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Paying ' buckets of blood' for the land: moral debates over economy, war and state in Southern Sudan *

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the prevailing focus on ethnic division and conflict in Southern Sudan in recent years, demonstrating that even within ethnically divisive debates over land, there are shared, transethnic levels of moral concern. These concerns centre on the commodification and monetisation of rural and kinship resources, including human life itself, epitomised in ideas of land being bought with blood, or blood being turned into money by the recent wartime economy. It argues that the enduring popular ambivalence towards money derives not only from its commonly observed individualising properties, but also from the historical association of money with government. Southern Sudanese perceive historical continuity in government consumption and corruption, and express concern at the expansion of its alternative value system into rural economies during and since the war. Whilst seeking to access money and government, they nevertheless continue to employ a discursive but powerful dichotomy between the moral worlds of state and kinship.

INTRODUCTION

They say, '*nina dofu backat wela safia ta dom*: we have poured a bucket or tin of blood, for this land'. They say it so that you get scared, because this person is a 'liberator'.[1]

Writing in 2004, as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/A) prepared to sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the Sudanese government, Branch and Mampilly (2005) drew attention to the lack of a unified Southern Sudanese identity and to a 'rupture between the Dinka, dominant within the SPLA, and the Equatorian peoples of the far south'.[2] During the subsequent interim period, international and Sudanese commentators have increasingly focused on these and other ethnic divisions in media and agency reports, leading some to question the viability of an independent Southern Sudan, should its people vote for secession in the 2011 referendum.[3] Commentators have also criticised corruption within the interim Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), and, by inference, the absence of the ethnically inclusive civil governance structures advocated by Branch and Mampilly. The latter emphasised the Dinka occupation of land in the Equatoria region as a major 'stumbling block' to internal peace and refugee returns. Since then, reports of tensions over land and of tribal conflicts in many areas of Southern Sudan have only pro- liferated.[4]

As the potential secession of Southern Sudan appears ever more likely, this emphasis among analysts and reporters on ethnic division and tribalist government needs to be urgently questioned. This paper argues that there are deeper shared popular perceptions across the supposed Dinka– Equatorian divide, on the basis of research conducted since 2004, primarily in Dinka-speaking areas of Lakes State and Bari-speaking areas of Central Equatoria State. Interviews, conversations and documentary sources, from internet media to chiefs' court records, inevitably revealed a great variety of opinion, perspective, language and idiom; the paper does not claim to represent a single, uncontested popular discourse. But it does suggest that there are striking commonalities in social and moral concerns in both states and among people of different ages, genders, livelihoods and lifestyles.

The paper argues that these common concerns centre on the commo- dification and monetisation of productive and reproductive resources, in- cluding human life itself, that have formed the basis of wealth and value across Southern Sudan. Over the last century people have increasingly sought out money and market resources, but the resulting debate and competition within families and communities has reproduced a binary distinction between the values of an idealised moral economy of kinship and reciprocity, and the immoral, individualistic cultures of money and town. As this paper shows, this moral dichotomy transcends ethnic divi- sions, and underlies perceptions of government corruption and of the

broader changes wrought by the political economy of the 1983–2004 war and the subsequent interim period.

The paper uncovers this transethnic moral discourse, conversely, from the starting point of ethnically divisive discourse about land in the southernmost three states of Central, Western and Eastern Equatoria. The fertile agricultural land of the central Equatoria Region is divided into clan territories, within which plots have been allocated – not sold – to use for cultivation. Many of the inhabitants fled during the war; on their return in recent years, they have found their former plots occupied by soldiers, officials and displaced people (IDPs) from cattle-keeping regions of Southern Sudan, commonly (but not always accurately) labelled as Dinka. Some Equatorians report that the new occupants claimed to have bought the land during wartime with the buckets or tins of their blood that was shed upon it. On one level this might indicate a vivid expression of the loss and suffering of the war and the resulting sense of entitlement among soldiers and IDPs to a reward long promised by the SPLA leadership. Equatorians tend to deploy and denounce the alleged claims in the context of broader, bitter debates as to which ethnic groups or regions contributed most to the liberation struggle.

But despite such ethnic politics, the paper argues that the rhetorical emphasis on 'buckets' and 'tins' of blood in these debates over land reveals an intersection with the wider underlying moral concerns about the encroachment of an urban, monetary economy, associated historically with army and government, into rural economies. The English-derived *backat* and the colloquial Arabic *safia* are both used as specific units of measurement for grain and other consumables in the markets of Southern Sudan (e.g. GoSS 2008).[5] To use them discursively as a measurement for human blood is, the paper argues, a dramatic expression of the commodification of human life by the war, something which is discussed beyond Equatoria – often with similar rhetorical emphasis on 'blood' being sold, paid or monetised.

The first two sections of this paper explore the tensions over Equatorian land in more detail. The third section addresses the paradoxes of the discursive dichotomy between value systems that these debates reveal, and the enduring capacity of rural moral discourse to regulate those who apparently challenge its predominance. Individuals who have profited from monetary and military employment have gained patronage resources outside the rural political economy, which uses idioms and structures of patrilineal kinship to control productive resources like land and livestock. Moral condemnation of money and towns by elders has therefore been in part a reactive strategy to try to maintain the pre-eminence of

lineage-based claims to authority and seniority. But this discursive tool has retained power to regulate people's behaviour because, as the monetary economy has become increasingly dominant and penetrative, it has also appeared ever more exclusive, predatory and unreliable. Most people have had to fall back recurrently on the resources of family and rural community, even as they aspire to participate in 'development' and the urban economy. The paradoxical result is an enduring moral discourse which simultaneously perpetuates a set of binary distinctions between town and village, money and kinship, state and society, and yet impels the expanding class of government employees and money-earners to cross these divides and demonstrate that they *are* redistributing their income and investing in social relations.

Anthropologists have examined similar moral dichotomies between money and other forms of value, particularly in cattle-owning societies in southern and eastern Africa (Broch-Due 1999; Ferguson 1985; Hutchinson 1996; Shipton 1989). The focus of this paper is not, however, on the specificities of the morally constituted economic barriers and conversions in particular livelihood groups. Instead it shows that locally variable value systems nevertheless produce commonly shared perceptions of the state and changing political economy. It therefore argues in its fourth section that to fully understand the enduring popular ambivalence towards money, we need to explore the historical association of money with government, as well as with the alienability and individualism highlighted by other studies. The ambivalence is shaped by opposition not just between genders, generations or livelihoods, but also between state and society.

The simultaneous popular desire to exclude as well as to incorporate money and government resources complicates notions of patrimonialism and corruption, addressed in the final part of the paper. Some political analysts have explained government corruption and neopatrimonialism in Africa as a mutated version of deeply rooted social norms and practices. But Southern Sudanese discourse instead locates the corrupt practices of government in an entirely separate moral economy whose history is traced all the way back to the militarised commerce and enslavement of the nineteenth century. In this context, the expansion since the 1970s of government employment, military recruitment, urban settlement and the monetary economy is generating profound and disturbing questions. Beneath the apparently 'tribal' conflicts over land, there are shared fears about the disrupting effects of these trends on social relations and productive economies, and a continuing desire to preserve a distance from the state.

LAND AND LIBERATION

Many former inhabitants of the Equatorian states claim to have returned from wartime displacement to find their plots or clan territories occupied by soldiers or internally displaced people (IDPs), who declare: 'I fought and liberated, I bought this land with my blood.' Equatorian politicians, journalists and commentators publicly denounce this as a distortion of the SPLA's broader struggle to defend the land of Southern Sudan. A meeting of the state governors and county commissioners of Greater Equatoria in 2007 recorded: 'We sadly note that the term "land-grabbing" has come into currency due to the faulty interpretation of why we made sacrifices in over 22 years' (Lokuji 2007).

Analysts are increasingly recognising the issue of land access and rights not only as a root cause of Sudan's civil wars, but also as a vital determinant of the success or failure of the continuing peace process in Southern Sudan (Johnson 2003, 2009; Pantuliano 2007). As Johnson (2009: 176) emphasises, alienation of land by government was the greatest common grievance among the marginalised people of Sudan by the time the CPA was signed in 2005. Having long claimed to be fighting to redress this, the SPLM/A has repeatedly asserted that 'land belongs to the community'. But the CPA, interim constitutions and GoSS legislation have remained vague regarding customary land rights (Badiey 2010; Deng 2010; Rolandsen 2009). Conflicts, tensions and divisions within Southern Sudan have increasingly centred on land and territorial disputes. As recent reports find, the rhetoric of administrative decentralisation together with resource competition has led to the conflation of ethnic territory with local government units, and given heightened significance to the boundaries between them (Rolandsen 2009; Schomerus & Allen 2010).

Unprecedented levels of urbanisation since the CPA have generated particular tensions as towns expand into formerly rural areas of communal territorial rights. Some SPLM leaders have warned that GoSS could legally acquire such 'tribally-held land', particularly around the capital, Juba (Badiey 2010: 251–5). Access to urban land holdings has always been governed on an entirely different basis from rural land rights, by the individual monetary purchase of leasehold and by privileged access to the government offices that distribute leases. Historically, the land on which towns are situated was expropriated by government, and any prior inhabitants were forcibly relocated, leaving lingering resentment and a sense of entitlement among their descendants. The land has then been leased primarily to government employees, licensed traders and retired soldiers. As urban populations have swelled in recent decades, particularly with returning refugees and IDPs unaccustomed to rural life, the commercial

value of urban land has rapidly increased, making it a potential government patronage resource (Pantuliano *et al.* 2008: 29–32). Official land leases have remained beyond the reach of most ordinary people, leaving urban populations vulnerable to evictions and demolitions (Gatdet Dak 2009; Deng 2010). The commodification of land has thus largely been experienced as a threat to the land access of poor or average households, and as indicative of the alien, arbitrary ways of the *hakuma* (government).

In the Equatorian states, urban expansion has been further complicated by the wider tensions over immigration during and since the war from other states in Southern Sudan. Many Equatorians accuse GoSS or the SPLA of failing to protect the land rights of indigenous communities, and of actively participating in the seizure of land in and around the towns, particularly Juba.[6] The struggle over land has become entangled in wider political and military divisions along broadly ethnic lines (Branch & Mampilly 2005). There are bitter debates between and among those who fought, stayed or fled during the war as to who contributed most or least to the liberation struggle. Some Equatorians interpreted the depredations of the SPLA from the 1980s as acts of occupation or revenge by a Dinka army, rather than as 'liberation' (Johnson & Prunier 1993: 127; Johnson 2003: 67–70).[7] Privately, some admit that 'even our own boys' in the SPLA were responsible for the military depredations. Indeed, across Southern Sudan, civilians shared the traumatic experiences of the military presence, regardless of ethnicity (see Hutchinson 2001). But the ethnic tensions also derived from the earlier fears of 'Dinka domination' that had been stirred up by Khartoum and some Southern politicians during the Southern Regional Government (1972–83).[8]

Both in the 1970s–80s and more recently, political and military divisions have intersected with competition for land. Much of the central part of Equatoria is a fertile middle ground valuable for both cattle-keeping and cultivation, between the south-western forests, and the floodplains to the north.[9] The tensions are often presented as inevitable conflict between pastoralist Dinka and agriculturalist Equatorians, another simplification since Dinka also grow crops, and many Equatorians possess cattle. The situation was complicated by population displacement during the wars: as Equatorians took refuge in neighbouring countries, IDPs from other regions moved south into Equatoria. The conflict for land became closely merged with perceptions of SPLA occupation when officers and soldiers took over valuable plots in and around Equatorian towns from the 1990s onwards (de Wit 2004). For the local population, these appropriations seemed to confirm a threatening conspiracy among soldiers, IDPs and herders to take over Equatorian territory (Schomerus 2008).

Unsurprisingly, there has been considerable resistance to the expansion of Juba town from the local Bari (Badiey 2010), as well as continuing tensions elsewhere in the Equatorian states between long-term displaced settlements and returning indigenes.

The conflation of military appropriations with displaced settlement is particularly apparent in the reported claims to land based on 'blood', which became more prominent from 2005, as Equatorians advocated a post-CPA exodus of IDPs back to their homelands. Equatorians reported that displaced 'Dinka' were claiming that 'they can't leave because they have shed blood to obtain this land'; 'their blood was spilled in the area and therefore they have the right to stay' (*Juba Post* 15–22.5.2005, 8.2.2008). Blood became a vivid rhetorical device for denouncing the inference that Equatorians had contributed less to the SPLA struggle:

If a Kakwa[10] said 'this is my place or my plot', others claim that a payment of blood is needed. Whose blood? You have your own blood and I have mine. Then whose blood should that Kakwa give you? I think all of us in South Sudan sacrificed ... The Kakwa people are not cowards.

Lo-Lumori 2006

Another Central Equatorian journalist and politician developed this question further, arguing that those who claimed the land were doing so on the dubious moral basis of the blood of their dead relatives:

These ones say their blood settled here; they are the liberators; there is a tin of blood poured there. But whose blood?! The one who died should claim the land! Not you on their behalf ... That thing of blood is being used for personal gains.

Politician 1 int.

Such explicit references to blood have been recorded only in alleged quotation by Equatorians; the new claims to land tend to be articulated publicly in more general terms of a reward owed to the liberation fighters. Why then might these Equatorians lay such stress on the attributed claim of a 'payment' of blood in 'tins' or 'buckets'? Such obvious references to the commodification of human life intersect with multiple layers of concern and debate, one of which, as we have seen, is the attempt to measure ethnic/regional contributions to the SPLA war and convert these into material reward. But the condemnation of the use of wartime bloodshed for personal gain resonates with moral discourse across Southern Sudan, as the later part of the paper will show. Firstly though, the discourse touches on complex debates over land rights at a more local level, which in turn connect with wider concern at the commodification of rural and kinship resources.

Within and beyond contests over land, Equatorians do not dispute that the
war has left blood lying on the soil, but, like many other Southerners, they
depict this as a form of pollution: as a Kuku chief explained, 'much *rima*
[blood] was shed during the war, and the land has been polluted; it requires
cleansing'.[11] The chiefs of displaced Equatorian communities resident in
Juba also describe the need to cleanse the land of blood before they return
to live in former battlefields:

When we return we will need to slaughter a bull and eat it and praise God for our
coming back. The blood of those killed there will be cleared because of this bull
and no problems will come to us.

Chief 1 int.

Other informants advocated such rituals and recalled comparable blood-
cleansing sacrifices during their childhoods in the village (Professors 1 &
2 int.; Politician 2 int.), suggesting that the discourse of blood and land
involves a complex interplay of cultures and languages; at one level, the
politicians and 'intellectuals' are debating globalised notions of blood, soil
and sacrifice, but at a local level communities also draw on indigenous
understandings of these notions and means of contesting them. If people
are indeed claiming land on the basis of wartime bloodshed, this could
similarly indicate cultural parallels with particular kinds of cattle sacrifice,
which assert ancestral ownership of the land on which sacrificial blood is
shed (e.g. Burton 1983; Lienhardt 1961: 295; Zanen & van den Hoek 1987:
190).[12] The articulation of vernacular and (inter)national concepts of
sacrifice and blood is beyond the scope of this article, but there are two
particular points which complicate these comparisons.

Firstly, Dinka informants insist that none of their multiple vernacular
words for sacrifice could be applied straightforwardly to the human blood-
shed of the war. Despite the frequently observed commensurability of
human and cattle lives and blood among, most famously, the Nuer
(Hutchinson 1996), anthropologists have also emphasised the ambiguous
and potentially polluting qualities of human blood, distinct from the
cleansing or life-giving properties of sacrificial animal blood (Evans-
Pritchard 1956: 213–20; Buxton 1973: 211–12; cf. White 1997: 439–40).
Death in a Bor Dinka cattle-camp required 'washing away the blood of
the dead body' (Zanen & van den Hoek 1987: 182). As Hutchinson (2001:
326) shows, the SPLA war may have seen the renegotiation of ideas about
blood pollution, but Nuer and Dinka have also expressed unease at the
spiritual consequences of the human bloodshed of the war. The desire to
cleanse blood from the land may therefore reflect deeper and wider

spiritual concerns than is apparent from the political rhetoric over land in Equatoria. A sense of crisis over deaths from suspected witchcraft and poison in Kajokeji, for example, is attributed to the blood on the soil undermining the power of spiritual land-chiefs to curse evil-doers (Moro, pers. comm. 2010). Shortages of rain in Western Bahr el Ghazal State in 2009 were also explained similarly by Fertit communities: 'People are saying the lack of rain is because of the war and all the blood that was spilled on the ground. This blood is a very terrible thing' (Returnee int.).

Secondly, sacrifices connected with ownership of territory are predicated specifically on 'first-comer' rights (Burton 1983). While the right of non-Equatorians to settle in Equatoria is generally articulated publicly by soldiers and political spokesmen in terms of national citizenship rights or the liberation struggle, at the local level settlers have on occasion employed a more indigenous concept of rights to unused land, claiming that the land was unoccupied when they arrived (Badiey 2010: 334–7; Schomerus & Allen 2010: 23). At this level, Equatorian and immigrant groups may be debating within a shared discourse and employing animal sacrifice and other rituals as idioms in which to assert land ownership. One Juba District chief claimed that several Nuer soldiers had been killed in an accident because they had wrongly sacrificed cattle on his community's land (Chief 2 int.). Some Equatorians perhaps deliberately focus instead then on the 'buckets of blood' claims precisely because these do *not* rest on an indigenous logic of autochthony or first settlement, and so can be more easily repudiated. But the desire to reassert the rights of land-owning clan leaders, often enacted through rituals and sacrifices, is also part of a broader rigidification of definitions of community, in terms both of the territorial and administrative boundaries mentioned above, and of efforts to strengthen patrilineal structures and authorities in the face of perceived threats.

Beneath the current land contest, there are shared cultural principles of ancestral, patrilineal land rights. Both Equatorian and Dinka oral histories idealise the past arrival of newcomers by emphasising the respect they showed to the existing inhabitants, often cemented by offers of new resources like cattle, rain-knowledge or iron-making, or by marriage. In Equatoria, the original inhabitants are seen as the custodians of the fertility of the land, ensuring that they have continued to be shown respect as the land-owners or 'landlords', even if other leadership roles have been taken by 'immigrant' clans (e.g. Buxton 1963). Some of the original land-owning clans have themselves migrated in recent times to other areas, but they continue to be called upon to perform important rituals in their

original territories. Their ritual invocations frequently begin with the conditional clause, 'If this land is ours', any efficacy thus confirming their land rights.

It has been common for people to move to the lands of their maternal relatives if necessary, and the inhabitants of clan territories or chiefdoms are by no means all related by blood (Buxton 1963; Retired politician 1 int.; Whitehead 1962). Even chiefs are not necessarily related paternally to the dominant lineage, since it was common for adopted dependents to take the risk of mediating government forces in the early colonial period, rather than the senior clan leaders (Leonardi 2007a). Nevertheless, an idiom of patrilineal kinship continues to structure inter- and intra-clan relations and hierarchies, reinforced in strictly ordered distribution of meat and drink during social and ceremonial events.

However, as pressure for and the value of land has increased in recent years, members of the land-owning clans complain that they are increasingly disregarded in land transactions, and variously blame local government officials, chiefs or other community leaders for allocating land to organisations or businesses without consulting them. As a result there have been intense intra-clan or intra-community debates over land, often along generational lines. According to one chief in Kajokeji, the landlords have been losing power recently because 'sons want to make money from the land'.[13] Around Yei, it was conversely the organised youth of some clans who were protesting at the sale of land by their elders and chiefs in 2005–7. In both cases though, the debate centres on whether clan land can be sold for money.

The response of at least some senior clan members has been to seek to restrict their allocation of individual plots to patrilineal relations, as one politician from a land-owning clan explained:

Most people living now in [clan territory near Yei] are our sisters' children, people from broken homes – some are not even Kakwa. So we have to say who has the right to exist there. We will get all the clan, even those who are abroad, and make a list. And it will be done [sub]clan by [sub]clan.

Politician 1 int.

Around Juba, some chiefs have reportedly been allocating plots to Equatorians to the exclusion of other groups, 'particularly Dinka' (Pantuliano et al. 2008: 30). But the debates over land reach beneath their ethnic dimensions to connect with generational tensions and changing relations between maternal and paternal kinship, as revealed in the reactionary attempts to restrict land to agnatic rather than affinal or assimilative blood relations.[14]

By focusing on the alleged claims that land has been 'bought' with blood, the Equatorians cited in this paper are apparently conflating a debate over whether land rights should be based on wartime effort, nationality or ethnicity, or on use, occupancy or autochthony, with a deeper debate taking place both within their communities and more widely across Southern Sudan over perceived threats to patriclan and familial control of key productive resources. Their rhetoric connects with wider vernacular concerns at the monetisation and commodification of resources and relations that were previously excluded from the money economy (cf. Shipton 2007). Just as the buckets of blood imply the commodification of human life, so the sale of land essentially involves the conversion of blood relations into money, something which has been resisted or regulated in the past (cf. Weiss 1996: 194–5).

DEBATING MONETISATION

One elderly professor from Central Equatoria claimed that 'this thing of using blood to get land only happens in the town, not in the village' (Professor 2 int.). Southern Sudanese have long sought out the opportunities and resources of towns and government, even when this entailed considerable risk. They have also integrated money into household and community economies, as Hutchinson (1996: 57) shows in detail for the Nuer; there has not been a simple opposition or 'barrier' to conversion between cash and cattle. Yet most people still subscribe to the discourse that depicts towns, government and money as an alien, exclusive and individualistic economy. Lineage and family authorities have therefore succeeded in retaining some control over the productive and reproductive resources that earn social status and capital, by resisting their straightforward commensurability with money. The paradox is not simply a disparity between discourse and practice, or ideology and reality, because the moral discourse continues to exert limits on the status of monetary wealth and to elicit investment in the productive economy of cattle, land and marriage. This is in turn because the discourse evokes memories and experiences of the volatility of the monetary economy of the urban government centres, leading people to convert money into more reliable and productive forms of value. These conversions are the focus of tensions and moral debates, as revealed not only in discussion of land sales, but also of bridewealth.

Since its colonial inception from the 1920s, the money economy has appeared to offer the potential for individuals to earn wealth independently, as well as for families to diversify their income sources. But this potential independence has been restricted by marriage practices that have

preserved the authority of senior male relatives over reproduction, even as
junior men and women have often gained greater economic power than
their elders (Huby 1981). As money became integrated into local and
household economies, it gradually became the main component of the
bridewealth in certain areas. But this has been countered by the continuing
role of senior men in negotiating, legalising and blessing marriages, still
marked above all by the exchange of the non-money bridewealth com-
ponents, such as iron hoes; money is merely said to 'cover the hoes' to
facilitate their acceptance. Marriage negotiations emphasise the represen-
tative rather than actual value of money, carefully itemised to indicate
amounts *for* 'opening the gate', or for 'the father's stick', or for specific
items like hoes, spears or livestock (see also Reining 1966: 94). The
appearance of a monetisation of the marriage exchange has thus been
avoided, and people criticise high monetary demands by parents as akin
to 'selling their daughter', because of their blatant conversion of social,
kinship and reproductive values directly into money.

In many cattle-keeping areas, even money-earning young men still re-
main dependent on their families to pay their cattle bridewealth, because
the number and cost of cattle required is too high for them to purchase; in
other words the local economy has maintained the stronger value of cattle
relative to money, in favour of senior generations (cf. Ferguson 1985: 666).
Resistance to monetary bridewealth has continued up to now, as a young
woman near Juba explained: 'We can't marry with money, because all the
bridewealth has to be shared out among the relatives. Money can be
hidden in the pocket, but cows have to be seen!' (Pastoralist woman int.)

Many people comment on the individualising effects of money and the
way that it can be secretly negotiated and 'pocketed', thus denying and
excluding the wider relations of reciprocal obligation and 'entrustment'
that Shipton (2007) explores in Kenya. The individualising effects and
alternative values of urban life were the subject of Dinka songs translated
by Mading Deng (1984: 162) which criticised the coins of the town for
diminishing the 'value' of family so that 'blood ties have been severed in
the pockets'. It is not that there are two distinct money and kinship
economies, but rather that a moral opposition has been preserved between
the value of family and the value of money.

As well as explaining that money can too easily be hidden in the pocket
rather than invested in social relations, people also frequently refer to
money being 'eaten' to indicate selfish, secretive forms of consumption
(cf. Broch-Due 1999: 59). Yet they are also quick to point out that money
was useless to people living in the bush during the war, because they could
not eat it. The frequently low purchasing power of money in general has

ensured that even money-earners have often depended on rural relatives for subsistence. And wartime disruption and market shortages or collapses have recurrently rendered money entirely useless, as colonial officials first reported in the 1940s, despairing of their efforts to promote monetisation and market trade (NRO 1944). In the popular imagination, the apparent capacity of urban elites to 'eat' money is therefore mysterious and disturbing.

In the last decade, the exclusive and illusive nature of money (cf. Weiss 1996: 135–6) has been underscored even as its use has become ever more widespread, because of the often invisible international connections of Southern Sudan's economy. The perceived inflation of bridewealth, whether measured in cattle or money, is attributed to the dollars gained by a new elite of government and aid agency employees, or from diaspora remittances:

Marriage has been spoiled ... The millions [for bridewealth] have started in Garang's time. During the war, there was no money; the money has increased due to those boys abroad affecting us here in the country, who have no money.

Church elder int.

As refugees and IDPs return to Southern towns, increasing numbers are dependent on the money economy, which in turn opens up greater differentiation between those with and without cash incomes. As in the 1970s–80s, high unemployment, price inflation and limited economic activity disappoint the high expectations people have of urban opportunities (Hill 1981; Martin & Mosel 2011). Urban crime is blamed on enlarging impoverished town populations (e.g. Mayar 2008). Around Rumbek, people criticise increasing inequality and individualistic consumption practices in the town, as one chief explained:

You [the local translator] and me are not equal. The UN brought education, smart clothes, so you know how to talk to foreigners, and now each person has his own small bowl instead of sharing from one dish. This is a new thing of the young men.

Chief 3 int.

Criticism of money and concern about the inflation of monetary bridewealth is part of wider discussion about the perceived decline of a redistributive economy. An elderly widow in Rumbek similarly bemoaned the effects of monetary employment in eroding social obligation:

This is the generation of money: they don't listen to us elders, or plan for the future, or give anything to us. When we were young, our parents advised us how to bring cattle: boys were told how to find cattle, and girls were told to be careful

so they would be married well. The educated people should bring us good things, but they just waste money.

<div align="right">Elder 1 int.</div>

Such complaints belie, and perhaps produce, the reality that 'educated people' do in fact reinvest their earnings in kinship networks and productive resources. Nowadays a recurring topic of conversation among employees of government and international agencies is the pressure they face from rural relatives to provide school or hospital fees, clothes and other commodities, and to continually disprove the suspicion that 'the educated' are selfish, alien or, at worst, practitioners of witchcraft. Yet even as they seek to convert their monetary resources into the moral economy of family and village, they are perpetuating the prevailing dichotomies by investing in the values of town in the form of school fees and commodity items.

The moral criticisms of money thus have the paradoxical effect of both eliciting its redistribution and perpetuating its confinement to a specific urban value system and set of uses. Despite their relative economic power, money-earners have therefore remained marginal in the local social and moral order. The expectations of their relatives are always higher than their actual earnings, and their status remains vulnerable in an economy of frequently unpaid salaries. Everyone depends on money to some extent, and yet virtually everyone has an interest in playing down or criticising the importance of money as a measure of human value.

TURNING BLOOD INTO MONEY: THE GOVERNMENT ECONOMY

The contrasts that many Southern Sudanese draw between money and kinship values are particularly apparent when they discuss compensation for human life. Even more than with bridewealth, people have resisted a monetisation of blood-compensation payments, because of the implication that 'it is selling your brother' (Chief 1 int.). Where possible, cattle are given as blood-wealth because they are seen as productive of human life and social relations (Mading Deng 1998; Hutchinson 1996); otherwise, people have largely refused to accept blood-money in the belief that it instead brings disease and pollution into the family (Retired politician 2 int.; Moro, pers. comm. 2010; Nalder 1937: 43–5; NRO 1943–5). This is why the commodification of human life in 'buckets of blood' is such a potent rhetorical device. And – even if unintentionally – it is revealing of a transethnic popular perception of the effects of war and a shared memory of the 'government' economy that stretches back to the brutally

extractive commercial and military incursions of the nineteenth century. Human life appears to have been commodified on a vast scale by the economy of the recent war, from which the top military officers are commonly believed to have profited. But this evokes a longer history of the apparent capacity of government to extract and consume productive resources, or, in the bluntest formulation, to turn blood into money.

The cultures of the army and towns trace their origins to the nineteenth-century military stations (*zara'ib*; sing. *zariba*) of ivory- and slave-traders and the Turco-Egyptian government (Johnson 1992). Described as 'parasitic' on the surrounding countryside, the *zara'ib* and Egyptian garrisons depended on raiding the population for ivory, slaves and cattle. Local people drawn into their orbit were themselves turned into slaves, soldiers or raiders (Gessi 1892: 84–5). Schweinfurth (1873 II: 427) categorised the *zariba* inhabitants as 'consumers' and the surrounding population as 'producers', a distinction which has endured in perceptions of urban economies; contrasts are still drawn between shared and ordered consumption practices within families, and the greedy, selfish consumption of government and townspeople. Schweinfurth (1873 I: 92; II: 169) also commented on the 'enormous consumption' of raided cattle in the *zara'ib*. The original cattle-owners would only have killed their cattle for consumption during famine, and it is still commonly considered shameful even to sell cattle in order to purchase food.

The predatory and extractive character of nineteenth-century commercial and military incursions remains powerful in Southern Sudanese memory. One elder from Central Equatoria linked the recent bloodshed of the war to this longer history: 'The blood has never stopped ever since the Turks came and captured people ... and sold them as slaves ... The blood did not stop so this is just another phase, and the blood goes on (Elder 2 int.). Another interviewee from the same area based his assertion of primary land rights on a long history of defending the land against government appropriation: 'This land, we have poured blood for it from our great, great-grandfathers; since the Mahdiyya and Turkiyya, we have poured blood ... to protect the land' (Professor 1 int.).

The colonial administrations of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of Sudan and the short-lived Belgian Lado Enclave appeared little different from their predecessors, launching their own raids to exact 'tribute' from the population. One British report on the Lado Enclave declared that the inhabitants 'are sick to death of the blood-sucking that has been going on ... the natives are beginning to realise that everything is being taken out of their country and nothing new substituted' (NRO 1905). Over time the 'blood-sucking' became less literal, but the British colonial

government continued to extract resources and labour from rural econ-
omies.

Soldiers and government employees began to form urban settlements
around the government stations, which in turn attracted individuals from
the surrounding area. But colonial administrators and local people alike
viewed these emerging urban populations with mistrust and derision,
the British seeing them as dangerously 'detribalised', and local society
associating them with theft, vice and dishonesty – in other words as stand-
ing outside the rural moral communities. Recruitment of individuals into
government employment, education and army would continue to involve
their perceived extraction from kinship society and transformation into a
town or 'educated' person: 'All our educated boys ... go to town and stay
there' (Golooba-Mutebi & Mapuor 2005; see also Hutchinson 1996;
Cormack 2010).

The economy of the urban government centres also became firmly as-
sociated with money, particularly as the colonial administration demanded
taxes in cash; in Dinka the word for money, *wεu*, is the same as for taxes
(NRO *c.* 1939). As one chief near Yei stated simply, 'money belongs to the
Government' (Chief 4 int.). Or, as Blunt (2004: 321) declares in the case
of Kenya, 'money is the ubiquitous and unavoidable symbol of the state'.
In Southern Sudan this association has been reinforced by the very limited
commercial development and continuing dominance of the economy by
the public sector (Cook 2008; Hill 1981). Government (and, more recently,
international agency) employment has been the main source of monetary
income since the colonial period. Commercial success has tended to depend
on access to markets and finance beyond Southern Sudan, giving
Khartoum or Ugandan traders an advantage over local traders. National
development has meanwhile focused on appropriating land for mech-
anised agriculture in the north-south border areas, or extracting natural
resources – most recently, and profitably, oil.

This history of marginalisation and extractive government was the main
justification for the SPLA rebellion from 1983. But Southern Sudanese
often interpret the war as a struggle *among* government people – the 'war
of the educated' (Hutchinson 2001: 320) – driven by hunger for money.
Although the SPLA was distinguished from the Khartoum government as
the government 'of the bush' or 'of our sons', its vernacular nomenclature
remained the same, denoting foreign and military origins (Leonardi
2007a). In popular discussion of the causes of war, money is again ascribed
a power of its own to corrupt and to destroy relations of kinship: 'Even if
you are brothers then you kill each other. Because of money, we are told to
fight. We are eating money, and this is the cause which brought war'

(Teacher 1 int.). Inhabitants of the government garrison town of Juba similarly blamed money for tempting people into informing on their own relatives and friends to security forces, so that 'the collaborators ate our blood' (Badiey, pers. comm. 2008; Elder 3 int.).

The profits of war are often described as 'blood-money' in a conflation of an international idiom with the indigenous dislike of monetary blood-compensation (e.g. Gordon 2009). One story recounted in Wau tells of a Shilluk military officer who allegedly received compensation from the Khartoum government for civilians killed in his home area during the war, whose relatives had refused to accept blood-money. The officer is said to have died subsequently, because of 'eating their blood' (Returnee int.). Another man in Wau explained that 'our people thought that if you kill my brother and give me a lot of money and I accept, then what I eat is like eating the blood of my brother' (Politician 3 int.).

The equations drawn between money, blood and eating in such stories suggest that money is seen to mediate the consumption of the blood of the people, with potentially dangerous spiritual consequences. In other African countries, the mysteries and falsities of neo-liberal capitalism have been expressed in popular accounts of individuals who could turn human blood into money (Apter 2005: 251; Blunt 2004; Weiss 1996: 202–7). There are parallels in Southern Sudanese accounts of occult wealth-generation (Kibego 2005; Leonardi 2007b). But the conversion of blood into money does not necessarily require such supernatural powers, in the context of the recent war.

Like the nineteenth-century military economy, the war since 1983 alienated productive resources and human life from the rural areas and lineage control on a massive scale, not least through the conscription of young soldiers (Leonardi 2007c). Military commanders also encouraged raiding for cattle and the 'steady siphoning' of civilian assets into their hands (Jok & Hutchinson 1999: 133; Walraet 2008). Johnson (2003: 166) describes the 'highly individualised economic policy' of the SPLM/A, whose leaders were able to 'strike deals of their own', and control the export trade in livestock, timber and minerals. As in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the primary role of chiefs reverted to provisioning armies with food and recruits in order to deflect worse depredations: 'We collect a lot of money and food for the government but we get nothing in return … these things go into the stomach of a crocodile' (Rumbek chief, cited in Golooba-Mutebi & Mapuor 2005).

There are commonly recounted tales of military officers who gorged themselves on entire goats during the war, while their bodyguards watched hungrily. This is a vivid caricature of unproductive patronage,

and the kind of individualistic consumption associated more generally
with the money economy and the government. Such behaviour would
have set the officers 'outside the consumption patterns' of the local
civilians from whom they seized the goats (cf. Alexander & McGregor
2005: 81–2).

Apter's (2005: 273) description of Nigeria as a 'vampire state', 'in which
the production of false value equals the consumption of human blood',
invites obvious comparison with Southern Sudanese discourse. Since
2005, the frequently observed lack of any constructive manifestation of the
anticipated peace dividend, the flimsiness of the elite economy of tent-
hotels, and the instability of salaries, banks and currency, seemed to
epitomise the false value of the government economy.[15] A particularly
dramatic allegory was reported in 2008, when a vulture vomited 'a litre' –
another commodity measure – of blood right next to a state governor's
office and its flags. The local news reporter noted that vultures feed on
flesh, including that of humans, and that the Sudanese national coat of
arms features a vulture, before quoting people on the streets who were
interpreting the unusual event to mean 'end of suffering'. According to a
local student, 'this bird used to feed on our blood while struggling in the
bush. It is now regretting and that is why it has to come and vomit the
blood it took from innocent people' (Biar 2008). The Sudanese state,
whose national symbol of a secretary bird is here – mistakenly but aptly –
believed to be a vulture, has proven less regretful.

Beneath any competition between ethnic groups, returnees, soldiers and
civilians to claim the greatest right to the 'peace dividend', there is a core
concern with the perceived extraction and consumption of human life and
productive resources by the forces of government(s) during the war, and
with the historical patterns this evokes. The predatory nature of the
government economy since the nineteenth century has been a pretext for
people to create rural refuges from it and to preserve alternative economic
and social structures (cf. Giblin 2005). But the seizure of land in Equatoria
seems to represent the expansion and penetration of the predatory
government economy into these rural economies. One chief responded
angrily to reports that land in his rural chiefdom was being taken by
soldiers of a prominent Southern militia leader: 'How can these brothers
of ours just take land like that? At least the Arabs just stayed in their
barracks and didn't try to take land' (Chief 2 int.). The desire to keep
the predatory economy of government confined to its barracks is a long-
standing one, but Southern Sudanese have found a new language in
recent years in which to criticise government: the international discourse
of 'corruption'.

STATE, KIN AND THE ROOTS OF CORRUPTION

In the aftermath of war and continuing uncertainties of the peace process, popular criticism of the vulture-like tendencies of government is tempered by the strong desire for self-determination in Southern Sudan, understood in simple terms as gaining independence from the 'enemy' in Khartoum. Nevertheless, there has been growing criticism of GoSS corruption, voiced everywhere from the cattle-camps and tea shops to the newspapers and parliaments.[16] This paper attempts an analysis, not of the veracity or extent of corruption, but rather of some of the popular discourse about it, which focuses on the 'eating' of government money, and the nepotism and tribalism by which the majority of people feel excluded from access to government offices and resources.

At first glance these are familiar litanies of corruption. They correspond to wider analyses of African governance and politics that stress patrimonialism as a system with its own socio-cultural logic and moral economy, which is in turn a much-mutated version of indigenous, deep-rooted political cultures. The reciprocal obligation between patron and client at the core of these cultures is said to have been denied and distorted in the neopatrimonialism of the post-colonial state, leading to the widespread popular condemnation of corruption. Nevertheless, some analysts argue, there is a replication of vernacular political culture and the relations of household and village at the level of the state (Bayart 1993; Berman 2004; Chabal 2009; Chabal & Daloz 1999; Olivier de Sardan 1999).[17] De Waal (2009) argues for the applicability of Bayart's analysis to Sudan, particularly in terms of the compatibility of lineage and state, and 'the way in which formal political systems and processes are intermingled with kinship'.

It is easy to see reported corruption in Southern Sudan in these terms, as indicating the demands on government people to redistribute state resources through networks of kinship and ethnicity. But the moral concerns apparent in the debates over land are also present in popular discourse on government corruption, and they actually suggest quite the opposite: kinship and state are fundamentally distinct moral worlds, even if they are increasingly connected in everyday practice. As we have seen, the state and the monetary economy with which it is so strongly associated have always been understood to operate in remote moral ways. People have therefore resisted the 'over-monetisation' of 'everyday forms of sociability', which Olivier de Sardan (1999: 45) highlights as a facilitator of corruption. They draw frequent attention to the large bellies of the big men not as a productive source of patronage but as a caricature of the unproductive consumption with which government and the urban money economy are associated. This ensures that while patronage may be an important form

of rural–urban and state–society linkage, the status of government patrons in rural society is simultaneously limited by the moral condemnation of the source of their wealth and the nature of their consumption.

GoSS explains its major expenditure on civil service and army salaries in terms of the need to reward its soldiers and civilian supporters (Cook 2008 : 70). However, the ambivalence with which people view the state and its economy ensures that even this form of government patronage is frequently interpreted as part of a wider, unwelcome, expansion of the state, blamed for the greater inequality and individualisation discussed above, and for an escalation of local conflicts. Many Southern Sudanese people are adamant that increasing conflicts since 2005 – too often labelled as 'tribalist' – are the result of political instigation or a new economy of cattle raids and trade controlled by military officers, so that 'tribal political vultures would like conflict to continue' (Vuni 2007; see Billy 2005; Walraet 2008). Similarly, a young man in Rumbek asserted that SPLA officers were profiting from sales of arms and raided cattle, with a particularly blunt formulation of the monetisation of human life and kinship values: 'The blood of your brother becomes your own money. These people are like vultures' (Teacher 2 int.).

Paradoxically, pressure to pay bridewealth in cattle may also be fuelling raids (cf. Broch-Due 1999: 85), but the prevailing discourse blames commodification and political elites. As a recent report also illustrates, rural people perceive 'tribalism' as something brought by the government people from the towns and offices, and associated with the intensifying commercialisation of cattle, another form of unprecedented monetisation (Schomerus & Allen 2010). Similarly Bari chiefs attribute the politicisation of land disputes in Juba to the Bari 'politicians and intellectuals' (Deng 2010: 32).

The recent popular concerns in Southern Sudan about both land and corruption – often expressed in terms of blood being turned into money – are a manifestation of long-standing ambivalent relations with the state, in which people seek to make claims on the state's resources, but simultaneously resist its intrusion into their social relations and local economies because they fear its extractive tendencies. When Equatorians decry the notion that their land can be bought with the blood of soldiers, they are not only asserting antecedent land rights against other ethnic groups. At a deeper level of moral concern, they are resisting the appropriation of the productive resource of land into the market economy and the penetration of the military and monetary cultures of government and army into the rural refuges of kinship and productive relations. In this respect it is the unprecedented closer proximity of the state to society since the SPLA war

that is arousing such unease, but this is understood not as the capture of the state by local cultures and relations, but as the intrusion of the immoral ways of the government into local society.

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When the late leader of the SPLM/A, Dr John Garang, promised to 'take the towns to the people', he meant to extend service delivery to the rural areas. In 2007 one county commissioner claimed to take up this call by inviting visiting GoSS officials 'deeper into his village', where he 'planted the Southern Sudan flag into the ground' (Diyan 2007). But the attempt to plant the state beyond its old urban centres is generating deep tensions between value systems that have historically been kept separate in moral terms. In the absence of the promised rural service delivery, many people have instead taken themselves to the town, following a long tradition of seeking to access and appropriate the resources of the state and the associated monetary urban economy. But they have also continued to subscribe to a discourse which warns of the capacity of this economy to remove individuals altogether from their social and moral communities and drive them into selfish and potentially rapacious modes of existence. In order to resist this process, people have therefore continued to invest in an alternative, productive and kinship-based, economy and social status associated with rural communities, even if they are living in the towns. And they are simultaneously resisting the expansion and encroachment of the towns into these alternative value systems.

In this context, the debates over alleged claims to Equatorian land on the basis of buckets of blood poured on it during the war also contain commentary on broader economic processes and ultimately on the state itself. Firstly, competition for land around Equatorian towns is perceived as indicating the wider expansion and penetration of urban, military and monetary forces into the rural areas, threatening to appropriate and commodify communal land. Secondly, the very notion of blood in buckets raises the disturbing implication of the commodification of human life itself, a process historically associated with the same economy in which government and military have their roots. Condemnation of the consumption and monetisation of human blood during and since the war is shared across ethnic and livelihood divides.

Over a decade ago, Tripp (1997: 172) emphasised the peculiar resilience of the political structures of state and society in Sudan:

This should serve as a warning to anyone who thinks either that the attitudes which have historically been associated with those structures can be changed

overnight, or that a formal change in the constitutional rules of the game can redress the imbalances at the heart of the Sudanese state project.

Southern Sudanese discourse reveals a common awareness of just this resilience: however hopeful they are of a potential independent state, Southern Sudanese also perceive their current government in the context of the historical patterns from which it has emerged. This might seem a pessimistic note to strike now as Southern Sudan looks forward to a popular referendum and potential independence. But much recent commentary has also been pessimistic, and it has directed greatest criticism at so-called 'tribal' divisions and conflicts, and at the generalised 'corruption' of the new government. The problem for Southern Sudan is not, however, primarily one of ethnicity, nor of the patrimonial demands of indigenous social and cultural norms. It is an enduring problem of the government economy. The military project that has produced the new government was ostensibly a struggle to overturn the entrenched pattern of an extractive, centralising and remote state. But from the popular perspective, the decades of war instead expanded and intensified those patterns, turning the blood of the people into money to be consumed in selfish ways. Collective memories in Southern Sudan suggest that the roots of the government economy are to be found in the nineteenth-century *zariba*, not in the village. Understanding the resulting ambivalence that people feel towards towns, money and the state is vital in order to move beyond the prevalent fixation with ethnic divisions in Southern Sudan. It is in the common desire to protect the social relations and productive economy of family, village and cattle-camp from the expanding, corrupting forces of predatory government that a shared Southern Sudanese culture and memory is most apparent.

NOTES

1. Politician 1 (int.: in English, quoting colloquial Arabic statement); see also Lo-Lumori (2006), Rolandsen (2009: 25).

2. The category of 'Equatorians' encompasses multiple ethnicities, languages and livelihoods in the old province or region of Equatoria (now divided into three states); the Dinka are the largest ethno-linguistic grouping in Southern Sudan, made up of many different sections. For the history of the war between (and among) the SPLA and the Government of Sudan, see Collins 2008; Johnson 2003; Rolandsen 2005.

3. There are many examples in Sudanese news sources, e.g. *Sudan Tribune*. For recent examples of pessimistic and simplistic international reporting see *The Economist* 11.6.2009, 6.5.2010. For an example of Equatorian media comment see Lupai 2008. On 'tribalist' conflict and corruption see e.g. Adeba 2009; HRW 2006, 2009; McVeigh 2009.

4. For deeper critical analysis see Rolandsen 2009; Schomerus & Allen 2010.

5. See Weiss (1996: 173–6) for a deeper discussion of plastic containers as a particular epitome of the commodity form in Tanzania.

6. See the excellent analysis of the local and national politics of land administration in Juba by Badiey 2010; also Deng 2010.

7. For an earlier internal criticism of the 'liberation' struggle see Nyaba 1997. The politics of the language of 'liberation' is discussed comparatively in Dorman 2006.

8. For a critical analysis of the 'Dinka domination' idea see Johnson 2003: 51–5.

9. According to Collins (2008: 136), these tensions can be traced back to the herding of Dinka cattle into Equatoria following the floods of the 1960s. See also Badiey 2010: 342.

10. The Kakwa are one of the Bari-speaking groups of Central Equatoria State.

11. Interview with a chief by Leben Nelson Moro, Kajokeji, 17.11.09, cited in Leonardi *et al.* (2010: 59).

12. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for emphasising this possibility.

13. Court case 13.1.10, Kajokeji: Moro, pers. comm. 2010.

14. See assimilative versus exclusive blood-based definitions of kinship and ethnicity in Hutchinson & Jok (2002: 96). See also Branch & Mampilly 2005: 12, Johnson 2003: 172–3 and Leonardi 2007a on the rigidifying of ethnically defined 'communities'.

15. E.g. Costa 2007; Toure Pouch 2006; *Sudan Tribune* 2010. See also Schomerus & Allen 2010.

16. See many examples at www.sudantribune.com and in Cook 2007, 2008.

17. See critiques such as Clapham 1994, and most recently the collected comments on Chabal (2009) in *Critical African Studies* 2, 2009.

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Confidential Interviews

Chief 1: male chief and his brother, both former government officials from Juba County, Central Equatoria State (CES), Juba, 23.8.2008 (in English).

Chief 2: male chief from Juba County, CES, Juba, 11.1.2007 (in English).

Chief 3: male town chief from Rumbek County, Lakes State, Rumbek, 5.6.2006 (in Dinka).

Chief 4: male sub-chief and former refugee camp leader from Yei County, CES, nr Yei, 22.1.2007 (in English).

Church elder: female leader in church from Yei District, CES, Yei, 17.10.2005 (in Kakwa).

Elder 1: widow from Rumbek County, Lakes State, Rumbek, 26.5.2006 (in Dinka).

Elder 2: male elder and retired town trader from Juba town, CES, Juba, 19.8.2008 (in Bari).

Elder 3: elderly man, former Anyanya One soldier from Juba County, nr Juba, 15.3.2006 (in Bari).

Pastoralist woman: young woman from Terakekka County, CES, Kworijik, nr Juba, 11.3.2006 (in Mundari).

Politician 1: male politician from Yei County, CES, Juba, 25.8.2008 (in English).

Politician 2: male politician and Bari community leader from Juba County, CES, Juba, 28.8.2008 (in English).

Politician 3: male politician from Wau County, Wau, 12.11.2009 (in English).

Professor 1: male professor from Juba County, CES, Juba, 29.8.2008 (in English).

Professor 2: elderly male professor from Juba County, CES, Juba, 21.8.2008 (in English).

Retired politician 1: elderly male politician from Yei County, CES, Yei, 31.8.2004 (in English).

Retired politician 2: elderly former engineer and politician from Juba County, CES, Juba, 26.8.2008 (in English).

Returnee: male former security guard in Khartoum, recently returned to Wau Town, Western Bahr el Ghazal State (WBS), Wau, 20.11.2009 (in English).

Teacher 1: school headmaster and village headman from Juba County, CES, nr Juba, 2.3.2006 (in Bari).

Teacher 2: young headmaster and youth leader from Rumbek County, WBS, Rumbek, 20.5.2006 (in English).