattice, and thick wooden poles connect this and are set into a mud buttress in the centre ground to support the structure. Below is a diagram Lienhardt drew of a *luak* in Pan Acier where he slept on the first night of his fieldwork. The door is usually tapered at the top (as shown) to allow cattle with large horns to enter.



Image 36: Lienhardt's drawing of a *luak*, 1947.<sup>14</sup>

Today, materials can either be collected or purchased in the market. When someone wants a *luak* built, they will enlist the help of family and neighbours to help them. Meals and local alcohol are prepared for people who come to help.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, *baai* is both the homestead itself and the whole village area. It represents or embodies change within individual lives, in terms of marriage, meaning that *baai* is both a place and a temporal stage of life. *Baai* is a moral idea, the centre of an idealized, self sufficient, traditional way of life and at the same time, (as we will come to) it is also a site of historical change.

<sup>14</sup> PRM GL Box 2/1 6-8.12.1947 Fieldnotes Pan Acier.

<sup>15</sup> It was estimated that if all the materials are purchased in the market it would cost around 5000ssp (approx. \$1250) for the materials alone to build a *luak* from scratch. Fieldnotes conversation with Baak Mariak, Cueicok 07.06.2012.





Image 37: *Yöro* and *yöt* (and child) 20.05.2012.

Image 38: Women repair the mud and dung surface of the *baai cielic* (*luak* in background) 28.02.2012.

Image 39: Building a *luak* in Cueicok 20.05.2012.

## LOCATING *BAAI* IN ACADEMIC STUDIES

My focus on *baai* is a departure from previous studies and offers a new way of looking at home, landscape and the construction of history in Gogrial. This section will explain how *baai* has been understood in previous scholarly accounts and how their analytical frameworks have resulted in the under-emphasis of the importance of *baai*.

Studies of South Sudanese Nilotic societies, many of which were conducted in the heyday of structural anthropology, are replete with binary analyses of different geographic, ecological and moral spheres.<sup>16</sup> The most significant structural opposition identified was between *wut* and *baai*.<sup>17</sup> The *baai/wut* division has been seen as ‘natural’ in the sense that an element of it was determined by the ecology. For example in Evans-Pritchard’s classic ethnography, *The Nuer*, he describes how in the wet season, ‘Nuer are forced into villages for protection against floods’ and then ‘forced out of villages into camps by drought and barrenness of vegetation.’<sup>18</sup> *Baai* has been understood as a place of agriculture - in opposition to *wut*, a place of pastoralism. It has also been related to a gender division, in which ‘the things of cattle are the things of men, while life in the village and cultivation is associated with the world of women’.<sup>19</sup> Numerous other ideologically loaded and structurally opposed differences have been invoked in ethnographic studies of various Nilotic societies, which supposedly separate village/*baai* from cattle-camp/*wut*, women from men; maternal from paternal kin; the domestic from the political; weakness from strength.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Buxton, “Animal Identity and Human Peril: Some Mandari Images,” *Man, New Series* 3, no. 1 (March 1968): 38. Andrew Mawson, “The Triumph of Life: Political Dispute and Religious Ceremonial Among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan” (University of Oxford, Darwin College, 1989), 42–50. Conradin Perner suggest Anyuak spheres are divided between the earth and the sky Conradin Perner, *The Anyuak - Living on Earth in the Sky. Vol II The Human Territory* (Zurich: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1997), 28, 51. Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 85.

<sup>17</sup> Zanen and van der Hoek, “Dinka Dualism and the Nilotic Hierachy of Values,” 181.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 63.

<sup>19</sup> John Burton, “The Village and the Cattle Camp: Aspects of Atuot Religion,” in *Explorations in African Systems of Thought*, ed. Ivan Karp and Charles S Bird (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 51.

<sup>20</sup> John Burton, “Lateral Symbolism and Atuot Cosmology,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 52, no. 1 (1982): 76.

Dinka ethnographies which stress the distinctiveness of *baai*, are revealing because they reflect how Dinka people themselves have often spoken about *baai* as a discrete moral sphere. Researchers write about these things at least in part because people talk about them, ‘The Dinka’, wrote Godfrey Lienhardt, ‘always distinguish between the cattle-camp and the homestead’.<sup>21</sup> But there are big problems with binary analyses in a simple form.<sup>22</sup> Most importantly the older accounts do not account for how these categories, such as *baai* or *wut* or *gen* (town) are themselves socially constructed and historically contingent. It is the case, as Leonardi has argued, that these spheres, of ‘town’ or ‘village’ are frequently discussed by South Sudanese people as morally distinct. But they are constructed in discourse and through practice and their boundaries have been shaped by political and historical changes, such as in response to the developing colonial economy and expansion of local government.<sup>23</sup>

The dichotomy between *baai* and *wut* that was used by earlier scholars has had a significant impact on how social and political realities in Gogrial have been presented. Scholars have tended to see anything politically important as connected to *wut*, cattle and military organization and their analyses have not paid close attention to *baai*.

Godfrey Lienhardt saw the migratory cattle-camp as emblematic of Dinka culture. As I have explained in the previous chapter, he showed that *wut* was the idiom of political unity.<sup>24</sup> I do not want to dispute this, but I want to show that the emphasis in Godfrey Lienhardt’s work was shaped by his theoretical understanding of what ‘political unity’ and ‘political’ meant more generally. Lienhardt defined ‘organized political unit’ as a unit that comes together for defense. This was in part because (as discussed in Chapter 2) Lienhardt’s work was mediated through the Government of Sudan, which had a

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<sup>21</sup> Lienhardt, “The Western Dinka,” 101.

<sup>22</sup> These kinds of binary oppositions (e.g. nature: culture, female: male) have been extensively critiqued by later generations of anthropologist, who have shown how the supposedly universal categories they use are themselves culturally constructed, for example Marilyn Strathern, “No Nature, No Culture: The Hagen Case.,” in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. Marilyn Strathern and Carol MacCormack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>23</sup> Cherry Leonardi, *Dealing With Government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community and State* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), 82–85.

<sup>24</sup> Lienhardt, “The Western Dinka,” 110.

militarized view of Dinka society and was focused on maintaining security.<sup>25</sup> In doing this he suppresses the political significance of relationships that are not structured around military organization or defense of pasture. Thus he marginalized *baai* as both a moral and a political centre in his work. He states this explicitly in *Tribes Without Rulers*:

The Dinka political system, like the Nuer, may be characterized in general terms as ‘an expanding series of opposed segments’, from the smallest cattle-camp to the whole Dinka people, the principles upon which segmentation at different levels is based and the functions of segments of different orders are not the same. All segments, from the smallest to the largest have a territorial basis, it is true, in that the permanent settlements and cattle herding circuits of the members can be plotted to each other on the ground. As I have said, however, segments smaller than the tribal group are not necessarily isolated from each other territorially in the permanent settlements, nor are there segments necessarily in a single continuous area. The basis of their unity is less the occupation of particular settled territories than the exploitation and defense of particular pastures, by their members in the wet and dry seasons. I have never heard in Dinkaland of an attack by one village (*baai*) on another. Organized fighting is always said to take place in the pastures, between cattle camps. It is therefore only those segments of Dinka society which, as whole segments, claim particular areas of pastureland, which are organized political units.<sup>26</sup>

Again, this is not wrong; it is just not the whole story. An equally important moral and political community could be created and maintained regardless of military unity. This is precisely what is being conveyed in the notion of *cieng baai*: one way of translating this is simply ‘living together’.<sup>27</sup> Living together, with mixed groups of neighbours from different clans, connected in everyday interaction, through greater or lesser degrees of relatedness was an important part of how rural people lived their lives in the past. This was not emphasized in Lienhardt’s work, although he did, latently, articulate this at various points. Leonardi has also argued that pre-colonial polities were heterogeneous, ‘not necessarily defined strictly by kinship...relationships with non-kin neighbours and protective patrons could be equally important’,<sup>28</sup> although people living in the same area are likely to intermarry and become related over a period of time. Jok too, emphasized that bilateral kin and non-kin relationships were important in a village setting, as an

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<sup>25</sup> Evans-Pritchard conducted his Nuer studies at the request of the government following government campaigns against them. See Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 7–12.

<sup>26</sup> Lienhardt, “The Western Dinka,” 128–9.

<sup>27</sup> Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Leonardi, *Dealing With Government*, 107–108.

extended network is a form of protection.<sup>29</sup> This was what strained so many households and communities during the last civil war, even in areas that had not experienced direct conflict, because they took in, fed and cared for neighbours and distant relatives who had been displaced by armed attacks.<sup>30</sup>

One reason that the moral and political significance of *baai* was overlooked by Lienhardt was that this sphere was to a large extent (but by no means entirely) configured around women and the maternal line. The importance of maternal relatives (*paneerda*) has been stressed in other ethnographies. Francis Deng, for example, describes the importance of maternal relatives in bringing up a child (a child is often raised in the maternal relatives' household) and in looking after the child in later life. In particular he stresses that the maternal uncle is one of the most powerful people in a person's life.<sup>31</sup> Dinka kinship relationships are bilateral – this is most clearly exemplified by the fact that it is both maternal and paternal kin that contribute towards and share in the bridewealth cattle (although, not equally). The maternal kin's obligations toward bridewealth formalizes their role in the creation of new relationships and creation of new homes.<sup>32</sup>

McKinnon's critique of Evans-Pritchard's analysis of the patrilineal structure of Nuer territorial segments demonstrates that he had underplayed of the importance of matrilineal relationships. Nuer political life was not the exclusively patrilineal system that Evans-Pritchard had suggested. It was actually determined by a mix of patrilineal and matrilineal relationships.<sup>33</sup> The issues with Lienhardt's analysis are subtler. Unlike Evans Pritchard, he did recognize the importance of maternal relations.<sup>34</sup> But when Lienhardt did discuss the importance of maternal relations, he focused on delineating the

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<sup>29</sup> The importance of social relationships as protection has also been made in relation to historical natural disasters Douglas H Johnson, "Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral 'Common Ecology,'" *Journal of African History* 30 (1989): 463–86.

<sup>30</sup> Jok Madut Jok, *Militarization, Gender and Reproductive Health in South Sudan* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 99.

<sup>31</sup> Deng, *The Dinka of The Sudan*, 47–50. Also see Jok, *Militarization, Gender*, 104.

<sup>32</sup> More so than in Nuer bridewealth systems, in Nuer marriages the maternal uncle is not obligated to contribute towards his nephew's marriage cattle Raymond Kelly, *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System* (Michigan, USA: University of Michigan Press, 1985), 213–221.

<sup>33</sup> Susan McKinnon, "Domestic Exceptions: Evans-Pritchard and the Creation of Nuer Patrilineality and Equality," *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2000): 57.

<sup>34</sup> Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," 111.

importance of kinship relationships and the emergence of centralized political leadership, rather than on the meaning of these maternal ties themselves.<sup>35</sup>

A serious consequence of his analytical focus on *wut* (discussed above), is that the importance of establishing a home (in *baai*) and maternal relations has not come through as clearly as it should have. It is women who establish homes, but Lienhardt focuses on the patrilineal relationships at the centre of *wut*, explained through *gol* – the cattle-hearth, somewhat obscuring the significance of establishing a home:

A *gol* is a cattle-hearth – the place where herdsmen make their smudge of dung to smoke away insects, either in the centre of a cattle-byre in the homestead, or among their cattle outside. It is the fire of the men of the homestead, while the cooking fires and their hearths (*mac thook*) are the fires of women and their young children and daughters. So, in a polygamous household, there will be several cooking hearths, one for each wife, and one cattle-hearth for the husband, his adult sons and his male visitors and kinsmen. Such an arrangement, in Dinka eyes, persists down the generations, so that a *gol* means also a group of agnatic kin, the children of one father, caring for a common herd...in a polygamous household the men who share the cattle-hearth are united as sons of the father, but divided into different groups as the sons of different mothers, so a *gol* in the sense of an agnatic descent group is divided by reference to different wives, or sons of the founder, from whom the members trace their descent. It consists then of different *mac thook* [sic], ‘cooking hearths’...where the internal divisions of an agnatic descent group are explained in terms of descent from different wives of an ancestor, the divisions are referred to as ‘cooking hearths’.<sup>36</sup>

The crucial point that Lienhardt clearly understands, is that at the level of the household, centres are being constructed along the maternal line; the *mactbok*, literally meaning ‘the doorway to the cooking hearth’ is defined by women. Women have the power to create a home and thus to create a centre. It is therefore not surprising that the maternal construction of moral centres and the household should be emphasized, as Deng does in the song extract above. However, women and maternal relatives’ role in making a home and making community have been marginalized in Lienhardt’s analysis, which in every respect elevates the importance of cattle and defence over establishing a home. When he explained that the first-comers could be described as the maternal uncles of the community, he reasoned that this was because the women of this lineage would be ‘most

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<sup>35</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, “On the Concept of Objectivity in Social Anthropology,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 94, no. 1 (1964): 7–10.

<sup>36</sup> Lienhardt, “The Western Dinka,” 111.

widely distributed through other descent groups'.<sup>37</sup> But what he does not mention, despite its importance, is that this lineage were the first ones to establish their homes, a process in which women were central. After this brief mention of *mactbok*, he does not discuss the home anymore, focusing on military organization, and thus he did not fully convey the political and moral importance of relationships at the centre of *baai*. He never fully grappled with their moral and political importance in respect to establishing a home in *baai*, because he did not see them as significant for defence.

#### SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT SO FAR

Previous academic analyses have not accorded *baai* the importance that Dinka people do themselves. The reasons for this are bound up with a tendency in structuralist anthropology to organize Dinka society in a series of binary oppositions. Scholars have in turn placed more emphasis on the *wut* side of this opposition – *wut* was believed to have greater political importance. Lienhardt's analytical focus was on understanding the patrilineal politico-military organization of Dinka society, which he separated from the domestic organization. This resulted in the marginalization of *baai* as a politically and morally significant idea. This emphasis was also due to continual focus that government authorities have placed on maintaining security in Dinka pastoralist areas and the effects of 'the bovine mystique'.<sup>38</sup> Lienhardt does in various ways discuss the importance of maternal relations and the moral centrality of *baai*, but these are always separated and relegated below the importance of cattle and patrilineal ties in his account. Despite its occlusion in the literature, *baai* has been important both morally and politically, both now and in the past: it is the place where the family home is established and a moral centre is made.

This chapter now moves on to consider how historical change is experienced and debated through the moral landscape of *baai*.

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<sup>37</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> James Ferguson used this term to describe the valorization of livestock as a special domain of property, the control of which allowed senior Basotho men to retain a relationship of power over younger migrant laborers. I am lightheartedly suggesting that anthropologists and other foreign observers have been under a similar mystique when they think about Dinka relationships with cattle. James Ferguson, "The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho," *Man, New Series* 20, no. 4 (1985): 647.

## NEGOTIATING CHANGE

During my research I made observations in *baai* that forced me to reconsider what I had read in the literature: it appeared that in these analyses, either male associations had been prioritized, or too stark a division between ‘cultivation’ and ‘pastoralism’ had been drawn. As a result the significances of *baai* seemed to have been overlooked in academic analyses. One example is the symbolism of the *luak* or cattle-byre. These are most often associated with housing animals, but they have numerous other functions, including ceremonial functions. I often observed that the *luak* was also where women pound and prepare sorghum grain during the day. It was not just where men could light a cattle-dung fire, as I had read in Lienhardt; it was also a place where food was prepared and was an important social space for women at home.



Image 40: A young married woman pounding sorghum in the *luak* at her mother's home in Cuiecok 04.06.2012

*Baai*, the whole area, is often described in academic accounts as separated from pastoralism and the connections between cattle and *baai* more generally are underplayed.



Yet, cattle manure is essential as a fertilizer for fields, which are planted each year in *baai* (without rotation or rest). Surplus crops can be exchanged for cattle, indeed this is a key strategy for restocking and for accumulating cattle for marriage.<sup>39</sup> The size of a herd is often taken as an indicator for wealth, but the size of a family's field is also a good indicator of their social economic status. It would be very unusual to find a man who was wealthy in cattle with a very small plot of cultivated land (and *vice versa*). In 2011-2012, further destabilizing a neat distinction between agriculture and cattle, some well-off families in Cueicok were paying to have their fields ploughed by oxen. Around Luonyaker, local employees of the NGOs, who had access to ox ploughs, ran small ox-plough businesses for wealthier locals. They would charge for rental of the ploughs, the trained oxen and provide young boys to control the plough.<sup>40</sup> Ox ploughs (*puor mior*) are not commonly used; by far the majority of people in Gogrial till their fields by hand (*puor ciin*), with locally made iron hoes (*maloda*). Aside from the expense residents of Cueicok were suspicious of the efficacy of an ox plough.<sup>41</sup>



Image 41: A Warrap State government minister (right) oversees ox-plough cultivation at his *baai* in Cueicok 05.06.2014

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<sup>39</sup> Jok, *Militarization, Gender*, 92.

<sup>40</sup> This was considerably profitable. For the ox-plough in Image 41 the cost was 100ssp to 150ssp for a large field and 60-70ssp for a small field; two large fields would take a morning to plough. The plough was operated by 2 young boys: the owner paid them 10ssp each per day. (they were given a meal by the household too). This meant a potential profit of 260ssp per morning for the owner of the plough and trained oxen. Fieldnotes Cueicok 07.06.2012.

<sup>41</sup> Specifically they worried that plowing the soil in this way would reduce the fertility and nutrient content of the manure, Fieldnotes Cueicok 04.06.2012.

It is very difficult to know to what extent the discrepancies I observed are due to Lienhardt's own viewpoint obscuring certain things and how much they are due to real change since his research. The use of ox-ploughs in Gogrial is certainly a recent development, the preserve of those with a relatively elite status who can afford to hire the equipment.<sup>42</sup> But could women's cooking in the *luak* be relatively recent? Was it a product of more significant year-long residence of people in the homestead – space that it was now possible for women to regularly use during the dry season, when cattle were away in camps, but more people had remained in *baai*?

I was often told that *baai* had become a place of more permanent, year long habitation; and that more people can now stay in the villages for the whole year and not go to cattle camps. There are several reasons to think that *baai* is now more perennially settled than it was in the past. It was often explained by the presence of the market. Certainly, since the 1920s, diversification; the increase in markets and alternative forms of income in rural areas have meant it has become much more viable for *baai* to sustain a greater, perennial population. Another absolutely crucial point is the consequences of the civil wars, famine and the growth of the aid economy. Aid agencies, all of which are based in *baai* areas (such as Luonyaker where there are three international NGO compounds), provide emergency relief and basic services such as water pumps and veterinary care. There are also schools, very basic medical facilities and some opportunities for employment in NGOs and the local government.

In addition, as the last two chapters have discussed, there has been a process of territorialization of political authority going on in Gogrial since 1923. These forms of political authority connected to the state are geographically located in *baai* areas, rather than in cattle camps. This has made *baai* more 'politically' significant than it was when Lienhardt was writing. The case of the border dispute at Maṅar is a perfect illustration of this because it shows how territorial disputes (previously confined to natural resource points in toc) are now being contested in *baai*, because there is now more at stake in *baai*. With expanded sources of political authority in *baai*, senior family members continue to try and assert their authority, and this is especially visible in marriage processes.

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<sup>42</sup> In other Dinka areas, such as Rumbek, ox ploughs are much more widely used.

There is a ‘folk structuralism’ in Gogrial that explains society through the kind of binaries that post-structuralist theory has long discarded. It was common to hear *baai* (the rural areas) discussed in sharp opposition with *geu* (town) as a meaningful way of explaining the social and physical landscape.<sup>43</sup> In this way, *baai* existed as a constructed sphere of rural tradition, even though the reality of its integration with the opposing sphere of ‘town’ was continually apparent. The clearest place to see the construction of *baai* was at its frontiers. These are the places where people are debating the limits of *baai*: places where these limits are revealed in practical and discursive ways. This can be seen in debates about two important frontier of *baai*: markets and marriage. Here, we can see that because the landscape is constructed morally, people attempt to maintain particular ideas of permanence, even in the face of change. *Baai* has become a place where, almost paradoxically because its ‘tradition’ is stressed, historical change has been sharply experienced.

#### THE MARKET AS A FRONTIER

I was frequently told that there were more people living in *baai* for an entire year than there had been in the past. These statements and my own observations of activity in *baai* in the dry season contrasted with Lienhardt’s descriptions of almost total abandonment of *baai* at this time of year. The most frequent explanation for this change came down to the spread of markets and trade having changed the way that many people lived.<sup>44</sup> The market was now a way for people to debate and redefine the frontiers of *baai*. Long running debates about the market and its effect on the qualities of *baai* reveal how people discuss history and the effects of war through a changing moral landscape.

Cueicok’s residents remember there being a single shop in Luonyaker in the 1950s, owned by a Greek merchant named Vasily. He was himself one of three sons of a Dinka woman and a Greek trader called Dmitri Valoris who had a bigger shop in Gogrial town.<sup>45</sup> Older people in Cueicok remember selling milk in Luonyaker and buying

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<sup>43</sup> C.f. Erik Harms, *Saigon’s Edge: On the Margins of Ho Chi Minh City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 226.

<sup>44</sup> Some also suggested that people were cultivating more than they had done in the past. Pers. Comm. Naomi Pendle (researcher and former resident in Luonyaker).

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Gregory Vasily. Liethom, 1.05.2012. His son Vasily had also married a local woman, from Abuok section of Apuk, on the other side of the river Jur. Vasily and his brother were killed during the first civil war, accused of supporting the Anyanya rebels. His son, Gregory

groundnuts, salt and dried fish with the money.<sup>46</sup> Traders in South Sudan have long been seen as exploitative, going back to the slave traders in the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> By the 1940s and 1950s, ‘bush shops’ were frequently criticized by the Gogrial local council and the Province government. The Governor of Bahr el Ghazal described ‘the general unreliability and untrustworthiness of the bush-shop [as] lamentable’.<sup>48</sup> In 1949 and 1951 there was a string of arrests and prosecution for fixing the price of grain and other offences.<sup>49</sup> The mainly northern Sudanese merchants were independent agents, but they were closely monitored and licensed by the government. When there were shortages of grain the Gogrial council arranged to stock the bush shops, with the idea that this would make grain available for people to buy.<sup>50</sup> The traders were dependent on the local population as they traded locally produced items like tobacco for cash, which people would use to buy other products.<sup>51</sup>



Image 42: Godfrey Lienhardt’s photograph, identified as one of Dmitri Valoris’ sons in Gogrial town.<sup>52</sup>

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Vasily became a senior SPLA commander and was appointed the Commissioner of Gogrial County in 2005. His daughter, Ayen, is married to Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Abang Mariak, Cueicok, 24.02.2012.

<sup>47</sup> John Burton, “When the North Winds Blow: A Note on Small Towns and Social Transformation in the Niotic Sudan,” *African Studies Review* 31, no. 3 (1988): 52.

<sup>48</sup> SSRA Bahr el Ghazal monthly diary Oct 1950 JUB/EP/562.

<sup>49</sup> SSRA Bahr el Ghazal monthly diary May 1949, Oct 1950, Nov 1950, June 1951 JUB/EP/562.

<sup>50</sup> SSRA Bahr el Ghazal monthly diary April 1950 JUB/EP/562

<sup>51</sup> SSRA Bahr el Ghazal monthly diary Nov 1949 JUB/EP/562

<sup>52</sup> PRM <http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/details/2005.51.485/>

Conflict affected the development of market centres, and thus altered aspects of the economic landscape in a variety of ways. Following independence from Britain, restrictions on northern merchants coming to the South, imposed by the Closed Districts Ordinance, were lifted and trading took on new dimensions. Wau *souk* grew from a size of twenty shops in the mid 1950s to over two hundred in 1970.<sup>53</sup> The influx of people into towns included many merchants who fled the threat of rebel activity in rural areas (many left the South entirely).<sup>54</sup> They first came by choice and then by force when in February 1964 it was announced that foreign traders – mainly Syrians and Greeks – would only be allowed to trade in provincial and district capitals, as it was suspected that they were aiding rebels in rural areas.<sup>55</sup> The railway line to Wau was completed in the early 1960s and improved the transport goods, previously coming on seasonally dependent Nile barges. Initially thirteen thousand tons of goods could be transported, although this declined as war intensified.<sup>56</sup> The sixties and seventies overall were a time of increased trade between northern and southern provinces.<sup>57</sup>

If the first civil war concentrated trade in the relatively secure major towns in Bahr el Ghazal, the longer second civil war (1983-2005) saw the establishment of smaller markets and trading centres outside government garrison towns into the SPLA-held areas where the civilian population was concentrated. This produced a complex pattern of rural-urban migration. Civilian strategies differed over time as some people sought both access to relief supplies in town, and/or refuge in rural areas.<sup>58</sup> Initially, insecurity in government held garrison towns such as Wau, Gogrial, Tonj and Rumbek pushed the civilian population into rural areas, which were increasingly SPLA-held. Smaller locations, which had not previously been markets bustled and later grew to be much

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<sup>53</sup> TNA FCO 39/686 'Account of trip to Bahr-el-Ghazal Province 24<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1970. R. Boyle

<sup>54</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, "The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls Among the Nuer, 1930-1983," *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 2 (1992): 301.

<sup>55</sup> Edgar O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan: 1955-1972* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 62.

<sup>56</sup> Benaiah Yongo-Bure, *Economic Development of Southern Sudan* (Maryland: Academic Press of America, 2007), 100.

<sup>57</sup> Luka Biong Deng, *Famine in the Sudan: causes, Preparedness and Response. A Political, Social and Economic Analysis of the 1998 Bahr El Ghazal Famine* (Brighton: University of Sussex, 1999), 39.

<sup>58</sup> Munzoul A.M. Assal, "From the Country to the Town," in *The Sudan Handbook*, by John Ryle et al. (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2011), 65.

bigger trading centres. In Gogrial this meant the growth of previously smaller places like Mayen Rual and Lietnhom in Gogrial East and Alek and Panliet in Gogrial West.<sup>59</sup> During the second civil war the biggest market in Gogrial shifted from being located in towns (which were now GoS held) into rural, SPLA held areas. Gogrial town remained a government army garrison and so Mayen Rual, (about ten kilometres from Luonyaker) became the biggest market in the county.<sup>60</sup>

The security situation improved from 1998. There was an open trade route from Uganda through to Gogrial County.<sup>61</sup> A Dinka-Baggara peace deal in 2000 further facilitated the free movement of people and allowed the resumption of previous trading routes from the north.<sup>62</sup> By the end of the war, cash flows as well as market access were increasing as workers were given salaries. There was a flow of US dollars paid for slave redemptions by Christian Solidarity International and some other organisations. Some of the money paid for the freedom of captured people was feeding into markets in Gogrial. A contemporary study suggested that this slave redemption economy had a knock-on effect of stimulating general trade in Bahr-el-Ghazal.<sup>63</sup>

There has been a long history of engagement with the market in Cueicok. This has been a story of sporadic expansion and contract and it has raised moral questions about the value of *baai*-based coping strategies. During the 1990s markets and trade in Gogrial suffered because of serious insecurity. At this time it was estimated that the entire population of Gogrial, Tuic and Abyei counties were being internally displaced more than three times a year. Houses were burnt, crops destroyed and grain stores looted.<sup>64</sup> The failure of market strategies and the high price of grain were identified as a primary cause of famine in Bahr el Ghazal in 1998.<sup>65</sup> During the 1998 famine, many people

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<sup>59</sup> There was a similar situation across Bahr el Ghazal in Thiet, Marial Lou and Akop in Tonj County and Wunrok, Mayen Abun, Turalei, Abin Dau in Tuic. Peter Adwok Nyaba, *Report of the Trade Consultancy Conducted in Northern Bahr El Ghazal. March - April 2002* (Nairobi: Save the Children (UK), July 2002), 29.

<sup>60</sup> Mayen Rual market had greatly diminished in size in 2011-2012 and many shops had been vacated. In early 2012 the market was being surveyed and plots sold by the local government, in an attempt to reinvigorate it.

<sup>61</sup> Adwok Nyaba, *Report of the Trade Consultancy Conducted in Northern Bahr El Ghazal. March - April 2002*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>64</sup> Deng, *Famine in the Sudan*, 31.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

survived by eating wild food, although in some areas militia raiding made it too dangerous to collect wild foods.<sup>66</sup> Even so, increased consumption of wild foods (many of which have high nutritional value) may have contributed more than anything else – including relief aid – to survival in Gogrial in the 1990s.<sup>67</sup>

At this time, some people were arguing that they were more vulnerable to famine because people were abandoning the ‘traditional’ way of life. They no longer understood how to exploit wild foods and were too dependent on the markets and town life. The idea was that exposure to the market and town had had a variety of damaging effects.<sup>68</sup> By doing this people were drawing a moral distinction, focusing on the market as a point of difference and a cause of weakness. This song, composed at a time of famine by Atiam Thon (from Gogrial county) illustrates the point, describing how turning away from past knowledge and practice leads towards ‘an end’:

You our people,  
You have abandoned the collection of weeds  
Let me show you these weeds  
Dig *agony* in rocky land,  
Add also *apam*...and also *beleak*...and the tree called *aneet*  
*Thou* is put in water and then eaten and tastes bitter and sweet as well;  
That is what is called survival.  
Then *cuei* is soaked and *kei* is uprooted,  
*Ajuet* is pounded and *akuatha* also,  
And also *aruaja* are uprooted...whatever warms the mouth.  
All these have been abandoned by *Muonyjang* [Dinka];  
They turned their life to the towns.  
Now you see with your eyes,  
And hear with your ears,  
The land has come to an end. <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Michael Medley, “Humanitarian Parsimony in Sudan: The Bahr Al-Ghazal Famine of 1998” (University of Bristol, 2010), 43. This echoed patterns of 1988, when many people had been prevented from collecting wild foods by the military and because of insecurity David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 126.

<sup>67</sup> Deng, *Famine in the Sudan*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> This point is briefly discussed in Jok, *Militarization*, 13–14.

<sup>69</sup> Deng, *Famine in the Sudan: Causes, Preparedness and Response. A Political, Social and Economic Analysis of the 1998 Bahr El Ghazal Famine*, 36.

It is not surprising that people would have tried to make sense of the crumbling social landscape at the time of famine. They did this, in part, by harnessing an idealized construction of rural life.

Fifteen years later in 2011-2012, interviewees still strongly associated the 1998 famine with wild foods in particular. These connections were also part of the broader association between insecurity, forests and wild places which this has been discussed in Chapter 3. During interviews people spoke extensively about the wild foods they ate during famine – it was a way of explaining to me what it had been like at the time and a way to explain their survival. The associations between wild foods and resilience – both physical and cultural – were deeply enmeshed. Wild foods were a symbol, not just of physical survival, but also of the strength and survival of a continuous moral sphere. As Atiam Thon’s song shows, this is explained through a contrast with the market and town.



Images 43 and 44 Being shown wild foods during an interview in Kuac South (one of the worst famine affected areas) 04.12.2011

Debates about *baai* and the market are ongoing. Since the end of the CPA, trade has increased because of better communications. It has also meant a greater variety of goods and imported food is available for people to buy, even in rural areas. The market is both a place of opportunity and has considerable transformative power (to allow people to change where and how they live), but it also remains a way for people to debate and work through the moral frontier of *baai*. As people claimed, throughout the war, the overreliance on the market had undermined the indigenous knowledge of *baai*.

In the post-CPA period, the idea of rural resilience was politically important. The government, both at the national and the state level were lobbying for cultivation and



agriculture - pushing for people to grow more food as an answer to the problems of trade with the north and the rumbling economic crisis that had been precipitated by the Heglig crisis and the shutdown of oil production in 2012 following disputes about revenues between the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan.<sup>70</sup> The need to grow food was being recast as a patriotic duty to achieve a higher tier of national independence – rather than to rest on economic dependence on Sudan for extracting oil. In 2012 all government employees in Warrap had been given Fridays off work to go to their villages and work on crop production. For many employed in larger towns like Kuajok, the power of rural subsistence also tapped into what I was tempted to see as a quasi-nostalgia for the civil war period: in which people romanticized a time when they did not rely (as they saw it) on money and their salaries to get by. In the increasingly uncertain times of 2012, the idea that money and the comparative luxury of the post-CPA period had had a socially alienating effect – which could now be reversed through self-sufficiency – was tempting comfort for many on the unreliable government pay role in Kuajok. A song by an artist from Tuic Mayardit in the north of Warrap State, which was often played on the radio, echoed these ideas, that money was an alien force that had corrosive social effects:

*Na wen ben Jieng,  
Raan anbiaar bi cam erɔt, raan anbiaar bi piir erɔt,  
Amaar nbom rielde, amaar nbom wamen.  
Since money came to the Dinka,  
A person likes to eat alone; a person likes to live alone,  
He has forgotten his own strength; he has forgotten his own brother.<sup>71</sup>*

Despite cash having been circulated in South Sudan since the colonial period and it having been incorporated into local value systems in a variety of ways across South Sudan, many people in Gogrial spoke about money as if it were a post-CPA innovation.<sup>72</sup> Urban residents of Kuajok with whom I spoke around the time of the oil shutdown reacted to the news of impending financial crisis by asserting they could easily fall back on rural, *baai*-based coping strategies from the difficult years of civil war,

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<sup>70</sup> James Copnall, "Sudan Mobilises Army over Seizure of Oilfield by South Sudan," *The Guardian*, November 4, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/11/sudan-south-border-war-crisis>.

<sup>71</sup> Macham Powut, '*Janub ok bi la ater erɔt*' (The South will Fight Itself) recording collected in 2011 Translated with Wol Aluk Chol, Kampala, 2013

<sup>72</sup> Hutchinson, "The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer, 1930-1983."

claiming they could survive without their salaries. They found comfort in the idea they would not be constrained by the perceived socially alienating effects of salaries and workplace competition and they would be able to rediscover their inner strength and cultural values which had allowed them to survive the long war.<sup>73</sup> This was not actually true – Gogrial had been terribly affected by famine during the war, and people were not able to cope with the destructive effects of political crisis, even in rural areas. It is suggestive of the power of *baai* as a discourse that people could think of it as completely separate from the national economy at all. It was vital to be able to call upon the values and practices of *baai* to alleviate the political uncertainty of the situation.

#### FOOD AS A FRONTIER

Growing markets and imports also had implications for debate about the consumption of food. This was another area where the sphere of *baai* was being debated. Arguments and rumours about imported food that was brought at markets and consumed in rural areas was another site for the construction of *baai*. Although imports and purchase of food was not new, since the CPA was signed there had been a much greater volume of imports of food products. Some people's eating habits had also changed. In the past, everyone would eat at home, but now young men employed in the local government or NGOs often buy food in market restaurants in small towns like Luonyaker or Lietnhom.<sup>74</sup> For example, chapatti, made and sold almost exclusively by East Africans was popular, but was also associated with a highly ambivalent, often quite xenophobic discourse. I was constantly told that chapatti is not good for you, and may make you ill and does not make you strong (*rie!*). Rumours about food cooked by foreigners being dangerous proliferated. For example, a young man from Cueicok living in Kuajok told me that he had heard the *mandazi* doughnuts made by Ugandans contained blood that spread HIV.<sup>75</sup> Such rumours, sitting at the intersection of national identity, *baai* and the

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<sup>73</sup> Fieldnotes Kuajok, 05.03.2012.

<sup>74</sup> In other parts of South Sudan in the 1980s, eating in restaurants was profoundly controversial and seen as immoral because it implied aggressively individualist behavior and the arrogant assumption that you did not need your relatives see Mawson, "The Triumph of Life: Political Dispute and Religious Ceremonial Among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan," 188.; Simailar debates in Nuer areas about purchase of food in the 1980s, Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 162.

<sup>75</sup> Fieldnotes Kuajok 05.03.2012.

political economy of post-CPA South Sudan reveal the power of food as an idiom for expressing ideas and fears and how it can be a commentary on social change.

But was not just in the market that food was stimulating a discussion. Similar and more intimate debates entered into food preparation in people's own homes and cooking-hearths. Central among these were struggles over the consumption of imported maize meal instead of locally grown sorghum and millet. Imported processed maize from Kenya and Uganda was widely available in markets and single shops. Many who could afford to were buying it. Younger married women favoured it because it was much less labour-intensive to prepare. Sorghum grown in fields had to be laboriously prepared: first threshed (*köm*), the stalks removed and the grains and husks collected (*ayiel rap*), then winnowed (*wiüu rap*) then pounded (*yoŋ*) and ground to make flour. Whereas imported maize is bought ready to cook. Some of these young women had spent time in Wau (or even Juba and East Africa) and they were used to the taste. Older people, who had spent their whole lives eating homegrown grains, were reluctant. They preferred the taste and texture of the homegrown, 'stronger' grains and resented what they saw as laziness in food preparation and the additional expense. In one household I regularly visited near to Yiik Adoor a woman and her daughter-in-law were in serious dispute about the type of grain cooked. It had reached the extent where the older woman was refusing to eat when imported maize was prepared. The older women also refused the home grown maize ground in a mill in the nearby market, insisting that it was still inferior because it was not properly sifted.



Image 45: Girls threshing sorghum in Cueicok 21.02.2014

The cooking of food itself was also a way in which ideas about *baai* and rural life were debated. Particular kinds of food and methods of preparing food allowed the moral sphere of *baai* to be maintained, and held separately from the market, the town and beyond.

#### MARRIAGE AS A FRONTIER

Marriage is a particularly important frontier of *baai*. It captures how *baai* is not just a physical space, but a part of individual biographical pathways and family history. Marriage is the point at which a home is established. To emphasize this point, a retired government official said to me in Luonyaker, ‘marriage is started in the cattle-camp, but it is finished in the village.’<sup>76</sup> This is a rather idealized way of looking at it, but still, *baai* remains the place where marriages are formalized, regardless of how much say young people may have in this or where they live in Warrap, Juba or beyond. For many people the pathway to marriage was much more complicated than simply progressing from the cattle-camp to the village. Those who had been displaced or travelled outside of Gogrial during the war had only the faintest memory of life in the cattle-camp or the village. For them, negotiating marriage and a stake in *baai* had different complications. I caught parts of the discussion over one young man’s marriage in Cueicok. His name was Wek and he was trying to get permission to marry the daughter of an SPLA commander whom he had met in Yei (in Central Equatoria State). His problems formalizing the marriage, which I will explain below, highlight the importance of marriage in creating a home and having a stake in *baai*.<sup>77</sup> They also reveal the emerging issues around marriage and the moral frontiers of *baai* in a context of increasingly expanded national and transnational life trajectories.

Wek’s late father, Akok, was from Cueicok and all his paternal relations live there. His mother is from Luonyaker. His father, an SPLA commander, had died after a short illness in 2010 and his mother currently lived in their home in Yei. Years ago, as a young man, Wek’s father had fallen out with the family and, in essence, cut his ties with

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<sup>76</sup> Interview Deng Mayuot 12.06.2012, Cueicok.

<sup>77</sup> This account is based on interviews and conversations with Wek and various paternal relations in Cueicok, February 2012.

Cueicok for a number of years. He had left the village and become a successful trader living in Wau and even Khartoum. Wek once showed me a precious black and white photograph of his father from this period, clean shaven and shirted, taken in Wau. At some point Akok joined the southern rebel movement and rose to a senior rank in the SPLA. In the 1970s or 1980s, he reconciled with the family and bought thirty cows, which he distributed among them. Despite the sincerity of this reconciliation, he did not settle in the village and did not establish a home and cultivate there. There was a piece of land in the village that notionally belonged to Akok but as he was not resident there, Wek's paternal aunt settled on his piece of land. Akok kept his family where he was stationed in Yei. This was common; many SPLA families from across South Sudan settled in parts of Equatoria, and soldiers often brought their wives and children with them. There was at least one other home in Cueicok which had been abandoned for this reason.

Wek therefore grew up in Yei and Uganda. In 2010 he had moved to Warrap, living between family homes in Wau, Cueicok, Luonyaker and Kuajok. Wek was desperate to marry a childhood sweetheart, a girl he had met in Yei. She was the daughter of another SPLA commander stationed there. Her family came from an area north of Gogrial. While visiting his mother in Yei over Christmas 2011 Wek had 'eloped' her and moved her into his mother's house there. This kind of 'elopement' is a radical, but relatively common strategy young men can use to force the issue of their marriage to be resolved in the family.

In early January 2012, Wek returned to Cueicok wishing to formalize the elopement into marriage. He was to collect his father's cattle and the contributions from his relatives for bridewealth to be given to his would-be in-laws. He went first to his uncle, his father's eldest brother (who had responsibility for Wek since his father died) to ask for support. Initially it looked like the family's support would be forthcoming. But they quickly reconsidered, and decided they were *not* in favour of the marriage. Various objections over the process had been voiced. One of the main objections was that he had not brought his potential wife to the village. 'How can we support the marriage of a girl we have not even seen?' some relatives asked.

As negotiations progressed many deeper problems came out of the woodwork. Wek's uncle, Akok's eldest brother, had several objections to the marriage. He explained these to me one evening. One of the major issues was Wek's ability to support his family and take on the responsibilities of his father. As the eldest son of his father, Wek was expected to take care of his father's wives and his brothers and sisters after his death. But Wek did not have a place in the village or an area to cultivate to provide food for the family. He did not have another source of income to support his wife, let alone his father's dependents. Wek's uncle stressed that the problem was not cattle. The family had enough cattle for him to marry; it was an issue of not having the village home and not having a place to cultivate.

Although his uncle had told me that cattle were not the problem, cattle were causing a problem for Wek. He knew that his father had had a reasonably sized herd. He began to think that by making good his claim on his father's cattle he could bypass the obstructions of his older relatives. But when he asked another paternal uncle about the whereabouts of the cattle, he was told that only five remained; the rest had died or had been stolen. However, a short time later some of his cousins (who looked after the cattle) informed him that this uncle had lied to him and there were at least forty heads of cattle he had a right to claim. Claiming these cattle was not simple. As it was the dry season, the cattle were in a number of different locations in the *toc* and so he had no way of verifying their numbers. In addition, he faced another agonizing problem that he did not know the colours of the cattle, so he had no way of identifying them even if he could have located them. He was at the mercy of others, and felt powerless and angry by this realization. Although he *theoretically* had access to his father's herd, in practice he could not overcome his uncle's obstructions and his own lack of physical connection to the herd. This marriage problem was not just a question of owning cattle, as marriage problems for young men are often reduced to in analyses of South Sudan.<sup>78</sup> Cattle are part of a wider system of social relations and obligations and his senior relatives would not budge from the position that as Wek was in no position to establish his home in the village, they would not support his marriage.

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<sup>78</sup> Marc Sommers and Stephanie Schwartz, *Dowry and Division: Youth and State Building in South Sudan* (Washington DC: USIP, 2011), 4.

Many different things appeared to be conspiring against Wek to make his situation seem particularly difficult. His father, having left the village had meant that Wek himself did have to work hard to integrate himself into his rural family network, being partially an outsider himself. His father's absence also meant that his aunt had taken over the house, because, in another twist of fate she and her husband had not had children they had no other house to move into. Her husband was from an area in *toc* which had been experiencing insecurity so they were not able to go back to his home area, further tying them to the land Wek considered his father's, and rightfully his. This situation was ultimately intractable.

This story exposes how crucial the home is, how non-negotiable a stake in *baai* is to establishing a home and a family. The post-CPA realities of South Sudan are forcing the frontiers of *baai* to be continually renegotiated as people return and try to enact their claims to be part of a rural community. *Baai* is treated as the centre of the family and this is why it continues to be the focus of marriage disputes, even for people who have spent their whole lives in other parts of the country or abroad.

This story also demonstrates another important characteristic of *baai*: that authority in Cueicok resides primarily with older men in the family who are invested in upholding the sanctity of *baai* as a place of unchanging cultural tradition. Controlling Wek's marriage was a way of trying to uphold this authority. Of course, things were changing: the authority of older men was being challenged by the existence sources of power, such as the government and the military. For example, under some circumstances during the civil war, SPLA commanders contributed cattle to allow soldiers to marry, casting themselves in the role of fathers to their troops and establishing, it has been claimed, a new kind of kinship network.<sup>79</sup> Wek was not able to tap his father's military network and was reliant on his own kinship network to cement his marriage claims – his older family members were the ones who determined his ability for marriage. Nonetheless, the rise of military authorities, market economies and other transformations are being debated in and through *baai* – a moral idea that is as dynamic and connected to broader political and economic changes as it is reified as an idealized sphere of rural tradition. Holding on to

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<sup>79</sup> Clemence Pinaud, "South Sudan: Civil War, Predation and the Making of a Military Aristocracy," *African Affairs* 113, no. 451 (2014): 202–204.

the idea of *baai* as a moral centre of society is part of an idea of cultural survival that is, or has become, political in the context of civil war.

#### BAAI AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE

This final part of the chapter considers some further implications of the way that *baai* is imagined. Because *baai* is a powerful moral idea as well as a place, it has also been transposed politically. *Baai*, its plural possessive *Baai panda* (our home) and the more overtly politicised expressions *Panda Janub*, *Baai Janub*, *Baai Panda Janub* - all of which mean 'our homeland the South' are common in official and political rhetoric as well as in popular culture and everyday conversation. In 2011-2012, 'development' in both a local and national sense was often translated into Dinka as *guir baai*.<sup>80</sup> *Baai* provides a way of expressing the nation and political identification with the state. This evolving meaning of *baai* is part of a political discourse that developed during recent periods of war, displacement and political change. But it has older precedents; even under colonialism, the official work of 'governing the country' was expressed as *mac baai*.<sup>81</sup>

That it is *baai*, rather than *wut*, which is being used to imagine the nation raises many questions; it reveals the limitations of Lienhardt's definition of *wut* as the most important political community; it touches on the points I raised in the introduction about the connection between people and land that is central to how history and the landscape are discussed. So why is the nation identified with *baai*? Is it because *baai*, being a place of permanent settlement, is closer to the territorialized definition of a nation state? Possibly in part, but more significant is that *baai* is a moral site, embodying an idealized 'correct' way of being (*cieng baai*) and because as well as being a physical place *baai* also means that to which one is intimately and indelibly connected. This is what was being expressed when both politicians and rural people spoke of *Baai Panda Janub*.

It is not hard to see how 'home' could become politicized in the context of civil war in which whole villages were burnt to the ground and millions of people were displaced

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<sup>80</sup> *Guir* (vb) - to organize or to put in order,

<sup>81</sup> *Mac* literally to tether, restrain or imprison, Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Sudan: Aspects of the South Government among Some of the Nilotic Peoples, 1947-1952," *Bulletin (British Society of Middle Eastern Studies)* 9, no. 1 (1982): 28.



from their natal homes.<sup>82</sup> A sentiment of deep connection to *baai* has been infused with strong associations of liberation war, nationalism and independence. The political resonance of *baai* can be seen in frequent references in popular music dealing with civil war (a common theme in Dinka language popular music), which reflect and invoke the emotional connotation of *baai*. A famous female Dinka language artist, the late Nyankol Mathiang, is well known for her songs urging people to keep struggling in the face of ongoing conflict says, in spite of everything:

*Mony toy bi doŋ bi lok aŋuot thaar,*  
*Tiy bi doŋ bi aŋuot lok dhieth*  
*Ku manb bi dhieth bi aŋuot baai luel.*  
 The man who remains will still fight,  
 The woman who remains will still beget a child  
 And the child that will be born will still defend his home.<sup>83</sup>

In another song, she sings about the need to improve and help *baaida* – ‘our home’, despite the tragedies of civil war. She asks, rhetorically, what Southerners will to do in order to ensure the prosperity of South Sudan and its people:

*Dööt ku baaida, baai ke wuor - oh.*  
*Mith Sudanda buk loi ke de?*  
*Mith pandan col, buk loi ke de?*  
*Mith dhieth riakic, ku ber ku dit riakic....*  
 Let us reach our homeland, the homeland is going.  
 Children of our Sudan, how will we do it?  
 Children of our black homeland (*pandan col*), how will we do it?  
 Our children were born in war, and grew up in war...<sup>84</sup>

The music group ‘Akut Kuei’, which formed during the SPLA war and are known for very meaningful and galvanizing lyrics, also invoke the emotional connection of *baai* in their songs.<sup>85</sup> In this example they draw southerners together as ‘*mith ë baai*’ - children of the homeland. They unify and contrast *baai* against the Islamist Regime and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF):

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<sup>82</sup> For examples see Human Rights Watch, *Civilian Devastation: Abuses by All Parties in the War in Southern Sudan* (New York, 1994), 70–73.

<sup>83</sup> Nyankol Mathiang Dut, ‘*Junub Sudan ku yen akin arum*’ (‘South Sudan is being invaded’) c.2000? Translated with Peter Mayen Nyuar, Rumbek, Sept 2011

<sup>84</sup> Nyankol Mathiang Dut, ‘*Dööt ku baai*’ (‘Let us reach home’) date unknown. Translated with Peter Mayen Nyuar, Rumbek Sept 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Akut Kuei means ‘the army of the fish eagle’.

*Ku dēt ye yīn ya mǎc yābndu,  
Yābnduun ye yīn ke pīny yuoc,  
Aci mith ē baai maan.*

And you had the nerve to force your religion on to us,  
This religion of yours for which you smell the ground.  
This has angered the children of the homeland.<sup>86</sup>

The transposition of *baai* on to nation was made very clear on the day that President Salva Kiir came on an official visit to Kuajok in 2011. Some young men in the house where I was staying had an animated discussion with their English teacher (a Dinka from Bor) over whether the president could be called ‘*mony baai*.’ Was this not the Dinka translation of ‘Father of the nation?’; the teacher asked the students.<sup>87</sup> A song, recorded in 2011 for Impey *et al*’s study of traditional Dinka music, by the well known Gogrial composer, Deng Kuot Thieec also uses *baai* in this way and it has been translated as ‘nation’ by the team of Dinka translators who worked on the project. The song is warning the political leaders to govern South Sudan well, not to ‘mishandle the nation (*baai*)’:

*Kecke tij? Kecke tij?  
Naa benke kuoc loi  
Yen baai ka ŋuot ke bak piŋ  
Aŋot e bak guo tij we nyiin  
Nbialic acee abeel*

Have you not seen it? Have you not seen it?  
If you mishandle the nation once again,  
Then you will see  
You will see it with your own eyes  
God sees everything.<sup>88</sup>

This song also discusses ‘the nation’s forces’, which is interesting considering Lienhardt’s insistence of the non-military significance of *baai*. It indicates that it has become possible to think of the political-military-moral connotations of *baai* in more radical ways:

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<sup>86</sup> Akut Kuei, ‘*Duk Ben la Wel Wel*’ (‘Don’t be Anxious’). c.1990s I am grateful to Stephanie Riak Akuei for her recording and translation of this song (which she heard sung and recorded in Cairo).

<sup>87</sup> Fieldnotes Kuajok 31.10.2011. *Mony baai* is also used to mean ‘the man of the house’ in an ordinary sense.

<sup>88</sup> Angela Impey, *Songs of the Dinka of South Sudan* (London: SOAS, 2012), track 2.

*Ken akut e baai*  
*Jundi ku bolith*  
*Aamac caap e ganun*  
The nation's forces  
The military and the police  
Guard the law<sup>89</sup>

The conflation of *baai* and nation tells us something important about the construction of peripherality. Places like Gogrial, and its rural areas in particular, are usually seen as being peripheral to the state. But here is an idiom of the nation-state that is actually modeled on the rural community. *Baai panda Janub* is ultimately a centralising discourse that is only possible if one believes that one is part of the state. It also raises an important question: is the state actually central in people's lives and constructions of history, or is it subservient to the moral and genealogical intersections at the heart of *baai*? The answer that is emerging in this thesis is that while many people in Gogrial do consider themselves to be part of the state and the nation they are discerning about the terms on which they will accept its presence in their lives. The state is seen as useful and important, but it is still subsumed by local moral centres.

## CONCLUSION

Deng Kuac was not alone in searching for poetic and moral meaning in establishing *baai*. *Baai* is a centre and the intersection of pathways. Despite its significance, *baai* has been overlooked in previous analyses, which have focused on military organization as the defining principle of Dinka society.

Through *baai*, I have also argued that the construction of a moral landscape is central to how historical change experienced. *Baai* is maintained as a separate moral centre, even though its frontiers as an imagined and idealized past are being increasingly destabilised: as the market spreads, as more imported food items and wage labour became available, as family members returned from wartime displacement and as different forms of governmental and military authority potentially challenge the position of senior men. Energy is invested in maintaining this separate sphere because people draw on *baai* as a moral resource.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

The moral power of *baai* has also meant it proved a potent political idea. This took on huge emotive power during the last war as rural areas and people's homes fell victim to brutal military and paramilitary attacks. The war was articulated as a struggle for the land, the homeland and the nation – '*Baai Panda Janub*'. The conflation of home and nation in this context also underlines the point that people create their own centre. It implies, that rather than seeing themselves as simply 'peripheral', rural people are actually modeling their construction of the nation on their own moral centres.

The next chapter will take the political meaning of the destruction of homeland further by looking at rebuilding and memorialization in the town of Gogrial, which became an embattled military garrison during the last civil war (1983-2005). It draws out themes from the latter part of this chapter and chapter 3 to consider how people rebuild and resocialized a centre which had been destroyed during war and how the difficult memories of this period were negotiated through the reconstruction process.

## 6 Visible and Invisible Memories

*Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon maadit, Apet Anyuon Joktiam ka ci pec Jur Abdel Manyiel lei  
Jur alei bambe, ka ŋuot buk yok.*

Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon my grandmother, Apet Anyuon Joktiam was captured by  
'Jur of Abdel Manyiel', the enemy 'Jur of the sweet potato' and we are still to find her.

*Yenja raan yok yen? Ce Wol Alei kek Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'?*

Who will find her? Will it be Wol Alei and Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'?

*Aye Marial thiec, lor de ee?*

Marial was asking – where are you going?

*Ku meth akec cak riel maadit men aabi ok ka ci roukic wun Denɗit, ce wun Denɗi ku Marial  
Aguok, ce wun Denɗi ku jal aa Marial Aguok kek Denɗi Thianbek.*

And the child is not yet strong; then my grandmother was found in the slaving fort in  
the place of Deng and Marial Aguok.

*Yenja raan yok yen? Ce Wol Alei kek Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'?*

Who will find her? Will it be Wol Alei and Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'?

*Aye Marial thiec, lor de ee? Ku meth akec cak riel.*

Marial was asking – where are you going? The child is not yet strong.

*Be riel bi kuc na men dier yen ke lor, wut Malek, wut Malek Adoor, ka ba puol guop yen ci  
Jur Arab col ajal ke yen kua cin raan dok nbom.*

The child is not yet strong and he is at the big dance of the people of Malek: Malek  
Adoor. It is bad that Arabs were here and no one intervened.

*Yenja raan dok yen? Marial Denɗi 'Wutjek' keyen ce dok nbom.*

Who will intervene to help her? It was Marial Deng Wutjek who intervened.

*Wol Alei kek Denɗi Baak ke war yen ku raan aci waar weɗ tok.*

Wol Alei and Deng Baak went and exchanged one cow for her.

*Wol Alei kek Denɗi Baak ke war yen ku raan aci waar weɗ ka rou.*

Wol Alei and Deng Baak went and exchanged two cows for her.

*Wol Alei kek Denɗi Baak ke war yen ku raan aci waar weɗ ka diak.*

Wol Alei and Deng Baak went and exchanged three cows for her.

*Ku raan aci waar weɗ ka ŋuan.*

And they exchanged four cows for her.

This section of the song takes a historical pathway. Deng describes the capturing of his ‘grandmother’, Apet Anyuon, the woman who had established her home in Tuong (see page 156-157). Apet was taken to a slave fort in the vicinity of present day Gogrial town. It is clear that Deng is locating the events in Gogrial town because he refers to ‘*Jur Abdel Manyiel*’ – the foreigners/Arabs of Abdel Manyiel. Abdel Manyiel is the Dinka-ised name of an infamous Arab slave trader, who had a *zeriba* at Wun Toor, just outside of what would become Gogrial Town, in the nineteenth century. Apet Anyuon was the daughter of a powerful Pagong *beny bith* from Yiik Adoor, Anyuon Deng, after whom the cattle camp Wutdom was named (see page 119-120). Apet Anyuon was also the mother of Deng’s grandfather, Chol. The implication is that the young child of Apet’s mentioned in the song is Deng’s grandfather. This extract tells how Apet was rescued by Deng’s great-grandfather, Deng Baak, whom she later married, and by his friend Wol Alei.

Kinship and the socially constructive properties of cattle are signified in the four cows that freed Apet. These were initially paid by Anyuon Deng, her father, but the debt was later repaid by Deng Baak when he married her. As the rescue involved the exchange of cattle, both with the slavers and within the family, it intimately incorporates the rescue into a history of kin relationships. By singing about this, Deng poetically constructs intersecting pathways of kinship, historical experience and memory.

In this extract Deng uses the present tense to narrate events that happened in the past. This fusion of tense is common in Dinka songs. It is a device which Francis Deng suggests artistically dramatizes and infuses past events with continual significance, keeping the past in a permanent dialogue with the present: ensuring that the dead are perpetually close and remembered.<sup>1</sup> Temporal dexterity works at various different layers in Deng’s song. He narrates historical events that are important in his family history, while the references to the slave trade hold a wider importance in historical memory of Gogrial, and invoke slavery as central rupture in the national historical narrative of South Sudan. As well as working ‘historically’, this narrative also reinforces social relationships and identities that are important in Deng’s present. The people mentioned in this abstract; Deng Baak and Wol Alei, who rescued Apet Anyuon, are important figures in Deng’s life. Deng Baak is Deng’s great-grandfather (who married Apet); the home they built is still today considered his family’s ancestral home. Wol Alei’s great-grandson is a close friend of Deng.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 88.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

The historical pathways traced in Deng's song inspire this chapter. My analysis moves from the violence perpetrated against Apet Anyuon in Gogrial to examine sites of political violence and the material practices of memorialization and reconstruction that were associated with them in 2011-2012.

One of the overarching questions this thesis asks is how chronic conflict is negotiated in and through the landscape. This chapter addresses this question by looking closely at sites in Gogrial Town. The town provides a rich body of evidence because it has experienced periodic destructions (*riäk*) over the last 150 years. In chapter 3, I explained that its original settlement is associated with the curse that all bad things would end up in Gogrial. Through the figure of Abdel Manyiel it is associated with the predatory commercial extraction of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Gogrial's incorporation into the British colonial administration was similarly violent: what would become Gogrial Town was first a military post in the Ariathdit patrol, then an administrative centre. It was a site of violence during the first civil war and again a locus of conflict, counter-insurgency and famine during the second civil war.

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<sup>2</sup> A version of this chapter was presented at the Horn of Africa seminar at Oxford University on 18.02.2014. I am grateful for the helpful comments I received, especially from Katie Hickerson, Jeremy Coote and Øystein Rolandsen.

<sup>3</sup> There is a query over exactly who 'Abdel Manyiel' was. 'Abdel Manyiel' is a Dinkarised version of another name. There is consistent mention of him, or a similar character, in oral and documentary sources. In Warrap in 2011-2012 he was described as a slaver. This is also how Jacob Akol describes 'Abdalla Manyiel' in his autobiography. (See Jacob J Akol, *I Will Go the Distance: The Story of a "Lost" Sudanese Boy of the Sixties* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2005), 56.) The 'History of the Gogrial area Dinka' (PRM GL Box 1/3) compiled by DC Hunter on the basis of information given by Kuanyin Agoth and Giir Thiik in 1948, does not record the name 'Abdel Manyiel'. However, a *zeriba* that was established in Wun Toor, (very near Gogrial) is mentioned. Wun Toor and Bundiir (to the west) are the *zara'ib* associated with Abdel Manyiel in the oral accounts that I collected. Hunter estimated the date the Wuntoor *zeriba* was established as 1882, the very beginning of the Mahdist period. Hunter's 'History of Gogrial' also records (elusively) that in 1883 somebody called 'Bol Nyiwol' and 'an emissary of the Mahdi' wiped out the *zeriba* at Wun Toor and the 'Dongolau' (the Northern traders) began to withdraw from the area in 1883 (date approximate). Jacob Akol records that there are oral historical accounts in Gogrial that Abdel Manyiel was killed when a joint force of Apuk and Aguok Dinka stormed his *zara'ib* at Wuntoor and Bundiir. After his death, it is said he was cut open and a catfish was found in his stomach. (See Johnson, Douglas H, *South Sudan's Past Notes and Records* (Pioneer Professional Publishers, Forthcoming).) Titherington's ethnographic article on the Gogrial area published in 1927 mentions an incident when a *zeriba* in the area was attacked: 'There are a few old Arab grandmothers who were girls when Abu Miriam's *zariba* [sic] was rushed by a herd of cattle driven in front of warriors.' (G.W Titherington, "The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province," *Sudan Notes and Records* 10 (1927): 177-178.) It could be that 'Abdel Manyiel' was really 'Abu Miriam.'

My analysis here builds on the previous chapters to show how memorialization and reconstruction in this town fit into a wider cultural repertoire of mediating instability through the landscape. A particular point on which it builds is the two-way conversion between *roor* (wild forest) and *baai* as both a response to and way of mediating the experience of chronic conflict. It also highlights the importance of centrality as a moral and political idea and how creating a home is also creating a centre. As a town, Gogrial is not *baai* in the sense of the rural village, but participation in building the town shows how *baai* as a moral idea – a place to which one is intimately and indelibly connected – can be deployed as a political idea. Gogrial Town, as the market and administrative centre has been an important node in the landscape. The rebuilding of this town also shows that certain people in Gogrial have sought to tap the powers of the government, while retaining their own moral claims on the landscape.

The argument that will be developed here is that sites associated with different kinds of violence are being dealt with differently: by rendering the memory of that violence either *visible* or *invisible*. These strategies of maintaining or obscuring visibility shape the historical pathways that intersect the landscape of Gogrial town. Like the story of Apet Anyuon's capture in Deng's song, these strategies reveal complicated interactions between the national historical narrative and the local memory. These points will be shown through three examples. I will first discuss a recently constructed memorial at a place called Lol Nyiel, on the outskirts of Gogrial town. It commemorates a massacre of civilians that took place in 1964, at the beginning of the first civil war. The second is rebuilding the town of Gogrial itself, which was almost entirely destroyed during the second civil war. Thirdly, within the rebuilding of the town, I will specifically consider how the site of a military base belonging to a particularly destructive warlord and 'liberation hero' called Kerubino Kuanyin Bol is now being treated. In the first case, I will argue that building the memorial can be understood as an attempt to restore and reclaim *sight* at a place of violence. The memorial works to make the loss of these members of the community *explicit*. This contrasts with other aspects of rebuilding Gogrial town – particularly at Kerubino Kuanyin's old base, which attempt to undo the traces of violence by *re-constructing* what was destroyed during the war: creating *invisibility*. Of course this is not completely possible and the project to reclaim sites of violence remains incomplete and ambiguous.



The Gogrial town case speaks to several important theoretical issues in the study of memory and memorialization in post-colonial Africa (and more broadly). I will use the idea of creating visibility and invisibility in the landscape of the town to show how certain aspects of history were being remembered and others were being forgotten. It is widely established that memory is partially constituted by forgetting: what is forgotten shapes individual and collective memory.<sup>4</sup> Gogrial Town provides very clear examples of how selective remembering was actually being inscribed into the landscape of the town itself, following civil wars.

It has been widely observed that there is a politics of memory; memorialization can be a way for the state to assert the legitimacy of its own narrative of history.<sup>5</sup> Much of the theorizing on this draws on European examples of commemorating mass-atrocity, but it is also true of African states, and recent work showing how Rwandan memorials fix the state narrative of genocide has powerfully made this point.<sup>6</sup> A particular characteristic of post-colonial African states is what Richard Werbner describes as a post-liberation struggle pattern of ‘elite memorialization’. In this the liberation ‘heroes’ of the nation are glorified, and the ordinary people, who also gave their lives, are not memorialized by the state; instead it is left to their communities and families to bury and remember them.<sup>7</sup> The process of selecting and memorializing these heroes can be, as it was in Zimbabwe highly controversial and destabilizing because of diverging views over who is a national hero (and who should decide).<sup>8</sup>

Unlike Zimbabwe and Rwanda, The Government of South Sudan does not (yet) have an official programme of memorialization of the civil wars. However, the Mausoleum of the

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<sup>4</sup> Adrian Forty, “Introduction,” in *The Art of Forgetting*, by Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuechler (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> Meirehenrich Jens, “Topographies of Remembering and Forgetting: The Transformation of Lieux de Memoire in Rwanda,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, ed. Lars Waldorf and Scott Straus (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Werbner, “Smoke From the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe,” in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Norma Kriger, “The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity,” in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995), 139–140.

late SPLA leader, John Garang in Juba has emerged as the central shrine of the nation, where official celebrations and speeches take place on Independence Day and other major public holidays as respects are paid to the nation's founding martyr. By considering acts of memorialization that take place in a small town on a 'periphery' of the state, rather than close to the centre of power in Juba, this chapter provides an opportunity to see some of the dissonance between state and local priorities over forgetting.

This particular South Sudanese case appears to be very different from some parts of Zimbabwe, like Matabeleland, where the state has sought to silence alternative memories, and public memorialization has been difficult or dangerous.<sup>9</sup> Although the people leading the memorializing practices in Gogrial Town are part of a local elite and employed in the government, these are not straightforward state-orchestrated sites of memory. One important aspect of the town's rebuilding - the 'invisibilizing' of Kerubino Kuanyin Bol, is actively in tension with the state's 'elite memorialization' of war heroes. The memorial at Lol Nyiel is an example of locally instigated 'non-state remembrance' that roughly aligns with the state's narrative of history but which articulates very local concerns about the massacre.<sup>10</sup> Thus Gogrial Town provides a platform to see how outside of the state capital and in the absence of a state programme of memorialization, local community leaders are inscribing different topographies of memory and forgetting onto the landscape.

#### MAKING THE INVISIBLE, VISIBLE: MEMORIAL AT LOL NYIEL

On the outskirts of Gogrial, beyond the *Medicins Sans Frontiers* hospital on the road to Kuajok, at a place called Lol Nyiel, a memorial is being built. It commemorates the mass execution of civilians, carried out by the police in Gogrial Town during the escalation of Sudan's first civil war in October 1964. Like so many atrocities in South Sudan's history, this event is almost entirely invisible in its written history, and there is only a sparse

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<sup>9</sup> Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor, and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: 100 Years in the "Dark Forests" of Matabeleland* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2000), 8–9.

<sup>10</sup> This refers to memorials that have been constructed by local communities, rather than part of a state programme. There are some regional parallels, for example a community built memorial to the 1996 Aboke Girls School LRA attack in Northern Uganda, in which 139 school girls were abducted, see John Daniel Giblin, "Post-Conflict Heritage: Symbolic Healing and Cultural Renewal," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2013, 10.

documentary record of it. However, it is very much alive in local memory in Gogrial and a small group of educated local elites is leading the efforts to build a memorial to commemorate the dead.<sup>11</sup> The driving force behind the project is a man called Nyan Geng (currently the speaker of the local council of Gogrial), whose uncle was among those killed in 1964. In what follows I will argue that building the memorial is an attempt to make the brutal events of 1964 explicit: building the memorial is an act of reinstating visibility at, and reclaiming the site of, the massacre. This interpretation is consistent with narratives of the massacre told by the memorial builders, which narrate the physical and symbolic destruction of sight and visibility that they are now seeking to reverse through memorialization.

#### THE FIRST CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN

The 1964 Lol Nyiel killings occurred just after the outbreak of civil war in Southern Sudan. The first civil war is usually dated from 18 August 1955, when a mutiny broke out at Torit army barracks, where many Southern troops in the Equatorial Corps were stationed. It spread to other garrison towns in the South and several hundred people, mostly Northerners, were killed.<sup>12</sup> Rolandsen has argued that although the period between 1955 and 1963 was a period of deepening violence and uncertainty in the South, it was not yet civil war.<sup>13</sup>

In 1958 a bloodless military coup brought in the rule of Gen. Ibrahim Abboud, who intensified an existing programme of ‘Arabization/Islamization’. The aim was to deal with insecurity in the South by bringing the South culturally and politically closer to the North.<sup>14</sup> These policies were widely viewed by the educated Southern literate elite as an attack on themselves.<sup>15</sup> The military government rapidly increased the appointment of

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<sup>11</sup> By ‘local elites’ I mean those people who are colloquially referred to as ‘intellectuals’, who are educated and have jobs in the state government or NGO sector.

<sup>12</sup> Scopas S. Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 42. This was the time when Deng had joked about his uncle/Lienhardt’s assistant becoming de facto Governor of Bahr el Ghazal. (see intro)

<sup>13</sup> Øystein Rolandsen, “Civil War Society?: Political Processes, Social Groups and Conflict Intensity in the Southern Sudan, 1955-2005” (University of Oslo, 2010), 107. Øystein Rolandsen, “A False Start: Between War and Peace in The Southern Sudan, 1956-62,” *Journal of African History* 52 (2011): 105–23.

<sup>14</sup> Rolandsen, “Civil War Society?” 146–147.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

Northern officials to the South. This increased tension and appeared to confirm existing Southern fears of Northern 'colonization'.<sup>16</sup> The official rest day was switched from Sunday to Friday in 1960, mosques were built in Southern towns and the language of instruction in schools was switched from English to Arabic. Conditions in schools deteriorated as restrictions were placed on missionaries (of whom the government were suspicious) through the Mission Societies Act 1962. This caused protests in schools where many students went on strike and on some occasions government troops were sent in and students were beaten and jailed.<sup>17</sup> In August 1963, on the anniversary of the Torit Mutiny, an armed group calling itself 'Anya-Nya' (meaning a type of snake venom in Madi language) announced itself as the 'national liberation army of the Southern Sudanese'.<sup>18</sup> Their weapons were basic; spears, machetes and Molotov cocktails, but they had successes against the army.<sup>19</sup> With the emergence of the Anya-Nya force a fullscale conflict engulfed the region during the end of 1963 and beginning of 1964.

If the attack and massacre of 1964 are understood to have happened at the beginning, rather than in the middle of a civil war, they can be understood as a much greater rupture. This was in a real sense the beginning of civil war in Gogrial. The first major insurgent activity in Bahr el Ghazal Province happened on 11 January 1964, when there was an Anya-Nya attack on Wau led by the missionary educated Anya-Nya commander, Bernedino Mou, with 123 uniformed fighters. The attack was unsuccessful: Mou and sixty of his troops were captured and he was killed.<sup>20</sup> At the end of February 1964, Abboud expelled all remaining foreign missionaries from the South, accusing them of stirring unrest.<sup>21</sup> The army presence in the South was also increased to over 8,000.<sup>22</sup> On the 30 October 1964 (just days after the Lol Nyiel massacre, but not directly connected), Abboud was removed from power.<sup>23</sup> Failure to deal with the security situation in the

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<sup>16</sup> P.M Holt and M.W Daly, *A History of The Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 4th Edition (London: Longman, 1988), 178.

<sup>17</sup> Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955-1972*, 97.

<sup>18</sup> Rolandsen, "Civil War Society?" 161. Citing SSNA ZD/SCR/36.B.1/vol.1 Zande District.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 162-163.

<sup>20</sup> Edgar O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan: 1955-1972* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 60. Rolandsen, "Civil War Society?" 132.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 139.

<sup>22</sup> O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan*, 62.

<sup>23</sup> Holt and Daly, *A History of The Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present Day*, 182.

South was a large part of the reason. Violence in the South would increase during the subsequent government of Mahjoub, as the army took more extreme measures to repress an increasingly coordinated rebellion.<sup>24</sup>

#### MASSACRE AT LOL NYIEL

There is very little mention of the events at Lol Nyiel in the documentary historical record. The sparse primary and secondary documentation of the massacre survives only in relation to a tour of the South made in December 1964 by the then Minister of the Interior, Clement Mboro. Mboro, a member of the Southern Front Party, was the first Southern Minister and was from Bahr-el-Ghazal himself. He encountered accounts of state sponsored violence in the rural areas of the South, including Lol Nyiel.<sup>25</sup> Bona Malwal writes that when Mboro reached Gogrial:

He was met very significantly by the crowd outside the town on the spot where a Northern police officer had a few months earlier bundled up more than fifty persons onto a heap, sprayed them with petrol and set them on fire alive while a number of tribal leaders he wanted to scare by this act were forced at gunpoint to stand by and watch their relatives burn.<sup>26</sup>

The only archival source on Lol Nyiel I have found is the text of a speech by a member of the Southern Front party, read to Clement Mboro on this visit. It is concerned with the recent massacre and the deterioration of security in the South. It gives this description of the October events:

Our town is small in size but big in name. What happened here and in the rural area will need volumes. We learnt many bitter lessons. Once we were blind but now we see.... What was done here? Fellow citizens were arrested and many foul games were played upon them. The well-known 'cubic metre' on the road you came [past Lol Nyiel] is not only a living memory in our minds, but a haunting one. It was just the beginning of the extinction method by the Hitlerite regime, since it happened during broad daylight for all to see. May God have mercy upon their souls. Women and girls were raped before their husbands and fathers in the native lodging area and the rural areas, even in custody beautiful women were raped and lashed. Both public and private properties were looted,

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<sup>24</sup> Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, 143–144.

<sup>25</sup> Also shown to Mboro was a site in Kodok in Upper Nile where teachers were killed and a site in Arini, near Akobo, 45 men were massacred by the army and their bodies left unburied Mansour Khalid, *The Government They Deserve* (London: Kegan Paul, 1990), 192.

<sup>26</sup> Bona Malwal, *People and Power in Sudan: The Struggle for National Stability* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 84.

houses and *dura* [sorghum] burnt. All this had official blessing in the name of restoring law and order by the so-called brothers. We wonder?<sup>27</sup>

The ‘cubic metre’ he describes is also repeated in later oral accounts. It refers to the bodies of the dead, made into a very visible, macabre structure at Lol Nyiel. In this speech there is an interesting precursor to the idea of the salience of visibility that is important in the more recent accounts of the massacre. The speaker emotively describes (drawing on religious imagery) how the massacre made them see the reality of the war.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the texts cited above being the only primary and secondary documentary accounts of the Lol Nyiel events, the massacre is significant in local memory in Gogrial. My understanding of the events has also been shaped by interviews about the memorial with people involved in its construction, other interviews in which the massacre was brought up by informants, informal conversations with English speaking people from Gogrial and interviews in Dinka with some people who were living near the memorial, which allowed me to acquire a broader understanding of local memory of 1964.<sup>29</sup>

The narrative of events, as I heard it in 2012, explains that about two months before Clement Mboro’s visit in December, around a hundred (or more) local people were rounded up by the police and taken to Gogrial Town prison. This is said to have been a violent crackdown by the police against the local (Dinka) population, to prevent them from supporting the Anya-Nya. There is a shared memory of the ferocity of the violence; descriptions of it consistently include people having their eyes pulled out and men being castrated, beaten and shot. All accounts state that the police were the perpetrators of this attack. This is plausible as the police force in the South at this time were highly militaristic in character and was often expected to participate in operations against the rebels during the first war.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> ACR A.85.26 ‘Speech delivered by Southern Front at Gogrial during the visit of Sayed Clement Mboro, Minister of Interior, December 1964.

<sup>28</sup> John 9:25 (King James Bible) ‘He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.’

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with residents at Lol Nyiel, 02.12.2011

<sup>30</sup> William Berridge, “Under the Shadow of the Regime: The Contradictions of Policing in Sudan, c.1924-1989” (University of Durham, 2011), 212–213.

Nyaŋ Geng, who organized the memorial to commemorate the Lol Nyiel killings, explained the events like this:

This thing happened around October 1964, a lot of people say it was on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October. Gogrial was a very small town; now it is much bigger, I don't know the extra number, but it is thousands [more] who are [now] resident of the town. One day, the police forces in Gogrial went out and arrested people, from 16 or 17 years of age, even some people who didn't know their age: they were arrested and taken to the police station where they were tortured. They were whipped, some had their eyes pulled out of the socket, some had 6 inch nails nailed into their heads, and some had their tongues cut off. It was very bad. After some days, they bundled them on lorries. They took them to the place where I built the memorial. Some had already arrived died [sic]: those who had 6 inch nails in their head, they had already died. Those who were still alive were shot at close range and they were piled up, one over another. They were left there for wild animals and birds. People were not able to bury them, because there were snipers all around. When they saw someone come to take the body of a loved one, they shot him or her. People failed to collect the bodies, until they ended up in that place. That is a very famous place: we call it 'Metre' What the meaning of 'metre' is - when they use a fire for burning bricks, they do it this way. One meter this way, and the other that, and the height, width and length. They stacked people this way. [i.e. as if they were building a furnace of firing bricks] They built poles, one here this way. And inside here they stuffed the bodies. Some heads were disappeared: there were others [laid] the other way. They reached this height of 1 metre and they left them there. I don't know why they did this.<sup>31</sup>

The 'metre' he described was also mentioned in the 1964 Southern Front speech, and the events at Lol Nyiel were sometimes described to me in English as 'the metre massacre'. A structure of bodies is a recurring motif across Gogrial, used to denote extreme cruelty. Lienhardt recorded stories of a cruel *bāny biṭh* who tried to build a luak out of human bodies.<sup>32</sup> Similar lore also circulates about Lual Ngor, an Apuk Dinka slaver in the nineteenth century, who is said to have made ghoulish constructions (possibly a *ẓeriba*) out of dead bodies. In this way the details of the Lol Nyiel executions evoke longer memories of violence in Gogrial.

Accounts describe ordinary townspeople being rounded up, apparently indiscriminately, and taken to the police station. The idea that those who were killed were not insurgents is echoed in a speech made (by an unnamed missionary education Southerner) to

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Nyaŋ Geng, Kuajok. 22.03.12

<sup>32</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 315. This appears to carry very different association from the Agar Dinka creation myth of a luak made out of people which Mawson suggests symbolizes the dependence of people on cattle. Andrew Mawson, "The Triumph of Life: Political Dispute and Religious Ceremonial Among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan" (University of Oxford, Darwin College, 1989), 130.

Clement Mboro at Kuajok. The speech describes the victims of the attack at several points as being ‘ignorant villagers’ – and asks the Government to investigate why ‘teachers, dressers, traders, students and other people in the market were put on a car and taken to be shot.’<sup>33</sup>

Bona Bek, a former schoolteacher from Gogrial, who was a child at the time, remembers helping people get away across the river in a boat he used for fishing. He said that people could hear the screams from the prison and they were trying to run away from the town.<sup>34</sup> His account differs from Nyaŋ’s slightly and it was the most detailed version I was given. He explained that after being beaten in the prison, the captives were taken out of Gogrial Town. They were supposed to be driven far out into the bush, but one man named Garang Tong (who had been blinded in the prison) shouted to the young people, ‘You youth, the place where we are being taken, this is our fate, but if any of you feel you can escape, leave us!’ A tobacco trader from Rumbek, on hearing this, tried to make a run for it. He was shot at by one of the police officers, but they missed and he escaped. At that point the captors panicked and decided to kill the captives there, by the side of the road. Bona Bek said that he was able to give this extra detail in the account because there was another man who escaped and was rescued by a relative of his who took him home and cared for him for two months in their village.<sup>35</sup> At Lol Nyiel, the other captives were unloaded, bundled on top of each other, tied together and killed.

#### OTHER HISTORIES OF THE MASSACRE

As I researched the 1964 events I began to see that they had wider importance in the history of Sudan and South Sudan than had been immediately apparent in Gogrial. Revealingly, I did not find out what had been the immediate trigger for the Lol Nyiel massacre until I returned to England. When I came to write about the material I realized that Nyaŋ and the others in Gogrial and Kuajok had been rather vague on this point, commenting only that it was supposed to scare the local population away from supporting the Anya-Nya. Local memory has cemented around the violent attack, and the escalating civil war that *followed* it, rather than on what led to this massacre. Bona

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<sup>33</sup> ARC A.85.26 Speech at Kuajok Mission Station (28 November 1964) to the Minister of the Interior.

<sup>34</sup> interview with Bona Bek, Kuajok, 27.03.2012

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Bona Bek, Kuajok, 27.03.2012.



Malwal, who had written briefly about the massacre in his book *People and Power in Sudan* was able to give me some crucial details about what had prompted the violence against the civilian population of Gogrial:

The Anya-Nya rebel army of South Sudan had captured and killed a Northern Sudanese trader in Gogrial two days earlier. It was a very provocative act by the Anya-Nya in that one of the local Anya-nya commanders, Valentino Akol Wol pinned a note to the body of the deceased Northern Sudanese with the written words: 'Sentenced to death by Valentino Akol Wol, Anya-Nya Chief Justice'.<sup>36</sup>

So the massacre was intended to warn people away from the Anya-Nya, as numerous people had told me in Gogrial, but it was also preceded by an Anya-Nya attack on the town. There is a reference to this attack in the doctoral thesis of Abdel-Basit Saeed, a Misseriya university lecturer and politician. He sees the attack in a different context. For him, the attack is relevant to the worsening relations between Misseriya and Ḍok Dinka in Abyei. He records further details, indicating that the attack on Gogrial was relatively serious:

In September 1964 the southern Anya-Nya forces attacked the village of Goriryal [sic. Gogrial] in the northern reaches of Bahr al Ghazal Province, where some Misiriyya had settled as merchants. They killed the men and captured women and children and took them into their camp in the bush.<sup>37</sup>

The next month, Cier Rehan, a chief from Tuic (norther of Gogrial) negotiated the release of these captives and returned them to Abyei. But news of the attack spread quickly among the Misseriya. One of the sons of Deng Majok (the paramount chief of the Ḍok Dinka) was a known Anya-Nya leader and they believed he was involved in the attack on Gogrial. They perceived it as a breach of long standing good relations between the Dinka and Misseriya and identify it as the start of serious deterioration in relations between the two groups, which were cemented by serious clashes between the Ḍok and Misseriya in 1965. These clashes are identified as a turning point in twentieth-century

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Bona Malwal, Oxford 13.06.13.

<sup>37</sup> Abdal-Basit Saeed, "The State and Socio-Economic Transformation in the Sudan: The Case of Social Conflict in Southwest Kurdofan" (University of Connecticut, 1982), 214.

Dinka-Misseriya relationships in Abyei.<sup>38</sup> This element of the massacre, and the violence perpetrated against the Misseriya has been sidelined in the accounts in Gogrial.

#### THE MEMORIAL



Image 46: Lol Nyiel Memorial, from the road to Kuajok. Dec 2011

In the last few years a group of older, educated men from Gogrial, led by Nyaŋ Geng, decided that these events should be memorialized. A structure is currently being built at Lol Nyiel that is visible from the road and is intended to mark the massacre. Immediately after explaining the events of the mass execution in October 1964, Nyaŋ explained:

So this is why we are now building a memorial, to remind the young ones who will come after many years, that something terrible happened here some years ago. So that there will be a memorial for them. The pain did not come out of nothing. A very very high price was paid. So this is why I am building that memorial.<sup>39</sup>

I asked him about it:

Zoe: What will it look like when it's finished?

Nyaŋ: When it's finished? This [the current structure] is just a reminder but in the future there will be a bigger one. Like a war memorial museum, but that will cost a lot of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 214–218. For a discussion of the 1965 clashes see Douglas H Johnson, "Why Abyei Matters: The Breaking Point of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement?," *African Affairs* 107, no. 426 (n.d.): 5–7.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Nyaŋ Geng and Bol Lual, Kuajok. 22.03.12.

money. That will be finished by the government, because we have got a lot of history around.

Zoe: What will that be like?

Nyaŋ: There are many of our people who cannot read and write. So we need to make a drawing. I have told you that they tortured people and drove nails through their heads, cut their eyes out and cut out their tongues. This will be the first thing to be shown. And second will show the piling up of the bodies. *Because the people will not understand, unless they see it with their own eyes.* Stage three will be the boards, with the names [of those who were killed]. Then we will write it in two languages, in Arabic and English; we will write what happened. When I get money I will get an artist to come and draw it. One, Two, Three. Then we will write all these things in English and Arabic, because some people don't read English.<sup>40</sup>

Work on the memorial was stalled at the end of my fieldwork because of lack of funds and the structure was still incomplete. Nyaŋ expressed a wish for financial support for the construction from the government, but this memorial is not part of a state programme of memorial and reconciliation. Neither is it connected with a programme of investigation or exhumation. The memorial at Lol Nyiel is very much a local project. This contrasts with the situation in Sierra Leone, where Paul Basu found that the post civil war Truth and Reconciliation Commission was very keen to memorialize the sites of mass graves so that they should remain *visible*, but local people preferred to have a 'community orientated' way of remembering the dead such as building a school or a hospital at the site.<sup>41</sup> Basu noted that many of the Sierra Leonean sites were already marked in locally important ways that were neglected by the TRC, and so the memorials were somewhat redundant. This is different from the Lol Nyiel memorial because it is a way of marking the site. It is broadly consonant with local practices of remembering the dead. The dead are remembered at structures, for example an *yoro*, the mound of a *yiik* or a post which had tethered a slain sacrificial animal or a tree. There is a continuity between existing forms because the memorial is a place to remember the dead.<sup>42</sup> However, one of the most interesting things about the memorial is that it is not

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Basu, "Palimpsest Memoryscapes: Materialising and Mediating War and Peace in Sierra Leone," in *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, ed. Michael Rowlands and Ferdinand de Jong (California: Left Coast Press, 2010), 250–251.

<sup>42</sup> Lienhardt records that the dead are remembered at *yoro* or *yiik* but he thought they were buried under the floor of a *luak* or somewhere near it, but he was not sure. I observed a grave being dug in Cueicok which was under adjacent to the *baai cielic* in the homestead. I was also shown a grave in Yiik Adoor which was adjacent to the *baai cielic* and was told people were buried under the floor of the *luak*. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 263.

connected to any obvious aesthetic tradition; the architectural form of the Lol Nyiel memorial appears *sui generis* in its design, if not its purpose.<sup>43</sup>



Image 47-49 Lol Nyiel Memorial.

Image 50: *Toc* surrounding the memorial

How should we understand the construction of this memorial? If we take Nyanj's intentions for the memorial seriously (and he is very explicit), then we can see that this is a project of reclaiming lost sight and restoring visibility. This memorial is explicitly about making things *visible*. This aim is entirely consistent with key aspects of how the story is told. A recurring detail in accounts of the massacre is people having eyes torn out. This is recounted by almost everyone who describes the massacre, sometimes in more than one way and it was one of the first things that Nyanj told me about the killings. Sightlessness was explicitly marked in Bona Bek's account – in which it was the blinded man who cried out for people to save themselves. This was also a public killing – its brutality all the more so for its perverse visibility - the relatives of the victims were forced to watch the killing. This was a corruption of sight both because of *what* they saw; and because they were coerced into watching it, thus they had to give up control of what they witnessed.

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<sup>43</sup> I am grateful to Jeremy Coote for drawing my attention to the unique material form of the memorial.

This memorial recovers that sight and control. Nyaŋ's longer-term plans for the museum would further transmit knowledge about the Lol Nyiel killings – promoting understanding and the visibility of the massacre. There is a clearly pedagogical impulse that underlies the plans for the written and visual story of the massacre to be made permanent. The plan to write the names of those killed restores their individuality and ensures that their names will be remembered. This contrasts with 'elite memorialization', which does not record the names of 'ordinary people' who lost their lives in the liberation struggle.<sup>44</sup> The concrete structure, visible from the road, itself echoes the structure of bodies. This parallel is interesting because it recalls the longer history of violence in Gogrial because the structure made out of bodies is associated with cruelty, slavery and the commercial extraction of the nineteenth century. The memorial could almost be seen to physically stand in for the decomposed bodies themselves.

The visibility of the memorial also symbolically resonates with historical memories of the Anya-Nya period. For many older people in Gogrial, the period is remembered as a time of secrecy, trickery and hiding. It is looked back on as a time when people had to cover their tracks, literally. The footsteps of visitors would be swept away by women so the police or the army would not accuse the household of harbouring Anya-Nya.<sup>45</sup> The late Ayii Madut, a famous old chief, vividly remembered being a trader during the Anya-Nya period and secretly transporting people between towns and rural areas in his car with the produce he was buying and selling.<sup>46</sup> Toŋ Majok Toŋ, now an MP for Alek South (about ten miles north of Gogrial Town), joined the Anya-Nya in the mid 1960s. His memories of the period centre on disguises. He remembered people fixing small branches and bunches of grasses onto the back of their bicycles so the authorities would not be able see the tracks where they had passed. He got scarified (six marks on the forehead, a mark of initiation) at this time, he said, because 'I had to mingle with the community in order to hide'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Werbner, "Smoke From the Barrel of a Gun: Postwars of the Dead, Memory and Reinscription in Zimbabwe," 73.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with elderly woman, a relative of Kong, Barpuot 7.11.2011. Sweeping footsteps is a very common memory.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ayii Madut, Barpuot 4.11.2011.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Toŋ Majok Toŋ, Kuajok, 21.20.2011

The need for cunning to outsmart soldiers and stay hidden was also emphasized. Bona Bek, who had also given me an extended account of the Lol Nyiel massacre, told me a story of encountering an army officer near to Gogrial in the wet season of 1966:

I was walking near them, when an Arab soldier stopped me under a palm and greeted me and asked me where I was going. I said I am going to that village. He said, “There are a lot of beautiful girls coming from that village; go and bring one for me”. I was clever enough to tell him I would do it. Then he offered me some dates. It was at the time that I had heard small boys had been poisoned by Arabs in Wau. So I told him that I had just eaten food, so I would like to decline his offer so I could hurry home and get him a girl. When I arrived home in the village I immediately went to all the houses and began to warn people that the road was not safe, that they should go to town by another route and not let their women and girls go on that road. I crossed over the river and I stayed there for one month, and when I came back to Gogrial, the force was gone.<sup>48</sup>

He managed to trick the soldiers, but was impelled to hide away in the bush (and advise others to do the same) until the army was gone and it was safe to emerge. The rebellion itself is associated with ‘the bush’ (*roor*). Akol Giir Thiik, was a student when he became a scout for the Anya-Nya, reporting to them and providing them with information. He remembers having to hide from the ‘Arabs’ who started looking for him and two fellow scouts. It was the dry season, most people had gone to *toe* with cattle, leaving wet season villages depopulated:

We hid ourselves in the daytime and went to walk in the forest at night. We hid for three months; we were used to the night, so we could see well at night, like wild animals (*lai*).<sup>49</sup>

As scouts for the Anya-Nya, they had been metaphorically transformed into wild animals in the forest. This recurring parallel between war, the forest (*roor*) and wild animals (*lai*) highlights war as desocializing – linked with the complex association of *roor*, as an unmediated and dangerous wild, but also a place of refuge.

The Anya-Nya period in Gogrial has an association with being hidden and disguising visible traces of people and rebels. The dehumanizing experience of the war both in the 1960s and in recollections in 2011-2012 is likened to becoming animalistic and hiding in the bush (*roor*). This memorial makes sense because it turns all of these elements on their head. The public memorial, which can be seen from the road, is about restoring and

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<sup>48</sup> Conversation with Bona Bek, fieldnotes Kuajok 28.03.12.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Akol Giir Thiik, Kuajok, 14.11.2011.

reclaiming that sight; it is supposed to help people to see, literally. And it makes visible an event that, outside of Gogrial and in the official history, has been largely invisible and forgotten. The memorial and Nyaŋ's plan for a visual representation of these events is symbolic; it shows that violence perpetrated can be redressed.

#### MAKING THE VISIBLE, INVISIBLE: REBUILDING GOGRIAL TOWN

During the 1983-2005 civil war destructions that far eclipsed the brutality of the Lol Nyiel massacre took place in the region. Gogrial Town (and the whole area of Northern Bahr el Ghazal) experienced multiple conflicts, serious famines and widespread civilian displacements. Almost all the direct confrontation between government and rebel armies happened around key strategic points: towns, roads and bridges.<sup>50</sup> Gogrial Town was an army garrison for virtually the entire war and was almost completely destroyed. This section explains how this wartime experience and how the physical space of the town has been transformed through reconstruction of the destroyed town since 2005. Like the memorial, the rebuilding of the town is a process of reclaiming an area marked by violence. But this is happening in a very different way in Gogrial Town. Rather than making the acts of violence visible and marked, the rebuilding of the town draws on historical patterns of resocializing space after conflict. This can be understood as a process of reclaiming the town by making certain things invisible. But, as I will show, that has not been entirely possible.

#### THE FIVE BATTLES FOR GOGRIAL

Gogrial experienced a high level of violence during the second civil war - an MP from near Gogrial described the military clashes as the five battles for Gogrial. When I asked in Kuajok and Gogrial why the town had been so embattled, the answer I often received was two-fold. First, it was explained that Gogrial was strategically important: located between Wau, Aweil and Abyei, it could have served as a base from which to attack all three important towns so both the GoS and the SPLA wanted to hold it. The second reason I was given was that Gogrial was symbolically important – that many senior SPLA

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<sup>50</sup> Africa Watch, *Denying "The Honour of Living": Sudan, a Human Rights Disaster* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1990), 67.

members and many ordinary recruits had come from the area of Gogrial, so Gogrial was a centre of the rebellion. By holding Gogrial, they explained, the Government was holding a part of the SPLA.

The start of the second civil war in Gogrial was experienced not as a rise in rebel activity, but as a dramatic intensification of raiding by groups of armed northern pastoralists, mainly of Misseriya ethnic origin, called *Murahaleen* (Ar. holy warriors).<sup>51</sup> A Bahr-el-Ghazal government security report from 1986 records that in the Gogrial area the SPLA 'did not constitute any much [sic] security threat' in the years 1983-1985.<sup>52</sup> There had been small incidents, described as 'looting' and 'minor ambush clashes with our security'. However, their main security concern during this period came from *Murahaleen*:

An organized force from Southern Kordofan Region, which has devastated the whole Province, by destruction of homes, food, livestock, mass killings, raping and kidnapping is the order of the day. At present the whole population is homeless and as a result of occasional armed raids.<sup>53</sup>

These raids caused massive disruption and displacement.<sup>54</sup> Many people and cattle sought refuge in remote parts of Apuk territory (present day Gogrial East County) or in the north or in garrison towns like Wau, Aweil and Gogrial.<sup>55</sup>

The SPLA first attacked Gogrial on 13 February 1986. It lasted for several days before they were repelled by the SAF. But the civil administration in Gogrial Town was virtually paralysed as all prison wardens, police and even the chief executive officer left their positions (possibly to join the SPLA).<sup>56</sup> The SPLA had failed to capture Gogrial Town but they controlled the surrounding countryside into which civilians fled from the town.

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<sup>51</sup> Douglas H Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2011), 69–70. For a discussion of this early period of the war in northern Bahr-el-Ghazal see David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 79–86.

<sup>52</sup> Security Report 23.05.1986, BGP/A/36.B.1 p.1 BeG Provincial Archives.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* Also see Amnesty International, *Sudan: Human Rights Violations in the Context of Civil War* (New York, 1989), 6. For reports of specific incidents in Bahr el Ghazal in this period see p.18-20. Africa Watch, *Denying "The Honour of Living": Sudan, a Human Rights Disaster*, 65.

<sup>54</sup> New York Times, May 4, 1986 cited in Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989*, 80.

<sup>55</sup> John Ryle, *Displaced Southern Sudanese in Northern Sudan with Special Reference to Southern Darfur and Kordofan* (Save the Children (UK), 1989), 12. Interviews in Kuajok and Luonyaker, see borders chapter for further discussion of movements to Apuk.

<sup>56</sup> Security Report 23.05.1986, BGP/A/36.B.1 p.1 BeG Provincial Archives.



A period characterized nowadays by a discourse of exclusion and separation began. Battle lines were drawn around the town. People who were outside the town never went inside it. The tiny number who had, out of desperation or nefariousness, remained inside the town or returned to it, did not leave. These people are a difficult issue as many of them were later accused of being traitors or informers. Memories of them embody a sense of shame or disjuncture. In Gogrial Town today there is a homeless, mentally disturbed man. The cause of his madness is believed to lie in the fact that he came to and stayed in Gogrial Town during the SAF occupation.<sup>57</sup> It is as if this transgression into the town had damaged him irreparably, and his madness remains as a physical manifestation of transgression.

The 1990s brought in a period of renewed conflict intensity following the split of the SPLM/A in August 1991.<sup>58</sup> Gogrial Town, having been a SAF garrison, became the centre of waves of active destruction carried out by a renegade SPLA Commander called Kerubino Kuanyin Bol (1948-1999). Born in Tuic County in northern Gogrial, Kerubino was a veteran of the Anya-Nya who had been absorbed into the national army following the Addis Ababa peace agreement in 1972. Importantly, he was the Commander of Battalion 105 that mutinied at Bor in 1983, an event now enshrined in the official historical narrative of South Sudan as the symbolic beginning of the SPLA. But he quarrelled with John Garang. Arop Madut speculates that because Kerubino had claim to the first symbolic bullets of the SPLA he may have considered he had an automatic entitlement to leadership.

Kerubino also had a reputation for erratic and extremely violent behaviour and was in SPLA military detention from 1987 until 1992, when William Nyuon Bany broke him out.<sup>59</sup> After his escape from military detention, Kerubino joined the Nasir Commanders who had re-named their faction 'SPLA-United'. In August 1993 Kerubino had begun

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<sup>57</sup> Fieldnotes Gogrial, 19.07.2012.

<sup>58</sup> Jok Madut Jok and Sharon Hutchinson, "Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities," *African Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (1999): 127. On 28<sup>th</sup> August 1991 three commanders from Upper Nile; Riek Machar, Lam Akol and Gordon Kong, calling themselves the 'SPLA-Nasir' announced the overthrow of John Garang. Garang and his supporters became the 'SPLA-Torit' or 'SPLA Mainstream' faction. See Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 97.

<sup>59</sup> Arop, *Sudan's Painful Road to Peace: a Full Story of the Founding and Development of the SPLM/SPLA*, 199-203.

moving his mainly Nuer troops from Bentiu towards Bahr el Ghazal.<sup>60</sup> Some SPLA officers I met who were stationed in Gogrial County remember hearing that Kerubino and his troops were at Pan Acieron the River Jur, on the 1 July.<sup>61</sup> They advanced towards Gogrial Town, over-running some small outposts, but were repulsed further north, as far as Abyei, where Kerubino was given weapons and supplies by the SAF.<sup>62</sup> Kerubino retreated to Government-held Gogrial Town in December 1994. Although Kerubino was from Gogrial County he had Nuer troops and there are various reports of him using *Murahaleen* as troops.<sup>63</sup> Throughout this period, while formally aligned with SPLA-United and SSIA/M, he was an independent warlord with his own links to the Government in Khartoum.<sup>64</sup>



Image 51: An artist's impression of Kerubino Kuanyin Bol circulated on mobile phones in Warrap c2011-2012.<sup>65</sup>

Kerubino made a base on the outskirts Gogrial Town at a place called Langic, close to the Jur River. This was formerly the site of the British ADCs' house. His arrival in Langic is remembered as the second battle of Gogrial and the beginning of the time of great destruction (*thaman riäk Kuanyin*), the most devastating period in Gogrial's recent history.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 203.

<sup>61</sup> Pan Acier had been Godfrey Lienhardt's main fieldsite

<sup>62</sup> Interview with SPLA officers, Gogrial 10.07.2012; Radio Omdurman reported that Kerubino had surrendered to the Government in Abyei, in Sudan Democratic Gazette Aug 1994 p10

<sup>63</sup> Sudan Democratic Gazette, October 1994, Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 204.

<sup>64</sup> Jok and Hutchinson, "Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities," 135.

<sup>65</sup> Image collected during fieldwork, 2012

He retained a base in Langic for the next five years, although he made various trips around the area to other bases in Bahr el Ghazal and to the North. The brutality of Kerubino forces showed a disregard for local forms of authority. He struggled with spiritual leaders over his actions, including Ajingdit, a very powerful spiritual leader from his home village of Wunrok. Ajingdit is supposed to have begged Kerubino to stop the rebellion and he refused.<sup>66</sup> Ajingdit then left the area in protest.<sup>67</sup> Kerubino was killed in Makien (in Unity State), in the midst of factional fighting by Peter Gadet Yak's troops (another defector) on 10 September 1999.<sup>68</sup> Popular memory in Gogrial attributes Kerubino with spiritual powers and it is often said that he was impervious to bullets and protected by ultra-human forces so that Gadet's troops had to hack him to death with machetes.<sup>69</sup>

In April and May 1997 the SPLA made a major advance in Bahr el Ghazal and recaptured several major towns; Rumbek, Tonj and Warrap. They advanced to Gogrial on 23 May 1997, but failed to capture the town. SPLA troops claimed they had been delayed in the vicinity because of rain and difficulties crossing the River Jur. They eventually stormed the town, where they found several thousand cattle, which had been raided from the local population. The SPLA drove out the cattle but they did not succeed in claiming the town.<sup>70</sup>

In 2000, in its fourth battle, Gogrial was finally captured by the SPLA, who were based at Alek, under the command of Salva Mathok.<sup>71</sup> Gogrial was recaptured by the Government two years later in the last and one of the bloodiest battles. This was really a series of battles fought between April and June, until the town finally fell on the 30 June 2002. One young man who involved in this battle now living in Gogrial spoke of the horror of this loss, recounting that some senior SPLA commanders took their own lives

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<sup>66</sup> Fieldnotes Wunrok 7.04.12.

<sup>67</sup> *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, October 1994, 5

<sup>68</sup> At the time of his death Kerubino was staying with Paulino Matip. This was at the height of factional fighting in greater Upper Nile, a period Douglas Johnson has dubbed 'the Nuer Civil war' Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*, 125.

<sup>69</sup> It is also widely said that Kerubino was 'crazy'. E.g. Interview with Chol Kuac Chol, Kuajok 12.11.2011.

<sup>70</sup> *Sudan Democratic Gazette*, June 1997, 3.

<sup>71</sup> Group interview with SPLA officers in Gogrial, 04.07.2012

when they saw that Gogrial had been lost to SAF, because they could not bear the humiliation.<sup>72</sup>

The civil war finished in 2005 with Gogrial in government hands. There followed a major demining operation and civilians began to return to the town, but Gogrial had been destroyed. Trees that had lined the road and provided shade had been cut down or blown up to improve visibility for the army. Palm trees that grew in and around the town had been felled and used for construction. Buildings had all been destroyed. The only structures left standing were the government headquarters and Commissioners house which had been used by the army. Huge trenches had been dug and even after the demining, a tank remains on the main square and bullet cases litter the ground.

#### OLD GOGRIAL REMEMBERED

On one occasion that I went to speak to Bona Bek, he described what the old town of Gogrial had been like when he was younger. These are some fragments from his descriptions that I jotted down. I am reproducing them here to give a sense of how the old town was described:

There was no army in Gogrial; security was run by the police and prison wardens...

There were shops, concrete shops [selling items from the north], along the road. And they sold local things too - a small market where women used to sell local things. This was all on the western side of the main road. There was no market like today, all the shops were located on the side of the road...

These traders, they were having their houses next to their shops. Among the traders I should mention 'Gorgor' he was a Greek trader who was famous. He married from Wau...his son was very white, but could speak Dinka and he used to sing Dinka songs. There was a trader who was loved by everyone called Dafallah Babiker [from Khartoum], he married four women from Aguok...

And then there was a small mosque, where the Muslims said their prayers...

There was a small hospital, with a nurse, there was no doctor. Then there was the police station, in the centre. In that high place. It was a very nice police station. There was a

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with an SPLA officer in Kuajok (anonymous) 05.11.2011.

very big prison, known as 'Malualdit' [Dinka. Lit. big red one] it was next to the road going to the river. Not the road that we used to pass [referring to when I had seen him in Gogrial Town] not that one. It was called Malualdit because the walls were painted red and the zinc was also red.

There were many houses and trees...the house of my paternal uncle was where they are laying bricks now...

Some people worked for the government, but ordinary people came just to spend time, to pay taxes, to vaccinate their cattle...

There was a very nice guesthouse, it was seen from a distance when you approached Gogrial. It was painted white and had a zinc roof; there where trees planted around it. They destroyed it. [Q - it was destroyed in the SPLA war?] – Yes, it was destroyed...<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Notes from interview with Bona Bek 27.03.12



Image 52: Satellite image of Gogrial Town in 2004 (above)

Image 53: Satellite image of Gogrial Town in 2011 (below)

## REBUILDING GOGRIAL

Following its destruction in the civil war, there has been an ongoing process of physical reconstruction in Gogrial Town. On my first visit to Gogrial, I was driven around the oldest part of the town by the grandson of Kuanyin Agoth, the chief who had described the past destruction and rebuilding of Gogrial to DC Hunter in 1948. Kuanyin Agoth described the nineteenth century slave raiding as follows:

In 1873 [estimated date] the real devastation of the Aguok began. It lasted about 8 years. Women, children and cows were almost all seized. *Only the stronger women who were able to take to the woods with the men survived.* All that time we lived as hunted things. *No houses were built.*<sup>74</sup>

In 2011, Mabior Wek Kuanyin Agoth pointed out buildings, empty spaces and new construction while he gave potted histories of them. I overheard him speaking to my translator in Dinka about the people associated with these places and house.<sup>75</sup> Chapter 3 argued that there are strong associations between clearing an area of forest and establishing human settlement. The clearing of forest is an important discursive element in describing how space becomes socialized after periods of conflict. Lienhardt records in his DPhil thesis how the people of Gogrial in the 1940s had covered areas with houses that had previously been depopulated by nineteenth century slave raiding, indicating how recovery from the violence of the slave trade was, at some level, bound up with the physical transformation and re-habitation of the landscape.<sup>76</sup> The same discourse is applied to recent civil wars. War and insecurity is consistently associated with unsocialized space, wilderness and ‘the bush’ or forest (*roor*). Rebuilding the town, therefore, is both literally and symbolically about reclaiming the space from the wilderness of civil war.

As these satellite images above [Image 52-53] show, the town has been surveyed and many plots of land have been bought and developed both for residential and commercial purposes. Much of this rebuilding has been for people’s homes, as they have returned to the town. In Gogrial, successive County Commissioners have put an additional spin on

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<sup>74</sup> PRM GL Box 1/3 ‘History of the Gogrial Area Dinka’

<sup>75</sup> Fieldnotes and interview with Aciec Kuot Kuot, Gogrial 08.03.2012

<sup>76</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, “The Dinka of The Southern Sudan: Religion and Social Structure” (University of Oxford, Exeter College, 1952), 37.

the acquisition and development of land. They have called for people to rebuild and invest in Gogrial in order to return the town to its pre-war character. On my early research trips to Gogrial Town I stayed as a guest in the compound of Aciec Kuot Kuot, who was Commissioner of Gogrial West County until May 2012. Aciec is from the Aguok Dinka section of Gogrial. He is a Lt. Col in the SPLA. He had been in school when the second civil war started and joined the SPLA in the 1980s, initially as a medic. He was stationed among other places around Gogrial and Wau for much of the 1990s. He had been chairperson of the Aguok Community Association since 2008 and was appointed Commissioner of Gogrial West in 2010. Over the course of several interviews and informal conversations he described how he had personally tried to encourage people from the area to return and take part in this rebuilding process. He was not solely responsible for the rebuilding of Gogrial – the Commissioner before him had taken a keen interest in this too, as had the residents of Gogrial Town. But he saw restoring the town as an important part of his role.

The rebuilding of Gogrial Town is rooted in strategies of *roor* to *baai* conversion. Aciec's concern to rebuild the town reflects an enduring discourse in archival and oral historical record of Gogrial. On the one hand there are periods of insecurity that are spoken about as associated with *roor* – homes becoming wild and people scattering in the forest. The other side of that are descriptions of people coming back and rebuilding their homes. It is worth recalling the oral history of Gogrial collected by DC Hunter in 1948. Rebuilding Gogrial also entailed memorialization, as it recovers the area from violence. As a form of memorializing practice, it too, like the memorial at Lol Nyiel fixed certain memories and enabled the forgetting of others. It revealed ongoing struggles about how to accommodate the difficult recent past.

Some of the rebuilding in the town is striking in the degree that it replicates the old structures. The clearest example is the Catholic church. The church building was completed in 1982 and was completely destroyed during the civil war. It has been rebuilt to exactly the same design. The finance for rebuilding this church has come from the Catholic Diocese of Wau (of which Gogrial is a part)





Image 54: Catholic Church in Gogrial Town, 1982 Archivio Comboniani



Image 55: Rebuilt Catholic Church, Gogrial Town, 2011

The same process has occurred with the Catholic church in Kuajok, which was partially destroyed during the second civil war and now faithfully restored by the Diocese of Wau. The rebuilders have taken care to repaint the original palm trees, which have been immortalized in a poem by the missionary Nebel, who wrote a Dinka-English dictionary and whose poems and stories in Dinka are still widely known used in schools in the area. The priest at Kuajok receipted the poem to me when he showed me round the refurbished church:

*Yon Nbialic Kuajok,  
 Adit ku Dhey apei  
 Agep aci giit pany kɔu,  
 Aci kum nbom yar weeth,  
 Nbialic a acien cak kɔc  
 Kɔc path aa Nbialic ɔɔk.*

Kuajok Church  
 Is big and very beautiful!  
 Palm trees are on the walls  
 It is covered with an iron sheet  
 God created people  
 Good people pray to God.<sup>77</sup>



Image 56: Kuajok Church, 1960. Archivio Comboniani



Image 57: Kuajok Church, 1949, during paintwork. Archivio Comboniani. [note palm tree details]

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<sup>77</sup> Tour of Church and interview with Fr. Paul Ariath, Kuajok 19.10.2011. See Arturo Nebel, *Dinka Primer and Reader: Athor Tuej. Revised Edition* (Nairobi: Diocese of Rumbek, 2000), 21.



Image 57: (above) Kuajok Church, post-war interior without roof, 2006.<sup>78</sup>



Image 58: (right) Kuajok Church re-roofed and repainted, 2011.



Image 59 Detail of re-roofed Kuajok Church, 2011  
note: palm trees on side walls are repainted

The rebuilt churches also have a particular resonance as symbols of religious identity that has been politicized in Sudan and South Sudan throughout the twentieth century. In contrast the mosque, which was also destroyed, has not been rebuilt. Akol, a friend in Gogrial, walked round with me on the second anniversary of South Sudan's Independence and pointed out the spot. Efforts to construct a mosque by the JIU troops (Joint Integrated Units, battalions of both the SPLA and SAF established by the CPA) stationed in Gogrial after the CPA proved incredibly controversial, he said. This

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was one of the factors that led the JIU to be re-stationed outside the main town, in Ror Atieny.



Image 60: area identified by Akol as the site of the old Mosque, not rebuilt

The prison, associated with the 1964 massacre is a particularly ambiguous building in Gogrial. The prison has been rebuilt at a different site. The old prison was nicknamed '*malualdit*' (big red one) because it was red brick with a red iron roof. The prison is still called '*malualdit*' even though the new prison is not red. It has retained the name the association although it no longer describes the aesthetics of the structure. Thus it is partially visible.

Rebuilding Gogrial is a process that remains incomplete. This was revealed in references to vanished trees, the shade they used to provide and comments about the town's former grandeur. The palm tree had recently been made the official symbol of Gogrial West county. But the trees themselves have not been replaced – they are marked by their physical absence.



Image 61: Material from the campaign to make the palm tree (*agep*) the country symbol of Gogrial West (explaining all the practical uses of palm trees). Seen in 2012

The incomplete removal of military hardware in town is also an issue. A demobilized tank still stands on the central square, bullet cases still litter the ground and trenches are still discernible. In a recent article in one of South Sudan’s online newspapers, a man from Gogrial described his discomfort with these reminders, what he labelled ‘the scars of war’.<sup>79</sup> They are marks which are too visible, and haunt the incomplete project of rebuilding Gogrial.



Image 62: Children play on the tank on Freedom Square, December 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Run Mou Run, “What Do We Do With The Scars of War?,” *Gurtong*, February 18, 2013.

## REMEMBERING KERUBINO KUANYIN BOL

One of the most important acts of reclaiming Gogrial that I observed involved the reappropriation of Langic: the area where Kerubino Kuanyin's base had been. The site of Langic is deeply layered with associations of violence. It was not only Kerubino who had made a home here - the British ADC's house had been before that so it carried another potent association of violence and external domination.



Image 63: ADC's house, 1947-1951<sup>80</sup>



Image 64: remains of ADC's house 2011

Memories of Kerubino were problematic for a variety of reasons. One was the incredible suffering associated with the period when he was based at Langic. The recurrent raiding by Kerubino's troops had helped create the conditions for the acute famine crisis of 1998.<sup>81</sup> This was a time when people would try to disguise the smell of a cooking pot, for fear of appearing selfish for not wanting to share the little they had. It was a time when people ate water lilies to survive. In my conversations and interviews, people would often move quickly over it or decline to speak in depth, as this extract from an interview with man in his 30s from Kuajok shows:

It was a dangerous life. Even when you got something, if you got food, someone would come and loot it. If there was a milk cow, that cow must be shared and someone would come and milk that cow. So it was a really black life, a life without hope. There was no hope at that time. No one is sure if they will be a person in the future. Because hunger was there, it was the 'jungle law' of life. No one followed the law at that time. It is very difficult to explain it to you really, so really, I will not complete it.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> PRM GL 2005\_51\_69\_0

<sup>81</sup> Michael Medley, "Humanitarian Parsimony in Sudan: The Bahr Al-Ghazal Famine of 1998" (University of Bristol, 2010), 43.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Madol Cuor Kuajok 27.10.2011

One of the most common memories of this period was of the raiding and looting of cattle, grain and people, by Kerubino's troops, who even destroyed standing crops, tactics eerily reminiscent of the Murahaleen attacks in the early 1980s.<sup>83</sup> This intense destruction was a critical factor in pushing Gogrial into extreme famine conditions in 1998. People fled to feeding centres, like the one at Ajiep: this was the context for the famine photographs of Gogrial (taken at Ajiep) that were discussed in chapter 2. The year after the famine, 1999, was described by Madol as the year of the blanket, '*ruuon battanyia*', because it felt as if some respite had finally come, as if someone had covered you with a blanket at the end of a cold night.<sup>84</sup>

In 2011-2012 the area of Kerubino's base was being incorporated into the new social fabric of the town. A government guesthouse was being built there – a replacement for the old one that Bona Bek had remembered fondly, which was destroyed during the war. In March 2012 it was the location of the Aguok Community Annual Meeting. This was a very large event, which lasted three days and aimed to bring members of the Aguok community from Gogrial West County, elsewhere in South Sudan and in the diaspora together. It was very well attended: delegates came from East Africa and the United States. Many senior government officials, including Tor Deng Mawien (the former Governor of Warrap), local elites, administrative chiefs and even *bäny bitb* (spear masters) were in attendance. Over several days speeches were delivered and views and plans for the future of the Aguok community were aired and discussed. There were performances, songs, meals and a very celebratory atmosphere. A constitution for the Aguok Community had been drafted in Juba and it was presented to 'the community' at this meeting. A new Aguok Youth Association was launched. 'Development' and progress was an important theme to the discussions, as well as the importance of unity with the Aguok community and with their neighbours.

Holding this conference at the site of Kerubino Kuanyin's base – the epicentre of the worst period in Gogrial's recent history – shows a clear attempt to reclaim the space for the local community. One portion of the conference was given over to speeches from the chiefs. During the course of their speeches, the chiefs led the crowd in songs that were intended to make them feel united and were exuberantly received. This extract from

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<sup>83</sup> Atual Karim et al., *Operation Lifeline Sudan: A Review* (Geneva: Operation Lifeline Sudan, 1996), 63.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Madol Cuor Kuajok 27.10.2011

Chief Chan Reec captures this call for co-operation, which he bases partly in the shared experience of war in Gogrial:

...this Gogrial belongs to all of us so don't feel jealous amongst one another. Much of the capturing of this Gogrial was a struggle by all Aguok's sons. As you all aware that Lino Longar Muordit was killed here as well as other sons and daughters who lost their lives because of Gogrial. Don't have hatred against one another, take care of the orphans. I call upon the twelve sections of Aguok to join their hands to be one people.<sup>85</sup>

His message was clear, everyone [in Aguok] 'struggled' for Gogrial, so they should remain united. Although it was never explicitly stated during the conference, the fact that all of these discussion took place at the centre of the 'struggle by all Aguok's sons' to defend Gogrial, made the event very symbolically important. It reclaimed and even capitalized on the symbolic power of the space tainted by Kerubino and the most divisive period of war as a space of community.



Image 65: Audience under trees at the Aguok Community meeting, Langic 5.03.2012

Kerubino's place in the emerging official national narrative of South Sudan posed a problem in Gogrial. Kerubino had fired the first symbolic bullets of the SPLA, yet he was associated with terrible atrocities in Gogrial. He could not be ignored, but he could hardly be celebrated either. The whole period was deeply divisive. Kerubino himself could not be entirely erased. To my surprise, some younger people circulated images of him on mobile phones (Image 51). At the official speeches in Kuajok for SPLA Day

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<sup>85</sup> Ch. Chan Reec speech at Aguok Community Meeting April 2012.



2012, the Governor Nyandeng Malek mentioned his name in a list of war heroes. Afterwards I asked Adut, the woman whom I stayed with during my research, about it. She told me that yes, he had to be recognized because he had commanded Battalion 105, but people did not like to hear his name because of the bad things he had done.<sup>86</sup>

The death of Kerubino and the fate of his body is the most striking way that he was being made invisible – especially when contrasted with the highly visible memorial being constructed by Nyaj to those who had died at Lol Nyiel. The death of Kerubino happened under murky circumstances: the speculation in Gogrial during my fieldwork was that he had been hacked to death with machetes because he had spiritual power that protected him from bullets.<sup>87</sup> This supposedly incomplete and maimed body of Kerubino reinforces the impression that his legacy and memory is incompletely resolved in Gogrial.<sup>88</sup> His body has reportedly recently been returned to Wunrok, by the arrangement of one of his wives, where he is buried privately in his home.<sup>89</sup> There is no public grave, no public memorial. Unlike the deaths of the people who had been killed at Lol Nyiel, which had to be made visible, the grave of Kerubino is kept hidden.

## CONCLUSION

The project of reconstruction and memorializing atrocities is always bound to be fraught and ambiguous. While the Lol Nyiel memorial made visible the invisible acts of heroism carried out by members of the community during the war, it also obscured the memory of violence carried out against the Misseryia. Rebuilding the town became symbolic because it shows that even what has been occupied can be reclaimed, but this is not a full resolution to the memory of violence – the physical markers, ‘the scars of war’ like the tank and the bullet casings are a material embodiment of that dissonance. Kerubino is denied visibility in Gogrial – the division which he symbolizes remains problematic to the project of building national unity in South Sudan. In 2012 the site of his base was

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<sup>86</sup> Fieldnotes, Kuajok 16.05.2012.

<sup>87</sup> Asserted by various people. E.g. Interview with Chol Kuac Chol, Kuajok 12.11.2011. C.f. other rebel figures e.g. RENAMO myths of invincibility and spiritual power, K.B Wilson, “Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 3 (1992): 544.

<sup>88</sup> C.f. The bodies of Lumumba and Mobutu in Congo Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Bob White, “Introduction to Mourning and the Imagination of Political Time in Contemporary Central Africa,” *African Studies Review* 48, no. 2 (2005): 2–3.

<sup>89</sup> Fieldnotes, Wunrok 7.04.2012.

used to hold a community meeting which emphasized unity – this both recovered the space and capitalized on the symbolic association with Kerubino’s problematic legacy – it was a powerful statement precisely because of this ambiguity.

These are some of the historical pathways through the physical landscape of Gogrial town. They show how violence can, paradoxically, play a constructive role in identity formation – despite war being typically an anti-social phenomenon – because it establishes new networks of affinity. This could be seen in Deng’s poetic account of the capture of Apet Anyuon, as well as in the physical landscape of Gogrial, which memorializes violence; sometimes explicitly and sometimes obliquely. These are all ways of culturally mediating the memory and experience of the multiple destructions (*riäk*) of Gogrial.

In order to make these points I have had to dwell on some of the most painful moments in Gogrial’s history. I have done this in order to show how the memory of these events is being negotiated through the landscape of the town. However, most conversations I had during in Gogrial were not about this violent past, they were about mundane things – the pursuit of education, marriages, personal projects and life’s small, quite generic disappointments. Violent things are unspoken precisely because reconstruction is mainly about creating normality – even in difficult circumstances.

This chapter has been about the processes and politics surrounding the resocialization of Gogrial Town since its destruction during the civil war (1983-2005). The next chapter continues to explore how aspects of the landscape were being renegotiated following this war, but from a different angle. It will explore how places of remote refuge: *roor* and *toc*, had been transformed during the civil war and the practical and moral debates about firearms and protection this has raised in Gogrial.

## 7 The Geography of Protection

*Na ye ruon abor na ye ruon abor ta cok Nuer ke ya ben, ka wek aa dut toc nbom.*

In the year when it floods, in the flood year, even if Nuer comes, you are the ones to defend the far side of *toc*.

*Ca nyuaj mac, ca moc talgat ke dhetem anjic wen Tonj Maker.<sup>1</sup>*

I pointed a gun and shot using six bullets, the son of Tong Maker knows.

*Ca tuom maruric wan nbiakrial adbohic.*

I went on lookout, early in the morning, I found the enemy and I encircled them at a cluster of *adobh* trees.

*Ca moc ku tiet wen Makhet 'Mawer gok nbom'.*

I shot and waited for the son of a black bull.

*Ca tuom kuac diet thondit Mawel yen ca bei ok cath ok wen waa col Dej Makom, Dej Akol Magoldit.*

I encircled the enemy at Kuac Diet and I took an uncastrated bull;<sup>2</sup> I was with my clansmate Deng 'Makom', Deng Akol Magoldit.

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col Dej Akol Magoldit.*

I encircled the enemy in the morning with my clansmate, Deng Akol Magoldit.

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col Ater Chan Kuei.*

I encircled the enemy in the morning with my clansmate, Ater Chan Kuei.

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col Bol Mayar.*

I encircled the enemy with my clansmate, Bol Mayar.

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col Wol Marieng, Wol Madut Akec.*

I encircled the enemy with my clansmate, Wol 'Marieng', Wol Madut Akec.

*Ca moc talgat ka bet ku teem wan nbial riel ta ci thianj apei ca lo dutdut.*

I shot eight bullets; there was a river in between, and I swam, the place was very congested, but I swam with the cattle across the river.

*Ca moc ok cath ok Kuac mathiang, col Kuony Madit Malong.*

I shot the gun; I was with Kuac 'Mathiang', called Kuony Madit Malong.

*Yen cie biok ke Jieng.*

I don't drive cattle with just anybody.

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<sup>1</sup> I have changed names to protect anonymity.

<sup>2</sup> And he takes several other cattle, it is implied.

These are the last lines of Deng's song. They provide a description of an armed cattle raid. Several references to guns and bullets emphasise danger, bravery and skill. These lines serve the double purpose of offering praise to the family members with whom he tends to cattle for their collective bravery and skills as herdsmen more generally: 'I don't drive cattle with *just anybody*' he concludes.

The description of the raid is intertwined with the powerful evocations of genealogical, natural and moral landscapes. Deng refers to his companions by their bull names – which simultaneously identifies them as individuals and recalls their place in wider kin-networks, because invoking cattle invokes a history of kin-exchange and relationships. The natural landscape is imaginatively conveyed, most strikingly the way that he articulates 'son of a black bull' is highly metaphorical and complex. '*Makbet mawer gok nbom*' means (approximately) 'the one who likes the forested savannah' - it refers to the buffalo (*anyaar*) that is often found in the forested areas; the buffalo is used to denote the black colour of the bull *machar*. This imagery also implies strength because the buffalo is a symbol of strength. His words further place them in the landscape by evoking natural forms: they are within a cluster of adoth trees (*adothic*) and he crosses a high river (*ci thiang apei*) revealing that he was coming from somewhere deep in the swamp land. Place and identity are further emphasized through the deployment of vocabulary that is very specifically associated with the defense of cattle and cattle raiding: to encircle an enemy (*tuom*), to be on the lookout (*maruric*).

Strength, masculine pride in raiding and the command of his gun are emphasized throughout these lines, but Deng is also singing about duty. The first line of the extract makes clear that even in a flood year (*ruon abor*) they must defend the cattle at the furthest reaches of their grazing lands (*toc nbom*) – a place where there are no permanent villages near to shared water points. The implication of this is that they must be ready to look after their family herds under any condition. These final lines of the song capture a complicated mixture of, on the one hand the performance of an aggressive kind of masculinity bound up with strength, the command of guns and acts of bravery; and on the other with a sense of responsibility and vulnerability that young cattle keepers feel as they drive cattle to the distant dry season pastures. This chapter explores this ambiguity; to what extent have guns addressed the need for protection felt by cattle-keepers? How have guns and the recent liberation war shaped new landscapes of vulnerability and protection and what pathways have guns opened and closed in Gogrial?

## INTRODUCTION

As previous chapters have shown, people in Gogrial have described how they have fled to *toc* to escape commercial traders in the nineteenth century, how they have hidden in *roor* to escape the security services in the first civil war and how they again retreated from settlements along main roads and from towns in the second civil war. In Chapters 3 and 6 I argued that narratives of transformation of wild *roor* into socialized space, to make the land good again (*aci piath*), are central to how chronic insecurity has been mediated in local historical memory. This meant that remote areas of *roor* and *toc* are ‘wild’ but they are also crucial places of refuge: there is a complementarity between *roor* and *baai*. This chapter proposes that some important characteristics of *roor* and *toc* in Gogrial have changed as a cumulative result of events and processes connected to the last civil war. As a result, in some parts of Gogrial, the relationship between socialized and remote places has been turned on its head.

Among the most serious effects of the last civil war (1983-2005) in rural parts of South Sudan have been widespread militarization and damage to inter-ethnic relationships. At the end of the war, it was estimated there were 1.9-3.2 million small arms in circulation in Sudan, two thirds of which were in civilian hands.<sup>3</sup> Many of these weapons were kept for the defense of people and cattle, or used in inter-community conflicts as these were drawn into cycles of political violence associated with factional fighting within the SPLA.<sup>4</sup> In 1991, the SPLA split and rival commanders sought support from their ethnic communities. Communities also allied with opposing factions for support and protection in the crumbling political landscape.<sup>5</sup> The SPLA established civilian based defense groups known as *titwej* (cattle guards), and many young cattle keepers joined and were armed and trained in the use of AK-47s to defend their cattle and their communities.<sup>6</sup> The legacy of these wartime conflicts and militarization of ethnic relationships continues

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<sup>3</sup> Small Arms Survey, *The Militarization of Sudan: A Preliminary Review of Arms Flows and Holdings* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2007), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, “A Curse from God? Religious and Political Dimensions of the Post-1991 Rise of Ethnic Violence in South Sudan,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 39, no. 2 (2001): 315.

<sup>5</sup> For example, in 1992 when the SPLA-United (a faction lead by Riak Machar, a Nuer) led an attack on *toc* in Gogrial East, the Apuk Dinka of the area sought support from the SPLA-Mainstream for a retaliatory attack. Jok Madut Jok and Sharon Hutchinson, “Sudan’s Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities,” *African Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (1999): 127–130.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

to affect local conflicts and community relations in Gogrial and South Sudan more broadly.<sup>7</sup>

One implication of these conflicts has been that in the post-civil war context, some places that previously provided refuge have different characteristics and some have become places of increased danger. This has produced a different landscape of insecurity, refuge and protection in Gogrial. This chapter will focus on the loss of wildlife in around Kuajok and the increased level of violence in *toc*, which has resulted in displacement and some areas of *toc* and some grazing areas being abandoned. There are different attempts to negotiate and comprehend how the landscape has been transformed by civil war. The negotiation of these changes also provides an opportunity to see how the landscape is both morally and historically constructed.

There is a strong local perception that wildlife populations were decimated during civil war as a result of armed conflict and the armies searching for food; as a result many wild animals have vanished from the landscape. For many interviewees, it was war that had changed the forests. This provided an opportunity to critique the traumatic effects of the war. It also raises questions about what *baai* and socialized space means in a context in which the *roor* is less wild.

The second part of this chapter explores a different war-related change to the landscape in Gogrial East which had had much more immediately serious consequences. To put it briefly: *toc* is much more dangerous than it used to be; significant numbers of people have been displaced and inter-community conflicts are now more deadly. Rather than being a place of refuge, as it was from slave-traders and military forces, *toc* is now a place of danger: the geography of protection has been inverted, and people are running from *toc*.

These changes were being discussed through the question of ‘protection’. The question of how to manage these new risks was the subject of debate in Gogrial. This chapter will discuss three different strategies employed to deal with how *toc* had been transformed by

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<sup>7</sup> Øystein Rolandsen and Ingrid Marie Breidlid, “A Critical Analysis of Cultural Explanations for the Violence in Jonglei State, South Sudan,” *Conflict Trends* 1 (2012): 52–53; David Eaton, “Violence, Revenge and the History of Cattle Raiding Along the Kenya-Uganda Border, c.1830-2008” (PhD., Dalhousie University, 2008), 5–18.

civil war: incorporating it into state control, guns, and spiritual protection. Educated and elite community members in the government and towns were advocating responding to the increased danger in *toc* with more policing and trying to incorporate cattle-keeping areas more firmly into networks of state control – by integrating it more closely into the networks of the state. Guns, both in the hands of the armed forces or the civilian population have become a very important source of protection in *toc*. Urban elites were increasingly distancing themselves from young cattle keepers, who were being cast as increasingly volatile, uncontrollable and wild. But it was widely acknowledged that many members of this elite were arming cattle keepers to protect the herds in which the elite were continuing to invest.

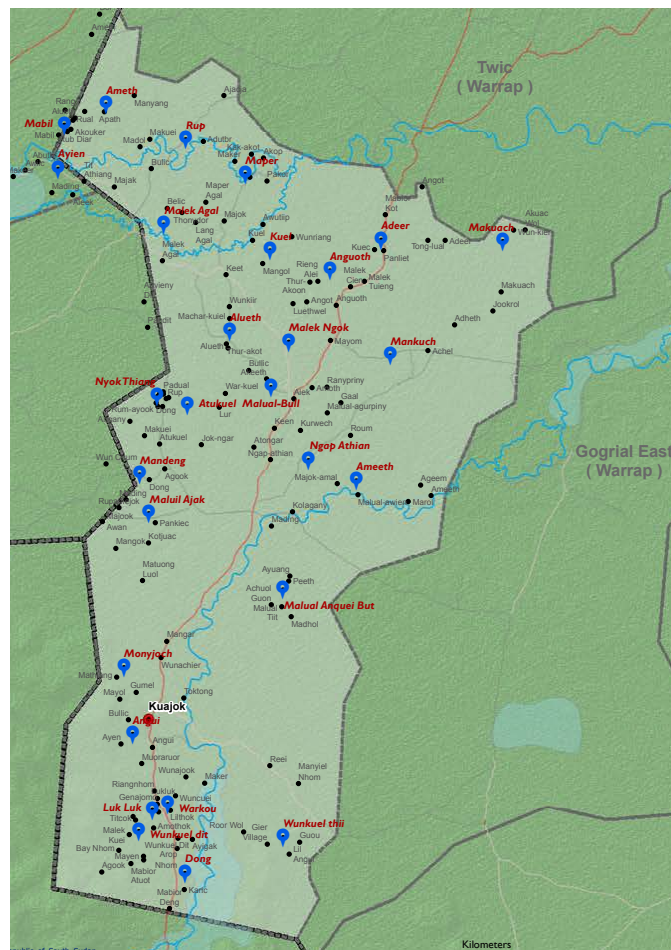
Guns are an important means of protection for young cattle keepers, as Deng Kuac clearly expresses in his song. This chapter will discuss some material that complicates the idea that guns were simply displacing older moral norms and ideas about protection. In Gogrial East some young people are exploring different kinds of spiritual protection as a way of mitigating their vulnerability in the distant cattle grazing areas where they risk the effects of inter-community conflict. This is also a way of dealing with how *toc* has been transformed by the civil war. I will explore this through a new spirit, called MABIORDIT that first emerged in Tonj East County and that has been active in Gogrial East County since the end of the CPA. This spirit possesses some young cattle keepers and makes them strong fighters in the defense of *toc*; it instructs them to fight with spears, not guns. The chapter interprets MABIORDIT as a response to a crisis of protection in *toc* in a militarized post-civil war landscape.

#### THE LOSS OF WILD ANIMALS

Among the most recurrent observations given to me about the landscape in Gogrial was the progressive and visible disappearance of wild animals (*lai*). I was often told how, as a direct result of the civil war, wild animals had vanished from the forested areas (*roor*) and from the low plains (*li*) near the riverbanks of the Jur.

This recent loss of wild animals was said to be especially pronounced around Kuajok and places on the main road between Wau, Gogrial and Abyei that had been badly disrupted by military activity and militia raids during the second civil war. This was part of a wider

impact on movement and paths during the last civil war. Armed groups used major roads as they advanced; they were dangerous to use because you could be seen. Even aid workers avoided them.<sup>8</sup> Paths through the landscape shifted as old routes became dangerous and exposed and new ones were established. The whole of Gogrial East and West Counties are latticed with roads that were used during conflict and roads that were abandoned because they were too high risk. When asked, people often give greater ease and freedom of movement as a most significant difference in life since 2005.<sup>9</sup>



Map 13: Gogrial West County. Road in red, area parallel in the proximity of Kuajok is most strongly associated with the loss of wild animals.<sup>10</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to quantify the extent of the loss of wild animals. I am much more interested in the perception of loss as a way of understanding the landscape and experiences with the military. I can say that in 1948 Godfrey Lienhardt

<sup>8</sup> Fieldnotes, conversation with Fergus Boyle, 10.02.2012, Kuajok,

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Athian Deng Acuil, Kuajok 29.10.2011.

<sup>10</sup> IOM, *Gogrial West Village Assessment Survey. County Atlas 2013* (Juba: IOM, 2013), 1.



heard lions coming very close to a village he stayed in near Pan Acier; he ‘could hear them roaring very loudly along the river’ at night.<sup>11</sup> And that many interviewees spoke about lions, giraffe, *tiang* and ostrich inhabiting along the river near Kuajok and these animals abound in stories told to children and in folktales.<sup>12</sup> There was a very strong perception that these wild animals have now gone.

It is reported that the animal population was affected by the first war. A 1976 report found that many large mammal species had been reduced and the researchers blamed the widespread availability of firearms.<sup>13</sup> But the numbers still remained high. Many observers suggest the scale and attitudes towards shooting animals did change during the second war. One South Sudanese writer in the late 1980s commented on what he perceived as a change in attitude towards animals, which he thought were being over-hunted and illicitly traded by soldiers and local population in search of hard currency as part of the war economy. He saw this change in attitudes as symptomatic of the pressure that conflict was causing on Southern society.<sup>14</sup>

There are many reports of substantial wildlife losses across the South during the second civil war. One report, written by an experienced aid worker in 1997 voiced similar opinions as many interviewees about guns and the loss of wildlife:

[The first civil war] was fought with spears and magazine rifles, the population took refuge in towns or outside the country and wildlife was still plentiful at the end of the war...[the second civil war] is fought across the rural areas, with automatic weapons and, increasingly, vehicles. Wildlife everywhere is in danger and decline.<sup>15</sup>

For many interviewees, the perception of now absent wildlife had profoundly changed the landscape. For example, one elderly woman who now lives in Kuajok, but who lived most of her life in a small village near the river, adjacent to Kuajok explained:

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<sup>11</sup> PRM GL Box 4/9 Fieldnotes 23.03.1948

<sup>12</sup> Francis Mading Deng, *Dinka Folktales: African Stories from The Sudan* (Holmes and Meier, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> J.H. Blower, *Wildlife Conservation and Management in The Southern Sudan* (Rome: FAO/UN, 1977), 1.

<sup>14</sup> James Baba, *The Future of Wildlife in The Southern Sudan* (Downloaded from [www.sudanarchive.net](http://www.sudanarchive.net), n.d.), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Winter, *Wildlife in War: A Proposal to Re-Survey Two Protected Areas in Sudan in Order to Devise Appropriate Conservation Strategies with Communities Around Them* (Downloaded from [www.sudanarchive.net](http://www.sudanarchive.net), n.d.), 2.

There used to be many wild animals (*lai ajuic apei*). But when Anyanya started people were shooting animals [to eat]. There was shooting of the guns so many animals just left.<sup>16</sup>

A common explanation was that animals left because of the guns, either because they had been killed or because the presence of guns had scared them away and they had run deeper into the *toc* (much like people had). In one interview I asked a young man why the wild animals had gone from the area; he laughed, as if this was obvious, ‘because of guns!’ (*net dhan!*).<sup>17</sup> Before, interviewees often stressed, animals had only been caught with traps.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the Rek Dinka word for gun, *dhan* is actually derived from the word for animal trap speaks to a long association between guns and shooting animals in this area.<sup>19</sup>

This process began with the Anya-Nya, but intensified during the SPLA period. One elderly man who had been educated at the missionary school in Kuajok, and who now lives just across the river from the town, remembered the last time he saw an elephant in the area:

1975; that was the last elephant to walk. My house is across the river, they came at night when the cattle are in the field, my field, my house, that one there! [gestures in the direction] When we heard their noise coming...they used to make a noise. They passed

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<sup>16</sup> Mou’s aunt in Kuajok, 1.11.2011

<sup>17</sup> Interviews at Juac Aleu’s house, Wunkuel, 06.12.2011

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Deng Aleu, Kuajok 04.12.2011

<sup>19</sup> *Dhan* is an animal trap with used a bow-snare mechanism. An example piece, collected by Powell-Cotton in Gogrial in 1933 can be seen at the Pitt Rivers Museum (Accession number 1934.8.11 .1 .2.). *Dhan* is also the word for a parrying shield which uses a fibrous bow mechanism, see Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years’ Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa. From 1868 to 1871, Vols 1* (New York: Harper, 1874), 156. In the mid 1920s Major Titherington recorded that the Dinka word for rifle was ‘dang a maich’ [sic. *dhan e mac*] see G.W Titherington, “The Raik Dinka of the Bahr El Ghazal Province,” *Sudan Notes and Records* 10 (1927): 188. *Mac* means fire and is sometimes used for gun. In comparison, the Nuer word for gun is derived from the word for spear, *mut mac*: ‘spear of fire.’ (see Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 138.). Nineteenth century accounts document many incidence of shooting animals in Bahr el-Ghazal. For example as Romolo Gessi recorded (in *Seven Years in the Soudan: Being a Record of Explorations, Adventures and Campaigns against the Arab Slave Hunters* (London: Sampson Low, Marsten & Co, 1892), 47.) ‘From this day till 4<sup>th</sup> July we did nothing but hunt; the natives grew accustomed to see us and at every report of a gun came in troops to claim their share. The soldiers fared sumptuously, and we regaled ourselves on beefsteaks which the gourmands of London and Paris would certainly have envied...’

and they did not touch anything in our area. That was the last elephant up to now...after then people became rebels: that was the time all the animals ran away.<sup>20</sup>

For some older people, the disappearance of wild animals from the landscape was also experienced as a shift in practices of bodily adornment and fashion. The absence of particular animals whose products had been used to make certain kinds of jewellery also meant a sense of cultural loss and historical change that was experienced and narrated through the landscape. As the elderly women I cited above described:

Back then (*watbeer*) people just used traps [to catch animals]. Even ostriches were many. We used to wear ostrich shell beads, my grandfather was wearing them, but that kind of jewelry is no longer made. I've never see the ostrich again, but feathers are still coming from somewhere in the east. <sup>21</sup>

Even in the late 1940s, ostrich jewellery was rare and expensive, not because ostriches were rare but because the shell was very difficult to work with and not many people knew how to make the beads properly.<sup>22</sup> In 2011-12, ostrich shell itself is now incredibly rare in Gogrial. Ivory jewellery (*tung akəwən* lit. elephant tusk) is still a regular sight, yet it is said to be harder to get and many people wear cheaper, more widely available white plastic jewellery, which is worked into similar designs and still called *tung akəwən*. This shift in body adornment was also attributed to there being fewer elephants and I was often told that you had to go to another area (Rumbek or Aweil) in order to obtain ivory.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Akec Reng, Kuajok, 21.11.2011

<sup>21</sup> Mou's aunt in Kuajok, 1.11.2011

<sup>22</sup> PRM GL Box 4/9 Field diary 21.04.1948

<sup>23</sup> Adut asked me to bring ivory from Rumbek (where I passed though on the way to Gogrial) where she thought it was available to buy in the market. I was not able to find it in Rumbek market.



Image 66: Ostrich shell jewellery, collected in Gogrial in the 1930s.<sup>24</sup>

The narrative of loss of wild animals and cultural products derived from them can be interpreted in several ways. It is a way of describing historical change. It is a way of describing how the past was different. These comments are also a subtle, but powerful way of critiquing the abuses of the military and rebel movements. In 2011-2012 it was hard to directly criticize the SPLA, given their place in the national historical narrative as the ‘liberators’ of South Sudanese. But for the civilian population, who had lived with the depredation of armed forces for 30 years, feelings were rather more ambivalent than this. Talking about the loss of wildlife to guns was a way of articulating how destructive the army has been. One elderly woman reflected simply that in the past, ‘wild animals were here and the land was good’ (*lai ten, piny apath*).<sup>25</sup>

This reveals a tension between civilian accounts of the destabilization of the physical (and moral) landscape with the SPLA’s own narrative of the liberation of South Sudan. Through the civil war, the SPLA had in a sense been attempting to reconfigure the landscape, through the barrel of a gun, by fighting for independence and the political reconstitution of the country.<sup>26</sup> ‘The bush’ was a place of liberation, but in liberating it the SPLA had also transformed it.

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<sup>24</sup> PRM Accession number 1934.8.24

<sup>25</sup> Mou’s aunt in Kuajok, 1.11.2011

<sup>26</sup> This idea that the SPLA could be seen in this way was suggested to me by Riiny Thiik Madut. An article by Damazo Dut Majak argues more or less this point, casting the SPLA as protectors who liberated the environment from the exploitations of the SAF and successive Khartoum

Comparing people and animals has been used as a moral critique of power and the government on other occasions. In the previous chapter I explained how the first civil war was associated with hiding in the forests and even becoming like wild animals (*lai*). In a speech, delivered by a mission educated Dinka man at Kuajok to the government minister Clement Mboro in 1964, the speaker remonstrates that the guns of the government which should be used to protect people from wild animals had been turned on the people, and people themselves had been hunted and shot:

These ignorant villagers shot down and killed were the backbone of the Government, they pay poll tax to the Government and the Government takes the money and buys things for their country [for] example guns to guard them from wild animals and other countries. Instead of all this we were shot down with our own guns, which we brought for our defense. We became the wild animals and the enemies in our own country and to our own Government and we don't know why we are done so.<sup>27</sup>

This is a fascinating statement, which touches on some very interesting ideas about relationships to the state and government responsibility for citizens. It resonates with Kuanyin Agoth's 1948 comment that during nineteenth century slave raids people 'lived as hunted things'.<sup>28</sup> The critique is based on the metaphor of people being killed like animals. In the second civil war the animals were devastated to the point of near disappearance, as were people.

The associations of *roor* are complex, forests are dangerous places and people do need protection from wild animals that live there. But their wilderness also provides protection and refuge. It is because it is wild and risky that people have been able to flee to *roor* to hide and forage during times of intense danger. One important implication of the loss of wild animals from forested areas of *roor* around places like Kuajok is that these areas have different associations of wilderness and remote refuge. Thus, in areas

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governments. However he downplays the allegation that the SPLA were themselves responsible for considerable environmental destruction. Damazo Dut Majak, "Rape of Nature: Environmental Destruction and Ethnic Cleansing in The White Nile Basin," in *White Nile Black Blood: War, Leadership and Ethnicity from Khartoum to Kampala*, ed. Jay Spaulding and Stephanie Beswick (New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> ACR A.85.26 Speech at Kuajok Mission Station (28<sup>th</sup> November 1964) to the Minister of the Interior.

<sup>28</sup> PRM GL Box 1/3 'History of the Gogrial Area Dinka'

such as Kuajok, the effects of the civil war have altered the complementarity between *roor* and *baai*.

The next part of this chapter continues to explore the notion that the characteristics of *roor* and remote areas have recently been changed. In parts of *toc* in Gogrial East the effects of the civil war on inter-ethnic relationships had transformed the landscape in a different way. Here, *toc* and *roor* towards the border with Unity State had been transformed from a place of wild refuge to a place of much greater insecurity.

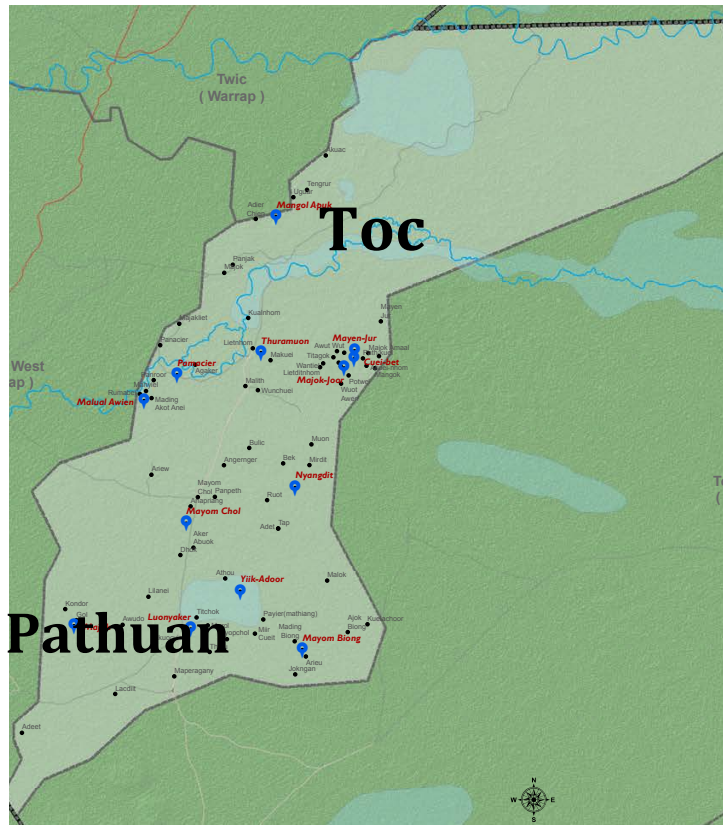
#### DEALING WITH A DIFFERENT LANDSCAPE

As they were drawn into the politics of the civil war during the ethnic factionalization of the SPLA during the 1990s, the traditional grazing conflicts along the border between Gogrial and Unity State became significantly more violent and militarized.<sup>29</sup> This insecurity constitutes a significant alteration to the landscape in Gogrial. Concerns were particularly focused on areas of *toc* in Gogrial East, where insecurity was a serious problem. People had been displaced from areas in the east and the north-east (particularly from places very close to the border such as Nyang payam). It was no longer possible to take cattle to some pastures and this had tangible consequences in the form of displaced people and concentrations of cattle in certain places. Areas of historic significance to people who participated in my research have been affected by insecurity. In the opening lines of his song, Deng Kuac had sung about being on the way to Wutdum Anyuon, the place Anyuon Deng had been given in return for his brother's lives in Jiel Yuot's historical account in Cueicok. To give an example of how serious this problem was perceived to be in Gogrial East, in 2012, an Apuk community committee in Kuajok produced a report estimating that 33,000 people have been displaced from *toc*.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Jok and Hutchinson, "Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities," 134.

<sup>30</sup> James Mawir Mou and Achol Madut Ayol, *Report on Field Visit to Assess Insecurity in Gogrial East County Carried out on 14/01/2012* (Kuajok: Apuk Community Association, 2012).



Map 14: Gogrial East County. Indicating regions of *pathuan* and *toc* (my annotations) Areas of insecurity are in the East and North, esp around Mayen Jur (Nyang payam).<sup>31</sup>

Giir Thiik, in the 1948, had related to DC Hunter how during the slave raids of the nineteenth century, the Apuk had fled from *pathuan* (the name of the southern part of Gogrial East, which is on higher ground and has sandy soil, compared from the low, clay floodplains of *toc*) to *toc* for safety:

At that time [the late nineteenth century] they were so numerous that *pathuan* [the southern part of Gogrial East county] was almost all homesteads with hardly a tree to be seen. They fled to their *toc* lands and the forest came back. It became great elephant country.<sup>32</sup>

In 2011-2012, the situation was the exact opposite: people were fleeing from the insecurity in *toc* to the safety of *pathuan*. These changing characteristics of *pan Apuk*, and what should be done about them, were frequently discussed through the question of ‘protection’ and how people should be protected. There were, unsurprisingly, different

<sup>31</sup> IOM, *Gogrial East Village Assessment Survey. County Atlas 2013* (Juba: IOM, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> PRM GL Box 1/3 ‘History of the Gogrial Area Dinka’

opinions about this.<sup>33</sup> One solution to this insecurity, which was primarily advocated by educated or ‘elite’ community members was to make *toc* less ‘remote’ and less dangerous by bringing it into networks of state protection and control. Another important view was the necessity of guns to protect people. But, this has not eradicated older ideas and feelings of vulnerability and the need for other forms of protection in *toc*. Cattle were still taken for blessing by the *bäny bith* before their journey to *toc*. Further, some young cattle keepers were seeking new forms of spiritual protection embodied in the rise of a spirit called MABIORDIT.<sup>34</sup>

#### INCORPORATING REMOTENESS

In 2012 members of the Apuk community living in Kuajok conducted a study of insecurity in *toc*, based on visits to Nyang and Thiek Thou. A report of the findings was distributed to Apuk government representatives, the County Commissioner, MPs and educated members (referred to as ‘the intellectuals’) of the Apuk community.<sup>35</sup> This report is a useful snapshot of what the ‘intellectuals’ of the Apuk community believed the problems of rural security to be. They claimed that they were at risk from the uneven disarmament, specifically because Unity State had not been disarmed, whereas Warrap had been (the report notably glossed over the fact that many in Warrap were still armed or had been rearmed). *Toc* Apuk was said to be under attack from ‘Nuer militias and armed Nuer cattle rustlers’ who ‘frequently spy on the area to where the cattle camps reach so as to launch their attack’.<sup>36</sup>

A further problem the report detailed was insufficient police protection. It was claimed that the regular county police force in Gogrial East was insufficient. Although thirty officers had been deployed in the locality of Thiek Thou, they frequently left, leaving civilians with no police protection, the report explained. An additional police deployment from Juba was apparently not providing protection either, claiming the Commissioner

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<sup>33</sup> Another important approach to maintaining security in *toc* was local justice, courts and peace meetings. This issue is not discussed in this thesis, but is the subject of Naomi Pendle’s PhD, which is currently in process.

<sup>34</sup> I have adopted the convention of capitalizing the name of these spirits, which are given proper names, in order to distinguish them from the name of a person.

<sup>35</sup> Mou and Ayol, *Report on Field Visit to Assess Insecurity in Gogrial East County Carried out on 14/01/2012*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



had no authority over them. The report suggestively commented that they appeared to be there ‘for their own reason and not that of protecting the civilians’.<sup>37</sup> I also heard from people in Lietnhom complaining those deployed were doing little more than shooting animals to eat.<sup>38</sup> The opinion of one woman, called Achol Atem, who had been displaced in Thiek Thou, was recorded. She had told the team that she did not believe the elected government were doing anything to provide security and blamed ‘the intellectuals of Gogrial East’ (i.e. the authors of the report) for this failure.<sup>39</sup>

The solutions that were proposed in the report were twofold. Overall, the solution to ensure protection was to increase state security and connectivity in *toc*. The first strand involved increasing police presence in the *toc*. The second involved various measures that would make the area more connected to the rest of the County. The report authors recommended the building of three bridges over the Jur River and the construction of a mast to provide a telephone network.

This strategy, of dealing with insecurity by bringing people into the state is a near replication of older attempts by the state to deal with governance and rural insecurity in Gogrial (see Chapter 2): a new state but very similar policies. This approach is also consonant with international agencies’ advice on improving security. NGO and UN studies have emphasized the lack of state capacity to provide this protection as a source of insecurity.<sup>40</sup> The findings of these internationally authored reports reflect the fact that there were indeed voices in Gogrial calling for SPLA deployment on the border between Warrap and Unity states.<sup>41</sup> It is not that this approach is necessarily wrong; in fact research from Karamoja suggests that effective state delivery of security and justice mechanisms does reduce cattle raiding.<sup>42</sup> But not everyone is perceiving the state as a source of protection in *toc*.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>38</sup> Fieldnotes, Lietnhom, 22.04.2012

<sup>39</sup> Mou and Ayol, *Report on Field Visit to Assess Insecurity in Gogrial East*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Saferworld, *People’s Peacemaking Perspectives: South Sudan* (London: Saferworld, 2012), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Saferworld, *People’s Perspectives on Peace-Making in South Sudan: An Initial Assessment of Insecurity and Peacebuilding Responses in Warrap State* (London: Saferworld, September 2011), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Eaton, “Violence, Revenge and the History of Cattle Raiding Along the Kenya-Uganda Border, c.1830-2008.”

## NOVEL FORMS OF SPIRITUAL PROTECTION

State security was not the only way that protection was being sought. Some young cattle-keepers, who took their families cattle to graze in these distant parts of *toc*, had different ideas about how to protect themselves. One of these was through MABIORDIT a free-divinity that has been active in Gogrial East since around the time of the CPA. I will explain the significance of MABIORDIT. This is relatively preliminary research into the spirit, but there are strong reasons to see MABIORDIT as a response to the context in grazing areas produced by civil war: a new spirit for protection in a new landscape.

MABIORDIT is a free-divinity of the cattle-keeping youth. What Lienhardt called ‘free-divinities’ are part of Dinka religious belief, in which there is a higher power called *Nbialic*, meaning literally ‘in the above’, which Lienhardt translated as Divinity.<sup>43</sup> As well as *Nbialic* there are other smaller divinities, or spirits called *yath* (pl. *yeeth*). All these forms of ultra-human powers are called *jok* (pl. *jaak*). There are two sorts of *yath*: ‘clan-divinities’, which are associated with clans and resemble classic anthropological totems; and ‘free-divinities’, which are not associated with particular clans and are given proper Dinka names. Free-divinities can make themselves known by appearing in dreams, causing illness or possessing people. They are formless, but they have particular personalities and they have individual biographies.<sup>44</sup> When someone is possessed, they are understood to become a vehicle for the free-divinity, who may speak through them.<sup>45</sup>

MABIORDIT is considered unusual for a variety of reasons: as one man said to me in Luonyaker ‘*acin jokdit acit Mabiordit*’ – there is not another power like MABIORDIT.<sup>46</sup> Estimates I was given (although I was not able to verify them) suggest a relatively high number of encounters in Apuk: among the *wut* of Amuk thirty-two people have apparently been possessed by MABIORDIT. Other *wut* had comparably high numbers of cases; I was told there were twenty-six in Boyar (to the south) and twenty-four in Apuol (to the north-west).<sup>47</sup> I first encountered someone who had been possessed by MABIORDIT in Kuajok near the beginning of my stay in Warrap (I met him when he was

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<sup>43</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Lienhardt describes the attributes of MACARDIT, DENG and GARANG, which were active powers in Gogrial during his research *ibid.*, 81–95.

<sup>45</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Fieldnotes, Luonyaker, 19.06.2012

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

no longer actively possessed by the spirit). And, later, as I continued to enquire about MABIORDIT, I was taken to meet another man in Gogrial East, in Maliai boma, who was possessed by the spirit.

Various other characteristics appear to make MABIORDIT unique. Firstly, MABIORDIT only comes to young people, and only to those who keep cattle in rural areas. It mainly comes to men but it may come to young women, although it leaves them once a sacrifice is made. This association with women is connected to the Apuk origin story of MABIORDIT (explained below). Second, MABIORDIT only comes to people who are good fighters. Repeatedly I was told that this free-divinity likes fighting and came because of war. One of the features of MABIORDIT possession is prophetic dreams, which tell the individual when conflict or an attack is coming (things being revealed in dream is a common feature of spiritual power more widely). More than anticipating violence, MABIORDIT actually compels a possessed person to go into battle. The spirit will protect them and bring them back safely, but someone who has MABIORDIT and does not go to fight risks death. Finally, a crucial point is that MABIORDIT has a very interesting relationship to guns. People possessed by MABIORDIT do not fight with a gun, they only fight with a spear and they fight very effectively with it – possession makes them excellent spear fighters. Even more, MABIORDIT is said to make people impervious to bullets – in a sense it renders guns irrelevant because if someone possessed by MABIORDIT is shot, theoretically they will not die.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF MABIORDIT

The fullest account given to me in Gogrial East in 2012 by a cattle-camp leader (*Majok wut*) called Mangar Wol.<sup>48</sup> Mangar explained that MABIORDIT originated in Tonj East County (in the south of Warrap State) among the Luac Dinka, and came to Apuk Giir Thiik through the Tonj North County and Koŋor Dinka.<sup>49</sup> I heard two different versions of how MABIORDIT originally appeared: one in which MABIORDIT came from the river (a common way for spirits to emerge) and another in which MABIORDIT fell

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Mangar Wol (and friends). Luonyaker 19.06.2012. *Majok Wut* is the leader of a cattle-camp of any size, he is in charge of the people and (for example) will make a decision about when they move on to the next camping ground.

<sup>49</sup> Lienhardt described how free-divinities were said to move over geographical areas and the divinity GARANG moved from east to west and was known in different parts of Rek territory (what is now Warrap) Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 84.

from the sky into a bowl. However, I was not able to get more details on this version. Accounts of how MABIORDIT first appeared are disturbing and violent. Mangar explained that MABIORDIT first came to a man called Mabior Madieu from Tonj East. It is said that in the original possession, MABIORDIT told Mabior Madieu to sacrifice (*aci tem rol* lit. cut the throat) one of his children. In response to this request Mabior sacrificed a girl called Akuol. From then on Mabior did certain 'divine' things, like making pronouncements about the future and eating fire.

Encounters with MABIORDIT can indeed be traced back to Tonj East, as various informants in Gogrial had described. Monyluak Alor Kuol, a former magistrate in the Sudan Judiciary and SPLA Judicial Officer, who completed an MPhil in Anthropology at Oxford University, heard a case of child sacrifice in Tonj East associated with a spirit called MABIORDIT in 1987 while he was serving as an SPLA judiciary officer, which he described in his thesis.<sup>50</sup> He records that a case was brought against a man, called Mabiordit, who slaughtered his eight-year-old son at the request of a spirit (also) called MABIORDIT. The man had claimed that MABIORDIT needed him to kill his son, as an act of peace, because this would resolve ongoing conflicts between the Luac Dinka and the Pakkam Dinka in Lakes and Nuer in Unity State.<sup>51</sup> After being instructed by MABIORDIT, Mabiordit convinced his wife that they needed to sacrifice their son. His wife, presumably out of fear because MABIORDIT was considered to be incredibly powerful, agreed to this request. The child was taken to the river, his throat cut and was buried by his parents. The SPLA arrested Mabiordit but he was later released without trial on the promise to stop all ritual killing of this kind. Seven years later, in 1995, MABIORDIT passed to the man's brother, Monychol who brought people to the site of where his brother's son had been killed and erected a shrine and sacrificed several bulls in commemoration of the child.

Monyluak Alor explains that MABIORDIT was well known in Tonj East at the time of the child sacrifice incident and was said to have been unique in a number of ways, although he makes no reference to special fighting powers. Possession by MABIORDIT in Tonj East gave an individual the power to predict the future. But unlike other spirits that

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<sup>50</sup> Monyluak Alor Kuol, "The Anthropology of Law and the Issues of Justice in Southern Sudan Today" (University of Oxford, St Antony's College, 2000), 30–31.

<sup>51</sup> This is an area of chronic local conflict, often now called the Tri-State area. The colonial border dispute discussed in chapter 4 (p.147-149) refers to the same area.

could do this the person possessed by MABIORDIT would not use water and a calabash (the normal way of divining); MABIORDIT simply made pronouncements through them. MABIORDIT was also said to be able to direct people to where their cattle would be secure and lead his followers in local conflicts. MABIORDIT has a series of successes, where people gained cattle and this confirmed its power. MABIORDIT was considered violent and fearsome but was nonetheless associated with peace and reconciliation.

Although there are differences in the detail of these accounts, there are enough similarities to think there is a connection to the MABIORDIT that has recently become active in Gogrial East: spirits are believed to travel across large areas; Apuk say that MABIORDIT came from Tonj East. There are striking similarities with the Tonj East accounts; they both describe the killing of the child of the man Mabiordit/ Mabiord Madieu at request of the spirit. In the Apuk version it is a daughter; in Luac it is a son. In both cases MABIORDIT is associated with prophetic visions, successful battles and in both places MABIORDIT is seen as unique. Some aspects of the meaning of MABIORDIT have changed. In Tonj East MABIORDIT, although violent, was associated with conciliation between different sections. While fearsome and dangerous, MABIORDIT nonetheless drew power, at least partially, from its ability to make peace. In Gogrial East, MABIORDIT appears to have become more explicitly a fighting divinity. Peacemaking functions, although they may be latent, were not emphasized. In Gogrial East MABIORDIT draws power in battle from recourse to older tactics of warfare.

#### UNDERSTANDING MABIORDIT

MABIORDIT can be seen as an expression of a crisis of protection in *toc* since the second civil war. Three points are crucial to understand about MABIORDIT. Firstly, MABIORDIT addresses religious questions about human strength and weakness, how to attain spiritual protection and ameliorate vulnerability through the symbolic control of experience. Secondly, the reason for the emergence and spread of MABIORDIT is connected to the diminishing authority of the *bäny bith*. Thirdly, questions about protection are not satisfactorily addressed by the possession of guns and guns have not eradicated older ideas about how to mitigate vulnerability. Sharon Hutchinson's research suggested that

gun-related deaths had been disengaged from spiritual consequences during civil war.<sup>52</sup> But the emergence of MABIORDIT in Gogrial East suggests that rather than spiritual associations becoming irrelevant, for some people at least, the consequence of the civil war has been to shift the nature of how spiritual protection might be accessed.

#### MITIGATING VULNERABILITY

In June 2012 I recorded a MABIORDIT invocation song by a young man, Maror Maror who I had met in Maliai and who was possessed by MABIORDIT.<sup>53</sup> A closer look at this invocation helps to understand the importance of this spirit. The overriding message of the invocation centres on the paradox of human strength and human weakness – a longstanding and key aspect of Dinka theology and one of the characteristics that Lienhardt identified in Dinka religious thought and practice is the attempt to overcome human fragility and weakness.<sup>54</sup> Thus spiritual power is closely associated with the ability to ameliorate vulnerability.

The invocation of MABIORDIT contains reference to the need to be strong and brave, but it also expresses feelings of fear, vulnerability and desire for protection from *Nhialic* and MABIORDIT. These are questions that guns cannot answer and appeals to MABIORDIT are a way of trying to resolve them. There are four important features of this song that illustrate this predicament. The first point is that it graphically describes conflict with Nuer at the border with Unity State and the inability of the government and guns to deal with this crisis. Second, it emotively laments this state of insecurity in the *toc* and the human failure, specifically the failure of the leaders (*beny*) to look after people (*kec muk*) and to look after the (home) land (*thor nbom baai*). Third, it describes human fear and the need for bravery in the face of insecurity. Fourthly it asks for spiritual help, repeatedly – help from MABIORDIT and also from *Nhialic* and *bäny bith*. Thus, Maror's song speaks directly to a struggle to overcome human weakness and the paradox of human strength and human frailty.

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<sup>52</sup> Sharon Hutchinson, "Death, Memory and the Politics of Legitimation: Nuer Experiences of the Continuing Second Sudanese Civil War," in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 63.

<sup>53</sup> Recorded 18.06.12, Maliai Payam, Gogrial East.

<sup>54</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 239.

From the opening lines of the song, we can tell that the singer is locating it within ‘modern’ concerns and the government and guns. One of the very first lines emphasizes the inability of either the government or guns to maintain security. This is a simple, but powerful indictment of view that neither guns of the government can bring peace:

*Bi Turuk keke dhanj, aḡoot ok akei dɔɔr toc yüiric.*

The Government will come with the gun; still we are not in peace in the *toc*.

The context for the song is the danger faced by the ongoing local conflicts with the Nuer and the need for help from MABIORDIT to address these. He addresses ‘Riak Machar’ (the former Vice President of South Sudan, of Nuer ethnicity) as a way of addressing Nuer leaders. As is typical in Dinka songs, this danger and violence is illustrated by highly visual imagery: ‘the place where the vulture sits’ connotes a battle ground, where the dead are being picked at by scavenging birds:

*Wet ca man cok a Nuer, yen ben a jɔl. Tɔḡ tuom dom a toc nbom.*

Because of the bad things done by Nuer, there will be anger and fighting in *toc* – at the border

*Tɔḡ tuom dom a toc nbom,*

The battle happened in the far side of *toc*

*Tɔḡ nek yen Machot, wai wai go ɔɔr nyuoc*

The battle killed Machot and the vultures sit

*Nek Mayuan tɔḡ Nuer*

I killed a tall man in the battle with Nuer (?)

*Go ɔɔr anyuoc, ɔɔr anyuoc, wet ca maan*

The vultures sit, the vultures sit, because of hatred

...

*Riak Machar aba wetdie gam.*

Riak Machar, accept what I am saying

*Ok aba ɔɔm tɔḡ lüiric, tɔḡ lüiric, tɔḡ lüiric*

We will meet in the battle, in the battle, in the battle

*Dɔɔr ke liu thin, ok aba ɔɔm go ɔɔr nyuoc.*

There is no peace here; we will meet where the vultures sit

*Go ɔɔr nyuoc raan keu.*

Where the vultures sit on a man’s back.

The threat of death and feelings of fear are exposed through the repeated emphasis on danger and violence. This is also a comment on the apparent inevitability of insecurity. MABIORDIT protects them, but it still sends them into battle, instead of pronouncing

they should avoid it. The state of insecurity is expressed through the idiom of the land. He sings that the land is suffering because of war (*piny adbolnbom*):

*Aye beny a thor nbom baai, beny a thor nbom baai*  
The leader looks after the things of the home area; the leader looks after the things of the home area  
*Ke looi raan machar a juec, acie dom buk kek amuk nhiim*  
The work/duties of people are so many; we can't hold them all in our head  
*Ke yin akuc kec muk beny cie thor nbom baai*  
And you didn't know how to hold (care for) people; the leader didn't protect the home area

The song is characterized by both asserting the bravery of the youth, but also explaining that they are weak and confused and asking for assistance from MABIORDIT and spiritual powers:

*A ric acie liec na ba roor a man tɔŋ thok a nyii wei*  
If you are afraid you will not face the fighting; when the strong people come you will run for your life  
*A ric wa acie liec*  
If you are afraid then you will not face the fighting  
*Ric bar cieŋ, ʔen cie tuom ke yen wa*  
A fearful man will not make me go to fight (if you fear I will not accept to move with you)  
....  
*Adiem<sup>55</sup> Adiem ma*  
Adiem Adiem of my mother  
*Bar e lɔŋ path*  
Come with a good prayer  
*Alaŋalaŋ, Alaŋalaŋ Nɬialic Madbol*  
I'm begging you God Almighty  
*Alaŋ Wa*  
I'm begging you father  
*Alaŋalaŋ Nɬialic ee*  
I am begging you God  
*Alaŋalaŋ Nɬialic Madbol*  
I'm begging you God Almighty

The need for divine help is complemented at various points with even stronger assertions of human vulnerability, for example, the notion that people 'just can't keep everything in their heads' (see above). This weakness of people is further conveyed by poetic reference to human beings as merely ants (*miith acuok*), which can be crushed and

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<sup>55</sup> Judging from other parts of the song, Adiem appears to be another name for MABIORDIT



scattered.<sup>56</sup> He talks about the youth as lost, afraid ‘running in circles’ and even running away from *toc*. *Toc* used in this context may also be a synonym for a battle, because inter-community conflicts take place in *toc*.

*Ok aric ci la wel wel, a wel wel toc...*

We, the youth are running in circles in *toc*...

*Wuot Apuk Giir, wër ba rioc kat toc.*

The sections of Apuk are scared and running from *toc*

The last third of the song is an extended, repeated appeal for help from *Nhialic* and MABIORDIT and *bäny bith* in the face of this human vulnerability, which would potential lead to Maror becoming possessed by MABIORDIT:

*Ee Mabiordit Deng Adiem waric, yin nek jək mathdie*

Mabiordit Deng Adiem change it; you’ve been got by a power (jək) my friend

*Ku Mabior, Mabior Panyaar waric, yin nek jək mathdie*

And Mabior, Mabior Panyaar change it; you’ve been got by a power (jək) my friend

*Ku Mabior Adiem, luak jək, luak aciek, luak Nhialic, buk rəm luak*

And Mabior Adiem, the luak of a power (jək), the luak of the creator, the luak of Divinity; we will meet in the luak

...(repeats with variation)

*Bäny bith kuony wei...*

Spear-master help...

*Nhialic kuony wei...*

Divinity/God help...

Through the themes articulated in this song, not only can we see how the appeals are made to MABIORDIT, we can also see how it is speaking to longstanding practical and moral questions about how to overcome human weakness and how to harness spiritual protection.

#### CHANGING POSITION OF BÄNY BITH

Another important question is why spiritual protection is being sought from MABIORDIT, over *bäny bith* (masters of the fishing spear)? The emergence of MABIORDIT must, in part, be explained with reference to the changing nature of *bäny bith* authority –

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<sup>56</sup> See Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 246.

which is in itself connected to the rising importance of governmental and military authority in South Sudan.

Lienhardt wrote that the primary role of *bäny bith* was to protect the welfare of people, literally to hold the lives (*amuk wei*) of the community – it was said that they ‘belonged’ to and supported everyone.<sup>57</sup> As such they are concerned with the holistic care of the land and the environment, for example to ensure there will be enough water for cattle and agriculture. They mitigated vulnerability by communicating with Nhialic and other ultra-human powers and divinities through sacrifice, invocation and prayer. One of their important roles was to protect people and cattle in *toc*. This prayer, spoken by a *bäny bith*, recorded in the late 1940s, asked for protection on this journey:

Forest of my father, keep my people and cattle well. Let them pass their sojourn without misfortune. No holes to break a man, no thorn to prick someone’s feet, no tree stump to wound someone’s feet. No lions, so that my cattle stay well.<sup>58</sup>

*Bäny bith* were not the only sources of protection. Members of *bäny bith* clans had also told Lienhardt that they were more politically influential in the past.<sup>59</sup> Lienhardt argues, highly plausibly, that this was partly because of the proliferation of different forms of local authority like government chiefs and formalized courts that were introduced during British colonial rule which had affected the position of *bäny bith*.<sup>60</sup> The government had taken on the task of maintaining security.<sup>61</sup> Lienhardt was even told during his research that it was no longer necessary for a *bäny bith* to say prayers in the cattle-camp because the government was now protecting people in camps.<sup>62</sup> Lienhardt’s informants (he does not say specifically who) also told him that there were more free-divinities than there were in the past, who could affect anyone, not just *bäny bith*, which Lienhardt suggested was a result of the undermining of the *bäny bith* authority.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>58</sup> ACR A 114/19/3 “Ethnographic notes”p.49-50.

<sup>59</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, 168.

<sup>60</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, “The Dinka of The Southern Sudan: Religion and Social Structure” (University of Oxford, Exeter College, 1952). Letter 66.A.25 March 21 1942 in SAD Collins 930/2

<sup>61</sup> A.C Beaton, *Equatoria Province Handbook* (Sudan Government Publications, 1949), 44.

<sup>62</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 241.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 169.

The answer to this question is also connected to the last civil war. This is part of a series of things (going back to colonial administration) that has affected the position of the *bäny bith*. Unlike other cases where spiritual leaders have been closely linked to rebel movements, *Bäny bith* were never formally or coherently connected to any military operation or the SPLM/A,<sup>64</sup> although those interviewed in Gogrial saw their role as protecting people during the last civil war. One example, which I was told about several times by *bäny bith* in Gogrial, was in the early 1990s when a group of *bäny bith* from Gogrial walked to the government held town of Wau, where the SAF were stationed, sacrificing bulls on the road to call for peace.<sup>65</sup> Many *bäny bith* recall local commanders coming to visit them to receive blessings, some, like Juac Aleu (from Wunkuel, near the River Jur) described sustained relationships with particular SPLA commanders for large parts of the war.<sup>66</sup> Juac Aleu, told me a story of how the Commander he knew well had wanted to give him a gun after blessing him. However, Juac explained that he refused the gun - and he asked for a cow instead, which the commander gave him.<sup>67</sup> Also indicating how *bäny bith* see their powers as being distinct from the military.

But in other respects, the war and the authority of military commanders exposed the limits of *bäny bith* power. The major example of this, as mentioned in the previous chapter was Kerubino Kuanyin Bol. Ajingdit (a very powerful *bäny bith*) is said to have beseeched Kerubino in Wunrok to stop his rebellion and spare the people, but Kerubino refused.<sup>68</sup> Ajingdit left Tuic County in October 1994 in protest at Kerubino's presence.<sup>69</sup> Rëec Lojar, a *bäny bith* from Gogrial also recounted how he had asked Kerubino Kuanyin when he was in Langic to stop his rebellion, but Kerubino still refused.<sup>70</sup> This was a demonstration of the power of the military.

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<sup>64</sup> Kuol, "The Anthropology of Law and the Issues of Justice in Southern Sudan Today," 28. C.f. *Mhondoro mediums' support to rebels in Zimbabwe* David Lan, *Guns & Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). In the Sierra Leone War Crimes Tribunal a spiritual leader, Allieu Konewa was convicted of supporting Kamajor fighters Nathalie Wlodarczyk, *Magic and Warfare: Appearance and Reality in Contemporary African Conflict and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6. Spiritual leadership has been important in conflicts in Northern Uganda, Erin Baines, "Spirits and Social Reconstruction After Mass Violence: Rethinking Transitional Justice," *African Affairs* 109, no. 436 (2010): 409-30.

<sup>65</sup> Described by Juac Aleu, Wunkuel on 06.12.2011 and Akol Mayom in Kuajok on 29.04.2012

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Juac Aleu, Wunkuel on 06.12.2011.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Fieldnotes, Wunrok, 07.04.12.

<sup>69</sup> Sudan Democratic Gazette October 1994, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Rëec Lojar, 04.07.2012 Gogrial

At various points in South Sudanese history scholars have identified an increase in the number of reported cases of free-divinities. Douglas Johnson suggests that free-divinities in Nuer areas multiplied during the colonial period because of the suppression of Prophets and the lack of prophetic controls on spiritual activity.<sup>71</sup> Lienhardt too had described the increased number of free-divinities during the colonial period as a result of the waning of *bäny biib's* monopoly on spiritual power. MABIORDIT exhibits a further 'decentralisation' of spiritual authority. It comes to many different people; there is not a specific 'prophet' associated with the divinity – this is reflected in the high numbers of reported possessions.

#### THE LIMITS OF THE POWER OF GUNS

MABIORDIT possessions suggest a critique of the primacy of guns by making the youth into powerful fighters without guns and making them impervious to bullets. The person who is possessed by MABIORDIT does not go into battle with a gun. They do not need one because of their strength and skill with a spear. The narrative of MABIORDIT actually rejects the gun. There is a more general point to be made here about the nature of protection and the meaning of guns in relation to MABIORDIT. Even at the height of inter-ethnic conflict in the 1990s many rural people distanced themselves from the conflicts remarking that wars fought with guns were not 'real wars' that tested manhood or bravery and even that they were 'not our war, but a war only educated people make us fight'.<sup>72</sup> In the 1980s many Western Nuer explained to Hutchinson that the spear had a greater military significance than the gun because spears also had a sacrificial role and guns were merely defensive.<sup>73</sup>

The idea, developed most extensively by Hutchinson, that the civil war (1983-2005) ruptured bonds of sociality and spirituality, needs to be complicated. Sharon Hutchinson has argued that guns changed the moral codes of conflict because the sheer scale of violence in this period meant that, in some cases under the encouragement of military

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<sup>71</sup> Douglas H Johnson, "On Disciples and Magicians: The Diversification of Divinity among the Nuer during the Colonial Era," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no. 1 (1992): 19.

<sup>72</sup> Jok and Hutchinson, "Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities," 132.

<sup>73</sup> Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, 137.

commanders, attempts to deal with so many violent deaths from bullet wounds (in which, unlike the spear, the link between victim and killer could not be traced) had resulted in lifting previous spiritual sanctions for such deaths.<sup>74</sup> What firearms offer (in terms of protection) is not straightforward, neither is it accepted by everyone.

Guns have not removed the need for spiritual protection, although the effects of war have changed its expression. Recent accounts from Jonglei, which trace the growing influence of spiritual leaders suggest that people are seeking out spiritual protection in novel forms – or it is being expressed in different forms in response to current political realities.<sup>75</sup> MABIORDIT shows that the desire for spiritual protection is very real for some young people: answering enduring questions in a new political context. Thus MABIORDIT can be understood as a creative response, drawing on traditional spiritual practice, to the changes that guns have meant for the landscape of Gogrial and the changing geography of protection.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered how the civil war has altered the landscape and local perceptions of the geography of Gogrial: from the emptying of wildlife (*lai*) from forests, to the increased insecurity and displacement from grazing areas in *toc* Apuk. Debates about these changes and their possible solutions reveal how narratives about the changing landscape can provide a moral critique, how the effects of the war are experienced on an everyday basis and how debates about the security and the future of the area were playing out at the time of my research.

The loss of wildlife was a way of narrating historical change and the disruption of war and a way of critiquing the violence of various military forces, including the SPLA. Similarly to the way Kerubino's military base in Gogrial town was being treated, this narrative allowed my older interviewees to critique military depredations and to articulate a sense of dramatic loss.

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<sup>74</sup> Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas*, 140–144.

<sup>75</sup> Rolandsen and Breidlid, "A Critical Analysis of Cultural Explanations for the Violence in Jonglei State, South Sudan."

Before the last civil war, in situations of insecurity, the people of Apuk described running to the refuge of *toc*. The exact opposite is now true; the inter-ethnic conflicts in *toc* are displacing people and preventing access. There were different ideas about how to address the situation. Those people who had orientated themselves towards the state were responding by trying to make *toc* less remote – following now long-established state efforts to deal with violence by bringing areas into government control. In this process they were alienating a ‘lumpen’ body of the cattle keeping youth as violent, unruly and distant. Many accounts of guns and pastoralist conflict in South Sudan and in the region more widely have emphasized the transformative power of guns on pastoralist conflict.<sup>76</sup> Guns were seen as an important source of protection, but they were not enough. Some youth were searching for spiritual protection as they attempted to negotiate the complex and far-reaching effects of war on cattle-keeping, inter-ethnic relationships and spiritual authority. MABIORDIT is a product of this situation. When a young man with whom I stayed in Kuajok tried to explain the spirit to me he said, ‘MABIORDIT came because of war.’<sup>77</sup> This was an accurate assessment; MABIORDIT is a cultural response to war and the renegotiation of an inverted landscape.

Deng Kuac’s song illustrates how different ideas about protection and the landscape are intertwined. He began his song by singing about the path to *toc*, asking his uncle, Akec Mading, to bless their journey. He ended it by singing about a victorious cattle raid and the potency of guns, insisting that they need the protection of firearms in *toc* as much as they need a blessing from the *bäny bith*. He also sang about being on the way to the cattle camp Wutdum Anyuon; a journey that has become too dangerous to make but is still traversed in song and in memory. The paths that are taken to *toc* and the areas of *roor* where people have fled and sought shelter in time of danger have been transformed. Attributes and understandings of the landscape, such as *roor* and *baai*, have been subject to change and interaction with wider political processes and debates within Gogrial itself. The making and remaking of Gogrial has always happened in the context of huge political change and violence; but it has, and will continue to be a creative and dynamic process.

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<sup>76</sup> For a statement of this position see Kennedy Agade Mkutu, *Guns and Governance in the Rift Valley: Pastoralist Conflict and Small Arms* (Surrey: James Currey, 2008).

<sup>77</sup> Fieldnotes Kuajok, 10.11.2011.

## 8 Conclusion

This has been a historical study of people who have been cast, in the historiography of Sudan, as marginalized pastoralist victims of centralized violence over which they have little or no control. The picture presented here has been much more complicated: while a narrative of foreign oppression does resonate for many in Gogrial, in other important ways, the people of Gogrial do not consider themselves to be on the margins for they create their own centres and their own forms of connectivity. For an academic study, the only way to capture the complexity of this situation is by turning attention to constructive local experience. This thesis has explored the local experiences of Gogrial's history by tracing how the people who live there have renegotiated their relationship with the landscape under extremely volatile circumstances. To convey this, I have presented the historical production of landscape in Gogrial as network of physical, genealogical and historical pathways and centres that are moral and familial as well as connected to the state.

This local study has wider implications for a variety of interconnected fields and issues in African history. It has offered insights on the cultural geography of a pastoralist region; fresh approaches for understanding rural people's ideas about statehood, and in particular how pastoralists seek to tap the power of the state; and a critical perspective on the experience of political marginalization. In a wider sense, this has been a study of how people respond to chronic conflict, and how rural populations live through post-colonial civil war.

This thesis has offered various theoretical and methodological contributions pertaining to how local perspectives on the past can be engaged with and integrated into historical accounts. Deng Kuac's song has been a guide and a way of attending to forms of historical narrative in Gogrial. One major concern of my work has been to produce a genuinely inter-disciplinary historical-ethnography that is not isolated from the wider political context in South Sudan. All interviews and historical insights (discursive and non-discursive) were generated through ethnographic research. This study has also shown how an anthropologist's archive can be used as a historical source, it has been

enriched by the decision to build on Godfrey Lienhardt's work and notes by returning to Gogrial, his main field site.

A major focus of this thesis has been on complex and overlapping relationships with different kinds of centres. This interest developed because, ironically, in an area that has been represented as an archetypal pastoralist periphery, centrality is one of the most politically important ideas in Gogrial. Centrality is woven into historical narratives in claims on land (because those at the centre have the right of first precedence), and in the construction of *baai* as a moral centre of Dinka society. And this is itself an illustration of how landscape is constructed morally, how the landscape is temporal and historical as much as it is physical and how it interacts with collective and individual life histories. The construction of *baai* as a moral central also shows how people and family are at the centre of historical accounts in Gogrial. The strength of the moral significance of *baai* is further illustrated by the fact that it has become a powerful political idea, which has itself been projected on to the nation.

War and catastrophic events have punctuated the recent history of Gogrial. These have been experienced and articulated as a series of destructions (*piny aci riäk*) and reconstructions of the land (*piny aci piath*); a process that has often been explained as the scattering of people in the wild forest (*roor*) or swamp (*toc*) and the subsequent conversion of *roor* back into socialized space (*baai*). Scholarship on African history is producing an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the ways that memory is materially embodied through the landscape and bodily practice.<sup>1</sup> Because *roor* to *baai* conversion is a practical, as well as a discursive, response to insecurity, it is a very powerful way of seeing how historical narratives exist in the landscape itself. In Gogrial, this was the result of the idea that the land was nothing without people.

A similar contrast between 'wilderness' and 'inhabited land' has been noted in a number of works on the social construction of African landscapes, several of which have

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<sup>1</sup> Tamara Giles-Vernick, "Doli: Translating an African Environmental History of Loss in the Sangha River Basin of Equatorial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 03 (2000): 391–392; Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).



explored understandings of history as a process of socializing wild land.<sup>2</sup> In Gogrial, movements between *baai* and *roor* are partly a commentary on history and historical migrations, but they are also the result of duress. Conflicts have periodically forced people to scatter into places of remote refuge and then to return. Movement between *baai* and *roor* and the reclamation of *roor* is thus a way of mediating violence. *Roor* and *baai* are not static categories: they are shaped by the actors themselves and they are constructed in dialogue with a wider political and historical context. As the transformations to *roor* during the last war shows, these ideas are not simply 'local' but entangled with the realities of civil war, the factionalization of the SPLA and the creation of the new state of South Sudan.

This thesis has stressed the salience of local versions of history. Part of the reason these have such autonomy (and are more easily discernable) in Gogrial is because of the relative weakness of state power here. Writing about the late colonial period, Lienhardt suggested that people in Gogrial (and South Sudan more widely) saw the government as merely 'some sort of mainly incomprehensible abstract entity really located in some distant place...which occasionally interfered in their lives.'<sup>3</sup> This was not quite true; even at the time of Lienhardt's research some men, including his key informants, like Giir Thiik, built power and influence through their connections with the state. But it is true that since the 1920s, state power in Gogrial has been restricted and excessively reliant on the use of force: often violent but lacking the ability to make people do things effectively.<sup>4</sup>

A body of scholarship addresses what it means to live on the margins of state power. Simple 'marginality' does not capture the experience of Gogrial. In his work on Ho Chi Minh city, Erik Harms uses the concept of 'edginess' as a way of describing how social actors carve out opportunities and negotiate living in an urban periphery. Unlike

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<sup>2</sup> William Beinart, "African History and Environmental History," *African Affairs* 99 (2000): 299; Ute Luig and Achim von Oppen, "Landscape in Africa: Process and Vision. An Introductory Essay," *Paideuma* 43 (1997): 24. Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor, and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: 100 Years in the "Dark Forests" of Matabeleland* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2000), 11; Emmanuel Kriek, *Re-Creating Eden: Land Use, Environment, and Society in Southern Angola and Northern Namibia* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Sudan: Aspects of the South Government among Some of the Nilotic Peoples, 1947-1952," *Bulletin (British Society of Middle Eastern Studies)* 9, no. 1 (1982): 27.

<sup>4</sup> Justin Willis, "Violence, Authority, and the State in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan," *The Historical Journal* 46, no. 01 (2003): 94.

marginalization, which implies a structural position outside centres of power, ‘edginess’, he suggests, is the potential, creativity and vibrant social struggle at fringes.<sup>5</sup> Gogrial can likewise be seen as an ‘edgy’ place: its edginess is revealed in the way that some people have sought to tap the power of the state. This is clearly apparent in the struggles between new administrative borders and Dinka ‘galactic borders’ – which shows that influential local paradigms exist for imagining territoriality and authority, and that the state’s practices and institutions may themselves be colonized by other forms of regulation.<sup>6</sup>

Still, the role of the state in people’s lives is highly debated. Conflicting views on this topic in 2011-2012 were evident in questions over how insecurity in the swampland edges (*toc nbom*) of their own territory should be dealt with. Some ‘intellectuals’ advocated that these places should be more firmly connected to the state; with police presence, roads and bridges and a mobile telephone network.<sup>7</sup> While others, particularly the young people who grazed cattle, looked for alternative means to mitigate vulnerability at these volatile edges; whether this be through arming themselves to protect their family herds or by seeking out novel forms of spiritual protection.

By definition, the authorization of a historical narrative happens in retrospect. What has happened in Gogrial Town is particularly important because it shows how South Sudanese are responding to ‘difficult’ histories. After independence, government officials and SPLA veterans in Gogrial could (and did) proudly state the region had been a centre of the SPLA and had given the lives of many of its young men to the cause of the nation. One veteran said to me that the SPLA had been like a fish that survived in the water of the community.<sup>8</sup> But, in reality, ‘the community’s’ experience of the SPLA was much

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<sup>5</sup> Erik Harms, *Saigon’s Edge: On the Margins of Ho Chi Minh City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 35–36; Erik Harms, Shafqat Hussain, and Sara Shneiderman, “Remote and Edgy: New Takes on Old Anthropological Themes,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4, no. 1 (2014): 363–364.

<sup>6</sup> Veena Das and Deborah Poole, *Anthropology in the Margins of The State* (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Since my fieldwork finished the mobile phone network has been extended to parts of Gogrial East County.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Ton Majok Ton, Kuajok, 21.10.2011.

more ambivalent. People in Gogrial had known the cruel treatment and ‘the bitter hearts of soldiers’ (*kec puou jiec*) in recent years of fighting and famine.<sup>9</sup>

At its core, the problematic memory of the late Kerubino Kuanyin Bol: who has been officially immortalized as a martyr who fired the first bullets on the SPLA, but who also perpetrated extreme acts of violence across his home area of Gogrial, resonates with conflicting historical memories across South Sudan. In 2011-2012 Gogrial (and Warrap in general) was officially proud of its close relationship with the SPLM/A.<sup>10</sup> Other parts of South Sudan have a more ambivalent relationship to the SPLA, but everywhere there are experiences that do not align with the broader national narrative of shared liberation. Community leaders in Gogrial were attempting to obscure divisive parts of their history like Kerubino’s base, and draw attention to unifying historical injustices – like the massacre at Lol Nyiel. This shows how South Sudanese are asserting their own historical narratives and how these are being memorialized on the landscape.

Despite the extreme violence that Gogrial has experienced I have deliberately avoided the approach taken in a comparable study of the Honde Valley in Zimbabwe of putting violence at ‘the centre of study’.<sup>11</sup> This is because people living in Gogrial do not see their lives and their locality as defined by violence. Rather, the history of violence has been subsumed into other local versions of history which themselves stress different processes. Neither has it been appropriate to present a linear picture of the unfolding and ending of conflict in Gogrial: the actual experience of war has always been much more fragmentary than this. And as events in late 2013 made clear, conflict is not over in South Sudan. Gogrial has, as yet, been spared from the direct effects of the current war, but destructions may come again. If and when they do they will be faced in new circumstances and they will carry new dangers, but people will draw on memories and experience of previous *riäk*.

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<sup>9</sup> This expression was used by a woman in Gogrial West to describe the short tempers of returning SPLA recruits in the early 1990s in Jok Madut Jok, *Militarization, Gender and Reproductive Health in South Sudan* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 138.

<sup>10</sup> When I attended the opening of Warrap State Legislative Assembly in 2012, the Governor Nyandeng Malek congratulated the house about the fact that Warrap parliament was entirely SPLM. Fieldnotes, Kuajok, 07.02.2012.

<sup>11</sup> Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: A History of Suffering* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2013), 8.

One challenge has accompanied the whole process of writing this thesis: how to engage with the far reaching effects of war, without violence and suffering becoming the only lens through which South Sudanese lives can be seen. This is an ethical challenge as much as it is a scholarly one. With the outbreak of a new conflict in December 2013 it has become clear that political stability in South Sudan will remain elusive for some time to come, making this concern ever more prescient. Rather than a study of violence, the thesis has explored the creative cultural management of chronic insecurity. This avoids presenting South Sudanese as victims of history and looks beyond a chronology of conflicts. This choice was shaped by many conversations and interviews during my research and long periods of reflection; in taking this approach I hope to have shown that there is much more in South Sudan than a history defined solely by violence.

# Appendix

Working translation of the song of Deng Kuac Chol  
Padiany from Yiik Adoor (Pathuon East Payam, Gogrial East)

Recorded December 2011 in Kuajok. This working translation was made with Wol Aluk Chol and Mawan Majok in Yiik Adoor in June and July 2012. All errors of transcription and interpretation are my own responsibility

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na Tuon.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to Tuong.

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na wut col Nyankijo kek Yiik Adoor.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to a cattle camp called Nyankijo and then to Yiik Adoor.

*Weywa Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.*

The cow of my father, Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.

*Wut col Kuoc kek Tayeu ka ok Amermiith ok acie kueth akaltok.*

The subsections of Kuoc, Tayeu and we Amermiith, we don't drive our cattle in a single day.

*Na la kueth Adoor, na kueth Adoor Malek, Marialdie yin aye nyiir dai.*

And when the cattle of Adoor, of Adoor Malek are being driven from toch, all the girls look at you, my Marial.

*Wadit Akec Mading Nyiel, Akec Col 'Marial kuei', yin abi loŋdu col.*

My grandfather<sup>1</sup> Akec Mading Nyiel called 'Marial Kuei' you will come and invoke God/ bless us.

*Wudom Anyuon, Wudum Anyuon Deng ok abi kaŋ yet Ajokic.*

On the way to Wudom Anyuon, Wudom Anyuon Deng we will first reach Ajokyic.

*Ta nbier Toch Arau ok abi gua ben nbiak le dey keer.*

He [Marial Kuei, the bull] likes Toch Arau, we will hurry back because soon/tomorrow it will rain.

*Marialdie col ale dey thnak kɔu.*

The rain washes the back of my Marial.

*Wadit Akec Mading Nyiel, Akec Col 'Marial kuei', yin abi loŋdu col.*

My grandfather Akec Mading Nyiel called 'Marial Kuei' you will come and invoke God.

*Wudom Anyuon, Wudum Anyuon Deng ok abi kaŋ yet Ajokic.*

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<sup>1</sup> Akec Mading is actually his paternal uncle but 'grandfather' (wadit) is used respectfully

On the way to Wudom Ayuon, Wudom Anyuon Deng we will first reach Ajokyic.

*Ta nbier Toch Arau ok abi gua ben nbiak le deŋ keɛɛr.*

He [Marial Kuei, the bull] likes Toch Arau, we will hurry back because soon/tomorrow it will rain.

*Marialdie col ale deŋ thuak kɔu.*

The rain washes the back of my Marial.

*Wundit Col 'Mangar Thon', Col Kuac 'Magiet', ok aci mior den teer kerik.*

The eldest son Chol 'Mangar Thon', Chol Kuac 'Magiet', we have a lot of cattle so we don't need to compete for them.

*Na cak Mangar yok, ke Dot la nyantbin, ku yen awec Marialdie.*

If you go with Mangar, then I can still remain, I can sing with my Marial.

*Walen Col Mangar, Col Aluk Mathil akel ruomwar aye pocic bi ke col adon piny luek.*

My paternal Uncle Chol 'Mangar', Chol Aluk 'Mathil', the calves that were born last year are selected and left behind in the byres.

*Bi ke col adon piny luek.*

They will be left behind in the byres.

*Bi ke col adon piny luek.*

They will be left behind in the luaks/byres

*ku yok kan tou wut ruel acie kuen ku bik thok.*

And the cows that remain [with us] in the fattening/wet season cattle camp are uncountable.

*Mawetcol dien, ke dier rian de kɔu.*

Mawetcol<sup>2</sup> is going to dance in an open space (clearing).

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na Tuong.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to Tuong.

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na wut col Nyankijo kek Yiik Adoor.*

Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to a cattle camp called Nyankijo and then to Yiik Adoor.

*Weywa Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.*

The cow of my father, Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.

*Wut col Kuoc kek Tayeu ka ok Amermiith ok acie kueth akaltok.*

The subsections of Kuoc, Tayeu and we Amermiith, we don't drive our cattle in a single day.

*Na la kueth Adoor, na kueth Adoor Malek, Marialdie yin aye nyiir dai.*

And when the cattle of Adoor, of Adoor Malek are being driven from toch, all the girls look at you, my Marial.

*Wadit Akec Mading Nyiel, Akec Col 'Marial kuei', yin abi loŋdu col.*

My grandfather Akec Mading Nyiel called 'Marial Kuei' you will come and invoke God.

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<sup>2</sup> Another name of Marial Kuei

*Wudom Anyuon, Wudum Anyuon Deng ok abi kaŋ yɛt Ajokic.*  
On the way to Wudom Ayuon, Wudom Anyuon Deng we will first reach Ajokyic.

*Ta nbier Toch Arau ok abi gua ben nbiak le deŋ kɛɛr.*  
He [Marial Kuei, the bull] likes Toch Arau, we will hurry back because soon/tomorrow it will rain.

*Marialdie col ale deŋ thuak kɔu.*  
The rain washes the back of my Marial.

*Ye der bei wut Amermiith be loor abun yic ben.*  
Take our cattle [lit. remove the ropes from the cows 'der bei'] from Amermiith subsection [to begin to go to toc], beat the drum.

*Walen Deng 'Maket', Deng Baak 'Ayonkuac', Deng Baak Madbok Aceŋ Ajom loor ten dier loor akol ke yin acaa guaŋ nhom.*  
My paternal uncle, Deng 'Maket', Deng Baak 'Ayonkuac', Deng Baak 'Madhok', put on the ostrich feathers [ajom] and go to the drum, it's the daytime<sup>3</sup> drum/dance and you will castrate [guaŋ nhom] them [i.e. you will exercise command and control over other people, be the leader].

*Walen Aluk 'Makon', Aluk Wol Makol, yɛn acie kueth muor ayiai.*  
My uncle Aluk 'Makon', Aluk Wol 'Makol', I don't drive a colourless bull.

*yɛn acie kueth muor ayiai.*  
I don't drive a colourless bull.

*Na Marialdie ce yin ce kaŋ loc.*  
And my Marial, it is you I take first.

*Mawetcol dien, ke dier rian de kɔu.*  
Mawetcol is going to dance in an open space (clearing).

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na Tuong.*  
Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to Tuong.

*Marial Kuei wut Manyiel ku na wut col Nyankijo kek Yiik Adoor.*  
Marial Kuei goes to the cattle camp of Manyiel and then to a cattle camp called Nyankijo and then to Yiik Adoor.

*Weywa Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.*  
The cow of my father, Kuac 'Magiet', Kuac Col 'Marial', Col Deng Baak.

*Wut col Kuoc kek Tayeu ka ok Amermiith ok acie kueth akaltok.*  
The subsections of Kuoc, Tayeu and we Amermiith, we don't drive our cattle in a single day [i.e. we have Adoor have a lot of cattle].

*Na la kueth Adoor, na kueth Adoor Malek, Marialdie yin aye nyiir dai.*  
And when the cattle of Adoor, of Adoor Malek are being driven from toch, all the girls look at you, my Marial.

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<sup>3</sup> Which are rare and only happen in the wet season

*Wadit Akec Mading Nyiel, Akec Col 'Marial kuei', yin abi loŋdu col.*

My grandfather Akec Mading Nyiel called 'Marial Kuei' you will come and invoke God/ bless us.

*Wudom Anyuon, Wudum Anyuon Deng ok abi kaŋ yet Ajokic.*

On the way to Wudom Ayuon, Wudom Anyuon Deng we will first reach Ajokic.

*Ta nbier Toc Arau ok abi gua ben nbiak le deŋ keɛɛr.*

He [Marial Kuei, the bull] likes Toch Arau, we will hurry back because soon/tomorrow it will rain.

*Marialdie col ale deŋ thuak kɔu.*

The rain washes the back of my Marial [i.e. he stays with Marial in toch the whole year, Marial is not taken to stay in the luak in the baai/village homestead].

*Kalei aye lec, ka lei aye lec raan nya.*

Praise things that are not yours, praise things that are not yours to the person of the girl [i.e. praise other people's cattle, because they might be yours one day).

*Ta dhok muor wut, Malong acam rial, Malong Angeth Yiwac, Malong Angeth Col Marialdit yen ye ruop nbom.*

When the boys take the bull to the cattle camp, it is Malong, Malong of my paternal aunt Angeth, he is the one who ties the tassles [on the horns].

*Kalei aye lec, ka lei aye lec raan nya.*

Praise things that are not yours, praise things that are not yours to the person of the girl [i.e. praise other people's cattle, because they might be yours one day).

*Ta dhok muor wut, Malong acam rial, Malong Angeth Yiwac, Malong Angeth Col Marialdit yen ye ruop nbom.*

When the boys take the bull to the cattle camp, it is Malong, Malong of my paternal aunt Angeth, he is the one who ties the tassles [on the horns].

*Muor wen Akan ee muor wen Akan Mayol, Mayol 'Akuor Jok'.*

The bull is the son of Akan<sup>4</sup>, the bull is the son of Akan Mayol 'Akuor Jok'.

*Yen awec yen Marialdie.*

I'm singing to him, my Marial.

*Weŋ wen Akan ee weŋ wen Akan Mayol, Mayol 'Akuor Jok', Yen awec yen Marialdie.*

The bull is the son of Akan, the bull is the son of Akan Mayol 'Akuor Jok'.

*Yen awec yen Marialdie.*

I'm singing to him, my Marial.

*Pagak aa paneerden yi waa Kuac 'Magiet'.*

Pagak are the maternal relatives of my father Kuac 'Magiet'.

*Wut cielic, Wun Kuel Aleu Magol.*

The centre of the cattle camp/section at Wun Kuel<sup>5</sup> (people of Aleu Magol).

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<sup>4</sup> Marial Kuei was given by Akan to his father.

<sup>5</sup> This is where is grandmother is from.



*Pagak aa paneerden yi waa Kuac 'Magiet'.*  
Pagak are the maternal relatives of my father Kuac 'Magiet'.

*Wut cielic, Wun Kuel Aleu Magol.*  
The centre of the cattle camp/section at Wun Kuel (people of Aleu Magol).

*Jol bei pan Apet Anyuon Jok Tiam.*  
Come back now, (the mother of my grandfather is) Apet Anyuon Jok Tiam.

*Raan ci pande ker, raan ci pande ker wut cielic wut Tuon Adoor.*  
She was brought and was successful [lit. established a house 'pande ker'] in the centre of the cattle camp/section of Adoor section at Tuong.

*Koc arɔt ben theek kehyc.*  
People respect themselves in the cattle camp [i.e. my grandmother was successful].

*Jol bei pan Apet Anyuon Jok Tiam.*  
Come back now, (the mother of my grandfather) is Apet Anyuon Jok Tiam.

*Raan ci pande ker, raan ci pande ker wut cielic wut Tuon Adoor.*  
She was brought and was successful [lit. established a house 'pande ker'] in the centre of the cattle camp/section of Adoor section at Tuong.

*Koc arɔt ben theek kehyc.*  
People respect themselves in the cattle camp [i.e. my grandmother was successful].

*Pagony aa panderden yi Waadit Col Marial Kuei 'εεε'.*  
Pagong are the maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei'.

*Aa paneerden yi waadit Chol Marial Kuei wut cielic, wut Anyuon Chan.*  
The maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei' at the centre of the cattle camp/people of Anyuon Chan.

*Pagony aa panderden yi Waadit Col Marial Kuei 'εεε'.*  
Pagong are the maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei'.

*Aa paneerden yi waadit Chol Marial Kuei wut cielic, wut Anyuon Chan.*  
The maternal relations of my grandfather Chol 'Marial Kuei' at the centre of the cattle camp/people of Anyuon Chan.

*Atheek men ta thin tene Madit Anon Akok Majok.*  
Respect goes to my grandmother Angong Akok Majok.

*Ka ok aa lo nyek, ka ok aa lo nyek wut Adoor Malekdit.*  
For we bring our cattle pegs to the centre of the people of Adoor of Malek.

*Atheek men ta thin tene Madit Anon Akok Majok.*  
Respect goes to my grandmother Angong Akok Majok.

*Ka ok aa lo nyek, ka ok aa lo nyek wut Adoor Malekdit.*  
For we bring our cattle pegs to the centre of the people of Adoor of Malek.

*Pathian aa paneerden yii waadit Den Abiokjak εε aa paneerden yi Wadit Den Abiokjok.*

Pathian are maternal relations to my grandfather Deng Abiokjak, the maternal relations through my grandfather Deng Abiokjak.

*Na cok lor yen dier, ke kek arɔt gua lor.*

[people from Angong's family – Pathian] came to get Deng from his home and take him to the dance.

*Pathian aa paneerden yii waadit Denj Abiokjak εε aa paneerden yi Wadit Denj Abiokjok.*

Pathian are maternal relations to my grandfather Deng Abiokjak, the maternal relations through my grandfather Deng Abiokjak.

*Na cok lor yem dier, ke kek arɔt gua lor.*

[people from Angong's family – Pathian] came to get Deng from his home and take him to the dance.

*Aye wadit Baak 'Agit Djar', Baak Aluk 'Tiar Jok' εε, Baak Aluk Tiar Jok.*

My grandfather Baak Agit Ngar (father of Deng, the husband of Angong), Baak Aluk 'Tiar Jok'.

*Raan ci tunj tuanj de dom.*

He was the man who took the responsibility [lit. seized the horns 'tung tuang de dom'].

*Kak a b ηuekda Ka ok a b ηuekda Yik kek Abakjooth.*

We are the owners of the cattle pegs, the cattle pegs in Yik Adoor and Abakjooth.

*Kɔc mol bi ciet tik apuoc thiak kɔc ke mol dhiop.*

[Because Baak was successful] people are down on their knees (respectfully) like a newly married woman and inlaws.

*Pel kedhie ye kek ke raan weet raan aye weet yiom kuc juec.*

Because of this people stopped coming in a group to advise him [yiom kuc juec – group of advisories].

*Kɔc mol bi ciet tik apuoc thiak kɔc ke mol dhiop.*

[Because Baak was successful] people are down on their knees (respectfully) like a newly married woman and inlaws.

*Pel kedhie ye kek ke raan weet, raan aye weet yiom kuc juec.*

Because of this people stopped coming in a group to advise him [yiom kuc juec – group of advisories].

*Kɔc mol bi ciet tik apuoc thiak kɔc ke mol dhiop.*

[Because Baak was successful] people are down on their knees (respectfully) like a newly married woman and inlaws.

*Pel kedhie ye kek ke raan weet, raan aye weet yiom kuc juec.*

Because of this people stopped coming in a group to advise him .

*Ka yoom Lonardit, ku yoom len Waadit Kuotdit Diany Anjokdit ee Kuot Diany Anjokdit ci wel abek guo pij.*

The advisors of Longardit, the advisors of my grandfather Kuotdit Diany Angokdit, oh Kuot Diany Angokdit – I have heard the message [that the stick belongs to Bek Marol].

*Wai len Nbialic wai Bek Marol<sup>6</sup> le raan ci nyai? Na wai Bek Marol le raan ci nyai? na wai Bek Marol le raan ci nyai aci jal kek aliir Deŋ yoom.*

The stick/shaft of the divinity of Bek Marol, who took it? The stick of the divinity of Bek Marol, who took it? The stick of the divinity of Bek Marol, who took it? They left in the cold rain and the wind.

*Ka yoom Loŋardit, ku yoom len Waadit Kuotdit Diany Aŋokdit ee Kuot Diany Aŋokdit ci wel abek guo piŋ.*

The advisors of Longardit, the advisors of my grandfather Kuotdit Diany Angokdit, oh Kuot Diany Angokdit – I have heard the message [that the stick belongs to Bek Marol].

*Wai len Nbialic wai Bek Marol le raan ci nyai? Na wai Bek Marol le raan ci nyai? na wai Bek Marol le raan ci nyai aci jal kek aliir Deŋ yoom.*

The stick/shaft of the divinity Bek Marol, who took it? The stick of the divinity of Bek Marol, who took it? The stick of the divinity of Bek Marol, who took it? They left in the cold rain and the wind.

*Ka yoom Loŋardit, ku yoom len Waadit Kuotdit Diany Aŋokdit ee Kuot Diany Aŋokdit ci wel abek guo piŋ.*

The advisors of Longardit, the advisors of my grandfather Kuotdit Diany Angokdit, oh Kuot Diany Angokdit – I have heard the message [that the stick belongs to Bek Marol].

*Aba ben piŋ kede ku teem War Aŋaac yen aril yic.*

Its very hard for people to come out of the Angaac river.<sup>7</sup>

*Ku apiir Loŋardit aci gua thok nyin yic war, le raan ci ke been com?*

The spears of Longardit first had to be shed.

*Aba ben piŋ kede ku teem War Aŋaac yen aril yic.*

Its very hard for people to come out of the Angaac river.

*Ku apiir Loŋardit aci gua thok nyin yic war, le raan ci ke been com?*

The spears of Longardit first had to be shed.

*Cum cum men abi puol ku jol luel kelor athan yen abuk kaŋ dier?*

The planting of the stick of Longardit was abandoned?

*Ke len Agoth Thiik<sup>8</sup> aci guo thiek nyin kɔu ka ci ciet kur alet?*

???

*Cum cum men abi puol ku jol luel ke lor athan yen abuk kaŋ dier?*

The planting of the stick of Longardit was abandoned ???

*Ke len Agoth Thiik aci guo thiek nyin kɔu ka ci ciet kur alet?*

???

*Waadit Diany 'Maker' nya wic riel den cath ke yen.*

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<sup>6</sup> Refers to the stick that was used to part the water to get people across the river – Nyankirr and her sister were taken across the water.

<sup>7</sup> Referring to the myth of the origins of clans at the river 'War Angaac'.

<sup>8</sup> Agoth Thiik was the one who opposed Longardit in the river in the clan origin myth.

My grandfather Diany 'Maker' wants a strong girl to walk with him.<sup>9</sup>

*Ka juec tɔ wiir kek ke reer akuacic, ace kuen ke bik thok.*

There are so many things in the river, they cannot be counted in one day, it is a process.

*Waadit Diany 'Maker' nya wic riel den cath ke yen.*

My grandfather Diany 'Maker' wants a strong girl to walk with him.

*Ka juec tɔ wiir kek ke reer akuacic, ace kuen ke bik thok.*

There are so many things in the river, they cannot be counted in one day, it is a process.

*Waadit Diany 'Maker' nya wic riel den cath ke yen.*

My grandfather Diany 'Maker' wants a strong girl to walk with him.

*Ka juec tɔ wiir kek ke reer akuacic, ace kuen bik thok.*

There are so many things in the river, they cannot be counted in one day, it is a process

*Yenja raan kuen kek, ke war aci ka roor Abackok?*

Who will count them? The things in the water are like the creatures on the forest of Abackok.

*Ka roor Athian Nhial εε ka roor athian nhial, alɔ yic kuac aciny.*

The things of the forest of this Athian Nhial, forest of Athian Nhial, there is a 'kuac aciny' [small leopard] there.

*Raan len amiet guop cak yok nen be ciet ka Padiany Arial Bek?*

Did you ever come across a person as lucky as those of Padiany Arial Bek?

*Bi ciet ka Padiany Arial Bek?*

Like Padiany Arial Bek?

*Le raan thonj ke ok wut a]ianj den yic?*

Is there anyone like us in the whole Dinka?

*Yenja raan kuen kek, ke war aci ka roor Abackok?*

Who will count them? The things in the water are like the creatures on the forest of Abackok.

*Ka roor Athian Nhial εε ka roor athian nhial, alɔ yic kuac aciny.*

The things of the forest of this Athian Nhial, forest of Athian Nhial, there is a 'kuac aciny' [small leopard] there.

*Raan len amiet guop cak yok nen be ciet ka Padiany Arial Bek?*

Did you ever come across a person as lucky as those of Padiany Arial Bek?

*Bi ciet ka Padiany Arial Bek?*

Like Padiany Arial Bek?

*Le raan thonj ke ok wut a]ianj den yic?*

Is there anyone like us in the whole Dinka?

---

<sup>9</sup> This is, in some way, a comparison between the triumph of people overcoming Longardit in the river – something very difficult that people none the less managed to do, and Kuot Diany still managing to produce a lot of hiers, despite being a difficult person – something very difficult that he none the less managed to do. I.e. its not easy to be successful.

*Yenja raan kuen kek, ke war aci ka roor Abackok?*

Who will count them? The things in the water are like the creatures on the forest of Abackok.

*Ka roor Athian Nhial ee ka roor athian nhial, ab yic kuac aciny.*

The things of the forest of this Athian Nhial, forest of Athian Nhial, there is a 'kuac aciny' [small leopard] there.

*Abe ben riel kede piny awel rot piny ee piny Lonjardit.*

Its going to be tough, the world is changing [piny awel rot], the world of Longardit [is changing].

*Piny len Aluonj, piny len Aluonj Jiel Makuei kek Ayii Thiek Arek.*

The world of Aluong, the world of Aluong Jiel Makuei and Ayii Thiek Arek.

*Abe ben riel kede piny awel rot piny ee piny Lonjardit.*

Its going to be tough, the world is changing [piny awel rot], the world of Longardit [is changing].

*Piny len aluonj, piny len aluonj Jiel Makuei kek ayii thiek arek.*

The world of Aluong, the world of Aluong Jiel Makuei and Ayii Thiek Arek.

*Kua Ayii Majokdit ben rot ??? miith aabi kanj dek cuei muor Anjaac ku lok Payii ben ke nyiei beer?*

Would you, Ayii Majokdit???<sup>10</sup>, blame yourself if your children were resting at the sycamore tree on the bank of the Angaac, and Payii came and took the flag?<sup>11</sup>

*Kua Ayii Majokdit ben rot ??? miith aabi kanj dek cuei muor Anjaac ku lok Patek ben ke nyiei beer?*

Would you, Ayii Majokdit, blame yourself if your children were resting at the sycamore tree on the bank of the Angaac, and Patek came and took the flag?

*Kua Ayii Majokdit ben rot ??? miith aabi kanj dek cuei muor Anjaac ku lok Pakuin ben ke nyiei beer?*

Would you, Ayii Majokdit, blame yourself if your children were resting at the sycamore tree on the bank of the Angaac, and Pakuin came and took the flag?

*Kua Ayii Majokdit ben rot ??? miith aabi kanj dek cuen muor Anjaac ku lok Pagonj ben diet kek nyiei beer?*

Would you, Ayii Majokdit, blame yourself if your children were resting at the sycamore tree on the bank of the Angaac, and Pagong came and danced with the flag?

*Ke war ci tem ci Ajiek Ajueer Malek tem pal de na le raan la yanb wun ke yen mec yen rot[??]*

*Ke war ci tem ci Agoth CiThiik tem pal de na le raan la yanb wun ke yen mec yen rot[??]*

*Ke war ci tem ci Akoon Anei tem pal de na le raan la yanb wun ke yen mec yen rot[??]*

*Ku Atem Ayii Thiek Arek, na l raan la yanb wun ke yen mec yen rot[??]*

*Men yen loor abun yen liu nyiir biem ke lor ace ben thianj.*

Without the marriageable girls at the dance, you don't feel like it is full.

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<sup>10</sup> Confused about how to translate here, because Ayii Majokdit is from Payii and the one who has the most powerful spearmastership – is not meant to imply that Ayii Majok gave up the flag of spearmastership

<sup>11</sup> The flag represents the spearmastership. All these clans (Payii, Patek, Pakuin, Pagong) are spearmaster clans

*Men yen loor abun yen liu wet aparak ke lor ace ben thianj.*  
Without the scarified youths at the dance, you don't feel like it is full.

*Men yen loor abun yen liu diar apoic thiak ke lor ace ben thianj.*  
Without the newly married women at the dance, you don't feel like it is full.

*Men yen loor abun yen liu keoc dit ci nuen ke lor ace ben thianj.*  
Without the old/big people at the dance, you don't feel like it is full.

*Ee koc ben tem kede warden adek-diet yen e keoc gup riooc Ayuom Lal ciet be we nyai.*  
There was an ocean/big water<sup>12</sup> because they are afraid of the spirit/creature Anyuon lal that will grab you.

*Ee koc ben tem kede warden adek-diet yen e keoc gup riooc Akok Maker ciet be we nyai*  
There was an ocean/big water because they are afraid of the spirit/creature Akok Maker that will grab you.

*Ee koc ben tem kede warden adek-diet yen e keoc gup riooc Aleek ciet be we nyai*  
There was an ocean/big water because they are afraid of the spirit/creature Aleek that will grab you.

*Yen e keoc gup riooc Awudiany.*  
Afraid of the spirit/creature Awudiany.

*Kuot Diany ee nja thonj ke yen?*  
Who can be compared to Kuot Diany?

*Ee nja thonj ke wadit? ci men Aluon, ci men Aluon Jiel Makuei.*  
Who is like my grandfather? For example Aluon Jiel Makuei?

*Raan war ce tuej kanj wat[??]*  
[??]

*Kua ye tuej war Akan Majok Kuot wadit, yen bi tuej kanj awat.*  
[??] Akan Majok Kuot, he can lead the cattle

*Ok a ruai kek piuu yen len lo yok akuakic nbiak yeththon wiir.*  
We are related to water<sup>13</sup>, go to the water and perform ritual sacrifice.

*Kua ye tuej war Akan Majok Kuot wadit, yen bi tuej kanj awat.*  
[??] Akan Majok Kuot, he can lead the cattle.

*Ok a ruai kek piuu yen len lo yok akuakic nbiak yeththon wiir.*  
We are related to water, go to the water and perform ritual sacrifice.

*Na wen ye thon Arial Bek ke njuot bi nok, ka njuot bi dier lor bet ken awar war bi Lonjar ajam.*  
The ox of Padiany, it will be slaughtered and then people will dance for it, the eight years of Longar/be patient [Longar said to have waited for something for 8 years).

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<sup>12</sup> warden adek-diet = lit. a water that birds can't cross.

<sup>13</sup> I.e. We are related to God, because water comes from God.

*Na wen ye thon Arial Bek ke ηuot bi nok, ka ηuot bi dier lor bet ken awar war bi Lonjar ajam.*  
The ox of Padiany, it will be slaughtered and then people will dance for it, the eight years of Longar/be patient [Longar said to have waited for something for 8 years).

*Na wen ye thon Arial Bek ke ηuot bi nok, ka ηuot bi dier lor bet ken awar war bi Lonjar ajam.*  
The ox of Padiany, it will be slaughtered and then people will dance for it, the eight years of Longar/be patient [Longar said to have waited for something for 8 years).

*Ok aa kɔc wiir, ka ok aa kɔc wiir, ok a war muoc nhiak le piny gua dou.*  
We are people of the water, we are people of the water, we will make a sacrifice if the water dries out.

*Yenja raan ben jam?*  
Who will speak again?

*Yenja raan ben jam?*  
Who will speak again?

*Men ci waric la dieu-dieu, dieu-dieu tɔ wir, na ce Bek Marol ke yen akuen ok, na ce Bek Marol ce yen akuen ok Ta ci Anjok Akuin kom ben jal akol war.*  
Now that there is 'dieu-dieu' in the river, if it were not for Bek Marol would Angok Akuin not have gotten across the water?

*Yenjo ci yen ben jal akol war?*  
How would he have gotten across?

*Ok aa Pakuin ku ok aa Padiany*  
We are Pakiun and we are Padiany

*Yenja raan ben jam?*  
Who will speak again?

*Yenja raan ben jam?*  
Who will speak again?

*Men ci waric la dieu-dieu, dieu-dieu tɔ wir, na ce Bek Marol ke yen akuen ok, na ce Bek Marol ce yen akuen ok Ta ci Anjok Akuin kom ben jal akol war.*  
Now that there is 'dieu-dieu' in the river, if it were not for Bek Marol would Angok Akuin not have gotten across the water?

*Yenjo ci yen ben jal akol war?*  
How would he have gotten across?

*Ok aa Pakuin ku ok aa Padiany.*  
We are Pakiun and we are Padiany.

*Yenja raan kuenj keek?*  
Who will force us to swear? [that we are Pakuin].

*Ok aa miith Akuin Kom, Anjok Akuin Kom ce rɔt wel bi ya Diany ya ka ηuot buk aagam, gem Kuot Majok.*  
We are the children of Akuin Kom, Angok Akuin Kom has changed his clan to be Diany, we have accepted. We have accepted Kuot Majok [to be Padiany].

*Kaŋ ku ye jal bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wut lual tek Bakjok.*  
First he went to go and sleep outside, he used to go and sleep away, used to sleep on the way to cattle camp of Lual Teek at Bakjok.

*Akol aci luet loi ke ken Ariath Makuei yen athioŋ ke yen.*  
There was a solar eclipse, like an incident involving Ariath Makuei.

*Yeŋa raan kueŋ kek?*  
Who will force us to swear? [that we are Pakuin].

*Ok aa miith Akuin Kom, Aŋok Akuin Kom ce ɾɔt wel bi ya Diany ya ka ŋuot buk aagam, gem Kuot Majok.*  
We are the children of Akuin Kom, Angok Akuin Kom has changed his clan to be Diany, we have accepted. We have accepted Kuot Majok [to be Padiany].

*Kaŋ ku ye jal bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wut Lual Teek Bakjok.*  
First he went to go and sleep outside, he used to go and sleep away, used to sleep on the way to cattle camp of Luak Teek at Bakjok.

*Yiwac Nyakiir key a nyan matthiang kua ye wun guot lor kua yen wut guot lor aye, ke ciet be ben.*  
My paternal aunt, Nyakiir is a mature girl, the people beat the drum<sup>14</sup>, beat the drum, the same again.

*Yeŋa raan kueŋ kek?*  
Who will force us to swear? [that we are Pakuin].

*Ok aa miith Akuin Kom, Aŋok Akuin Kom ce ɾɔt wel bi ya Diany ya ka ŋuot buk aagam, gem Kuot Majok.*  
We are the children of Akuin Kom, Angok Akuin Kom has changed his clan to be Diany, we have accepted. We have accepted Kuot Majok [to be Padiany].

*Kaŋ ku ye jal bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wei, ku ɾɔt miit bi ɔ nin wut lual tek Bakjok.*  
First he went to go and sleep outside, he used to go and sleep away, used to sleep on the way to cattle camp of Luak Teek at Bakjok.

*Wut Lual Teek ku wut Ajiək Ajuer Malek ka bi reek.*  
The people/cattle camp of Luak Teek and Ajiək Ajuer Malek.

*Ee waadit yen athoŋ ke kek.*  
My grandfather is like them.

*Ee Waadit Kuot Majok yen athoŋ ke kek.*  
My grandfather Kuot Majok is like them.

*Ee dhal Muonyjiaŋ ee ta cok yen Nbialic aŋuot dhuk cien, ta cok yen aŋuot dhuk cien.*  
And what defeated people, not even God can bring it back, what was defeated cannot (lit. is still to be) brought back.

*Yiwac Nyakiir aci ben doŋ nyin kɔu, yen acie piuu ben dhuk.*

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<sup>14</sup> Beating the drum 'guot lor' indicates something has happened, or a warning signal.



My paternal aunt Nyankiir remained in/disappeared under the water she will not come out of the water [not even God can bring her back].

*Wut Lual Teek ku wut Ajiek Ajueer Malek ka bi reek.*  
The people/cattle camp of Luak Teek and Ajiek Ajueer Malek.

*Ee waadit yen athonj ke kek.*  
My grandfather is like them.

*Ee Waadit Kuot Majok yen athonj ke kek.*  
My grandfather Kuot Majok is like them.

*Ee dhal Muonyjian ee ta cok yen Nbialic anuot dhuk cien, ta cok yen anuot dhuk cien.*  
And what defeated people, not even God can bring it back, what was defeated cannot (lit. is still to be) brought back.

*Yiwac Nyakiir aci ben doŋ nyin keɔu, yen acie piuu ben dhuk.*  
My paternal aunt Nyankiir remained in/disappeared under the water she will not come out of the water [not even God can bring her back].

*Wut Lual Teek ku wut Ajiek Ajueer Malek ka bi reek.*  
The people/cattle camp of Luak Teek and Ajiek Ajueer Malek.

*Ee waadit yen athonj ke kek.*  
My grandfather is like them.

*Ee Waadit Kuot Majok yen athonj ke kek.*  
My grandfather Kuot Majok is like them.

*Ee dhal Muonyjian ee ta cok yen Nbialic anuot dhuk cien, ta cok yen anuot dhuk cien.*  
And what defeated people, not even God can bring it back, what was defeated cannot (lit. is still to be) brought back.

*Yiwac Nyakiir aci ben doŋ nyin keɔu, yen acie piuu ben dhuk.*  
My paternal aunt Nyankiir remained in/disappeared under the water she will not come out of the water [not even God can bring her back].

*Abi ben thonj keda kua Anjok Akuin Kom yen ci weŋ kaŋ amac.*  
It is not the same as when our grandfather Angok Akuin Kom first raised the cattle.

*Kedan Bek Marol ee kedan Bek Marol yen aye ok Padiany.*  
Our thing/luck/charm from Bek Marol is why we are Padiany.

*Abi ben thonj keda kua Anjok Akuin Kon yen ci weŋ kaŋ amac.*  
It is not the same as when our grandfather Angok Akuin Kom first raised the cattle.

*Kedan Bek Marol ee kedan Bek Marol yen aye ok Padiany.*  
Our thing/luck/charm from Bek Marol is why we are Padiany.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek doŋ piny wut den Agar Wol kua ci raan ci ben dhuk.*  
Padiany Marial Bek are abundant/have remained over the land, in Agar Wol a person went and remained.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek doŋ piny wut den Agar Pakkam kua ci raan ci ben dhuk.*

Padiany Marial Bek are abundant/have remained over the land, in Agar Pakkam a person went and remained.

*Padiany Marial Bek na men ci kek donj piny wut den Abuk Ayiai kua ci raan ci ben dbuk.*  
Padiany Marial Bek are abundant/have remained over the land, in Abuk Ayiai a person went and remained.

*Kuac Amet b yic raan tok ku ee Kuot Diany Angok.*  
In Kuac of Amet (Kuol) there is one person of Kuot Diany Angok (i.e. Padiany are also in Kuac).

*Apuoth Yel b yic raan tok ku ee Kuot Diany.*  
In Apuoth Yel there is one person of Kuot Diany (i.e. Padiany are also in Apuoth Yel).

*Ke ba lioi, yen yok lioi.*  
Simply because he was divorcing and leaving the cows [therefore his children raised as his own, as Padiany].

*Pajok men ok ruai ku ee ken Acol Madit.*  
We are now related to Pajok because of Achol, my grandmother.

*Cok alor yai ke yen bik ya tinj.*  
If there is any celebration, we recognize their presence.

*Pajok men ok ruai ku ee ken Acol Madit.*  
We are now related to Pajok because of Achol, my grandmother.

*Ta le yen wut ruel ke yen bik a tinj.*  
At the wet season cattle camp (fattening camp) we recognize their presence.

*Pajok men ok ruai ku ee ken Acol Madit.*  
We are now related to Pajok because of Achol, my grandmother.

*Ta le yen daany yic ke yen bik a tinj.*  
At the women's dance, we recognize their presence.

*Pajok men ok ruai ku ee ken Acol Madit.*  
We are now related to Pajok because of Achol, my grandmother.

*Ta rem kek kem dbel ke yen bik a tinj.*  
If we just meet on the road, we recognize their presence.

*Go ben bi end de? Yet Kuot Majok ben b mai, ku le dbuk ye ciin.*  
Kuot Majok used to go fishing and come back empty handed.

*Acaa anyan bei ku luel lei tik lioi.*  
He brought 'anyan' [a kind of animal] and said to his wife to prepare it [or he will divorce her].

*Go ben bi end de? Yet Kuot Majok ben b mai, ku le dbuk ye ciin.*  
Kuot Majok used to go fishing and come back empty handed.

*Acaa biet bei ku luel lei tik lioi.*  
He brought 'biet' (a kind of snake) and said to his wife to prepare it [or he will divorce her].

*Go ben bi end de? Yet Kuot Majok ben b mai, ku le dbuk ye ciin.*

Kuot Majok used to go fishing and come back empty handed.

*Acaa agany bei ku luel lei tik lioi*

He brought 'agany' (a kind of gecko) and said for his wife to prepare it [or he will divorce her]

*Bei yen magak cor ku luel len tik lioi*

Brought 'magak cor' (a vulture) and said for his wife to prepare it [or he will divorce her]

*Acol Jok Ton ee nyan matthian na le wiir na le lak ke bi thiak wen buot.*

Achol of Jok Tong is a marragiable girl, if she goes to the stream to wash she will be married for 100 cows [because she is so beautiful].

*Acol Jok Ton ee nyan matthian na le wiir na le lak ke bi thiak wen buot.*

Achol of Jok Tong is a marragiable girl, if she goes to the stream to wash she will be married for 100 cows [because she is so beautiful].

*Kua ye mun wet ee na ke baai yen?*

Who doesn't recognized that her father brought her well?

*Acol Jok Ton ee nyan matthian na le wiir na le lak ke bi thiak wen buot.*

Achol of Jok Tong is a marragiable girl, if she goes to the stream to wash she will be married for 100 cows [because she is so beautiful].

*Kua ye man wet ee na ke baai yen?*

Who doesn't recognized that her mother brought her well?

*Acol Jok Ton ee nyan matthian na le wiir na le lak ke bi thiak wen buot*

Achol of Jok Tong is a marragiable girl, if she goes to the stream to wash she will be married for 100 cows [because she is so beautiful]

*Kua wet paneerden ee na ke baai yen?*

Who doesn't recognized that her maternal relatives brought her well?

*Kuot Majok yen aduet koc luang n ace Acol Maadit yen acath ke yen*

*Na ce Acol Jok yen cath ke yen ke ok acie kuen Wut Adoor Malek, Wut Adoor, Wut Adoor Malek ku yen Apuk dhojuan.*

Kuot Majok almost poisoned (luang) people. If it hadn't been for my grandmother Achol moving with him, if Achol Jok was not walking with him we wouldn't be the section Adoor Malek, the section Adoor and the nine Apuk.

*Nyan col Anak ta le ye yec ku yen ee yok ran ku kueth wuot.*

A girl called Anak<sup>15</sup> is called to milk cows when people go to toch.

*Nyan col Anak ta le ye yec ku yen ee yok ran ku kueth wuot.*

A girl called Anak is called to milk cows when people go to toch.

*Nyan col Anak ta le ye yec ku yen ee yok ran ku kueth wuot.*

A girl called Anak is called to milk cows when people go to toch.

*Wut ee wut ce luel kueth bak akol war.*

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<sup>15</sup> Anak is the sister of Diany, paternal aunt to Kuot Diany.

The information about the movement of all the people and cattle to toch was given the day before yesterday (bak akol war).

*Yiwac Nyakiir yen jal kueth ku ka Anak yen nyan cath ke yen.*

My paternal aunt Nyakiir was walking with Anak, she was the girl to walk with [escort] her.

*Wut ee wut ce luel kueth bak akol war.*

The information about the movement of all the people and cattle to toch was given the day before yesterday (bak akol war).

*Yiwac Nyakiir yen jal kueth ku ka Anak yen nyan cath ke yen.*

My paternal aunt Nyakiir was walking with Anak, she was the girl to walk with [escort] her.

*Ka ci piŋ baai eben ee ka ci piŋ baai ee eben lon ci ok ke ben jaal.*

Meaning something like – it is hard by all that we have gone.

*Yenja raan ben ye kac?*

Is there anyone who doesn't know?

*Kua yenja raan ben ye kac?*

Is there anyone who doesn't know?

*Majok Anek, Majok Anek Yiwac ke yen ee tunj thiaar ku thon den.*

Majok Anek, Majok Anek of my paternal aunt he has brought 10 horns (i.e. 10 bulls) and a ox (part of a marriage payment).

*ka loi Aweer ke Kuot ee, ke loi Aweer ke Kuot miith aye dbieth ta ci kek aa miith len tienj tok kua kek awenj ben tek.*

What Aweer and Kuot are doing, children must be begetted by one mother and then they will divide the cows.

*Ka ci piŋ baai eben ee ka ci piŋ baai ee eben lon ci ok ke ben jaal.*

[Means something like –] it is hard by all that we have gone.

*Yenja raan ben ye kac?*

Is there anyone who doesn't know?

*Kua yenja raan ben ye kac?*

Is there anyone who doesn't know?

*Majok Anek, Majok Anek Yiwac ke yen ee tunj thiaar ku thon den.*

Majok Anek, Majok Anek of my paternal aunt he has brought 10 horns (i.e. 10 bulls) and a ox (part of a marriage payment).

*ka loi Aweer ke Kuot ee, ke loi Aweer ke Kuot miith aye dbieth ta ci kek aa miith len tienj tok kua kek awenj ben tek.*

What Aweer and Kuot are doing, children must be begetted by one mother and then they will divide the cows.

*Ee wenj det bik tek Majok Kuot waadit Majok Kuot Diany Angok ku ruai anjot, ruai anjot, anjot to ruai acie cak kuen be tem kon.*

Another cow is divided, Majok Kuot my grandfather, Majok Kuot Diany Angok, the relationships are still, they are yet to count and divide [the cattle].

*Ee wen det bik tek Majok Kuot waadit Majok Kuot Diany Angok ku ruai anuot, ruai anuot, anuot to ruai acie cak kuen be tem kɔu.*

Another cow is divided, Majok Kuot my grandfather, Majok Kuot Diany Angok, the relationships are still, they are yet to count and divide [the cattle].

*Yenja raan yen Acol Anak Yiwac yen aben kɔc nɛr*

Who will continue the marriage when my paternal aunt Achol Anak, the bride, has refused

*Na lek Kuot acie gam na lek Aweer ke ηuot ci kaη gam.*

When Kuot was told he refused, when Aweer was still ge still refused.

*Na lek Kuot acie gam na lek Aweer ke ηuot ci kaη gam.*

When Kuot was told he refused, when Aweer was still ge still refused.

*Yenja raan gam yen na lek Kuot Diany Angok ka ηuot ci kaη gam.*

Who will accept when it has been told to Kuot Diany Angok and he still refuses.

*Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual ku yen Apuk Dboruan.*

Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual is from the nine Apuk.

*Ee ηa raan gam yen na lek Kuot Diany Angok ka ηuot ci kaη gam.*

Who will accept when it has been told to Kuot Diany Angok and he still refuses.

*Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual ku yen Apuk Dboruan.*

Kuei Akot, Kuei Akot Mayual is from the nine Apuk.

*Wun Apuk ce waadit yen akon wɛɛt luel piny aye mek wen, piny aye mek raan, raan a kaη wen yoc.*

The people of Apuk exist today because my grandfather decreed it. You own a place with a cow, or you own a place with a person, the first person to 'buy' (or exchange) a cow.

*Wun Apuk ce waadit yen akon wɛɛt luel iny aye mek wen, piny aye mek raan, raan a kaη wen yoc.*

The people of Apuk exist today because my grandfather decreed it. You own a place with a cow, or you own a place with a person, the first person to 'buy' (or exchange) a cow.

*Jok Tonj Agoth ka ci riu Apuk nbom tuen, yen ale ok Manyiel, yen ale ok ke Yiik, Yiik Manyiel Adoor kun a tuonj.*

Jok Tong Agoth took Apuk forward, he got us Manyiel, and he got us Yiik, Yiik Manyiel Adoor and Tuong.

*Jok Tonj Agoth ka ci riu Apuk nbom tuen, yen ale ok Manyiel, yen ale ok ke Yiik, Yiik Manyiel Adoor kun a tuonj.*

Jok Tong Agoth took Apuk forward, he got us Manyiel, and he got us Yiik, Yiik Manyiel Adoor and Tuong.

*Ke cien ta ηuen, ka cien ta ηuen piny a puoth aniin aben.*

There is no place that is better, no place better, everywhere you go there is life sleeping.

*Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon maadit, Apet Anyuon Joktiam ka ci pec Jur Abdhal Manyiel lei Jur alei bambe, ka ηuot buk yok.*

Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon my grandmother, Apet Anyuon Joktiam was captured by 'Jur Abdel Manyiel', the 'Jur of sweet potato' and we are still to find her.

*Ke cien ta ruen, ka cien ta ruen piny a puoth aniin aben.*

There is no place that is better, no place better, everywhere you go there is life sleeping.

*Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon maadit, Apet Anyuon Joktiam ka ci pec Jur Abdhal Manyiel lei Jur alei bambe, ka ruot buk yok.*

Apet Anyuon, Apet Anyuon my grandmother, Apet Anyuon Joktiam was captured by 'Jur Abdel Manyiel', the 'Jur of sweet potato' and we are still to find her.

*Yenja raan yok yen, ce Wol Alei kek Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'.*

Who will find her? It will be Wol Alei and Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'.

*Aye Marial thiec lor de ee?*

Marial was asking – where are you going?

*Aye Marial thiec lor de ee?*

Marial was asking – where are you going?

*Ku meth akic cak riel maadit men aabi ok ka ci roukic wun Deydit, ce wun Dey ku Marial Aguok, ce wun Dey ku jal aa Marial Aguok kek Dey Thianbek.*

And the child is not yet strong [is still young], my grandmother was then found in the slaving fort (rouk) in the area of Deng and Marial Aguok.

*Yenja raan yok yen, ce Wol Alei kek Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'.*

Who will find her? It will be Wol Alei and Dhel Aguer 'Wai Bek'.

*Aye Marial thiec lor de ee?*

Marial was asking – where are you going?

*Aye Marial thiec lor de ee?*

Marial was asking – where are you going?

*Ku meth akic cak riel.*

The child is not yet strong.

*Be riel bi kuc na men dier yen ke lor, wun Malek, wun Malek Adoor, ka ba puol guop yen ci Jur Arab col ajal ke yen kua cin raan dok nbom.*

How the child is not yet strong and he is at the big drum/dance of the wut of Malek, wut of Malek Adoor. It is bad luck that Arabs were with in and no one will intervene.

*Be riel bi kuc na men dier yen ke lor, wun Malek, wun Malek Adoor, ka ba puol guop yen ci Jur Arab col ajal ke yen kua cin raan dok nbom.*

How the child is not yet strong and he is at the big drum/dance of the wut of Malek, wut of Malek Adoor. It is bad luck that Arabs were with in and no one will intervene.

*Yenja raan dok yen Marial Dey Wujek keyen ce dok nbom.*

Who will intervene to help her (dok nbom – intervene) it was Marial Deng Wutjek who intervened.

*Wol Alei kek Dey Baak ke war yen ku raan ace waar wej tok.*

Wol Alei and Deng Baak were the ones who went and exchanged one cow for her.

*Wol Alei kek Dey Baak ke war yen ku raan ace waar wej ka rou.*

Wol Alei and Deng Baak were the ones who went and exchanged two cows for her.

*Wol Alei kek Denj Baak ke war yen ku raan ace waar wej ka diak.*  
Wol Alei and Deng Baak were the ones who went and exchanged three cows for her.

*ku raan ace waar wej ka nuan.*  
the one who exchanged for cows for her.

*Chol 'Marial' yen ci Chol Apet col amuk thooc, yen ci Chol Apet col yen muk thooc nun Apuk dhojnan.*  
Chol 'Marial' his is Chol Apet and he is called a big person in Apuk (*amuk thooc* – holds a seat), Chol Apet is called and he holds a seat in the nine Apuk.

*Ku golic dan Agak Ker ee, golic dan Agak Ker ke yen aniin cielic.*  
Our gol (family cattle hearth) is Agak Ker, our gol is Agak Ker, he sleeps in the centre.

*Ku golic dan Agak Ker ee, golic dan Agak Ker ke yen aniin cielic.*  
Our gol (family cattle hearth) is Agak Ker, our gol is Agak Ker, he sleeps in the centre.

*Nin men tɔ thin na men ci Thel Aguot col yen ci tung dom.*  
Now people sleep there was Thel Aguot has taken responsibility (*ci tung dom*).

*Cimen Apet Maadit col ajal be tem ee. Cimen Apet maadit, njuot lɔ piŋ cok.*  
Because of Apet my grandmother would have been gone and separated from us, but we have heard of her.

*Nin men tɔ thin na men ci Thel Aguot col yen ci tung dom.*  
Now people sleep there was Thel Aguot has taken responsibility (*ci tung dom*).

*Cimen Apet Maadit col ajal be tem ee. Cimen Apet maadit, njuot lɔ piŋ cok.*  
Because of Apet my grandmother would have been gone and separated from us, but we have heard of her.

*Yenja raan piŋ n ace Anyuoon Denj manb thon lɔ wut?*  
Who heard it if it wasn't Anyuon Deng, the child of the ox (strong person) of the wut.

*Bi ben tem wanb den Malual Awein ee ka ci ben tem wanb den Malual Awein, bi lɔ nin wut Abien Atem.*  
He crossed the ford of the river at Malual Awein, crossed the ford of the river at Malual Awein and slept in the cattle camp of Abiem Atem.

*Yenja raan piŋ n ace Anyuoon Denj manb thon lɔ wut?*  
Who heard it if it wasn't Anyuon Deng, the child of the ox (strong person) of the wut.

*Bi ben tem wanb den Malual Awein eek a ci ben tem wanb den Malual Awein, bi lɔ nin wut abien Atem.*  
He crossed the ford of the river at Malual Awein, crossed the ford of the river at Malual Awein and slept in the cattle camp of Abiem Atem.

*Ee Nbialic den Awar na wen ee beny awar yen ci yen ben lo ben.*  
It is because of their divinity awar and the chief of awar that they came back (referring to powers of spearmasters).

*Kua Athianj Magakdit, Athianj Kuac Baak, ok aa Padiany ku ok aa Padiany ke ok mauk ken Arial Bek.*

We are from Athiang Magakdit, Athiang Kuac Baak, we are Padiany, we are Padiany hold the thing of Arial Bek.

*Ee Nbialic den Awar na wen ee beny den yen ci yen ben lo ben.*

It is because of their divinity awar and the chief of awar that they came back.

*Kua Athianj Magakdit, Athianj Kuac Baak, ok aa Padiany ku ok aa Padiany ke ok muk ken Arial Bek.*

We are from Athiang Magakdit, Athiang Kuac Baak, we are Padiany, we are Padiany hold the thing of Arial Bek.

*Waadit Athianj ne ca moc nyot lor ace gutic ne men doŋ Majok Thon ku yen ee tunj rienj.*

My grandfather Athiang if you were not a man we would still not be playing the drum, we would now will be (at the slaughter of) Majok Thon) and you went and attacked the enemy (*tung rieng*).

*Waadit Athianj ne ca moc nyot lor ace gutic ne men doŋ Majok Thon ku yen ee tunj rienj.*

My grandfather Athiang if you were not a man we would still not be playing the drum, we would now will be (at the slaughter of) Majok Thon) and you went and attacked the enemy (*tung rieng*).

*Tunj war ci rienj, ce ken Ajuet Genj yen rilic.*

The attack they went on then, it was the thing of Ajuet Geng that was very tough.

*Yenja piŋ Adoor, na piŋ Adoor Malek kua ke Aram Toc.*

When Adoor heard about it they went to toch (euphemism for they went to fight).

*Tunj war ci rienj, ce ken Ajuet Genj yen rilic.*

The attack they went on then, it was the thing of Ajuet Geng that was very tough.

*Yenja piŋ Adoor, na piŋ Adoor Malek kua ke Aram Toc.*

When Adoor heard about it they went to toch (euphemism for they went to fight).

*Le raan det ben liu toch na Bil Baak Mawut kua Akol Nyier Makuei.*

No other person was absent from toch – Bil Baak Mawut and Akol Nyier Makuei (very strong fighters) were there.

*Ku ka Koŋor, koŋor miŋ Ayak ku Apuk Giir Maŋar.*

And those of Kongor (of deaf Ayak) and Apuk (Giir Thiik) were there.

*Le raan det ben liu toch na Bil Baak Mawut kua Akol Nyier Makuei.*

No other person was absent from toch – Bil Baak Mawut and Akol Nyier Makuei (very strong fighters) were there.

*Ku ka Koŋor, koŋor miŋ Ayak ku Apuk Giir Maŋar.*

And those of Kongor (of deaf Ayak) and Apuk (Giir Thiik) were there.

*Le raan det ya Apuk ce Kuony Baak Magol yen ya Apuk buoth, ye Jur Manaŋer ee, Jur Manaŋer Deŋ Buok ke yen ci toc dil yic.*

Is there anyone else from Apuk, Kuony Baak Magol was the one Apuk are following, and Jur Manager, Jur Manager of Deng Buok are going directly to toch (i.e. are ready for a fight).

*Le raan det ya Apuk ce Kuony Baak Magol yen ya Apuk buoth, ye Jur Manaŋer ee, Jur Manaŋer Deŋ Buok ke yen ci toc dil yic.*



Is there anyone else from Apuk, Kuony Baak Magol was the one Apuk are following, and Jur Manager, Jur Manager of Deng Buok are going directly to toch (i.e. are ready for a fight).

*Aken nbom ee, ka keu nbom, wuan nbiak riel ke kieu bi yin gua ben.*

At the border, at the border, tomorrow morning shouts of sorrow and wailing will be heard.

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Maror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.<sup>16</sup>

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom [place of singing competition]

*Ayuel Achol cok amin a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Maror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom [place of singing competition].

*Ayuel Achol cok amin a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei*

?????????

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Maror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nbom [place of singing competition].

*Ayuel Achol cok amin a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei*

???????????

*Wut dan tunj ee acit Nyankijo, Aluk Machiir, Aluk Mou Mading ee wun ruel da.*

Our cattle-camp is like Nyankijo, Aluk Machiir, Aluk Mou Mading this is our summer cattle camp.

*Aluk Magak, Aluk Kuot Matiok, na ye biok, biokdia ka ηuot thoon yin.*

Aluk Magak, Aluk Kuot Matiok, if it is it my turn to go and graze cattle I can still hand it over to you.

*Aluk Malual, Aluk Akec Maker, Aluk Aker weok Chol Margen, Chol Deng Majok rial*

???????????

*Na cok deŋ ben tueŋ ta na ye ruon abor, na yen ruon abor, ta cok deŋ ke ben bor wun ruel dan Yiik acie bor.*

If it rains everywhere like it does in a flood year, like a flood year, it doesn't flood in our summer camp of Yiik.

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<sup>16</sup> An honour, worn at special occasions

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Mror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom [place of singing competition].

*Ayuel Achol cok amib a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei.*

???????????

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Mror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom [place of singing competition].

*Ayuel Achol cok amin a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei.*

???????????

*Ee tij waar Ajok Anguei Maror Malukluk Machar nok ajom.*

The inherited wife Angok Naguei Maror Malukluk Machar will wear the ostriche feather.

*Yen ba kaj dak luek, yen ba kaj dak Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom.*

She will be the first person her sings about when he goes to Yiik Akol Bol Wuel nhom [place of singing competition].

*Ayuel Achol cok amin a yen ka Aniiik geer ku ke Nhialic, ce yen agou yen rianj alei.*

???????????

*Wut dan tunj ee acit Nyankijo, Aluk Machiir, Aluk Mou Mading ee wun ruel da.*

Our cattle-camp is like Nyankijo, Aluk Machiir, Aluk Mou Mading this is our summer cattle camp.

*Aluk Magak, Aluk Kuot Matiok, na ye biok, biokdia ka ηuot thoon yin.*

Aluk Magak, Aluk Kuot Matiok, if it is it my turn to go and graze cattle I can still hand it over to you.

*Aluk Malual, Aluk Akec Maker, Aluk Aker weok Chol Margen, Chol Deng Majok Rial chol*

*Aluk Malual, Aluk Akec Aker, Aluk Aker.*

Aluk Malual, Aluk Akec Maker, Aluk Aker weok Chol Margen, Chol Deng Majok Rial, Chol Aluk Malual, Aluk Akec Aker, Aluk Aker.

*Na cok deŋ ben tuen ta na ye ruon abor, na yen ruon abor, ta cok deŋ ke ben bor wun ruel dan Yiik acie bor.*

If it rains everywhere like it does in a flood year, like a flood year, it doesn't flood in our summer camp of Yiik.

*Pan Ayer, pan ayer ee pan ayer.*

Lit. home outside; extended family; an open place.

*Deŋ Matem, Deŋ Wol Akol, ku Deŋ Majok, Deŋ waadit Aluk Magol Magai Rial chol, Magai*

*Acol Athianj Magak ee Magai Acol Magak.*

Deng Matem, Deng Wol Akol, and Deng Majok, Deng my grandfather, Aluk Magol Magai Rial, called Magai Achol Athiang oh Magai Achol Magak.

*Ta cok Nuer ke ya ben ka wek a dut ye nbom.*  
Even if the Nuer comes, you will defend the edges of toc.

*Pan Ayer, pan ayer ee pan ayer.*  
Lit. home outside; extended family; an open place.

*Dej Matem, Dej Wol Akol, ku Dej Majok, Dej waadit Aluk Magol Magai Rial chol, Magai Achol Athiang Magak ee Magai Achol Magak*  
Deng Matem, Deng Wol Akol, and Deng Majok, Deng my grandfather, Aluk Magol Magai Rial, called Magai Achol Athiang oh Magai Achol Magak.

*Ta cok Nuer ke ya ben ka wek a dut ye nbom.*  
If the Nuer come, then you will defend the edge of toc.

*Na ye ruon abor na ye ruon abor ta cok Nuer ke ya ben, ka wek aa dut toc nbom.*  
In the year when it floods, if the year floods even if Nuer comes, you are the ones to defend toc (the far side of toc).

...

*Ca nyauj mac, ca moc talgat ke dbetem ajiic wen [REDACTED]*  
I pointed a gun and shot using six bullets, the son of [REDACTED] knows

*Ca tuom maruric wan nbiakrial adhothic.*  
I went on lookout, early in the morning, I got the enemy and I encircled them at in a of adoth trees adhothic.

*Ca moc ku tiet wen Makhet Mawer gok nbom.*  
I shot and waited for the son of a black bull.

*Ca tuom kuac diet thon dit Mawel yen ca bei ok cath ok wen waa col [REDACTED], [REDACTED]*  
I encircled the enemy at Kuac Diet (a place in toc) and I took an uncastrated bull I was with my clansmate [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col [REDACTED]*  
I encircled the enemy in the morning with my clansmate, [REDACTED]

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col [REDACTED]*  
I encircled the enemy in the morning with my clansmate, [REDACTED]

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col [REDACTED]*  
I encircled the enemy with my clansmate, [REDACTED]

*Ca tuom wan nbiak riel ok cath wen waa col [REDACTED], [REDACTED]*  
I encircled the enemy with my clansmate, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

*Ca moc talgat ka bet ku teem wan nbiak riel ta ci thian apei ca lo dutdut.*

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<sup>17</sup> Names redacted to protect anonymity.

I shot eight bullets, there was a river in between, and I swam, the place was very congested, but I swam with the cattle and swam across the river (towards Apuk).

*Ca moc ok cath ok [redacted] col [redacted]*  
I shot the gun, I was with [redacted], called [redacted]

*Yen cie biok ke Jieng,*  
I don't drive cattle with just anybody.

...

*Ku raan Jiem ok ten ken ee ting wamaath, ting col Nyanyai Deng Maker*  
And the person I have been with is the wife of my brother, called Nyanyai Deng Maker

*Ku ben Deng Kuac Chol, Padiany Adoor, ku ben Deng Mawan*  
And I am Deng Kuac Chol, from Padiany of Adoor, also known as Deng 'Mawan'.

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F.R. Boardman

J.F.E. Bloss

R.O. Collins

P.P. Howell

T.R.H. Owen

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R.C. von Slatin

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Copies of documents from the Equatorial Provinces Files provided by Cherry Leonardi.

Papers in Private Collections:

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## INTERVIEWS AND SONGS CITED IN TEXT

Much of the research is contained in the form of Field notes. These are in my possession. Dates and location of field notes are indicated in text.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Interview language</b>	<b>Location</b>
Fr. Paul Ariath	19.10.2011	English	Kuajok
Toŋ Majøk Toŋ	21.10.2011	English	Kuajok
Madol Cuor	27.10.2011	English	Kuajok
Bol Cuor	28.10.2011	Dinka	Angui
Athian Deng Acuil	29.10.2011	English	Kuajok
Akol Giir Thiik	12.10.2011; 22.10.2011; 14.11.2011	English	Kuajok
Mabior Wek Kuanyin	02.12.2011	Dinka	Gogrial Town
Group of people living in Lol Nyiel	02.12.2011	Dinka	Lol Nyiel
Ayii Madut	04.11.2011	Dinka	Barpuot,
SPLA officer (name with held)	05.11.2011	English	Kuajok
Elderly woman, near the river	07.11.2011	Dinka	Kuajok
Chol Kuac Chol	12.11.2011	English/Dinka	Kuajok
Group at the Grave of Wol 'Kuajok'.	14.11.2011	Dinka	Kuajok
Akec Reng,	21.11.2011	Dinka	Kuajok,
Mou's aunt	01.11.2011; 21.11.2011	Dinka	Kuajok
Deng Kuac Chol	01.12.2011	Dinka	Kuajok
Deng Aleu	04.12.2011	Dinka	Kuajok
Thomas Amman	05.12.2011	English	Kuajok
Juac Aleu	06.12.2011	Dinka	Wunkuel
Young relatives of Juac Aleu	06.12.2011	Dinka	Wunkuel
Joong Deng Akuien	13.02.2012	English	Kuajok
Abang Mariak	24.02.2012	Dinka	Cueicok
Baak Yuot,	15.02.2012 (AM and	Dinka	Cueicok

	PM)		
Jiel Yuot	16.02.2012, 27.02.2012	Dinka	Cueicok
Maluil Maluil Agany	08.03.2012	Dinka	Gogrial Town
Aciec Kuot Kuot	08.03.2012	English	Gogrial Town
Nyaŋ Geng	22.03.12	English	Kuajok.
Bol Lual,	22.03.12	English	Kuajok
Bona Bek	27.03.2012	English	Kuajok
Akol Mayom	29.04.2012	Dinka	Kuajok
Gregory Vasily	01.05.2012	English	Lietnhom
Riiny Thiik Madut,	06.06.12	English	Luonyaker
Thiik Mawut	07.06.2012	Dinka	Luonyaker
Group of elder men	08.06.2012	Dinka	Luonyaker
Dotdit	11.06.2012	Dinka	Cueicok
Deng Mayuot	12.06.2012	English/Dinka	Cueicok
Wol	14.06.12	Dinka	Mawut
Maror Maror	18.06.12	Dinka	Maliai
Maŋar Wol	19.06.2012	Dinka	Luonyaker
Atem Atem Abiem	03.07.12	Dinka	Gogrial Town
Reec Longar	04.07.2012	Dinka	Gogrial Town
SPLA officers under tree	04.07.2012	Dinka	Gogrial, Town
Bona Malwal	13.06.2013	English (email)	Oxford

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