

**Naomi Pendle**

## Contesting the militarization of the places where they met: the landscapes of the western Nuer and Dinka (South Sudan)

**Article (Accepted version)  
(Refereed)**

**Original citation:**

Pendle, Naomi (2017) *Contesting the militarization of the places where they met: the landscapes of the western Nuer and Dinka (South Sudan)*. [Journal of Eastern African Studies](#), 11 (1). pp. 64-85. ISSN 1753-1055

DOI: [10.1080/17531055.2017.1288408](https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2017.1288408)

© 2017 Informa UK Limited, trading as [Taylor & Francis Group](#)

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/84493/>

Available in LSE Research Online: October 2017

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

## **Contesting the militarization of the places where they met; the landscapes of the western Nuer and Dinka (South Sudan)**

Naomi Pendle\*

*Department of International Development, LSE, London, UK*

### **Abstract**

Decades of militarized, violent conflict and elite wealth acquisition have created a common rupture in shared landscapes between communities of the western Dinka and Nuer (South Sudan). Through the remaking of these landscapes, governments and their wars have indirectly reshaped political identities and relationships. Networks of complex relationships has used this space for migration, marriage, trade and burial. Since the government wars of the 1980s, people from both Dinka and Nuer communities have participated in a myriad of cross-cutting political alliances with a lack of ethnic homogeneity. Yet, the recreation of this landscape as a militarized no-man's land has stopped Nuer and Dinka meeting and is etching into the landscape naturalized visions of ethnic divisions. The article also examines how inhabitants have made use of the materiality of the landscape and imagination to try to contest and coopt these visions. In so doing they have challenged central governments' powers to rule the landscape and have tried to recapture power to determine community relationships. However, elite politics in times of war and peace threaten people's ability to express this more demographic authority over the landscape, relationships and political identities.

**Keywords:** landscape, identity, conflict, peace building, South Sudan.

Ganyliel is a market village near Lake Tayer in the flood plain on the west bank of the Bahr al-Jabal River (South Sudan). Recent years in Ganyliel have highlighted how governments have remade the landscape and, through the landscape, indirectly altered political identities and relationships. There have been both “political and material ramifications of changing use, experience and engagement with space”.<sup>1</sup>

In early 2014, international cartographers mapping the new civil war in South Sudan drew Ganyliel at the edge of the frontline between the Juba government and the new, armed opposition. The new civil war had erupted on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and had spread across South Sudan by the end of the year. The western media were quick to portray this conflict in ethnic terms,<sup>2</sup> between Dinka and Nuer, although Dinka and Nuer leaders were on both sides of the conflict. International observers mapped the crisis to simplify the rapidly shifting dynamics, assuming the warring sides had clearly bounded territorial control. Inhabitants of Ganyliel had lost relatives in Juba in December 2013. They blamed government forces and were sympathetic to the armed opposition. By mid 2014, the newly formalized armed opposition (the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition – the SPLA-IO) appointed a commissioner to

---

\* Email: [n.r.pendle@lse.ac.uk](mailto:n.r.pendle@lse.ac.uk)

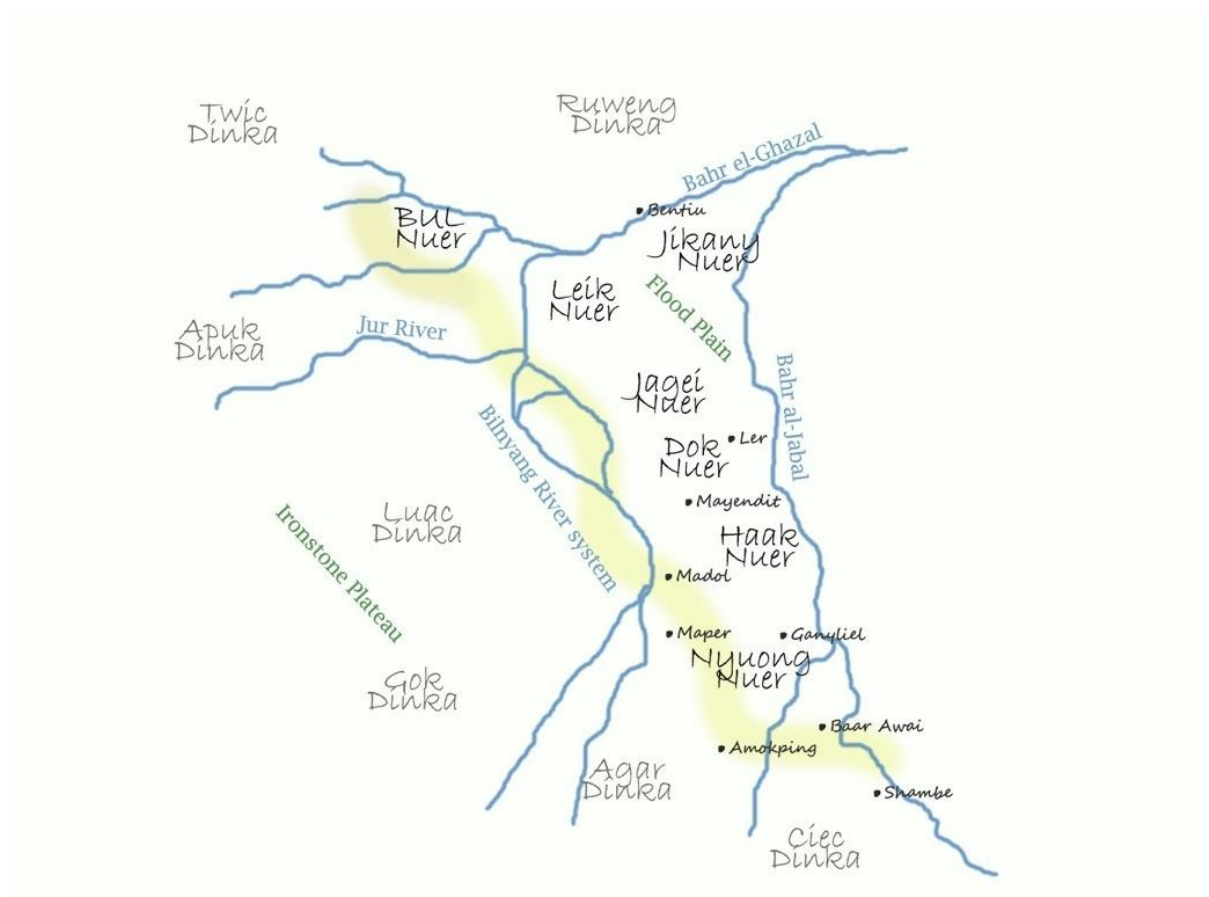
Ganyliel. To the south and east, the Juba-government controlled the Dinka lands of what were then Lakes and Warrap States.

Despite the ongoing war, when I returned to Ganyliel in mid 2014, the Nyuon Nuer inhabitants' dominant, daily debates about the changing landscape were not about a new, wartime frontline but about unprecedented flooding. Water had already overflowed hand-built dams, and people had moved to increasingly congested pockets of dry land. There was not space enough for cultivation or grazing. This unprecedented material change in landscape also brought fear of disease and deadly snakes that competed for a dry patch. The Nyuon Nuer annually rely on some flooding and have long managed the uncertainty of erratic flood patterns by moving people and herds to the drier lands of the Dinka. In this movement, inhabitants demonstrated their power over the landscape's material uncertainties, and also entangled relationships and identity to the landscape.

However, recent years of militarization changed the landscape. Government wars have made old migration patterns too dangerous.<sup>3</sup> Local authorities have also co-opted the brute force of government into local competitions extending lethal violence. This has changed the physical landscape by making flooding more likely; elders attribute the flooding to grass-filled rivers near the Dinkalands that have filled with grass due to a lack of grazing. Dinka and Nuer no longer felt safe to take their cattle there to graze as they feared cattle raiding and lethal violence from raids and wars entangled with politics. The flooding itself was linked to the politics the cartographers were trying to map. As Luig and von Oppen described of 'landscape' in Africa, this landscape is in a "continuous process of being 'made' and contested through physical, social and political practice", with physical appearance itself also molded by migration, settlement and use.<sup>4</sup> Nyuon elders presented the flooding as a material expression of their political disempowerment over the landscape. They also presented it as a material expression of what increasingly appeared to be an unending physical distance from the Dinka.

Power and politics do not just impact the way people engage with places, but "for people not accustomed to compartmentalizing environment, culture, and politics, the experience of landscape likewise influences how 'the political' comes to be defined and articulated."<sup>5</sup> Landscape is important to collective identity and its character, formations, stories and histories reveal to people who they are and naturalize claims to power.<sup>6</sup> In the 1980s Johnson wrote a historical perspective on the impact the environment has on settlement, movement and identity amongst Nuer and Dinka communities to the east of the Nile.<sup>7</sup> Johnson describes how the annual and historic variability of flood patterns enforces repeated movement that influences identity and relationships. In this article, I instead focus on the west of the Nile where there are different but overlapping histories of migration.

In 2014, while some people in Ganyliel highlighted the hardship of the flooding, others perceived the landscape as so militarized that they were grateful for the physical barrier of the floods. In February 2014, government forces had mounted a joint offensive with Luac and Agar Dinka cattle keeping youth through Madol. The hybrid, pro-government forces burnt Nyoung Nuer villages and killed at least twenty nine people, including three chiefs. However, the water and distance to Ganyliel prevented them reaching this space. In 2015, when government again attacked, they were only able to attack the port in Tayer from boats on the Bahr al-Jabal. They could not reach Ganyliel through the high flood-waters. One chief lamented how the sanctuary of the Dinkalands from the flooding had now become source of danger from which flooding offered sanctuary.<sup>8</sup>



Ganyliel is just one tangled slither in a long string of landscapes between communities of the western Dinka and Nuer. This article explores these changing landscapes and their political ramifications. The landscape is materially dominated by the transition from the ironstone plateau in the west to the clay flood plain adjacent to the Bahr al-Jabal, and contains a multiplicity of rivers and *toc* (or *toic* in Nuer) (grass lands used for grazing). Along this space of transition, there are a series of

varied but overlapping ways in which the government and local public authorities have changed the use of space and remade the landscapes. The remaking of these Dinka-Nuer landscapes has reshaped the way politics and political identity are defined and articulated. Connections between landscape, space and identities can be instrumental in inter-group relations.<sup>9</sup> As Watson found in her research in northern Kenya, ethnic conflict has become in the last decade directly related to the changing nature of different groups' engagement with space.<sup>10</sup>

Amongst the western Dinka and Nuer, since their arrival in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, governments have played a significant role in altering groups' engagement with this space. This article follows Leonardi in seeing government (*hakuma*) in South Sudan as encompassing armies and military cultures broadly, as well as literate, bureaucratic cultures of schools and government offices.<sup>11</sup> Governments have remade the landscape in different ways at different times. They have introduced administrative boundaries, including those between Unity State, and Warrap and Lakes State, and previously between Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile. Governments have also initiated border courts and prohibited violent raids across the landscape. At other times, they have commanded wars and supplied weapons.

The governments' remakings of the landscape have indirectly, but sometimes intentionally, remade political identities. Ethnic identity has been a strong force around which governments have sought to divided or unified.<sup>12</sup> Johnson has long highlighted that it is too simple to imagine the Nuer and Dinka as single corporate 'tribes' capable of mass mobilization.<sup>13</sup> This has never been the case.<sup>14</sup> In previous literature on the wars of the 1990s, Johnson criticizes anthropological commentary for assuming the structural opposition of Nuer and Dinka that is entrenched in the secondary anthropological literature on the peoples of southern Sudan.<sup>15</sup> As Johnson points out, many have recognized as given the "tribal explanations of the SPLA split [in 1991] and the familiar dogma of Nuer-Dinka opposition that has been repeated and elaborated on in endless re-workings of Evans-Pritchard's classic ethnography"<sup>16</sup>. Early theorists in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had even used descriptions of this structural violence to justified slavery.<sup>17</sup> Johnson comments that more nuance literature places the events of the 1990s in the context of a global trend towards militarized ethnicity, yet this still ignores the interlocking civil wars amongst the Nuer themselves. Nuer and Dinka in the wars then and now are not political or military homogeneous. Hutchinson and Pendle also highlight how actors now, such as Nuer prophets, can have strikingly different spiritual visions of the Nuer/Dinka category distinction.<sup>18</sup> De Waal attributes the apparent ethnic form of the conflict to military-ethnic patronage where "commanders assembled military units on tribal lines with the aim of maximizing personal loyalty".<sup>19</sup> However, elite patronage networks have usually been built around much smaller groupings than larger ethnic communities. By considering the connections between government, landscape and political identity, this article offers another lens through which to understand the complex political identities between communities of the western Nuer and Dinka.

In this article I am interested in how, for the inhabitants of this landscape, these varied sections of landscape between the western Nuer and Dinka have experienced a common transformation into an impassable no-man's land, ending the movement and marriage that created intermingled Nuer and Dinka communities and undermined possibilities for ethnic-based political identity.<sup>20</sup> I explore the extent to which these contestations over the landscape have been material in the negotiations of objective visions of division (in Bourdieu's sense) between the Nuer and Dinka. This resonates with literature on landscape where elites enfolded in landscapes conspiracies of false consciousness.<sup>21</sup>

Local public authorities and the landscapes' inhabitants have also co-opted and contested the government's remaking. "Everybody knows, possesses and partakes in 'landscape'," giving landscape a democratic value.<sup>22</sup> Cormack has shown how South Sudanese have remade their landscapes as a way to increase their own security.<sup>23</sup> Here I also argue that inhabitants have displayed in their daily rhythms of pastoralist migration and trade their power to form landscape. In so doing people have enacted their sovereignty and contested the powers of governments and colonial histories to dictate identities and landscape. They have recreated many forms of 'being Nuer' and 'being Dinka'.

This article is based on interviews and ethnographic fieldwork from 2010 to 2015 in various western Dinka and Nuer communities including the Apuk Dinka, the Nyuong Nuer and the Haak Nuer. I follow Ingold in privileging the "understandings that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world."<sup>24</sup> This ethnographic research included travel and visits to the *toc* (sadly, in parts, with an armed escort). I also conducted archival research in the South Sudan National Archive and Durham's Sudan Archive.

The article first discusses a common story to outline how ideas of landscape and identity are entangled. Secondly, the article takes a brief comparative look at two examples from the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Government in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The examples illustrate government's reshaping of the use of space between the western Nuer and Dinka, the implications for ethnicity and political identity and the inhabitants contesting of these changes. These examples highlight how the autonomy of the material environment has been used to limit power. Thirdly, I describe the militarization of the landscape since the 1980s and then since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Fourthly, I look at two recent examples of government attempts to reshape the landscape through the building of two payam offices. I discuss these new material landscapes and the remaking of these landscapes since December 2013.

### **The story of Nyarup and Nyatoc**

In February 2013, an elderly man from the Haak Nuer told me this story.

In the past, the Dinka and Nuer used to meet. When they did, they would tell a story: ‘once there were two sisters called Nyarup (the girl of the forest) and Nyatoc (the girl of the swamp). Nyarup went to live in the sandy lands of the forest, where trees were abundant. She was the mother of all the Dinka. Nyatoc went to the east to live in the swamp. Nyatoc was the mother of all of the Nuer’. When we met, we would tell each other that story and we would laugh. Yet, now, we no longer meet to tell the story. It is too dangerous now to walk across to the Dinkalands.

During my research, many elders from the Luac and Agar Dinka and Haak and Nyuong Nuer recounted this story to me. The retelling of this story highlights a memory of a long-term understanding of identity being related to landscapes. In this story, material features of the landscapes of the sandy forests and the flood plains are linked to peoples and their history, territorializing memory and giving the landscape a social authority.<sup>25</sup> The Nuerlands is presented as synonymous with the flood region. Here “the lack of slope, the heavy impermeable soils, and the comparatively heavy rainfall, combined with insufficient drainage channels, means that the whole region is subject to heavy waterlogging and flooding during the rains.”<sup>26</sup> Much of the land lies below the height of the Nile’s water and rivers in the region “spread out like a delta, forming vast swamps of papyrus and other vegetation.”<sup>27</sup> The landscape has few trees.<sup>28</sup> To the southwest the environment transitions to a scattered forest on the ironstone plateau over which higher-sided rivers drain to the Nile. The story relates this land of forested, sandier soil (*rup*) to the Dinka.

In the nineteenth century, there were large Nuer migrations to the east, across the Nile, and away from the homelands of the western Nuer. In histories of the Nuer migrations to the east in the nineteenth century, Nuer argue that one reason for not moving west was the strong western Dinka settlements.<sup>29</sup> These decades of eastern expansion and intermingling of eastern Nuer and Dinka may have made the ethnic divisions to the west appear more discrete. Yet, for this story’s tellers, Nyarup and Nyatoc evoke images of interdependency as much as division. They are also not invoking ideas of material determinism but instead link the material to history and politics. The story explicitly imagines a common ancestry and highlights a political history of interdependency in their management of the annual uncertainty of water levels. When water is too high, Nuer found refuge in Dinkalands and when there was insufficient water, the Dinka rely on access to Nuer pastures. As Johnson discusses further east,<sup>30</sup> in the west people also built lineages through marriages across Nuer-Dinka lines to provide safety during migrations. In the west, some inter-ethnic friendships were so close that they would consult each other at times of their daughter’s marriage and give friends cattle from the bride price. While cattle obligations after marriage eventually end, these exchanges of cattle between friends create obligations and cattle exchange over generations across ethnic lines. Trade in times of need also helped survival. By the second half of the twentieth century with a

growing monetized trade, Nuer moved cattle to auction in urban centres such as Wau and Juba through Dinkalands.

*Toc* is a dominant part of the environment in the landscape of transition. To the north, the Bahr el Ghazal river system and *toc* is fed by the rivers Jur and Lol and runs east to the White Nile. Further south, the Bilnyang river system and the surrounding *tocs* flow roughly from south to north and is created both by spill-water from the Bahr al-Jabal and by water draining in from the south-west. In the south, there are lakes, such as Lake Nyubor and the lake at the Nile port of Shambe. For inhabitants of this landscape, it functions to provide dry season grazing and where cattle grazed side-by-side.<sup>31</sup> Shared cattle camps included Wath Tong, Putijar and Tiwemwut (known as the 'junction'). In these times of meeting, relationships were built. Relations were sometimes negotiated through physical and symbolic violence. For example, in the 1960s, in the Jur *toc*, a Dinka is said to have urinated on a fish being roasted by a Nuer. On another occasion, a Dinka cut the tail from a living cow of a Nuer. Both were to assert Dinka authority over this landscape. Yet, violence was mitigated by their mutual need of access to the others' lands.

The landscape was not just functional but was entrenched in meaning and important in transmitting historical memory.<sup>32</sup> Communities buried people in the cattle camps of the *toc*. As Ingold describes, for those who live daily in a landscape, the landscape is a story of previous generations who have played their part in the landscape's formation.<sup>33</sup> These important riverine pastures are also closely linked to myths and understandings of divinity.<sup>34</sup>

In these landscapes, it was families, clans and smaller sections (often based around a cattle camp) that negotiated relationships. Ethnic groups were not homogenous nor did they assume themselves to be monolithic in these political negotiations. As mentioned above, Johnson has long highlighted that it is too simple to imagine the Nuer and Dinka as single corporate 'tribes' capable of mass mobilization.<sup>35</sup> The story of Nyarup and Nyatoc evokes a construction of a naturalized vision of division between Nuer and Dinka based on the *toc* and the *rup*. Yet, even this is not necessarily the case as the Dinka are not homogeneously associated with *rup*. The land of the Apuk Dinka near the river Jur extends over both *rup* and *toc*. Therefore, the story is essentially about interdependence as much as division in a certain section of the landscape. In the *toc* near the Bahr el Ghazal, there are relatively larger areas of high lands so there are even permanent homesteads where Nuer and Dinka lived side-by-side.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, this story does highlight that it has long been meaningful to tie identity and political relationships to the landscape.

### **Early examples government's remaking of the landscape**

Foreign governments first came up the rivers into this landscape in the second half of the nineteenth century. Garrisons were built on the riverbanks and the White Nile



became “the communications artery between South Sudan and the cities and markets of Sudan and the Mediterranean.”<sup>37</sup> Government entry into southern Sudan relied on navigation of the *sudd* blocks in the Nile, and then moving upstream along rivers such as the Jur. Therefore, the rivers became a known landscape for the government, with much of the landscape beyond unknown and dangerous. For Dinka and Nuer inhabitants of this landscape, the government’s appearance from the rivers entrenched knowledge that things of power came from the rivers. The Dinkalands hosted a significant Egyptian army presence at the river port of Meshra Er-Rek from 1898 and the surrounding area quickly became known to the government. Dinka settlements were known and progressively fell under government administration in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup>

While landscape is socially constructed, its social construction is in dialogue with the materiality of the landscape and this materiality’s enduring autonomy that limits the possibilities of remaking the landscape.<sup>39</sup> So, “the meanings, values and political implications of a landscape does not just derive from the changing social, political and cultural webs of meaning and action in which it is situated at any moment, but these meanings find tractions in their entanglement with the materialities of the milieu.”<sup>40</sup> When governments arrived they turned places far from the centre into “peripheral places and burdened their societies with new contradictions.”<sup>41</sup> Scott has shown how some peoples deliberately relocated themselves to impenetrable ‘peripheries’ to avoid the violent centre of the state.<sup>42</sup> Descola also discusses how the European forest and wilds were refuges from the laws of the city.<sup>43</sup> Yet, at the same time, as Cormack has highlighted, the state is often produced locally.<sup>44</sup> Plus, Cormack warns of the danger that centre-periphery analysis denies local agency and ignores people’s own (re)making of their landscapes as non-peripheral. For Dinka and Nuer inhabitants in the landscape, the material autonomy of the landscape limited government and this gave local public authorities greater potential to preserve a landscape that benefited them through both co-opting or contesting government.

In contrast to the Dinkalands, to British officials in the Sudan government, the Nuerlands were an impenetrable “maze of inland water courses”<sup>45</sup> surrounded by the barrier of a papyrus swamp. As one British official described, “Their [the western Nuer’s] country, which consists of little more than a swamp in wet weather and a waterless plain in the dry season, was highly unsuited to occupation and also to punitive measures on a large scale.”<sup>46</sup> It was “an administrative no-man’s land.”<sup>47</sup> Even by 1912, Condominium maps were not marking any settlements in the western Nuer despite having a detailed knowledge of major settlements in the western Dinka.<sup>48</sup> For some, the western Nuer was just an unfortunate obstacle on their way to the Bahr el-Ghazal, the Congo and Uganda.<sup>49</sup> Even the governance of the western Nuer until the 1940s was from a steamer on the Nile and via irregular patrols into the Nuerlands. The government only started serious attempts at road building in the western Nuer in the 1940s. The only all season roads in the flood plains were not built until the late twentieth century and were built to serve oil fields, not

populations.<sup>50</sup> When all weather roads were eventually built into the lands of the western Nuer, the feat was so remarkable that an elderly chief declared to me, “finally I believe in the government more than divinity because it was the government that managed to build this road.” In the twentieth century, the lack of government access meant that it was perceived by government as a place to avoid government and a hiding place for ‘rogues’<sup>51</sup> and criminals.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in the 1920s, for the British, the *rup – toc* transition was a boundary between governed and the ungoverned. This government image of the western Nuer was only perpetuated when Captain Ferguson (the District Commissioner) was killed in 1927 on a visit to the Nyuong Nuer, making the Nuer and these lands even more dangerous.

### ***Example 1: Attempted resettlement of the Bul Nuer***

In the 1920s, during the violent British settlement of the Nuer, British officials in the Sudan government attempted to forcibly displace the Bul Nuer away from the Dinka to create a no-man’s land. At the time, settlements were continuous and there were shared rights to the water.<sup>53</sup> Bul Nuer were living with Dinka in the *toc*.<sup>54</sup> The proposed resettlement of the Bul Nuer was to “the other side of the Bahr El Arab [Bahr el Ghazal]”<sup>55</sup> and along its southern edge<sup>56</sup>, pushing the Bul Nuer “well away from contact with Dinka except possibly from the North side.”<sup>57</sup> Officials also hoped that this would bring the Bul Nuer into the reach of government<sup>58</sup> as they were situated behind a swamp<sup>59</sup> preventing government access for most of the year.<sup>60</sup> As the then Governor described, the “Bul have placed villages in most inaccessible areas and definitely told Government they intend to stay there to avoid Government orders.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, the government aspired to reimagine this space as an uninhabited wasteland where no one could live.<sup>62</sup> Officials also used the justification that the resettlement would return the Bul Nuer to their preferred land prior to slave raids forced them south.<sup>63</sup>

In 1925, Captain Fergusson gave clear orders for resettlement<sup>64</sup> but Fergusson’s death resulted in Wheatley (retiring Governor of Bahr El Ghazal Province) being given the task.<sup>65</sup> In 1929, the British burnt the Bul Nuer villages.<sup>66</sup> There was also a significant military ground force. While only four Nuer were actually killed, the sound of the machine guns and the British planes quickly made the Nuer temporarily flee from this threat of violence.<sup>67</sup>

However, the Bul Nuer contested British imaginings in their response. Instead of moving away from the Dinka, Nuer instead ran across the *toc* east to the Dinkalands for safety, even approaching the District Commissioner in Gogrial to ask for help.<sup>68</sup> The District Commissioner promised to reinforce the division by taking “steps to clear them [the Nuer] out.”<sup>69</sup> He threatened Dinka chiefs with severe penalties for harbouring Nuer.<sup>70</sup> Yet, inter-marriage made fictional any clear division and the government’s attempt to create a no-man’s land failed.

This proposed no-man's land came at the time when Willis was Governor of Upper Nile. He had also tried to create tribal divisions and no-man's lands to the east of the Nile, such as between the Gawaar and Lou Nuer, and Dinka.<sup>71</sup> Yet, this policy proved thoroughly unworkable too, and was abandoned after 1933 following Willis's retirement in 1931.<sup>72</sup> Local agency had easily contested these momentary British attempts to reconstruct the landscape as a vision of division between Dinka and Nuer.

### ***Example 2: Execution in the meeting place of Madol***

From the 1930s, British civil administrators promoted security through the rule of law. The landscape between the Nuer and Dinka was recognized as a place of meeting and was now reimagined as a site for legal justice. Johnson has recorded how important border courts were at positively reshaping Nuer – Dinka relations during the Condominium.<sup>73</sup> In Maper in 2012, a chief remembered a British official forcing burial of those killed in the *toc* to end the visible memorial of the remains of the dead and reduce incitement for revenge. In the 1940s, roads were also constructed between lands of the Nuer and Dinka, such as the Makuac-Adok road, bringing a material government presence into the *toc*.

The British also set up a customary court at Madol. The first Luac Dinka found guilty in Madol had raided and killed a Haak Nuer man. His sentence was to be hung from a tree in Madol. His home community objected. Their objection was not about the punishment itself but about it being conducted at Madol and not in the British administrative centre of Wau. If conducted in Wau, the execution would be conducted in a landscape associated with the government and out of sight of the Nuer. They feared the execution reshaping Agar Dinka-Haak Nuer relations.<sup>74</sup>

Local history remembers a *bäny bith* (master of the fishing spear) using his spiritual powers to reshape the material landscape and assert his authority to contest this government landscape regime. At the time, there was one suitable tree in Madol to carry out hanging. The night before the man was due to be hung, the local *bäny bith* cursed this tree. By the morning the tree had died and withered, and hanging there became impossible. The execution later took place in Wau. People described how the stump of the tree could still be seen at Madol. This stump's material presence made the landscape a history of the government's limits and a reminder that, from the earliest days of government in South Sudan, its power over the landscape could be contested.

Both these British era examples serve to illustrate people's potential power over the landscape, including by using the landscape's materiality, even at times of militarized government and brutal violence.

### **Militarization since the 1980s - *Toc Acï Pat***

*Toc aci pat* [the *toc* is full] was a common Apuk Dinka phrase to describe the abundance of fish in the *toc* adjacent to the Nuer. Yet, the 1980s and 1990s shifted the local imagining of this landscape to a militarized space.<sup>75</sup> Now *toc aci pat* is used to describe the gains from military action and warfare in the *toc*. The material richness of the *toc*'s grazing lands draws the cattle into this space and this makes the cattle easier to violently raid.

From the 1980s, Southern armies, including the SPLA, Kerubino Kuanyin Bol's forces and South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF) violently negotiated their authority across this landscape. In 1983, the SPLA rebelled against the GoS, with the initial mutiny to the east of the Nile. In the early years of the SPLA, Salva Kiir (a western Dinka whose cattle sometimes grazed in the Apuk *toc*) was instrumental in mobilization of many western Dinka.<sup>76</sup> In response, GoS mobilized northern proxy militias to raid into the western Dinka and the *toc* was of growing use to hide from raids as GoS had little direct access to the *toc*.<sup>77</sup> Riek Machar joined the SPLA in 1984 and spearheaded the mobilization of the western Nuer. Machar had been born in Ler and was son of a local chief. With a general movement of SPLA recruits east to Ethiopia, Dinka moved peaceful through Nuerlands.<sup>78</sup>

At the same time, the leadership of the "Ananya-2" came from the Bul Nuer. They violently opposed the SPLA's leadership of the southern rebellion.<sup>79</sup> In 1984, GoS armed the Ananya-2 against the SPLA.<sup>80</sup> The Bul Nuer-Apuk Dinka meeting place was a frontline in these government wars.

In 1991, the SPLA split and rival commanders tried to mobilize support along ethnic lines.<sup>81</sup> The SPLA armed and reshaped the Dinka defense force of the *titweng* and *gelweng* as a proxy force.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, 'white soldiers' emerged under the leadership of Machar.<sup>83</sup> Military commanders valued the cattle keepers' intimate knowledge of *toc*. These armed youth fought along side formally recruited soldiers while retaining close relationships with their home communities. Commanders encouraged raids to be larger and without moral restraint.<sup>84</sup> In new patterns of violence, combatants targeted women and children, and burnt villages.

As discussed above, neither Dinka nor Nuer were politically homogenous, despite commanders' attempts at ethnic mobilization. Yet, in the 1990s commanders did try to brutally construct lands as monoethnic through the killing of Nuer in the Dinkalands, and Dinka in the Nuerlands. These violent constructions of ethnicity were resisted at the most local levels in hidden, brave acts of mercy and power. Families concealed and absorbed into their families those who were threatened. As much as the anthropological literature highlights Dinka assimilating into Nuer communities,<sup>85</sup> at this time Dinka families also absorbed Nuer men and women in acts of mercy under these extreme conditions.

Yet, there was a common militarization of the landscape where Dinka and Nuer had once met. Cormack describes how the relationship between socialized and remote places was turned on its head in Gogrial during these civil wars, with places that previously provided refuge, such as *toc*, becoming places of danger. Prior to the 1980s, people used to run to the *toc* for protection or ran through the *toc* to seek inter-ethnic safety as did the Bul Nuer in the 1920s. “The exact opposite is now true; the inter-ethnic conflicts in *toc* are displacing people and preventing access.”<sup>86</sup> They were reimagined as places of hyenas, the wildlife even expressing the landscape’s menace.

Families had previously lived in *toc* so children could benefit from the fullness of the *toc* (*toc aci pat*)’s fish, milk and crops. The new targeting of children and women made the *toc* no longer safe for domestic settlement. In the 1999, at the Wunlit people-to-people peace meeting, participants listed 417 displaced settlements between the Dinka and Nuer lands.<sup>87</sup> These lands had never previously been so fully deserted.<sup>88</sup> Now only armed men would go to the various *toCs* with just a few milking cows to feed them to act as a defensive frontline. This movement of people away materially changed the landscape from villages into *roor*. Cormack’s research amongst the Apuk Dinka defines *roor* as ‘wild land’.<sup>89</sup>

In 2012, a young Dinka man described to me his home village in *toc* before he fled in 1995. He described how, “From that year, there has been no building on the border with the Nuer. They burnt our buildings and we burnt their buildings. And we all ran away and have left that place as a vacuum. I saw those places a couple of years ago. It is all *roor*. No one will live there now because of the fighting and fear of the Nuer. It has returned to *roor*”.<sup>90</sup>

The new militarized landscape created a violent barrier between Nuer and Dinka communities, preventing meeting, exchange and marriage. As an Apuk Dinka Chief described:

In the past, we were mixed up [the Dinka and the Nuer]. Before the Ananya-2. It started when they moved to Ethiopia and we are separated up to now. There are no links. Now they are gone.<sup>91</sup>

A Haak Nuer man described:

I am free to be in the Dinkalands. I speak Dinka and my in laws are there. I know people in the villages and they know me. Yet, I have no means to get there. If I walk to the Dinkalands, I will be killed along the way. I’m an old man with no gun. So, I cannot go to the Dinka and, unlike me, my sons will not marry from the Dinka.<sup>92</sup>

In the 1980s, using examples from the east of the Nile, Johnson described how “in an historical perspective the ‘ethnic’ identity or definition of the peoples of the floodplain is as fluid as the conditions in which they live.”<sup>93</sup> Yet, the militarized landscape ended movement even in times of great need, such as flooding. Fluidity was paused and a vision of division between the Dinka and Nuer became increasingly explicit.

However, even during the height of wartime violence, some local actors dared to imagine the landscape differently. Bul Nuer sought refuge amongst the Apuk and Twic Dinka during the late 1990s when the new oil pipeline prompted new violent control of oilfields in the Nuerlands. “They [the Bul Nuer] did not even build *tukals*. They lived with us right in our houses.”<sup>94</sup> Haak and Dok Nuer also sought refuge amongst the Luac Dinka during the Nuer civil wars. The Wunlit peace agreement had roots in this context.

### **Peacetime entrenching of militarization**

By 2006, there was an apparent peace in South Sudan: in 1999, the Wunlit meeting had brought agreement between the western Dinka and Nuer; in 2002, Machar returned to Garang’s SPLA; in 2005, GoS and the SPLA signed the CPA; and in 2006 the SSDF agree to join the Kiir-led SPLA.

Nevertheless in daily lives of inhabitants, wars continued and the landscape remained militarized. In some sections, there was explicit government warfare such as the Bul Nuer dominated South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA)’s rebellion in 2011. One of the first acts of Peter Gadet’s leadership of the SSLA was a large cattle-raid into the Apuk Dinka *toc*. As one Dinka chief described in 2012, “It is now still as bad as the Ananya-2 times. There is no peace between us. They loot and kill us. We loot and kill them.”<sup>95</sup>

The militarization of the landscape is also entrenched as the material present of the current landscape retells the recent past as a time of violent death and non-burial. In certain patches, human remains are still visible from deaths in conflict when burial was too dangerous. People remember where these remains can be found and these remains are an ongoing, present expression of violence and militarization.

The landscape has also been reimagined through the visible mutilation of human bodies, using landscape to announce disregard for former moral limits to violence. For example, in 2011, a body was crucified in the *toc* between the Nyoung Nuer and Ciec Dinka. Nuer and Dinka I interviewed both considered this a particularly horrendous violation of the individual, the community and the landscape.

However, young, armed men still take risks to visit and make sacrifices on the gravesites of ancestors buried here. They go heavily armed. In preserving these material reminders of more peaceful pasts they are potentially providing an alternative

imagining of the landscape. Yet, in the post CPA era of land law, men have invoked their ancestors for spiritual protection during exclusive claims to land rights. As one young man explained:

Our grandparents lived in the *toc*. That is where they are buried. That was really our land. We need power to reclaim our land again so our cattle are well fed and so our children are well fed. So, a few of us go back with our guns. We went last year to sacrifice a cow to my grandfather.<sup>96</sup>

While young men seek the power of the divine, in practice they also rely on elite-provided weapons. South Sudanese politicians have used peace to amass personal wealth. De Waal has highlighted the kleptocratic nature of South Sudanese governance that has made use of oil money since the CPA<sup>97</sup>, but political competition over personal wealth has not been limited to monetized gains.

Many elites invest this new money in these *toc* landscapes. Riek Machar, for example, invested in a farm at Madol. As mentioned above, decades before Madol had been a common meeting place of the Luac and Agar Dinka, and the Haak, Dok and Nyuong Nuer. Here, peace negotiations and court cases were held, marriages were arranged and cattle grazed together. People would freely move through Madol to and from the lands of the Dinka and Nuer. As above, the Condominium government failed to make this a site for executions. However, in the 1990s, SPLA wars did turn Madol into a militarized frontline. During the 1990s Nuer civil war,<sup>98</sup> Madol became a military barracks for opposition leader Riek Machar. After the 2005 CPA between GoS and the SPLA, that hoped to end violence in South Sudan, Riek Machar recreated Madol into a large, private farm. Dinka cattle keepers and chiefs had violently opposed this assertion of exclusive control of this landscape. When I visited in 2013, the large farm machinery still sat unused and sinking into the heavy mud. The Dinka cattle keepers and chiefs had refused to attend a peace meeting at Madol when the invitation assumed Nuer ownership of Madol. The post-CPA aggression continued in this landscape until Salva Kiir personally persuaded the Dinka chiefs to stop fighting with the gift of half a dozen cars. In December 2013, this landscape quickly returned to militarized conflict. Elite attempts to remake the landscape of Madol for political ends and private profit had reshaped the prevailing local histories and political identities, carving into the landscape new ethnic visions of divisions.

Other elites bought cattle to graze in the *toc*, and they armed nephews to guard their herds. Nephews felt obliged to raid across Nuer-Dinka lines to replenish herds if cattle are lost to sickness or violence, and to use violence to secure rich pastures. Since the CPA, elites in Juba have commanded the dynamics of some cattle camps through *Thuraya* satellite phones.

For example, the *Baar Awai* (large salt) near Shambe is a highly valued area for grazing. Prior to the 1990s, many communities peacefully, jointly accessed the *Baar Awai* and local laws enforced the illegitimacy of raiding here. Since the 1990s, the *Baar Awai* has been violent and inaccessible. Then, in the 2010 dry season, Nuer and Dinka were surprised by the sudden appearance of bright lights. A large, privately owned herd of cattle was camped at the heart of these salt licks and surrounded by generator-powered floodlights. Armed men, some in SPLA uniforms, guarded the herd. The youth I spoke to felt powerless to contest this access or access the salt themselves.

However, in early 2014, small groups of Nuer and Dinka young men peacefully, privately grazed in the *Baar Awai*. While elite attentions were on the national crisis, the local herders had a renewed freedom to reclaim access to this landscape. Elite's knowledge of the value of the landscape to pastoralists entrenches its militarization.

### **Two payam offices**

After the CPA, in line with their state building agenda, international donor governments paid for the construction of government buildings including at the payam level. Donors presented these as apolitical, technocratic physical symbols of the coming of the government. The buildings were a material performance in the present of an imagined future of 'good governance'. Donors even hoped these buildings would themselves conjure security by making visible the government's power, even if the government was absent in other ways.

These scattered, new local government buildings are made from brick with iron-sheet roofs. Their builders paint them, evoking images of global modernity in a landscape where paint is hard to come by. Donors have paid as much as US \$250,000 for construction and inhabitants can rarely mimic this monetary income. Other dotted brick structures in this landscape are remnants from previous government constructions or the new, private constructions of Juba's elite. Still, local authorities display their networks by acquiring left over paint to decorate their own mud walled homes. Their networks highlight their own centrality in the landscape.

The payam is part of a hierarchical, administrative structure of government units that fit together to form the state. For the central government, the payam offices attempted to capture the landscape for the state and created it as just a local, marginal part of the whole. Nonetheless, pastoralists often create their own centres in government 'peripheries'.<sup>99</sup> Latour argues that we should not assume the whole, but open up all the controversies of relations of the parts to the whole.<sup>100</sup> Here we look at the controversies over these constructed parts.

### ***Mayenjur payam office***



Mayenjur is a settlement on the confluence of the rivers Mabior, Ngenga and Jara of the Jur. Apuk Dinka elders remember Mayenjur as a place of meeting the Bul Nuer, and as a Nuer route to grazing in the Dinkalands and cattle markets in Wau. People in Mayenjur and the surrounding area spoke Dinka and Nuer and freely moved across the landscape. Local history dates serious Bul Nuer – Apuk Dinka conflicts to the 1960s. Since the government wars of 1980s, people were periodically displaced, but people only fled more permanently in 2004. Cattle keepers, *titweng*<sup>101</sup> and rebelling forces (including the SSLA) have raided thousands of cattle in this *toc* and killed hundreds. By 2012, Mayenjur was just an SPLA barracks; its inhabitants lived in Warabyei, far into the Dinkalands.

In 2012, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) had EU funding to build a payam office in Mayenjur. However, the construction workers refused to build the office in Mayenjur due to insecurity, so the NGO suggested building in Warabyei. A local politician refused. He was actively trying to resettle Mayenjur and had been lobbying for people to return. He argued that if they failed to return the Bul Nuer would claim their land. The payam office became a contested opportunity for an assertion of exclusive ownership of the land that would enhance the vision of division with the Nuer. In the end, no payam office was built at Mayenjur. In this case, the enduring presence of the past decades of militarization was through the material absence of the new signs of ‘good governance’ and settlement.

For a couple of years after December 2013, there has been a new, high-level political homogeneity because of the SSLA’s alliance with the Juba-government. Yet, this did not allow local inhabitants to reclaim the landscape as a shared place of meeting. In 2016, government leaders met in Mayenjur and issued an order that future raiders would be subject to the death penalty. This apparent return to rule of law was described as a court martial and asserted military authority over the landscape more than a reuniting of communities.

### ***Amokpiny payam office***

I first arrived in Amokpiny in 2012 tired and hot after our car was stuck in the mud of the new road being built by World Food Program (WFP). The chief arrived a few minutes after us by motorbike, having rushed from the government centre in Rumbek where he lived half the time. Even for the chief, the village had no tea. In the 1990s, Dinka of Amokpiny fled raids to resettle in Pan Awac along the Rumbek-Juba road. Raids had continued until 2009, but by 2012 the chief had led five hundred people to resettle in Amokpiny. Nonetheless, the inhabitants were still actively reclaiming their landscape from *roor*. Cormack’s research amongst the Apuk Dinka discusses how the turning of *roor* into *baai* (socialized land) can be a powerful restorative process and expression of human agency including after conflict and displacement.<sup>102</sup> People returning to Amokpiny had brought oxen to plough fields to reclaim the land as *baai*. Yet, when I visited, tsetse flies were killing the cattle and the landscape’s material

autonomy was limiting the ability of these five hundred people to reimagine the landscape.

When the chief rebuilt his Amokpiny home, he married a wife from the Nyuong. Crucial to his reconstruction of the landscape was the remaking of a relationship of law and lineage through the movement of cattle and people. Over the following few years, complex cattle negotiations over bride wealth continued in the Nuer courts and took the chief backwards and forwards. By 2012, there was also a small trade in cattle between Amokpiny and Ganyliel.

The government also asserted its presence on this landscape. In 2012, Ugandan contractors were building a USAID funded payam office in Amokpiny. Opposite, UNDP had already constructed a police post. In addition, the WFP road between these brick building was planned to bisect the landscape to reach to the Nuerlands. At the time, the road was still under construction and most people opted to travel on the less slippery, adjacent, small path. Yet, the trio of the police post, payam office and road were a visible reconstruction of the material landscape to include the hierarchical government and the penetrating influence of the international order. The landscape was visibly reshaped and this iron-sheeted image of modernity was a reminder of Amokpiny's future as a part of the whole state. A makeshift school had also started meeting behind the payam office. At the time, the Lakes State governor commented on the road as 'taking the towns to the people', imagining the new landscape as a fulfillment of the promises of the SPLA's liberation struggle.

As Fontein described in relation to the Mutirikwi (Zimbabwe),<sup>103</sup> in Amokpiny different pasts co-existed in close proximity in the shared materialities of the landscape. The new constructions created in the present the future presence of government. A lack of ox-ploughs and the sick cattle continued in the landscape the memory and struggle of the long displacement. In addition, adjacent to the payam office was an old shrine that dated from a time Amokpiny was a cattle camp. It had been consistently remade and added to since. Even during the war, people had visited to make sacrifices at the shrine. This kept the ancestors alive in the present as the shrine "constituted of an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within the landscape."<sup>104</sup> The shrine appeared to testify to a different, past regime of governance of the landscape, before the contemporary model of statecraft, when Amokpiny (not Juba) had been the centre.



In 2012, the local chief was active in coopting donor construction and mingling these pasts. For him, Amokpiny was still “the centre of the earth and the earth goes around it.”<sup>105</sup> ‘Amokpiny’ itself makes reference to being in the centre. The chief admitted the landscape was new but he explained, “My uncle was the former chief, over twenty years ago. During his day, there was this cattle camp and the shrine. The payam office will now be my history.”<sup>106</sup> For the chief, both the office and cattle camp shrine were material displays of the history of his own lineage’s power. Despite the reconstruction of the landscape by donors to place Amokpiny in a state-centric hierarchy, the chief’s reimagining of these material additions kept Amokpiny central in its own regimes of rule of landscape.

After the December 2013 eruption of violence in South Sudan, Amokpiny sat on the edge of government-controlled territory and local inhabitants feared a renewed Juba-government assertion of militarized control over this space. Yet, in Amokpiny, despite the war and the further remilitarization of places like Madol, the landscape was created as a place of refuge and meeting, illustrating this ongoing rule of the landscape by inhabitants.

The Nyuong Nuer faced severe food shortages due to flooding and conflict. In mid 2014, traders from Amokpiny walked through the waterlogged *toc* to Ganyliel, carrying food on their head. Nuer traders then returned to Amokpiny, using inter-ethnic familial networks to provide them security and a place to stay. By May 2014, hundreds of Nuer lived in Amokpiny. Larger-scale Dinka traders then brought goods to sell to the Nuer. The Nuer’s dwindling cash reserves made the relationship with traders asymmetrical, but Nuer recognized their reliance on these relationships.

NGOs even brought food to Amokpiny for the Nuer. In 2014, the peaceful settling of two elopement cases of visiting Nyuong girls further cemented relations.

The traders rapidly built iron-sheeted, brick shops, overshadowing the recently constructed government buildings and making less visible the decades of wartime abandonment. The traders reclaimed the landscape from *roor* and their buildings performed the social function of recreating a story of meeting and interdependence by solidifying Nuer-Dinka trade. In Domanska's words, these shops participated "in the creation of human identity at the individual and collective levels, and they mark its changes."<sup>107</sup> The Nuer and Dinka public, as well as donors, physically gathered around these shops.

After the success of this trade, some Nuer traders even went as far as Juba. These traders used both their ability to speak Dinka and friendships with Dinka to subvert the national government's embargo on traders coming from opposition areas. These passages across militarized landscapes and under the guise of markers for another ethnicity not only silently challenged government's authority and control, but made meaningless the constructed naturalized visions of division between the western Nuer and Dinka. Through 2014 and 2015, Nyuong Nuer were even able to use friendships with Ciec Dinka youth to continue to be traders in Juba's black market forex trade. The shops in Amokpiny referenced this larger subversion in the landscape that reached from the *toc* to urban landscapes at the very centre of the state.

## **Conclusion**

It was early 2014, and I was sitting on the sofas in the lobby of the Radison Blu Hotel (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). An eclectic combination of South Sudan's political elite walked passed me to access the hotel's lavish buffet. The day's IGAD peace negotiations on South Sudan had ended without significant progress and now the opposing elites of South Sudan's warring parties had returned to their internationally funded place of rest. One general joked to me that he had just been sent to the negotiations to fatten him up before returning to the battlefields. Their plates were piled high with food and they sat in close proximity to each other, irrespective of sides their soldiers were fighting on. This glistening, urban place of international extravagance could not have been a more contrasting landscape for meeting than the landscapes of the *toc* between the communities of the western Dinka and Nuer. There appeared to be a stark political, social and spatial dissonance between the Radison Blu lobby and the lived daily realities of the inhabitants of that landscape and their attempts to assert their own control over their lives and landscapes.

In the *toc*, naturalized visions of divisions were not the products of short-term diplomacy and elite choices, but instead were the result of long-term renegotiations of the histories embodied in the landscapes. Through changes in the use of space and the imaginings of the landscape, governments and authorities have altered visions of

divisions between Nuer and Dinka. This remade political identities that were now entangled with the material experiences of daily life and entrenched through spatial distance. Ethnic political identity had indirectly been remade by the government wars that had made the *toc* and the spaces shared between the Nuer and Dinka into a militarized no-man's land.

At the time of writing, people are again asking how to rebuild peace in South Sudan. After the continued wars of 2016, no-one is satisfied with the momentary peace made in the hotels of the regional capitals. More crucial than any momentary peace, are the times of war and peace in South Sudan that have militarized landscapes and made it almost impossible for communities to meet to marry and negotiate relationships. The common militarization has constructed a naturalized vision of division between Nuer and Dinka, despite the consistent lack of political homogeneity amongst either group. Inhabitants have contested this militarization and divisions in small acts of defiance and remaking that challenge governments' rule of the regime of the landscape and their elite attempts to capture power. In the landscape, people might find democratic powers to assert peace and their own authority. Those who do not only focus on urban elite negotiations but are willing to protect these small acts of defiance to construct a new landscape may make a larger contribution to peace and democracy in South Sudan.

### **Acknowledgements**

The article is based on a paper presented in September 2013 at the Danish Institute for International Studies. At the time, Jairo Munive and Douglas Johnson gave invaluable feedback. I am also grateful for the readers' detailed contributions. Zoe Cormack's work on landscape in Gogrial has been an inspiration and this article simply adds examples to a theme she discusses with great skill and passion. I am also grateful for the continued patience and ideas of current and former colleagues at LSE, including my supervisor Professor Tim Allen. Marc and Tiggy also provided vital help with the map. Yet, I give my greatest thanks to my Nuer and Dinka research assistants, and their families who looked after me.

---

<sup>1</sup> Watson, "A "hardening of lines"", 202.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Briefing*, 300.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchinson records how Riek Machar tried to distinguish 'government war'. Hutchinson, *Nuer Ethnicity Militarized*, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Luig and von Oppen "Landscape in Africa," 7.

<sup>5</sup> Willow, "Conceiving Kakipitatapitmok," 263.

<sup>6</sup> For example: Daniels, *Fields of vision*; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*. Also see McGregor, *Crossing The Zambezi*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, "Enforcing separate identities".

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Nuer Chief, Ganyliel, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2014 (in Nuer).

<sup>9</sup> Watson, "A "hardening of lines"".

- 
- <sup>10</sup> Watson, “A “hardening of lines””, 202.
- <sup>11</sup> Leonardi, “‘Liberation’ or Capture”.
- <sup>12</sup> Jok and Hutchinson, “Sudan’s Prolonged Second Civil War”.
- <sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Briefing*, 300.
- <sup>14</sup> Johnson, *The Root Causes*.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 116.
- <sup>17</sup> Thomas, *A Slow Liberation*, 74.
- <sup>18</sup> Hutchinson and Pendle, “Violence, legitimacy and prophecy”.
- <sup>19</sup> De Waal, *When kleptocracy*, 361.
- <sup>20</sup> Johnson, “Enforcing separate identities”.
- <sup>21</sup> Moore et al, *Heritage, Memory*, x.
- <sup>22</sup> O’Keeffe, “Landscape and Memory”.
- <sup>23</sup> Cormack, *The Making and Remaking of Gogrial*.
- <sup>24</sup> Ingold, *The Temporality of the Landscape*, 152.
- <sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power”, 23.
- <sup>26</sup> SDIT, *Natural Resources*, 3.
- <sup>27</sup> JIT, *The Equatorial Nile Project*, 8-9.
- <sup>28</sup> Willis, *Upper Nile Province Handbook*, 130.
- <sup>29</sup> Johnson, “Enforcing separate identities”, 5308.
- <sup>30</sup> Johnson, “Enforcing separate identities”.
- <sup>31</sup> Owen, “Fisherman’s Truce”, 27; JIT, *The Equatorial Nile Project*, 237.
- <sup>32</sup> Bender, *Landscape*; Ingold, “The Temporality of the Landscape”; Schama, *Landscape and Memory*. .
- <sup>33</sup> Ingold, “The Temporality of the Landscape”.
- <sup>34</sup> Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, 195.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> SDIT, *Natural Resources*.
- <sup>37</sup> Thomas, *A Slow Liberation*, 37.
- <sup>38</sup> For an account of the arrival of government administration in Gogrial, see Cormack, *The Making and Remaking of Gogrial*.
- <sup>39</sup> Ingold, “Towards”.
- <sup>40</sup> Fontein, *Remaking Mutirikwi*.
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas, *A Slow Liberation*, 38.
- <sup>42</sup> Scott, *The Art*.
- <sup>43</sup> Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*, 48–49.
- <sup>44</sup> Cormack, *The Making and Remaking of Gogrial*, 29; Cormack, *Borders are Galaxies*.
- <sup>45</sup> JIT, *The Equatorial Nile Project*, 37.
- <sup>46</sup> Collins Papers, “Troubles in Nuer Country”.
- <sup>47</sup> Willis, *Upper Nile Province Handbook*, 3.
- <sup>48</sup> Ordinance Survey, “The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan”.
- <sup>49</sup> Willis, *Upper Nile Province Handbook*, 1
- <sup>50</sup> Thomas, *A Slow Liberation*, 38.
- <sup>51</sup> SSNA, Letter from Governor of UNP to Assistant District Commissioner of Western Nuer, 1 May 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.57
- <sup>52</sup> Collins Papers, “Troubles in Nuer Country”.
- <sup>53</sup> SSNA, Governor of UNP, UNP.5.A.3.31.35

- 
- <sup>54</sup> SSNA, Telegram to Governor from Richards (District Commissioner Eastern District), January 1930. UNP.5.A.3.31.97.
- <sup>55</sup> SSNA, Governor of UNP, UNP.5.A.3.31.35.
- <sup>56</sup> SSNA, UNP.5.A.3.31.94.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>58</sup> SSNA, Kamil, H. (Governor of UNP) UNP.5.A.3.31.20; SSNA Kidd (District Commissioner of Western Nuer District), UNP.5.A.3.31.33.
- <sup>59</sup> SSNA, Letter from Governor of UNP to Assistant District Commissioner of Western Nuer, 1 May 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.57
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>61</sup> SSNA, Governor of UNP, UNP.5.A.3.31.14.
- <sup>62</sup> SSNA, SSNA, Letter from Governor of UNP to Assistant District Commissioner of Western Nuer, 1 May 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.57.
- <sup>63</sup> SSNA, Civil Secretary, 25 June 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.71; SSNA UNP.5.A.3.31.94.
- <sup>64</sup> SSNA, Letter from Governor of UNP to Assistant District Commissioner of Western Nuer, 1 May 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.57
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>66</sup> SSNA, Kidd (District Commissioner of Western Nuer District), UNP.5.A.3.31.1
- <sup>67</sup> SSNA UNP.5.A.3.31.95.
- <sup>68</sup> SSNA, Richards Telegram to Kidd (District Commissioner WND), 3 June 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.66; SSNA UNP.5.A.3.31.97.
- <sup>69</sup> SSNA, Richards Telegram to Kidd (District Commissioner WND), 3 June 1929, UNP.5.A.3.31.66.
- <sup>70</sup> SSNA UNP.5.A.3.31.97.
- <sup>71</sup> Johnson, *Colonial Policy and Prophets*, 14.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16.
- <sup>73</sup> Johnson, *Judicial Regulation*.
- <sup>74</sup> Interview with Dinka elder, Makuac (Warrap State), 11 March 2013 (in Dinka).
- <sup>75</sup> Cormack, "Making and Remaking Gogrial."
- <sup>76</sup> Le Riche and Arnold, *South Sudan*, 72.
- <sup>77</sup> HRW, *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights*; Cormack, "Making and Remaking Gogrial."
- <sup>78</sup> Speech by Chief Gum Madiing, Wunlit, 1999.
- <sup>79</sup> Johnson, *Root Causes*, 69.
- <sup>80</sup> Johnson, *Root Causes*, 69.
- <sup>81</sup> Jok and Hutchinson, "Sudan's prolonged".
- <sup>82</sup> Pendle, "They are now".
- <sup>83</sup> In 2012, western Nuer translating the term as "white soldiers".
- <sup>84</sup> See, for example, multiple speeches at Wunlit; Hutchinson, *Nuer Ethnicity Militarized*. Johnson highlights that children had previously been the targeted in certain types of conflict but the scale of killings increased.
- <sup>85</sup> Hutchinson, "Nuer Ethnicity Militarized".
- <sup>86</sup> Cormack, *Making and Remaking of Gogrial*, 258.
- <sup>87</sup> Wunlit.
- <sup>88</sup> Speech by Kulong Marial, Wunlit; Speech of Marial Malual Arop, Wunlit.
- <sup>89</sup> Cormack, *Making and Remaking of Gogrial*.
- <sup>90</sup> Interview, young man, Yiik Ador (Warrap State), 7 January 2012 (in English).
- <sup>91</sup> Interview, Executive Chief, Luonyaker (Warrap State), 18 February 2012 (in Dinka).
- <sup>92</sup> Interview, Haak Nuer man, Mayendit (Unity State), 23 April 2013.

- 
- <sup>93</sup> Johnson, “Enforcing Separate Identities, 5278.
- <sup>94</sup> Interview, Woman from Mayen Jur, Liethom (Warrap State), 15 March 2012 (in Dinka).
- <sup>95</sup> Interview, Executive Chief, Liethom (Warrap State), 12 November 2012 (in Dinka).
- <sup>96</sup> Interview, Yiirk Ador (Warrap State), 13 December 2011.
- <sup>97</sup> De Waal, *When Kleptocracy*.
- <sup>98</sup> Johnson, *The Nuer Civil Wars*.
- <sup>99</sup> Cormack, *Making and remaking of Gogrial*.
- <sup>100</sup> Latour, “Paris”.
- <sup>101</sup> Pendle, “They are now”
- <sup>102</sup> Cormack, *Making and remaking of Gogrial*, 125.
- <sup>103</sup> Fontein, *Remaking Mutirikwi*.
- <sup>104</sup> Ingold, “The Temporality of the Landscape,” 152.
- <sup>105</sup> Interview, Amokpiny (Lakes State), 27 May 2012 (in Dinka).
- <sup>106</sup> Interview, Amokpiny (Lakes State), 28 May 2012 (in Dinka).
- <sup>107</sup> Domanska, “The material presence”, 340.

## Bibliography

- Badiy, N. “The Strategic Instrumentalization of Land Tenure in ‘State-Building’: The Case of Juba, South Sudan”, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 83, no. 1 (2013): 57 – 77.
- Bender, B. *Landscape: Politics and Perspective*. Oxford: Berg, 1993.
- Beshir, M. O. *The Southern Sudan: Background to the Conflict*. London: Hurst, 1968.
- Berry, S. “Property, Authority and Citizenship: Land Claims, Politics and the Dynamics of Social Division in West Africa”, *Development and Change* 40, no.1 (2009): 23–45.
- Berry, S. “Questions of Ownership: Proprietorship and Control in a Changing Rural Terrain – A Case Study from Ghana”, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 83, no. 1 (2013): 36-56.
- Collins, Robert Oakley papers, “Summary of events leading up to the troubles in the Nuer country, Bahr El Ghazal Province in December 1924”, *Sudan Intelligence Report*. The Sudan Archive at Durham. GB-0033-SAD.930/2.
- Coriat, Percy (District Commissioner of the Western Nuer). Report, 1st February 1931. In Willis, Upper Nile Province Handbook.
- Cormack, Zoe. “The Making and Remaking of Gogrial: Landscape, history and memory in South Sudan.” PhD diss., University of Durham, 2014.
- Cormack, Z. “Borders are Galaxies: Interpreting contestations over local administrative boundaries in South Sudan”, *Africa*, 86, no.3 (2016): 504-527.
- Daniels, S. *Fields of vision: Landscape imagery and national identity in England and the United States*. Cambridge: Polity Press, (1993).
- Descola, P. *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- De Waal, A. *Demilitarizing The Mind: African Agendas for Peace and Security*. Justice Africa, 2002.
- De Waal, A. “When kleptocracy becomes insolvent: brute causes of the civil war in South Sudan”, *African Affairs* 113, no. 452, (2014): 347 – 369.
- Domanska, E. “The Material Presence of the Past”, *History and Theory* 45, no.3,



- (2006):337-348.
- Fontein, J. *Remaking Mutirikwi: Landscape, Water and Belonging in Southern Zimbabwe*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2015.
- Governor of UNP, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1929, Letter to Assistant District Commissioner of Western Nuer, South Sudan National Archive UNP.5.A.3.31.56.
- Grawert, E. and Andra, C. "Oil Investment and Conflict in Upper Nile State, South Sudan", *Brief 48: Bonn International Centre for Conversion*.
- Hamilton, A. "Oil Exploitation as a Factor of Violent Conflict Between Sudan and South Sudan", *Kigali Institute of Technology, Research Paper*, No 21. (2012)
- Harrison, M. N. *Report on a Survey of Grazing Areas of the Sudan, Sudan Veterinary Service*, (unpublished) (1952).
- Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights*. Human Rights Watch, (2003).
- Hutchinson, Sharon. "On The Nuer Conquest", *Current Anthropology* 35, no. 5 (1994): 643 – 651.
- Hutchinson, Sharon. "Nuer Ethnicity Militarized", *Anthropology Today* 16, no. 3 (2000): 6 – 13.
- Hutchinson, Sharon. "Violence, legitimacy, and prophecy: Nuer struggles with uncertainty in South Sudan", *American Ethnologist* 42, no.3 (2015): 415-430.
- Ingold, Tim. "Toward an Ecology of Materials", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1992): 427-442.
- Ingold, Tim. "The Temporality of the Landscape", *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993): 152–174.
- Johnson, D. "Colonial Policy and Prophets: The 'Nuer Settlement', 1929 – 1930", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 10 (1979):1-20.
- Johnson, D. H. "Tribal Boundaries and Border Wars: Nuer-Dinka Relations in the Sobat and Zaraf Valleys, c. 1860-1976", *The Journal of African History* 23, no. 2. (1982): 183 – 203.
- Johnson, D. H. "Judicial Regulation and Administrative Control: Customary Law and the Nuer, 1898 - 1954", *The Journal of African History* 27, no.1. (1986): 59-78.
- Johnson, D. H. "Political Ecology in the Upper Nile: The Twentieth Century Expansion of the 'Common Economy', *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 3 (1989): 463 - 486.
- Johnson, D.H. "Enforcing Separate Identities in the Southern Sudan: The Case of the Nilotes of the Upper Nile," in ed. Prunier, Gérard and Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, *Les Ethnies Ont Une Histoire*, 2nd ed. (Karthala, 2003), 235–45.
- Johnson, D. H. "The Nuer civil wars", in Schlee, G. and Watson, E. E. (eds), *Changing Identification and Alliances in North-east Africa*, vol. II, New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books, (2009): 31-47.
- Johnson, D. H. *When Boundaries Become Borders: The Impact of Boundary-Making in Southern Sudan's Frontier Zones*. London: Rift Valley Institute, 2010.
- Johnson, D. H. *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*. Oxford: James Currey, 2012.
- Johnson, D. H. "Briefing: The Crisis in South Sudan", *African Affairs* 113, no.451 (2014): 300 – 309.
- Jok, J. and Hutchinson, S. "Sudan's Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities", *African Studies Review* 42, no. 2 (1999):125 – 145.
- Jonglei Investigation Team (JIT), "The Equatorial Nile Project and Its Effects in the

- Sudan”, *The Geographical Journal* 119, no.1 (1953):33-48.
- Latour, B. “Paris, invisible city: The Plasma”, *City, Culture and Society* 3, no.2 (2012):91-93.
- LeRiche, M. and Arnold, M. *South Sudan: From Revolution to Independence*. London: Hurst & Co., 2012.
- Lindquist, J. “Modern Spaces, Wild Places and International Hinterlands”, *Anthropology Today* 16, No. 3 (2000):15 – 17.
- Lienhardt, G. *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Lindquist, J. “Modern spaces, wild places and international hinterlands: The cultural economy of decoupling and misrecognition”, *Anthropology Today* 16, no. 3 (2000): 15 – 17.
- Luig, Ute. and von Oppen, Achim. “Landscape in Africa: Process and Vision. An Introductory Essay,” *Paideuma* 43 (1997): 9–16.
- Lund, C. “The Past and Space: On Arguments in African Land Control”, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 83, no. 1 (2013): 14 – 35.
- Lupai, J. K. “Oil: is it a curse or a blessing in South Sudan?”, *The Sudan Tribune*, May 16<sup>th</sup> 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article46597>, as viewed in July 2013.
- Mackenzie, P. K. in correspondence, quoted by Lewis, D. J. “The Tsetse Fly Problem in Anglo-Egyptian Demand”, *Sudan Notes and Records* 30, (1949): 189.
- Mawut, L. L. “The Southern Sudan Under British Rule 1898 – 1924: The constraints Reassessed.” PhD diss., University of Durham, 1995.
- Moore, N. and Whelan, Y. *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape*. Oxford: Routledge, 2007.
- McGregor, J. *Crossing The Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier*. Woodbridge: James Currey, 2009.
- O’Keeffe, T. “Landscape and Memory:; Historiography, Theory Methodology”. In Moore and Whelan *Heritage, Memory and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape*. Oxford: Routledge, 2007.
- Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). *An Investigation into Production Capability in the Rural Southern Sudan: A Report on Food Sources and Needs*. Nairobi: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, (June 1990).
- Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). *Western Upper Nile Assessment Mission*. Nairobi: UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, (2000).
- Ordinance Survey, “The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan : Bahr El Ghazal Province”, Ordinance Survey: Southampton, 1912.
- Owen, T.R.H. “Fisherman's Truce or Angling Among the Hippos”, *Sudan Wild Life and Sport* IV, Part. II (December 1953).
- Pantulino, S. “The long road home: opportunities and obstacles to the reintegration of IDPS and refugees returning to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas”, *Humanitarian Policy Group Report*. London: Overseas Development Institute, (2007).
- Pendle, N. ““They Are Now Community Police”: Negotiating the Boundaries and Nature of the Government in South Sudan through the Identity of Militarised Cattle-keepers”, *International Journal of Minority and Group Rights* 22, (2015):410–434.
- Pierce, S. “Pointing to Property: Colonialism and Knowledge about Land Tenure in Northern Nigeria”, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*

- 83, no. 1 (2013): 142–163.
- Schama, S. *Landscape and Memory*. London: HarperCollins, 1995.
- Schomerus, M., Vaughan, C., Vries, L. *The Borderlands of South Sudan: Authority and Identity in Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Scott, James. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, Yale: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Shipton, P. *Mortgaging the Ancestors: ideologies of attachment in Africa*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Small Arms Survey. *The conflict in Unity State (18 March 2014 update)*. Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2014.
- Southern Development Investigation Team (SDIT), *Natural Resources and Development Potential in the Southern Provinces of the Sudan. A Preliminary Report by the Southern Development Investigation Team*. London, 1954.
- South Sudan National Archive (SSNA), Papers on the Bul Nuer resettlement, UNP.5.A.3.31.
- Sjostrom, M., Ardo, J., Eklundh, L., El-Tahir, B. A., El-Khidir, H. A. M., Hellstrom, M., Pilesjo, P., and Seaquist, J., ‘Evaluation of satellite based indices for gross primary production estimates in a sparse savanna in the Sudan’, *Biogeosciences*, 6, 129–138, 2009.
- Thomas, Edward. *The Kafia Kingi Enclave: People, politics and history in the north – south boundary zone of western Sudan*. London: Rift Valley Institute, 2010.
- Thomas, Edward. *South Sudan: A Slow Liberation*. London: Zed Books, 2015.
- Turton, D. “The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia”, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 3, 2005
- Watson, E. E. “A “hardening of lines”: landscape, religion and identity in northern Kenya”, *Journal of East African Studies* 4, no. 2, 2010: 201-220.
- Willow, A. J. “Conceiving Kakipitapitmok: The Political Landscape of Anishinaabe Anticlearcutting Activism”, *American Anthropologist* 113, no.2, 2011: 262 – 276.
- Wunlit Report, Dinka – Nuer West Bank Peace and Reconciliation Conference, 1999. Sudan Open Archive.