

Violence, legitimacy, and prophecy: Naomi Pendle on South Sudan

*Final-year PhD candidate Naomi Pendle has had an article published in the *American Ethnologist* journal. Co-written with Sharon Hutchinson from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, **the article** identifies new opportunities for prophetic peace frameworks in South Sudan.*



Violence, legitimacy, and prophecy: Nuer struggles with uncertainty in South Sudan

Contemporary South Sudanese Nuer prophets play powerful roles in interpreting the moral limits of lethal violence and weighing the legitimacy claims of rival government leaders. Their activities remain largely invisible to external observers investigating the making and unmaking of fragile states.

Focusing on South Sudan's tumultuous 2005–14 period, we reveal these hidden dynamics through analysis of the two most-powerful living western Nuer prophets.

Gatdeang Dit (pictured above), a male prophet of the divinity Deng, rejects all forms of violent aggression and fosters relations of peace and intermarriage with Dinka neighbors. Nyachol, a female prophet of Maani, inspires thousands of armed Nuer youth to retaliate against Dinka cattle raiders and other external threats while insisting on purification for Nuer–Nuer homicides.

Despite their differences, both prophets invoke God's superior powers to push back against the simplified, secularized, and objectified forms of violence glorified by rival government elites.

(This early-view article is free to view and download until 30 October 2015. Read it while you can!)

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