



**PEACE IS THE NAME
OF OUR CATTLE-CAMP
LOCAL RESPONSES
TO CONFLICT IN
EASTERN LAKES
STATE, SOUTH SUDAN**

SOUTH SUDAN CUSTOMARY AUTHORITIES PROJECT

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Peace is the Name of Our Cattle-Camp
Local responses to conflict in
Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan

JOHN RYLE AND
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Aya piŋ ɛ̃ kɔcc ǎ luɛl toc ku wɛl ʏɔk
ʏɔk kuek jien ku Atuot akec kaŋ thör wal yic
Yeŋu ye köc röt nɔk wɛt toc ku wal
Mith thii nhiaŋ tɔŋ ku ran wut pɛɛc
Yin aci pɛɛc tik riel
Acin ke cam rielic
Kɔccit nyiaŋ tɔŋ
Ku cɔk ran nɔk aci ʏɔk thin
Acin ke cam rielic
Wut jiɛŋ ci riɔc
Wut Atuot ci riɔc
Yok ʏen Apaak ci riɔc
Yen ya wutdie
Acin kee cam rielic ɛ̃ɛ

I hear people are fighting over grazing land.
Cattle don't fight—neither Jien cattle nor Atuot cattle.
Why do we fight in the name of grass?
Young men who raid cattle-camps—
You won't get a wife that way.
Violence gets us nowhere.
Elders who like war—
You can kill but you'll never win.
Violence gets us nowhere.
A cattle-camp for Jien who are cowards!
A cattle-camp for Atuot who are cowards!
Cowardly Apaak! That's what I'm looking for.
That's the cattle-camp for me.
Violence gets us nowhere—eeee

From 'Acin Ke Cam Rielic' (Violence Gets Us Nowhere)
by Maker Aguek Lueth, Ciec Dinka singer from Yirol.

Transcription and translation by Machot Amuom and John Ryle.



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COVER: A young cattle keeper covers his cattle with ashes in a cattle camp in Lulwuot, Yirol, South Sudan.

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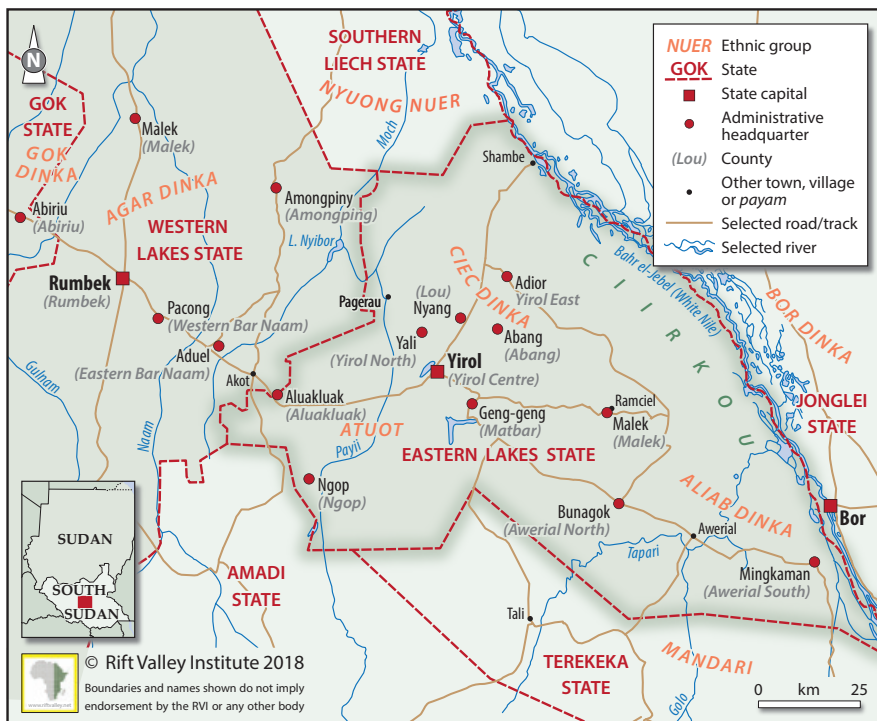
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Map 1. (above) South Sudan

Map 2. (below) Eastern Lakes state

Summary

Following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the subsequent independence of South Sudan in 2011, many agro-pastoralist and pastoralist areas of the country have experienced an upsurge of livestock raiding, counter raiding and cycles of revenge killing. The increase in unregulated violence has been ascribed to a variety of interacting and overlapping factors. These include the corruption of central government, the partisan machinations of politicians, the erosion of customary authority, the ineffectiveness of the judicial system, local boundary changes following the redivision of states and counties, the spread of firearms, an increasingly violent youth subculture and military confrontations provoked by the conflict between national political elites.

Greater Yirol (the area that now forms Eastern Lakes State) is an exception, however. Since 2011, there has been a significant reduction in violent conflict between communities in the state. In this respect, Eastern Lakes State stands in contrast to its neighbour, Western Lakes State (Greater Rumbek). During the same period, the latter has become a byword for intercommunal violence, as have many other states in the agro-pastoral zone in South Sudan.

The report is based on research conducted in 2017, including two field research trips in Eastern Lakes State in March and June. Some 20 recorded interviews with chiefs, youth leaders, government officials and politicians were conducted in the Lakes states and in Juba.¹ The report considers the communal resources brought to bear on conflict resolution in Eastern Lakes State, beginning shortly before the CPA, and on local understandings of this process. Based on interviews with participants, and reflecting their sometimes contrasting views, the study addresses the recent history of conflict and the variables that make local peace possible. These include the evolution of the institution of chiefship, the role of

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1 Some of these interviews were conducted in English, others in *thoj* Muonyjan, the language of the Dinka, or in the Atuot language, *thok* Reel.

youth militias and educated youth, changes in the livestock economy, the effects of civil war and misgovernment, the threat of hunger, and the distinctive cultural and historical resources of the communities of Greater Yirol. The interplay of these factors on the ground, and the responses to them on the part of community leaders and political figures, offers an approach to the reduction of conflict that is based on an understanding of the changing moral and political economy of agro-pastoral communities in post-independence South Sudan.

Timeline

1998	Famine in Bahr el-Ghazal
February–March 1999	Wunlit Peace Conference: Dinka customary authorities from Bahr el-Ghazal meet with Nuer of Western Upper Nile; conference is a precursor to reunification of the SPLM/A
25–29 September 1999	Meeting of Dinka–Nuer Peace Council in Yirol
September 2001	SPLA disarmament of <i>gelweng</i> —in Greater Rumbek and parts of Greater Yirol
January 2001	Forced recruitment of civil population from Yirol into SPLA and deployment to SPLA camps in Eritrea; friction between communities in Greater Yirol
2002	Reunification of the two factions of the SPLM/A
September–October 2002	Consultative meetings in Yirol and Panakar to address rising intercommunal conflict in Lakes and Mvolo
2003	Conflict between Ador of Ciec and Luac of Atuot settled by payment of compensation (<i>apuk</i>)
November 2002 to January 2003	Election of chiefs in Greater Yirol
20–22 April 2003	Yirol–Awerial peace conference organized by the Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Development Association in Panakar
5 May 2003	Fighting between Gok of Ciec and Luac of Atuot in Yirol East and Ciirkou
6 February 2004	Fighting in Yirol East and Ciirkou between Luac of Atuot and the Gok of Ciec expands to include all ethnic groups in Greater Yirol
20 April 2004	Attack by Ciec on Alakic (Atuot village in Yirol East), followed by wave of displacement and ambushes

June–August 2004	SPLA attempted disarmament of civil population in Greater Yirol
April 2004	Yirol divided into three counties—Yirol East, Yirol West and Awerial
September 2004	First direct meeting between chiefs of communities to resolve disputes in Yirol East and Panakar
1 January 2005	Comprehensive Peace Agreement between SPLM/A and the Sudanese government, ending 1983–2005 civil war
May 2005	Ciec raid Atuot cattle returning to Yirol West at Lang Matut cattle-camp in Ciirkou, sparking new conflict
26 February 2006	Ciec attack Amak cattle-camp in Yirol West
15 April 2009	Apaak attack Ciec in Tokngot–Amaak cattle-camp
July–September 2009	Disarmament of civilian population in Greater Yirol by SPLA
8 February 2010	Atuot raid in Ciec territory, at Nyigomkot cattle-camp in Yirol East
4 March 2010	Disarmament of civilian population in Greater Yirol by SPLA
1 August 2010	Attack by Atuot on Ciec at Nyigomkot cattle-camp
27 September 2010	Peace meeting in Awerial between representatives of three states: Jonglei State, Terekeka State and Eastern Lakes State
2011	Independence of South Sudan
January 2011	Conflict in Thiangruel cattle-camp between Apaak Atuot and Ciec resolved with a wrestling match
September 2011	Conference of <i>gelweng</i> in Nyang town, after fighting at Yom Alier cattle-camp
27–30 December 2011	Peace conference between chiefs, politicians and intellectuals, organized by Greater Yirol Youth Union in Yirol

15 December 2013	Intra-SPLA conflict breaks out in Juba
December 2013	Fighting between SPLA and SPLA-IO in Bor. Influx of IDPs from Bor across the Nile to Greater Yirol
March 2014	Peace conference organized by Greater Yirol Youth Union in Yirol town
11 July 2015	Attack by Agar Dinka on Papuol, a Ciec cattle-camp in Pagerau
2 October 2015	Presidential decree establishes 28 states in South Sudan in place of original 10; Lakes State is split into three: Gok State, Western Lakes State and Eastern Lakes State
29 November 2015	Peace conference of chiefs and others from Rumbek East, Rumbek Centre, Yirol East and Yirol West, in Aluakluak
24 December 2015	Rin Tueny Mabor Deng appointed first governor of newly created Eastern Lakes State
7 August 2016	Renewed fighting in Juba between forces of Salva Kiir and Riek Machar; conflict spreads to many parts of South Sudan
17-19 June 2017	Conference in Mvolo between Western Lakes state, Eastern Lakes state, Gok state, Amadi state, Terekeka state to discuss security and movement of cattle
27 January 2017	Bor Philip Wutchok appointed governor of Eastern Lakes Meeting in Gutthom of chiefs and <i>gelweng</i> leaders from Ciec, Aliab, Atuot and Bor
9 May 2017	Former SPLA Chief of General Staff Paul Malong, dismissed by President Salva Kiir, arrives in military convoy in Yirol; returns to Juba
June 2017	Nuer attacks on Ciec at Dhiaudit cattle-camp, in Malek County, Pagerau and Titnagau
21 June 2017	Akeer of Aliab attack on Luac of Atuot at Pakuac cattle-camp in Bunagok

- 23 June 2017 Aliab attack on Atuot at Lang Matut cattle-camp, leaving seven people dead
- 26 June 2017 Committee of elders, politicians, student leaders from Greater Yirol meet in Juba, send delegation to Yirol
- 10 July 2017 Nuer raid Ciec cattle-camp at Dhiauadit in Yirol East
- 21 July 2017 Akeer of Aliab attack on Luac of Atuot Nyilel cattle-camp in Bunagok County
- 23 July 2017 Aliab attack on Atuot at Lang Matuot cattle-camp in Ciec territory
- 18 September 2017 Chief Kuer Dhuor, executive chief of Kuacthii sub-section of the Ciec, killed in revenge attack in Pagerau
- 7 December 2017 Three-month state of emergency in Gok State, Western Lakes State and Eastern Lakes State after killings in Western Lakes; IDPs from Pakam in Western Lakes arrive in Ciec area of Eastern Lakes State
- 25 January 2018 Mangar Buong Aluenge appointed governor of Eastern Lakes State
- 26 April 2018 Four new counties created in Eastern Lakes State

1. Introduction

Eastern Lakes State comprises the home territories of three related ethnic communities: Ciec, Aliab and Atuot. The first two of these—Ciec and Aliab—are among the major divisions² of the Dinka people, the largest ethnolinguistic group in South Sudan (Muonyjaŋ, Jiëŋ, or Jieng, in the Dinka language).³ The third group, Atuot, is an eclectic collection of six smaller sections: the members of one of these sections—the Apaak or Apak—speak a dialect of Dinka;⁴ the other five Atuot sections speak *thok* Reel, a dialect of Nuer.⁵

The Atuot are culturally assimilated to their Dinka neighbours. Nearly all are bilingual: some neighbouring Dinka in Eastern Lakes State speak *thök* Reel as well as *thuŋ* Muonyjaŋ. Apart from the linguistic connection,

2 In the ethnographic literature, the Ciec, Aliab and the 20 or so other primary divisions of the Dinka are referred to as tribes or tribal groups. See: Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

3 For a helpful analysis of variations in ethnolinguistic terminology and orthography, see: Melanie Baak, *Negotiating Belongings: Stories of Forced Migration of Dinka Women from South Sudan*, Studies in Inclusive Education, Volume 30, Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016.

4 The dialect spoken by the Apaak is *thong* Apau. See: John W. Burton, *A Nilotic World: The Atuot-Speaking Peoples of the Southern Sudan*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.

5 John W. Burton, 'Atuot Ethnicity: An Aspect of Nilotic Ethnology', *Africa* 51/01 (1981): 496–507. The inclusion of Apaak in the Atuot grouping and the use of the term 'Atuot' *per se* have recently been challenged by Apaak youth activists asserting the primacy of an Apaak connection to the greater Dinka polity over their old-established links to the other Atuot sub-groups. See: Apaak Youth Steering Committee, 'Declaration of Apaak Community as a Sub-Section of Jieng Tribe in South Sudan', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 18 August 2018. Accessed 7 September 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2018/08/18/declaration-of-apaak-community-as-a-sub-section-of-jieng-tribe-in-south-sudan/>; Atuot Youth Association Volunteer Team, 'Press Release by Atuot Youth Association Volunteer Team (AYA-VT)', Atuot Youth Association Volunteer Team, 2018; and Madol Chien Achieng, 'Apaak vs Reel: Atuot Community in Intensive Care Unit of Ethnic Identity Crisis', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 24 August 2018. Accessed 25 August 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2018/08/24/apaak-vs-reel-communities-atuot-community-in-intensive-care-unit/>.

Atuot are not socially or politically linked to the Nuer communities in the Greater Upper Nile region to the north of Eastern Lakes State.⁶

Eastern Lakes lies towards the southern edge of the floodplain of the River Nile, the Nilotic heartland of South Sudan. Yirol town, the administrative centre of the state, is the only sizeable town in the Greater Yirol region.⁷ The primary mode of livelihood of the rural Dinka and Atuot communities in this area is cattle husbandry, in combination with rainfed horticulture or agriculture, and seasonal fishing. This way of life necessitates seasonal movement between dry-season and wet-season grazing areas. Cattle-keepers spend long periods away from their home villages in communal *wuot* (seasonal cattle-camps). A single cattle-camp may have hundreds of human inhabitants, with livestock in the thousands. Here, members of rival ethnic sub-groups live in close proximity for periods of months.

For the inhabitants of Greater Yirol—and for other communities that live on, or on the edge of, the flood plain—cattle husbandry has an all-embracing cultural and economic importance.⁸ Historically, traders

6 The historical formation of Apaak, Atuot and Aliab ethnicity is discussed in Stephanie Beswick, *Sudan's Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan*, Rochester, NY: University Rochester Press, 2004.

7 In this report, 'Greater Yirol' is used in its inclusive sense to signify the whole of Eastern Lakes, i.e. the Atuot area, and the Ciec and Aliab areas.

8 For descriptions of the customary mode of life of the inhabitants of the floodplain, see the standard ethnographic accounts of the Dinka, Nuer and Atuot: for the western Dinka, Godfrey Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, and Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka of the Sudan*, Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1984; for the Nuer, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940, and Sharon E. Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996; and for the Atuot, Burton, *A Nilotic World*. See also the description of the day-to-day life of the Agar Dinka of Lakes in John Ryle and Sarah Errington, *Warriors of the White Nile: The Dinka*, Amsterdam: Time Life Books, 1982. On the ecology of the floodplain, see: J. D. Tothill, ed., *Agriculture in the Sudan*, London: Oxford University Press, 1948; Paul Howell, Michael Lock and Stephen Cobb, *The Jonglei Canal: Impact and Opportunity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; and recent UNEP reports; e.g. United Nations Environment Programme, 'South Sudan: First State of Environment and Outlook Report 2018', Nairobi: United Nations Environment

from Eastern Lakes (particularly those from the Atuot sections) have been prominent in the long-distance livestock trade southwards, from the floodplain to the Equatorias and beyond.⁹

During most of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005), the geographical situation of Yirol—far from any national border—meant that it was effectively cut off from trade and government services. Although youth from the area were recruited in large numbers into the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) through voluntary or forcible mobilization, their home area was not itself a zone of military conflict, except on its northern and southern borders. The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was present in all areas outside Yirol town from the early stages of the civil war. The SPLA captured the town in December 1985, soon after the war began; it was recaptured by Sudan government forces in April 1992, and finally retaken by the SPLA in 1997.¹⁰

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Programme, May 2018. Accessed 7 July 2018, https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25528/SouthSudan_SoE2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. On the interdependence of communities in the economy of the floodplain, see: Douglas H. Johnson, ‘Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the Pastoral “Common Economy”’, *The Journal of African History* 30/3 (1989): 463–486.

9 John W. Burton, ‘Ghost Marriage and the Cattle Trade among the Atuot of the Southern Sudan’, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 48/4 (1978): 398–405 and Moses Ngor Ring, ‘Dinka Cattle Trade: A Study of Socio-Economic Transformation in a Semi-Pastoral Society’, MA thesis, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 1980. Accessed 4 February 2018, <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/96408/MOSES%20NGOK%20RING%20M.A%201980.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

10 Douglas H. Johnson, et al., ‘An Investigation into Production Capability in the Rural Southern Sudan: A Report on Food Sources and Needs’, UN Operation Lifeline Sudan, June 1990, London: Rift Valley Institute, Sudan Open Archive. Accessed 3 March 2018, <https://sudanarchive.net/cgi-bin/pagessoa?a=pdf&d=D1d3.1.1&dl=1&sim=Screen2Image>; Human Rights Watch, ‘Civilian Devastation: Abuses by All Parties in the War in Southern Sudan’, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1 June 1994; Yasin Miheisi, ed., ‘Sudan News & Views 27’, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, June 1997. Accessed 5 January 2018, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/snv27.html>; and Frode Sundnes, ‘Land of Plenty, Plenty of Land? Revival of Livelihoods and Emerging Conflicts in Yirol County, a Liberated Area of the Southern Sudan’, MA thesis, Noragric, Agricultural University of Norway, Aas, June 2004. Accessed 9 September 2018, http://www.umb.no/statisk/noragric/publications/master/2004_frode_sundnes.pdf.

During the 1990s, following the SPLM/A split in 1991, which set the Dinka-backed mainstream faction of the SPLA against the Nuer-backed Nasir faction of the SPLA, there were Nuer attacks in the northern part of Yirol district, a remote area where Atuot and Ciec Dinka territory borders that of the Nyuong Nuer of Upper Nile. In response to these intra-SPLA hostilities, the formation of local youth militias in what is now Eastern Lakes State was accelerated—they were already active in other parts of Bahr el-Ghazal—under the auspices of the mainstream SPLM/A, with the aim, initially at least, of defending villages and cattle-camps from raids by Nuer forces. These home guards—known as *gelweng* (cattle guardians)—outlasted the 2002 political reconciliation between the SPLA factions and the respite in raiding between the Dinka and Nuer communities that endured for the next decade. Today, the *gelweng* in Yirol—armed youth without an official role in governance or administration—have become a key component of the emerging local order—a factor both in the spread of violence and the control of it.

As in most other pastoralist areas of South Sudan, the period between the CPA in 2005 and independence in 2011, when external threats were in abeyance, saw a sharp increase in cattle raiding within Greater Yirol, and an intensifying cycle of revenge attacks between rival tribal sections and sub-sections. This involved considerable loss of life and livestock. A lengthy series of peace meetings in Yirol, culminating in 2010–2011, brought a provisional end to this escalating conflict, as described in this report. The number of intercommunal clashes in the years that followed was significantly diminished. This relative peace has been maintained, with some exceptions, from that time—the year of South Sudan’s independence—to the present. For the inhabitants of Yirol, this record of peacemaking and peacebuilding is a source of both pride and unease. In the pastoralist cultures of Eastern Africa, a peace agreement between rival ethnic divisions can only be an armistice; underlying conflicts are always liable to be rekindled. In the late dry season in 2017, for example, the peace of Yirol was interrupted by a renewal of intersectional fighting. This 2017 outbreak was resolved but, as of 2018, it leaves long-term control of conflict in the balance.

BOX 1. SEASONAL CALENDAR

MONTH (<i>pɛi</i>)	SEASON (<i>abak ë run</i>)	WEATHER AND LOCATION OF LIVESTOCK
October (<i>Lal</i>)	<i>tiok</i>	End of the rains; trees lose leaves; harvest in villages; floods recede.
November (<i>Yorbeklai</i>)		Some areas of <i>toc</i> (seasonally-flooded grazing land) still inaccessible. Livestock grazing mostly in <i>rup</i> (slightly higher wooded areas). Movement to <i>toc</i> grazing grounds increases in November and December.
December (<i>Kön</i>)		
January (<i>Nyëth</i>)	<i>mei</i>	Height of dry season; temperatures high; water sources limited. Most livestock and herders now in large cattle-camps in <i>toc</i> near the Nile River or Lake Nyibor. Fishing season.
February (<i>Kol</i>)		
March (<i>Akɔcɔdit</i>)		
April (<i>Akɔcthii</i>)	<i>yak kɛɛr</i>	Early rains; new grass; cattle on the move. Herders use both <i>toc</i> and <i>rup</i> between March and June. High season for cattle raids and cattle theft. Herders visit <i>bar</i> —salt grass areas—in June and July before moving to <i>gok</i> (higher land near villages not susceptible to flooding). Cultivation in villages. Hunger gap till harvest in September.
May (<i>Aduon</i>)		
June (<i>Alëthbor</i>)		
July (<i>Akoldit</i>)		
August (<i>Bildit</i>)	<i>ruël</i>	Cool season; height of the rains. Cattle in <i>gok</i> . Awaiting harvest.
September (<i>Bielthii</i>)		

The relatively peaceful situation that has prevailed in Greater Yirol since 2011 is in contrast to that in the neighbouring Greater Rumbek area—now Western Lakes State—during the same period. Western Lakes State is the territory of the Agar Dinka, another of the primary divisions of the Dinka people. (The state is also home to three other smaller, sedentary, non-Nilotic communities). Up to the time of the redivision of states in 2015, Rumbek and Yirol formed a single state—Lakes State—and their political fate was closely linked.¹¹ The Agar Dinka of Rumbek, like the people of Yirol, are primarily transhumant cattle-keepers. Their way of life and recent history are similar. Since the independence of South Sudan in 2011, however, Greater Rumbek has gained an unenviable reputation, locally and nationally, for chronic intercommunal conflict. Sections of the Agar Dinka have been locked in a seemingly intractable cycle of cattle raiding, counter raiding and revenge killing. Following the 2015 division of former Lakes State, there has also been increased conflict on the border between Eastern Lakes State and Western Lakes State—between sections of the Agar of Western Lakes and sections of the Atuot and Ciec of Eastern Lakes.

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11 On 2 October 2015, President Salva Kiir Mayardit issued a decree that created 28 new states in place of the 10 already existing constitutionally established states. These new states include Eastern Lakes State; see: Douglas H. Johnson, 'Brief Analysis of the Boundaries of the 28 States', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 8 October 2015. Accessed 7 September 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2015/10/08/douglas-johnson-historical-analysis-of-the-boundaries-of-the-28-new-states/>. State boundaries were drawn mainly on ethnic or sub-ethnic lines. In November 2015, the South Sudan parliament retrospectively empowered the presidency to create further states. In January 2017, four more states were created, bringing the total to 32.

2. The approach to Yirol

Topography and communications

Yirol town, the capital of Eastern Lakes State, is an out-of-the-way place, even by the standards of South Sudan, where poor roads, rain and insecurity are ubiquitous constraints on the movement of goods, livestock and people. The town is about 300 km (186 miles) from Juba, the national capital, on the southern edge of the great floodplain that lies at the heart of South Sudan, and roughly 100 km (about 60 miles) from the River Nile. The principal land route is an unsurfaced road that runs north-west from Juba, through the small towns of Mundri and Mvolo, towards Rumbek. This road forks at Aluakluak, 50 km (31 miles) before Rumbek. From here, the main branch leads west to Rumbek and on to northern Bahr el-Ghazal; the other turns east to Yirol.

Yirol can also be reached from Juba via a dry-season route that follows the west bank of the Nile north through Terekeka State. Terekeka State is the territory of another agro-pastoralist group, the Mandari, who have had frequently combative relations with the government in Juba (and, before that, with the SPLA during the 1983-2005 war).¹² Leaving the Mandari area, the road crosses into Eastern Lakes State and the territory of the Aliab Dinka, who form one of the three major sub-ethnic groups in Greater Yirol, and thence to Yirol town. There is an air strip in Yirol but until 2018 there were no regular flights—neither commercial flights nor UN flights.

Like everywhere else in South Sudan, the economy of Greater Yirol has been affected by the continuing national political crisis, and by military conflict in areas beyond Eastern Lakes State. Fighting and banditry related to this wider internal conflict has made the two land routes

12 Paul Wani Gore, 'The Overlooked Role of Elites in African Grassroots Conflicts: A Case Study of the Dinka–Mandari–Bari Conflict in Southern Sudan', Sudan Working Paper WP 2014:3, Bergen, Norway: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2014.

increasingly perilous. In recent years, though, there has been limited growth in dry-season traffic taking the route through Terekeka State—road freight and relief supplies on their way to Rumbek and Northern Bahr el-Ghazal—which has brought an increase in the traffic of trucks and tankers through Yirol town.

Yirol is connected northwards to Shambe Port on the River Nile, which lies within the state boundaries of Eastern Lakes State (as does Ramciel, a village optimistically designated as the future capital of South Sudan).¹³ The poor condition of the road to Shambe and the proximity of the conflict-affected Nuer areas of Southern Liech State in Upper Nile—formerly part of Unity State—limits the use of this route from Yirol to the Nile. The presence of the Nile is currently a more significant factor upstream, to the south, in Awerial County, where the river separates Eastern Lakes State from Jonglei State. Here, the Nile is a means of communication and trade—including the cattle trade—linking the communities on its two banks. There are expanding relations between Bor Dinka communities in Jonglei State across the river on the east bank and the Aliab Dinka in Eastern Lakes State, particularly at Mingkaman in Awerial County. The mixing of populations has been reinforced by two events in recent history: the violent displacement of people from Bor across the river into Awerial County after the Nuer attack on Bor in 1991 (at the time of the historic split between the two factions of the SPLM/A) and the further displacement in 2013, during the current national conflict, following fighting in Bor between the government and forces of SPLM-IO, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-in-Opposition.

Yirol and Rumbek

Until 2015, Greater Yirol comprised three counties administered from Rumbek, then the capital of Lakes State. Together, the three counties—Yirol West (the territory of the Atuot, including Apaak), Yirol East (territory of the Ciec Dinka), and Awerial or Aliab (territory of the Aliab

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 13 ‘Ramciel’, Wikipedia, 29 January 2018. Accessed 7 September 2018, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramciel>.

Dinka)—occupy a land area of around 15,000 sq km (about 5,000 square miles). In 2008, the total human population was said to be more than 200,000.¹⁴ Following the creation of Eastern Lakes State, the three counties were divided first into 10, then into 14 new counties.¹⁵

In the wider Lakes region (now comprising three states, Eastern Lakes State, Western Lakes State and Gok State) Rumbek, the capital of Western Lakes, in its strategic location on the main road to northern Bahr el-Ghazal, remains the largest and most important urban centre, the principal site of government administration. With a human population recorded at 32,000 in 2010,¹⁶ it is more than twice the size of Yirol and has much greater visibility on the national stage. For a brief period following the 2005 CPA, Rumbek served as the centre of the SPLM/A government—as capital of the country then coming into being. It remains the operational hub for the Lakes region of Greater Bahr el-Ghazal. There is a major UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan) base there, a busy airport and a large military barracks.

In recent years, however, the social and political atmosphere in Rumbek has come to reflect the high incidence of intercommunal conflict in the wider Rumbek area. There have been many revenge killings, not only in rural areas but also within the town limits. During 2016 and

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14 In 2008, the human population of the three counties was recorded as follows: 103,190 in Yirol West; 67,402 in Yirol East; and 47,041 in Awerial (Aliab). Source: 5th Sudan Population and Housing Census, 2008, quoted in Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, 'Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2010', Juba: Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, 2010, 13.

15 Following the creation of Eastern Lakes State, the former Aliab (Awerial) County was divided into Awerial North County (with its county headquarters at Bunagok) and Awerial South County (headquarters at Mingkaman). The former Yirol East County was divided into Malek County (headquarters at Ramciel), Yirol North County (Yali), Lou County (Nyang) and Adior County. And the former Yirol West County was divided into Yirol County (with headquarters at Geng-geng), Ngop County, Abang County and Madbar County. In 2018 it was announced that four further counties would be created in Eastern Lakes: Awerial East (Abuyung), Awerial Centre (Dor), Anuol County and Geer County.

16 Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation. 'Statistical Yearbook for Southern Sudan 2010.' Juba: Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation, 2010.

2017, there was an early evening curfew in force in Rumbek and gunfire was frequently heard at night. The situation was exacerbated by the national economic crisis, whereby the availability of goods was limited and commodity prices were at an all-time high. Traders from outside Rumbek were leaving the town. The governor of Western Lakes State was the subject of widespread criticism in the state for his management of the crisis and failure to resolve its internecine conflicts.¹⁷ Many in Rumbek ascribe the interminability of these conflicts to the clandestine involvement of government officials and politicians in the judicial process and in the arming of youth, acting in the perceived interests of their own kin group or section. Meanwhile, in Yirol town—and in Eastern Lakes State generally—there is a widely expressed desire to be dissociated from the troubles of Rumbek and Western Lakes State, even though politicians in Yirol have in the past been subject to similar accusations of partisan involvement in intercommunal conflict.

Through the woods and grasslands

The road that leads east from Rumbek, through Aluakluak to Yirol, is the main axis of communication between Western Lakes State and Eastern Lakes State. It follows the edge of the higher ground of the ironstone plateau that forms the southern rim of the great floodplain. The terrain along the road consists of settled stretches, alternating with woodland and *toc* (grassland that floods in the rainy season) where there is no permanent habitation.

For a traveller on this road, there is a palpable difference between the Rumbek side and the Yirol side. In 2015, there were road closures and attacks on vehicles, and the SPLA barracks in Akot was overrun by

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17 For example, see: Ajak Deng Chiengkou, 'Daniel Deng Monydit Responded to Governor Matur Chut on Lake States Crisis', SBS (Sudan Broadcasting Service), 5 October 2014. Accessed 14 July 2018, <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/dinka/en/audiotrack/daniel-deng-monydit-responded-governor-matur-chut-lake-states-crisis> and 'Lakes State Caretaker Governor Criticised over Military Calls', *Sudan Tribune*, 2 May 2014. Accessed 4 June 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article50851>.

a local youth militia.¹⁸ In 2017, armed men were frequently seen around Rumbek. Years of fighting between rival Agar Dinka tribal sections has had a visible effect on patterns of settlement. Though the area along the road out of Rumbek is densely populated and heavily cultivated, there are stretches where land has been left fallow to create a *cordon sanitaire* between the territory of contiguous rival tribal groups. In 2017, the absence of cultivation in these stretches was noticeable—the threat of violence inscribed on the landscape.¹⁹

The journey east from Rumbek to Yirol, a distance of around 110 km (68 miles), takes half a day by car in the dry season. Around 30 km (18 miles) into this journey, the road crosses the Bar Naam, the principal waterway flowing through the Agar *toc*. A broken bridge over the Bar Naam marks the site of a major battle early in the north–south civil war. Until recently, the remains of tanks and armoured personnel vehicles littered the sides of the road. Further on, between Akot and Aluakluak, the territory of the Agar Dinka ends and that of the Atuot begins. This is the boundary between Western Lakes State and Eastern Lakes State.

There is a new bridge crossing the Payii River, an all-season river that flows from Yei (to the south in Equatoria), and forms the main waterway in the grasslands of Eastern Lakes State. One branch of the river flows to Lake Nyibor, one of several lakes from which the Lakes region gets its name. Beyond the Payii bridge, approaching Yirol town, the road skirts Lake Yirol, crossing a wide, treeless *toc*—pale in the dry season and verdant in the rains—dotted with cattle-camps and herds at pasture.

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18 ‘Lakes State Protesters Close Road between Yirol and Rumbek Towns’, *Sudan Tribune*, 29 June 2015. Accessed 17 June 2018, (<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article55537>).

19 In mid-2018, on the scale of humanitarian disaster employed by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the other Lakes states were classified as crisis level; Rumbek was given a more critical rating and designated as an emergency; see: United Nations Office for the of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ‘South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot’, March 2018. Accessed 15 August 2018, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SS_20180412_Humanitarian_Snapshot_March_Final%20%281%29.pdf.

From here, traversing a belt of mango and mahogany trees on the perimeter of the town, the road leads to the town square.

The town square, the auction ground, the traffic circle

The main square in Yirol, as in other major South Sudanese towns, is the visible expression of an idea of order, emblematic of the political and economic institutions that have endured since the colonial era, despite the fractured conditions of the past three or four decades. *Maidan Huria* (Freedom Square), as it has been known since the independence of Sudan from Anglo–Egyptian rule in 1956, is a large open space in the centre of the town. (The name ‘Freedom Square’ may be seen as signifying either a place of celebration or a location of protest.²⁰) The town market is on the south-west side. Administrative buildings, some of them dating from the colonial era, lie to the north-west, towards the shore of Lake Yirol. A chiefs’ court stands in the centre of the square, and, next to it, the town football pitch.

In mid-2017, arriving in Yirol, there was little sign of the security problems evident in Rumbek at that time. In Yirol, the market remained busy well into the evening. There was a functioning electricity supply, with sound systems set up by music vendors playing Dinka language hip-hop in the dusk. There was no curfew and there were no guns to be seen. In the town square that day, the chiefs’ court had been in session well into the afternoon, with elders from sections of the Atuot community assembled there, smoking locally grown tobacco in pipes of mahogany and brass. Some weeks previously, the town football team had played—and won—a match against a team composed of foreign traders—Ethiopians, Darfuris, Congolese and Ugandans. (The number of these traders was considerable at the time of South Sudan’s independence. Although it has diminished in number in recent years, the court in Yirol still has representatives of the trading communities to advise chiefs on matters that relate to them.)

Until 2016, Freedom Square was also the site of a daily cattle auction. Today the livestock market has been relocated a kilometre away from the

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 20 Thanks to Jok Madut Jok for this point.

centre of town. The market serves a wide catchment area: there are cattle for sale from all parts of the state, some of them on their way to be traded across the Nile River to Bor. The price of cattle in Yirol is consistently high, both historically and in comparison to other locations in South Sudan. Towards the end of the 2017 dry season, the market was busy until evening, with up to 100 head of cattle sold each day. Prices at the auction reached SSP 50,000 (USD 500)²¹ for a heifer in calf, and twice as much for a song ox of a favoured colour.²² There was a constant coming and going of cattle-keepers to or from areas outside the town, and consultations on mobile phones between those at the auction ground and those back in the cattle-camp.²³

A notable feature of Yirol is the roundabout, or traffic circle—the only one in the state—at the intersection of roads near the main square in the centre of the town. It boasts a striking centrepiece: A two-metre high sculpted concrete representation of a cooking pot, painted in the colours of the national flag. This nestles between four upward-pointing arms representing the fire stones of a traditional cooking fire, inscribed with the names of former chiefs of Greater Yirol and their dates in office. The monument was built—as was the roundabout itself—under the direction of Margaret Nyibol Marial, a police captain from Rumbek who is responsible for traffic control in Yirol. In conversation, Captain Nyibol explained that the function of the roundabout is to bring order and safety to traffic in the same way that the chiefs’ court in the market brings peace and good governance to the community at large.²⁴ She described the significance of the cooking pot in these words: ‘I put the pot there to show that women have an important contribution to make to peace...

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21 This was the unofficial exchange rate between SSP and US dollars in Yirol in June 2017.

22 Oxen—castrated bulls—with hides displaying particular colour patterns, usually black and white, are valued highly among pastoralist communities in South Sudan.

23 John Ryle, ‘Letter from Yirol’, *Letters from the Field*, London: Rift Valley Institute, 1 August 2017. Accessed 5 August 2018, <http://riftvalley.net/news/letter-yirol#>.

24 Interview with Margaret Nyibol Marial, police captain from Rumbek, Yirol town, 4 June 2017.

Women are the ones who suffer when their husbands and sons take up arms... When this happens, they should just tell them to stay at home.²⁵

There are less visible features of life in Yirol that modify the image of order presented above, and that serve to correct too sanguine a view of life in the town. In a street behind the administrative buildings on the north-west side of Freedom Square, between the square and the lake, stands Maburzeed, the former oil factory. Before the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005), this building was a mill making edible oil from locally grown sesame seed. Scheduled to be renovated after independence,²⁶ Maburzeed has instead become one of the many undocumented places of confinement that have been established in South Sudan since 2011, an outgrowth of the wartime culture of the SPLA that has been reinforced by the ongoing militarization and securitization of government in South Sudan. Reports published online by concerned citizens of Yirol allege illegal confinement, extra-judicial executions and other human rights abuses at Maburzeed; there is no public record of the prisoners who are held there.²⁷

The populousness and bustle of Yirol town is, furthermore, not necessarily a sign of security or prosperity. In the evening, street children beg

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25 Interview with Margaret Nyibol Marial, 4 June 2017.

26 See the renovation plan and financial provision for Maburzeed in the published central government budget: Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 'Approved Budget Tables: Financial Year 2014/15', Juba: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, August 2014. Accessed 7 September 2018, <http://www.grss-mof.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/RSS-Approved-Budget-Book-2014-15.pdf> and Adroit Consult International, 'Final Report: For Feasibility Study on Defunct Yirol Oil Mill, in Lakes State, South Sudan', Juba: Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment, 2012.

27 Tong Kot Kuocnin, 'Mabur-Zeed Detention Center in Yirol: A Detention Facility Worse than Guantanamo Bay Prison in Cuba', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 16 January 2017. Accessed 5 May 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2017/01/16/mabur-zeed-detention-center-in-yirol-a-detention-facility-worse-than-guantanamo-bay-prison-in-cuba/> and Tong Kot Kuocnin, 'Who Authorized the Killing of Detainees at Mabur-Zeed Detention Center in Yirol?', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 17 January 2017. Accessed 5 May 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2017/01/17/who-authorized-the-killing-of-detainees-at-mabur-zeed-detention-center-in-yirol/>.

for food outside the open-air restaurants in the market. Hunger in rural areas drives people to town in search of relief supplies. In conversation with chiefs and elders in Yirol Town—and in the rural areas beyond—the question of hunger was frequently the first response to enquiries about the causes of intercommunal violence. These conversations were taking place at the end of June 2017, at the beginning of the annual hunger gap that lasts until the first harvest in August or September. This meant that the worst effects of hunger were still to come.

Hunger, according to an Atuot (Reel) proverb, is the oldest and strongest of the powers— *aboth yene kai juon*.²⁸ Our interviewees ascribed crop failures and shortfalls variously to the weather, the security situation, cattle theft and acts of God. By contrast, the absence of food aid was ascribed to the government. As an Atuot elder at the chiefs' court, Panchol Arok, said, 'We got our independence but we failed to eradicate hunger (*cok*) and insecurity (*riok*). These two things are the way God has punished us. That is why there is drought. Why is it those who are fighting who are given food? Is it that the politicians encourage fighting?'²⁹

For the chiefs we spoke to —aware that one of their interlocutors was an outsider who might offer a conduit to decision making by relief agencies—the discussion of connections between crop failure, stock theft, communal conflict and bad government was subordinate to the urgency of the food deficit.³⁰

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28 Burton, *A Nilotic World*.

29 Interview with Bahon Mabor, paramount chief of Luac Atuot and Anhiem Nhial, deputy chief, Yirol town, 22 March 2017.

30 In the Nilotic realm, hunger exists in a spectrum of severity: *theel*, *cok* and *riak*. *Theel* signifies every day hunger; *cok* is more serious and more long term; *riak* is a general disaster, one usually involving famine, when granaries are empty and people must slaughter cattle or rely on wild food to survive. In addition, among the Dinka and Atuot, as in many other African cultures, particularly eventful years have names. According to Paramount Chief Reechedit Anyieth of Ciec Ador, the most senior of the chiefs in Yirol, the most grievous years of *riak*—disaster—during his lifetime were *Mabor Bon Buot* (1964–1965), *Cok Mathiang* or *Mayiircual* (1988), *Nyidier* (1994) and *Bieltiel* (1998). When we spoke to Chief Reechedit in 2017 he said he thought that things were going to be as bad that year as they had been in the years of *riak*. This time, he noted, there was food in shops—communications and commerce

3. A history of conflict

Sources of dispute between communities in Yirol

Traditional leaders, political figures and others interviewed in Greater Yirol were in broad agreement on the history of intercommunal conflict in the state, though not always on the underlying causes. As in other pastoralist communities in South Sudan, a quarrel between individuals can escalate rapidly, through kinship solidarity on each side, into a confrontation between ethnic groups or sub-groups, each tending to ally with those to whom they are closest in terms of descent.³¹ This reflex solidarity, illustrating an anthropological principle known as ‘segmentary opposition’, is reflected in the Dinka proverb, ‘raan ręc du aci thoŋ ke raan puoth raan dėt’. (‘Better a bad person who is one of your own than a good person who belongs to others’). Such disputes are most likely to start in shared grazing grounds where livestock herders from different tribal sections gather in the dry season.

In the case of Greater Yirol, one of the major dry-season grazing areas for all ethnic groups is the easternmost part of the state, Ciirkou, along the banks of the River Nile. Most of Ciirkou is low and swampy, largely uninhabited during the rains, but in the dry season the area provides an abundance of grass. ‘The place is nice’, said Permena Awerial, an MP from

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being better organized than they had been in the civil war years between 1983 and 2005—and to this extent the cash economy had returned. Nonetheless, those who had no cattle—or whose cattle had been raided—would have neither money nor grain, and would therefore go hungry. Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, Paramount Chief of Ador of Ciec Dinka, Malek, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

31 The term ‘segmentary opposition’ was first used by E.E.Evans-Pritchard in relation to the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*), and later extended by scholars to other African societies; e.g. see: John Middleton and David Tait, eds., *Tribes without Rulers: Studies in Africans Segmentary Systems*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958.

Aliab, ‘People come there with cattle and [young men] look for girls to get married. It is a point of social interaction among pastoralists.’³²

Control of this riverain zone is divided between the Ciec Dinka section in the north and the Aliab in the south. Herders from the third major group in the state, Atuot, who have no territory along the river Nile, and who face pressure from conflicts with Agar Dinka groups in Western Lakes, have increasingly taken their cattle to graze there. Ciec cattle-keepers, whose territory borders the Nuer in the north, have also moved south towards the Aliab *toc* for reasons of security. Ciirkou is an area with few permanent dwellings, located far from the main settlements and administrative centres in Eastern Lakes State. It was described by an administrative official as ‘a place where there is no government’.

In 2004, shortly before the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, an incident in one of the cattle-camps in Ciirkou triggered a conflict that was to disrupt Greater Yirol for the next seven years, expanding to involve all three of the communities in the state. Abinigo Akok Awer, paramount chief of the Akot Atuot, described to us the immediate origin of the dispute from an Atuot perspective:

The conflict between Aliab, Ciec and Atuot began as a small issue of cattle. The Atuot went to Ciirkou. The problem started with young man called Makuei Reechdit [son of Chief Reechdit Anyieth Reech of Ciec Ador, one of the senior chiefs in Eastern Lakes State]. Makuei attacked another young man call Aleth Ijong, who was from the people of Paramount Chief Bahon Mabor [of the Luac of Atuot]. The case was settled and *apuk* [blood compensation] of a single heifer was paid. ... [But] a year later, in 2004, Makuei decided to take back his heifer by force. This son of Reechdit had changed his mind because he thought the injury was not in proportion to the heifer he had given as compensation. This is how the conflict started in Yirol between

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 32 Interview with Permena Awerial Aluong, member of National Assembly for Awerial, Juba, 14 August 2017.

Ciec, Aliab and Atuot. Then there were killings, raids and counter raids. No cultivation took place at that time.³³

Later, in Yirol Town, under the shade tree in the town square where he held his court, Paramount Chief Bahon Mabor of the Luac Atuot, chief of one of the two sub-sections at the heart of the dispute, described his attempt to head off conflict: ‘I set off from Yirol as soon as I heard the news. I appealed for armed forces to go with me. But the people in charge of all units of administration were from Ciec. They refused. I did everything possible to stop the violence, even though it was a person from my section who was killed.’³⁴

In Nyang, in the Ciec area to the north of Yirol Town, Matoch Majak Malou, a former *beny wut* (cattle-camp leader) and now chair of the local traders association, continued the account of the conflict—this time from a Ciec point of view:

Yes, it started as a very small issue between people of two cattle-camps, between the Luac section of the Atuot and the Ador section of the Ciec... A small fight in which one person from the Atuot section was killed. The Atuot then organized themselves and attacked the Ador [of the Ciec]. They killed one person and raided cattle.... When the Ador of the Ciec asked for their raided cattle to be returned by the government, these were not forthcoming. So they organized a revenge raid against the Atuot. The Atuot were told [by the administration] not to move to specific cattle-camps [that year] but they moved there anyway, without permission—to camps belonging to the Ador section [of the Ciec]. Another person was killed there. The case was settled by a traditional chiefs’ court but there was no implementation of the verdict.³⁵

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33 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

34 Interview with Bahon Mabor, paramount chief of Luac Atuot and Anhiem Nhial, deputy chief, Yirol town, 22 March 2017.

35 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

A government official, Manyiel Atuot, commissioner of Malek County, of the Ador section of the Ciec, summarized the historical background to this outbreak of violence. Among the Ciec, he says, there had long been historical anxiety regarding territorial expansion on the part of their Atuot neighbours.³⁶ He recalled a story, well known in the Lakes region, about Apugi Alam, an Atuot leader from an earlier generation.³⁷ Apugi, it is said, became seized of the importance of the Dinka proverb ‘*Ran cin toc acit ran cin neere*’. That is, a man without a *toc*—with no dry-season grazing ground—is at a disadvantage, as badly off as a man who lacks a maternal uncle to help him. The well-being of pastoralists, the proverb suggests, depends on having rights in a dry-season grazing area, just as it depends on support from your mother’s kin.

Apugi became determined to possess a *toc*—a grazing ground that would belong to his people, the Apaak of Atuot. In the 1940s, toward the end of the colonial era, following a long conflict between the Apaak and Ciec in which Apugi was killed, the Apaak were compensated by the colonial administration with the award of rights in grazing land near Lake Nyibor, another area where cattle-keepers congregate in the dry season. So Apugi achieved his aim, albeit only in death.

In the early 2000s, Manyiel explained, when Atuot herders started to give new names to cattle-camps in Ciirkou,³⁸ their historical reputation for expansionism gave rise to fears among their Aliab and Ciec neighbours that the Atuot were aspiring to permanent possession of this territory—just as they had previously coveted and won part of the *toc* lands at Lake Nyibor.

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36 Interview with Manyiel Atuot, county commissioner of Malek County, Malek, 4 June 2017.

37 See the account of the life of Apugi Alam in Kuyok Abol Kuyok, *South Sudan: The notable firsts*, Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2015.

38 This is confirmed by an Aliab chief, Mading Anyang. Speaking in his home near Bunagok, he says, ‘They rename places. This place [where we are]—Guththom—was renamed Longluac.’ Interview with Mading Anyang Manyang, Aliab chief, Bunagok, Awerial, Yirol, 3 June 2017.

They started renaming places with their own names [and making sacrifices there]. This is where people began to question whether [the Atuot] wanted to repeat this history [of territorial expansion]. If you come to somebody else's place, you can't just rename it. You stay and then you go back. So people fought—in Paluoth cattle-camp.³⁹

This area of Ciirkou—the dry-season riverain grazing zone where the fighting began—is in the territory of the Aliab Dinka of Awerial. Although dry-season grazing lands are routinely shared with cattle-keepers from other groups, the Aliab Dinka, as owners of the territory, asserted their right to control access to it. Aliab cattle-camp leaders informed the Atuot staying there that they had to return to their own territory. The Aliab and Ciec—both being Dinka—have closer relations with one another than either group has with the mainly non-Dinka Atuot. Consequently, the Aliab in Ciirkou—as Matoch Majak explains above—made common cause with the Ciec against the Atuot. Then the Atuot fought with both the Ciec and Aliab, and more people were killed.

Before the end of the dry season, a dispute that began with a fight between two young men in a cattle-camp had escalated to involve all three of the main ethnic divisions of Greater Yirol, disrupting the freedom of movement of cattle-keepers, restricting cultivation in the rainy season that followed, and threatening the safety of people and livestock. It was a difficult time. Andrew Madut Buoï, chief of the Pajiek section of the Ciec, interviewed in the village of Pagerau, to the north of Yirol town, summarized the years that followed, as we walked with him among his herds at the edge of the extensive *toc* lands extending west of Pagerau: ‘The people of Yirol fought for three or four years or more without finding a solution. It was a recurring conflict. There were many fights in Ciirkou,

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 39 Interview with Manyiel Atuot, county commissioner for Malek County, Malek, 4 June 2017.

even here in Pagerau. And there were peace attempts after every fight, but these did not last.⁴⁰

The role of local government in preventing and fomenting disputes

The initial spread of conflict between tribal sections in Yirol took place during the last years of the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005), a time when the SPLM/A was emerging from autocratic military rule and developing some of the institutions of civilian administration. This transition did not help resolve the dispute. On the contrary, it intensified it. Ambassador Telar Ring Deng,⁴¹ describing to us the trouble between tribal groups that developed in the early 2000s, stressed the contributory role of the SPLM/A administration, including the grievances of the civilian population.⁴² The SPLM/A role also included forced recruitment to the army, influence peddling and disputes over new administrative divisions.

The conflict between sections, argued Ambassador Telar, was exacerbated by local politics. The establishment of counties with administrative boundaries that were defined by the territory of ethnic groups had made

40 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017. Also see: Manyang Mayom, 'Cattle Rustlers Battle in Yirol, Killing 13 and Wounding 9', *Sudan Tribune*, 16 April 2009. Accessed 18 July 2017, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Cattle-rustlers-battle-in-Yirol,30884>. Surveying the situation in 2001, before the Ciirkou incident of 2004, Peter Adwok Nyaba notes long-running disputes between groups that met in the dry season at Ciirkou; see: Peter Adwok Nyaba, 'The Disarmament of the Gel-Weng of Bahr El Ghazal, and the Consolidation of the Nuer-Dinka Peace Agreement 1999', London: Rift Valley Institute, Sudan Open Archive, 2001, 14. Accessed 5 March 2018, <https://sudanarchive.net/cgi-bin/pagessoa?a=pdf&d=Dslpd75.1.51&dl=1&sim=Screen2Image>.

41 Ambassador Telar Ring Deng, from Luac of Atuot, was one of the facilitators of the 1999 Wunlit meeting that brought peace between the Dinka of Bahr el-Ghazal and the Nuer of Western Upper Nile, and ushered in the 2002 peace agreement between the two factions of the SPLM/A. Telar was also one of the facilitators of the 2002 conference at Panakar. Later, he held positions as a minister in the post-independence government of South Sudan and as South Sudan's ambassador to the Russian Federation.

42 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, 14 August 2017.

things worse.⁴³ Opposition between the Atuot, on the one hand, and the Ciec and Aliab, on the other, was driven not just by competition over grazing land but by a perception that the Atuot officials and their ethnic constituency were benefiting disproportionately from the rewards of office at county level. The denial of grazing to Atuot herders was partly driven by this perception, he argued: ‘It was actually coming from some of us in SPLA/M. And that spilled over to ordinary citizens.’⁴⁴

It started with division of counties. There was a conflict between the commissioner and the SPLA commanders that went down to the average person. That [was what] sparked off the fight. It was not about [the demarcation of county] borders. It was about resources. Government resources were controlled by the commissioner. Other commanders [wanted] a share. There were no salaries then... There was only money from court fines and auction centres. And we had children and families to support. That sparked the division. There was mistrust ... with resources all going to the county headquarters.⁴⁵

A government official in Yirol confirmed Telar’s analysis: ‘It was a conflict between the commissioner and his rivals that expanded into the grazing ground. People wanted the division of counties but it actually made things worse.’

The search for resolution

In 2002, a series of meetings was held in Panakar, site of Yirol’s first missionary school, on the other side of Lake Yirol from the town. Organized under the auspices of the New Sudan Council of Churches,

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43 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Luac Atuot of Yirol, South Sudanese diplomat and politician, Juba, 14 August 2017. For a discussion of the role of new administrative subdivisions in fomenting conflict in South Sudan, see: Marieke Schomerus and Lovise Aalen, eds., ‘Considering the State: Perspectives on South Sudan’s Subdivision and Federalism Debate’, London: Overseas Development Institute, August 2016.

44 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Juba, 14 August 2017.

45 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Juba, 14 August 2017.

these meetings were intended to address the rising trend of intercommunal conflict generally in the Lakes region and Mvolo.⁴⁶ A year later, in September 2003, the Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Development Association—one of the earliest indigenous NGOs in the SPLA-controlled areas of Southern Sudan—organized a county-level peace conference at Panakar. The minutes of the meeting record the air of distrust that prevailed, even before the events of 2004:

There seemed to exist fear and a sense of suspicion among communities. One community perceived the other to be better armed and associated it with incidences that created tension and held potential for conflict. Evidence provided by the communities was about stolen cattle, hostilities and resistance to police arrest by persons from both communities.⁴⁷

There were numerous peace meetings in the years that followed. After the outbreak of violence in 2004, conferences took place every year in Yirol, at local or state level.⁴⁸ The meetings typically involved almost all sections of the community, including customary authorities, youth militia leaders, women and government officials. People from Yirol who were living outside the Lakes region were also active. In Juba, after the 2005 CPA, there were also meetings of politicians from the Lakes region who were serving in the new national government. In addition, students

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46 South Sudan Council of Churches, 'Panakar Consultative Meetings: A Series of Two Meetings to Address the Rising Trend of Inter Communal Conflict in the Lakes Area of Bahr El Ghazal Region and Mvolo County', proceedings, 16–20 September and 30–31 October 2002, Panakar, Yirol, South Sudan: South Sudan Council of Churches, London: Rift Valley, Sudan Open Archive, 2002. Accessed 8 September 2018, <https://sudanarchive.net/cgi-bin/pageSSOA?a=pdf&d=Dslpd12.1.46&dl=1&sim=Screen2Image>.

47 Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Association, 'Yirol–Awerial Peace Conference', Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Association, 2003.

48 Some of these meetings are documented, but for many there is no available written record. Among those for which there is documentation, see, for example: Panakar Peace Council, 'The Panakar Peace Council's Rapid Response in the Lakes and Mvolo Sub-Region: Consolidated Report', Panakar: Panakar Peace Council, May–July, 2004, London: Rift Valley Institute, Sudan Open Archive. Accessed 6 August 2018, <https://sudanarchive.net/cgi-bin/pageSSOA?a=pdf&d=Dslpd31.1.127&dl=1&sim=Screen2Image>.

from Yirol who were studying in Kampala, Uganda, met formally to discuss the problems in their home area.

Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of the Akok Atuot, looked back on this process: ‘The people who worked for peace, especially after all this happened, are themselves youths, chiefs, elders, local administrators, politicians, as well commissioners, including *koc ci pioc*, our intellectuals. Even those who were in Khartoum helped a lot in terms of financial support.’⁴⁹

A meeting in Yirol in March 2009, with chiefs from Rumbek and Yirol, failed to bring an end to conflict.⁵⁰ Then, in 2010, the newly appointed county commissioners of the three counties summoned more than 100 *baany wuot* (cattle-camp leaders) and formed a tribunal to investigate the killings during the previous six years.⁵¹ The involvement of these multiple levels of civil society and government culminated in a meeting in Yirol Town in December 2011, organized by the Greater Yirol Youth Union, an association of educated youth, which aimed to bring together all those with a stake in the governance of Greater Yirol, including government officials, chiefs, elders, women leaders, leaders of the *gelweng*, church people and politicians.

Chief Abinigo Akok described the spirit of this meeting, in contrast with the fraught Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Development Agency meeting of 2004: ‘We knew that the cost of conflict was too much. So we sat down as brothers [and sisters]—being chiefs, politicians, intellectuals, local

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49 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of the Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

50 In 2009, the commissioner of Yirol West reported that 139 deaths had been caused there by the conflict between the years of 2004 and 2007; Manyang Mayom, ‘Interview: Yirol West Commissioner Describes Education, Security Woes’, *Sudan Tribune*, 8 January 2009. Accessed 14 April 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article29793>.

51 Several interviewees commend the role of the commissioners who convened the meeting; e.g. interview with Matoch Majak Malou, former Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leader, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017. This took place during the governorship in Lakes of Chol Tong Mayay (elected in May 2010, but dismissed by presidential decree January 2012, 19 months later). The commissioners who convened the meeting were: David Mayom Riak (Aliab); Makur Kulang Liei (Yirol West); and Athiaan Majak (Yirol East). Athiaan Majok was dismissed from his position before the conference took place and replaced by Bol Acinbai.

administrators, commissioners, youth—and we settled our grievances once and for all. We adopted the principle of healing and reconciliation.⁵² Reechdit Anyieth Reech, paramount chief of the Ador, the opposing Ciec section, confirms Chief Abinigo's sentiment: 'We left our differences aside and committed ourselves to a future of peace in Yirol.'⁵³

The meeting agreed blood compensation (*apuk*) for deaths during the conflict. The numbers of cattle were calculated according to a modified version of the standardization of traditional law established for Greater Bahr el-Ghazal at the Wathalel conference in 1975.⁵⁴ The resolutions of the Yirol meeting were endorsed by the SPLA commissioners of each county, and the proceedings were blessed by an Episcopalian bishop. The following dry season, for the first time in seven years, there were no major incidents between tribal groups in the state. 'People were afraid that the situation would repeat itself', Athiaan Majak, a former commissioner, remarked to us. 'And fear can stabilize a situation.'

Conferences subsequently took place every year: in Yirol West, in Aluakluak in 2015⁵⁵; in Mingkaman in September 2016 (between Eastern Lakes State and the three states of Jonglei); and in 2017 prior to the dry season migration.⁵⁶ The process of reconciliation and the maintenance of

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52 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

53 Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, paramount chief of Ador of Ciec Dinka, Malek, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

54 The Wathalel laws were codified in 1984, just as the Second Sudanese Civil War began; see: John Wuol Makec, *The Customary Law of the Dinka People of Sudan: In comparison with aspects of Western and Islamic laws*, London: Afroworld, 1988. The text of 'The Restatement of Bahr el-Ghazal Region Customary Law (Amended) Act 1984' is reprinted in an appendix to this book.

55 United States Agency for International Development/Office of Transition Initiatives, 'Report on Greater Yirol Peace Conference', Facebook post, 26 March 2015. Accessed 6 January 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/USAIDOTI/posts/10152672895632441>.

56 Mabor Riak Magok, 'One Day Cattle Pre-Migration Conference Held in Yirol', Gurtong, 18 April 2017. Accessed 19 April 2017, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/20385/One-Day-Cattle-Pre-Migration-Conference-Held-In-Yirol.aspx>.

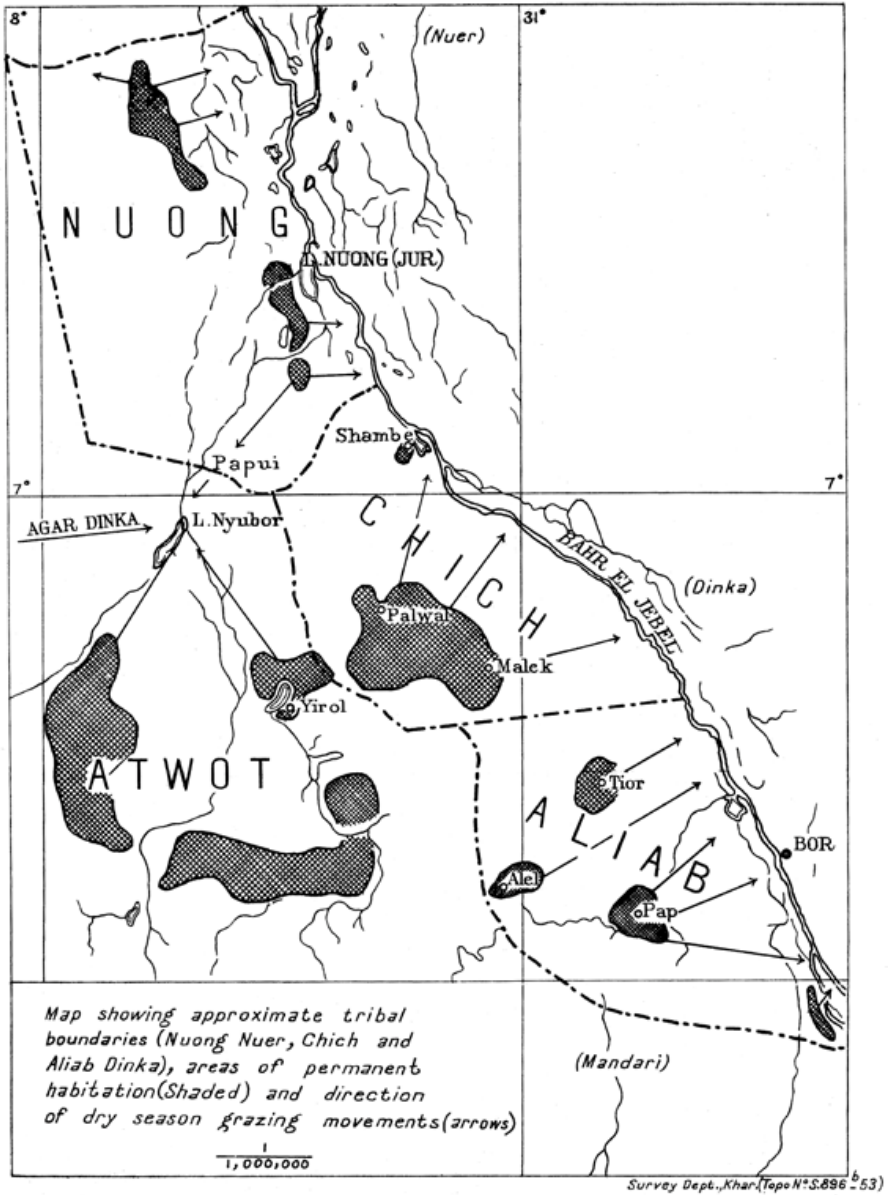


FIGURE 1. Greater Yirol, showing areas of permanent habitation (shaded) and movement towards dry-season grazing areas. Source: Sudan Survey, 1953.

peace in Yirol, as many interviewees make clear, was—and remains—a continuing project.

Monica Nyandior Kuch, a church activist in Yirol town, described her role in halting a fight in Ijurgai cattle-camp—a fight that threatened to reignite the original dispute:

There was a fight in the camp. It started with my cousin Makuei Majak and others from the Atuot Luac section, a quarrel over uncontrolled movement of cattle at night. People were pushing them to fight. These people were my maternal uncles. I told them if you fight again, some of you will be killed and some will end in SPLA prisons. Or shot.⁵⁷

Monica Nyandior Kuch's account of mediating between her paternal and maternal relatives echoes the words of an unnamed woman delegate at the Panakar meeting in 2004, a decade earlier, who had also invoked the role of women as mediators between kinship groups at odds with each other: 'I do not wish to see a quarrel between my maternal uncle and my paternal uncle. ... I won't know which side to take.'⁵⁸

The local peace that was finally established in Yirol in 2011—the year of South Sudan's independence—endured, by and large. It survived the first outbreak of violent national-level conflict in South Sudan in December 2013 and the second, in 2016, while other areas of the country were swept up in the new tide of violence and ethnic polarization. Subsequent sections of this report consider the factors that made this achievement possible.

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57 Interview with Monica Nyandior Kuch, church activist, Yirol town, 5 June 2017.

58 Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Association, 'Yirol–Awerial Peace Conference', 5.

4. The work of chiefs

The changing role of customary authority

Over the past three or four decades, moral and political authority in rural areas of South Sudan has been subject to transformation and fragmentation. The corruption of government at national and state levels, the ubiquity of firearms and a culture of violence created by war are among the factors contributing to this. The distinctive features of the social order in South Sudanese communities emerging from two generations of conflict are not yet clear. With regard to customary authorities, chiefs and elders undoubtedly retain some degree of influence—varying from place to place—but their power has been significantly diminished.

Customary authority (traditional leadership) in most parts of South Sudan is, to a great extent, a product of colonial administration and local responses to this. In the precolonial era, before the twentieth century, among Dinka and Nuer communities, social organization was based on lineage. Hierarchical authority was largely absent. In Dinka communities, specific forms of power were invested, on the one hand, in spiritual leaders (*baany bith*, spear masters; also known in Greater Yirol as *baany Nhialic*) and, on the other, in war leaders (*baany wuut* or *baany wuot*, cattle-camp leaders). All were male. The authority of *baany bith* and *baany wuut* was limited and local; neither the Dinka nor the Nuer had a central political organization.

During the colonial era, a system of indirect rule—rule through chiefs (known in Arabic as *idarra ahliya* [native administration])—was introduced by the British.⁵⁹ This gave selected local leaders a formal role in

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59 Described in Cherry Leonardi, *Dealing with government in South Sudan: Histories of Chiefship, Community & State*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2013; summarized in Douglas H. Johnson, *South Sudan: A New History for a New Nation*, Ohio Short Histories of Africa, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016a; and documented, in the case of the Nuer, in the records of Percy Coriat collected in Douglas H. Johnson, ed., *Governing the Nuer: Documents by Percy Coriat on Nuer history and ethnography, 1922–1931*, Oxford:

governance, incorporating them in a hierarchy that came to include paramount chiefs, executive chiefs, sub-chiefs and other office holders. Among other things, chiefs had responsibility for raising taxes or labour levies, and for resolving local disputes. A version of this system of chiefly authority has survived, in diminished form, to the present time. Successive postcolonial governments, including the SPLM/A, have used chiefs as instruments of civilian administration. Thus, chiefs' courts still convene beneath the trees in South Sudanese villages and communities continue to turn to traditional leaders for the resolution of small-scale disputes.

In Dinka communities, chiefship tends to run in families. Chiefs are also subject to election. The number of chiefs has increased since the CPA, with many now holding the title of paramount chief. Although the authority of chiefs was undermined by the military regime imposed by the SPLA during the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005), to a limited extent this has been restored in the years since the CPA. The number of chiefs may have increased, but the connection between chiefs, local government, politicians and the military remains problematic.⁶⁰ The role of chiefs as keepers of the peace is correspondingly constrained.

Traditional leaders in most of South Sudan are the first to articulate their perceived and actual loss of power and prestige, and the consequent limits on their ability to restore order to the communities they represent.⁶¹ Speaking to us in a packed courthouse in Malek, in the interstices

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JASO, 1993; C. A. Willis, *The Upper Nile Province Handbook: A Report on Peoples and Government in the Southern Sudan, 1931*, edited by Douglas H. Johnson, Wanneroo, Australia: Africa World Books Pty Limited, 2015; and Douglas H., Johnson, ed., *Empire and the Nuer: Sources on the Pacification of the Southern Sudan, 1898-1930*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016b. See also: Edward Thomas, *South Sudan: A Slow Liberation*, London: Zed Books, 2015.

60 See, for example, Nicki Kindersley, 'Politics, Power and Chiefship in Famine and War: A Study of the Former Northern Bahr El-Ghazal State, South Sudan', London: Rift Valley Institute, 2017.

61 See the documentary films produced by the RVI South Sudan Customary Authority project: John Ryle, 'South Sudan: The Chiefs Speak', London: Rift Valley Institute, 2015. Accessed 14 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ilk0aSp9G8>; and Florence Miettaux, 'We Are Here for the Sake of the People: Chiefs in Conversation in South Sudan',

of presiding over local dispute resolution, Paramount Chief Reechdit of the Ciec stated bluntly: ‘I have to tell you that chiefs no longer have power. The power of chiefs depends on [the maintenance of] the rule of law by central government. But now it is the gun. The gun is the source of power and authority.’⁶²

Of all the changes noted by chiefs of a particular age, the spread of small arms and light weapons is the one to which they most often returned. Paramount Chief Reechdit continued: ‘In the past, people used sticks and spears. But now people use live bullets. They are not the same. There is too much greed now. Everyone wants to live by taking other people’s things.’⁶³

‘Take that hat you are wearing’, Chief Reechdit added, ‘You have a nice hat. If I had a gun that hat could be mine.’⁶⁴

Andrew Madut Buoi, the Ciec chief in Pagerau, argued that the fighting in the dry-season cattle-camp at Ciirkou, which had triggered the bitter seven-year conflict in Greater Yirol, was the result of a general decline in morality: ‘We, too, went to Aliab when we were young. But we didn’t steal. We grazed there during all seasons and returned without problems. Now young people go there to drink alcohol and slaughter other peoples’ cattle.’⁶⁵

In Aluakluak, in the Atuot area on the western boundary of Eastern Lakes State, Paramount Chief Kon Mayor Machar of the Awan sub-section of Apaak, sitting in the shade of a spreading fig tree on his homestead, summarized the social changes of the past 30 years: ‘There are many changes in Jieng culture,’ he said. ‘Courting girls has changed. Cattle

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 YouTube, London: Rift Valley Institute, 2016. Accessed 5 January 2018, <http://riftvalley.net/project/south-sudan-customary-authorities-project#.W5OpuegzZPY>.

62 Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, paramount chief of Ador of Ciec Dinka, Malek, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

63 Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, 4 June 2017.

64 Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, 4 June 2017.

65 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017.

movement has changed. Marriage settlement has changed. Relations to other communities have changed. Everything has changed completely.⁶⁶

Chief Kon Mayor, like Chief Reechdit, stressed the significance of the shift from spears to guns—not just the greater scale of damage they cause but the difficulty of establishing individual responsibility for death or injury caused by firearms, and the problems this created in agreeing compensation: ‘In the past,’ he said, ‘conflicts were few. We would fight and it would stop. But now there is killing here and killing there, killing everywhere. ... With spears at close range, you know the person who injured you. ... Where there are guns, the person who kills may not be known.’⁶⁷

In recent decades, the implications of this newly indiscriminate style of killing in conflicts between pastoralist communities have been noted across Eastern Africa. A bullet from an AK-47 has no target, as one of the Yirol *gelweng* explained to us. It is addressed, he said, ‘To Whom It May Concern’, a joking phrase that is now commonplace in the region.

In contrast, some chiefs account for their current role in less pessimistic terms. Chief Abinigo, of the Akot Atuot, had this to say:

In South Sudan, there are still places where traditional authorities are respected. Where the rule of law still exists. ... When you came here, I was hearing and settling a case. These people you see are here to listen to me. Yes, there are some places where youths get drunk and hold chiefs at gun point. But here in Yirol, this has never happened. ... You can see there are no police. ... But if there was a threat, you would see police here.⁶⁸

Asked what the case brought before him was about, Chief Abinigo gave us a quizzical look. ‘Obviously’, he said, ‘It’s a case about a cow.’⁶⁹

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66 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, paramount chief of Apaak section of Atuot, Aluakluak, Yirol West County, 5 June 2017.

67 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, 5 June 2017.

68 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

69 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

Chiefs and the government

David Deng Athorbei is an SPLM/A veteran politician who currently represents Yirol West in the national assembly. A former South Sudanese government minister, he chairs the Yirol Committee of Elders in Juba. He, too, confirmed the decline of chiefly authority under SPLA rule:

[In the time of] the British, they would tell chiefs to mobilize people to build roads. ... Chiefs would take people by force. Chiefs cannot take people by force now. During the war, there was something like a social revolution. There was no respect for traditional authority because they were seen as part of the exploitative military authority. ... [But] the army had no respect for chiefs, nor for elders, nor for the educated. They could all be subjected to anything by those in military uniform.⁷⁰

Deng Athorbei argued that the harshness of the wartime government under the aegis of the SPLA had served to maintain order in the face of what amounted to an existential danger to the people of South Sudan and their liberation struggle:

During the war, we had a guerrilla government. There were very strict rules [in relation] to homicide. If you killed somebody with a gun, no matter whether you were right or wrong, you were executed. ... It was not open for discussion. You could fight but not using guns. This kind of strict rule managed to bring peace [within communities] all over South Sudan.⁷¹

Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, another prominent resident of Yirol, is an SPLA general who became the first governor of Eastern Lakes States in 2015. Earlier, towards the end of the 1983-2005 war, he was the SPLA CMA (civilian military administrator) in Yirol. At that time, he gained a reputation for harsh treatment of civilians during SPLA recruitment

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70 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

71 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, 8 September 2017.

campaigns. As Deng Athorbei had done, Rin Tueny stressed that it had been a time of crisis, of collective survival:

CMAAs worked closely with chiefs. Our mission as CMAAs was to mobilize resources—human resources and material resources—in order to support the war. They would give us food and young men to be trained as soldiers. It was easy. Yirol, Rumbek and Cueibet were the most peaceful places in South Sudan during the war. There was a hunger gap [each year] but no real problem of hunger then.⁷²

By early 2000, according to Deng Athorbei, the situation had begun to unravel in Yirol. This, he argued, was a consequence of the relaxation of military rule:

We were moving towards peace, and we began to try to put in place institutions that respected human rights. ... It was the division of Yirol into three counties [in 2004] that ushered in conflict. When you make a strict system and you try to loosen it, some people try to take advantage of this. We are a traditional society and authority needs to be a bit tough. In our society, most of our people don't like the government. But they like to fear the government. That is how it should be.⁷³

Daniel Ayual Makoi, an SPLA General from Yirol, echoed Deng Athorbei's view. As deputy governor of then Lakes State after independence, he said he pursued a dual strategy in dealing with disputes: intervention by SPLA forces in cases of cattle theft, and invocation of customary authority when dealing with abuses of civilians by SPLA soldiers. The latter involved the traditional system of compensation that had been codified at Wathalel, in Tonj.⁷⁴ As he explained, 'What chiefs hate is interference with their

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72 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

73 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

74 Makec, *Customary Law of the Dinka*.

women and girls. They hate adultery. They hate abduction. They hate rape. They hate any violent contact with SPLA [soldiers]. [In such cases], I would apply the ordinary laws of Wathalel: You must pay cows.⁷⁵

‘The country needs discipline,’ General Ayual added. ‘And discipline starts from tip of the spear.’⁷⁶

The chiefs we interviewed in Yirol do not dispute the authority of the government. They look to it to restore their own authority. It is notable, moreover, that in many cases they do not wholeheartedly endorse the established system of *apuk*, of compensation, despite this being the long-established local form of dispute resolution. As Daniel Ayual noted, *apuk* is a central feature of the formalization of customary justice laid down in the Wathalel laws. Administered by chiefs, it has been central to native administration from the colonial era onwards. In 2012 in Yirol, at the behest of chiefs, *apuk* payable for homicide was even increased from 31 head of cattle to 51. Yet Kon Mayor, paramount chief of the Apaak argued that in the current situation *apuk* has done little to discourage revenge killing.

Even if you don’t have cows, you can kill—because you know your relatives are going to pay. It is easy now to give some old cows to the family of the victim. ... [Whereas] in the past, it was not all that easy to get enough to pay *apuk*. And people feared, because if you killed, you were hanged or you faced a firing squad.⁷⁷

Chief Kon made reference to the historical conflict between the Ciec people and his own section—Apaak of Atuot—the dispute that Manyiel Atuot, the commissioner of Malek county, also mentioned. This dispute was sparked by the Apaak leader Apugi Alam’s quest for *toc* in the colonial era that culminated with the award to the Apaak of grazing land at Lake

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75 Interview with Daniel Ayual Makoi, Ciec of Yirol, SPLA lieutenant-general, Juba, 17 August 2017.

76 Interview with Daniel Ayual Makoi, 17 August 2017.

77 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, paramount chief of Apaak section of Atuot, Aluakluak, Yirol West County, 5 June 2017.

Nyibor. This, says Chief Kon, had been the last conflict between the two groups, Ciec and Apaak, until the 2004 conflict broke out. The dispute was still there but government action had prevented earlier expression of it. He explained, ‘In my grandfather’s time—in 1943—there was war with Ciec. We were attacked and people killed. Manyang Chinthok, the man who organized the attack, was tried and found guilty and hanged with his son. There wasn’t another war again until this last one in 2004.’⁷⁸

Many chiefs argue that prison is the appropriate remedy for cattle raiding, whether this is connected to an inter-sectional feud. Some singled out for praise the establishment of Maburzeed, the prison in Yirol, an undocumented detention centre that has been criticized for illegal detention and abuse of detainees.⁷⁹ Paramount Chief Bahon Mabur dismissed concerns about abuse at Maburzeed. These were the preoccupation, he said, of the *khawajaat* (foreigners) and their excessive concern with human rights:

The three commissioners of Awerial county, Yirol East and Yirol West ... called us as chiefs to make an arrangement for peace. First, there was agreement on a common detention centre for all criminals. ... We listed all names of suspected criminals in our various communities. We agreed on the nature of the crimes that should take people to this prison. This included violent criminals (kɔc ɛ̃ kɔc nɔk), looters (kɔc ɛ̃ tuɔp), thieves (cuɛɛr), raiders (apɛɛc), and adulterers (kɔc ci kɔr). We also agreed on an interim joint and common traditional court system independent from the government judiciary to try cases.⁸⁰

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78 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, 5 June 2017.

79 Kuocnin, ‘Mabur-Zeed Detention Center’ and Kuocnin, ‘Who Authorized the Killing?’.

80 Interview with Bahon Mabor, paramount chief of Luac Atuot and Anhiem Nhial, deputy chief, Yirol town, 22 March 2017.

Eastern Lakes and Western Lakes

Interviews with chiefs in Greater Yirol reveal their strong sense of a difference between Eastern Lakes and Western Lakes. In Chief Bahon's view, carrying out the policy of imprisonment for selected offences was one of the important differences between the administration in Greater Yirol and that in Greater Rumbek, with its predominantly Agar Dinka population. '*Tɔŋg adit pan Akaar*', he told us, 'There is too much war in the Agar land.'⁸¹

The difference between us and Rumbek is that the chiefs and elders [in Rumbek] are ... part of an administration that is not working. They are not doing their part. They collude with criminals and condone crimes. ... In Yirol, we respect government and the law. For them, they have discarded justice. ... They kill each other. There is no justice there.⁸²

Chief Reechdit Anyieth agreed: 'In Yirol, educated leaders and traditional leaders make common cause. With the Agar in Rumbek it is different. This is why there is so much bloodshed there. Politicians in Rumbek take sides on tribal lines. They are not willing to be neutral or impartial in such cases.'⁸³

Chief Reechdit and Chief Bahon are the paramount chiefs of two rival tribal sections—the Ador section of the Ciec and the Luac section of the Atuot, respectively. The quarrel between these sections is at the heart of the long conflict in Yirol. Chief Reechdit drew attention to the support they had received in the mediation between the two groups. 'When we were settling our case, myself and Chief Bahon,' he said, 'we received a lot of support from our educated sons and from our politicians.'⁸⁴

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81 Interview with Bahon Mabor, 22 March 2017.

82 Interview with Bahon Mabor, 22 March 2017.

83 Interview with Reechdit Anyieth Reech, paramount chief of Ador of Ciec Dinka, Malek, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

84 Interview with Bahon Mabor, paramount chief of Luac Atuot and Anhiem Nhial, deputy chief, Yirol town, 22 March 2017.

Other chiefs are equally emphatic in differentiating the administration of Yirol from that of Rumbek. But they are also aware of the similarities between them. According to Chief Kon Mayor, what was happening in Rumbek had nearly happened in Yirol: ‘Some politicians and elders here were at first taking sides. Then they disengaged. They realized it was bad. But with the Agar—their conflict started before ours but it still continues. ... It is not that we don’t have problems, but when we have them, we fix them.’⁸⁵

Chief Kon also stressed the role of youth. This was more significant, he said, than that of the government:

The reason why Yirol is better is because elders, politicians, leaders and chiefs have a spirit of peace in their hearts. ... Peace in Yirol is not the work of government. It works because of collective efforts of youth. They agreed that we should not fight any more as people of Greater Yirol. ... Ciec, Aliab, Atuot and Apaak. We [chiefs] were neutral and so were the politicians. This is the reason why peace came soon in Yirol. In Rumbek, the reason there is no peace is that politicians are part of problem. They divide themselves along tribal lines. ... There will never be peace unless educated people and politicians distance themselves from their communal conflicts.⁸⁶

As well as invidious comparisons with the Agar of Western Lakes State there is also fierce criticism of neighbouring communities within Yirol, reflecting the constant threat of conflict between them. An Aliab elder, David Akucuaq, explained that Ciec youth and Agar youth no longer listen to elders; it is only in Aliab, he said, that youth give them their due

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85 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, paramount chief of Apaak section of Atuot, Aluakuak, Yirol West County, 5 June 2017.

86 Interview with Kon Mayor Machar, paramount chief of Apaak section of Atuot, Aluakuak, Yirol West County, 5 June 2017.

respect, which is why cattle theft is so common in other areas: outside Aliab, no one asks a person where they got their cattle.⁸⁷

At the same meeting in Bunagok, Solomon Anyang, a former paramount chief who served from 1969 to 2015, who was now more than eighty years old and afflicted with blindness, described the three ethnic groups in the state in zoomorphic terms:

We are like the leopard, the snake and the hyena—living side by side in the same cattle-camp. Our brother Ciec—his grandmother is a leopard. Ciec people may be brave ... but they are highly aggressive. The Atuot move at night like hyenas, looting and robbing cattle. And we, the Aliab, are like the snake. We stay in one place. If you step on us, though ... then we will bite you.⁸⁸

87 Interview with Mading Anyang Manyang, Solomon Anyang, David Akucak and John Aguto Gumbo. Chiefs and former chiefs of Aliab, interviewed in Bunagok, Awerial. Interviewed by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 3 June 2017.

88 Interview with Mading Anyang Manyang, 3 June 2017.

5. The rise of cattle guardians

Origin of the *gelweng* of Lakes

An increasingly noticeable feature of the political economy of pastoral areas of Sudan and South Sudan from the 1990s onwards has been the rise of the local youth militias, known in the Lakes states as *gelweng*.⁸⁹ The current role of these militias varies from one area of South Sudan to another. In northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile, they have become an adjunct of the armed forces, engaged either as paramilitaries fighting on the side of the government or the SPLA-IO.⁹⁰ *Gelweng* from Bahr el-Ghazal guarding the cattle of SPLA officers have been involved in many

89 In Lakes armed youth are referred to generally as *gelweng*—guardians of cattle. In some parts of Greater Yirol they are also called *macwëŋ* or *macweng* (derived from the word for care or tethering of cattle). In northern Bahr el-Ghazal such local militias are known as *titwëŋ* (with the same meaning as *gelweng*, and in Bor, *titbai*. These terms are coinages dating from the 1980s or 1990s. In Awerial the local term is *ayilah*, derived from the name of the village where in 1919 the newly-appointed Governor of Mongalla Province, Major Chauncey Stigand, was killed by Aliab resisting the imposition of the Anglo-Egyptian administration. The Mandari militia in Terekeka state, to the south of Awerial—known there as *tetontikoji*—is referred to by neighbouring Dinka as *aringa*. The latter name is derived from an ethnic group in NW Uganda that became involved in the 1983–2005 civil war in Sudan on the Khartoum government side; see: Gérard Prunier, ‘Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986–99)’, *African Affairs* 103/412 (2004): 359–383. The name *aringa* was also used for other pro-government militias in South Sudan during the 1983–2005 civil war.

90 Among the Nuer, various militias known collectively as *jiech mabor* (white army), played an important role in the fighting that followed the SPLA split in 1991, and again in 2013; see: John Young, ‘Popular Struggles and Elite Co-Optation: The Nuer White Army in South Sudan’s Civil War’, Geneva: Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies, 2016. Accessed 5 June 2018, <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP41-White-Army.pdf>. In northern Bahr el-Ghazal and Warrab, local Dinka militias called *mathiang anyoor* (brown caterpillar) and *dut ku beny* (protect the leader) became auxiliary forces fighting with the SPLA during the split.

violent clashes with sedentary inhabitants of the Equatorias, where other local defence forces also have sprung up.⁹¹

In some areas of Bahr el-Ghazal, including the Lakes region, there have been attempts to co-opt *gelweng* into government service as community police.⁹² In Greater Yirol, however, despite proclamations to this effect,⁹³ the *gelweng* remain without any official, paid connection to the government. Unlike militias from northern Bahr el-Ghazal, the *gelweng* of the Lakes region (with some exceptions) have not become an instrument of the armed forces of South Sudan nor have they joined any military forces opposing the government.

Rin Tueny, the SPLA general who was the first governor of Eastern Lakes State, stressed the continuity between the *gelweng* and the traditional role of youth in Jieng (Dinka) and Atuot society. The only difference, he argued, is the spread of new kinds of weapons:

The work of youth [*aparak*] has always been to protect people in times of danger. To look after cattle. *Aparak* have been there since the creation of *Muonyjang* [Dinka]. When the SPLA was fighting the [Khartoum] government and Riak's group split and fought the SPLA, the youth were allowed to acquire guns to protect themselves and the cattle. There's only one new thing—and that is guns.⁹⁴

The first of the Dinka wartime militias was formed in northern Bahr el-Ghazal in the 1980s in response to attacks from Khartoum

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91 Luka Biong Deng Kuol, 'Dinka youth and civil war: Between cattle, community and government', in *Informal Armies: Community Defence Groups in South Sudan's Civil War* by Jok Madut Jok, Mareike Schomerus, Luka Biong Deng Kuol, Ingrid Marie Breidlid and Michael J. Arensen. London: Saferworld, February 2017.

92 Pendle, "They Are Now Community Police", 426–427.

93 'Gelweng Militias to Have Role in Lakes State—Yirol Officials', Sudan Tribune, 21 November 2008. Accessed 3 March 2017, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Gelweng-militias-to-have-role-in,29346>.

94 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

government-backed militias operating from South Kordofan and South Darfur. Following the first SPLA split, the *gelweng* of the Lakes region were created in 1991, under the auspices of Commander Daniel Awet Akot from Gok, then the SPLA Zonal Commander in the Lakes region. This arming of cattle-camp youth in Rumbek and Yirol was a response to attacks on communities in the Lakes region by Nuer forces aligned with the Nasir faction of the SPLA under Riek Machar. The attacks particularly affected the Ciec, as one of the northernmost Dinka sections in the Lakes region. The Ciec share a long border with the Nuer of Unity State.⁹⁵ To the south in Aliab at that time, there were also raids from the pro-Khartoum government Mandari militia groups, known to the Dinka as *aringa*.⁹⁶

Weapons—mainly AK-47 automatic rifles—were made available to youth in the cattle-camps of the Lakes region by SPLA commanders. A secondary market in arms and ammunition grew up in the wake of this initial distribution. As Rin Tueny put it: ‘Some were given guns but a good number bought guns for themselves. They got them from the SPLA, from neighbouring countries, even from their enemies.’⁹⁷

Following the 1999 Wunlit peace conference and the reunification of the SPLA in 2002, Nuer attacks ceased until the renewed SPLA split in 2013. This was not, however, the end of the *gelweng*. In the same way that the *baany baai* (government chiefs)—created by the colonial government for administrative purposes—outlasted colonialism, so the *gelweng*, instituted as a proxy local defence force by the insurgent SPLA government, took on an independent life of their own.

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95 In 1992, a Ciec paramount chief, Makur Chut, was killed by Nuer in Pagerau, in the northern part of the Ciec area. According to Chief Abinigo Akok, this event was the spur for the formation of the Ciec *gelweng* (Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.) *Gelweng* from Lakes also participated in the military operations in 1997 that saw large areas of Bahr el-Ghazal fall under SPLA control; see: Nyaba, ‘The Disarmament of the Gel-Weng’, 6.

96 The origin of the term is the name of an ethnic group in northern Uganda. (See Glossary.)

97 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

Andrew Madut Buoi, now paramount chief in Tinagau *payam*, was a force behind the creation of the Yirol *gelweng* at the time of the original split in the SPLA. He described the evolution of *gelweng* in the 1990s in this way: ‘After the Wunlit Conference and peace with the rebels, our *gelweng* generation disappeared. We became part of the government of the SPLA/M.’⁹⁸ He acknowledged, however, that a new generation of *gelweng* had continued in Yirol, without official government support. A new age-set—young men initiated into adulthood during a specific period of years—had succeeded its predecessor. Another interviewee noted that the original idea of the *gelweng* had rebounded on those who devised it: ‘All cattle-camp youth are *gelweng* today. You can’t get the gun back.’⁹⁹

A neo-traditional institution

Leadership among *gelweng* in Yirol is not hereditary, nor is it subject to formal election. The choice of a *gelweng* leader is a collective decision by the members of an age-set (*ric*). Leadership depends on individual qualities and on recognition by fellow members of the age-set in question. Matoch Majak explained that bravery in war and a reputation for fairness in dispute resolution are among the primary qualifications: ‘Being a *gelweng* leader is not easy. It needs someone who knows the community well, and who is known by those communities, too. He must have experience of solving common problems, like cattle movements and handling elopement of girls.’¹⁰⁰

The age-set system that the organization of the *gelweng* builds on is a social institution predating the colonial era. To males born within a specific period of time, or initiated together, the age-set system ascribes membership to a particular named generation. The span of a single

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98 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017.

99 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017.

100 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, respectively, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

age-set varies between 8 and 16 years.¹⁰¹ A *gelweng* leader is likely to be a member of the age-set of those in their 20s and 30s. In other parts of Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile, it has been argued, the militarization of cattle-camp youth has blurred the generational system, conflating one age-set with another.¹⁰² Among the youth of Greater Yirol, however, *gelweng* still conform to the traditional system. Although they are a recent innovation, the *gelweng* in Yirol have a leadership structure and relationship with the elders in their community that is based on a long-term, established indigenous social institution. The age-set system has acquired an additional function, and leadership of the *gelweng* has become a distinction that can lead to other forms of influence in the community.

An example is the career of Matoch Majak, who was the first head of the Ciec *gelweng* in the 1990s. He explained that he had been a cattle-camp leader before becoming a *gelweng* leader. At present, he and his generation have passed the leadership of *gelweng* on to the age-set following them. Matoch himself is now a trader, with a new role as chair of the traders association in Yirol East.¹⁰³ As he describes it, during his time the responsibility of *gelweng* grew to include an increasing number of roles: policing cattle-camps, assisting cattle-camp leaders, controlling the spread of guns and patrolling borders, particularly where Dinka territory bordered Nuer territory.

Yes... I was a *beny wut* at a time when there was influx of guns and no gun control. People said to me that I should take on the

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101 The names of age-sets in Greater Yirol are as follows: among the Aliab, *Adheek* (between ten and eighteen years of age, candidates for initiation), *Rorthii* (middle youth, between nineteen and thirty-five years of age) and *Awutdit* (senior youth, between 36 and 45 years of age); among the Ciec, *Dhaak* (between ten and eighteen years of age), *Achootthi* (between nineteen and thirty-five years of age) and *Achootdit* (between thirty-six and forty-five years of age); and among the Atuot, *Dheei* (between ten and eighteen years of age), *Achiir* (between nineteen and thirty-five years of age) and *Awutdit* (between thirty-six and forty-five years of age).

102 Pendle, "They Are Now Community Police", 9 and Thomas, *South Sudan*, passim

103 Other erstwhile *gelweng* leaders in Yirol have become government chiefs, e.g. Jueljok Aruopiny, chief of the Kuek section of Atuot.

role both of *gelweng* leader and *beny wut*... *Gelweng* history started with this—with the influx of guns into cattle-camps. When the guns came into our hands, there was no one taking responsibility. Then there was Riek Machar’s rebellion and the cattle raids that followed. *Gelweng* were organized to protect cattle and monitor border security. Our orders were to take care of guns. To control random shooting and the trafficking of guns to places far away from cattle. And protect those from elsewhere seeking pasture and water. Also cattle theft. If your cattle was stolen from here [the Ciec area] by the Atuot, then *gelweng* leaders tried to trace it.¹⁰⁴

Some chiefs, though, are critical of this expansion of the responsibilities of the *gelweng*. Abinigo Akok, chief of the Akot Atuot, confirms it was a vacuum of authority in the cattle-camps that led to the institutionalization of *gelweng*. In Rumbek, he said, this is now a problem:

Gelweng is a new thing. Before [in the cattle-camp] there was only the *benywut*. In Rumbek, the *gelweng* have been one the reasons for continuing violence. *Gelweng* are not part of government. They developed out of a policing vacuum during the civil war. The SPLA was fighting Arabs [those loyal to the Khartoum government] and there was no one to protect our resources.¹⁰⁵

A new influx of guns

Representatives of all sectors of society in Yirol agree that the influx of guns since the 1990s has had deleterious consequences on social order, undermining the authority both of chiefs and the government, and empowering youth with no clear lines of command. The distribution of guns to cattle-camp youth in the 1990s that led to the creation of

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104 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, respectively, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

105 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

gelweng, several interviewees point out, was eclipsed by a second flood of weapons in the early 2000s, in the run-up to the CPA.¹⁰⁶ In the words of Telar Deng:

Before 1991, there were no civilians with arms. After the split [following the 1991 Nasir Declaration], came *jiech mabor* [white army] for Nuer to protect themselves from Dinka and *gelweng* for Dinka to protect themselves from Nuer. After peace was signed we did not demobilize the youth.... Firearms became abundant. Some soldiers were selling them. Some were giving them their relatives to protect their cattle. That weakened traditional authority and government. There are areas in Rumbek where the government cannot even venture.¹⁰⁷

The veteran SPLM politician Deng Athorbei confirmed this account: ‘Because fighting was diminishing, some guns were not needed and they were being sold to civilians. This came to our knowledge when we heard of fighting in 2003 in Yirol. There was a robbery from the armoury. Generals in Juba were selling guns to civilians.’¹⁰⁸ When it came to guns, Deng Athorbei added, it was generally politicians who were the scapegoats; he himself, he said, had been accused—falsely—of providing guns to Atuot youth in Yirol.¹⁰⁹

In 2014, following the December 2013 conflict in Juba between Dinka and Nuer SPLA battalions, more guns flowed to Dinka areas such as Yirol. After the second round of fighting in Juba in 2016, more and newer guns arrived. Matoch Majak, the former *gelweng* leader, explained that the effectiveness of *gelweng* leaders had been fatally compromised by this

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106 The age-set among the Ciec initiated between 2004 and 2006 was named *nokdhang* (hand gun) in recognition of this transition from spears to guns.

107 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Luac Atuot of Yirol, South Sudanese diplomat and politician, Juba, 14 August 2017.

108 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

109 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

unrestrained influx of guns—by that time, a single gun cost less than a heifer.¹¹⁰ He explained further:

The *gelweng* came into existence so they could take charge of accounting for guns. Now there is a great increase in guns. We can't estimate the number now. In the past, guns were few. Formerly, the leader of the *gelweng* registered the guns among his people. Now there is no knowing the number.¹¹¹

Chief Madut Boi offered a more specific explanation: ‘There is rebellion everywhere and that is why the problem [of guns] is not going away’.

Guns in hands of rebels is a problem. And our youth get many of their guns from rebels. ... If we disarm our youth, then there is a fear that rebels can attack anytime, as in 1992. It can happen again. But if you leave guns with young people, they kill each other like the Agar are doing [in Rumbek]. If there were no rebels, there could be comprehensive disarmament among the Agar and the Nuer, and here in Yirol.¹¹²

Many of those interviewed stress the fatal confluence of guns and alcohol. When asked what she thought was the greatest danger facing the community, Monica Nyandior Kuch, the church activist from Yirol town, said, ‘It is distilled alcohol [*mou*] that is the source of theft and killing. If the government was a government, it would control both alcohol and guns.’¹¹³

The *gelweng* and the government

The relationship between the *gelweng* and the SPLA—and their relation to government in general—has been erratic. In 2000, a draconian

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110 The cost of an AK-47 automatic rifle in Lakes in mid-2018 was about SSP 30,000 (USD 300 at the unofficial exchange rate).

111 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

112 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017.

113 Interview with Monica Nyandior Kuch, church activist, Yirol town, 5 June 2017.

disarmament exercise in the Lakes region yielded several thousand weapons.¹¹⁴ According to at least one observer of the process, however, disarmament did not extend to the whole of the state; moreover, the weapons that were collected were subsequently recycled by those who confiscated them: ‘the gun store has two doors,’ he said. Such suspicions and accusations are commonplace in South Sudan, where multiple disarmament exercises have visibly failed to diminish the ubiquitous presence of guns. There have been six recorded disarmament campaigns in the Lakes region: in 2000, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2011.¹¹⁵ As one commentator from Lakes has described such operations, they may amount to no more than moving cash from the left pocket of one’s trousers to the right.¹¹⁶

By all accounts, the increase of guns in then Lakes State in 2001 and 2002 exceeded the scale of the original 1991 arming of the *gelweng*. This increase was not in response to a new Nuer threat but the result of internal competition between communities in Lakes State. Guns, unsurprisingly, were a key factor in the rapid spread of intercommunal conflict a few years later. The 2004 disarmament, at the beginning of the conflict in Yirol, started badly. An attempt to disarm the *gelweng* by force in two cattle-camps, Alel and Nairobi, failed. Lacking the cooperation of *gelweng* leaders, the exercise had to be called off. The 2011 disarmament, instituted after internal peace had been established in Greater Yirol, seems to have been more successful. At present in Eastern Lakes State, guns are at least less publicly visible than in Western Lakes State, and in many other parts of the country. Successive state governments in Eastern Lakes State have established a *modus vivendi* with gun owners there.

114 Nyaba, ‘The Disarmament of the Gel-Weng’, 14-15.

115 Nyaba, ‘The Disarmament of the Gel-Weng’, 14-15; Sara Skinner, ‘Civilian Disarmament in South Sudan: A Legacy of Struggle’, London: Saferworld, 2012; ‘Seven Killed during Disarmament Exercise in Lakes’, Catholic Radio Network, 30 December 2009. Accessed 9 August 2018, <http://catholicradionetwork.org/?q=node/114>.

116 Manyang Mayom, ‘That Disarmament in WLS Is Just like Manyang Mayom...’, Facebook post, 18 March 2018. Accessed 19 March 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/manyang.mayom/posts/10156280953684680>.

Rin Tueny described the approach to gun control he took when he was governor:

I would tell the youth in the cattle-camps these guns are a temporary thing to protect yourself and your cattle. There are areas where you are not allowed to move with a gun, like towns and main roads. If you have a gun, it has to stay in the cattle-camp. And if you are drunk, we will take it [from you]. Shoot randomly, we will also take it. Threaten the chief in court with gun, and that gun is ours. Slowly, slowly, we were getting guns out of their hands. They were ready to give them up. If I had continued [as governor], they would have given them up.¹¹⁷

In December 2013, following the split in the national government and the fighting in Juba, and with a threat of renewed conflict with the Nuer to the north, the *gelweng* in Yirol once again cooperated with SPLA forces against an external threat. Manuer Mangui, the Ciec *gelweng* leader, stressed, however, that the responsibility of the *gelweng* was to their own communities, rather than to the government:

If you are raided and the government doesn't take action to return your cattle and you are left with nothing, you may also raid or steal. Hunger has made people lose their dignity. As *gelweng*, our responsibility is to protect our communities and their resources.¹¹⁸

Majak Makur, at that time the minister of information in Eastern Lakes State, told us he sees these developments as a growing security issue:

You have got a lot of educated youth who are unemployed. Some of them are going back to cattle-camps and becoming *gelweng*. The *gelweng* are beginning to pose a serious threat to

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117 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

118 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, respectively, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

government authority. For the last ten years, the government has not been effective in collecting taxes simply because the *gelweng* are carrying guns. You can't tax somebody who is carrying a gun. We are advocating for universal disarmament but the political conflicts we face mean it can't happen. We can't make people vulnerable to their enemies. It is a dilemma.¹¹⁹

Chief Abinigo Akok's view is that the *gelweng* should be paid and incorporated into government structures: 'There are people who have salaries from government and don't do anything. Why not pay the *gelweng*?' he said. 'They are mediators between the government and the civilian population. They are doing work of government without pay. The government should pay them.'¹²⁰ Matoch Majak, the former *gelweng* leader, agrees. The *gelweng*, he agreed, are already doing the work of the government:

The *gelweng* started to fight the Nuer. At that point, the Nuer were a threat. They were a threat both locally, in terms of cattle raids, and at the political level. Now, raids from Nuer are fewer. The biggest threat now is from the Agar. And the function of the *gelweng* now is to protect against people from there. They are doing the work of the government but without pay.¹²¹

Persistence of the cattle complex

The primary role of the *gelweng*, as their name indicates, is to guard cattle. For pastoralists in South Sudan, cattle have long had a significance that goes beyond their importance as a source of livelihood. This is well documented in ethnographic and historical literature, where it

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119 Interview with Majak Makur, information minister for Eastern Lakes State, Yirol, 4 June 2017.

120 Interview with Abinigo Akok, paramount chief of Akot Atuot, Abang, 3 June 2017.

121 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, respectively, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

has been characterized as a ‘cattle complex’¹²² and a ‘bovine idiom’.¹²³ Cattle exchange in the form of bridewealth cements family alliances. It also reinforces the patriarchal character of Dinka and Atuot society, forming an obstacle, notably, to aspirations on the part of Dinka women for equality with Dinka men. These features of the cattle complex have endured their progressive incorporation into the money-based economy and the transformation of social relations in South Sudan that is the consequence of long-term war.

As compensation for death or injury, the payment of cattle restores relations between individuals and groups that have been in conflict with one another. Cattle are the object of intense aesthetic attention on the part of their owners; song oxen (*muorcien*), castrated bulls whose hides display favoured colour patterns, are celebrated in song and command high prices.¹²⁴ Cattle are a capital reserve for the rich and a famine reserve for the poor. They are a profit centre for traders and a target for thieves. ‘*Weng ë jok, ʏok ä kəc nək, weng ë kəc nək*’, runs a Dinka proverb: cattle are a disease; they will be the death of you.

For cattle-keepers in Yirol, as for pastoralists everywhere in Eastern Africa, the survival and well-being of their livestock is an all-important matter. Access to water and grazing is their paramount concern. To ensure the welfare of their herds, pastoralists are prepared to fight. In order to acquire cattle, they may also be prepared to steal.

The time of the highest risk of conflict, as can be seen from patterns of fighting in Greater Yirol, comes at the end of the dry season, towards the middle of the calendar year. At this time of year, grazing is increasingly limited, herds are on the move and youth from rival sections or

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122 Melville J. Herskovits, ‘The Cattle Complex in East Africa’, *American Anthropologist* 28/1 (1926): 230–272.

123 ‘Their social idiom is a bovine idiom’; Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 19.

124 Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, and John Ryle, ‘Sarah Nyanath and Jok Madut Jok Discuss Cattle Colour Patterns in Rumbek’, YouTube, London: Rift Valley Institute, 10 September 2008. Accessed 4 July 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CR02tVLZFk.

sub-sections live close together in one place. Rin Tueny, the first governor of Eastern Lakes State, put it like this:

It's not that there is competition over grazing land. Or a lack of cattle. But, still when herds are moving, cattle theft increases. Cattle-keepers tend to be aggressive. That is the culture of pastoralists. When you are moving with your cattle, there is nothing you know—except yourself.¹²⁵

Due to continued civil war and violence in South Sudan since December 2013, there have been changes in the pattern of cattle husbandry. Herds have grown but ownership of livestock is, by all accounts, concentrated in fewer hands, often those of SPLA commanders who profited from positions of authority during the war.¹²⁶ The continual growth in the number of cattle in Bahr el-Ghazal increases the pressure on livestock keepers. The internal conflicts in their home territory may add to the appeal of grazing areas beyond it. Cattle, as interviewees noted more than once, know no borders.

In this way, conflict has been exported to new parts of the country, with grazing areas expanding southwards from the floodplain into the agricultural areas of Equatoria. This has provoked disputes with the sedentary communities living there and bitter denunciations of Dinka pastoralists by Equatorians. With the increasing domination of the national government and army by the Dinka, particularly Dinka from Bahr el-Ghazal, it is a conflict that has become violently politicized, feeding into the wider South Sudanese civil war. Rin Tueny, the former governor of Eastern Lakes State, referred obliquely to this:

We had problems in Amadi [a contiguous state in Equatoria]. We had problems in Maridi [a state in Equatoria]. Our people were

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125 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

126 See section 5.2 'Norms of restraint among the cattle-keeping groups of South Sudan', based on research by Naomi Pendle, in Fiona Terry and Brian McQuinn, 'The Roots of Restraint in War', Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, June 2018.

moving with their cattle right up to Maridi. Some people had permanent homes there until they were removed by presidential decree in 2014.¹²⁷

In the insecure situation that prevails in South Sudan, there is little systematic data from the field to confirm or challenge accounts of the evolution of the livestock economy, in Yirol or elsewhere. Statistical information is also lacking on the cattle trade and movement of livestock in and out of the state. From ground surveys, available anecdotal information and fly overs of cattle-camps, however, it is clear that there is no lack of cattle in Eastern Lakes State.¹²⁸ This was also the case during the 1983–2005 civil war.¹²⁹ Moreover, the cattle population in all the Lakes states continues to burgeon. Despite this plenitude, prices are high and remain high even during the hunger gap, when distress sales might be expected. Cattle are both numerous and costly. Complaints about increases in cattle raiding are a continual refrain among interviewees. For Dinka pastoralists, cattle form a kind of bank; but it is a bank constantly under threat, where there may be thefts any day.

A new use—and consequent demand—for cattle also has developed in Greater Yirol in the past two decades, whereby oxen are increasingly employed for ploughing.¹³⁰ The use of cattle as draught animals is a practice that was subject to cultural prohibition in earlier Dinka culture

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127 Interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

128 An estimate puts the cattle population of former Lakes state (i.e. Agar, Aliab, Atuot and Ciec) at 1.3 million, said to be growing at 1 per cent per year; see: Yacob Gebreyes, et al., 'The Impact of Conflict on the Livestock Sector in South Sudan', Juba: Food and Agriculture Organization South Sudan, 2016, 29–30. For historical comparison, a government report from 1954 gave a combined figure for Aliab, Atuot and Ciec of 170,000 head of cattle. A widely quoted figure for South Sudan as a whole puts the total cattle population of South Sudan at approximately 12,000,000; quoted in Mark Johnson, 'Sudan Council of Churches: Yirol Survey 1979', Khartoum: Sudan Council of Churches, 1979.

129 Gunther Omozik, et al., 'Assessment of Western Yirol County (Aguran)', New York: Unicef, 1993.

130 Sundnes, 'Land of Plenty, Plenty of Land?', 57, 59.

and was rarely seen before the Second Sudanese Civil War. Majak Makur, the former minister of information in Eastern Lakes State, explained how the spread of animal traction had led to a new demand for oxen.

The ox plough was introduced in 2002. It was introduced among the Aliab. It was introduced among the Ciec. The Ciec were actually the first to use the ox plough. Later on in 2002, it was introduced here in the Atuot area. It works very well. Up to now, you will find people using ox ploughs. But both the ox and the plough are expensive. You may have to sell a bull or a heifer. And some people can't afford it.¹³¹

'People need cows to do everything now', Majak Makur said.

Ploughing needs cows. Marrying needs cows. And bride price is increasing because it has become prestigious to marry with many cows. ... Some people don't have cows. And some people have many. Is this behind the increase in cattle raiding? Of course. The price of cows has gone up. The number needed for bride price has gone up, too. So people can't afford to marry. And our communities are now very hostile to one other. ... Those who raid other people's cattle are seen as heroes. Those have not gone to raid are seen as weak or cowardly. Even someone looking after my cattle may come and tell me 'your cow is lost' when they are cooperating with thieves. They tell them the owner of this cow is in the town. Then a thief takes it.¹³²

'Cattle theft', he concluded, 'was one of the main factors that led Yirol into fighting.'¹³³

Although large-scale cattle raids in Greater Yirol formed part of a pattern of vengeance and feuding between ethnic sub-groups that was becoming prevalent before 2011, the majority of incidents of small-scale

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131 Interview with Majak Makur, information minister for Eastern Lakes State, Yirol, 4 June 2017.

132 Interview with Majak Makur, 4 June 2017.

133 Interview with Majak Makur, 4 June 2017.

livestock theft are regarded as criminal—the result of greed or desperation. Perpetrators of the latter kind of livestock theft, as Matoch Majak explains, may even include your own relatives. He also drew attention to the number of unemployed young people to be seen in towns and villages: ‘You see those educated youth playing dominoes there? If you have no job, you may have no choice. You go and steal other people’s cattle. ... People who have nothing have to steal. Lack of jobs is the challenge.’¹³⁴

There has also been a decline in the availability of wild food and a reduction in productivity from agriculture due to drought and over cultivation. These factors, and the long history of war, have contributed to a general moral decline, as Matoch Majak went on to explain:

In our generation, there was plenty of food. There were many wild animals and the output from farms was high. Now there are no wild animals left and food production has declined. There is hunger. Some people have had their cattle raided. That is why people are stealing. It is because of food shortages. People are starving.¹³⁵

The formal, agreed exchange of livestock in marriage is a central cultural feature of most Dinka and Nuer communities, as is the system of compensation for offences against the person by payment of cattle. The abduction of cattle in inter-group raiding can be seen as a counterpart to this. That is to say, the forcible appropriation of livestock is imagined by cattle raiders to be compensation for some earlier collective offence on the part of the raided community. In many parts of South Sudan, however, the chaos of war has blurred the distinction between revenge and mass depredation; between communal conflict and criminality. Chiefs in Yirol agree that government action is necessary to prevent cattle raiding, but the ineffectiveness of the administration in dealing with cattle raiding, added to the SPLA’s own wartime practice of extensive confiscation of

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134 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, respectively, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

135 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, 4 June 2017.

livestock and the general paralysis of the judicial system, have undermined public confidence.¹³⁶

The cattle trade

Before the civil war period (1983 to 2005), young men from Yirol, particularly Atuot, were prominent in the cattle trade between Bahr el-Ghazal and Equatoria, moving livestock southwards from the floodplain.¹³⁷ The cattle trade more or less ceased during the civil war, however, and it has not revived. Would-be traders complain of the imposition of taxes when crossing state and county boundaries, when entering towns and when moving cattle across rivers. Livestock traders also need armed escorts, even between Yirol and Rumbek.¹³⁸ When asked if the eclipse of the cattle trade was due to the fear of violence or the excessive taxes imposed by administrations of the various states that cattle traders pass through, Majak Matur was emphatic that taxes were not the reason.

It is not because of taxes. It is because the nation is not stable. Communities are against one another. Like now, you can't find Atuot going on foot with cattle to Rumbek. Those cattle will not survive. The trade in cattle was dominated by the Atuot from here to Malual—up to Aweil, and down to Maridi and Juba. All over South Sudan we were known for that. It used to bring a lot

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 136 Cattle-keepers' perception of government as a predatory institution with designs on their herds has a long history. In conversation in Yirol, General Abiar Wol, a politician from Aliab, raised the issue of a punitive expedition that the Aliab suffered at the hands of the Anglo–Egyptian government in 1919. The expedition followed the killing of the governor of Mongalla Province, Chauncey Stigand, by Aliab rebelling against the imposition of colonial power. Many Aliab were killed by government forces and large numbers of livestock were confiscated. As General Abiar remarked, 'So, was it not the British who invented cattle raiding?' Interview with Abiar Wol, SPLA general and Aliab politician, Yirol, 2 June 2017.

137 Ngor Ring, 'Dinka Cattle Trade', *passim*.

138 A 2016 report on the livestock sector in South Sudan states that the main Gumbo market had been disrupted due to the conflict in Juba, further reducing livestock trade flows from Bahr el-Ghazal (including Yirol). Since the outbreak of fighting in December 2013, Ugandan traders have increased their exports to Juba at the expense of South Sudanese producers and traders; see: Gebreyes, et al., 'The Impact of Conflict on the Livestock Sector', 53.

of wealth here. That is why the number of cattle was increasing in our area. Cattle trade is not viable now. The whole country is insecure. You go to Ekuatoria—you're killed. You go Bahr el-Ghazal—you're killed. To Maridi—you're killed. So people have decided to stop the trade and keep their cattle here. It is not because of taxes. It is because there is no freedom of movement. You won't make it. You will lose your property. You won't survive.¹³⁹

Chief Bahon confirmed Majak Matur's view: 'You can't risk your wealth going to Juba. Ugandans have taken over that sector of economy. They bring thousands of their red cows with tasteless meat into Juba. It is because the Uganda-Juba road is secure. I tell people to halt all cattle business until security improves.'¹⁴⁰

Notwithstanding these accounts by the chief and the former minister, there are still cattle from the Lakes region to be found for sale in the livestock markets of Juba, where young men from Yirol, particularly from Apaak, have now moved on to dominate not only the cattle trade but also the black-market currency exchange conducted in the side streets of the city market.

Visiting a cattle traders' camp near Juba, following our visit to Yirol. We spoke with a trader from Aliab named Majier Bol. His camp was across the river, on the outskirts of Juba, in a swampy glade behind a gas station on the Gumbo Road, the main road on the East Bank, the two branches of which lead, respectively, to Eastern Equatoria State and to Uganda. Cattle from northern Uganda—those derided by Chief Bahon—passed by in trucks on the last stage of their journey to the slaughterhouses in Juba. After the 2005 CPA, Majier explained, the cattle trade from the Lakes region had picked up for a while. Now, however, the route from the Lakes region via Aliab, through Mandari

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 139 Interview with Majak Makur, information minister for Eastern Lakes State, Yirol, 4 June 2017.

140 Interview with Bahon Mabor, paramount chief of Luac Atuot and Anhiem Nhial, deputy chief, Yirol town, 22 March 2017.

territory, had become perilous. This, he said, combined with exactions from local authorities—in Yirol, Bunagok, Terakeka and Juba itself—had radically reduced the overland trade. Cattle from the West Bank, from the Lakes region, he said, now mostly come to Juba by river, via Bor.

6. The resource of culture

Diet dör: the power of song

‘Why do we fight in the name of grass?’ asks the Ciec singer Maker Aguek Lueth in his song, ‘*Acin ke cam rielic*’ (Violence Gets Us Nowhere).¹⁴¹

Cattle don’t fight—neither Jiëŋ cattle nor Atuot cattle.
Why do we fight in the name of grass?

This song condemns violence—on the part of youth in the cattle-camps, as well as the elders who encourage them. Fighting won’t get you a wife, Maker Aguek sings, there is nothing to be gained from violence—violence will get you nowhere. The best kind of cattle-camp, the song proclaims, would be a cattle-camp of those wise enough not to fight.

A cattle camp for Jieng who are cowards!
A camp for Atuot who are cowards!
Cowardly Apaak! That’s what I’m looking for.
That’s the cattle camp for me.
Violence gets us nowhere...

Among the Dinka, and other peoples in South Sudan, songs are a form of social media, carrying stories and ideas from town to town and cattle-camp to cattle-camp. They are a means of communication and a form of memory.¹⁴² Praise songs (*diet pöny* or *diet aleec*) and insult songs (*ket ë röt*) are among the genres that feature in the traditional Dinka repertoire.¹⁴³ For the SPLA, during the 1983–2005 civil war, songs were

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141 See the epigraph of this report for the original *thong* Muonyjang (Dinka language) version of the lyrics.

142 Francis Mading Deng, *The Dinka and Their Songs*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

143 John Ryle, ‘A War of Words among the Agar Dinka of Sudan’, in *Domestic Warfare: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard*, ed. by Mark James. Eastbury, Oxford: Private printing, 1987. Accessed 8 August 2018, <https://johnryle.com/?article=a-war-of-words-among-the-agar-dinka>.

a powerful medium of propaganda.¹⁴⁴ War also affected the imagery chosen by song writers and singers, even in traditional genres; the horns of a favoured song ox may be described as having the shape of the curved magazine of an AK-47 automatic rifle, the colour of its hide compared to the effect of shrapnel from a machine-gun.¹⁴⁵

Newly composed songs, formerly spread by live performance and adoption by other singers, are now more often distributed via flash drive and mobile phone. Maker Aguek's songs are popular with young people in Yirol, along with many others recorded by singers from different parts of the Dinka area. His song, 'Violence Gets Us Nowhere', with its synthesiser backing and repeated refrain, *Acin ke cam rielic*, is non-traditional in musical style, but belongs to an established genre in the Dinka repertoire, the peace song (*diet dör*). As such it can be understood as a riposte to the war song, *koŋ*, or *cŋŋ*, which is sung in anticipation of conflict, or in celebration of victory.

Public performance and distribution of recordings of war songs—and of insult songs designed to provoke opponents—has been banned in Yirol, at least in the town.¹⁴⁶ This attempt at government censorship is an indication of the influence the government accords to the power of singing, a traditional oral medium that has been reinforced by new communications technology.¹⁴⁷ A street merchant in Yirol market who

144 Angela Impey, 'The Poetics of Transitional Justice in Dinka Songs in South Sudan', UNISCI Discussion Papers No. 33, October 2013. Accessed 7 September 2018, https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_UNIS.2013.n33.44815.

145 'muordien ci tung ciet gön kalange' (my bull with horns like the magazine of a Kalashnikov) and 'thiith buk yeduol cimen rush awen' (the scattered red colours round its hump like shrapnel) are phrases in songs composed by Ngoth Malang (also found in the work of other composers). Thanks to Jok Madut Jok for these quotes.

146 'Gelweng Militias to Have Role', *Sudan Tribune*. There is a long history in South Sudan of government attempts to ban insult songs. For example, see: Akolda M. Tier and Abraham Matoc Dhal, 'A Case Study of: The Nuer–Dinka Conflict', n.d. Accessed 24 June 2018, <https://sudanarchive.net/cgi-bin/pagessoa?a=pdf&d=Dslpd59.1.21&dl=1&sim=Screen2Ima> ge and Ryle, 'A War of Words'.

147 An insult song (*kët ë röt*) by an Apak singer named Nyala Jongkuc praises his own section, Apak, and mocks the *Jiëŋ*, or *Muonyjan*, ie, in this case, the Ciec Dinka, with whom

sold us downloaded tracks by Maker Aguek and others explained that these days most singers confine themselves to love songs (*awaan*), at least in public. It was safer, he said.

He added, perhaps with a touch of irony: ‘*Wut da acɔl dör*—peace is the name of our cattle camp now.’

Kong koc: the practice of restraint

Maker Aguek’s song epitomizes a quality the Dinka call ‘*kong koc*’ (literally translated as ‘first, stop’ or ‘wait’). In the context of peacemaking and peacebuilding, *kong koc* signifies patience and rationality in a tense or volatile situation. In a fissive culture where *lex talionis*, the desire for retribution, is frequently a driving force, *kong koc* is an appeal to stay the hand of vengeance. As a government official in Rumbek explained, ‘You send elders in. You do not spread unnecessary rumours.’¹⁴⁸ In discussion of the factors that made peace possible in Eastern Lakes States, a number of interviewees mentioned *kong koc* as a quality that the Ciec, Atuot and Aliab possess, in their opinion, to a greater degree than other Nilotic groups. They drew a contrast with the Nuer in particular, but also with other Dinka groups.¹⁴⁹ As one asserted, ‘We Dinka [in Yirol] say, “You

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the Apak are in conflict. The song includes a derogatory reference to the Ciec *gelweng* leader, Manuer Mangui: in order to escape during a fight between Ciec and Apak, it says, Manuer had to abandon the coat he was wearing. These are the opening lines of the song:

Ric athær bai bi jieng rioc	Our age-sets fought for land till Jieng [Ciec] became afraid
Wet jïjën rioc	We intimidated the youth of Jieng...
Muonyjaŋ ëë ran cit agok	Those Muonyjaŋ are like monkeys
Gok ëë koc lo guak yee røl dec pëël	Who growl at people and defecate
Gok ëë koc lo guak ëë røl dec thuöny	Monkeys who roar threats and run...
Reem Apakda acie lop toch dë eey	You can’t invade the Apak toc
Wun ciet America da wut tiam	Our cattle camp is like America. We defeat everyone...
ëë reem Apakda acie wuäk kol tøn.	Youth of Apak don’t run away in time of war
Aye thaat lec weng ku dhuk cien	We beat them back with tethering pegs...

148 Interview with Makim Makur Mabeny, government official, Yirol, 2 June 2017.

149 The equivalent in *thok* Reel, the language of the five non-Apaak sections of Atuot, is *kong meth* or *kong cuong*.

know these people called Nuer? They don't listen to one another." One day they say, "We're going to do this." Then they just go and do it.¹⁵⁰

The principle of *kong koc* was invoked by interviewees as an explanation for the limits on the extent of violence observed during the 2004–2011 conflict in Yirol. Deng Athorbei noted that Yirol town (which lies within the territory of the Atuot, but has a population drawn from the whole state) had been secure, even at the height of conflict: There had been no killings there. "There were no revenge attacks. People moved to Yirol town and felt safe. There were certain things we wouldn't do in fighting because of who we are as people of Yirol. That element of killing people in towns was not there."¹⁵¹

Kong koc is a traditional value that, by its nature, enables accommodation and change. Daniel Ayual Makoi, the SPLA general and former county commissioner, characterized the people of Yirol as generally less conservative and more adaptable than their neighbours in Rumbek. "In Rumbek," he said, "they have pride in their culture. They are slow to change. For instance, in Rumbek, adultery—or the impregnation of a girl—can lead to killing. There is no culture of mercy there."¹⁵²

Others put it more simply: in Rumbek, they told us, they do not have *kong koc*. And *kong koc*, these interviewees argued, is lacking at the national level, too. An absence of the spirit of restraint has compounded the disaster befalling the country. Discussing the fighting between SPLA

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150 Interview with Majak Makur, information minister for Eastern Lakes State, Yirol, 4 June 2017. This is a disparaging reference to the Nuer rallying cry *wanathin*. *Wanathin* means 'let us go forward'; in a military context, it is an exhortation to advance, to not turn your back on your enemy.

151 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017. But Rin Tueny, the former governor of Eastern Lakes State, dismisses the idea that this was the result of cultural difference, suggesting that it was just bad government; interview with Rin Tueny Mabor Deng, Luac of Atuot, SPLA general, Juba, 29 August 2017.

152 Interview with Daniel Ayual Makoi, Ciec of Yirol, SPLA lieutenant-general, Juba, 17 August 2017.

factions in Juba, Majak Makur said, ‘No one practices *kong koc* in Juba. In Juba, there is no *kong koc* at all.’¹⁵³

Ayiang: recreational wrestling

Another aspect of culture that the peoples of Greater Yirol have in common is *ayiang*—recreational wrestling. Many interviewees credited wrestling contests with displacing violence—pre-empting armed conflict between the youth of rival sections. Stories are told of contests between the great wrestlers of the recent past, such as Long Anguat, Agok Adhum or Koc Aleth. Wrestling contests have become important events in the calendar of Eastern Lakes State, and are increasingly incorporated into peacebuilding, though they have also been linked to incidents of disorder.¹⁵⁴ David Deng Athorbei, the veteran Lakes region politician, explained that the practice of wrestling came to Greater Yirol in the 1960s, from Bor, across the Nile River: ‘It came from Bor via Aliab. Some other things started there and spread out [to the rest of Eastern Lakes State]. Wrestling is all over South Sudan, in fact. The Nuba have a culture of wrestling.... But Agar [in Western Lakes State], they don’t have this, [nor do] other Dinka.’¹⁵⁵

Andrew Madut Buoi explained his role in promoting wrestling in Yirol in the run-up to the 2011 peace agreement:

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153 Interview with Majak Makur, information minister for Eastern Lakes State, Yirol, 4 June 2017.

154 See Mabor Riak Magok, ‘Two Killed In Eastern Lakes During a Clash Between Apuk And Akuei Communities’, Gurtong, 21 February 2018. Accessed 23 February 2018, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ID/21302/Default.aspx>. In 2017, wrestlers from Aliab failed to participate in the annual wrestling competition in Yirol town for the first time since 2011 for fear of clashes with the Atuot.

155 In 2009, a wrestling contest also took place in Rumbek; see: Manyang Mayom, ‘Wrestling Resumes In Rumbek As Tool For Peace’, Gurtong, 16 September 2009. Accessed 18 July 2017, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/2050/Wrestling-Resumes-in-Rumbek-as-Tool-for-Peace.aspx>. The culture of wrestling has been actively developed in South Sudan in recent years by Peter Biar Ajak and the South Sudan Wrestling Company; see: Lillian Leposo, ‘Wrestlers Fight to Unite World’s Newest Nation’, CNN, African Voices, 16 August 2011.

Makuet Mayor called me for *ayiang* in 2010. It was organized at Greater Yirol level and conducted in Yirol town, when there was still insecurity. We were the ones who organized the competition. We didn't wrestle ourselves. But the youth of his section and mine wrestled. This competition become a symbol of peace. It was welcomed by the government.¹⁵⁶

Deng Athorbei discussed a pivotal event that took place at a cattle-camp the following year, 2011, when the peace process that ended the conflict in Greater Yirol was in its final stages:

A single incident changed the history of fighting between Ciec and Atuot. It was in a cattle camp called Thianrue, in Ciec territory, in January 2011. There was an Apaak Atuot camp close by. [Young men from] Ciec were seen running towards the Apaak cattle. [The Apaak youth] thought they were cattle raiders. They took guns and defensive positions. When they came nearer, though, they realized the Ciec youth were not carrying guns. They were singing wrestling songs [and] carrying spears and sticks. They lined up and asked people to come for a wrestling match. They wrestled until 11 o'clock, then people went to dance. By evening, the Apaak with their guns accompanied [the Ciec youth] back to their cattle camp. Peace remains between them up to today.... This was *gelweng* alone. [It was] the young people who did it.¹⁵⁷

Manyiel Atuot, the commissioner of Malek County, told us he was planning to organize wrestling matches the following dry season between the youth of Malek and those of neighbouring counties. Wrestling, he argued, is one of a number of common cultural traits that link the people of Yirol and those to the south along the Nile and across the river. The

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156 Interview with Andrew Madut Buoi, paramount chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, Pagerau, 4 June 2017.

157 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

people of Yirol and the people of Bor, across the Nile on the east bank, were both quicker to change their customs than other Dinka. The practice of facial scarring—an initiation rite for young men ubiquitous in Dinka communities until recent years— is disappearing both in Yirol and Bor, but not elsewhere in Dinkaland. The people of Yirol, Manyiel suggested, have more in common with the Bor Dinka—even with the Mandari—than they do with the Agar Dinka of Western Lakes State. ‘Actually,’ he said ‘we could call ourselves people of central South Sudan. That is to say, us and the Mandari and Dinka Bor. We share the same culture, especially *ayiang*, wrestling. This is important because it brings peace.’¹⁵⁸

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158 Interview with Manyiel Atuot, county commissioner for Malek County, Malek, 4 June 2017. Manyiel Atuot’s comment resonates with a statement in the 1975 report of the Committee for the Redivision of the Southern Provinces, regarding the division of the three original southern provinces into six: ‘The most popular view held by the public at Yirol is that the southern part of Bentiu in Upper Nile Province and Mundari of Tali in Equatoria should be added to Yirol; their reason being that both the Nuers of southern Bentiu and the Mundari of Tali are in perpetual security troubles with them and that, once all of them are in one province under one administration, all troubles will be minimized.’ Committee for the Redivision of the Southern Provinces. Final Report. (1975) Juba: High Executive Council. Thanks to Douglas H. Johnson for this reference.

7. Recent developments in Greater Yirol

Recurrence of local conflict

The unresolved civil war, the national economic crisis, the decay of central government and the inefficacy of state administration continue to have complex effects at the local level in South Sudan, putting all communal achievements at risk. The struggle to survive may undercut the need to coexist. In 2017–2018, the relative calm that had prevailed in Greater Yirol since 2011 wavered under these pressures but endured.

At the end of the 2017 dry season, when herders were preparing to move back to higher ground, conflict broke out again in the dry-season grazing grounds along the Nile River. A fight at Pakuach, an Aliab cattle-camp in Ciirkou on 21 June 2017, between the Akeer section of the Aliab and the Luac of the Atuot, left two dead. Armed men from Aliab—with support from displaced youth from Bor living in Aliab—pursued the Atuot north into Ciec territory. On 23 June 2017 they mounted a revenge attack on Lang Matuot cattle-camp, killing seven men. The blind chief of Aliab, Solomon Anyang, had told us that his people were like a snake: if you stepped on them they would strike. At this point the Aliab decided to strike. County commissioners from Bunagok and Malek went to Lang Matuot to warn its inhabitants, but they were too late to prevent the attack.

These incidents echoed events in 2004, when killings in Ciirkou gave rise to the seven years of conflict that followed. The new fighting in 2017 was treated as an emergency, a communal crisis, that could once again engulf all the three communities—the Aliab, Ciec and Atuot. In Juba, in response to the emergency, the Greater Yirol Youth Association and a Yirol committee of elders, representing the educated elites of Yirol, held a joint meeting. The latter formed a committee¹⁵⁹ and sent a delegation

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159 The ad hoc emergency committee of elders from Yirol formed in Juba in response to the 2017 crisis included members of the National Assembly, judges, academics and military

to Yirol.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile in Yirol town, chiefs and elders met with government officials and *gelweng* leaders. In Bunagok, a meeting between the state governor and customary authorities reached an agreement, at least on paper, for the two communities to halt hostilities and cooperate in a number of areas. These included the handover of perpetrators, recovery of raided cattle, control of the movement of livestock and the separation of cattle-camps.

The response of the authorities was prompt. In the longer run, however, the main constraint on the spread of violence turned out to be less these administrative interventions than the unifying effect of an old security threat from outside Eastern Lakes State: the threat, and reality, of Nuer raids from the north.

Nuer raiding

In the course of 2017 and 2018, there was a sharp increase in cattle raids in Western and Eastern Lakes states, originating from the Nyuong Nuer areas to the north. Payinjar County in Southern Liech State in Western Upper Nile—which borders the two Lakes states—has been under SPLA-IO control since the national crisis of December 2013.¹⁶¹ The stalemate in the South Sudanese civil war and the uncertainties surrounding the national peace process have left Southern Liech State isolated and with a sporadically effective administration. The mobilization of youth militias on each side of the ethnic divide has increased the flow of arms and inflamed communal feeling. No mechanisms exist for addressing cattle raiding or regulating conflict between the two polities.

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officers. It consisted of the following: Majak Macar Kacuol (Apaak); Jongkyc Telar (Atuot), Ajak Kom Awan (Ciec); General Andrew Makur Thou; Gordon Matot Tut (Ciec); Job Dharuai Malou (Ciec); Gordon Matut Tut, MP (Ciec); Monica Nyanchut Arok (Atuot); Permena Awerial Aluong (Aliab); and Johnson Jongkuch Kulang.

160 Job Dharuai and the Yirol Committee of Elders, 'Report on Pakuac Incident to Eastern Lakes State Community in Juba and Concerned Citizens in Diaspora', Juba, 2017.

161 See the interview with Nyuong Doanhier Gatluak, paramount chief of the Nyuong Nuer, in the Rift Valley video documentary, Ryle, 'South Sudan: The Chiefs Speak'.

Famine conditions in Payinjiar in Liech state, in 2017 and 2018 drove some Nuer to seek refuge among the Dinka in the Lakes states. At the same time, in a paradox characteristic of pastoralist communities, Nuer youth from Liech state, with no government to restrain them, and possibly with backing from the SPLA-IO, mounted raids on Ciec and Atuot cattle-camps and villages to the south, attacking with overwhelming force. These Nuer raids were described by government officials in Yirol as the most damaging since those in 1994, at the height of the first intra-SPLA conflict, when Nuer forces attacked Pagerau.¹⁶² They serve as a reminder of the risky life that cattle pastoralists lead, maintaining their mode of livelihood in the midst of civil war and violence.

Makur Mabuol Machar, a young *gelweng* leader from Ciec, a survivor of one of the 2017 attacks, hospitalized in Juba, described to us the raid on his cattle-camp, Dhiaudit, north of Pagerau, on 10 July 2017.

In the morning, we took our cattle to grazing land very early. We youth with guns were sent on patrol. We came across the tracks of four people. Because of this, we were about to move on from that camp but people argued that they were only thieves. So the cows were milked and taken back out to grazing land in the afternoon. That night, in the dark, I became aware of people very close by. I was with my father. Their accent was strange. I used the secret code language we use as Ciec *gelweng*. They didn't respond. I released the gun from my shoulder and

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162 Nuer attacks in 2017 include a raid in Malek County on 15 June, in Pagerau on 18 June, in Titnagau on 23 June and the 10 July attack on Dhiaudit, where 19 people are reported to have been killed; see: Mabor Riak Magok, '19 Killed Following Cattle Raid in Eastern Lakes', Gurtong, 11 August 2017. Accessed 13 August 2017, <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/20679/19-Killed-Following-Cattle-Raid-In-Eastern-Lakes.aspx>. In mid-2018, Assistance Mission Africa (AMA), a South Sudanese NGO, convened a peace meeting of Dinka and Nuer representatives in Ganyliel in Panyijiar County in Southern Liech (Unity) State, with support from the Netherlands-based NGO Pax; see: Anton Quist, 'Community Peace Resolutions Agreed between Panyinjiar, Yirol and Amongpiny', PAX blog, 1 June 2018. Accessed 16 August 2018, <https://protectionofcivilians.org/community-peace-resolutions-agreed-between-payinjiar-yirol-and-amongpiny/>. This was followed by a meeting held in Nyang, near Yirol, in September 2018 between chiefs of former Lakes state and former Unity state, organized by VISTAS, UNMISS and AMA.

cocked it but it was too late. There was a guy to my left. He shot at the back of my head and I collapsed. There were sounds of grenades everywhere and hissing sounds of bullets from *kalany* [Kalashnikov rifles]. They used *ahon* [mortars] to stop cows from moving away. I was crawling on the ground. I told my father we could find ourselves a better place to take cover. Those were the last words I spoke to him. He was killed before he reached that place.¹⁶³

For the Ciec and Atuot *gelweng* in 2017, the need to collaborate to defend their cattle-camps from Nuer attacks became a more urgent issue than the internal dispute between the Atuot and Aliab sections. A meeting of Ciec *gelweng* leaders in late June 2017 in Malek resolved to remain neutral on the latter issue. On the other side of the Aliab–Atuot conflict, among the Atuot, collective support for the Luac Atuot section in their old dispute with the Aliab Dinka was more limited than in the past. In the face of Nuer raiding, the principle of segmentary opposition between tribal sections—the structural feature that ordains cooperation between closely related descent groups—served to limit the expressions of local conflict and generate the higher-order solidarity required to face an external threat.

The Nuer threat to communities in Greater Yirol thus became a source of unity, as it had been in the 1990s when Nuer attacks led to the formation of the *gelweng*. In this sense, in 2017 and 2018, the Nuer once again helped reduce conflict among the people of Yirol. The increase in Nuer raids, however, has also had negative effects. First, in the minds of cattle-keepers, the raids confirmed the need for weapons for self-defence and made disarmament yet more politically impracticable. Second, they further reduced the availability of safe dry season grazing, driving the Ciec and Atuot together once more in the Aliab *toc* at Ciirkou, a place far from the northern borders of the state. Although the Nuer could not reach this area, it is a place where trouble between the three communities

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 163 Interview with Makur Mabuol Machar, a *gelweng* leader from Yirol East, Juba, 2 August 2017.

that share Eastern Lakes State is always liable to spark again, as other pressures on these communities mount. In the words of Manuer Mangui, the Ciec *gelweng* leader: ‘We all know what is happening. It is hunger. And we don’t have solution for it. Like now, we move all our cattle to Ciirkou because we face a constant threat of raids in the west from Agar and in the north from Nuer.’¹⁶⁴

By mid-2018, however, towards the end of the dry season, there had not been any recurrence of the old conflict between the three peoples of Eastern Lakes State.

Dinka migrants from Bor

In 2018, Eastern Lakes State remained an area of stability in comparison to its neighbours. It was also a place of sanctuary for those fleeing conflict elsewhere. Over the course of this year, parts of Eastern Lakes State were host to an increasing number of people displaced from other states: Nuer fleeing hunger and lack of services in Upper Nile; Dinka from Pakam, the northernmost county in Western Lakes State, who had been displaced by their internal conflict with other Agar groups there (or by Nuer raids); and Bor Dinka who had crossed the Nile from Bor to Awerial.¹⁶⁵ Permerna Awerial, a member of parliament for Aliab in the national assembly, told us that at one point the number of migrants coming from Bor across the river and settling in his Mingkaman constituency exceeded the number of indigenous inhabitants.¹⁶⁶

Migrants from Bor are a growing factor in the communal politics of Greater Yirol. At earlier times of national conflict, members of these Dinka communities on the east bank of the Nile River have sought refuge

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164 Interview with Matoch Majak Malou and Manuer Mangui, former and current Ciec Dinka *gelweng* leaders, Nyang, Yirol East County, 4 June 2017.

165 ‘More than Four Thousand Residents of Pakam County Have Fled Their Homes’, Facebook post, Radio Miraya, 20 June 2018.

166 According to Permerna Awerial, the migrants from Bor were unwilling to be registered by census takers for fear of being taxed. Interview with Permerna Awerial Aluong, member of national assembly for Awerial, Juba, 14 August 2017.

on the other side, in Aliab. After the fighting between SPLA factions in 2013, when Bor town was attacked, many Dinka from the east bank fled across the river.¹⁶⁷ At present, people from Bor have a growing role in the tentative revival of the cattle trade, this time between the west and east banks of the Nile. As guests in Eastern Lakes State, Bor migrants have no historical role in the conflict in Yirol. An Aliab chief, Mading Anyang, commended the Bor for their honesty: ‘Our cow could stay in a Bor cattle-camp and they would never tamper with it. That is why we like them.’¹⁶⁸ Bor youth residing in Aliab, however, have become the object of antagonism on the part of the other two communities in Yirol, who accuse them of supporting Aliab in disputes with the Ciec and Atuot.¹⁶⁹ Notwithstanding the views of Chief Mading, other interviewees frequently asserted that cattle stolen in the Lakes region ended up sequestered across the river in Bor.

Cultural practices shared by the peoples of Yirol and Bor, however, may yet have a mitigating effect, as numerous interviewees point out. In 2018, a team of wrestlers from Eastern Lakes State defeated the hitherto victorious Bor team, making Yirol the winners in the South Sudan national wrestling championship for the first time.¹⁷⁰

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167 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ‘Initial Rapid Needs Assessment: Bor IDPs–Yirol East, Yirol West and Rumbek Centre Counties–Lakes State’, 6 January 2014. Accessed 30 June 2018, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/06.01.2014_IRNA_Yirol_%20Rumbek_final.pdf

168 Interview with Mading Anyang Manyang, Aliab chief, Bunagok, Awerial, Yirol, 3 June 2017.

169 For example, a Ciec speaker at a 2018 peace conference in Gutthom was reported to have publicly warned those from the Bor community against interference in disputes between the peoples of Yirol.

170 ‘Wrestling Match: Eastern Lakes [Yirol] and Terekeka States Defeats Jonglei State by 4–2’, PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 21 January 2018. Accessed 5 July 2018, <https://paanluelwel.com/2018/01/21/wrestling-match-eastern-lakes-yirol-and-terekeka-states-defeats-jonglei-by-4-2/>.

A victory for *kong koc*?

A further event in 2017 was the occasion for collective pride in Yirol. On 10 May 2017, the SPLA chief of staff, Paul Malong Awan, a Dinka from Aweil, was abruptly dismissed from his position by President Salva Kiir Mayardit. Up to that point, Malong had been one of the most powerful figures in South Sudan. Among other things, he was responsible for the transformation of the *mathiang anyoor* (brown caterpillar)—the *gelweng* of northern Bahr el-Ghazal—into the paramilitary force that played a role in the internecine fighting in Juba in December 2013 and thereafter.

Immediately following his dismissal, amid rumours of incipient rebellion, Paul Malong left Juba in an armed convoy, taking the road along the Nile River via Yirol, heading for his home area and support base in northern Bahr el-Ghazal. On arrival in Yirol, he was met, not with a show of force, but by a committee of representatives of the community in Eastern Lakes: elders, chiefs, politicians and representatives of women youth and the churches—many of the groups responsible for the prevailing communal peace in Yirol. The effect of this meeting (which was likely reinforced by General Malong's awareness of the military confrontation with SPLA forces that would await him if he continued towards Rumbek) was that he was persuaded to return voluntarily to Juba.¹⁷¹ In Yirol, the peaceful departure of General Malong, and his return to Juba, was widely ascribed to the wisdom of restraint—to the power of collective *kong koc*.¹⁷²

171 For example, see: Isaac Wende Paul, 'Arrival of Paul Malong in Yirol', *Africans Press*, 10 March 2017. Accessed 6 September 2018, <https://africanspress.org/2017/05/10/arrival-of-paul-malong-in-yirol-and-was-receives-by-large-army/>. A subsequent Konkoc conference in Juba is reported to have been less successful; e.g. see: Elbow Chuol, 'Dutku Beny, Mathiang-Anyoor and the Collapse of Konkoc Conference', PaanLuel Wël Media Ltd., 8 June 2017. Accessed 24 July 2017, <https://paanluelwel.com/2017/06/08/paul-malong-dutku-beny-mathiang-anyoor-and-the-collapse-of-konkoc-conference/>.

172 Some months later, General Malong, now living outside South Sudan, announced the formation of a new armed group, the South Sudan United Front. For General Malong's earlier career, see: Kindersley, 'Politics, Power and Chiefship'.

8. Conclusion

The crisis of governance in South Sudan

The complex *ad hoc* response to the threat of intercommunal violence in Yirol documented in this report illustrates the uncertain nature of authority in present-day South Sudan. At the national level (as has been extensively documented), a corrupt patrimonial system is periodically convulsed by militarized competition for power and resources.¹⁷³ The impact of the crisis of central government is pervasive, generating uncertainty and exacerbating competition at state level. Patronage networks emanating from the national government extend to the states, but these grow weaker outside administrative centres, where they interact with locally organized forces. At the level of state government, rivalry among politicians has been exploited by the presidency in order to pre-empt challenges to power at the national level. The exercise of authority by officials in the states may, however, be forcefully resisted by members of the communities they administer.

Reconciling these forces is the challenging task of the next generation of politicians in Yirol. It is all the more striking that it is during this same period following the independence of South Sudan—a time that has seen such grievous developments at the national level—that the internal peace of Eastern Lakes State has been most effectively maintained. This is an achievement worthy of note. As one government official said:

All ills can be laid at the door of *hakuma*, the government. Drunkenness, drought, famine, crime, cattle theft, border raids, revenge killing, the economic crisis—everything can be blamed on the government, or the lack of it. But either way, it is we who have to deal with these things. We have to find ways of tackling them ourselves.

173 Alex de Waal. 'When kleptocracy becomes insolvent: Brute causes of the civil war in South Sudan. *African Affairs* 113/452 (2014): 347-369.

In the case of the redivision of states, the resultant boundary disputes have been linked in many parts of South Sudan to an intensification of local conflict. In Greater Yirol, however, changes in administrative boundaries have had good effects as well as bad. On the one hand, the original division of the area into three counties in the run-up to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is acknowledged to have been a trigger for the long-term local conflict that began in 2004 and lasted until 2011. On the other, the establishment of Eastern Lakes State as a separate state in 2015 has been widely welcomed. This may be because Eastern Lakes State is, in effect, not so much a redivision as the reincarnation of the former Yirol County. (In this sense, the cohesion among the three communities of Yirol harks back to the period before the 1983-2005 civil war.) Local cooperation in Greater Yirol has also been informed and reinforced by an awareness of external threats to the body politic: raiding by members of the neighbouring Nuer communities in the SPLA-IO controlled area of Greater Upper Nile (and by Agar Dinka from Western Lakes State); and the wider threat of violence unleashed by the crisis of government in Juba.

Frequent changes of governor in Eastern Lakes State—by presidential edict—and consequent changes of county commissioners and other officials, have exacerbated administrative problems.¹⁷⁴ Though all of the interviewees in Yirol welcomed the creation of the new state, several expressed concern about the high turnover of senior government officials, and the short-term attitudes this encourages. When the administration in states and counties changes, these interviewees observed, and when governors are changed, the chance of conflict increases.

Comparison with other agro-pastoralist communities

Critical comparisons between Yirol and Rumbek were routine among interviewees in Yirol. Some also mention the long-running dispute in another Dinka area, Warrab, in northern Bahr el-Ghazal—between the

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 174 Eastern Lakes State has had three different governors since its establishment by presidential decree on 2 October 2015.

Apuk and Aguok sections of the Rek Dinka. Explanations offered for the higher levels of violence in parts of Warrab and in Rumbek, and for the apparent intractability of the intercommunal conflicts there, stress the involvement of politicians in community disputes, the lack of prompt judicial process and, in the case of Rumbek, specific cultural characteristics ascribed to the Agar Dinka.

A different kind of comparison is drawn between Yirol and Aweil. Aweil, the territory of the Malual Dinka, is in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State, on the border between Sudan and South Sudan. In Yirol, by all accounts, the danger from the Nuer to the north and the Agar Dinka to the west has been one of the factors restraining internal disputes. Similarly, in Aweil the constant threat from Rizeigat Arab militias across the border in Sudan means that internal disputes among Malual Dinka have been suppressed. In the words of Deng Athorbei:

A tribe which doesn't feel any threat from outside becomes complacent and they can fight among themselves. With Malual Dinka, there is a constant threat from Arabs. They will never fight each other. The same thing is with Yirol. We have Agar in the west, Nuer in the north and Mandari in south. There is an element of threat which brings us together to fight these common enemies.¹⁷⁵

Telar Deng described his discussions of this issue with community leaders in Yirol:

In April 2010 during elections, when there was communal fighting between Atuot and Ciec, I told them, 'Look here, you are fighting among yourselves. [Meanwhile] the *bar*, where there is salt grass, is empty and it is very easy for Nuer to come in there, without being noticed, to kill people in Pagerau.... We have common interests that bring us together. When we were fighting

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 175 Interview with David Deng Athorbei, Apaak Atuot, SPLM/A politician and former finance minister, Juba, 8 September 2017.

Arabs, our internal conflicts were less. [Look at] Aweil. There is no ethnic fighting there.¹⁷⁶

Delays and failures in the judicial system

In Yirol, the weakness of government, and the slowness and inefficacy of the courts, are recurrent themes identified by a range of interviewees. Delays in government justice are seen as one of the greatest threats to peace,¹⁷⁷ since offended parties are liable to take matters into their own hands. In such cases, wild justice is liable to prevail.¹⁷⁸ There has been some success in restoring the rule of law in Yirol: an internal memorandum prepared for an international NGO in 2014 confirmed a point made to us by Chief Bahon Mabor. It contrasts the special courts in Yirol with those in Rumbek. In Yirol, it notes, the special courts were able to function effectively because suspects in cases of killing and cattle theft had already been detained, while in Rumbek no arrests were made.¹⁷⁹ But the general disarray of the criminal justice system in South Sudan is reflected in Yirol also, where those accused of adultery are imprisoned alongside those guilty of murder, and where traditional systems of blood compensation and restorative justice exist in an inconsistent and unregulated relation to government courts. The uneasy hybrid of legal systems and practices—*apuk*, monetary fines and arbitrary imprisonment—reflects the judicial chaos that prevails at national level. This is the subject of debate locally as well as nationally.¹⁸⁰ Telar Deng, at one-time

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176 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Luac Atuot, Juba, 14 August 2017.

177 The issue is explored in an account of dispute resolution in David K. Deng, 'Challenges of Accountability: An Assessment of Dispute Resolution Processes in Rural South Sudan', Washington, DC: PACT, 2013.

178 The phrase 'wild justice', signifying revenge, was coined by the English writer Francis Bacon (1561–1626).

179 'Understanding the Ongoing Violence and Socio-Political Dynamics in Lakes State' 2014.

180 A senior chief in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal explains that *apuk* has also lost the traditional spiritual and legal importance it once held as part of a community-wide ritual process and has thus ceased to assuage the desire for vengeance; see: Naomi Pendle, "The dead are just

legal adviser in the office of the president, confirmed the views of many chiefs who were interviewed, summarizing the situation in these terms:

We have a modern statutory law that takes into consideration customary law. Customary law gives the relative of a deceased the right to opt for *apuk* and [the killer] going to jail for ten years. Or [the killer] is hanged. Many people are convinced that *apuk* is no longer a deterrent in many cases. Crimes are becoming complicated. With firearms, you can kill as many people as you want. ... And it is now much easier to raise 31 cows than it used to be. Bride price, too. The number of cattle is much higher than before. When my mother was married, for example, the bridewealth, even for a wealthy family, was only 40 cows. Now it goes up to 200 and more.¹⁸¹

The benefits of obscurity

The civil wars in Sudan over the past 40 years have had differential effects on the communities of the southern flood plain. Some agro-pastoral areas, such as Jonglei and parts of former Upper Nile, have been repeatedly devastated by fighting. Yirol has been spared the worst effects of conflict, both of fighting and the famine associated with it, aiding a local sense of social cohesion and historical continuity. Greater Yirol also has the benefit of a balance of power between the three communities that live there: Aliab, Ciec and Atuot, with relatively settled territorial boundaries between them.

At the national level, Yirol could be said to enjoy the benefits of obscurity. Its lack of prominence in national affairs and its remote geographical position have helped shield the area from the current conflict. Unlike the oil regions of Greater Upper Nile, Greater Yirol has no mineral resources

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to drink from”: Recycling ideas of revenge amongst the western Dinka, South. Africa: 88/1 (2018): 99-121 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/85696/>

181 Interview with Telar Ring Deng, Luac Atuot of Yirol, South Sudanese diplomat and politician, Juba, 14 August 2017.

to fight over; it lies on no international boundary; and its educated elite is under-represented in the South Sudan government. As of mid-2018, there is only one serving minister from Eastern Lakes State in the government in Juba¹⁸² and few military officers in key posts in the military.¹⁸³ This comparative dearth of national political influence means that Yirol has been spared some of the effects of power struggles among South Sudanese elites. (No politician or military figure from Greater Yirol has joined the armed resistance against the government of South Sudan.) Those citizens in Yirol who were interviewed for this study give local

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182 As of mid-2018, two of the most prominent politicians from Greater Yirol—Telar Ring Deng and David Deng Athorbei—both of them SPLM/A veterans and former ministers in the national government, were no longer in ministerial positions. Telar Deng was named as minister of justice by President Salva Kiir in 2013, but his nomination was rejected, unusually, by a vote in the national parliament. In 2014, he was appointed as ambassador to the Russian Federation but was recalled from Moscow and resigned in January 2018; see: ‘S. Sudan Recalled Its Russian Envoy before His Resignation’, *Sudan Tribune*, 26 January 2018. Accessed 17 June 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article64575>. David Deng was dismissed as minister of finance in July 2016. By mid-2018, the only minister from Greater Yirol remaining in the national government was Moses Hassan Ayet (Luac of Atuot), the minister of commerce, trade and industry.

183 In the SPLA, and subsequently the armed forces of South Sudan, Yirol has historically been well represented; however, in 2017–2018, two of the most prominent military officers from Greater Yirol were removed from their positions. The first, Lieutenant-General Marial Chanuong Yol, had been the head of the presidential guard, the Tiger Battalion, which played a key role in the internecine fighting in Juba in 2013. In 2015, as a result of the events of 2013, he was placed under sanction by the UN; see: United Nations, Security Council, ‘Resolution 2206’, 3 March 2015, S/RES/2206 (2015). Accessed 9 September 2018, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2206%20%282015%29. Although subsequently promoted to chief of defence forces for operations, training and intelligence of the SPLA, Marial Chanuong was removed from his position in March 2018 by presidential order, see Jason Patinkin, ‘South Sudan’s Kiir Promotes Three Generals Facing U.N. Sanctions’, Reuters, 15 December 2017. Accessed 8 September 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-unrest/south-sudans-kiir-promotes-three-generals-facing-u-n-sanctions-idUSKBN1E9235>; and Memoscar Lasuba, ‘Kiir Fires Stephen Dhieu and Marial Chanuong’, Eye Radio, 13 March 2018. Another senior officer from Yirol was removed in 2017: General Marial Nuor Jok, who had been appointed head of military intelligence in 2014, was reassigned to the diplomatic service; see: ‘Kiir Moves Head of Military Intelligence to Foreign Service’, Radio Tamazuj, 15 September 2017. Accessed 20 September 2017, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/kiir-moves-head-of-military-intelligence-to-foreign-service>.

politicians credit for self-restraint—at least in recent years—that is to say, for the practice of *kong koc*. Of two such political figures, at odds in the past, it is said, ‘In Juba they can’t sit at one table. But in Yirol they travel in a single car.’

Armed youth, educated youth, and customary authorities

Many in Eastern Lakes State commend the role of youth in the maintenance of peace between communities formerly in conflict. Deng Athorbei’s account of the transformation of a cattle raid into a wrestling match is a story that resonated with youth and elders alike. One chief remarked, ‘Although it is youth who fight, it is also youth who bring about reconciliation.’ He referred both to youth in the cattle-camps and to the educated youth who have promoted the peace process from outside the state.

In Yirol, an emerging three-way relationship between armed cattle-camp youth, educated youth and customary authorities serves in some cases to maintain peace. The generational structure of leadership among the *gelweng* links them to an existing hierarchy of age-sets, one that is also respected by educated youth. This may presage a new form of customary authority, with *gelweng* and chiefs cooperating in the maintenance of social order, and *gelweng* leaders, in some cases, forming the next generation of chiefs.¹⁸⁴

But discussion of the role of cattle-camp youth is also tinged with anxiety. Approbation for their role in peacebuilding is accompanied by uncertainty concerning their role in conflict, and fear of an increasingly lawless future. The increasing violence of everyday life in most parts of South Sudan and the sanguinary role that youth militia played in the national conflicts of 2013 and 2016 may not augur well, even in Yirol. Reservations about the role of youth militias have been voiced in more than one report on the emergence of local defence forces elsewhere in South Sudan: ‘With the increasing absence of government from people’s

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 184 Jueljok Aruopiny is a prime example: Now chief of the Kuek section of Atuot, he was formerly a *gelweng* leader.

lives, the armed groups fill the gap but do so in ways that mean no one can restrain them when their ability to protect also becomes a capacity for harm.¹⁸⁵

This fear is also voiced in Yirol—particularly by government officials—as it is in all communities on the floodplain, where gun law and the cattle complex prevail. In South Sudan, increasingly, uncertainty about the future permeates all social institutions. In the case of guns, the spread of lawlessness is blamed on armed youth; at the same time, no one was willing to countenance disarmament for fear of weakening the capacity of their community to defend itself from outside attacks. In the words of the former Aliab paramount chief, Solomon Anyang: ‘If we tell the local government to disarm the Ciec, the Ciec will say the Nuer are a threat to us. Their argument is understandable. If you try to disarm the Atuot, they will say the Agar or Jur [people from Western Equatoria] will kill us. And so on. Everyone is suspicious of their neighbours.’¹⁸⁶

The role of peace meetings

If pastoral communities are good at fighting, they are also good at talking. In discussions of the peace process in Yirol, the Wunlit peace meeting of 1999 is frequently invoked. Wunlit is the most successful and well documented of all such meetings in South Sudan’s recent history. Organized by the Sudan Council of Churches, with support from an international church network, Wunlit gave a voice to the traditional leaders of Bahr el-Ghazal and Upper Nile, and brought about a cessation of hostilities between the Nuer of Western Upper Nile and the Dinka of Lakes, ushering in the reunification of the SPLA that took place in 2002.¹⁸⁷ Many

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185 Jok Madut, et al., *Informal Armies: Community Defence Groups in South Sudan’s Civil War*, London: Saferworld, February 2017, 42.

186 Interview with Mading Anyang Manyang, Solomon Anyang, David Akucuak and John Aguto Gumbo. Chiefs and former chiefs of Aliab, interviewed in Bunagok, Awerial. Interview by John Ryle and Machot Amuom. 3 June 2017.,

187 New Sudan Council of Churches, ‘Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace & Reconciliation Conference’, proceedings of the Wunlit Peace Conference, Wunlit, Tonj County, 27 February–8 March, 1999. Accessed 7 September 2018, <https://www.southsudanpeaceportal>.

older chiefs and other community leaders from Yirol attended the Wunlit meeting.¹⁸⁸ Telar Deng, now a senior politician, then general-secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches, was one of the principal organizers.

The success of Wunlit initiated a continuing sequence of local peace meetings in other parts of South Sudan, modelled to a greater or lesser extent on Wunlit. Most of these were externally funded.¹⁸⁹ In Yirol, however, the local peace meetings between 2004 and 2010 that brought about the resolution of conflict in 2011 were, for the most part, organized and funded internally. It is only in the past few years that has there been significant input from international organizations.¹⁹⁰ An official of one of the latter organizations remarked that he did not think that the international input, or even the meetings themselves, had been the principal factor in the maintenance of peace; more important, in his view, were

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com/wp-content/uploads/1999/03/Wunlit-Dinka-Nuer-West-Bank-Peace-and-Reconciliation-Conference.pdf.

188 There were more than 30 representatives from Yirol County present at the 1999 Wunlit meeting, including several who were still chiefs in Yirol nineteen years later, and featured among our interviewees. Representatives from Yirol at the Wunlit meeting were as follows: Chief Makeny Kamic Apetbeu; Chief Bahon Mabior Deng; Chief Reechdit Anyieth Reech; Chief Madit Maker Gum; Chief Dhor Majak Yek; Chief Mabor Cuot Cap; Chief Dhor Macar Kuer; Chief Marial Dhieu Malual; Executive Chief Maker Dhol Jok; former Executive Chief Marial Nyibol Kuer; Executive Chief Rin Gac Ahou; C/M Long Ngolow Jok; C/M Banek Nguec Ariak; Sub-chief Mayen Balang Kenjok; Sub-chief Makok Manyang Cengaan; Spiritual Leader Bol Malual Ayuelel; Spiritual Leader Reec Ater Bar; Spiritual Leader Dor Majak Alit; Spiritual Leader Majok Cap Kuer; Spiritual Leader Apugi Wath Bang; Mr Mayen Kot Thon; Mr Macar Akot Manyuat; Mr Tur Telar Gai; Mr Dhieu Manyar Cap; Mr Mabor Kuol Yuec; Mrs Yar Malek Malual; Mr Ajuot Dhieu Akat; Amuor Bol Acol; Guet Arol Mathiang. See: New Sudan Council of Churches, 'Dinka-Nuer West Bank Peace & Reconciliation Conference', Section V Yirol County signatories.

189 Mark Bradbury, et al., 'Local Peace Processes in Sudan: A Baseline Study', London: Rift Valley Institute, 2006.

190 Principally by the USAID-funded AECOM VISTAS program (Viable Support to Transition and Stability); e.g. United States Agency for International Development/Office of Transition Initiatives, 'Report on Greater Yirol Peace Conference'. An earlier peacebuilding programme, PACT, supported some of the meetings organized by Bahr el-Ghazal Youth Development Association in Yirol. Also see: Sudan Peace Fund, 'Pankar Cluster: A Strategic Approach in Support of the Peace and Recovery Plans for the Counties under the "Pankar" Peace Initiative', Nairobi: Sudan Peace Fund, 2005.

the character and good faith of the government officials appointed to key positions.

Nevertheless, the value of peace meetings is endorsed by all parties in Yirol. Such meetings have become an established part of the political process. They are forums that bridge the various sectors of communal life, giving a platform not just to the powerful but also, increasingly, to those groups—women in particular—whose voice in political discussion has been muted. Peace meetings in Yirol thus have a significance that goes beyond the resolution of particular disputes. They are a location for collective discussion of the wider challenges faced by communities engaged in a problematic transition from conflict—haunted by the threat of hunger, and marooned in the midst of war. As a meeting point for government, armed youth and customary authority, these peace meetings can be seen as local precursors of a future national dialogue in South Sudan, long mooted but not yet implemented.

A local response to a general crisis

This report has discussed conflict and peacebuilding in Eastern Lakes state as understood and practised by those who live there. It documents an understanding on the part of the people of the state of the shifting layers of power in South Sudan. This understanding is characterised by an awareness of the potentially dire convergence of key political and economic factors: administrative disarray at government level, an uncontrolled influx of guns and continuing constraints on economic development imposed by civil war.

In Yirol these challenges have been the occasion for action at the community level. The shocks of broader political and technological change have been tempered by a developing awareness of their effects on intercommunal relations. A form of cooperation has emerged between the powers in the land: between the state government (with formal authority and force of arms but often absent or ineffective outside centres of administration); customary authorities (long established and rooted in communities but weakened in influence), the leaders of militarized youth (effective but local), and educated youth (active in conflict resolution

but without recognized authority). The willingness of all these parties to engage in the ceaseless process of negotiation and compromise has led to a recognition of shared interests that restrains the escalation of conflict. In the fraught context of South Sudan this sense of common responsibility is grounds for hope.

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Since 2015 the RVI South Sudan Customary Authorities project has received financial and diplomatic support from the Government of Switzerland. The Swiss Government has an exemplary long-term commitment to understanding the role of indigenous forms of authority in South Sudan, dating back to the years leading up to the CPA¹⁹¹. The personal and intellectual engagement of Swiss diplomatic staff in Juba, notably Phillippe Besson, Christoph Wille, Thomas Munsch and Oliver Humbel—and Martina Santschi of Swisspeace—has made working with them a pleasure.

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191 John Ryle. 'To Conserve You Must Transform: Culture and the Wealth of Nations in South Sudan'. Paper presented at Modern Government and Traditional Structures in South Sudan, an open consultation on present challenges in South Sudan, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 14–16 April 2005. Accessed 6 August 2018. (<https://johnryle.com/?article=to-convert-you-must-transform&highlight=To%20conserve>)

conversations in Rumbek with Athiaan Majak Malou—former Commissioner of Yirol East, sometime VISTAS conflict adviser, and currently Political Affairs Officer for UNMISS—deepened our understanding of the culture and politics of Yirol and the Lakes states. *Wet yen misk ee puou*—your words are oil for the heart.

In Juba, Napoleon Adok Gai, in the Office of the President, offered helpful advice and recommendations regarding his home state. In Eastern Lakes Bor Philip Wutchok, then state governor, and his deputy Nhial Enock Chahoch, allowed us freedom to travel and conduct our research without hindrance. We were assisted also by Philip Kot Job, the Minister of Local Government in Eastern Lakes, and to Taban Abel Aguek, now Minister for Information, Communication, Youth and Sports. Our driver, Aguer Chol, conveyed us safely from Rumbek to Yirol, round Eastern Lakes, and back to Rumbek.

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- Abinigo Akok. Paramount Chief of Akot Atuot, interviewed in Abang, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 3 June 2017.
- Abraham Majak Makur. Minister of Information, Eastern Lakes State, interviewed in Yirol, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom and Abraham Mou Magok. 4 June 2017.
- Bahon Mabor and Anhiem Nhial Nhial. Paramount Chief of Luac Atuot and his Deputy, interviewed in Yirol, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle and Abraham Mou Magok. Translated by Machot Amuom. 22 March 2017.
- Daniel Ayual Makoi. SPLA Lt-General, Ciec of Yirol, interviewed in Juba, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 17 August 2017.
- David Deng Athorbei. SPLM/A politician, former Minister of Finance of South Sudan, Apak Atuot, interviewed in Juba, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle and Machot Amuom. 8 September 2017.
- Kon Mayor Machar. Paramount chief of Apak section of Atuot, interviewed in Aluakluak, Yirol West County, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle. Audio. Translated by Machot Amuom. 5 June 2017.
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- Madut Buoi. Paramount Chief of Pajiek section, Ciec Dinka, interviewed in Pagerau, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 4 June 2017.
- Maker Beny and Majok Adut. Chiefs in Yirol 'C' court, South Sudan. Interview by John Ryle and Abraham Mou. 22 March 2017.

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- Permena Awerial Aluong. Member of National Assembly for Awerial, Eastern Lakes State, South Sudan, interviewed in Juba. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 14 August 2017.
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- Rin Tueny Mabor Deng. SPLA General, Luac of Atuot, interviewed in Juba. Interview by John Ryle. Translated by Machot Amuom. 29 August 2017.
- Telar Ring Deng. South Sudanese diplomat and politician, Luac Atuot of Yirol, interviewed in Juba. Interview by John Ryle and Machot Amuom. 14 August 2017.

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Glossary of acronyms, place names, words and phrases

Thoŋ Muonyjaŋ, the language of the Dinka, the principal language of Eastern Lakes, is spoken in a wide area of South Sudan, and in an expanding regional and global diaspora. Linguists classify the dialect of *thoŋ* Muonyjaŋ spoken in the Lakes States as ‘South-central Dinka’. The South-Central dialect has numerous local variations, and features of vocabulary and pronunciation in common with Dinka as spoken in Jonglei (the Eastern, or South-eastern dialect of Dinka). There are several systems of orthography for Dinka and other Nilotic languages; all based on an extended roman alphabet. This report follows the most widespread current usage for *thoŋ* Muonyjaŋ and *thoŋ* Naath (the Nuer language) and for *thök* Reel, the language spoken in Eastern Lakes by the Atuot (except for the Apaak, who speak a dialect of Dinka). Noteworthy features of pronunciation include ŋ—the English ng sound—and a soft ‘c’, pronounced *ch*. Some common regional variations and alternative spellings are included in the glossary. South Sudanese languages have incorporated and transformed numerous words derived from Arabic—a local form of Arabic being the principal *lingua franca* of the country.

WORD OR ACRONYM	LANGUAGE AND DIALECT	DEFINITION
Agar		a Dinka tribal group, one of the primary divisions of <i>ran</i> Muonyjaŋ, the Dinka people, the major ethnic group in Western Lakes,
<i>agur</i> <i>agurgur</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	vengeance
<i>aŷon</i> <i>ahon</i>	Arabic and <i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	mortar, RPG (Rocket-propelled grenade launcher)

Aliab		one of the major Dinka tribal groups—
Aliap		primary divisions of the Dinka people—Aliab territory lying along the Nile in the southern part of Eastern Lakes
Apaak		largest section of the Atuot tribal grouping (Apaak are speakers of thong Apau, a dialect of Dinka)
<i>aparak</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	Youth, literally ‘one who no longer milks cows’
<i>aparakpuol</i>		
<i>apuk</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	in a case of killing or injury, payment of compensation by relatives of the perpetrator to the family of the victim, conventionally in the form of cattle. Equivalent of Arabic diya.
<i>Aringa</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	Dinka term for Mandari youth militia, the tetontikoji. Aringa is derived from the name of the Aringa ethnic group in West Nile, in N.E. Uganda, said to have been a source of weapons for pro-government militias in southern Sudan during the 1983-2005 civil war.
Atuot		One of the three major ethnic groupings in Eastern Lakes State. The Atuot comprise six sub-groups: five are speakers of the Atuot language, <i>thök</i> Reel; those in the sixth, larger sub-group, Apaak, are speakers of a dialect of Dinka. The six sections have formed one political and administrative grouping at least since the colonial era.
Atut		
<i>awai</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	salt earth from anthills
Awerial		Name of town, and formerly a county, in Lakes State; territory of the Aliab Dinka, now part of Eastern Lakes state

<i>ayiaŋ</i> <i>ayiang</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central and Eastern groups including Ciec, Aliab, Apaak and Bor South	wrestling
<i>ayilah</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by Aliab	Aliab youth militia
<i>bar</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	toc with salt grass, awai
Bar Naam		river between Rumbek and Akot
<i>beny alamchol</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	subchief ('black-sash leader')
<i>beny alamthith</i> See also <i>beny</i> <i>malual</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	executive chief ('red-sash leader')
<i>beny bai</i> <i>bany baai</i> pl. <i>baanybai</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	paramount chief ('community leader') (beny bai is also used in other parts of Bahr al-Ghazal to refer to any government chief)
<i>beny malual</i> See also <i>beny</i> <i>alamthith</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	Executive chief ('red leader')
<i>beny wut</i> <i>bany wut</i> pl. <i>baanywut</i> , <i>baanywuot</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	cattle-camp leader

boma	South Sudanese English	smallest administrative unit in South Sudan, subdivision of a payam
BYDA		Bahr al-Ghazal Youth Development Association, one of the first indigenous NGOs in SPLA-controlled Sudan
Ciec Cic Ceic	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab. Apaak and Bor South	one of three major ethnic groups in Eastern Lakes State, Ciec are a Dinka tribal group or primary division
Ciir		the Nile
Ciirkou Kiirkou	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	extensive dry-season grazing area on the bank of the Nile, running from Minkammen in Aliab territory northwards to Shambe in Ciec territory. The <i>toc</i> of Ciirkou is used in dry season, a higher but smaller rup area of Ciirkou is used in the rainy season (when the <i>toc</i> is flooded).
<i>cɔk</i> See also <i>theel</i> and <i>riak</i>	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	hunger, starvation
county see also state, payam	English	subdivision of a state, equivalent of a district in earlier administrations
CPA		Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Government of Sudan, 2005
<i>cuer</i>	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	theft

customary courts	English	courts at county, payam, and boma local level presided over by traditional authorities
<i>dhieth</i> see also <i>ric</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	a generation or age-set
<i>diet aleec</i>		praise song
<i>diet dör</i>		peace song
<i>diet pöny</i>		praise song
<i>dor</i> pl. <i>door</i> See also <i>thai, wut,</i> <i>kuat, gol</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	ethnic sub-group, section of a primary tribal group
<i>ganuun Wathalel</i> (pr. 'Wanale')	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	Wathalel laws—codification of customary laws of Dinka of Bahr al- Ghazal and others at 1975 meeting in Wathalel, near Tonj, in Kalkuel state (formerly Tonj county)
<i>gelweng</i> See also <i>titweng</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	cattle guardians—term for local defence forces in Gok, Western Lakes and parts of Eastern Lakes State and some other parts of Bahr al-Ghazal
<i>gok</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muɔnyjaŋ (Dinka)	higher land that does not flood; site of permanent settlements
Greater Yirol		comprises Atuot territory (including Apaak) and Ciec and Aliab territories, ie the three former counties of Lakes State—Yirol East, Yirol West and Awerial—which now form Eastern Lakes State

GYJU		Greater Yirol Youth Union
GYJA		Greater Yirol Youth Association The GYJU was formed in the late 1970s and revived in 2002. Outside South Sudan it has retained the name GYJU. Within the country, since 2014, it has been known as GYJA
<i>gok</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	wooded terrain, sandy soil, above flood level
<i>guur ë pec</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	revenge raid
<i>hakuma</i>	Arabic	government
hunger gap	English	late dry season and early rainy season, variable between May and September
IDP		Internally Displaced Person
<i>jiech mabor</i>	<i>jaysh</i> is Arabic for army;	White Army (Nuer militias in Greater Upper Nile)
<i>jiec mabor</i>	<i>mabior</i> is Nuer	Reference is to the white ash that cattle keepers smear on their faces and limbs—and on their livestock—to ward off biting insects.
<i>jaysh mabor</i>	(Naath) for white	
<i>jiech bor</i>		
<i>Jieng</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	<i>jieng</i> is the general term for the Dinka people in the Dinka language (<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ). In Yirol the term is used by speakers of <i>thok</i> Reel to denote the Ciec in particular. To speakers of <i>thok</i> Reel (the Atuot language) other Dinka groups are known by specific names, thus, among the Atuot the Agar Dinka are known as Arol.
<i>Jiëŋ</i>	<i>thok</i> Reel (Atuot)	
<i>jaŋ</i>		
<i>Jur</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	non-Nilotic person or people, eg from the Equatorias
<i>ket ë röt</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	insult songs

<i>koc ci pioc</i>	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	educated people, intellectuals
<i>idarra ahliya</i>	Arabic	native administration (colonial administrative system of rule through chiefs)
<i>khawaja</i> pl. <i>khawajaat</i>	Arabic	foreigner
<i>Kiir</i> <i>Ciir</i>	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	River Nile. (In northern Bahr al-Ghazal ‘Kiir’ refers to the Bahr al-Arab)
<i>kong koc</i>	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	patience and restraint in a difficult situation, literally ‘first, stop’ or ‘wait’.
<i>kəŋ meth</i> <i>kəŋ cuəŋ</i> See also <i>kong koc</i>	<i>thök</i> Reel (Atuot)	As <i>kong koc</i> in Dinka, ie patience and restraint in a difficult situation, literally ‘first, stop’ or ‘wait’.
<i>kuat</i> See also <i>thai, dor, wut, gol</i>	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	clan, a descent group within a wut, or may be spread across various wuut in different ethnic subsections (<i>door</i>)
<i>Kalany</i>	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	gun, AK-47 Kalashnikov automatic rifle
<i>kwajeet</i> (from Arabic <i>khawajaat</i> qv.)	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	foreigners
Lake Nyibor		name of a lake with dry-season grazing in northern part of Eastern Lakes state
Lake Yirol		name of a lake near Yirol town
long	<i>thon</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	law, justice

<i>lex talionis</i>	Latin	an eye for an eye; the law of retaliation, where the punishment resembles the crime
<i>lingua franca</i>	Latin	common shared language
Maburzeed	Arabic	former oilseed pressing factory in Yirol, now an unofficial prison.
<i>mathiang anyoor</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	‘Brown Caterpillar’, a Dinka militia, formed in northern Bahr al-Ghazal, that developed into a paramilitary wing of the SPLA
<i>modus vivendi</i>	Latin	mode of existence—an arrangement that allows conflicting parties to coexist in peace.
<i>Muonyjang</i> See also Jieng, Jiëŋ	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	Dinka people (literally ‘men’)
<i>muorciën</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	song-ox—castrated male with a hide that displays a favoured colour pattern, usually a specific variant of black and white.
Nilotic	English	language group that includes <i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), <i>thoŋ</i> Apaak (the Apaak dialect of Dinka), <i>thok</i> Reel (Atuot), and (Nuer)
<i>nyitin</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka) as spoken by Aliab	variety of dura grown in wetlands in Aliab
OCHA		UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PACT		peace-building programme operating in South Sudan 2005-2010
<i>pan</i> from <i>baai</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	qualified form of <i>baai</i> —home, homestead, village, country. E.g. <i>pan</i> Muonyjaang—Dinkaland, the Dinka area

Panakar		a village on the north side of Lake Yirol, site of first missionary school in Greater Yirol and of a number of inter-communal peace meetings. (Panakar secondary school is situated south of the lake, however, in Yirol town.)
<i>pap</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	treeless area
<i>parak</i> See also <i>dhieth</i> , <i>ric</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	age-set group of initiates
payam See also county, state	South Sudanese English	subdivision of a county, instituted by the SPLM/A at the National Convention of New Sudan in Chukudum (1994)
Payii River		continuation of Yei River, flows north through Eastern Lakes towards Sudd
<i>pec</i> (pl. <i>peec</i>)	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	raid on a cattle-camp, usually by a rival ethnic section or sub-section
Reel	<i>thök</i> Reel (Atuot)	ethnic group comprising five of the six sections of the Atuot grouping and the language they speak. The term 'Reel' does not include the Apaak, the sixth section of the Atuot group, who are speakers of a dialect of <i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka).
<i>riak</i> See also <i>theel</i> and <i>cök</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	calamity, disaster
<i>riok</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	insecurity

<i>ric</i>		<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjan	age-set
<i>ric</i>		(Dinka), as spoken by	
See also <i>parak</i>		south-central groups	
		including Ciec, Aliab	
		and Apaak. Also in	
		the Nuer (Naath)	
		language	
<i>rise</i>		Arabic	court president (usually a paramount chief)
<i>rup</i>		<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjan	wooded land that floods in the rainy season
		(Dinka)	
SAF			Sudanese Armed Forces
SCC			Sudan Council of Churches
Second Sudanese	English		22-year war between Government
Civil War			of Sudan and the Sudan
1983–2005 civil war			People’s Liberation Movement
			/ Army (SPLM/A}, ended by the
			Comprehensive Peace Agreement of
			2005 (CPA)
segmentary	English		Principle of automatic solidarity
opposition			between close kin groups when one
			is in conflict with a group that is less
			closely related
SPLA			Sudan People’s Liberation Army
SPLM			Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
SPLM/A			Sudan People’s Liberation Movement
			/ Army
SPLM/A-IO			Sudan People’s Liberation Movement /
			Army - In Opposition, after 2013 split
SPLM/A-			principal faction of Sudan People’s
Mainstream			Liberation Movement / Army after
aka SPLM/A-Torit			1991 split, led by John Garang

SPLM/A-Nasir aka SPLM/A-United		faction of Sudan People's Liberation Movement / Army following 1991 split, led by Riek Machar
state see also county, payam	English	largest governmental unit in South Sudan—as of mid-2018 there are 32 states; each state is divided into counties; each county into payams
Sudd	Arabic	extensive swamplands at the centre of the floodplain in South Sudan. (Literally 'blockage' or 'obstacle')
<i>talga</i> (pl. <i>talgat</i>)	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	bullet
<i>tetontikoji</i> See also <i>aringa</i>	Mandari	Mandari youth militia
<i>thai</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by south-central groups including Ciec, Aliab and Apaak	ethnic group (used to refer to groups other than one's own).
<i>theel</i> See also <i>cək</i> and <i>riak</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	hunger, dearth, lack of food, fasting
<i>thök Reel</i>	<i>thök</i> Reel (Atuot) <i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	the language of the Atuot—spoken by the five non-Apaak sections of Atuot,
<i>thok</i> Apau	<i>thoŋg</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by Apaak	the Apaak dialect of thong Muonyjang (Dinka)
<i>thong</i> Muonyjang <i>thong</i> Muonyjang <i>thok</i> Muonyjang	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	Dinka language
<i>tiet röt</i>	<i>thoŋ</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	self-defence
<i>tir</i> (pl. <i>tier</i>)	<i>thoŋg</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	feud

<i>titbai</i>	Eastern <i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka), as spoken by Dinka of Bor	local defence forces in Bor, equivalent of <i>gelweng</i>
<i>titwey</i> See also <i>gelweng</i>	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	cattle guardians—local defence forces in Warrab, Aweil and other parts of former northern Bahr al-Ghazal
<i>toc</i> <i>toich</i>	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka) also Nuer (Naath)	seasonally-flooding grazing lands
UNMISS		United Nations Mission in South Sudan
VISTAS		Visible Support to Transition and Stability, a USAID-funded peace- building programme operating in South Sudan
<i>wanathin</i> (pl.) <i>werthin</i> (sing.)	Nuer (Naath)	‘Let us go forward’. In a military context, an exhortation to advance, not turn your back on the enemy. In a domestic context an invitation to eat.
Wathalel Wanalel		town in Kalkuel state (formerly Tonj county), site of a meeting in 1970s that codified customary law of Dinka and other communities, resulting in 1984 ‘Wathalel laws’. (Pronounced, and sometimes spelled, ‘Wanalel’)
white army	English	Nuer militia. See Jiech Mabor
<i>wut</i> (pl. <i>wuut</i> , <i>wuot</i>) See also <i>thai</i> , <i>dor</i> , <i>kuat</i> , <i>gol</i>	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka) Also Nuer (Naath)	cattle camp; can also refer to a tertiary ethnic section, usually consisting of the descent groups that are associated with a single cattle camp; subdivision of a tribal section (<i>dor</i>)
<i>yuith</i> See also <i>talga</i> (pl. <i>talgat</i>)	<i>thoj</i> Muonyjaŋ (Dinka)	bullet

Selected RVI publications



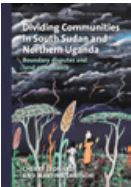
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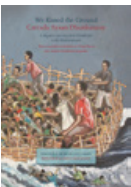
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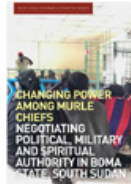
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Ce rapport analyse la militarisation en territoire d'Uvira et la manière dont celle-ci façonne les rapports entre conflits locaux, gouvernance et mobilisation armée. *Also in English.*

Following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the subsequent independence of South Sudan in 2011, many agro-pastoralist and pastoralist areas of the country have experienced an upsurge of livestock raiding, counter raiding and cycles of revenge killing. Eastern Lakes State, in contrast to its neighbor, Western Lakes State, is an exception. Since 2011, there has been a significant reduction in violent conflict between communities in the state. Peace is the Name of Our Cattle Camp considers the communal resources brought to bear on conflict resolution in Eastern Lakes State, beginning shortly before the CPA, and on local understandings of this process. The interplay of factors on the ground, and the responses to them by community leaders and political figures, offers an approach to conflict reduction based on the changing moral and political economy of agro-pastoral communities in post-independence South Sudan.



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