ETHNIC DIVISIONS, SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN LAKES STATE

An Anthropological Study to Inform the *Water for Lakes State Programme*
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1All photographs and graphs are made by the author. The ethnic and sectional divisions have been designed onto an existing map of the British Geological Survey: “South Sudan South Sudan: Lakes State Detailed Transport Map” (as of 1 Mar 2013), online available at: http://reliefweb.int/map/south-sudan-republic/south-sudan-lakes-state-detailed-transport-map-1-mar-2013.
ACRONYMS

CPA – Comprehensive Peace Agreement
IDP – Internally Displaced Person
SAF – Sudan Armed Forces
SPLA – Sudan People’s Liberation Army
SPLA/IO – Sudan People’s Liberation Army/In Opposition
SPLM – Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
UNMISS – United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
SUMMARY

This research report investigates ethnic and social divisions, conflict dynamics and cultural change in Lakes State in reference to the Water for Lakes State Programme that is realised jointly by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of South Sudan. Lakes State is positioned in the geographical centre of South Sudan and is predominantly inhabited by the majority Southern Bahr el Ghazal Dinka sections of Agar, Alia, Apak, Atuot, Ciec and Gok and the minority Jibeli, who are mythologically and historically connected in relationships of antagonism, displacement and marginalization. Since the late 2000s, Lakes State has experienced high levels of lawlessness, physical violence (including rape and police abuse), displacement, food insecurity and inter- and intra-ethnic conflict.

Comprehensive analyses of the multiple conflicts in Lakes State have to include, but move beyond explanations based on resource and political competition. The need to accumulate wealth, poverty and unequal access to water resources as well as conflicts over women (elopement, impregnation, adultery) are contributing factors to cattle raiding and conflict. However, conflict dynamics are highly influenced by mechanisms of reciprocal justice and proportional retribution mechanisms which implicate individuals in wider social units and hold whole social groups accountable and punishable for individual actions. Individuals are part of a collective body of clan affiliations from which collective response is expected and on which coalitional guilt is imposed. At the same time group membership is constructed conditionally and situationally and conflict both integrates and separates societies. In Lakes State, and South Sudan as a whole, there is a strong proliferation of automatic weaponry in the hands of civilians and the recent outbreak of violence in December 2013 has increased access to and civilian possession of guns, which has given a new impetus to localized conflicts in Lakes State. In the past years, women, children and elderly have been violently interpolated in revenge killings and the rapid unravelling of regional codes of warfare ethics has resulted in the breaking down of traditional protection mechanisms. Therefore, these complex social dynamics related to initial conflict make it difficult to assume that improving access and availability to water will actively and conclusively resolve conflict and the construction of new water sources can equally contribute to novel conflicts or exacerbate existing conflicts through disputes over land ownership and access.

This research report shows that in scholarly and popular representations, Dinka have incorrectly been characterised as exclusive pastoralists who profess an extreme devotion to cows. Both historical and contemporary research has shown that agriculture played a major role in the foundation and continuance of communities and an explicit relationship has been established between the fertility of the land in the Southern Bahr el Ghazal, the number of cattle possessed and political prowess. Cattle symbolically substitute human beings in transactions that generate, reinforce and reconcile relationships in marriage, homicide compensations and in conflict-settlement, but also reinforce a hegemonic masculinity that engenders a physical and moral superiority over cattle-less men, women and children. Cattle form an extensive and metaphysical vocabulary of self-perception and environmental reflection, but the generalization of Dinka as pastoralists also feeds into a homogeneous and archaic image of the archetypical cattle keeper. Pastoralism and agriculture are intimately connected, but explicitly stratified activities that follow social divisions along class, generational and gender lines and perpetuate power dynamics based on cattle-wealth. Decades of war, displacement, the introduction of formal education and monetary systems and the improved access to Western medicine have diversified livestock activities changed the position of cows and strongly influenced traditional generational hierarchies and positions of status and authority. Changing perceptions on the value of cows are strongly related to a division between educated and non-educated and whereas the latter generally perceive cattle as procreative sources of wealth and pride, a growing class of educated Dinka gained access to other sources of wealth/income.

The ‘Water for Livestock’, ‘Water for People’, ‘Water for Agriculture’ and ‘Water for Fishery’ components envisioned in the Water for Lakes State Programme represent highly interconnected activities that follow a specific hierarchy between pastoralism and agriculture and are based on a particular stratification of society along ethnic, sectional, class, gender and generational lines. Through the improvement of availability of and access to water resources, the Water for Lakes State Programme could become a positive catalyst for development in the state. However, Lakes State experiences rapid situational changes and any development intervention in the area calls for a hypersensitive and holistic operation that critically and continuously analyses the impact of operations on local conflict dynamics and existing social and cultural divisions.
INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This research report has been undertaken in the context of the bilateral Water for Lakes State Programme that is funded by The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation of South Sudan and is implemented by Mott McDonald. The general objective of the Water for Lakes State Programme is “to balance the development and management of natural resources with water as an entry point in order to contribute to security and to reduce dependence on food aid.” This anthropological study examines the socio-cultural dynamics in Lakes State and aims to identify influences that might positively impact or inhibit progress of the Water for Lakes State Programme and research was conducted in September and October 2014.

The report discusses societal divisions; investigates conflict dynamics; and gives an overview of the various ethnic, sectional and clans divisions in Lakes State. With the acknowledgement that Lakes State forms a heterogeneous and complex context, this report aspires to contribute to a balanced understanding of the internal differences (individual, ethnic and sectional) and describes processes of cultural and societal change. Finally, this research report will formulate recommendations to inform a culturally-sensitive implementation of the Water for Lakes State Programme.

LAKES STATE: A NOTE ON CONTEXT

Lakes State, which is positioned at the geographical centre of South Sudan, is home to various sections and sub-divisions of the Dinka confederation and the non-Nilotic Jibil, who occupy Wulu County at the border with Western Equatoria State. Dinka are the largest ethnic community in South Sudan and the Dinka that settled in what is contemporarily known as Lakes State are referred to as the Western Dinka or the Dinka of the southern Bahr el-Ghazal. The Jibil, who are called Jur Bel in Dinka, consider themselves marginalized, underrepresented and understudied and in my literary review no previous studies could be found of this small ethnic community. In this study a dominant focus is placed on cultural practices and social divisions among Dinka, however - in comparison to the Dinka - occasional reference is made to the Jibil.

Lakes State is often portrayed as a state affected by extreme forms of lawlessness, ethnic conflict and revenge killings; and particularly the majority Dinka Agar have a reputation of ‘hot-bloodedness’ and ‘short-temperedness’ in the wider Dinka confederation.\(^2\) The peoples of Lakes State experience high threats of physical violence, including rape, police torture and killings; displacements; the deliberate destruction and theft of property; and food insecurity. Rumbek, a government garrison, was re-captured from the Sudan Armed forces (SAF) by the SPLA in 1997 and an SPLA administration was established. At the time of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) the town was a thriving administrative and trading centre. An intensification and change in character of intra-ethnic conflict and cyclical retaliation in the state is traced back to the early 2000s and is intimately connected to a national militarization of (ethnic) identities (Jok and Hutchinson 1999; 2002) during the second civil war (1983-2005) and the proliferation of armed military groups as well as the presence of weapons in the hands of civilians.

National Conflict Dynamics

In mid-December 2014, two-and-a-half years into the independence of South Sudan from Sudan, the country experienced a fast disintegration of the security situation on a national level. Within the span of

days, the violence spread to Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States in Greater Upper Nile. Human Rights Watch (2014) states that the recent conflict has been triggered by a political dispute among the leadership in the ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and is characterised by a pattern of ethnically motivated reprisal violence based on presumed allegiances, mass pillage and the destruction of civilian property. The conflict\(^3\) between the two main warring parties, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/In Opposition (SPLA/IO), is played out in Greater Upper Nile and no active fighting in connection to this national conflict occurred in Lakes State. The state remained largely untouched by the conflict, but out of the 1.44 million people who are internally displaced since December 2013, an estimated 137,500 are situated in Lakes State\(^4\). The internally displaced peoples (IDPs), of who the majority crossed into Lakes State from Bor South, Twic East and Duk counties in neighbouring Jonglei State, are housed in Mingkamman, Awerial County.

Map: Ethnic and Sectional Divisions in Lakes State

Simultaneously, the national crisis of governance, the renewed militarisation of the society and the mobilization and subscription of marginalised youth into the army and non-aligned armed groups has exacerbated an already volatile situation in Lakes State and has expedited accessibility of weaponry. Also, because of its strategic position in the centre of South Sudan, Lakes States has become a passageway for both SPLA and opposition forces.

State-Level Conflict Dynamics

Mid-September 2014 saw an increase in revenge killings in Lakes State as a result of heightened tensions between the various Dinka Agar sections of Greater Rumbek (Rup and Kuei and Athoi) and

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\(^3\) In this report I will not detail a historical overview of the recent conflict, nor will I touch on the factors that contributed to the eruption and spread of violence. The renewed conflict has been documented by various national (South Sudan Committee for Human Rights and the Sudd Institute) and international (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan) human rights organisations and these reports give a balanced overview of the political developments in South Sudan that led to the recent outbreak of national conflict and describe the fast-changing situation in South Sudan since mid-December 2013.

the Dinka Gok of Cueibet. It is widely argued that local political elite augment experiences of insecurity and actively ‘orchestrate’ conflict dynamics in Lakes State. During my visits to Lakes State, open discontent was expressed about the leadership of caretaker governor Major General Matur Chut Dhuel, who was appointed in January 2013 after the removal of the elected governor Chol Tong Mayay. Early August 2014, Paramount Chief Apareer Chut Dhuel was murdered in a revenge attack.\(^5\) The death of this prominent chief and brother of the governor, who belong to the Gony-section, reignited historical grievances between the Gony and Thuyic clans of Rumbek East and immersed Greater Rumbek in a cycle of revenge killings, mobilizing clans against each other. The justice system showed to be clearly biased towards the state authorities as only chiefs from the Thuyic-clan were arrested. These arbitrary arrests and the targeting of chiefs in revenge killings add to the already-diminishing influence of customary authorities.

In October 2014 disarmament campaigns were organized by Lakes State government in collaboration with the police and customary authorities and galweng, youth militia, were mobilized as administration police. A *Conflict and Protection Note on Lakes State* by the South Sudan Protection Cluster (October 2014, 1) argues that the civilian disarmament campaign is “adding fuel to the fire, exacerbating fissures between the SPLA and cattle camp youth, and communities at large” as the galweng predominantly serve to build “protection forces and (...) home guards” for the political elite. Simultaneously, open clashes have occurred between SPLA soldiers and police and cattle camp youth who resisted disarmament.  

Due to increased insecurity, heavy rainfall and a poor maintenance of the Mundri-Pangor-Rumbek road, Rumbek became inaccessible by road in early October 2014 which resulted in growing fuel and food shortages. This might potentially aggravate existing competition over scarce resources. Heavy rainfall also flooded wide geographical areas and saw the displacement and concentration of people and livestock in cultivated areas and will contribute to existing levels of food insecurity.

**METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS**

The data presented in this research report has been collected using a variety of qualitative research methodologies grounded in anthropology; ranging from group discussions, semi-structured interviews, observations and informal conversations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with government officials, academicians, customary authorities and individuals from various ethnic, sectional and social backgrounds. The diverse social backgrounds of the informants help to attain an insight in multiple and at times conflicting perspectives. However, the limited time available for fieldwork did not allow for a corroboration of information, which makes it difficult to draw generalizations. Interviews and interactions with informants almost exclusively took place in public spaces – marketplaces, courts, community centres and under trees – which often resulted in the eavesdropping and observation of, or active participation of ‘outsiders’ to the conversations.

An extensive literature review of existing materials was conducted to inform the ethnographic research, to provide a historical context and to substantiate views and perceptions collected during the actual fieldwork. Field research was conducted during two consecutive weeks in mid-September and mid-October 2014. The volatile security situation and high levels of flooding, which made roads inaccessible, resulted in a dominant focus of the fieldwork in Rumbek town (Rumbek Centre), the state capital and administrative headquarter of Lakes State. Research was thus performed in urban and semi-urban spaces - which obviously delimited and coloured the insights gathered.

This research report does by no means give a comprehensive insight into cultural practices and social divisions of a widespread and perturbed geographical location and complex inter- and intra-ethnic relations. Through ethnographic research, however, this study hopes to create an analytical basis to inform the relationships that the Water for Lakes State team will engage in, and guide a culturally-sensitive implementation of the programme.

ETHNO-HISTORICAL FORMATIONS AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS

In this chapter, I will give an overview of the ethno-historical formations of the Dinka and Jibeli and their settlement in what is contemporarily known as Lakes State. Secondly, this chapter will discuss systems of social organization among the Dinka and Jibeli societies.

The ethnically and culturally diverse peoples living in the Republic of South Sudan have historically been divided into three main groups: the Nilotic peoples (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, Murle, Anyuak and Luo); the Nilo-Hamitic peoples (Bari, Mundari, Lokoya, Kuku, Kakwa, Pojulu, Nyangwara, Toposa, Lopa, Didinga and Lotuku); and the Sudanic peoples (Jibeli, Kresh, Balandu, Ndogo, Moro, Madi, Azande, Baka, Bongo and Avukaya). The Dinka, numbering between 2.5 and 3 million, roughly make up one-third of the population and form the biggest ethnicity in South Sudan. The Jibeli form a much smaller ethnic community that numbers between forty- and fifty-thousand.

SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A Brief Overview of Dinka

In classical ethnological representations the Dinka are characterised as a congeries of approximately twenty-five independent tribes which, despite their settlement over a wide geographical area (often described as ‘Dinkaland’), are considered to be culturally and linguistically homogeneous and uniform (see for example Seligman and Seligman 1932, Lienhardt 1961 and Deng 1973). Francis Deng (1973, 1) attributes this to an attitude of conservatism and pride that is grounded in self-perceptions as “the people”, which is a direct translation of ‘Monjiang’ - the colloquial name for the Dinka. This perceived conservatism is by no means the result of isolation, as Dinka alike other ethnic communities in the contemporary South Sudan have had multiple experiences with foreign invasion and colonialism and the ethno-historical formation of the Dinka reads as a continuous process of fission and fusion. In 1973, Deng observes that this attitude of conservatism does not manifest itself in a rejection of foreign elements, but in a careful selection and incorporation of novelties. Equally he argues that “education and increasing exposure to other cultures (…) might result in the disintegration of the traditional order without any substitute.” (Deng 1973, 2) The role of education will be discussed below in greater detail, suffice to say here that every society is constantly changing and transforming and that culture cannot be perceived as fixed and static.

Dinka can be divided along territorial, descent, gender and generational lines. As described earlier, Dinka live dispersed over wide geographical areas and this research report focusses on the Dinka in Lakes State. According to Chol, a student in the Catholic University who comes from Cueibet, the Dinka of Lakes State can be divided in sections (thai), sub-sections (wuf) and clans (gol). (The various sections, sub-sections and clans are outlined in Annex II.) A clan can be divided into various sub-clans and is equally divided into various lineages, which bring together all the descendants of a man and exist of various families, made up of a male family head, a wife/or wives and children. Descent is classified in inclusive, but agnatic terms and comprises all kin related by blood and marriage - both patrilineal and matrilineal. An agnate is a person related by patrilineal ancestry and in an agnatic society kin trace their relationship by descent exclusively through males from a common ancestor. Traditionally, societies are stratified by gender and age and elderly married men control political and

6Obviously, the assumption that all Dinka live in ‘Dinkaland’ is a false one: decades of conflict resulted in the displacement and resettlement of Dinka all over the world, and processes of urbanization further distributed Dinka all over South Sudan.

7The pre-independence history of South Sudan is often divided into five broad temporalities: Turco-Egyptian occupation (1821-1885); the Mahdist state (1885-1898); the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1956); domestic Sudanese colonization (1956-2005); and post-CPA autonomous Southern Sudan (2005-2011).
economic power through ownership over land and livestock. In regards of marriage, Dinka are a polygynous society that practice exogamy: men are allowed (and often encouraged) to marry multiple wives - depending on capacity and cattle-wealth - and marriage is permissible only outside the clan, which is observed with respect to both the matrilineal and patrilineal clan. Beswick (2001, 36-37) defines polygyny as “the practice of having more than one wife at one time. Here each wife and her children form an economic subunit with a separate kitchen, fields for food production, and cattle. Each extended family is embedded in a sociological structure characterized by networks of wider economic and political obligations based on kinship ties.” Gender divisions and marriage practices will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

Customary Authorities and Chieftaincy

Dinka are often portrayed as egalitarian people with no class distinction, although a certain level of social classification between chiefly and commoner clans is observed. In reality, chieftaincy is a hereditary position, however, the new but unimplemented Local Government Act specified that the position should be open for political contest. Sub-sections are ‘ruled’ by Paramount chiefs and clans are headed by executive-chiefs. The basic structures of the present customary system have been inherited from a Chief’s Court Ordinance that was issued in 1931 and implemented by the Anglo-Egyptian colonial administration. After Sudan’s independence in 1956 the structures were largely preserved although the terminology changed. Under SPLM/A administration an autonomous judiciary was created and the introduction of “new local government units prompted a period of division and subdivision of the old administrative and chiefdom units” (Leonardi et al. 2010, 19). This resulted in the creation of new positions and a proliferation of self-pronounced courts in different societal section like cattle chief courts, town quarter chiefs, border courts and galweng courts. Kuot Ater, the Director of Local Governance and Traditional Authority, makes it very clear that the galweng, the cattle camp youth-militia, are not part of the law and came into existence to protect and defend the communities and livestock from raiding Nuer and neighbouring Dinka: “No, no, no, they have nothing to do with the courts, they have no interior powers. Their powers are only at the borders.” In 2009, The Local Government Act was created, but according to Kuot Ater, this act has not yet been implemented because of the instability in Lakes State. Leonardi et al. (2010, 5) observe that the “local court system functions as a loosely governed unitary system which incorporates legal principles and practices from both statutory and customary law. It is characterized by hybridity and mutability, by an amalgamation of principles and procedures rather than a clear distinction between separate legal spheres.” Assistant Paramount-Chief, Malual Malok of Jiir payam in Rumbek Centre summarizes that the major issues the customary courts of the Executive Chiefs deal with are elopement, marriage issues like the delayed payment of dowry and adultery. The Regional Courts of the Paramount Chiefs deal with appeals from the lower courts and used to hear cases about theft, cattle raiding and inter-clan fighting. However, Kuot Ater argues that with the increased insecurity these cases are now referred to the magistrate courts, whose judges have received formal training in law. The Executive Chiefs and Paramount Chiefs are overseen by the Magistrate and County Commissioner. Restorative and consensual dispute resolution is favoured over an adversarial and retributive approach. However, as discussed in the introduction, the relationship between statutory and customary authorities in Lakes State is strained by the implication of chiefs in arrest and interrogation and the customary authorities feel that they do not enjoy a fully autonomous position in the settlement of court cases.

Divine Leadership

Apart from political authorities, there exist religious/spiritual leaders who mediate between God and the ancestral spirits. Seligman and Seligman (1932, 178) observes that “the threads of religious belief are woven into the fabric of daily life.” The most powerful spiritual agency that is known by the Dinka is called Nhialic, which could be literally translated as ‘in the above’. Another spiritual being that is recognized as subsidiary to Nhialic is Dengdit, which means ‘great rain’. An important living spiritual leader is the Rainmaker (bany dit), who inherited the spirit of a great ancestor down the generations and functions as an ecological agent, protects crops from birds and cures the sick. The spirits of long dead and powerful ancestors are named jok and they take “active interest in their descendants” (ibid., 185). These spirits or divinities are honoured with sacrifices or dedications of animals or objects, and if the demands of jok are disregarded sickness or bad luck will descend on the clan. Deng, similarly to Seligman and Seligman, argues that “divinity (…) is not limited to any particular feature of human experience, but embraces all aspects of life.” Some members of society, both men and women, are considered to be able to communicate with the ancestral spirits and are called tiet. Powers which are used to diagnose and treat sickness and advising on lost cattle or other accidental events in life. The
changing role of divinities will be discussed in greater detail in connection to the shifting values of cows in the next chapter.

Education: Novel Social Divisions

An important element of male socialization and community-building could be found in the initiation rites that groups of age-mates undergo to signify their entrance into adulthood and manhood. Male youth received initiation in the form of marks across the forehead and are secluded from society for a specified period of time after which their male prowess was publicly tested. As happened among the Nuer in the 1980s, discussion erupted among the Dinka about the ultimate significance of male initiation, ethnic identification and the definition of a boy and a man (see Hutchinson 1996, 270). Many of the educated Dinka were not initiated into manhood by the marking of their forehead and there still exist perceptions of unmarked men as non-men. Deng describes how the educated are sometimes referred to as Jur, which means foreigner or stranger. In my conversations with people a clear dichotomy between educated and uneducated people was established. This dichotomy was sometimes also described in terms of “civilized” and “uncivilized” and “modern” and “traditional”. These dividing lines expose a clear urban/rural disparity, where rural is commonly identified as the cattle camp. This dichotomy, however, does not completely reflect the reality as there are cattle camps in urban and semi-urban areas and not everybody who lives in the rural areas is actually living in a cattle camp.

As discussed above, in descriptions of Dinka the egalitarian character of their societies is often emphasized. However, I believe that in recent times this image has been changed by a growing gap between poor and rich. Political elites are treated with a certain submission that ambiguously combines financial dependence with a representational and electoral power on national level. Also there is a clear distinction between cattle-wealth and cattle-less men. I was told by various people that Dinka selling on the market do not own any cattle, as people who own cattle would not engage in such socially diminishing businesses. In my conversation with various market sellers this perception is confirmed. In a group discussion with male market sellers in the vegetable and fish markets of Rumbek, the men argue that they face difficulty in marriage: “We are not respected because we do not own any cows and fathers will not allow us to marry their daughters.” Some of the sellers narrate how they save the money earned through their small businesses for the purchase of cows (often with the purpose of marriage), whilst others are in no position to save and spend the little profit they make on the sustenance of their families. Although most of the sellers we spoke to worked small fields of land, their agricultural output was not enough to sell on the market and was used for own consumption. The produce was brought from surrounding villages and sold with profit. Some of the salesmen had enrolled in the business after they spend all their cows in marriage, but others had been forced unto the market because of the theft of their herds.

A Brief Overview of Jibeli

Apart from the majority Dinka, Lakes State is home to a minority group of Jibeli. The processes of ethno-historical formation of the Dinka and Jibeli are strongly interconnected and it is argued by Beswick (2004, 78) that the Jibeli have “adopted Gok Dinka Culture (...) [but] still maintain a strong independent culture”. Simon Malual emphasizes the need for the Jibeli to “define ourselves. We know where we came from. We have to recognize ourselves as Beli, not Dinka because God has no mistake in determining where you are. Making your story to get lost is very painful. We are people of people, we are independent.” A similar sentiment is expressed by Ezekiel Thiang when he argues that “the Jibeli identify themselves as different from the Nilotics and we have different attitudes and thinking.” One of the major differences between the Jibeli and the Dinka is the fact that the Jibeli are not exogamous and do not follow the strict incest laws existence among the Dinka.

The Jibeli intellectuals describe their community as egalitarian; everybody is equal and there are no social classes, although some people take more responsibility than others. The society is divided

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8 According to the discussants, the markets in Rumbek have been affected by the recent outbreak of revenge killings between the Dinka Agar and Gok which has driven up prices and makes it more insecure to import goods into the city. During a second visit the markets were virtually empty because of the poor and impassable conditions of the roads.
along strict gender lines: the work for women is cooking, fetching water, pounding, grinding, preparing the land. The work for men is to build houses and to clear the harvest. However, women will come and remove the harvest from the land and bring it home. Hunting is done together, but women only carry the luggage and men do the actual activities related to making traps and killing animals. Fishing and farming is done together, but men are not allowed to harvest. Men cut down the sorghum, but women remove the grain. Women cannot engage men, but men do engage women in courtship.

Power Hierarchies

The power hierarchy existing among the Jibeli is said to date back to 1924 and has been established by the Anglo-Egyptian colonial administration. Before the arrival of the British, the only traditional authority among the Jibeli was the Rainmaker (njere toro). The Rainmaker receives his powers from god (Mitoro), who is the creator of heaven. People respect the rainmaker and will not anger or counteract him or her. The rainmaker is considered to always be right and the spiritual powers are inherited, mostly by the last born. You cannot be elected or called to become a rainmaker. Once the selection falls on you, you will and cannot reject. According to Ezekiel Thiang, who is an ordained but inactive priest, before people used to believe in small gods and turned to them “for blessings and protection”, but that this is dying with the introduction of Christianity and education. The Jibeli are renowned amongst the Dinka for their magical power and knowledge of poisons. Beswick describes how “the Dinka were frightened of their magic, and expressed anxiety over the number of Dinka affected by it” (2004, 74). It is argued by the Jibeli intellectuals that witchcraft was “borrowed from the Azande” and there is a clear distinction between witches (ibiuja) who kill and prophets (mijo) who predict the future and protect people against sickness. If somebody is accused of being a witch, the person will be punished by isolation and social exclusion and he/she will no longer be allowed to attend big gatherings.

Currently, Wulu has one Paramount Chief who rules over the county, one Executive Chief per boma and two to three Sub-Chiefs per boma. Apart from the chiefs (njere) there are gol (clan) leaders and community leader and family heads (ibu be), who settle small issues. The characteristics of a chief, as identified by the Jibeli elders are: lives in a well-build house; cultivates a lot; is carrying and open to receive any guest; is a peacemaker and resolves problems; and is a representative for the community. Women cannot become leaders, but they are consulted in the process of marriage. However, in the position of rainmakers and spiritual leaders, women can make decisions. People fear women in such positions and if you try to make her angry, if you annoy the rainmaker, she will stop rain from falling in the area. People have to build houses for the rainmakers, because it is a disgrace to leave a spiritual person to work. Before the rainmakers were considered to be strong enough to stop fighting that is coming from outside and what rainmakers predict will happen. Rainmakers can make rituals to protect people against fighting.

DINKA: CHANGING HOMELANDS AND ETHNIC ASSIMILATION

In a book titled Sudan’s Blood Memory, Stephanie Beswick (2004) retraces the historical existence of a Nilotic kinship in central Sudan and therewith argues that “the geographical cradleland of East Africa’s Nilotic people is the central rather than Southern Sudan” (Beswick 2004, 1). Beswick compares the oral histories of the Western Nilotic Dinka of Lakes State, who are at the centre of her book, with the oral histories of the progeny of other Nilotic peoples en route from the northern residence to the south and other ethnic groups who encountered the migrating Dinka. Beswick employs the oral histories, which she calls “blood memories” (Beswick 2004, 1), - for a substantive focus on wars and events of great trauma - to present a peculiar narrative of the ethno-historical formation of South Sudan. She observes that there are indications of correspondence between the material culture of the Nilotes and ancient Egypt, and concludes that the ancient Egyptian civilization is

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9 Mythologically, the Dinka believe that they are the first people created by the supreme god, named Nhialic. It is believed that God created in the beginning a man and a woman, and the earth was so near to the sky that people on earth could easily reach God in the sky by a rope that stretched between them. Sickness and death were unknown, and a single grain of millet was sufficient for a day’s food. God forbade them to pound more than this single grain. The woman, however, wanted more food and she began to pound more grain with the long-handled pestle the Dinka use. In doing so, she struck God, who withdrew to the heights and sent a finch to sever the rope that had once allowed man easy access to him. Therefore man has since had to work hard to get his food, and death and sickness, unknown when God and man were near together, are his lot.
also an ancient Nilotic civilization. From the thirteenth to the seventeenth century military and ecological stress (ibid., 29-30) forged the Nilotes residing in the land between the Blue and While Nile in the Gezira southwards from a central Sudanese homeland, a displacement that resulted in a shifting of the “Nilotic frontier” (ibid., 2). The narrative of long-distance migration and resettlement subsumes iterate elements of violent war and permanent instability and reads as a history of onslaught, displacement and absorption, where some ethnic groups that settled before the arrival of the Dinka were (forcibly) assimilated and others were pushed from the land and resettled in other locations.

The historical arrival of the Dinka in the contemporary South Sudan signalled a change into human-environmental interaction with the introduction of a “hardier variety of cattle and sorghum into the region” (Beswick 2004, 2) and a “massive ethnic expansion” through intermarriage and violent assimilation. In her description of the migration routes of the contemporary Southern Bahr el Ghazal Dinka (Ciec, Aliab, Apak-Atwot, Agar, Pakam, Gok) from the land east of the Nile to what is currently known Lakes States Beswick emphasizes the rich and fertile quality of the land in which the contemporary Western Dinka settled, which can be distinguished from the other lineages in the Dinka confederation by the preferable and exceptional types of soil and land (Beswick 2004, 64) and which allowed higher quantities and qualities of agricultural output. Simultaneously, the exceptional quality of the land also resulted in “more wars and less ethnic integration of ‘foreign’ peoples” (Beswick 2004, 64).

Sectional Formations among Dinka Lakes State

Before a division in various sections, the Agar (Rup and Kuei (Amanum), Aliam Toch and Pakam) who occupy what is contemporarily known as Greater Rumbek, were led to southern Bahr el Ghazal by two priests and upon their arrival they found the Jibeli inhabiting the land, whom they suppressed and whose land they occupied. The Agar believe that major Dinka groupings (Luaic, Rek and Gok) as well as the Nuer are the progeny of one of their prominent chiefs and the original settler in the contemporary homeland of the Agar. According to Beswick, the Pakam of Rumbek North have a different history from the other Agar and the first prominent Pakam leader, who was a paramount chief during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, was born out of the marriage between a run-away Nuer and a Dinka girl (Beswick 2004). A process of socio-political and economic incorporation resulted into an assimilation and integration into the Dinka amalgam.

The Ciec of Yirol East are made up of two major sections, namely the Ciec-Lou and the Ciec-Ador (Beswick 2004, 65). The ancient father of both Ciec clans is considered to be Manyiel Tiop and it is estimated the Ciec arrived west of the Nile in the late seventeenth-century, after which – under the leadership of two priests – the Nile was crossed at two points. Beswick argues that the Aliab Dinka, the Dinka Agar and the Atuot once belonged to the second group of Ciec Dinka and gained new ethnic identities as a result of fission. Members of the Ciec that initially settled on the Eastern bank of the Nile separated in smaller clan group, migrated northwest and became the Rek (Tonj) and Western Twic (Gogrial) Dinka. The oral histories recall invasions from the Luo, Nuer and Murle that were repulsed and it is believed that some of the sections are not of an original Dinka ancestry but from Luo, Nuer and Mundari origin. Evidence of this is found in the fact that the Western Nuer also have Lou and Ador sections, which according to Beswick suggests that “these clans were historically one” (Beswick 2004, 67). The origin of the Atuot of what is contemporarily known as Yirol West is disputed and apart from Dinka the Atuot speak a language “that other Dinka cannot hear and which resembles Nuer”. The Atuot originate from Yei and from east of the Nile. The Atuot moved into their new homelands between 1500 and 1620 (Beswick 2004, 70) and warred with and absorbed other Dinka sections (Ciec and Agar) and Luo, Mundari and Bari.

The migration history of the Aliab, that live in what is now known as Awerial has been characterised by a search for good grasslands for cattle and as the Aliab found the Bor Dinka residing on the east bank of the Nile, they followed the Ciec and Atuot westwards. Wars occurred with the contemporary Agar, who were evicted from the present-day land of the Aliab. Conflict also occurred with the Mundari and some were displaced, whereas others were absorbed into the Aliab Dinka.

Oral histories of the Gok of Cueibet recount a migration from the Ciec territory but also a genealogical connection to the Agar. The clan history of the Gok is complex and is characterised by political fissions and Gok and Agar share a long history of conflict.
JIBELI: A NON-NILOTIC MINORITY IN LAKES STATE

In comparison to the ethno-historical formation of the Dinka, fairly little has been established about the history of settlement of the Jibeli and the scattered information that exists is documented in reference to other, larger ethnic communities. Generally, the Jibeli are believed to have migrated from the Central African Republic in the company of the Moro Kodo, Baka and Bongo and fall under the Bantu-speaking, Sudanic group. The Moro Kodo established themselves in Mundri, Western Equatoria State, the Baka migrated south-westwards to the present-day Yei and Maridi and the Bongo settled in Wau and Tonj, although Bongo were also assimilated into the Jibel. Ruben Macier Makoi (quoted in Beswick 2004, 73) claims that the Jibeli "understand that the Moru are our brothers." Beswick establishes that the Jibeli used to reside in the present-day Ciec Dinka territory (Beswick 2004, 67) and Ezekiel Thiang, who is the current Peace Advisor to the Governor of Lakes State and a former commissioner for Wulu county, argues that not only Yirol, but also Cueibet used to be Jibeli areas. The Jibeli are thus believed to have settled in the area that is contemporarily known as Lakes State before the arrival of the southern Bahr-el-Ghazal Dinka. All Jibeli informants I spoke to argued that the Jibeli population used to be much larger, but reduced significantly because of diseases and conflict. Ezekiel Thiang describes the Gueri, Weku and Bongo who occupy the area between the Jibeli and the Zande as Bantu. “They are a part of us, but speak a different language and form separate sections within the Jibeli. Inter-marriage takes place between us and they speak Jibeli. We all came together as one.” Simon Malual argues that the Gueri speak another language that he argues is because they are neighbouring the Mvolo of Western Equatoria State. He argues that although the Gueri moved to Wulu a long time ago, they found the Jibeli already settled. The various sub-groups of the Jibeli “share the same behaviours and do not fight each other”, concludes Simon Malual. Ezekiel Thiang confirms the connection between the Bongo and the Jibeli and also claims an ancient relationship with the Azande:

“They [the Jibeli] say they were living here as three sections: The Bongo, Jur Bel and Azande. With time, we had the system of ruling of a king and section head. The king of the Azande wanted to colonize the area. The Bongo were in the middle and the Zande tried to colonize the Bongo and include the Jur Bel. They started fighting and defeated the Bongo, who migrated. The king wanted to expand further and displace the Jur Bel. By then we had a good relationship with the Dinka and we made a plan so that the Azande bypass the Jur and meet with the Dinka, who made a plan of deception. When the Azande reached the cattle camp the men ran away and the young boys remained. The Azande asked them: “How do you tie cows to keep them in one place?” They replied: “We tie the cow at the neck and at the hand and you go to sleep.” During the night the men came back and moved the cows who pulled the Zande men who were then defeated.”

This challenges the assumption that the Jibeli preceded the Dinka and shows that various oral histories overlap each other. This narrative of Dinka assistance has to be seen in light of more conflictive and disputed relationships – both historical and contemporary - between the Dinka and the Jibeli, which will be addressed in greater detail in chapter six.

SHIFTING VALUES OF COWS

The Dinka, as well as other pastoralist communities in South Sudan are renowned for their intense devotion to cattle. However, scholarly representations of the Dinka often exclusively and erroneously emphasize the social values of cows. Godfrey Lienhardt (1961), in his classical study on the Dinka titled *Divinity and Experience* shows that, historically, cows have had economical and practical as well as social and symbolic/religious value. Lienhardt sums up the material and nutritious importance of cattle:
“Soured milk and curds form a high proportion of the food taken, especially by young men when they are in the cattle-camps, and boiled butter is both a food and an unguent. When cattle die or are sacrificed their flesh is eaten, and their hide provides rope, sleeping-skins, and shields. Their urine disinfects the milk gourds and curdles the milk, to Dinka taste, and their dried dung is the fuel for the smudge-fires with which the Dinka try to protect themselves and their herds from biting insects. Dung ashes are rubbed over the body, both for decoration and as a partial protection against flies by day and mosquitoes by night.” (Lienhardt 1961, 4)

A more contemporary example of this is the sale of a bull for two milking cows by a young father in order to release him from the financial burden of buying expensive powdered milk. The young father argued that where the powdered milk had no value beyond its usage, the milking cow could be included in the family’s herd and reproduce itself. Some of the material as well as dietary usages of cows have diminished or disappeared with the introduction and influx of foreign goods. Simultaneously, cows have become a means through which people purchase foreign goods and have an increasing monetary value. For example, Gabriel Makuac Manyiel, a rainmaker from Tonj, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, who has lived in Lakes for the past two years, shows how cows often play an important role in the purchase of commercial merchandise. As we meet Gabriel at the auction in Rumbek he is negotiating the sale of a young bull (2500 ssp) in order to buy clothes for his four wives.

Decades of conflict, processes of urbanization, and the introduction of Western medicine and goods have not only changed the material but also the social values of cows. Before I address the shifting values of cows in greater detail, I will discuss the intimate connection between cattle and society.

CATTLE AND SOCIETY

Words like *wut* (cattle camp) and *gol* (cattle-hearth) are equally used to describe groupings of cattle and territorial and agnatic descent units. *Wut* can both be translated as cattle and men. Both Lienhardt and Deng argue that this illustrates the intimate connection between and interdependence of cow and men - but equally exposes a clear gender division/exclusion. Among the Dinka a vocabulary of names exists that is derived from the colour configurations of cattle and there is “a general parallelism between the prefix for a bull and ox and for men’s personal names and between that for cow and women’s personal names” (Lienhardt 1932, 11). These colour configurations are also used to describe colour in the living environment and thus cattle is an intimate part of self-perception and environmental perception. Symbolically, men are equated with bulls – begetters and fighters [virility] – or as “the centre, source and leader of his own herd” (Lienhardt 1932, 20). A man cannot reach the status of a complete member of society without cattle and human personality heavily depends on a man’s cattle wealth. Lienhardt argues that “to have rights in a herd is to have rights in a descent-group and through that in the political group to which it belongs. To have no such rights, or to be unable to assert them effectively, is to have no place in the main structure of Dinka society.” (Lienhardt 1961, 26) The right to control and use cattle - the circulation of cattle - serves primarily social objectives and depends on the position of an individual in the lineage order and ownership of cattle is male. Hutchinson, as well as Deng, observe that not everyone equally benefits from the equation between people and cattle: women and children, Hutchinson argues, were excluded in principle and cattle-less men in practice. This thus fortified the dominant social authority of senior, cattle-wealthy men and maintained relationships of dependence amongst members of community or family, reinforcing “men’s claims of physical and moral superiority” (Hutchinson 1996, 61).

Human beings and cattle substitute each other and are symbolically linked through transactions that generate, reinforce and reconcile enduring relationships and bonds between members of different agnatic descent groups in marriage, in compensation for homicide and in settlement of conflict. Secondly, cattle intimately connect human beings to divinity in dedication and sacrifice and have a strong religious significance as the medium of reconciliation between people, ancestral spirits and God. Hutchinson speaks of the cultural and ideological assertion of a fundamental oneness between cattle and people that allowed people “to transcend some of the profoundest of human frailties (death, infertility, illness) and thereby achieve a greater sense of mastery of their world” (Hutchinson 1996, 60). “The cattle which are received for a daughter given in marriage are used for the provision of wives for her brother; the cattle handed over in compensation for homicide are used for the provision of a women who will bear members into the lineage of the deceased, and thus restore them what they have lost in him.” (Lienhardt 1961, 25). The social values of cattle are thus strongly connected to “the maintenance of the lineage and the race” (Deng 1973, 30).
Interestingly, both Dinka and Nuer share a common expression in relationship to the killing of cows and both Lienhardt (1961, 21) and Hutchinson (1996, 299) translate this as: “cattle are not killed just for nothing”. Lienhardt connects this to the non-utilitarian value of cattle and a fear that a cow that is killed non-sacrificially will come back to haunt the killers - comparable to spiritual reprisals after the ‘unjust’ homicide of a human person. Hutchinson explains that previously sacrificial slaughter was at the centre of the idea of killing and that it is not that cattle must only be killed for sacrifice; they must be sacrificed to kill. However, both Lienhardt and Hutchinson describe alterations in the perceptions on sacrificial slaughter and the value of cows as a result of societal change. Hutchinson describes that by the early 1980s this expression had been redeployed by Nuer Christian communities as “a sacrificed cow is a wasted cow”, which meant that cattle should only be slaughtered for purposes of meat consumption. This is related to the attempt of Christian leaders to “strip cattle of their mediating role with divinity” which “made it far more difficult for Christian converts to seek the spiritual counsel of local prophets, earth priests, diviners, and healers of all sorts” (Hutchinson 1996, 300). However, this also unsettled societal distinctions of age, gender and descent related to cattle sacrifice and altered the authority of spiritual leaders.

CATEGORIES OF WEALTH

Hutchinson distinguishes four main categories of wealth amongst the Nuer in the 1980s, which “played an increasingly prominent role in determining relations of autonomy and dependence” (Hutchinson 1994, 57). These categories are: ‘money of work’, ‘money of cattle’, ‘cattle of money’ and ‘cattle of girls/daughters’. Similar categories are distinguished amongst the Dinka.
Cattle of Girls/Daughters

The cattle of girls/daughters principle will be further discussed in the fifth chapter, but for now it is important to understand that women are considered as a source of wealth and that marriage is one of the main sources of cattle-wealth. It is argued that a daughter must bring at least the same amount of cows that the mother has brought and this increases the pressure on prospective husbands. From conversations during dowry-negotiations in Madol Akoch, a cattle camp in Rumbek city, I gather that money is not exchanged as dowry. Relatives of the groom who will contribute to the bride-wealth and who do not own cows will buy cattle at the cow auction and these cows will be physically approved of by the members of the bride’s family. This follows after a lengthy selection procedure in which individual members of the bride’s family evaluate the herd of the groom’s family. As we visit the cattle camp Madol Akoch, two marriages are being conducted and negotiations about the dowry (bride-wealth negotiation) are ongoing. A dowry is not simply composed of a final number of cows, but is divided into an exchange of cows from one individual member of the groom’s family towards an individual member of the bride’s family. People gather around a group of cows that have been prepared by the individual member of the groom’s family and negotiations start over the number of cows, but also about the particular cows that the individual member of the bride’s family will receive. The individual member of the bride’s family – a brother or uncle of the bride – will select cows that are of his liking. The negotiations are guided by an interpreter who repeats the words of both parties and maintains order.

Another manner in which cattle can be acquired is through cattle raiding – often in preparation of marriage -, an activity that has contributed significantly to insecurity in Lakes State. The issue of cattle raiding will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Cattle, Work, Money: Shifting Hierarchies

Conflict, cattle raids and the increasing importance of a monetized economy resulted in the migration of Dinka men to northern Sudan in search of stability and economic prosperity as wage laborers. Lorins (2007, 19; see also Hutchinson 1996) argues that “with a decrease in traditional resources of wealth, and the viability of pastoralism lessening [due to the North-South conflict and South-South hostilities], some young men chose the journey north to seek independent sources of wealth”. Some of these young men returned southwards and used their wages earned to invest in cattle and independently establish families. These changing socio-economic contexts have had a great impact on traditional generational hierarchies, status and authority as young men could operate relatively autonomously from their extended families. At the same time, the money of work could be invested in cattle and cows are no longer only acquired as bride-wealth but are also purchased on cow auctions or in more informal ways using, instead of cows, the newly introduced money as a medium of exchange.

Cattle function as a financial security network, sometimes even across national boundaries, and when necessary cows are sold to pay for medical treatment, purchase medicine, clothes and in times of food insecurity to buy food. There are examples of cows being sold to pay for education, however, oftentimes youth complained that their parents, especially the fathers, were unwilling to sell cows to support the educational careers of their children. Commonly, people employed in formal and informal economies, use their salaries owed to invest in cattle as it is argued that whereas money is considered sterile, cattle have a self-generating capacity. In conversations with various people it becomes clear that cows are not sold to possess cash money. In case there is need for money, a cow will be sold that will bring the exact amount of money that is needed. For example, if you need to buy something that costs 4,000 pounds you will look for a bull that brings you that money; which shows the purposeful sale of cows. As described above, cows are also exchanged to acquire new cows. During our visit to Madol Akoch cattle camp, two weddings were taking place and as the dowry negotiations are ongoing, cattle youth parade their personal oxen in front of the marriage parties. Full of pride the young men tell me how some of the bulls that were paraded around were bought with 15-20 cows and an equal number of goats and will be used for the marriage of these young men and will be the namesake for first-born child (mostly, boy). These bulls are not ‘bought/exchanged on cow auctions, but are exchanged informally with other cattle-keepers. This is to prevent the purchased ownership of a bull that has been stolen. Especially the cows that are sold on the auction which come from far (i.e. are considered to be illegally acquired cows which are sold at a distance from where the owner can find it). This also explains the third category distinguished by Hutchinson: not every cow in the cattle-
herd can be sold for money. Some cows are reserved for spiritual rituals and others strongly symbolize the procreative value of cows and are maintained for future generations.

However, there exists a clear contemporary contradiction in the Lakes society: young educated men are aware of the value of money as insurances, whereas uneducated, elderly generations believe that money has no ‘life span’ beyond its usage, whereas cattle reproduce and multiply. Makeny, a young, educated man, argues that: “The assumption is that educated men can take good care of their wives and children and that will be more beneficial than dowry.” He emphasizes the fluidity of cows and argues that “people are realizing that cows can be transferred into tangible assets, whilst if you live in the town your cows only reduce instead of multiply. In town, you cannot know whether your cows are taken care of. They [relatives in the cattle camp] will say that your cows have been raided, or died of disease. People in town are cheated.” This is contradictory to the idea that cows reproduce themselves, whilst money does not have that autonomous capacity. Makeny gives the example of the Governor of Lakes State who has invested a great proportion of his cattle-wealth in the building of shops in Rumbek town. It is unclear whether the sale of large numbers of cows in order to invest in more permanent structures is reserved for political elites. Amongst the educated – or more generally people who earn a salary/money - two patterns emerge: the individual who transfers his money of work into cattle and the individual that invests his money in immovable and lifeless assets.

Cattle and money cannot be considered completely interchangeable as cows cannot fully be replaced by money in dowry payment, compensation and in sacrifice. For centuries, the only form of wealth inherited was livestock, although Lienhardt equally argues that “the vicissitudes of herding work against the secure transmission of this wealth” (ibid. 2). We have already seen how cattle-wealth defines a societal hierarchy and Hutchinson observes that although money could not substitute cattle, it was used to overcome “perceived instabilities and inequalities within the cattle economy” (Hutchinson 1994, 57). An increasing monetized economy provides an opportunity for cattle-less men to improve their status in society and many politicians have large herds of cattle that are allegedly purchased with money accessed through corruption.

THE MYTH OF EXCLUSIVE PASTORALISM

Deng (1973) and Beswick (2004) correct the portrayal of Dinka as exclusively pastoralists and show that this is an incomplete and historically inaccurate image as agriculture and cultivation have always been of great importance in the daily lives of Dinka. Beswick describes how the main dividing line between the southern Bahr el Ghazal - of what is contemporarily known as Lakes State - and the northern Bahr el Ghazal is the types of soils and land into which the groups migrated. She claims that “the land in the southern Bahr el Ghazal is by far the richest in the whole Dinka confederation, and (…) the fertile soils afforded these Dinka the opportunity to grow large quantities of their favourite crops (kec – grain) much coveted by other Dinka.” (Beswick 2004, 64) Beswick establishes an explicit relationship between the fertility of the land and the number of cattle possessed as the agricultural produce could be ‘sold’ [exchanged] to less fortunate neighbours. However, as Deng argues, the combined pastoralism and agriculture follows a particular hierarchy: “preoccupation with cattle is an obsession which limits their utilization of land resources” (Deng 1973, 30), because even though people might engage in agriculture and fishery ultimately the value of land is established in reference to cows - grazing of livestock. This hierarchy is well illustrated by two incidents that I witnessed during my fieldwork.

Contemporary Examples of Agro-Pastoralism

As we visit the cattle camp of Madol Akoch, I ask the cattle chiefs if their presence caused any tension as small gardens in the residential neighbourhood have been visibly destructed. The young men narrate to me that they have been displaced from their usual wet season cattle camp because of the flooding and that their setting up of a cattle camp in a residential area did not cause any disagreement between the cattle keepers and the residents. The permanent inhabitants of the area accept that their crops will be destroyed because in the end the wellbeing of the livestock is of greater importance than agricultural output. That the presence of cattle in residential areas does not always follow agreement is shown during a visit to Nyotikangui IDP community. The group discussion is abruptly cut short when the women who have gathered are informed of an approaching herd of cattle and rush to the boundaries of their fields to protect their crops. The community is of the impression that cattle are send purposely to chase them away and the women present complain about the hostile relationship with the host community. The women are forced to harvest early to prevent their crops from being eaten and
store them before the harvest has ripened. “We try to protect our land [crops], but the cows outnumber us,” one elderly woman laments. The women argue that although there is no open conflict - because “we are peaceful” - there are cultural differences that have resulted in their isolation and prevented integration. The main reason mentioned for this is that the IDPs do not own cows prevents intermarriage. This relates back to the social division on the basis of cattle-wealth discussed in the previous chapter. Returnees in Rumbek town, especially from Khartoum, often returned to South Sudan without many belongings and financial capital and they are a cattle-less community that is gravely affected in their daily life by cattle-owning neighbours.

A contemporary example of how agriculture increases cattle-wealth can be found amongst the farmers in the collective farming project in Makernhom (Rumbek East). During our inspection of the land of the women farming project the mooing of cows is heard in the distance and one of the staff members climbs up a water tower to assess the situation and inform the cattle herders to move in another direction. When I ask James what he considers more important; agriculture or cows, he argues for the former saying that without agriculture people cannot buy cows – although this is, according to me, a relatively recent experience.

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DYNAMIC CONFLICT EXPLANATIONS: MECHANISMS OF SOCIOCENTRIC GUILT AND PUNISHMENT

The general observation is that in recent years inter- and intra-ethnic conflict in South Sudan intensified, both in character and incidence. In the formation of an understanding - and potential formulation of a response - to the cyclical violence that envelopes Lakes State, I propose to follow Jeffery Deal’s suggestion to locate interpretations of violence in “local concepts of justice” (2010, 564). How are meaning and purpose attributed to acts of violence within the greater context of Lakes State and how are conflict and power mediated culturally?

JUSTICE AND RETRIBUTION

A Discussion on Local Mechanisms of Justice

Deal (2010, 566) introduces mechanisms of “reciprocal justice” and “proportional retribution” that subordinate individuals to a wider social unit (section, clan, sub-clan); where the social group is held accountable and thus punishable; and in which individual members “could be sacrificed to satisfy a corporate need for revenge or penitence” (Deal 2010, 567). Individuals are part of a collective body of clan affiliations from which collective response is expected and on which coalitional guilt is imposed. According to Deal, these mechanisms are related to sociocentric ideas, translated in Dinka as cieng. Cieng can be translated as the collective goal of unity in harmony and refers to both what is good and bad in society. The sociocentric understandings of guilt and punishment result into “replacement killings” (Deal 2012, 566), whose aim is to “punish the clan (section or any social unit) equivalent to the loss experienced by the clan of the murdered man” (Deal 2010, 565). A similar system of political association informed by agnatic kinship is described by Evans-Pritchard for the Nuer as a system of segmentary oppositions:

“A tribal segment is a political group in opposition to other segments of the same kind and they jointly form a tribe only in relation to other Nuer tribes and adjacent foreign tribes which form part of the same political system, and without these relations very little meaning can be attached to the concepts of tribal segment and tribe.” (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 147)

Comparable to the Nuer, group membership amongst the Dinka used to be and continues to be fixed and is constructed conditionally and situationally and conflict contributes to both political integration and fission.
Gender and Conflict

In conversation with a group of women at an adult learning centre in Rumbek city, the mechanism of sociocentric guilt and punishment, and its implications for women, is explained:

“Women are not killed intentionally, but the bullet cannot be stopped. A husband will see it differently and will kill the wife of somebody. He will make a comparison and will kill a woman of the same nature as his wife or with a higher responsibility. He will not kill a drunkard or a mad person. That husband will have to revenge also. Killing affects women every day and especially when they are travelling women are killed, but they still move because of their responsibilities.”

Discussions of and explanations about the recent but violent interpolation of women in revenge killings were mixed with a certain level of unresisting resignation. The following example, however, shows that there is - at least discursive - societal opposition towards reciprocal ‘justice’. A well-educated youth, who spend considerable times outside the state and the country, expressed feelings of continuous insecurity and frustration over the concept of sociocentric justice:

“We can never feel safe. Your brother in the village might have committed a crime without your knowledge and approval and you find the family of the victim is already looking to retaliate against you”.

Frustration here is directed towards both the own social group as well as the social group to whom one is connected in a complex dynamic of collective association and vengeance. A highly educated youth from Cueibet, who I interviewed in Juba explained the transformation that occurred in him as he progressed in his primary and secondary education and the understanding that came to him that cattle raiding and revenge-killings are senseless. However, he also explained the ambiguity that came with this realization: his disapproval of violence seriously affected his position in society, where one is considered a coward if one doesn’t defend his fellow kinsmen. This might potentially reflect on his children when they seek to get married, as the relatives of the future bride and groom will carefully monitor the behaviour of the family – past and present - and acts of cowardice are considered “social suicide”.

MILITARIZATION AND ETHNICIZED VIOLENCE

This concurs with earlier research conducted by Stephen Gray and Josefine Roos for Accord into the conflict dynamics amongst the Ayual and Dachuek clans of the Dinka, living in Wanglei, Jonglei State. The research shows that “typical explanations for local violence in post-civil war contexts such as resource and political competition and insecurity are an over-simplification”. (Gray and Roos 2012, 1) In the case of Jonglei, Gray and Roos emphasize the need to understand clan’s “competing desire to maximise group pride” (ibid., 1). The proliferation of automatic arms in the hands of civilians is often cited as the dominant underlying factor of perpetuating violence. The increase in access to and civilian possession of guns has to be understood in the context of the second civil war and the fraction of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in 1991. Jok Madut Jok and Sharon Hutchinson (1999) describe a deepening regional polarization and politicized programs of ethnicized violence between Dinka and Nuer. The transformation “of earlier patterns of intermittent cattle-raiding into no-holds-barred military assaults” (ibid. 131) instigated a transgression of established ethical limits on violence: the intentional killing of women, children and elderly and the purposeful destruction of livelihoods. “Rapid unravelling of regional codes of warfare ethics” (ibid. 125) brought about a militarization of ethnic identities through the arming of civilian populations with automated weaponry by military and political factions. The newly acquired fire power not only resulted into an increase in cattle raids on other ethnic communities (to redeem dignity), but was also used to settle personal disputes in home communities (ibid. 134). At the same time, the introduction of automatic weaponry changed perceptions of cowardice and courage as everybody can shoot a gun.

10 On the 28th of August 1991 Riek Machar, Lam Akol and Gordon Kong issued the Nasir Declaration in which they advocated the right of self-determination for South Sudan and criticized the human rights situation within the SPLA and demanded a more equal division of authority between army and political movement.
Post-CPA Conflict Explanations

In conversations about the origin of conflict, various informants argued that the signing of the CPA brought human rights to Lakes States and replaced the justice system of the bush. On our return from a visit to Rumbek East, as we pass the scene of a recent revenge killing and various staff members of the Water for Lakes State Programme argue that the cycles of inter-ethnic fighting come as the result of human rights. They discuss that “even if you do something wrong you will be protected by human rights. During the administration of the SPLA, if you committed a murder you will be hanged or executed by a fire squad. When the UNMISS was brought the prisons used to be frequented and then some of the guards, if they were bribed they could open the doors and let the criminals escape. Those who lost relatives wondered how criminals could be allowed the move freely and this increased revenge killings, simply because criminals became more in the countryside. This brought the different clans together and resulted in avenge.” Poth, a highly educated youth counters this claim and argues that the system that was put in place by the SPLA during the second war was not functional. “When a crime was committed the SPLA would seek out a culprit and families would gather to discuss who amongst their family would be selected to be ‘sacrificed’ to the SPLA. Often this was not the actual offender, but somebody with a lesser stature in society: somebody less hansom and strong, somebody who hails from a family with many brothers, someone with fewer cows. The SPLA would not commit thorough investigations and whoever came forward would be punished – often executed.” This would still leave the relatives of the murdered person without an actual sense of justice.

Cattle keepers pose with their oxen in Madol Akoch cattle camp, Rumbek town

State Hierarchies, Unequal Distribution and Poverty

Deal observes parallels in the manner in which the state and military authorities legitimize state violence against innocent people whose relatives and/or clan members are implicated in revenge killings and shows how there exists general acceptance of the extension of sociocentric justice to include the state apparatus. The normalization of state violence should be understood in the context of a longer history of SPLA interventions during the second civil war, which often resulted in a brutalization of people and theft of cattle for the enrichment of high-ranking officers.

State authorities become the epitome of the uneven and illicit distribution of wealth, both in empirical and imaginary sense, and their effectiveness in quashing violence is seriously diminished. Secondly, authorities - although claiming objectivity and neutrality - are by nature of their clan affiliations doubly implicated in the complex cycles of revenge and retaliation. John Lang argues that “in the earlier age, Dinka didn’t like fighting. It comes to this generation that killing and taking property has become prevalent. This is caused by poverty: If you are wealthy and I meet you on the way I should kill you in order to own your wealth and property.”

The reference to poverty as a cause for violence shows how perceptions of poverty have changed since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and with the independence of
South Sudan. Experiences of poverty - not uncommon in pre-CPA Lakes State - have increasingly become connected to the uneven distribution of wealth (see also Kircher 2013). Peace and independence raised expectations for development and the passive improvement of living conditions.

Inter- and intra-ethnic conflict often is the result of competition over water resources; however there are complex social dynamics related to initial conflict that make it difficult to assume that improving access and availability to water will actively and conclusively resolve conflict. The improvement of water access and availability amongst the various communities in the selected counties is a form of conflict management that is supported by the majority of the people that I spoke to as it minimizes the occurrence of migration and resources-based conflicts in the dry season. However, the construction of new water sources can equally contribute to novel conflicts or exacerbate existing conflicts through disputes over land ownership.

5

GENDER RELATIONSHIPS AND DIVISIONS

In this chapter I will address gender relationships in Lakes State and discuss the ambiguous positions of women in society.

Patriarchy and Marriage Systems

The Dinka name for themselves, Monyjiang, “Man [or Husband] of Men” exemplifies the patriarchal structure of the society, and highlights the centrality of the father and agnatic lineage in sustaining customary procreative values. As discussed before, the Dinka are a polygynous society and equate the acquisition of numerous wives with status and wealth. Women are considered as a link between two potentially warring groups. The role of the woman as mediator is further institutionalized through the recognition of the importance of the mother and maternal kin to the development of the child. Still, exogamous marriage patterns and the incorporation of foreign women posed the threat of disunity and fracturing, and this threat was off-set in Dinka society by cultural products such as songs, folktales and myths that presented the woman as “the enemy of family solidarity” and “breaker of family ties” and emphasized the role of the father as the symbol of family unity (Deng 1973, 24). The patriarchal and polygamous character of most ethnic communities in South Sudan forms a clear impediment to gender equality and women are commonly perceived as inferior to men. Women only gain recognition - but not equal status - in society after they are married, have given birth and affirmed their reproductive roles. Subservience and obedience are expected of women and decision-making processes, both in the domestic and public sphere are dominated by the male members of society. Deng describes marriage as “a union” of both the couple and their families and argues that “no marriage can be concluded without the consent of the bridegroom’s elders, especially the father” (Deng 1973, 18). Traditionally, both the paternal and maternal kin are mobilized by the bridegroom’s family for the dowry payment. However, girls have relative power: “Although girls will normally succumb to the wishes of their relatives, they are independent enough to frustrate arranged marriages by elopement with, or impregnation by, the men they love. While these do not necessarily obstruct the marriages desired by their relatives, they reduce their status and create serious legal and social complications.” (Deng 1973, 21).

Women are commonly perceived as a source of wealth and the cattle wealth of a family increases as there are more daughters of marriageable age. It is generally observed that with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 the bride price increased in South Sudan. However, the various sections of the Dinka in Lakes State are renowned for high bride prices and marriage competitions. Women are considered a source of wealth for their family and as property of their husband and his extended family. Traditionally, women rear children, perform a multitude of domestic chores (fetch water, collect firewood, clean, cook) and engage in subsistence-farming activities.
Customary law of the Dinka specifies that women hold no autonomous ownership over property or assets as this is reserved for men who function as head of household. Women possess “virtually no control over resources”, even those acquired in the marriage of their brothers, and have to obtain permission from husbands or male relatives for the sale of livestock. A man without cattle is not considered a full man and a woman without children is not considered a full woman. Cattle wealth and fertility establish security and stability in husband’s homes and describe the processes of self-realization, or the experiences of full masculinity and femininity and social personality. Whereas bridewealth connects two families to each other, it are the children that eventually connect wives to husbands’ families. Hutchinson describes the mediating role of cattle between women and men as “the nurturing powers of the herd” (1996, 197) and the cow is described as “a powerful ally in disputes with men in that nearly all the vital nutrients she provided passed through women's hands before reaching men's stomachs” (ibid., 1996).

Hegemonic Masculinity and Reproductive Rights

Jok Madut Jok, a South Sudanese anthropologist, conducted fieldwork amongst the Western Dinka/Dinka Reik on the changing gender dynamics produced by processes of militarization from 1993 to 1995. He shows that the liberation struggle expected of men a military hyper masculinity and of women an available sexuality to “support the national cause” (Jok 1999, 436, see also Hutchinson and
Jok 1996). Jok speaks of a “nationalization of the womb” (ibid. 427): men ‘inhabited’ the literal battlefield and women the domestic and reproductive front (ibid. 429). A redefinition of women’s obligations stressed procreation and the reproduction of a besieged and dying population. In relation to this, the changing roles of dependency during the war and the fact that husbands were often unable/physically absent to provide for their families in terms of food security and protection resulted in a reaffirmation of power positions through sexual domination and exploitation (marital rape). In the context of civil war, many women lost their husbands and experienced abandonment by his extended family. This demanded new levels of independence and self-sufficiency and changed gender relationships. This shows that there are shifting relations of autonomy and dependence between men and women. Hutchinson (1996, 158) argues that “Nuer men (…) appeared to have suffered a rapid loss of ground vis-à-vis women ever since their most vital of social roles – that of the protectors of homestead and herd – was first challenged by government guns. Their actions and decisions regarding their dependent’s welfare had likewise become increasingly subject to the scrutiny of government courts and the approval of distant administrative officials.”

The need to accumulate wealth, poverty and an unequal access to resources are contributing factors to cattle raiding. In conversations with various people, conflicts over women (elopement, impregnation, adultery) were mentioned as the principal cause of violence among communities. (See also Hutchinson 1994, 159). Women are perceived as ‘property’ of the families, both natal and marital. Womanhood is a status achieved only through procreation and childbirth. For example, a woman who is ‘barren’ can become a full member of society only through marrying another woman, who will then produce children in her name with an external man and she will become the societal ‘father’ of the children. This will allow her a relative independence, as she establishes herself as the metaphysical head of the family. The role and position of girls amongst the Dinka in Lakes State - acknowledging variations between the different sections - might be illustrated by the following incident: During a visit to the court of the Paramount Chief of Jiir Payam, Rumbek Centre, I am asked by one of the members of the council what the benefit is of girls in the country I come from. When I explain that we do not classify the position of a girl in terms of benefit and that girls are equal to boys and we do not marry with dowry, the man is dumbstruck and looks at me with a mixture of sorry and horror.

**Inheritance and Property Rights**

As emerges from a group discussion with women of various ages, husbands have formal rights of ownership over cattle and monetary wealth acquired by their wives during marriage (see also Hutchinson 1996, 93). The women in the focus group described the value of cows to themselves as:

> “Women buy cows and when a daughter is married they are given cows. In town one can find families that have one bank account. In a good marriage, the man will consult the women on how to use the money and a woman can bring suggestions on how to spend the money. Cows are under the responsibility of the husband. The success of women to have access to their cows depends on their approach, (…) This has been inherited. Things a woman generates belong to her husband. The man has a say about anything. Men have many wives and some are generating an income whilst others are idle. It is the task of the man to share his belongings equally amongst the wives. Women are close to cows and they have to know the number of cows that is owned by her husband. Women will look for cows for their growing baby boys. If their sons, at a later age, do something wrong like impregnating a girl or eloping with a girl, the mother can solve the problems and maintain the house.”

During a visit to a collective women farming project in Makernhom, Rumbek East (Mathiang Payam) it became clear that increased financial independence does not necessarily result in a change in social positioning. Initially the project was received with hostility by the men of the communities and the women recall that “the men said the project tried to create conflict and mislead the women to divide their houses or break up the families because the men would lose the services of their wives.” The money that the women earned with the sale of their produce (eggs and honey) allowed them to take their children to school and assist their husbands with the purchase of livestock – initially only goats but later also cows. In a sense this created an independence from the husbands as it was the first time for women to be able to buy livestock independently. This helped to convince the men of the benefits of the project and appeased them. However, as was explained by the women: “There is nothing a woman decides alone.” The husband will use the cows to marry again but it does not change the position of a woman in society as she will not gain a more powerful voice, or the right for ulterior decision-making.
Generally, women are considered to be fluid members of their biological families and strangers in their martial families and this double ambiguity is often used as a justification for women’s subordinate position in society and male superiority.

THE JIBELI; INTER-ETHNIC COEXISTENCE, LAND OWNERSHIP AND MARGINALIZATION

This chapter will address the relational dynamics between the Jibeli, a minority group that inhabits Wulu County, and the majority Dinka. As established in chapter two, upon their arrival to the current homeland, the contemporary Dinka of the southern Bahr el Ghazal did not find the land empty and uninhabited: large densities of the Jibeli resided in the present-day Dinka territory and were displaced by the Dinka (Beswick 2004, 67). Before, Ezekiel Thiang gave a positive account of the ‘trickery’ of the Dinka that saved the Jibeli from forced incorporation into the Azande kingdom. However, this chapter will show that relationships between the Jibeli and Dinka are not always supportive and peaceful.

MYTHOLOGICAL INTERCONNECTIONS

An illustrative example is the mythologies constructed by both Jibeli and Dinka about ownership claims over Rumbek town. Although narrative structures of the origin myths of Rumbek narrated by the Dinka and the Jibeli are similar, the variations in detail are significant and reflect contemporary conflictive relations between the two ethnic communities. The origin myths show that claims of land ownership are at the forefront in the formation of inter-ethnic, inter-sectional and inter-clan relationships (see section on ‘conflict dynamics’).

A Dinka Version

Abraham Kolnyin, a student in the Rumbek University who currently resides in Juba and who is a Dinka Gok, narrates the historical background of Rumbek in the following way:

“Rumbek was a bush in which a man called Bek was living alone. It was a bush used for grazing goats, sheep and cows as well. One day the man called Bek decided to use goats as his food by killing goats and eating them. This happened without the knowledge of the boys looking after goats as well as their parents. The parents called a gathering and asked themselves: ‘Why are our goats always missing? Can we find who he is, taking our goats?’ Some youth were selected and they were sent to the bush to find out what is really taking goats. They found goat heads and bones very dry. They came back and told the gathering that: ‘We have got goat heads and bones without anybody around while the bush was known for Bek only.’ On top of that, the bush was fertile land for cultivation but people fear Bek. That was the first problem after discovering Bek was accountable for the missing goats. From there people came up with another idea of giving their daughter called Akon Buoi to Bek as his wife. They talked to their daughter and explained the story to her until she was convinced to marry him. They took her to where he was, while Bek doesn’t stay with people.

By the time the marriage party arrived to the bush of Bek he tried to run away. When Akon moves towards Bek, then Bek will start moving away, meanwhile Akon is following him. When he ran away the people occupied the area. People started building their houses and cut down the bush for cultivation and they named it Rumbek, meaning the bush (rum) of Bek, the man who was known of living there and who was married to Akon Buoi. The Dinka became the owners of the place. Bek never returned and since that time their goats were not eaten again by Bek.”
His version of the origin myth has been corroborated by other individuals from various sectional backgrounds and I cite his version here as representative for the manner in which the Dinka in Lakes State understand the etymology of Rumbek.

A Jibeli Version

The origin myth that has been narrated to me by various Jibeli portrays the relationship between the Dinka and Jibeli in a different manner. Ezekiel Thiang narrates it in the following way:

“In Beli, we speak of the bush of Bek as Mubeki. There were no houses and people were scattered. The Dinka said they were coming and were looking for water and grass as they were following the Nile. When they met us, the Dinka asked about the name of the place and we told them that this is the bush of Beki. In Dinka bush is called rum and that is how they agreed on a name and started building a relationship. But our activities are different: we are hunters and catch the legs of animals with ropes. When the Dinka and their cattle came they were caught by the ropes. Also we make big holes to catch and kill the wild animals and now the cows also fell in these holes. We came to an agreement about where both could stay so that we remain in peace.

That was the meeting point but at that time there was another conflict that erupted because of cattle approaching the Jur area. The Dinka migrated eastwards and entered the forest, whereas the agreement said they should remain in the toic. The Dinka and Jibeli started fighting. “You have violated our agreement whilst we welcomed you.” This started the conflict over land issues. There is a man called Buoi, he is a Dinka. When he saw the conflict advancing, he suggested not to continue with violence. He said: “Let me go to the Beli. We have to have intermarriage. If he [Beki] accepts I hand over my daughter so that we can live in harmony.” He met with Beki and proposed him to marry his daughter so that we come together as one community. There is no objection but the Beli urged the Dinka to separate the animals from the farming. “When you come with your cows, the wild animals will migrate and we depend on them.” They agreed and gave that girl Akon Buoi, who is an Agar from the Amanum-section in marriage to Beki. From then they say it is the land of Akon Buoi. “How do you claim it is yours? Those who don’t know the history, they claim ownership?” The Dinka violated the agreement that was made by bringing their animals. The head of the clan is Beki and he sat with his group. They agreed that “let us move and you will remain [with the Dinka].” Mbele is the brother of Beki and when he married Akon, the relatives of Akon decided to all move into the house of Beki. Children were dying because of a lack of food. Mbele decided to move away to a place that is now called Makembele. Mbele separated from Beki because he was frustrated with Beli giving land to in-laws. The problem insisted and we, the Beli, don’t want to be squeezed.”

Two general observations can be made from a comparative analysis of these two versions of the origin myth: according to the Jibeli, Bek(i) was not a solitary man who lived alone in a bush, on the contrary, he is portrayed as a leader and his relatives play an important role in the narrative. Secondly, in Abraham's version of the origin myth there is no agreement between the Dinka and the Jibeli; the only agreement that is made is between Buoi and his community members. This exposes very general archetypical self-ascribed characteristics of the two ethnic communities: whereas the Dinka are forceful encroachers, the Jibeli are welcoming hosts.

IMAGERIES OF OTHERNESS

Ezekiel Thiang claims that the name Jur Bel has been given to the Jibeli by the Dinka and whereas jur means foreigners or strangers, according to Ezekiel bel in Dinka means 'somebody who is stupid'. (This has laughingly been admitted in conversation with students at the Catholic University.) He states: “The word bel does not exist in the Jur language. Instead, the word yibeli in Beli (language) means ‘home of people’. (…) We have tried to correct and condemn this naming because there are no whole people who are stupid.” Despite the protestations and disagreement on naming, the use of the word Jur by Ezekiel in his explanation of the origin of the name - but also in other conversations with Jibeli - shows that the Dinka terminology has been incorporated in the vocabulary of the Jibeli.

Historical and Contemporary Peace-Making

From 9 to 15 July 2010, a Peace and Reconciliation Conference was organised between the Dinka Agar and the Jibeli under the responsibility of the Southern Sudan Peace Commission, Lakes State
and in collaboration with Pact Sudan. The main aim of the conference was, as specified in the conference report prepared by the then-director for Peace Mayen Chuar Kulong: “to bringing the conflict between two communities to an end through a negotiated settlement and promotes reconciliation and building of mutual trust among two communities to restore back their forefathers’ peaceful way of living.” This explicit reference to a history of peaceful coexistence has been disputed by the Jibeli intellectuals I engaged with and who detailed continuous experiences of displacement at the hands of the Dinka and who argue that the historical settlement that “created a relationship” between the Jibeli and the Dinka Agar has been violated continuously and persistently. The peace conference report implicitly portrays the Dinka as aggressors and the Jibeli as the aggressed defenders of their ethnicity and documents acts of murder, rape, theft and destruction of crops and honey hives on the side of the Dinka and acts of murder committed by the Jibeli in the period between 2006 and 2010. These acts are all labelled together as “the abuse of culture”, again referring to an assumed peaceful co-existence.

A set of culturally-sensitive penalties was designed (including the fining of cows [but also the death penalty]) and one of the main resolutions of the peace conference was to penalize and thus prevent the movement of cattle to Wulu in the period between May and April - after cultivation and before harvesting. Interestingly, emphasis is put on the fact that “problems between two persons should not be considered as a group issue”. The peace conference exposed the general absence of a rule of law and order in Lakes States and specifies that a criminal justice operative system should be put in place and that hybrid courts should be established in order to act as a peace and reconciliation mechanism to involve the communities in the settlement of grievances and to promote peaceful co-existence.

In September 2014, in conversation with a selected group of Jibeli intellectuals I am told that “due to random armament the agreement remained on paper” and there has been no implementation of the recommendations that were drafted during the conference. In comment on the failed peace agreement between the Dinka Agar and the Jibeli, Simon Wai Wai argues that the root causes of conflict between the Jibeli and the Dinka Agar are claims of land ownership and the construction of new histories by “naming the land as theirs [Dinka]”:

“The Dinka only ask permission to stay once and then rename the area with their different tongues. Those who do not know the boundaries claim them. The time of the first war was the first time that the Dinka migrated to the area of the Jur and it happened again during the second war. At first the area of the Jur is not good with the cattle because of the tsetse fly. This prevented them to come, but when they came in big numbers the tsetse fly migrated. They come with a condition: if the problem is settled they supposed to return to their own areas. They do not respect the culture of the Beli and when a problem happens in their own land they take advantage of us and start growing in a fertile land. We are like the United Nations; we do not discriminate or segregate but they come and rename and reclaim our areas.”

The harsh judgement of the agreement is grounded in historical grievances and during my research I have been unable to corroborate the opinions of Jibeli representatives with Dinka representatives. However, it can be assumed that both parties will have differing views on the actual implementation of the 2010 peace agreement. The signing of the peace agreement signalled a period of relative peace between the two communities and no deadly incidents have occurred since.

Oppositional Self-Definitions

As we have seen above, the Jibeli have constructed a narrative of victimhood at the hands of the Dinka and they have constructed a collective identity in opposition to the Dinka. During a group discussion with a number of Jibeli intellectuals, the gathered men argue that “Jibeli are a different tribe with a different culture. The way we marry, the way we live, the way we build our houses, even our language is different from the Dinka.” According to the Jibeli intellectuals “the language and culture of the Jibeli is stronger than that of the Dinka, which is polluting”. Simon Malual emphasizes the need for the Jibeli to “define ourselves. We know where we came from. We have to recognize ourselves as Beli, not Dinka because God has no mistake in determining where you are.” However, he simultaneously uses the word Jur and says: “Jur have to stay Jur. Making your story to get lost is very painful. We are people of people, we are independent.” A similar sentiment is expressed by Ezekiel Thiang when he argues that “the Jibeli identify themselves as different from the Nilotics and we have different attitudes and thinking.” Education plays an equally important role in the narration of the
history of the Jibeli and Ezekiel Thiang states that “the Jur were a farming community and did not know education. Only the 1960s education has been introduced and since then we started to correct the mistakes and understood that the agreement with the Dinka was distorted.”

For example, Jibeli intellectuals argue that in the past they were the best blacksmiths in the area and that the Dinka purchased their spears and knives from them. Whereas the Dinka are pastoralists, the Jibeli are hunters and agriculturalists, they rare goats and harvest honey. Ezekiel Thiang argues that “the Jur are producing food crops [short and long varieties of dura and yam] which were unknown to the Dinka. They found these from the Beli and adopted them from us. Our farming is different from the Dinka. We cultivate other crops and use different tools. Before it was done with ox-ploughs. The Dinka adopted from the Yibeli the short handle for weeding, which is called kombe.” This however, conflicts with the ethno-history that Beswick has constructed of the Dinka in what is contemporarily known as Lakes State in which she argues that it were the Dinka who introduced hardier version of dura in the region.

More significantly, the Jibeli intellectuals believe that the main reason why there is fighting in Lakes State is because of the Dinka lack respect: “For us, we have respect. We will not steal property or kill somebody. They are warriors, they won’t listen to our talk of peace. We are peacemakers.” These stereotypical oppositions between minority and majority; victim and perpetrator; warrior and peacemaker; respectful and insolent; agriculturalist and pastoralist define the relationships between the Jibeli and Dinka and hamper non-violent coexistence and equal political participation and representation.
KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations based on the key conclusions of the research project to conduct the Water for Lakes State Programme in socio-culturally sensitive ways:

- Water resources serve multiple and often conflicting purposes and clear dichotomies in water allocation and usage can be observed: male/female; public/private; cattle/household; pastoralism/ agriculture.

The portrayal of Dinka as strict pastoralists gives an incomplete and essentialist image of a dynamic and diversified reality. Pastoralism and agriculture are intimately connected but stratified (social, generational, gender) activities. Dinka are not exclusively pastoralists and agriculture and cultivation have always been combined with cattle keeping activities. However, agro-pastoralism follows a particular hierarchy and the right to control and use of cattle depends on the position of an individual in the lineage order and ownership of cattle is male. This fortifies the dominant social authority of senior, cattle-wealthy men and and maintains relationships of dependence amongst members of community or family, reinforcing men’s claims of physical and moral superiority.

- Among the various sections of Dinka in Lakes State cattle are the principal metaphor for value (wealth) and the value of land and water resources is construed in reference to cattle.

The preoccupation with cattle limits the utilization of land resources. Generally, amongst the Dinka the ownership of cattle is preferred over the possession of money, although there are indicators that money is slowly taking precedence over living animals. Development and diversification of the economic and livelihoods resource base through the support of agricultural production and fishery in Lakes State could potentially contribute to a further increase in cattle populations and form an intrinsic detriment to the growth of these sectors as much of the monetary output is anticipated to be invested into livestock purchase and the restocking of cattle.

- It is advisable that in consultations on the construction and management of water points the voices and opinions of women and cattle-less members of society are actively sought and included as their expectations of and objectives for water are different from and oftentimes opposed to that of (cattle-wealthy) men.

The patriarchal and polygynous character of the Dinka forms a clear impediment to gender equality and women as well as cattle-less men do not have equal access to positions of authority and decision-making processes. As a result of these existing social divisions and the intimate but hierarchical relation between pastoralism and agriculture, the author has observed that generally, Dinka communities give preference to the accommodation of cattle over agricultural productivity. If water points are constructed in close proximity to permanently inhabited and agricultural areas it is important to deeply analyse the (often conflicting) attitudes and objectives of the various members to the particular connection between water, livestock and agricultural activities. Community consultations should not only work towards the establishment of locations for water points, but can be seen as a platform to engage communities in dialogue about the interconnection between the various envisioned components of the Water for Lakes State Programme: Water for Livestock, People, Agriculture and Fishery. The author advises the Water for Lakes State Programme to incorporate participatory development approaches in all phases of the programme.

- Lakes State should not be perceived as an isolated geography and static social entity.

Decades of conflict, forced migration, processes of education and urbanization have resulted in the displacement and resettlement of Dinka from Lakes State all over South Sudan and beyond the national boundaries and society is increasingly defined along the lines of educated and uneducated people. The recent national conflict has brought internally displaced people from neighbouring Jonglei state to Awerial county and because of its strategic position in the centre of South Sudan, Lakes States has become a passageway for both SPLA and opposition forces.

- In relation to the Water for Agriculture-component, the collective women farming project in Markernhom shows that improved agricultural productivity significantly and structurally improved the living conditions of the participating families and facilitated higher levels of education.
Two of the main lessons that can be learned from the Makernhom project in relation to the Water for Lakes State Programme’s implementation of the Water for Agriculture-component are: 1) Gender inclusivity in the agricultural component of Water for Lakes should coincide with a comprehensive discussion (and potential redefinition) of customary property rights. 2) In order for the agricultural component to be supported widely, hegemonic negative perceptions of agricultural activity as reserved for cattle-less men should be addressed and discussed in public fora.

- **The relationship between the various Dinka sections and the minority Jibeli is characterised by antagonisms and Jibeli representatives express feelings of exclusion and marginalization.**

In order to address relationships of enmity and to prevent future conflicts over grazing and passing rights, it would be advisable to involve community members of the Jibeli in consultations about the destinations of water points for cattle outside Wulu County. In deliberations on the construction of water points outside Wulu County, it is important to investigate possibilities to minimize or prevent dry-season migration into and through Wulu County. Secondly, in order to address feelings of exclusion and marginalization it is advisable to consider the establishment of Water for People and Agriculture-components in Wulu.

- **Resource competition is a contributing cause of conflict, but the improvement of access to and availability of water resources will not actively resolve social conflict dynamics.**

The Water for Lakes State Programme should employ a local framework of understanding to understand the fluid conflict dynamics in Lakes State. Comprehensive analyses of the multiple conflicts in Lakes State have to include, but move beyond explanations based on resource and political competition and migration patterns. The need to accumulate wealth, poverty and unequal access to water resources as well as conflicts over women (elopement, impregnation, adultery) are contributing factors to cattle raiding and conflict. However, conflict dynamics are highly influenced by mechanisms of reciprocal justice and proportional retribution mechanisms which implicate individuals in wider social units and hold whole social groups accountable and punishable for individual actions. The improvement of access and availability to water cannot be seen as a conclusive resolution to conflict. On the contrary, the construction of new water sources can equally contribute to novel conflicts or exacerbate existing conflicts through disputes over land ownership.

- **It is advisable that the Water for Lakes State Programme conducts periodical research to stay informed about the fast-changing and dynamic context of Lakes State and monitor the impact of the Water for Lakes State Programme on socio-cultural and conflict dynamics.**

The author advises the Water for Lakes State Programme to consider the development of a multidisciplinary water research group that brings together national and international scholars and experts from various disciplinary backgrounds. The water research group, which could potentially be harboured in the University of Rumbek, can contribute to a greater sense of ownership of the programme in the state itself, but should also investigate and develop manners in which the Water for Lakes Programme can holistically contribute to positive social transformations and higher levels of gender and class equality.

- **In the implementation of the Water for Lakes State programme, the Technical Assistance Team should aim to employ and engage a cross-section (ethnicity, section, clan, class, gender, generation) of Lakes State in order to maintain a neutral position.**

To arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics in Lakes State it is important to locate interpretations of violence in local concepts of sociocentric justice and connected mechanisms of reciprocal justice and proportional retribution. The national staff that hails from Lakes State is part of a collective body of clan affiliations, and even though they might not be directly engaged in violence, a coalitional guilt could be imposed on them. Secondly, one of the identified causes of inter-ethnic conflict is poverty and political exclusion. It is important that the Water for Lakes State Programme does not immerse herself in existing power hierarchies and demonstrates a hypersensitivity to the complex conflict dynamics in the employment of local staff.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


## ANNEX I: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

The following table describes the individuals and groups that the researcher interviewed or engaged with as part of the fieldwork of this research project and follows a chronological order.

**Table I:** List of People Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Kolnyin</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Hai Malakal, Juba</td>
<td>Ethnic, sectional and clan divisions in Lakes State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawa Abdallah</td>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Rumbek University</td>
<td>Gender roles and position of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manut Manuer</td>
<td>Commissioner of Rumbek Centre</td>
<td>Commissioner’s Office</td>
<td>Access to cattle camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariem Paul Jibi and Joseph Mabor</td>
<td>Minister of Culture Youth and Sports; and Director-General of Culture</td>
<td>State Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports</td>
<td>Cultural change and cultural traditions and beliefs in Lakes State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josephine Abau</td>
<td>Lab Manager</td>
<td>Directorate of Water</td>
<td>Position of women and gender divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumbek Market group discussion</td>
<td>Market sellers</td>
<td>Rumbek Market</td>
<td>Perceptions on employment; poverty and class divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maleth</td>
<td>Auctioneer</td>
<td>Rumbek Cow Auction</td>
<td>Social and economic values of cows; operation of auction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mading</td>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Water for Lakes</td>
<td>Sectional divisions in Rumbek East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham Deng, Gabriel Nihimia Aciek and Majok Mabor Matoc</td>
<td>Lecturers and department heads in Psychology and English Language and Literature</td>
<td>Rumbek University</td>
<td>Social change, conflict origins and gender divisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumbek North group discussion</td>
<td>Executive Chiefs of Rumbek North</td>
<td>Rumbek Town</td>
<td>Sectional divisions in Rumbek North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marial Kum Baai Mading</td>
<td>Executive Chief of Matangai Payam</td>
<td>Water for Lakes</td>
<td>Sectional divisions in Rumbek Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyotikikangui IDP community group discussion</td>
<td>Women leaders and community members</td>
<td>Nyotikikangui, Rumbek Town</td>
<td>Dynamics of resettlement; cattle versus agriculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel Thiang Mangar</td>
<td>Peace Advisor</td>
<td>Office of the Governor</td>
<td>History of Jibeli and inter-ethnic (conflict) dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Deng Awur and Abraham Majur</td>
<td>Students in Wau University</td>
<td>Water for Lakes</td>
<td>Sectional divisions in Yirol East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makernhom Women’s Organisation group discussion</td>
<td>Women farmers</td>
<td>Rumbek East – Mathiang Payam</td>
<td>History of organisation; societal and gender divisions; cattle versus agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yibeli group discussion</td>
<td>Members of the Jibeli community in Rumbek Town</td>
<td>Rumbek Town</td>
<td>History of Jibeli; sectional divisions and inter-ethnic (conflict) dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon. Simon Malual Deng</td>
<td>Deputy Chairperson of Public Accounts Committee</td>
<td>National Parliament, Juba</td>
<td>History of Jibeli; sectional divisions and inter-ethnic (conflict) dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic University Lakes States students group discussion</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Catholic University of Juba, Juba</td>
<td>Cultural traditions and beliefs; conflict origins and dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Makuac</td>
<td>Rainmaker (Tonj – Luac</td>
<td>Rumbek Cow</td>
<td>Social and economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manyiel Dinka)</td>
<td>Auction</td>
<td>values of cows; interstate connections and conflict dynamics</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Lang Office manager for Deputy-Governor</td>
<td>Rumbek Town</td>
<td>Conflict origins and dynamics; sectional divisions in Yirol East</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumbek Centre group discussion</td>
<td>Customary authorities and council of elders</td>
<td>Jir Payam Court, Rumbek Town</td>
<td>Sectional divisions in Rumbek North; operations of customary authorities and conflict dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madol Akoch group discussion</td>
<td>Cattle (galweng) authorities</td>
<td>Madol Akoch cattle camp</td>
<td>Values of cows; conflict dynamics; class relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women discussion group</td>
<td>Women students</td>
<td>Adult Learning Centre</td>
<td>Position of women and gender divisions; women involvement in conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuot Ater and Majoang Mawut</td>
<td>Director-General of Traditional Authority Directorate of Local Governance and Traditional Authority</td>
<td>Dynamics between customary and statutory law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX II: ETHNIC, SECTIONAL, SUB-SECTIONAL AND CLAN DIVISIONS IN LAKES STATE

The following illustrations give a graphic overview of the various ethnic, sectional, sub-sectional and clan divisions found in Lakes States. The sectional graphs follow a similar order and describe the county and section, payams, sub-sections and clans. In my consultations with various customary authorities and individual members sections were largely described in reference to counties, the sub-sections were described in relation to payams. However, sub-sections with similar names can be found amongst the different sections and even across county-boundaries.

The graphs give a relatively complete overview of the various sections in relation to the eight counties in Lakes State, but they do not give a complete overview of the various sub-sections and clans. Simply because I was unable to gather and corroborate this information in the short period of research. Data on Awerial is missing, as I was unable to meet with customary representatives or members of the Dinka Aliab. In footnotes I describe the source(s) of information and the context in which this data was collected.

*Graph I: Ethnic and Sectional Division in Lakes State*
Information on the Dinka Agar from Rumbek Centre was collected in conversation with Marial Kum Baai, the Executive-Chief of Matangai payam and members of the Paramount Chief’s court of Jiir payam. Information was later corroborated and completed with the assistance of Yak, a student in the Catholic University.
Information on the Dinka Pakam from Rumbek North was gathered in a group discussion with the executive-chiefs of the various payams in Rumbek North - who were displaced to Rumbek town due to the flooding of their original areas.

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12 Information on the Dinka Pakam from Rumbek North was gathered in a group discussion with the executive-chiefs of the various payams in Rumbek North - who were displaced to Rumbek town due to the flooding of their original areas.
Information on the Dinka Agar in Rumbek East was compiled with the assistance of Mading Dor. Information was later corroborated and corrected with the assistance of Yak, a student in the Catholic University.
Graph V: Sectional, Sub-Sectional and Clan Divisions in Rumbek East – Aliem Toch Two

- Paloch
  - Panyaar
    - Apiny
    - Pathuoc
    - Parier
    - Pamech
    - Pabul
    - Pabarek
    - Pagut
  - Machar
  - Payibek
  - Pachor
  - Pananguop
  - Pakanciir
  - Panaciency
  - Panakorbi
  - Panabordit
  - Panriak
  - Panayak
  - Patiob
  - Padoor
  - Aneat
  - Pathuoc
  - Pamel
  - Pathiang

- Atiaba
  - Durchok
    - Paloch
    - Panyaar

- Aduel
  - Durbaar
    - Atiaba
    - Durchok

- Akot
  - Nyieu
    - Aduel
    - Durbaar

Rumbek East - Dinka Agar - Aliem Toch Two (Yek)
Initial data on the sectional divisions among the Dinka Gok was collected in discussion with Abraham Kolnyin, who lives in Juba. Due to the volatile and violent relationships between Dinka Agar and Dinka Gok during the time of fieldwork, this information was corroborated by Chol, a student in the Catholic University.
Information on the Dinka Atuot from Yirol West was collected in discussion with students from Yirol West in the Catholic University, Juba.
Information on the Cic of Yirol East was collected from David Deng Awur and Abraham Majur and the contribution of Adongwei, a student in the Catholic University.
**Graph X: Ethnic and Sectional Divisions in Wulu**

- Wulu Centre (Jibeli)
- Makundi (Opi)
- Domoloto (Gueri and Weku)
- Bahrgeli

- Yiquolo
- Yingira
- Yiyomi
- Yilori
- Yiweri
- Yibito
- Yigabi
- Jibeli
- Yimeri
- Yimandara
- Monga
- Bongo
APPENDIX III: SELECTED SUGGESTED READINGS

This study is partially based on an extensive review of existing ethnographic literature on Dinka. This list of suggested readings is made up of literature that has been used in writing this anthropological report on the socio-cultural dynamics in Lakes State and literature that was inaccessible to the researcher due to the fact that the author had no access to these books in South Sudan.

Francis Mading Deng, who is the son of the late Paramount Chief of the Ngok Dinka from Abyei, has compiled a large body of ethnographic and political writings on the Dinka and South Sudan, both as an insider and researcher. Deng is a diplomat, scholar and novelist who worked as a human rights officer of the United Nations Secretariat and held several positions as Special Rapporteur/Advisor to the United Nations. Deng was the Ambassador of the Sudan to Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States and served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Sudanese Government. Deng held several fellowship and research positions in America before he was appointed Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and Research Professor of International Politics, Law and Society at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Deng has contributed to a more nuanced and less archaic of the Dinka and gives detailed descriptions of processes of social change.


Apart from his academic work, Francis Deng wrote *Seed of Redemption* (1986) and *Cry of the Owl* (1989); two works he titled political novels. The novels are fictional reflections on socio-political developments in Sudan, but occur as a backdrop to factual events.

In 2011, Jeffrey Deal published the first book-length ethnography of the Dinka Agar based on anthropological fieldwork that was conducted between 2003 and 2009 when Deal worked as a physician at Ticagok Baptist Mission Hospital. However, his book received criticism for the fact he is unengaged with scholarship on the Dinka and for drawing simplistic and essentialist conclusions on the Dinka that do not do justice to the complexities of change experienced in Lakes State.


Stephanie Beswick’s book is based on oral interviews with more than three-hundred individuals from a South Sudanese ‘ancestry’ (the majority of which are Dinka, but also Bari, Azande, Balanda, Moro, Shilluk, Nuer and Latuka) in various locations in six different countries (United States, Canada, Kenya, Sudan, England and Egypt) over the period of a decade (1990-2000). Beswick compares the oral histories of the Western Nilotic Dinka, who are at the centre of her book, with the oral histories of the progeny of other Nilotic people en route from the northern residence to the south and other ethnic groups who encountered the migrating Dinka in what is contemporarily known as the Republic of South Sudan). She juxtaposes the store of oral recordings to written travelogues, administrative and missionary accounts and archaeological and linguistic studies.


Jok, Madut Jok is a medical anthropologist and who worked for the Government of South Sudan as an Undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Heritage and is the executive director of the recently founded Sudd Institute.

He has co-authored a series of articles with Sharon Hutchinson on the influences of the second civil war (1983-2005) on the daily lives of Dinka and Nuer:


Sharon Hutchinson has written extensively on the Nuer and reviewed the ethnographic corpus of Evans-Pritchard who made the Nuer one of anthropology’s most celebrated people. She shows the cumulative effects of decades of secondary re-analyses and deconstructs the immortalized image of Nuer as an isolated, independent and cattle-minded people. Many of her observations are equally useful in reference to the Dinka, who share many cultural beliefs and social divisions with the Nuer, and helps to construct a less archaic and essentialist image of the Nilotic ethnicities in South Sudan.