The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, orange glow that reflects on the water's surface. Silhouettes of several people are visible in the foreground, looking out towards the water. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Animism

of the Nilotics and Discourses
of Islamic Fundamentalism

in Sudan

Kuel Maluil Jok

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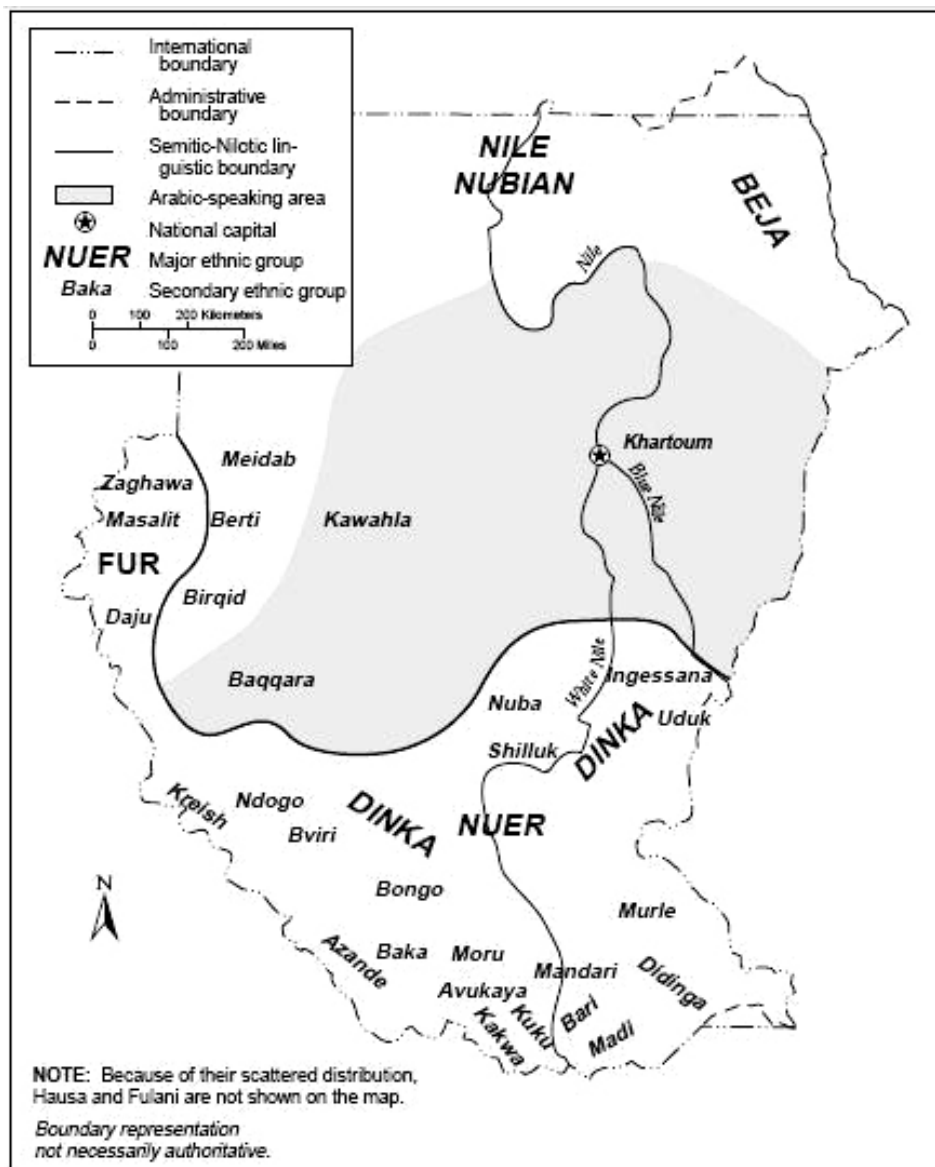
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Acronyms

ANO	Anyaya National Organisation
ARG	Anyidi Revolution Government
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
GONU	Government of National Unity
GOSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HAMAS	Islamic Resistance Movement
KPA	Khartoum Peace Agreement
NIF	National Islamic Front
NPG	Nile Provisional Government
NCP	National Congress Party
NSR	National Revolution Salvation
PNC	Popular National Congress
SRRC	Sudan's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SSPG	South Sudan Provisional Government
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM/United	Sudan People's Liberation Movement United
UNWFP	United Nations World Food Programme



Ethno-linguistic map of Sudan. Courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Preface

This text-book is intended for both undergraduate and advanced postgraduate students of institutions of higher learning. Its roots can be traced back to September 2007, when the Department of African Studies at the University of Helsinki, Finland initiated the course entitled '*Contemporary African Animism*', with me as its instructor. Before the introduction of this course, Dr Annika Teppo taught a related course, which bore the title '*Magic and Witchcraft in Africa*'. Her article '*My House Is Protected by a Dragon*', published by the Finnish Anthropological Society fascinated me. After having read it and comprehensively digested it, I found myself in disagreement with Teppo. My conceptual perception of magic as an insider from the Nilotic ethnic group within the African continent is completely different to that of Teppo. I shared my disagreement with Professor Dr Jok M. Jok at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, United States of America. Out of our discussion, I developed an interest in writing a book on Nilotic religion(s). As Jok is an anthropologist and I a sociologist and linguist with expertise of being professional teachers and researchers of higher institutions in the Western universities, we reached an agreement to produce an authentic compendium of what we really know about ourselves as African-Nilotics. This is not to say that there was no relatively authentic knowledge being studied or produced before us. Preceding anthropological and sociological scholars such as Sir Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, Godfrey Lienhardt and Paul Howell have undertaken profound studies of the Nilotics as participant observers and produced knowledge about them, but under various heading such as 'Religion', 'Value', 'King' or '*Reth*'. My study broke from this tradition in producing a unified anthropological text of these ethnic groups' titles under the heading 'Animism'. It would have been a seriously misleading approach if the former studies had adopted the term 'Animism' in its archaic derogatory sense. For Sir Edward B. Tylor 'Animism' was a religion of a 'lower race' who believed that anything and anywhere contained a soul and spirit. These scholars refrained from stereotypical characterization, and hence, their ethics and presentation of facts as they are dictated that they use the term religion to describe the ritual performances of the Nilotic people. I, however, as an insider and a practitioner of these religion(s), have no intention to reject the religious quality defining me, albeit not in the way Tylor defines it. For me, Animism as a religion best describes the series of religious performances of the Nilotics in three respects. First, the totems of the clans, second, the free spirits of some clans and finally God with attributes of eternity, omnipresence, self-sustenance and being the creator of all living beings. These merits dictate the inner conscience of every Nilotic to regard God as the only universal Being to be worshipped without any deviation. Failure to do so implies a rejection of and disrespect to Him. Rejecting Him is at the same time a self-rejection and it causes uncertainty of life in this

world at the end of which lies death. On the other hand, totems of clans and free spirits of individuals in a clan enjoy respect. In the Nilotic vocabulary, two words, 'respect' and 'worship', define the religious identity to be assumed.

Second, due to an extensive interaction of the Nilotic people with other present-day cultures, the Nilotic constantly assimilate other cultures and religions without purging their totems, spirits and the traditional and custom-induced model they pursue in approaching God. Therefore, the compatible nature of their Animism with Christianity and Islam automatically renders them Christian-Animists or Muslim-Animists in Africa. This book will form a solid foundation for the modern discourses of Animism, since its author is a Christian-Animist researching his own people: the Nilotic Jieng, Naath, Collo, Jur-Col and Anyuak in the 'Upper River Nile' area, a location that has lost its original name and is now known as 'South Sudan', instead of its native Nilotic name of 'Kiir', meaning the River Nile. Reading and comprehensively understanding this study will dispel the present confusion over and ambiguity of magic, witchcraft, herbalism, the occult and cult from Animism. In this context, students and teaching staff at universities and colleges worldwide will fundamentally digest and understand what enters the minds of the African Nilotic nation, when human lips utter the word religion in their presence. For them, it is a tripartite act emanating from the category of the clans' totems and free spirits. Though all elements of this category receive 'respect' from the Nilotics, God is regarded an intertwined-intrinsic-absolute One among them and thus worthy of 'worship', glorification and praise at all times, anywhere, in any action undertaken for the sake of the health of people and cattle.

Introduction

When a Nilotic talks of a religion,
(s)he means the Animism of Africa;
and not only the Animism of Africa;
but the Animism of the Upper River
Nile; and not only the Animism of
the Upper River Nile; but the
Intertwined Animism of the Nilotics
with the prophetic religions

This study explores how the Nilotic people in the 'Upper River Nile' area, known today as 'Southern Sudan'¹ identify themselves religiously and culturally. Essentially, there is no consensus among scholars over what term best describes their religious, social and cultural identity. Some call them 'Animists', followers of God, ancestral spirits and 'theism'. For instance, Nikkel defines the Nilotic Dinka as mostly followers of "Powers".² An'Naim however describes the whole territorial population of the South as 'mainly Animists'.³ Johnson characterises them as adherents to the 'theistic religions'.⁴ Deng, however, defines them as believers of God and inherited spiritual-moral-values from their genealogical ancestral descent.⁵ This study adopts the term Animism, because it best accords with their religious practices. For instance, among the Nilotic Dinka ethnic group, each clan has its obligatory observation to *yath* (a totem), *joak* (benevolent or evil spirit) and *Nhialic* (God), who is believed to stand above all the totems and spirits with the attribute of being omnipresent. Similarly, each clan among the Nilotic Nuer has its obligatory respect to *kuoth* (a totem), multiple *kuth* (benevolent or evil spirits) and the Supreme *Kuoth* (God). He alone deserves worship, not the totems and spirits. The same applies to the Nilotic Shilluk, whose clans pay respect to *kuong* (a totem), *Nyikang* (a benevolent spirit of the mythical ancestral founder of the Shilluk) and finally *Jwok* (God), who stands above all these powers as a self-sovereign. These three religious structural hierarchies form the Nilotic Animism. Each spirit is an auxiliary to God and has its social, political and economic function within the individual Nilotic clans. God, however, is believed to be an independent-artless

1 Rolandsen, Oystein H. (2005), *Guerrilla Government Political Changes in the Southern Sudan during the 1990s*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, p. 23.

2 Nikkel (2001), *Dinka Christianity the Origin and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with the Special Reference to the Song of Dinka Christians*, Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa p. 20

3 An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytisation and Communal Self- Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 12.

4 Johnson, Douglas Hamilton (2003). *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars*, Oxford: James Currey, p. xviii.

5 Deng, Francis Mading (1995). *War of Visions Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, p. 190.

processor of an endless cycle of supplying life and taking it from all people and animals. For this reason, He alone receives 'worship' from the Nilotic people and the rest within the hierarchy of these religious practices receive 'respect'.

This study capitalises the first letter of 'Animism', instead of writing 'animism', because it is a religion that involves God. Studies of Godfrey Lienhardt concerning the Dinka religion⁶, of Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard concerning the Nuer religion⁷ and of Paul P. Howell concerning the religion of Shilluk stress this claim without combining these religions under one religious name.⁸ Animism written with a lower-case 'a' - as 'animism' - limits it to the category of the totems and spirits in exclusion of the third level involving God. Although Animism is a religion practiced among the Nilotics, intolerance to it on the part of followers of 'Islamic fundamentalism' has grown enormously in national institutions of Sudan. Islamic fundamentalism is an ideology for the establishment of a just public order. It dictates that a just social, political and cultural society must base its constitution on *Sharia* (Islamic law). National laws for such a society must be derived from three sources: the Holy Quran, all the examples of the Prophet Muhammad and the precedents, which recognised Islamic scholars interpret in consensus.⁹ According to Sidahmed and Ehteshami, the radical political Islamic party which is the dominant political power in Sudan, the National Islamic Front (NIF), defines the 'Sudan People's Liberation Movement' (SPLM), which is a political organisation mostly composed of the Christian-Animist in the South as a 'public enemy' of the Muslims. The NIF views the SPLM as a barrier to the transformation of national and private institutions in the country into those with Islamic characteristics, and therefore, it invites a "tough militarist" confrontation.¹⁰

It is worth noting that, whenever a dominant group in authority applies a body of religious discourse to paralyse its political and cultural opponent in the political arena, the opponent tends to radicalise its opposed religious discourse in the same political space. In the end, the spaces of worship turn into spaces of political rhetoric. At the present moment in Sudan, most members of the SPLM in power have developed a sense of Christian fundamentalism parallel to the Islamic fundamentalism. In Juba, capital city of 'Southern Sudan', the majority of its non-Muslim population flocks to the churches on Sundays. Ritual services commence at 6:00 in the morning and ends at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The President of the South, Salva Kiir Mayardit, a Catholic, has become more Catholic than the Pope. After the Holy Mass, Kiir snatches a service microphone,

6 Lienhardt, Godfrey (1961), *Divinity and Experience, the Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

7 Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan (1956), *Nuer Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

8 Howell, Paul P. (1952, April) "Observations on Shilluk of the Upper Nile. The Law of Homicide and the Legal Functions of the 'Reth', Africa, *Journal of the Royal International African Institute*, Vol., XXII, No., 2, pp .97-119.

9 Brown, Daniel (1996). *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-3.

10 Sidhamed, Abdel Salam, "Sudan: Ideology and Pragmatism" in Abdel Salam Sidhamed and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds.) (1996). *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Oxford: Westview, p. 185.

stands up on the podium and updates the Christian congregation in the church about the status quo of political disagreements between his party, the SPLM and the ruling National Congress (NC) party in the Islamic North. Having reached a deadlock over the Ministry of Energy portfolio with the NC, Kiir waited for Sunday in Khartoum to inform the Christian-Animist-South: "I would not return you to war, because of the ministerial position. Today, I must tell you that your party, the SPLM has abandoned the Energy and Mining portfolio to the NCA".¹¹ The religious political language continues in Sudan to the extent that if there is even the slightest difference in political agendas between the predominantly Christian-Animist movements such as the SPLM and NIF in Sudan, the decision-makers at the highest level from the former NIF, which has rifted into two parties, the National Congress Party (NCP?) and Popular National Congress (PNC) party, would resort to the Islamic discourse couched in tough military rhetoric. Three paradigms of this kind from the NC can be extrapolated from the statements issued by its leading figures over their disagreement on the borders between the Islamic North and the Christian-Animist-South. First, Presidential Advisor Mustafa Osman Ismael launched a massive campaign calling for the *Mujahedeen* (Islamic holy warriors) to be ready for war with the Christian-Animist South, if it were to break away from the Islamic fold of the united Sudan.¹² Second, Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Thaher, Speaker of the National Assembly (NA) in Sudan, argues "Nothing better for an Islamist than to enter into the heavenly paradise", in other words, to be ready to die in the defence of the Islamic Sudan from the Christian-Animist South.¹³ Finally, Al-Haj Majid Suwar, Minister for Youth and Secretary for National Mobilisation states "We in the National Congress shall not rest and surrender to the pressure of the Christian-Animist-extremists of the South, who receive backing from the Zionists and secular colonial Christian extremists". Our Islamic project is our nationalism of liberation in Sudan and beyond".¹⁴

The religious nationalism of the ruling NCP in Sudan sanctifies its Islamic orientation and considers an opposed opinion of any citizen as an attack on its Islamic orthodoxy. For this reason, it invokes the vocabulary of *Jihad* (Islamic holy war) in attacking the Christian-Animist-South. According to African Rights, President of Sudan Omer Hassan Al-Bashir called together some Islamic clerics in el-Obeid, capital city of Northern Kordofan on 27 April 1992. During that gathering, the clerics and Al-Bashir defined the violence in Sudan as a religious war with the infidel pagans and Christians of the South, supported by the apostates from the Nuba Mountains. The outcome of the conference was that, since the violence was a religious war, it must be conducted in a religious fashion in order to defend Islam. Al-Bashir was given the title *Amir el-Mumeneen*, pious

11 Salva Kiir Mayardit talks in the Catholic Church of St. Peter and Paul, September 2005.

12 Sudan: A New York Divorce <http://allafrica.com/stories/201010121107.html>.

13 Al-Watoni (2010, October 23) "*Al-Watoni: Len Nertah iza Infasul Al-Junub*, National Congress: We Shall not Rest, if the South Secedes", Arabic Newspaper Al-Rayaam.

14 Al-Watoni (2010, October 23) "*Al-Watoni: Len Nertah iza Infasul Al-Junub*, National Congress: We Shall not Rest, if the South Secedes", Arabic Newspaper Al-Rayaam.

commander of the Islamic believers. Under such religious definition, Al-Bashir immediately declared *Jihad* against his dissidents the SPLM and SPLA in South Sudan, Ingessana Hill and the Nuba Mountains.¹⁵

The definition of war in political disputes and misunderstandings in terms of the Islamic discourse has created racial boundaries and led to suffering among the people of Sudan. The racial African Christian-Animists of Upper River Nile along with the African Muslim-Animists in the Nuba Mountains and Ingessana Hill have become public targets of Muslim solidarity in the region. For instance, the Supreme Guidance of the 'Muslim Brothers' movement in Egypt, Dr Muhammad Badia, warns the Islamic world that the secession of the Christian-Animist South from the Islamic North "will be the first step in the project of change in the map of the region". Badia concludes that "the unity of the global Muslims and Arabs is the only resolution to ... enable them to defend their religion and sacred lands and wealth from the oppressive new world order".¹⁶

The call of the Supreme Guidance to the universal Islamic world under the guise of defending Islam in Sudan implies the suppression of the Christian and Muslim-Animists who wish to maintain the unique characteristics of their African religious identity mixed with the prophetic religions. Essentially, the presence of international Islamic religious organisations in Sudan as *Jihadists* is not a new initiative. It dates back to the 1990s, when Osama Bin Laden, the chieftain of the so-called Pan Islamic organisation Al-Qaeda staged an exodus to it with his allegiances. According to Petterson, Hassan Abdullah Turabi, the founder and the leader of NIF party in Sudan, incited his Islamic allies in the army to overthrow the democratic elected government in 1989. After this military action, Turabi began to articulate some radical methods of building an Islamic state, where the *Sharia* would be the source of legal bills, extending to the global world, until Islam became the religion of the land. He set up an international centre called the 'Popular Arab and Islamic Conference' in Khartoum, capital of Sudan. The centre was open to all the radical Islamists around the world. Next, he invited Osama Bin Laden to immigrate to Sudan from Pakistan and establish his organisation there. In response to this invitation, Bin Laden moved to Sudan with his "Islamic terrorists" that included Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic *Jihad*, the Abu Nidal Organisation, *al Jama'at al Islamiyya* of Egypt, the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) of Palestine, and others from Algeria and Eritrea.¹⁷

It is worth noting that Turabi's inviting of Osama to Sudan has clear religious undertones. (Im)migration occurs as a result of political, social and cultural persecution of individual(s) or group(s) of people. There are many examples of (im)migrations that occurred under the influence of religion. It was imperative for

15 African Rights (1995). Facing Genocide: the Nuba of Sudan, London: African Rights Publication, p. 287.

16 Al-Sahafa (2010, October 24) *Murshed (Al-Akuan): Ingessaam Al-Sudan Kathuwa nahu Tagiir kharait al-Mantheqa*, Supreme (Brothers): The Division of Sudan Is a Step towards the Change of the Regional Map, Arabic Newspaper, Al-Safa, Issue No., 6206.

17 Petterson, Donald (2003), Inside Sudan Political Islam, Conflict and Catastrophe, Revised and Updated, Oxford: West View Press, pp. 115-117.

the Jews to emigrate away from the social and political persecution deliberately imposed on them by the Catholic rulers of Spain and Portugal. As in 1495, King Manuel, son of King Joao II, wanted to marry the daughter of King Ferdinand and his wife Isabella of Spain. In response, the parents of the bride laid down the condition for the approval of the marriage to King Manuel. The condition was that the Jews were to be expelled from Portugal. In 1495, King Manuel issued an edict of expulsion to the Jews. The Jews were given ten months to leave, unless they converted to Catholicism. One hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) complied with the edict and commenced emigration from Portugal to what is now Turkey.¹⁸ Some emigrated to the Kingdom of Naples, southern Italy, yet they eventually had to emigrate to Turkey as well, after the French invaded the Kingdom and sacked them, under racial and religious pretences.¹⁹

It is necessary to highlight the distinction between immigration and migration in Islam and Islamic political views. The prophet Muhammed initiated *Hijra* (migration), hence it has become a universally legitimate goal for a Muslim to pursue. Dissatisfied with the threat to and persecution of his followers (Muslims) in Yathrib, present-day Mecca, the prophet instructed them to emigrate to Africa, specifically Ethiopia, to gain sanctuary. The same situation confronted him and he migrated to Medina in Saudi Arabia.²⁰

In classical Islamic dogma, the two events of emigration to Africa and migration within the Arabian Peninsula have religiously legitimated immigration of a Muslim into a foreign land as equal to migration within a local territory. Politically, immigration refers to the crossing of a border to another sovereign state territory and the latter refers to the transfer of a resident from one place to another location within the territorial sovereignty. For Muslims, however, a foreign land is strictly defined according to religious beliefs as an 'earth' created by *Allah* (God) for a Muslim and not as a sovereign state to its indigenous population. To them, sovereignty is God's and the 'earth' is for Muslims, where they perform good deeds, until 'Judgment Day'.

*As Allah (God) stated "Surely as for those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you on the earth? They shall say: We were persecuted on the earth: They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious enough that you could have migrated therein?"*²¹

In light of this, the coming of Osama and his disciples to Sudan was an Islamic migration for the Islamic propaganda on the earth (Sudan). Osama solidified the *Jihadists* and defined the Islamic road map of fighting the Christian and Muslim Animists in the state. According to Rone, the Sudanese Islamic fundamentalists adopted the penalties that the *Sharia* introduces for those who disobey God and

18 Marks, Scott Alfassa (1995), *The Jews in Islamic Spain*, New York: Sephardic House, p. 3.

19 Stillman, Norman A. (1991), *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern times*, New York: Jewish Publication Society, p. 21.

20 Lunde, Paul (2002) *Islam Faith, Culture, History*, London: Dorling Kindersley Limited.

21 Holy Quran (4:94)

His messengers. Those who are under the sway of *Al-Imam*, (Islamic cleric) can be penalised collectively and individually. The former applies to recalcitrant groups like the Sudanese Nuba Muslims in the SPLM who are to be brought back under the sway of the *Imam*, who has declared war against them. The latter applies to the non-Muslims, Animists, unbelievers, infidels as fundamental enemies of God and His messenger prophet Muhammed. *Jihad* was the method used to confront such group, because God dictates in the Holy Quran; “For whoever has heard the summon of the messenger of God, peace be upon him, and he who has not responded to it, must be fought, until there is no persecution and the religion is entirely God” (2:193, 8:39).²²

The assertion that religion must be purified to become entirely God indicates a serious religious intolerance on the part of the Muslim fundamentalists in Sudan towards Animism. It is an illusion for the Muslim fundamentalists to think that Animists’ religion has no underlying religious values of a monotheistic God and therefore; it must be purified in order to God’s religion. The claim of purifying Animism prompts one to search for the origin of Animism. Essentially, it originated as a universal conscious anxiety about the nature of the organised logical structures of the universe. Oracles, myths and the offering of ritual sacrifices to spirit(s) emanated as alternative instruments of approaching the arcane nature of the universe.²³ Etymologically, the word Animism comes from the Proto-Indo-European-family-tree-language root; ‘*ane*’, which means to ‘breathe’. In Latin, *animus* is a synonymous term to the Greek word *anemos*, which also refers to ‘wind’ and ‘breathe’.²⁴ The phenomenon of ‘breathing’ prompted the ancient Greek philosopher Thales Examydes of Miletus to conclude that “all things are full of gods”.²⁵

In the context of contemporary religious studies, the term ‘breath’ has been translated as ‘soul’ or ‘self’.²⁶ Subsequently, Animism has become a cryptic abyss of the Western European contemptible description of the primary traditions and dogmas of mankind. For example, in the late nineteenth century the British writer Sir Edward Burnett Tylor developed such a theoretical approach in analysing the traditional beliefs of Latin American societies, particularly the Mexicans and from that point on the term ‘Animism’ surfaced in academia. For Tylor, Animism is a doctrine that “a lower race” generally uses to express the belief that human beings have “souls”, while “spirits” reside in animals and things.²⁷ This was a pejorative description but was adequate for the European-Christian missionaries, Arab-

22 Rone, Jemera. (1996). “Behind the Red Line Political Repression in Sudan”, New York: Human Rights. Watch. pp. 5-7.

23 Parker, Robert (2005). *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 9, 116. Paris, Ginette (1987), *Pagan Mediations Aphrodite Hestia Artemis*, Dallas: Spring Publications Inc pp. 4-5.

24 Liddell and Scott’s (1985). *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (seventh Ed.) of Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 67.

25 Aristotle (350 BCE), *On the Soul* in J A Smith (2007). *On the Soul by Aristotle* (Trans.) ebooks. [adelaide.edu.au/Aristotle/a8so/-](http://adelaide.edu.au/Aristotle/a8so/)

26 Smart, Ninian and Hecht, Richard D. (Eds.) (1982). *Sacred Texts of the World a Universal Anthropology*, New York: Macmillan Reference Books, p. 242.

27 Tylor, Edward Burnett (1871). *Primitive Culture*, New York: Gordon Press, p.100.

Islamic propagandists and some social anthropologists to generalise it as a model of explaining the African-traditional continental religions. This scholarship rejects this principle of generalisation for two reasons. First, modern Animism among the Nilotics of Sudan cannot be simply explained using such a generalised approach. The study adopts the terms 'argon' and 'armature' to explain the vision of the Nilotic Animists concerning the universe. Argon refers to an inactive chemical substance of gas that floats in the air, yet valuable for the production of certain electric light for use.²⁸ Armature, however, is an effective operative machine within the cycles of electrical wiring that produces electricity.²⁹

In their conceptual perception, the Nilotics believe that the universe is structured in three categories. First, human and other living beings exist as inactive entities at the bottom, second, inactive and limited spirits reside in the middle and third, God, being omnipresent, is thus positioned at the top, in the middle and at the bottom. Human beings with spirits are believed to be inactive argons functioning as dependent subjects. Armature (God) with His transcendental omnipresence at the top, at the bottom and in the middle is independent and every living being, including spirits depends on Him. The convergence of all clans' totems and spirits of individual clans and all the clans or peoples within one category as dependent argons of the independent Armature is the final phase of the Nilotic Animistic religion. This complex cycle of dependent argons and independent Armature can be comprehensively understood by means of the following elucidatory example from the Dinka religious-offering hymn of the Payei's (Parek) clan:

*I ask you kuel Ayei and my name is dignified,
I tether malwal to offer it to kuel;
That was bestowed on me by God,
The dawn has come wake up;
Wake up to invoke the Owner of life'*

Kuel is a large tree with a red bark and green flat leaves. Its ripened fruit is delicious and sweet. Members of the Payei clan do not chop it down out of 'respect', because it is a totem that God 'bestowed' on their original ancestor, Ayei, but they eat its fruits. Cattle are important for religious ceremonies and to this end, a priest from the Payei clan tethers malwal (a red ox) beside a Payei sanctuary. The red colour of an ox represents *kuel* and the meaning of the offering is to commemorate the past moment of God's bestowal and its endless cycle of peaceful continuity. A priest says prayers of thanksgiving to God; however, he personifies the totem, *kuel* and invites it as dependent argon in the middle to 'wake up' and join him in invoking their independent Armature, the 'Owner of life'.

28 Butrica, Andrew J et al (1990), *Out of Thin Air: A History of air products and Chemicals*, Connecticut: Praeger.

29 Braymer, Daniel Harvey (2010), *Armatures: Electric Machines and repair*, New York: McGraw-Hill book company Inc.

The second reason for rejecting the principle of generalisation stems from the cross-cultural interactions of complex external religions, cultures, customs and traditions with internal Nilotic cultures. Generally, interactions create a new cultural identity called 'gradable' culture. In studies of antonyms, something 'gradable' refers to a comparison between identical entities. For instance, the opposite of long is not necessarily short; it could be medium.³⁰ Comparison shows that interactions of various cultures in a specific social, political and cultural space in time eventually results in a gradable culture. It is defined as a kind of assimilation that endeavours to reduce cultural boundaries without imposing strict political or religious discourses, which eradicate cultural diversity. Instead, it enhances similarity of cultures and does not necessarily and completely transform them into a dominant culture of the majority. In other words, it is an interaction that seeks out a gradable result without the complete loss of differences between the interacting groups of different religions and cultures, but a typical reproduction of simulacrum of cultures. Ricoeur observes that a close examined logic of analogy generates various meaningful issues of historical times, which range from "tediousness to an unquenchable human hope". It rectifies situations and produces significant redefinitions of situations that may gradually eradicate stereotype, injustice and inequality from human institutions.³¹

Various interactions between the Upper River Nile's population and cultures of the Christian West and the Islamic World have greatly rectified the prejudice and stereotype of some studies, which define the Nilotics as mere Animist-pagans, pagans or 'heathens'.³² The intensity of interaction has transformed the Nilotic religious identity to Animist-Christian or Animist-Muslim. This identity rejects religious extremism that attempts to eradicate Animism and urges the adoption of gradable religious cultural identity. According to An'Naim, Muslim fundamentalists captured power in Sudan by military force in 1989 and imposed 'Islamic fundamentalism'. They introduced strict *Sharia* (Islamic law) and imposed it upon national state institutions without taking into account the existing religious diversity. In reaction, the indigenous Animist-Christian populations in 'Southern Sudan' rejected these laws. They argued for a modern national identity derived

30 Fromkin, Victoria and Rodman, Robert (1993). *An Introduction to Language* (Fifth Ed.), New York: Rinehart and Winston, Inc., p.132.

31 Ricoeur, Paul "The History of Religions and the Phenomenology of Time Consciousness" in Joseph M. Kitagawa (Ed.) (1985). *The History of Religions Retrospect and Prospect*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, p. 18.

32 Prunier, Gerard (2004) "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-99)", *African Affairs*, the Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 103, No. 412, p. 365. The aim of the National Islamic Front (NIF) party in Sudan has been to Islamise the Great Lakes population. The resistance of the Southern rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to this aim made the NIF to "the resolute prosecution of the war in the 'heathen' South". See the writings of Seligman, Charles Gabriel and Seligman, Brenda Z. (1932), *The Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd.

from the culture of the Christian West and advocated the application of secular laws drawn from a national constitution in order to protect different traditional religions in Sudan.³³

Is there any necessity for a human being to protect an abstract idea called religion? Before it can be protected, human minds must first have acquired a complete knowledge of it in order to enjoy the category of protection in human institutions. The search for a complete knowledge of religion is a search for its origin. Ramsey and Ledbetter trace the word 'religion' to the Latin *religio*, which Cicero derived from the word *relegere* "to're-read", that which is're-read' and passed on via a long line of traditions. Lactantius, however, traces it to *religare*, to "tie up" community's beliefs with current people and their God.³⁴

For the Nilotics, Animism is the vestige of continuity from their past ancestral religion, traditions, knowledge, customs and philosophy to their current cultural, linguistic and religious state. They have intertwined it with the prophetic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The state, however, does not recognise it as a religion, although its believers also regard belief in the monolithic God as the ultimate goal, and so, it imposes an extreme Islamic assimilation. In reaction, the Christian-Muslim-Animists present an unwavering counter-measure of resistance, which precipitates a political predicament in Sudan. The Arabised Muslim 'fundamentalists' in power strive to impose *tawajha al-bathari* (civilising orientation). It is an ideological orientation project that advocates the revival of the restricted Islamic orthodoxy with the intention of assimilating the present and diverse cultural identity of ethnic populations in Sudan into a monolithic Islamic-Arab culture. Its ideological discourse is typically institutionalised against the intertwining of Animism with Islam as well as an austere intolerance towards Christianity. The epitome of the assimilation discourse is cunningly entrenched within the national institutions to enslave the other free³⁵; irreligionise the other religious³⁶; fool the otherwise; illiterate the other literate³⁷; arrogance the other calm; insane the other sane; theft the other innocent; incriminate the other un-guilty; poor the other rich³⁸; displace the other place; depopulate the other popular; death the other

33 An-Na'im, Abdullahi Ahmed (Ed.) (1993). Op. cit., p. 12.

34 Ramsey, Elizabeth and Ledbetter, Shannon "Studying Religion: Issues in Definition and Method" in Ian S. Markham and Tinu Ruparell (Eds.) (2001). *Encountering Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, p. 2.

35 Idris, Amir Hassan (2001). *Sudan's Civil War-Slavery, Race and formational Identities*, New York: The Edwin Millen Press, p. 2. "The practice of slavery and a renewal of the slave trade in ... Sudan ... is legitimated by the Islamic State policy of the *jihad* (Islamic holy war) against the South".

36 Report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to the UN General E/C.12/QSUD/I13December 199, p. 4. The reports states: "Muslims may proselytize freely, but non-Muslims are formally forbidden to proselytize".

37 Appointments of the illiterate and semi illiterate Muslims such as Salah Al-Din Ngnang Marol, Mayen Ngor in Warrap State, Mongo Ajak in Upper Nile and Aciek Peech in Jonglei State as Ministers in 1990s.

38 Report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to the UN General E/C.12/QSUD/ I13December 199, p. 4. The Report states: "The North exploitation of the Southern economic assets of oil".

un-ill³⁹; profane the other holy indigenous ethnic groups such as the Muslim Beja along the Red Sea, Funj people in Ingessana Hill of the Southern Blue Nile the Nuba in the Nuba Mountains, the Christian-Animists in the Southern Sudan.⁴⁰

The inhuman practices of the extremist Muslims in Sudan against their fellow country men and women, Christian-Muslim-Animists, indicate their ignorance towards the religion of the Animists. This research adopts the concept of ignorance of other groups to a religion of other followers in a social milieu. Clodd argues that mental powers of other people that do not share a religion cannot fathom 'what is in the minds of people when the word religion is used'.⁴¹ This concept is very significant as an alternative approach in explaining Nilotic Animism. Ignorance on the part of the Islamic World and the Christian West of the Animism of the Nilotics coerces them to humiliate its believers and scorn Animism rather than recognising it as a real and practical religion compatible with Christianity and Islam. Deng observes that Nilotic people are very conservative and proud people in terms of their moral religious identity. Their recent contacts with Western-Christian-missionaries and the Islamic world have created a new phenomenon of choice between these two new religions. The Nilotics have chosen and adopted Christianity as complementary to their ancestral moral religions for its developmental and educational advantages.⁴² With such compatibility, Animism remains a theatrical religion in the view of its opponents. They frequently write and preach a series of regulatory discourses profiling pejorative definitions and stereotypes of it. On the other hand, it remains de-rigueur at the religious parameter among the populace in Sudan. It is incumbent upon social scientists, Muslim propagandists and Evangelists to free themselves from the bondage of pejorative approaches to Animism and stereotypes of its believers. An authentic and profound self-re-examination will unveil that blaspheming against Animism of the Nilotics is tantamount to profaning the monolithic supreme creature and stereotyping its believers. A political pledge that accords Animism a place in the national media in Sudan and beyond will disambiguate the obscurity and ignorance of others to the enormous moral role it plays in modern 'Southern Sudan'. Among the Nilotic people in Greater Bahr el-Ghazal, Upper Nile and the

39 Moorehead, Caroline (2005). *Human Cargo A Journey among the Refugees*, London: Chatto & Windus, 267. Dinka parents Maum and his wife Mary were displaced by the government in Rumbek, South Sudan. Mary was a nurse, yet she could not be employed in Khartoum. She was harassed by the security, and later arrested with her husband and tortured. Mary said she "was all insulted, because I am a Dinka". The security broke the teeth of Maum and took his money away.

40 de Waal, Alex and Abdel Salam, A H "Islamism, State Power *Jihad* in Sudan" in Alex de Waal (Ed.) (2004). *Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, Addis Ababa: Shama Books, p. 73. The government troops in Nuba Mountains wrecked the Nuba mosques, the mosque of Mukla in Southern Blue Nile and Holy books of Quran and the mosques in the villages of Gedamayeb and Rabbasim of Beja Muslims were destroyed.

41 Clodd, op. cite., p. 9.

42 Deng, Francis Mading (1995). *War of Visions Conflict of Identities in the Sudan*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, p. 190



A girl wearing imposed clothing at the gate of the University of Khartoum

Central and Eastern Equatoria States, Animism is an antidote to injustice, a remedy to anxiety, an arbitrator between political, social dissidents and a consolidator of secular and spiritual powers.

Theoretical Framework and Analysis

Discourses of missionaries, sociologists, historians and anthropologists feature enormously derogatory descriptions and definitions of Animism. Indeed, they have transformed it into a cliché cult. In Clodd's words, "most definitions concerning Animism hang between platitude and paradox".⁴³ One derogatory paradigm claims that Animism is a religious performance, in which adherents deify all

⁴³ Clodd, Edward (1905), *Animism the Seed of Religion*, London: Archibald Constable & CO. Ltd., 1905, p. 9.

forms of idols by practicing magic, superstitions, sorcery, witchcraft and keeping amulets, talismans, and anything that they believe has power to protect them from unknown threatening evil spirits and to placate the good ones.⁴⁴

In fact, definitions clustering around 'platitudes and paradox' imply the writers' ignorance of Animism, since nothing in them conforms to the genuine practice of its believers. This approach runs counter to professional research etiquette, since it produces knowledge full of evasions. Animists' worship is a set of religious cycles with one ultimate goal that ends with the supreme God. This God is identified as *Nakwuge* among the Toposa, *Ngun* among the Bari, *Juok* among Anuak, *Mbori* or *Mboli Bapaizegina* among the Azande, and as *Loma* by the Bongo, *Ajok* or *Hollum* by the Otuho, *Juong* by the Maban, as *Mbiri* among the Ndogo, *Nhialic* among the Dinka, *Kuoth* among the Nuer and *Jwok* among the Shilluk in the 'Upper River Nile' area of contemporary 'Southern Sudan'. It is ignorance of these cycles and the aims of Animism which compels the Islamic and Christian West to stigmatise the believers of Animism in Africa. Consider two instances, which accentuate this stigmatisation and reveal inadequate knowledge of the Nilotics' Animism. First, a journalist of Time Magazine described the impact of the wretched conditions as a result of the last twenty-two years of war between the Islamic North and the Christian-Animist South as follows:

*The elderly Nilotic Nuer woman Buk Thuch in the town of Ayod believes that the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) relief aircraft that carried humanitarian service delivery to them in Ayod each day were "sent by her animist gods".*⁴⁵

This description conforms to the oldest discourses of apriori mental set of producing a derogatory knowledge of the Nilotic-religious cultural identity. An alien reader would assume that the Nuer people believe that their 'animists gods' sent planes, which carried food for them, but a literate Nilotic reader would not accept that an old Nuer lady believes such a thing. If she even uttered this statement at all, she probably meant that God was the inspirational power behind the sending of aid to the vulnerable Nilotic people. For them, God is defined as eternally just and His majestic justice affects human institutions and functions in them through inspired individuals or collective peoples. The second example comes from Eleanor Vandevort, a female missionary. Vandevort claims that one day while relaxing on her veranda in Nasir, South Sudan, she abruptly heard a wailing voice of a man calling her to come with a gun and kill 'Deng', which she defines as a poisonous sluggish short snake. Vandevort concludes by saying that she killed the snake, but nevertheless, the Nuer men "claimed that this snake was God".⁴⁶

44 Yamada, Takako (1999), *An Anthropology of Animism and Shamanism*, Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, pp. xi, 62. Roheim, Geza (1930), *Animism, Magic, and the Divine King*, New York: International University Press, INC., pp. v, 20, 168.

45 Andrew Purvis, (1993), "'When the Flyers from Heaven Stop, We will Die'", Magazine, Time, pp. 46-7.

46 Vandevort, Eleanor (1968), *Leopard Tamed*, London: Harper and Row Publishers, p. 45.

Vandevort's discourse actually makes little sense to the speakers of the Nuer language. A Nuer man or a woman would not claim that a snake was 'God'. A sage religious missionary, social scientist or an educated novelist in pursuit of research work must choose between static-stereotypical analysis and dynamic-empirical discourse of ethnic speakers in South Sudan. Interpreting accurate expressions of the religious words and their representations helps a researcher to produce the highest quality research results. Vandevort presents only a stereotype with the aim of casting Animism in an unfavourable light, so that its followers denounce it in favour of Christianity. This form of missionary approach is not practical among the Nilotic people of the Nuer, the Acholi, the Pari, the Dinka, the Shilluk, the Anuak, the Bari, the Otuho and the Jur-Col of South Sudan. Animism in the Nilotic regions remains a religion intertwined with Christianity and Islam. Many respondents of this research from three Nilotic ethnic groups (the Dinka, the Nuer and Shilluk) at five institutes of higher learning (University of Khartoum, Omdurman Ahlia University, University of Juba, University of Bahr el-Ghazal and University of Upper Nile) provide responses from which an authentic definition of Animism can be distilled. Their ancestral-phenomenological experiences of the consistent and diachronic mysterious events among them made them believe that the universal human environment contains spirits. Animists, however, refrain from worshipping the spirits, but they 'respect' them as ancestral totems.

In principle, according 'respect' is not equal to performing 'worship'. The religious compatibility of the two terms confuses non-speakers of the Nilotic languages and may lead them to conclude that the Nilotic Animists worship spirits and totems. 'Worship' of God and expression of 'respect' to totems are the fundamental basis of Animism religion. Their intertwined performance of 'worship' to God and 'respect' to particular totems which they consider to have spirits makes them Animists, consciously or unconsciously. Only through a conceptual digestion of the interlaced character of cycle of 'respect' to totem and 'worship' to God (compatible with social structures generally in Africa and particularly among the Nilotics of 'Southern Sudan') can a missionary or a social scientist deduce an appropriate definition of Animism, which accepts the Nilotics' Animism as a persistently challenging religion in 'Upper River Nile'.

The Nilotic ethnic groups are followers of Animism, and demonstrate a wide range of parallel totem tokens. Each clan has a totem and a child that is born in a family is gradually taught to observe the obligation of paying due 'respect' to that totem. Those who share a totem regard themselves as genealogically descended from one original ancestor of a clan; however, God is the focal point of their common religious interaction. They conceive of Him as a Self-Sufficient Supreme Being and Creator of everything in the universe. Thus, He alone deserves the privilege of 'worship'. A Nilotic student explains: "I am a Christian-Animist, I regard myself as an Animist, simply my father's clan, Pagong *e thek gong*, which means I respect the hedgehog. This is a mere small animal ... is just a totem for our clan ... we do not worship it, but it is respected. In practical terms, we avoid killing it. Members of our clan *e Nhialic doar* (worship God), we know Him. *Nhialic* is

the Creator of all living beings and this is the same name that I acquired when I was baptised in Khartoum as a Christian in 1990. To me, the Christian God is *Nhialic* whom we the Jieng (Dinka) worship and we like Christianity, because its believers do not mock us, whenever we perform our respect to totems and worship to One God”.⁴⁷

In addition, another Dinka student states: “I always describe myself as a Christian-Animist for two reasons. First, in Dinka religion, *Nhialic* is the Creator of heaven and earth, so He is worshipped. Second, my identity as an individual person among the Dinka is not known, being a worshipper of *Nhialic*, since the whole Dinka believe that everybody in the universe worships *Nhialic*. So, *Nhialic* is a ... collective identity of mankind and not an individual identity. My clan pangwak, however respects tortoise and that is my individual cultural identity at the level of the Dinka in general, but an inclusive identity to Pa-ngwak”.⁴⁸ According to Lienhardt, the clan paghol among the Dinka is also called ‘the house of thigh-bone’. This clan respects the thigh-bone as its divinity. Members of the clan refrain from breaking the thigh-bones of any beasts paying it due “respects” rather than “worship”.⁴⁹

The Nilotic Dinka responses reveal the religious identity of the Dinka students. It is from such plausible enumerations of complex religious rituals among the Nilotic Dinka, that the definition of Animism can be well established. In this regard, Animism is a complex religious practice whose followers believe in particular totems, which they believe that the monolithic God bestowed to them. Believers, however, refrain from recognising these totems and other free spirit(s) as God; hence, these only receive ‘respect’ as dependents of the independent God that enjoys the privilege of ‘worship’. The belief of Animism invokes differences of opinion and intolerance between some Muslim Arab students and the believers of Animism at the five universities. For example, one Muslim Arab student argues: “Islam is the best religion because it removes paganism that dominates the social institutions in the South and Nuba Mountains.”⁵⁰ Another declares that the people of “South Sudan worship idols”.⁵¹ And as result, one Muslim student presents a question: “Why worship idols and there is One God in Islam?”⁵² In contrast, a Christian-Animist student presents a corresponding question: “Why do Muslims pray towards Mecca, a place in Saudi Arabia when there is One God everywhere in anything?”⁵³

47 Mou Akol, University of Juba.

48 Kon Deng, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

49 Lienhardt, Godfrey (1961), *Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford: Clarendon Press p.108.

50 Sabur Ali, University of Khartoum.

51 Mohammed Al-Naim at University of Khartoum, people of “South Sudan worship idols” and Saleh el-Nur, University of Khartoum states: “If you go to the South, you would find some people are followers of idols”.

52 Sabah Abdel Rahman, University of Khartoum.

53 Theip Mar Lual, Dinka, Gatluak Mayom, Nuer, and Chan Majwok, Shilluk all at University of Juba.



Christian-Animist at the Catholic Cathedral of St Mathew in Khartoum

The religious performances among the Nilotic students, where some ‘respect’ totems and others prostrate themselves five times a day towards Mecca construct irreconcilable religious boundaries between the Muslim extremists on one side and the Christian and Muslim-Animist-students on the other. Each group is ignorant of the religious performances and their profound theological meaning of the other group. Ignorance of people to the religious faith of others is a universal phenomenon that occasionally causes controversies among the believers of different religions in social, cultural and political arenas. Religious tolerance is the only remedy to these controversies. Tolerance would afford each believer the freedom to convert a person of an opposing religion to his or her own; however, conversion becomes a problem when it shifts to the category of religious proselytisation. In essence, there is a difference between religious conversion and religious proselytisation.

Conversion and Proselytism

Consideration of the conflicting views between the Nilotic Christian-Animist-students and the Muslim-Arab-students forces me to search for an alternative resolution that may gradually remedy religious conflicts globally and particularly in Sudan. A free religious discussion among individuals of opposing religions in public spaces at different institutes without the interference of the state enhances

understanding and allows conversion of persons from one religion to another to occur without strife. However legislation in favour of a single religion in the national state institutes is tantamount to proselytisation.

The two terms 'conversion' and 'proselytise' are synonymous, but do not convey exactly the same political or religious message. Conversion is a spontaneous event, which occurs through interactions between people from different religions in a free political or social environment, which refrains from controlling freedom of interactions. In the view of An'Naim, conversion represents a free unintended religious consequence of human interactions in commercial, social, and cultural institutional organs.⁵⁴ It is extremely negative, when a religious conversion shifts from the status of eventual interaction to the category of state-institutionalised event. Such a shift brings with it the ideological discourse of proselytism, which is an institutionalised religious propaganda that may not necessarily promote religious dialogue, tolerance and pluralism or diversity. Instead, its adherents impose and implement it in public institutions, defining it as 'ours', instead of being a distinctive religious practice of 'theirs' without 'us'.⁵⁵

In this way, proselytism represents a denial of another religion within the same territory. In territorial Sudan, there are two distinctive and parallel institutions. First, there is the ideological school of Proselytism and second, there is the ordinary school of 'conversion'. The National Congress Party embraces the former. It strives to legalise constitutionally the conversion of the Animist-Christians, Animist-Muslims and secular Muslims to the restricted Islamic orthodoxy. It pursues this process by staffing national institutions with people who adhere to its ideology. The staffs implement this official ideological method with the intent of making it function in the national institutions of the state. Therefore, Muslims who subscribe to this orientation are cast as good Muslims in the country and the rest of the population is characterised as 'heathens' and 'apostates'. The Christian-Animists, Muslim-Animists and secularist Muslims embrace the latter ideological school. This category seeks to legalise conversion of the citizens from one religion to another as a free, spontaneous, interactive event. According to Collins, the NIF defines the citizens of Sudan by a reference to the Quran. The party upheld an Islamic ideology that consistently shapes, indoctrinates, and controls religious diversity. It applies a comprehensive *Sharia*, which it codified in the Sudan Penal Code of 1991. Under that legal Islamic law, a 'Police Public Order' was institutionalised as 'Guardians of Morality and Advocates of Good Conduct'. Policemen from this unit roam the public streets vigilantly in order to implement radical proselytism, where the private life of the residents is regulated by the strict *Sharia*. The ability of women to travel abroad is restricted and their dressing habits must

54 An-Na'im, Ahmed Abdullahi "Competing Claims to Religious Freedom and Communal Self-Determination in Africa, in Abdullahi Ahmed An'Naim (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 2-3.

55 Martin, Paul and Winner, Harry "Religious Proselytization Historical and Theological Perspectives at the End of the Twentieth Century", in Abdullahi Ahmed An'Naim (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, pp. 29-30.

include a veil and preferably a scarf on the head and long garments touching the ankles. On the other hand, those who strive to maintain diversity of religions as a private individual entity face imprisonment in the detention centres notorious for torture, abuse and killing. Moderate Muslims rejecting the ideological proselytisation are categorised as “apostates” and Animists are characterised as “heathens”.⁵⁶

Two aspects constitute the fundamental political problem in Sudan. First, power classifies Muslims to infallible and ‘apostates’. The former refers to those allegiances to the ideological doctrine of proselytism. The latter refers to Muslim dissidents. Such classification characterises the political Islam as an exposé of the ideological corruption that intends to purge Islamic religion within itself. A faithful community expects religious guidance from leaders to shield them from divisive dogmas. When a faithful community becomes conscious of the shift of dogmas from religious discourse that defines religion as ‘ours’ to the exclusion of others for the sake of political aims veiled in the shroud of religion, then such an initiative qualifies as a schism within one religion. Setting religion aside from politics preserves integrity of religion as ‘ours’, while mixing it with politics disintegrates a faithful community into categories of ‘enemies’ and ‘friends’, apostates and Muslims, heathens and religious. According to Esack, the ideological practice of the regime in power in Sudan blatantly divides its citizens into different categories explaining that the “enemy is often the internal self”.⁵⁷

Second, the description of Animist believers as ‘heathens’ is misleading and would be of great significance for a social scientist interested in understanding Animism as a fundamental religion in Africa and searching for the underlying religious mystery in the minds of Animist believers. Having comprehensive understanding of what is in their minds mitigates the anxiety of prejudice and stereotype among its opponents. This alternative approach would unfold their infinite perception in defining the reality of the universal existence. Cautious adoption of this alternative view per se would be the best way for scholars and Muslim Arab extremists in Sudan to discover the underlying motivations that dictate the Nilotics to view totems as indispensable realities in their lives, leading to the eventual respect for them and worship of God. The totality of ‘respect’ towards totems and ‘worship’ of God is the religion called Animism. It is a very powerful and enduring religion, even though it has no missionaries.

This research devotes a great deal of attention to the latter point and argues that the inner mysticism and thoughts of the Animist Nilotics can be inferred from a passage in Henry Fielding’s novel *Tom Jones*, where Parson Thwackum re-

56 Collins, Robert (1999), “Africans, Arabs, and Islamists: From the Conference Tables to the Battlefields in the Sudan”, *African Studies Review*, African Studies Association, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 106-107.

57 Esack, Farid “Muslims Engaging the Other and the Humanum”, in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 51.

veals his religious identity by arguing: “When I mentioned religion, I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England”.⁵⁸

The form of expressive discussion in the novel defines what Parson Thwackum clearly understands as Christianity and is in fact not what other people think and declare about his religion, but only what he thinks of it. Similarly, when a Nilotic talks of a religion, (s)he means the Animism of Africa; and not only the Animism of Africa, but the Animism of the Upper River Nile area; and not only the Animism of the Upper River Nile area but the intertwined Animism of the Nilotics with the prophetic religions. This mental template or image of Animists differentiates between practices relevant to all forms of magic and religious performance of Animism.

Difference between Animism and Magic

The discourse of individual mental thought on religion is useful. It helps explain African Animism in general, and particularly Animism of the Nilotic people. Many derogatory descriptions of Animism have been written in text books, published and taught in important and advanced Western academic institutions. Researchers fail to distinguish what others mean by Animism as a religion and instead stick to their own opinion of it. For instance, Roheim describes Animism in a generalised way as “a type of human behaviour equivalent to magic”.⁵⁹

Equivalating magic with Animism is controversial and problematic. There is no consensus among social scientists on what practice constitutes magic. One example of this comes from Annika Teppo. She writes that, during the nineteenth century, the Black majority in South Africa had largely converted to Christianity. On the other hand, it practiced magic and witchcraft. Teppo concludes that *muthi*, traditional medicines, may cause death, but with a *sangoma*, a benevolent healer, knowledge of magic or witchcraft may cure different illnesses and protect people from harm.⁶⁰

The author does not believe that the practice of *muthi* has any link with magic. Physical medicines which are occasionally benevolent **cannot at the same time be** magic. Magic is an attitude of the mind attached to a specific action with intent to harm. Consider one example of typical characteristics of magic in Tharumba society in Australia. A sorcerer takes some of the bodily excreta, a piece of a finger nail or hair of an enemy and embeds it between the branches of a squeaking tree. The

58 Robertson, Ian (1981), *Sociology* (2nd Ed.), New York: Worth publishers, p. 403.

59 Roheim, Geza (1930), *Animism, Magic, and the Divine King*, New York: International University Press, INC, p.v.

60 Teppo, Annika (spring 2009) “My House Is Protected by a Dragon”, *Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, Vol. 34 No. 1, p. 24.

reason for this performance is that a sorcerer wishes the owner of the substance to suffer in the same way as when the branches of the squeaking tree destroy these fragmented bodily substances.⁶¹

In light of this performance, magic becomes a physical ritual performance with intent to influence a conceptual supernatural being to fulfil an apriori subjective wish. In this sense, it has no equivalency with Animism as a religion. The primary aim of magical performance is to cause its target harm. Believers of Animism among the Nilotics perform 'worship' to God and 'respect' to totem(s) without intent to harm others. A Nilotic spiritual priest can perform a religious rite by inviting people to pass through his opened legs. The underlying aim of this performance is a wish that the people who have passed through the legs would be spared any dangerous diseases or natural disasters in the same way as they have passed unharmed through the legs. In this sense, the aim of Animism is to bring harmony and health to people. According to James, the Nilotic people provide a clear, comprehensive explanation of the 'Divinity' role in human conditional situations. The Jiang (Dinka) generally perform religious rites with the aim of 'bringing peace and health in the name of a universal Divinity'.⁶²

Limiting Animism to magic is nothing but being prejudiced, stereotypical and absolutely ignorant towards it. It represents the total absence of value free thinking in social sciences and that causes religious controversies. Prophetic religions such as Christianity and Islam are not free from this kind of Animistic performance, with the ultimate aim being health, peace and blessing. For example, in the Old Testament Jacob took the stone that he had used as a pillow, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on it and gave the place a new name, Bethel. The aim behind the performance of oil on the stone was a wish from Jacob that the pillar of stone would become the House of God.⁶³ Also, the Prophet Muhammad spit his saliva on the wound of Abu Baker al-Sadiq after a lethal snake bit Abu Baker in a cave where they were hiding from their pursuing antagonists.⁶⁴

These two instances in the holy texts of Christianity and Islam justify that such performances do not necessarily represent magic, since, they reflect positive wishes. Yet, such religious practices are not the ultimate ends of Christianity and Islam. Christian faith focuses on the mystery of baptism as a means to purify universal human beings of their original sins and on believing in Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father as One God, Holy Trinity.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Islam teaches about the straight path of One God and recognition of the Prophet Muhammed as a sealed Messenger of God.⁶⁶ Similar teachings apply to Animism as can be

61 Roheim op. cit., p.1.

62 James, Wendy (1988). *The Listening Ebony Moral Knowledge, Religion, and Power among the Uduk of Sudan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 187.

63 Holy Bible (Genesis 28:18-22).

64 Malek, Kamal Abdel (1995), *Muhammad in the Modern Egyptian popular Ballad*, Leiden: E J Brill, p. 63.

65 Holy Bible Conversion to Christian faith of one God based on Baptism continues, until to the end of the earth (Luke 3:3)

66 Holy Quran 2:54



Christian-Animists in Sudan

derived from cases drawn from three Nilotic ethnic groups of Southern Sudan. This process, however, first requires a clear research methodological approach to the targeted subjects. How to reach them at their different geographical locations within a specific timeframe in order to access data from them? How many participants would be involved as a target group at each university and why? What kind of research method would be applied (qualitative or quantitative) and why? Why does the researcher choose students of five institutes of higher learning as the subjects for the research? What really prompts him to select students from only five universities among the many universities in Sudan?

Research Methodology, Aims, Plan and Sources

This research is based on a qualitative rather than a quantitative method. It has drawn on certain relevant written sources to Sudan. Anthropological studies of Paul Howell Paul, Edward Evans Evans-Pritchard, Lienhardt Godfrey, Jeremy Coote and Shelton Anthony, Francis Mading Deng to the Nilotic people were

deemed useful literature. Islamic scholarships for the people of Sudan such as of Abdullahi Ahmed An’Naim, Abdel-Wahab El-Affendi and Abdel Salam Sidhamed were also very helpful secondary sources.

The main primary source material was collected by means of a survey conducted in Sudan. Pre-prepared and methodological questionnaires in English, Arabic and Nilotic languages were presented to one hundred students of higher education in Sudan. This number comprised twenty-five Muslims and seventy-five Christian-Animists. There were objective reasons for this imbalanced division among the adherents of the three religions. First, the study targets the Nilotic population and not the larger population of Muslims in the North.⁶⁷ Second, it is said that Christians of the South, practice Christianity and Animism compatibly, which was adequate reason to combine them into one group as Christian-Animists.⁶⁸

In our modern society, students of institutions of higher learning are important groups. They are the future leaders of states and capable of constructing political and cultural ideologies to further their political aims. For instance, students of institutions of higher learning in Sudan organised and implemented the popular uprisings which overthrew the former military juntas of Ibrahim Aboud in October 1964 and Ja’afar Muhammad Nimeiri in April 1985. Hassan Abdullah Turabi, the founder of the NIF, constantly appeals to students to move and overthrow the current Government of Sudan (GoS), under the leadership of President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir of the NCP party.⁶⁹

These past successes and the contributions of students to politics has stimulated political and democratic associations in Sudan to visit campuses of universities and recruit students for their political parties. This paradigm turns the institutions of higher learning in Sudan into massive centres of political competition, where political associations acquire members for their political parties. Despite this, the author expects that the views of students may foster alternative opinions concerning the state’s national identity. Nonetheless, the author is conscious that students of higher education have their distinctive political organisations, yet some of them have no fixed political affiliation.

The chosen students were mainly from the universities of Khartoum, Juba, Omdurman Ahlia, Upper Nile and Bahr el-Ghazal. There were some objective reasons for this choice. First, the University of Khartoum is very popular as the

67 Hughes, John (1996, September 26). “Removing the Veil of Slavery and Exploitation”, Christian Science Monitor, Vol. 88, Issue 212, p. 19. Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Its northern part is inhabited by the Muslim majority, while the South embraces the Christian and Animist minority.

68 de Waal Alex (2006, December 22). “Averting Genocide in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan”, p. 2. The inhabitants of the Nuba Mountains are the same as the people of South Sudan. They are indigenous Black Africans. Some adhere to Christianity, Islam and Animism compatibly.

69 Shreq al-Awsat (2007, March 17). “*Fatwa Jadida min Turabi: Rejim el-Zina Sharia Yhudia*, The New Islamic Verdict: For Turabi, Stoning Is a Judaism Law”, Arabic Newspaper, Shreq al-Awsat, No. 10336, p. 1. Turabi says history proves that students in Sudan have a political capacity to overthrow dictatorial military regimes. The students uprising of October 1964 forced the former Military President Ibrahim Aboud to resign and in April to the May regime of the former President Ja’afar Muhammed Nimeiri.

oldest and largest institution of higher education in Sudan. Second, Omdurman Ahlia University is an elite institution that bases its curriculum and orientation at the campus on secular values. For this reason, it has been in conflict with the Government of Sudan leading to several clashes between the ideologically Islamic students and the ideologically secular Muslim, Animist and Christian students. In 1996, students from the Islamic forum incinerated offices, libraries and other essential properties of the University. The same scenario repeated itself in 2004, when a number of administrative offices were set on fire. These recurring events at one university lead one to consider it as a centre of conflicting ideologies of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and secularism, and deserving of research attention.

Moreover, the author has extensive experiences at these three universities. First, he was an undergraduate student at Omdurman Ahlia University and graduate student at the University of Khartoum and taught at both universities from 1997 to 2000. These connections made it possible for him to get more than one hundred students to respond to the given questionnaires. Some students also volunteered to collect responses from other students and delivered them to the author with a promise not to read them. Staff colleagues provided comfortable office spaces for writing, interviewing and receiving the responses of the research questionnaires from students.

The University of Juba was chosen, because it is the oldest university in the South and it has most students from the 'Southern Region'. The University of Bahr el-Ghazal was chosen for three reasons. First, the researcher has been a member of the teaching staff, since November 1997, when its campus was temporarily transferred to Khartoum, amid political turmoil and violence from its original campus in Wau, South Sudan. Second, Wau is also the home town of the author, which helped him procure accommodation and interact with students. Third, it lies at the centre of the largest ethnic group in South Sudan, the Dinka; thus, most of its students come from two Nilotic ethnic groups, the Dinka and the Jur Col. The University of Upper Nile was chosen, because it is located at the centre of four Nilotic ethnic groups: the Nuer; the Dinka; the Shilluk and Anyuak. The majority of its students come from these Nilotic ethnic groups.

The plan for the survey and the collection of data from Sudan was adapted to the limited time at hand. It comprised three visits of intensive three-month field-work periods. The first survey was conducted January through March 2008 and the second from May to June 2008. During this time, a monograph was drafted. During the third visit, from July to November 2009, three students were individually consulted for private in-depth interviews of about an hour per student.

The reason for the interviews was to give further opportunities to those students to better explain what was not clear about their earlier responses in the questionnaires; thus the interviews focused on their past responses. During the interview, the author took care not to influence the interviewee in any way, but remained impartial and non-judgemental. After these interviews, it was possible to sit and finalise the monograph with a complete review of relevant scientific literature, objective interpretation of the data and all necessary crosschecking of

students' statements. The present manuscript is organised in accordance to the responses of students to the given questionnaires, participant observation as an insider and the interviews.

The current political Sudan is not free from political harassment, interrogation, detention and murder of those who disseminate knowledge that does not pander to the policy of the ruling government, the NCP. A Sudanese who attempts to disseminate an opinion that deviates from the oriented policy of *tawajja alhathari*, an ideological Islamic system that intends to change the cultural landscape of Sudan into a homogeneous Islamic orthodoxy, may be killed.⁷⁰ The state quickly interprets such dissidence as 'blasphemy'⁷¹ or 'apostasy' and both are punishable by death in the criminal court of *Sharia*.⁷²

The present climate in Sudan made the author consider the safety of the responding students a top priority; the respondents provided two options yet. First, a few wanted their names to be abbreviated and many wanted their names to appear in the manuscript. The names are defined in the footnotes and some within the text of the manuscript according to religion, ethnicity, university and regions as requested in the questionnaires. The term anonymous was used in reference to those who did not reveal their names in the questionnaires. The majority of students from the Nilotic peoples of Jur Col, Anyuak, Jieng (Dinka), Naath (Nuer) and Collo (Shilluk) identify themselves as Christians and Animists and some defined their religious identity as 'Christian-Animists'.

The religiously compatible definition has forced the author to conclude that there is a difference between the descriptions, 'Christian-Animist' and 'Christian and Animist'. The former refers to the Nilotic students that practice Christianity and Animism compatibly and the latter is for the identification of those believers who avoid compatible practice and adhere to one of the two religions, Christianity or Animism in South Sudan. Furthermore, the capitalised North stands for the region of the Northern Sudan; a student from that region is also identified as a Northerner. It includes the west, far north, the east and centre and the same applies to the South or 'Southern Sudan Region'. A student from the territorial South is sometimes identified in the text as a Southerner.

70 Amnesty International (2007, October). "Editor-in Chief of Al-Wafaq Arabic Newspaper, Muhammad Taha Is Killed", p. 1. Before his death, the government had charged him with apostasy. He published an article in his newspaper that discusses the genealogy of the Prophet Muhammad. Later on 6 September 2007, Taha was found dead on the street in Khartoum with a decapitated body and his head placed beside his body. His killing appeared to be politically motivated.

71 Shreq al-Awsat (2007, December 22). "Government of Sudan Punishes the British Teacher, Gillian Gibbon", Shreq al-Awsad English Newspaper, Issue No. 10617, p. 1. The government of Sudan accuses the British school teacher, Gillian Gibbon of "blasphemy" in naming the teddy bear Muhammed.

72 Sudani (2007, December 3). "*Hokuma Sudania Hakim aala Messereen*, Government of Sudan Sentenced Egyptians", Sudani Arabic Newspaper, Issue No. 757, p. 2. Two Egyptian nationals, Ali Al-Fatah Abdel Ra'wuof and Mahruoz Muhammed Abdel Gadier were accused of "apostasy" and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, because they sold a book that conveys controversial views about Islam.

Chapter 1

Animism of the Dinka

Whenever I tell these things here,
Muslims quickly respond be silent,
Satan.

The world of the Dinka is entirely religious. Every born and adult Dinka is bound to observe two entities. First, each member is bound to recognise the sanctity of the clan's *yath* (totem) and *yeeth* (totems). There are also free *yeeth*, which a clan does not inclusively recognise, but individuals within it do. Second, there is *Nhialic* (God), an obligatory omnipotent entity to be worshipped and feared. These categories emerged from two questions in the questionnaires; “*What is your clan and religious affiliation, what do you worship and how do you offer sacrifice?*” and “*How does one become a convert from a religion to another religion in Sudan and do you think there is an interference of racial and cultural views to your religion? Please, give explanation of what you know as well as your experiences.*”

Each Dinka student who responded to these questions identified his or her religious identity as a Christian and at the same time, (s)he offered due ‘respect’ to the clan’s totem, which is believed to carry a spirit. A Dinka student at the University of Juba explains: “I am a baptised Christian ... and I believe that Jesus Christ is the only Son of the Living God and our clan, pagor respects *apothou* (pumpkin). I was not baptised into it, instead, I knew it, when I was a ... small boy that pumpkin was our *yath* (totem). Beside it, cantaloupe, and both are all our *Yeeth* (totems). So, *En athek apothou* (I respect a pumpkin)”.⁷³ Another student adds “I am from the pariath clan and we respect *piol* (watery cloud). My father brought a cow from the Nuer land and that had a *joak* (a bad spirit) called *maherbainhom* (cracker head of area), while my mother speaks of another *joak* called *macardit* (a great black one). Both *maherbainhom* and *macardit* are *jaak* (spirits) at home. Each one of us is ... free to respect or not to respect, but there is no freedom in *Nhialic* (God). Every individual Munyjiang (Dinka) worships *Nhialic* as the ultimate end”.⁷⁴

The Dinka students identify themselves as ‘Christian-Animist’. A converted Dinka to Christianity does not drop the clan’s totem, but continues to ‘respect’ it. (S)he identifies himself or herself at the level of the Dinka social institution with

73 Dau Thuc, University of Khartoum.

74 Garang Ateny, University of Bahr el-Ghazal

that totem as a particular identity of a group. This can be elicited from another Dinka statement: "Different clans of the Jieng owned different *yeeth*, whom they owe respect. Some ... also owned *jaak*, but they are disadvantageous spirits. A clan, however, does not own *Nhialic*. He is so immense beyond human degrees and categories of dimension. He is a Creator of the universe."⁷⁵ Another student concludes "We ... Jieng, *oak aa roak*, (we pray) to *Nhialic* at anytime anywhere. It is Him alone whom we *doar*, meaning worship, glorify, adore, praise and eulogise. The word *doar* represents what our minds think of Him. Among us, no one ... chooses to reject *Nhialic*; to do so, would imply self-denial and such a person faces inexorable misfortune and death. Our clan, however, manipulates our *yeeth* to participate in invoking *Nhialic* to listen to us for the sake of the health of our people and ... cattle. Whenever I tell these things here, Muslims quickly respond be silent, Satan".⁷⁶

Students have given testimonies of the practices of Animism and it would be possible to comprehend its functional phenomenon through them. Paying attention to the terms that the Dinka students use to religiously express what is in their minds in approaching the Animistic triad of totems, spirits and God provides a complete, adequate knowledge of the Dinka's Animism. The students have provided two textual terms; *doar* refers to worship and *atheak* to 'respect'. Each of these words carries a functional religious message. The term *doar* is treated as a sanctified word which they use entirely, at least here, to denote God. On the other hand, *atheak* is not equivalent to *doar*; the two words share the category of religiosity, but differ completely in the context of Animism. *Atheak* is set apart for totems and spirits. The present functional perspective of Animism shows that the Animistic life of the Dinka is religiously structured and expressed by the triad. First, there are *yeeth*, totems which every clan owns. To be an Animist requires no service of initiation or baptism. Put differently, members of a clan are not baptised into Animism. One proposes here the term Animistise as synonymous to the word baptise or to become an Animist. Therefore, in Animism, there is no Animistisation ritual service. Second, there are the *jaak* (spirits), which are not obligatory; hence, individuals choose to own them or to reject them. Third, there is *Nhialic* (God), a supreme One and impossible for anyone to reject. Lack of rejection of God's rules among the Dinka indicates that it is unlikely that atheists and agnostic groups are going to found among them, hence, everyone is religious. The choice for agnosticism or atheism is believed to lead to death.

The three stages of Animism involving the worship of a monotheistic God is an adequate reason to write it with a capital 'A', as 'Animism', rather than the lower case 'a', yielding 'animism'. Writing it with a lower case 'a' excludes God. It represents only *yath* (totem) or *yeeth* (totems), and spirits which are not worshipped, but their interlacement with the highest level including God is where it becomes a religion spelled with the capital letter, Animism. In this sense, Animism

75 Donato Tem, University of Juba.

76 Deng Mel, Omdurman Ahlia University

is a religion that adopts totems of clans and spirits as vertical means, but the end is the monotheistic God who enjoys exceptional privileges of glorification and worship.

The presence of totem and spirit between the Dinka and God is a symbolic representation of the Dinka concept of God. Among the Dinka, God is conceived as beyond comparison, since He is so extreme and present anywhere at one time. Thus, such omnipresence requires an intermediary approach as in other religions. For instance, according to Horrie and Chippindale, God instructed the prophet Muhammad from heaven through Moses to promulgate to the followers of Islam that prayer must be conducted fifty times a day. Muhammad realised that fifty sessions per a day devoted for prayer per se was too much for human nature. The Prophet negotiated with God through the Prophet Moses (Musa) explaining the burden of praying fifty times a day to the faithful Muslims. In the end, God was receptive to the concerns of the prophet and allowed him to inform the Muslims to pray only five times a day.⁷⁷

Furthermore, in light of this development, there is no animistisation in Animism; instead each person identified as a member of a clan such as the Wenyor clan in Dinka Ngok or the Paqueen clan in Dinka of Northern Bahr el-Ghazal is simultaneously linked to a totem or totems of a clan as intertwined entities. In this sense, each member of a clan is bound to identify himself or herself with the clan's totem in social institutions among the Dinka, even though some Christians may choose to stop paying *atheak* (respect) to totems or a totem. This category is what we call the first religious level in Animism of the Dinka; where a totem represents a religion at the limited level of religious practices known as *theak* (respect) and not *Doar* (worship). The second religious level of Animism is an occasional one, where there are numerous free *jaak* (spirits) or one *joak* (spirit). Concerning the free spirits, an individual in a clan can own a spirit or multiple spirits independently of the whole clan. Owners of such spirits manifest them in different ways in religious performances. They have no unison, since they are free spirits that come from outside, so they differ from place to place. They include *macardit*, meaning 'a great black one' and *maherbainhom* literally translated as 'a cracker head of an area'. Lienhardt calls these collections of *jaak* "free-divinities" which the Dinka observe to have been introduced into their land recently from abroad, particularly from their cousins, the Nuer. Lienhardt concludes that the Dinka express their rejection of these *jaak* in a religious hymn:

*Let us pray to the master, the original master,
The master of the centre of the camp,
Our masters [now] are not masters of time long past,
Let us pray to the master, the original master.*⁷⁸

77 Horrie, Chris and Chippindale, Peter (1997), *What Is Islam a Comprehensive Introductory*, London: Virgin Books, p. 2.

78 Lienhardt op. cit., p. 104.

Although Lienhardt uses a small ‘m’ for the word ‘master’, instead of a capital ‘M’, one argues that the original Master in this religious hymn is a symbolic reference to God. Therefore, a capital ‘M’ would be more appropriate than the small ‘m’. God is the final One whom every clan acknowledges and as a result; the whole Dinka *doar* (worship) Him. He is the only One that brings the Dinka together in order to be worshipped as a supreme being.

In fact, not every Dinka uses the term *doar* in approaching God. For instance, the Dinka student at the University of Juba uses the phrase “*athei Nhialic*” meaning glory to God.⁷⁹ Why do some Dinka students use the term *doar* as a synonym of the English term ‘worship’, while others use *athei*? The interviews show that the reason comes down to the language of the Dinka comprising various regional dialects. Most of the Western Dinka, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and the Rek (Warrap regions) students consistently use the word *doar*, rather than *athei*. The Dinka of the Lakes, Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei States regions mostly use the term *athei*. So, the term *athei* is for them a synonym of *doar* in addressing God and not applicable to totems or spirits.

Nevertheless, the two entities spirit and totem are not equally represented among the Dinka. Some Dinka have no spirit or spirits, but totems are a prime identity, which distinguish clans from each other and prevent incest from occurring. A Dinka student at the University of Juba explains ‘*jaak* are not ... important, my father has no *joak*, but our clan, Payei has *yeeth*. We have *kuel* a sycamore tree and we ... have *malek yath* or *awuotik* (wave) in a river. These *yeeth* are very important, without them, we could end up inmarrying ourselves. The Dinka country is very vast, yet each clan knows a relative from other far regions, through the *yeeth* of a clan. For instance, we the Payei are all over the Dinka country. They are called Parek in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal and we know ourselves through our *yeeth*, *kuel* and *malek*, which we respect”.⁸⁰ Lienhardt notes that the Payei or Parek clan is known ‘the House of Ayei’. Ayei is observed as an original ancestor that gave birth to them all and the name of the clan carries his name. Ayei has *kuel*, a giant ficus tree which is respected as a divine totem of the clan.⁸¹

1.1 Mysterious Pregnancy and Religious Laws for Sexual Relationships

Animism helps in establishing the genealogical descent of a clan among the Dinka. A student from the clan of Payei records the myth concerning a clan’s totem as: “In our clan, *kuel* is our *yath*; it came to be through a mysterious ... way. It is said that our grandmother of all unknown number of thousands and thousands of Payei Arek got pregnant in a mysterious way in a river. She was pregnant without sexual contact with any man. She received an unexpected pregnancy from *awutiak*

79 Mangar Makur, University of Juba.

80 Jok Agai Madut, University of Juba.

81 Nebel, P A (1948), *Dinka Dictionary and Grammar*, Verona: Afncane, p. 51.

(wave) in a river. She was told in a dream not to cover the child after birth with anything but the leaves of the *kuel* tree. After giving birth, she acted in accordance with this instruction and the clan started to respect the *kuel* tree as a totem”.⁸²

A Catholic Priest, Fr. P. A. Nebel writes about this myth that the Payei (Parek) clan told him that this child of a wave that goes around and returns is called Awutiak, which is referred to as a ‘wave’. Nebel concludes that the Payei sing this hymn to celebrate his birth as:

*Arek the Great followed the River-Lord up to the Kiir.
The river where the Arabs are, which borders on death,
Which builds on dam and closes the door,
To be not found on this side of the Arab country
She followed the Lord into his home
The Wave is my mother's husband,
Arek the Great followed the Lord up to the Kiir ...*⁸³.

Two characteristics of the Payei clan which are also reflected in other Dinka clans are identical. First Animism is not only a religion that is expressed in respect of totems. It is also a societal mechanism for the classification and recognition of kinship relationship. A totem of a clan is a symbolic interaction that defines the identity of a clan member. It identifies kin and kith, even over the long distances of the ancestral-genealogical past that is difficult to trace without encountering lacuna. It is only this symbolic centre of totems, which helps the huge number of the Dinka living all around the Upper River Nile area of modern ‘Southern Sudan’. The Dinka are the largest ethnic group in the South. Its population is estimated at more than three million. Currently they reside in the Lakes, Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, Warrap and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States to the west of the Nile River. They also live in the States of ‘Unity’ (West Upper Nile), Jonglie and Upper Nile on the eastern bank of the Nile.⁸⁴ All young boys, girls, old men and women in a new social interaction identify their names. Respected totems of a clan always accompany the name of a person. After self-introduction of individuals, each one begins to distinguish a kin. In this way, *akeath* (incest), sexual intercourse between people too closely related to each other, can be avoided.

Incest is a serious offence among the Dinka and requires a mechanism of religious purification. This is noted in the response of a student from the University of Bahr el-Ghazal to the following question in the research questionnaires: “How do you perform religious rituals in your religion”? The student explains the collective participatory religious ceremony, which the Dinka undertake for the purification of offenders who committed incest. “I have witnessed old men taking two opposite sexes of incest to the middle of a common road marked as a centre of ritual purification. The reason was, because the totems and people disowned incest. It

82 Majak Awutiak, University of Juba.

83 Cited from Lienhardt (1961), p. 172.

84 Beswick, Stephanie (2004), *Sudan's Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan*, New York: University of Rochester Press, pp. 33, 37.

has no place in the ... house and a three-year-old ox was slaughtered and chopped into two parts. The chopping of the beast into two parts was to show that incest was wrong and the offenders were separated spiritually and reconciled to God. The participants collectively invoked God to pardon the offenders and the meat of the beast was consumed on the road. After that ceremony, the Dinka expect a new *ceing*, a moral social relation, to be instilled".⁸⁵ The religious ceremony on a public road signifies the validity of Animism in a moral social order among the Dinka towards incest. Incest is a taboo, an action that cannot be touched or broken, and when it is touched and violated, people would totally reject it and determine ways for its correction. Its rectification requires a space for a religious purification, but since it is a serious offence which has outraged the people, the totem and God, home cannot be its ritual setting, but a public road. There on the road a rare new form of ritual purification is introduced in offering sacrifice, thus, a bull is cut into two halves. The cutting symbolises an inner mechanism of separation between offenders that have broken the taboo. The sacrificed beast mends the relationship between the offenders and their totem, and God cleanses their sins and forgives them. Finally, spiritual reconciliation between the violators of the incest taboo on one side and the people, with totems, spirits and God on the other side is engendered and a new moral social order resumes from there and endlessly continues.

The second experience we note from the Payei clan is their respect to *kuel* tree as a totem. A totem is an intelligible entity that is acquired through experience easily explained to others. It also serves an additional valued role in social institutions. It unfolds kinship relationships in which incest is avoided. In contrast, this is not the way among the Muslim Arabs of the Northern Sudan. For instance, an Arab Muslim student from Ja'aleen at University of Khartoum declares: "Among us, there is no incest except sisters and brothers and parents. It is always preferred socially to marry a daughter of an uncle or a relative, but not a nephew or a daughter of one's own sister".⁸⁶ These two contradictory social perceptions of incest in Sudan show that the country displays a diversity of cultural forms of marriages. Exogamous marriage is defined as a system of marriage outside one's own group and is mainly observed to have a role in breaking down social and cultural boundaries. It provides a new system of possible alliance of groups that might have never experienced close social relationships before.⁸⁷ On the other hand, endogamy is the opposite of exogamy; it is an intra-group marriage within one's own group. There are two striking points of interest for analysis in this phase. Does endogamy have an advantageous role in Sudan, similar to the few examples of exogamous advantages among the Dinka that we have seen above? What is the penalty inflicted upon those who commit incest? A Muslim Arab student from the Kababish ethnic group studying at Omdurman Ahlia University recounts his ethnic experiences of

85 Dut Lual.

86 Yusuf Ibrahim, University of Khartoum.

87 Goldenweiser, A A (1911, October- December), "Exogamy and Totemism Defined: A Rejoinder", *America Anthropologist New Series*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 196-197.

endogamy as follows: “You know; it is better to marry a daughter of your uncle. It helps ... it strengthens constant social relations ... It is good always to keep inheritance of wealth around the family; it allows the family to always go on with one identity”.⁸⁸

The opinion of the Arab Muslim student is of great significance. For him, a lineage pattern based on parallel cousin marriage between sons and daughters of brothers and other agnatic kin has an institutional validity elsewhere in the Islamic Arab ‘Northern Sudan’. Such a system has major advantages, which include maintenance of the lineage line of a family involving closer family bonds. It has the additional side-effect of retaining property within the family circles, especially if women participate in inheritance of wealth from their parents. It reinforces and promotes social and political relationships within a group without crossing other social borders and may serve among the Kababish as an instrument to maintain distinctiveness of the group’s social and cultural identity. A Muslim student from the Shukuriya tribe in the eastern region argues that “Incest is adultery”; *Sharia* dictates that a married Muslim female who is found guilty of adultery must be convicted and stoned to death. An unmarried Muslim female who commits adultery must face flagellation and an adulterous man that has practiced illegal sex with her ... be flogged with specific whips. In our country, Sudan, such a person is flogged with a hundred lashes”.⁸⁹

The student has enumerated two significant legal codes among the Muslim Arabs in the Islamic North of Sudan. First, incest to him represents adultery and whipping is the adopted punishment against an adulterer and an adulteress under the *Sharia* jurisdiction. In contrast, the concept of incest among the Dinka-Christian-Animists is quite different from the definition of the Muslim-Arabs in Sudan. Therefore, what is adultery to the Dinka Christian-Animists? For the traditional Dinka, adultery is sexual intercourse on the part of a married woman with someone other than her husband. For one baptised Christian Dinka who practices Animism beside Christianity, there is an additional form of adultery. He explains “I am a Christian Animist; I know what adultery means in ... Christianity and Animism. In Dinka, fornication is not adultery. Having sex with a married woman is adultery and the Bible says do not commit adultery and do not commit fornication. So, the two are different in meaning and the same in practice as sexual intercourse”.⁹⁰

The Dinka ‘Christian-Animist’ has provided definitions of incest; however, these are insufficiently detailed to match the strict Christian teachings on adultery. It is classified in three ways. First, practical adultery refers to a married woman or a man who enters into sexual activities with someone who is not a legitimate spouse.⁹¹ Second, there is sensory and lustful adultery as Jesus stated: “You have heard that it was said; do not commit adultery, but now, I tell you; anyone who

88 Hatim Mohammad, University of Khartoum.

89 Sabur Abdella, University of Khartoum.

90 Wol Kon, University of Juba.

91 Madut Acier, University of Juba.

looks at a woman lustfully is guilty of having committed adultery".⁹² Third, traditional Catholic-Christian dogma also teaches that if a woman or a man divorces a spouse and marries another spouse, then that is adultery.⁹³

In contrast, with reference to the *Sharia* courts in Sudan, males found guilty of having committed adultery are whipped and married females are stoned to death. In this sense, there are no different penalties defined for those who commit fornication, incest or adultery in Sudan. Sources of laws, however, are derived from the *Sharia* and the customs of the country. Under the *Sharia*, Article (146) (a) of Sudan's Penal Code stipulates that anyone who is married and has sex outside wedlock shall be executed by stoning.⁹⁴ This kind of penalty is applied to an adulteress, but if both the adulteress and the adulterer were unmarried, they receive whipping instead, and that is a penalty for fornication. What is extremely odd in Sudan is that the *Sharia* courts do not draw clear distinctions between these practices. Consider two cases. First, Amnesty International reports the trial of two Sudanese women, Sadia Idriss Fadul and Amouna Abdullah Daldoum, in Managil, a city in central el-Gezira State. These women were sentenced to death by stoning for committing adultery. Sadia was sentenced on 13 February 2007 and Amouna on 6 March 2007. The males accused along with these women were acquitted, because there was not sufficient evidence against them to warrant their lashing. Amnesty argues that witnesses are usually required to gain a conviction and forensic tests are not normally used in such sexual criminal cases.⁹⁵ Amnesty does not explain further, however, why, if there was not enough evidence, the women were condemned to death? Perhaps they were married women and became pregnant, though not by their legal husbands.

Second, in February 2010, three men in Khartoum North dragged a nineteen-year-old girl called A. M. to a dark location and gangraped her. Some people heard the screams of the girl and headed in the direction of the sound. The three men saw the people advancing, and two of them escaped and one offender was caught. During the trial in the criminal court of *Sharia*, the victim of the rape became the accused, because she had undergone illegal sexual intercourse. Under Article (149) of the Criminal Code of 1991, there was no standard proof that the girl was raped, since there were no four men to witness the rape. If there had been such proof, the three men would have been punished with one hundred lashes. Again, under Article (146), if there is proof that a married woman has committed adultery, she would be stoned to death, while an unmarried woman must be flogged with one hundred lashes.

Within the present legal context in Islamic North Sudan, there is no clear definition of or distinction drawn between adultery and rape, under these two articles in *Sharia* legislation. A coalition of human rights activists in Sudan urges the Government of Sudan, which signed the African Women Protocol to the

92 Holy Bible (Mathew 5:27-28).

93 Holy Bible (Mark 10:11-12).

94 Sudan Penal Code (1991) www.law.emory.edu/ifl/.../sudan.htm - Yhdysvallat -

95 Amnesty International, www.amnesty.org/.../ai_search?... -

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2008 to ratify the rights of women in Sudan. The coalition stresses the importance of abolishing immunities to crimes of sexual violence in the Sudan's *Sharia* judiciary system, where there is no clear difference between rape and adultery.⁹⁶ Before the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), a former rebel organisation the majority of whose supporters come from the Christian-Animist South, and the National Congress Party, which is a radical Islamic organisation that holds power in Sudan, laws for the citizens were derived from the National Constitution of 1998. In that constitution, Article (65) states that "*Sharia* and custom are the legal sources of the country".⁹⁷

Practically, customary laws have not been applied to the Christian-Animist females and males found guilty of having committed fornication as the constitution requires. Christian-Animist men found guilty of adultery have been whipped at different *Sharia* courts and adulteresses penalised and stoned to death. For instance, Human Rights Watch (HRW) sent a petition to President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir asking him to pardon the Dinka Christian-Animist girl Abok. HRW states: "Based on information from reliable sources, on December 8, 2001, a criminal court in Nyala, southern Darfur, sentenced to death by stoning eighteen-year-old Abok Alfa Akok, a Christian woman from the Dinka tribe, after finding her guilty of adultery".⁹⁸

In this regard, Sudan is a country that inclusively applies the punishments of the *Sharia*, irrespective of religious and customary differences as reflected in the penalty of Abok, who, although was a Christian-Animist-Dinka, was subjected to the *Sharia* penalty.⁹⁹ Currently, there is a new constitution, Article (5) paragraph (1) of which confines the *Sharia* as the main source of legislation to the Islamic North while "values, customs and religious beliefs" are the sources of the legislature in the Christian-Animist-South.¹⁰⁰ By definition, two laws are operating in the two systems, the secular one in the Christian-Animist-South and the Islamic system in the Islamic North. Yet, what is the perspective of the Nilotic Christian-Animists on incest? Most of the Nilotic Dinka Christian-Animist-students argue that their second religion, Christianity rejects all forms of incest. They conclude that their Nilotic God is compatible with the Christian God.¹⁰¹ This claim returns us to the Biblical literature. In the Old Testament, none of the identifiable consanguineous groups, including affines and kin, are allowed to intermarry. Laws

96 A raped Girl (2010, February 13) A raped Girl Turned to be the accused, [http:// www. Rayaam.info/news_views.aspx](http://www.Rayaam.info/news_views.aspx)

97 Constitution (1998), www.sudan.net/.../constitution/english.html -

98 Amnesty International, www.amnesty.org/.../ai_search?... -

99 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sudan and the Sudan people's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army, Nairobi, Kenya 9 January 2005.

100 Interim Constitution of the Republic of Sudan Entered into Force July 2005.

101 Adut malek, University of Juba, Majok Mareng, University of Juba, Athuei Mou, University of Bahr el-Ghazal, Atem Guer, University of Upper Nile.

which regulate marriage define incest as illegal, since these persons are blood relatives.¹⁰² For the Dinka incest is a serious offence, but does it really prevent a soul entering into heaven after physical death?

1.2 The Cycle of Human Change and the Concept of Heaven

For the Dinka, God is not a free choice, but an obligatory entity for everyone to worship and praise for the purpose of keeping three cycles going: creativity, existence and death. His abode is assumed to be *nhial* (up). Marriage among the Dinka is a source of the human cycle of change. Such a change is endlessly associated to God. People arrange a marriage, but God is believed to be the creative power behind the pregnancy of a married woman. After pregnancy, the change of parents is visible. As a Dinka student explains, “We are born to replace our parents who move to the other world of the living dead. After their bodily disappearance here, then their souls live with *Nhialic* (God) forever and we constantly bestow upon our children their names on the earth”.¹⁰³

Living with God is an inevitable intricacy embedded in the Dinka Animistic-religious life. The Dinka believe that God is a mysterious being interconnected with everything, whether one lives in the physical world or is physically dead; the soul leaves the body and lives with God forever. This mystery may present difficulties to Muslims who also worship One God to understand clearly God’s dominant roles in whatever the Dinka people practice. Many Dinka students argue that their worship is quite distinctive from the Muslims’ worship. For them, *Nhialic* (God) is a Great One who gives life and takes it away. Parents create children through Him, even though He is believed to live in *nhial* (above or up). He has an abundant and limitless divine power that moves and changes everything. One student argues that “Muslim Arabs do not understand the way we worship *Nhialic*. For them, *Nhialic* is not ... equal to *Allah* (God), yet they define Him as the Creator of heaven and earth. For this reason, we tell them *Nhialic* is *Allah*. We, the Jieng, believe that all our *atiep* (souls) will ... meet in His house. The Dinka proverb says, ‘death is a way without a hyena’. It means that no person, upon death, would encounter a hyena on the way threatening to hamper where the soul of a dead body goes and its restoration back to life on the earth”.¹⁰⁴

These statements provide some theological insights into Animism. First, the Dinka’s Animism teaches that God is an omnipresent power in the sense that He alone is responsible for all events. He is the centre of everything that occurs in the universe. He is the model of interpreting different experiences of the dynamic world. The mysterious experience of death and life of human beings from generation to generation is categorised as His divine activity. Nothing happens alone without His inspiring presence. Therefore, the practical modification of the world occurs under His instruction. Second, God is perceived as an Omnipresence Who

102 Holy Bible (Leviticus 18).

103 Kur Akol, University of Juba.

104 Kuol Mawien, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

processes, directs and changes the phenomenological world, so that generations come to live and leave for the next world. This means human beings are born to live temporarily on the earth and die. Third, death is described as '*a road without a hyena*', which literally means there is no hyena that frightens a dying person to return to life, if the predetermined time of entering into the next world of souls has finally come. Thus, death represents an inevitable implementation of the change of the world as an eternal with an endless cycle. Such a change from generation to generation occurs individually. The establishment of a relationship between females and males that in turn bear children is the beginning of an endless cycle of human change. After the birth of children, the world of parents begins to change and pass to their children. The phenomenon of change indicates that Animism does not support same-sex marriage. Homosexual and lesbian marriages are the epitome of an anti-cycle of natural life continuity. The aim of life in Animism is to maintain the natural cycle of change from this world to the next, leaving children behind to maintain the continuity. The way to death without a 'hyena' is a signal that triggers the consciousness of the global elite who may think that they are who they are in and of themselves and overrides the phenomenon of death as an inevitable universal threat and fact. Davies observes that the death of one person among many advertises the mortality of all and highlights the irreducible fragility of all human institutions in heading in one direction, death, with the expectation of living as souls in the next world.¹⁰⁵

In African Islam, especially the Sufi teaching, the human soul is believed to enter into the next world and live there with possibility to intercede on behalf of people at a particular time. This Sufi belief creates some space for sectarian religious overlap between the Dinka's Animism and the Islamic Sufism. Two instances of similar practices are derived from the recognition of the need for intercession of the souls in prayer to *Allah* on the part of Sufi Muslims and to *Nhialic* in reference to the Dinka's Animism. Those Dinka students who practice Christianity and Animism compatibly as Christian-Animists claim that every person among the Dinka generally adheres to God. Each one invokes Him in all kinds of religious performances and prayers including the call for the intercession of the souls of ancestors to God for health, peace and tranquillity of the human institutions. In contrast, Clarke says that Islam is characterised by oppositions as Sufis come from the Sunnis, who were first seen as natural enemies by the Shiites intent on the mediation of their Islamic leaders. A living or a dead Sufi master is accorded an all-important veneration in Sufism and Shi'ism. An Iranian Sufi Shiite could write with justification that "he who *shi'ises* Sufises and he who *Sufises Shi'ises*".¹⁰⁶ Clarke concludes that Sunnis who carry out fundamentally violent attacks upon the Shi'a group disregard their veneration to the family of Muhammed, which is typically akin to the Sufis' veneration of their dead leaders.¹⁰⁷

105 Davis, Jon (Ed.) (1994), *Ritual and Remembrance Responses to Death in Human Societies*, England: Sheffield Academic Press, p. 30.

106 Clarke, Peter (Ed.) (1990), *The World's of Religions Islam*, London: Routledge, p. 55.

107 Ibid.

In Sudan, leaders of Sufism claim in their ritual celebrations that they maintain direct connections with the Prophet Muhammad. According to Khalid, a Sufi leader, Awad Al- Jiid Muhammad Ahmed told the former President of Sudan Ja'fer Muhammad Nimeiri in a Sufi ritual assembly that he had a "telepathic communication"¹⁰⁸ with the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet assured him that the President would constitutionally apply the *Sharia* in Sudan.¹⁰⁹ In regard to the Dinka Christian-Animists, their Animistic-religious belief teaches that a person dreams, because a soul comes out during the sleeping hours and travels to swim in a space in time. During this travel, the soul of a sleeping person interacts somewhere with the souls of the dead people. Deng explains that the Dinka maintain their relationships with the souls of their loved ones in dreams, because souls visit their relatives for either a good or bad purpose.¹¹⁰

The Dinka Animists believe that the relationship between them and their dead is maintained through the interactive encounter of the living souls with the dead souls. These souls do not generally visit any soul of a dead person, but each visiting soul interacts with a specific soul of the dead relative or a company of them. What is not clear in the context of Dinka Animism and Sufism is whether someone who has no prior knowledge of a deceased can dream of having contact with a soul of another dead person, somewhere in the universe or in the other world conceived as heaven. Christian-Animist-Dinka-students do not provide unanimous testimonies of reconciliation of Animism with Christianity and Islam. Some argue that both Christianity and Islam teach about resurrection after death. The Animism of the Dinka too, recognises the existence of souls after death.¹¹¹ According to the Dinka students, the Animism concept of heaven is quite distinctive from that of both Christianity and Islam. Life after death in the teaching of Christianity and Islam is conditional. A Dinka Christian-Animist-student at the University of Bahr el-Ghazal explains "We can reconcile Animism with Christianity and Islam, because both articulate life after death".¹¹² Yet, another Dinka-Animist-student repudiates this view and argues that "In Christian teaching, life after death is conditioned between heaven and hell. The religion of Jieng objects to this belief and teaches us that everybody dies physically, but the spirit lives eternally, since it is immune to death. It obliges one ... to do what is morally good for the aim of the present living existence".¹¹³ Deng says that the Dinka religion calls life *wei* (breath) and it requires both physical and moral practices to ensure present existence and not eternal salvation. A sick person is described as *apir* (alive) as long there is a breath. In this sense, death is the absence of breath. In English language, a dead person

108 Khalid, Mansour (1990), *The Government They Deserve: The Role of the Elite in Sudan's Political Evolution*, New York: Kegan Paul International, pp. 277-79.

109 Ibid.

110 Deng, Francis Mading "Scramble for Souls: Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan", in *Proselytization and Communal Self Determination in Africa*, Abdullahi Ahmed An'Naim, (Ed.) (1993), New York: Maryknoll, p. 199.

111 Amel Kon at University of Bahr el-Ghazal, Chol Makol, University of Juba.

112 Longar Jel, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

113 Manut Dong, University of Juba.

is described as having “passed away”, a synonymous term to the Dinka, “*aci wer wei*”. Deng concludes that the dead are believed to undergo further transformations of existence in the world of the multiple deaths. Dead persons, however, continue to maintain their relationships with living persons through dreams and afflictions on their relatives as *atiep* (spirit of a dead).¹¹⁴

The Dinka Animists do not believe in punishment after death, except they believe that human soul is immortal. There is no unanimous name for heaven, but what is clearly stated is that the body of a human being dies and the soul crosses to the next world and lives there forever with privileges equal to all preceding souls. A Dinka Christian-Animist-student at the University of Juba explains “Dinka Animism teaches that every soul enters into *Pen Nhialic* (House God) after death. In the English language, *pen Nhialic* is heaven.”¹¹⁵ Another Dinka Christian-Animist-student at Omdurman Ahlia University elucidates that “Heaven in Christian doctrine is synonymous to *Lual Aghony* in Dinka Animism. It is a conceptual place of rebirth after the physical death on the earth. A re-born person resides there eternally free from death, pain, fatigue and hunger”.¹¹⁶ According to Lienhardt, there is a conceptual location in the Dinka religion, called *Lual Aghony*, and people who enter it with their cattle enjoy fabulous pastures ..., where there is endless grass, water and no death.¹¹⁷

There are no prerequisites in Dinka’s Animism to enter into *Lual Aghony* or *Pen Nhialic* or God’s house. This does not mean that there are no sinners among the Dinka. Performances of individual Dinka men and women in social structures single out a sin from a practice which is not a sin. According to some Dinka Christian-Animist students, Dinka Animism literally has the equivalent of the Ten Commandments of the Bible. A Dinka Animist who violates these commandments commits a sin and must confess to avoid physical death.¹¹⁸ Death is feared, because a person who violates the commandments, which are not limited to the Biblical ones, will face physical death on earth¹¹⁹ and the soul will cross into *Lual Aghony*.¹²⁰

A *Beny* (a chief, priest, king or a leader) does not pass a religious verdict on men and women disobeying *ceing*, moral order. A Dinka-Animist-student at the University of Juba argues that “There is no religious punishment that a *beny* inflicts on a sinner; instead, people leave it to God to judge it”.¹²¹ Lienhardt observes that when a Dinka cheats lies or commits cruel acts or any form of injustice, society resorts to “Divinity” (God). They believe in Him alone as unbiased arbitrator

114 Deng, Francis Mading “Scramble for Souls: Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan”, in *Proselytization and Communal Self Determination in Africa*, Abdullahi Ahmed An’Naim, (Ed.) (1993), New York: Maryknoll, p. 199.

115 Amir Daniel, University of Khartoum.

116 Aluel Deng, University of Upper Nile.

117 Lienhardt, op. cite., p. 173.

118 Jel Akok, University of Juba.

119 Non Deng Majok, University of Juba.

120 Chan Acien, University of upper Nile.

121 Cier Longardit, University of Juba.

who always provides justice where it belongs without exception. For this reason, the Dinka have no problem with allowing sinners to prosper, because God will deliver justice when it is supposed to be as a final penalty without human interference.¹²² Avoidance of human interference to sinners in Dinka Animism is limited to the avoidance of passing any legal judgment; however, *bäny biith* (priests) continue to invoke God to expose the guilty person in a physical or in a mysterious event, so that people can witness that such a person has sinned.

1.3 The Origin of the Priestly and Ordinary Clans

The Dinka world is classified into two religious categories in terms of religious powers. In their religious institutions, not every Dinka can attain priesthood. It is implicitly acknowledged that specific clans are mysteriously gifted with exceptional supernatural powers. Those who come from naturally gifted clans belong to the category of *bäny biith*. *Bäny* is plural meaning presidents, leaders, chiefs, head-masters or priests. *Bääny* refers to leadership or chieftainship and *biith* are un-barbed spears, *bith* being the singular form. The clans that own these kinds of spears are called *bäny biith* and singular *beny bith*. The second category is composed of clans without exceptional Animistic powers, which are called *kic* - singular *kiic* - meaning ordinary. A Dinka student explains “We the Jieng, our religious world is ... composed of clans who are *bäny biith* and normal ones ... known as *kic*”.¹²³

It is important to set down some dominant clans which the Dinka classify as priestly and ordinary clans in their religious hierarchies. The reason is to trace the origin of the division into the acceptable priestly and ordinary clans. The priestly ones include Patek, Payei (Parek), Padheiu, Pahol also known as Pakuec or Pajok, Pakueen or Padior and known in Abyei as Dyn Dior, Pajek and Pagong. The ordinary ones encompass Pajiang, Padiainbaar, Pangwet, Paluac, Padolmot, Padianj, Pacieng, Payoum, Paloang and Papoal. What is peculiar among the priestly clans is how one enters priesthood. Priests are not ordained to the ministry by any form of ceremony; nor is there any specific age at which a member of these clans can attain priestly power. Myths of some clans speak of their founding ancestors having acquired the status of *bäny* through performance of miracles while they were young. For example, Lienhardt writes about Ayuel Longar, an ancestor of the Pagong clan. As a baby lying on a mat on the ground, Ayuel mysteriously stood up and walked towards the goat beside him. He snatched the goat, which held milk

122 Lienhardt (1961), op. cite., p. 46.

123 Majak Awuteik, University of Juba. In Dinka orthography ‘ch’ in English is ‘c’, and thus *kic* reads ‘*kich*’ in English pronunciation. Nikkel (2001), Dinka Christianity the Origin and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with the Special Reference to the Song of Dinka Christians, Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, p. 20

and drank it. His mother saw him, but he warned her not to reveal his actions to public, for if she did, she would die. The mother went and communicated the mystery to people and indeed, she immediately died.¹²⁴

The Acquisition of priestly power among the Dinka comes as a mysterious and spontaneous event. Dinka Christian-Animist-students explain this acquisition in answer to the following question: “*How does a person convert from one religion to another religion in Sudan ...?*” Students begin as follows: “*Ring*, which is an exceptional supernatural divine power, arises only in a man of priestly clan. Its appearance in a person is self-explanatory in religious performances. When it begins to function in a person, the Dinka describe it as *ring aci rot jot ye gob*, meaning the divine supernatural power has awakened in a person”.¹²⁵ Such a person must be a man or a boy from the priestly clans. He must have learnt religion and the priestly clan hymns and antiphonies while growing up. In this way, the power of *ring* operates in him and helps him to perform miracles in prayers. “God quickly answers him, whenever he invokes Him to intervene in a difficult situation”.¹²⁶ There is no age limit for *ring* to manifest itself within a priestly clan. It can spring up in the body of a boy, during puberty and in an adolescent.¹²⁷

Literally, *ring* means meat, but in the religious context, it refers to a divine supernatural power which operates within a priest of a divine clan. Christian-Animist-Dinka-students assert that members of each priestly clan from different parts are assumed to have originated from one ancestor and ramified into the present lineages and the clans. Still, the blood of a single genealogical ancestor binds them. Their religious and divine priesthood is a self-operative spiritual inheritance. An individual performance of superior miracles in the social structures represents the manifestation of *ring* in that person.¹²⁸ The priests whose power of *ring* has been awakened must demonstrate attributes of prophetic vision and supernatural activities, which are physically seen following their invocation to God.¹²⁹

Priests endowed with exceptional supernatural powers must manifest unique and consistent divine behaviours. They are bound to tell the truth, to promote justice, and to have knowledge of ancient prayers, religious songs, descent myths, and above all, to perform miracles. It is only these unique attributes and their performances, which persuade a clan and other neighbouring clans and the Nilotic Nuer to collectively recognize the exceptional character of such men and spontaneously give them religious titles such as *bäny biith*, priests. Subsequently, their names will spread throughout the Dinka land and Nuer land. From there they will be regarded as dominant priests and many people from far away will visit them

124 Lienhardt, Godfrey (1961), op. cit., p. 173.

125 Deng Ngor Ayuel, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

126 Monyeng Ajing, University of Juba.

127 Mangar Dheiu, University of Upper Nile.

128 Amet Majok, University of Juba, Mayar Dau, University of Bahr el-Ghazal, Juac Ring, University of Juba.

129 Dau Arol, University of Juba.

to pray with them for peace and health of families and cattle. Ngndeng of Naser, Arieath Makuei of Aweil and Lual Nyathon of Akobo have been the prophetic paradigms among the Nilotic Nuer and the Dinka.¹³⁰

The non-priestly *kic* clans form the second category comprising collective clans, whose members have no hereditary religious divine functions. Their importance lies in the role they play in wars in protecting social, economic and political institutions. They are heroes in wars, and the Dinka acknowledge them as superior group identified as '*koc tong*'. *Koc* means people and *tong* is spear and literally translates as 'the people of the war spear' as opposed to '*koc bith*', priestly clans or priestly people. The distinctive functions of these two 'spears' have caused some scholars to translate the spear of priests as a "fishing spear".¹³¹ This translation has no equivalency to the Dinka conceptualisation of it and to the spiritual role the priests play with these un-barbed spears. Nevertheless, students maintain that both *koc bith* and *koc tong* are equal in term of fundamental moral and conservative obligations. Each group has its social, religious and cultural function. *Koc tong* (warriors) do not fight for the sake of fighting, but are bound by a moral duty to defend their society, hence, *koc bith* (priestly people) bless them for to foster their success in confronting and defeating a certain enemy.¹³²

1.3.1 Animistic and Islamic fundamentalism

Social and political relationships among the Dinka are organised according to a fundamental moral social order. This order includes maintenance and strict observation of the defined political, social and economic relationships between the individuals and public. A person that observes and respects all religious laws in structural settings is not a sinner. A Dinka student at Omdurman Ahlia University reiterates: "In Dinka religion, a person that goes and commits incest and adultery is a sinner, however, the Dinka do not punish the opposite sexes. Instead, the priests purify them and it would be up to God to determine whether they continue to practice the act or not".¹³³ The functions of chief priests from the priestly clans include identifying a thief that might have stolen someone's property and denied having done it. Since, a priest is a choice of God among His people, a person accused of theft but denying the accusation, while consciously knowing that he or she had stolen the subject in question, the result of such an identification would be a disaster in his life".¹³⁴

Theft, lying, murder and all forms of immoral attitudes and practices in religious institutions of the Dinka Animists are emphatically denounced. The Dinka Animists define them as enemies of peace, since they break down the moral order of God as an orderer of the ordered people and institutions. Deng observes that

130 Rob Thuc, University of Juba, Akon K. University of Khartoum, Akech Yuot, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

131 Lienhardt, Godfrey op. cite., p.299.

132 Malek Makur, University of Juba, Bol Ring, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

133 Kur Cier, University of upper Nile.

134 Malith Akot, University of Juba.

tolerance is a dominant factor among the Dinka; it is religiously, politically and socially expressed in the Dinka word *ceing* meaning a good moral relationship. *Ceing* is to avoid violence and maintain social order, custom and social behaviour. It includes listening to the interests of others in order to create mutual and reciprocal cooperation as equal human beings before God. It is a preference for negotiation and persuasion in social conflicts as opposed to violence. A Dinka leader considers *ceing* as the guiding model in approaching and addressing all religious, social and political exigencies within his jurisdiction. The Dinka describe a leader adhering to moral order as 'a great peace-maker' who adjusts and corrects wrongs within his domain. The adjustment is important in order to safeguard the continuity of *ceing*. Deng concludes that a leader accomplishes the re-adjustment on the basis of the collected and accumulated objective facts with evidence and truth as a process of establishing "a moral code".¹³⁵

Moral conservatism of the Dinka Animists represents Animistic fundamentalism. The Dinka term *adheng* expresses this kind of religious fundamentalism. Its literal meaning is complex. It includes beauty, handsomeness and prettiness. Handsome and beautiful persons are generally described at one category as *adheeng*. The term, however, carries within it other fundamental meanings in Dinka social, religious and political structures. Thus, there is *adheng nya*, a beautiful girl and *adheng muc*, a handsome man. These attributes are categorically graded as insufficient human characteristics. The Dinka generally expect that activities of *adheeng* must reflect oriented religious and social values within public and private institutions. The attributes are unlimited, but include gentleness, hospitality to foreigners or guests, high moral standards, an unshakable code of behaviour and manners in eating and attitude. It also entails a consistent sense of personal dignity and integrity and reverence to individual clans' totems. Maintenance of these moral values appears to be of a great importance to the Dinka-Christian-Animist-students. For instance, one of them at the University of Juba argues: "I think ... Muslim Arabs displaced us, so that we lose our religion, traditions, cultures and customs. In the Islamic North, I feel a danger and ask myself: What, ... a Dinka that eats while walking; what, a Dinka that steals; what, a Dinka that has sex with married women; what, a Dinka that displays double standards; a Muslim among the Muslim Arabs in darkness and a Christian among the Christians in a broad day light. These attitudes are very disappointing; we must restore our morals post peace".¹³⁶ Another one says: "In Dinka land, every clan observes respect to *yath*; even if one is hungry one cannot violate a symbol of a clan's identity".¹³⁷

Furthermore, *adheng* varies in degree of social relationships. The expectations among the Dinka of *adheeng* are centred on the maintenance of one's own cultural attitudes within the religious system as a life goal. According to Deng, the Dinka

135 Deng, Francis Mading "Scramble for Souls: Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan", in Abdullahi Ahmed An'Naim, (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 200.

136 Geng Lual, University of upper Nile.

137 Madut Longar, University of Juba.

expect *adheng* to demonstrate moral attributes of “pride, honour, dignity and social courtesy”. The Dinka hold in their minds that *adheng* must appear clean and observe social virtues. Their social institutions expect *adheeng* from young adult men and girls to play a role in maintaining a functional cultural system. The aim is to obtain values of religiosity and secularity which contribute in determining their social moral standards of self-esteem, inner pride and human dignity. Deng concludes that the Dinka are proud of their culture and indeed, they are conservative and resist change.¹³⁸

While the resistance of the Dinka to change represents fundamentalism, it would be wrong to apply to the Dinka the term ‘fundamentalism’ in the same way as it is applied to the ideological proponents of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and liberalism in Sudan. ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ urges the adoption of the *Sharia* that limits freedom in national institutions. Liberalism pursues freedom of expression and formation of all forms of independent associations.¹³⁹ The presence of these contradictory movements presents Sudan with a conflict of ideologies, which blend politics with religions. Hence, the term religious ‘fundamentalism’ becomes an attribute in the struggle between the political democrats, the moderate Islamic and secularist groups on the one hand and on the other hand the Muslim political movement, originally known as the National Islamic Front (NIF) and currently split into two political associations, the National Congress Party, under the leadership of Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, and the Popular Congress Party, led by the Muslim religious ideologue Dr Hassan Abdullah Turabi.

This study applies the term ‘fundamentalism’ to both the National Congress and the Popular Congress. They have no disagreement concerning Islamic religious orthodoxy. Both strive to revive restricted literal interpretations of the sacred texts of the Holy Quran and *hadith*, sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammed, as the sources of civil and criminal codes in the state of Sudan. The National Congress most often uses the term ‘Islamist’ as a descriptive cultural term identifying individual Muslims in Sudan who advocate the political religious ideology of the *Sharia* instead of the secular system. Experiences reveal that this political and religious organisation pursues violence as a method of overthrowing a secular regime. In the early 1990s Muslim states such as Egypt and Al-Jeria which are open to wider political, social and cultural relationships with secular states made a series of accusations against this organisation. Muslim fundamentalists within the National Congress defined this violence as *Jihad* (Islamic holy war) and urge their ideological supporters to adopt it as a religious duty to combat those whom they categorise as oppressors to the transformation of Sudan into an Islamic state. On the other hand, the ideological liberals reject the definition of the war as a religious one. The group rejects *Jihad* and defines it rather as Islamic “terrorism” following a derivative vocabulary from the West.¹⁴⁰

138 Deng, Francis Mading (1993), op. cit., pp. 200-201.

139 Sidahmed, Abdel Salam and Ehteshami, Anourshiravan (Eds.) (1996), *Islamic Fundamentalism*, Oxford: West view Press, pp. 180-181.

140 Ibid.

This study does not intend to associate the definition of 'Islamic fundamentalism' with the Dinka Animistic fundamentalism as the National Congress and Popular Congress express it. The religious fundamentalism of the Dinka, instead, is based on two definitive parameters. First, it is used to define the role of *adheng* and *adheeng* among the Dinka. Questionnaires, interviews and discussions with the Dinka-Christian-Animist- students testify to the role of *adheng*. This term, *adheng*, is synonymous in their minds with the terms *rinythei*, *acoat* and *aparakpol*. The four words convey the same, defined parameters of virtue in the social, political and religious structures of the Dinka-Animists. The term *rinythei* is widely used among the Dinka of the Warrap, Northern and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States. Both *acoat* and *aparakpol* are used in the Lakes State. The Dinka of Yirol usually use the term *acoat* as a synonym for *aparakpol*, which the Dinka of Rumbek mostly use. *Adheeng* (gentlemen) are expected to vigorously protect personal rights and dignities, collective rights of a clan, a section and the entire Dinka nation. *Adheeng* are bound to resist, if an alien power encroaches upon the culture of the Dinka with the intent to eradicate, pollute or adulterate it. Such intruders are defined as enemies of the nation (Jieng or Munyjiang) and their expulsion calls for a collective reaction from the Dinka from different regions. The elders influence *adheeng* to be ready and to engage the defined enemy for the preservation of the integrity and dignity of the Dinka, under any available methods of eradicating the defined person as *raan ater* - an antagonistic person - or *koc ater*, antagonistic people. Dinka Christian-Animist-students explain the role of *adheeng*: "We the Jieng bring onto ourselves deadly wars. Sometimes, these wars are between *adheeng* of one clan against another clan; and *adheeng* of one section with another section, but when an alien person interferes with our public way of life, *adheeng* become quickly oblivious of their internal wars and converge to fight an alien figure".¹⁴¹ "We have been killing ourselves, but when Muslim Arabs joined together and wanted to force and change us to their religion, we said no; and we collectively fought them".¹⁴²

A common cause coercing the Dinka to confront a defined group as an enemy to the Dinka is a symbolic reference to ethnic solidarity. Ethnic groups forget their differences when some one whom they view as an alien person interferes and acts against their economic, cultural, social and political affairs. Historically, Dinka ethnic solidarity dates back to their opposition to Turkish, Mahdi and British regimes in Sudan. The latest episode was their collective fight against the British colonial power. Fighting started in Rumbek, when Mayen Mathiang of the Agar Dinka section of that place assembled the Agar and attacked the British garrison. He was killed in 1902 with other *adheeng*. In the South of the Dinka land, present-day Yirol County, another Dinka man called Awuou Kon from the Atwot section organised the local Dinka to fight the British. Many *adheeng* were killed with him in 1907. The news of his death spread throughout the Dinka ter-

141 Atem Lual, University of Juba.

142 Chol Marob, Omdurman Ahlia University.

ritory and leaders organised assaults against the British, while the war continued in Yirol under the new leader, Dheiu Allam of the same Atwot. Finally, after fierce battles Dheiu was killed with other *adheeng* in 1912. Bol Yol, a spiritual man and a Prophet, known by the name of his spiritual power as *Ariathdit*, organised the Dinka Rek of Tonj, Gogrial, Abyei and Aweil and fought the British from 1912 until he was captured in 1923 and sent into exile, where he died.¹⁴³

Furthermore, the Dinka students promulgate that *adheng* are very cautious on choice of words and phrases in order to maintain social and political harmony. Violation of the defined standards of moral order in approaching the Dinka institutions causes severe violence. It is incumbent upon *adheng* to avoid irresponsible statements, because reciprocal aggression **will very commonly emanate from them**.¹⁴⁴ The angry Dinka elders say that all forms of aggressive dialogues, discussions and negotiations amount to '*e lew menth ci dhieth*'. Literally, it means the lack of a born child and has its proverbial meaning. The proverb means that, if children were born and grew up as *adheeng*, then the offending behaviour or statement would have been challenged. In another word, it is an invitation of *adheeng* to aggressively and violently address an offense.¹⁴⁵

The maintenance of social harmony and peace is the fundamental aim of the Dinka. There is a Dinka proverb which says "*Nhialic du een col akoth athok*' meaning 'God, do not allow me to pollute via the mouth'. The literal meaning of this phrase is a prayer to God to keep and control a tongue from uttering a bad word that could cause disharmony in the social, political and cultural spheres of moral order. When a Dinka expresses himself irresponsibly, the response from the offended side is a phrasal proverb 'lack of a born child'. If an elderly person says this proverb in the presence of the *adheeng* or a single *adheng* or *rinythei*, plural *rinythee* of a clan, a relative, a son or sons, they would all interpret that phrase as regret from an elder who would have fought in this situation, if he were to be younger. 'Lack of a born child' is an allusion of inviting young gentlemen as *adheeng* to stage an assault upon a defined enemy, *raan ater*.

The Dinka students explain that such an invitation to violence may begin in a single location, but can easily spread throughout an area. Aggregation, under the basis of solidarity between clans against other clans or a collection of sections against sections or against Muslim Arabs will automatically occur. At such a time of violence, *bäny biith* are meant to play a religious role to strengthen and embolden *adheeng* or *rinythee*.¹⁴⁶ The Dinka priests advocate different approaches in addressing *Nhialic*, during misfortune and war. Lienhardt cites a former Dinka slave ordained in England as a pastor, Macar Katak, whose name was distorted as Hatashil Masha. Katak provides a testimony on how the Dinka organised religious war:

143 Alier, Abel. (1990), Southern Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonored. Reading: Ithaca Press, p. 13.

144 Mathiang Ajak Mayom, University of Juba.

145 Mayen Deng, Omdurman Ahlia University.

146 Makuac Aleu, University of Juba, Mac Kuol, University of upper Nile.

*"The Dinka perform religious rites before launching an organised assault against defined aggressors or adversaries. 'The Chief Priest' smears the knees of... the warriors with milk and butter, asking God to fill their bones with marrow and ease their joints and give them a brave heart to do credit to themselves before their enemies. The Chief calls Beny the all sufficient, then anointed himself, sprinkled dust on his head and sat in the burning sun all day fasting and praying for the success of his Dinka army. This service is a duty which requires no remuneration. Prayer for success or protection is not allowed to be performed by necromancers".*¹⁴⁷

The Dinka students claim that "During the attack against an enemy, the fundamental objective of the Dinka warriors is to fight until they defeat and disperse the aggressors. Everyone who is completely armed with spears and a shield is expected to play the role of a professional *keec*, meaning a hero (plural *kec*) in engaging an opponent as a foe".¹⁴⁸ In our religious rituals, the traditional *kec* who have protected the nation from an intruding enemy before are revived in songs as fundamental sources of inspiration. It is war, which allows the Dinka to discover themselves who is who in confronting an enemy to preserve dignity. Thus, *kec* are discovered when an enemy intent on destruction is resisted resulting in the destruction of an enemy on the front line. At the end of war, *kec* enjoy endless praises in composed social songs to be sung in grazing lands, known as *toc* and at various interactions of social dancing to a drum called *lorhic*.¹⁴⁹ In contrast, the Dinka who demonstrated the property of *arioac* (cowardice) are widely disowned through composed negative songs which define them abjectly in different forms of social gatherings. Their cowardly behaviour may haunt them as well as their children at other social competitions, such as in marriages.¹⁵⁰ Cowardly behaviour cancels out a person's *adheeng* status. As a result of heroism, an elderly Dinka can choose a daughter of a hero as a wife for his son. The underlying aim is the expectation that the woman would bear a hero within a family.¹⁵¹ The term 'fundamentalism' is also applicable to the Dinka Animism. The fact that some men among the divine clans widely known for the performance of miracles as *bäny kec* (sour priests) urge their clan members, heads of family and sons in particular to bury them alive is fundamental. *Bäny biith* who feel any form of suspicious sickness that may cause death ask to be buried alive in all seriousness. Sometimes, the aim is to follow the pattern of burials constituted by the past ancestors who happened to be buried alive, though the state struggles to outlaw the practice.¹⁵² Lienhardt observes that the Dinka have a mysterious religious practice of burying spiritual

147 Lienhardt (1961) op.cit., p. 105.

148 Acien Ayuel, Omdurman Ahlia University.

149 Parek Deng, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

150 Mathuc Mar Deng, University of Juba.

151 Akol Deng Mou, University of Juba.

152 Bol Majok, Omdurman Ahlia University

men alive. The ceremony is known as ‘the burial of the master-fishing spear’ with full honour. The Dinka name this kind of burial *dhor beny ke pir*, or *thiok beny ke pir* or *beny aci lo thoc*.¹⁵³

The first term, *dhor* is highly exceptional when Dinka students use it in a religious sense. It is associated with the burial of a Dinka priest and it is really untranslatable into English in the way Lienhardt does.¹⁵⁴ Its meaning could only be explained in reference to the description given by a Dinka student of the death of a *beny bith*. The student states that “*Dhor beny bith* involves many religious performances. First, he is carried to a prepared grave with sacrificial hymns of homage, as a result of satisfying his needs to leave to the other world in peace”.¹⁵⁵ Dinka-Christian-students offer additional cultural procedures which are to be carried out as demands from *beny bith*, before he can be buried alive such as: “When *beny bith* feels that his illness will claim his life, the first action he undertakes is *cin* (will). He communicates his economic social and political will to his children and people, after his final absence. He promises that he will not forget them in the next world”.¹⁵⁶ Thus, if he “demands to be buried alive, people act in accordance to his instructions. His will is what matters, because it is believed that if he dies outside the grave, he would interpret that in the next world as an opposition to his divine will and the result is a curse. Some *bäny biith* threaten their children with that, so that *ring*, a mysterious supernatural intrinsic power in him as a priest leaves him and jumps into the body of a son as its free choice. He is buried in the area of ancestors placed on bound woods of *akoc*, a type of tropical tree”.¹⁵⁷

I have no adequate knowledge of the role and value of the *akoc* tree in religious rites of the Dinka, but it is always at the centre of sacrifices and the burial of priests. Its wood is always placed in the middle of a house as standing poles to represent a holy religious site. Seligman and Seligman noted the structure of the divine location of the homestead of the Dinka rain-maker. Charles Seligman toured many villages of the Dinka in Bor with a missionary, Archdeacon Shaw, as his guide and interpreter, until they reached Biyordit at Gwala in 1910. In that area, they found a built shrine to the left of the sleeping rooms within which the spirit of Lerpio was said to reside and outside its door was a *rit* (a pole of a certain tree). *Rit* had the horns of the sacrificed oxen and bulls as its branches. Within the shrine, the sacred spear also called Lerpio was kept, and beyond the shrine a special bush called *akoc* which should not be cut or damaged. It functioned in the religious rites of the rain-making ceremonial initiations.¹⁵⁸

The burial of a Dinka priest with *Akoc* is organised in the following way. First, a bull or an ox must be slaughtered in order to bind the woods of *akoc*. After this, a living or a dead priest is laid on four small, firmly fixed pieces of wood in the

153 Lienhardt (1961), op. cit., p. 299.

154 Ibid.

155 Akot Deng Mel, University of Juba.

156 Ayei Deng Akol, Omdurman Ahlia university.

157 Dau Mou, University of Juba.

158 Seligman, Charles Gabriel and Seligman, Brenda Z. (1932), *The Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, p. 67.

ground and a second structure is built above him, so that the soil does not touch him. If he is buried alive, then the grave is left open and his first wife will frequently attend to him in the uncovered grave, until she reports of his *naab* (death of a priest) to the various groups waiting to celebrate.¹⁵⁹

These arrangements or prerequisites for the burial of the Dinka Animist priest can be reiterated as follows: first, a priest believes that there is another world and urges the close relatives, children and other leaders of a clan or a section to bury him alive of his own free will. He would interpret the failure to fulfil his demand as the epitome of disrespect when he is in the next world and that would represent a curse to his family. This prerequisite is controversial for some scholars who claim that the initiative for burying a priest alive comes from his family and that it is, in fact, a killing. Beswick writes that the Dinka believe that a prominent priest, *beny bith*, should not be allowed to die naturally, because they fear that, should that be the case, then the divine power in him would not be passed to a successor. So, killing him is the only course to escape a disaster.¹⁶⁰

This claim is misleading and has no real basis among the Dinka. For instance, the Dinka sometimes refuse to fulfill the will of a priest, even though he bitterly urges people to bury him alive. While I was a young boy, I witnessed my father who as a priest forced us, his children, to bury him alive. In response, we, his children, and the people unanimously refused to comply with his demand. He threatened my elder brother Parek, with the words: 'Parek, listen to me, if I die out of the grave, it would be a problem between me and you'. Parek got up from the room, with tears in his eyes and took the axe to chop down an *akoc* tree for the burial. My father re-divided the cattle among each one of us and finally selected the location of burial and the bull *malwal*, whose skin would be used to bind the *akoc* wood. Before these preparations had ended I declared my father *beny aci naab* (the priest is dead). In fact, even if a priest's wish to be buried alive is not fulfilled, he would still die. Therefore, there is a strong force compelling him to ask for the burial, while alive. To Lienhardt, the Dinka put their master of the fishing-spear in the grave, while alive. The basic reason underlying this form of burial is to augment his vitality and gratify his own desire to die in peace and to enter the next world.¹⁶¹

Gratification of a priest's 'own desire' brings us to the second phase of honour and gratification. The structure of a grave for a burial requires a special tree, *akoc* for honour and gratification. *Akoc*, a rare tree threatened with extinction must to be sought from a forest and chopped down. The reason is that its trunks are arranged in the form of a wooden bunk at the centre of a grave. The grave must be deep enough to accommodate the two wooden beds made of *akoc*. Four pillars of *akoc* are placed deeply into four holes dug in a grave. Each pillar has an open space at its top end, so that two other pillars can be placed across them. After

159 Koc Akol, University of Upper Nile.

160 Beswick, Stephanie (2004), *Sudan's Blood Memory: The Legacy of War, Ethnicity, and Slavery in Early South Sudan*, New York: University of Rochester Press, p. 109.

161 Lienhardt (1961), *op cit.*, p. 299.

this, additional pillars are placed across the middle and bound firmly with leather strips of bull hide woven to form a frame for the structure in which the priest is laid. A second structure is constructed in the same way, but above the first one within the same grave. This one protects *beny* from soil, because soil must not touch him. After having finished all these preparations, the carrying of a *beny* into the grave begins. Religious hymns and songs of praise of a clan are sung and the priest is placed in a grave and left there without being covered with soil and protected from the heat of the sun, if the burial is not in a room. His first wife or any other relatively close person (i.e. a son or daughter) constantly serves him food and water keeping an eye on him; until (s)he breaks the news that *beny a ci naab* (a priest is dead).¹⁶²

The reaction of the waiting assembly to this news is extremely religious. His people do not cry upon his death; instead drums are beaten. Adult men and women burst out of the village, while singing religious songs and killing rams with sticks and not with spears for an entire day. Rams are killed randomly in their grazing grounds without complaints from the owners.¹⁶³ The underlying mystery of this random slaughter is connected with the Dinka belief that a priest must not go to the next world without cattle to accompany him. So, the days following his death are spent slaughtering bulls, oxen and rams.¹⁶⁴

The Dinka Animists have not explained the mystery behind the choice of rams to the exclusion of goats, during the religious ceremonies after a priest has passed away. One important aspect, however, is the belief of a priest and the people around him that there is another world, to which he wants to go in peace. The Dinka believe that God has not created living beings in vain, but supports them all in the next world. Getting into that world is not conditional; however, it is connected to the maintenance of religious codes and taboos in socially organised moral order within private and public institutions.

1.3.2 Reconciliation and Religious Purification

War is one of the ugliest human practices, which the Dinka Animists describe as an 'enemy'. For them, unseen powers permit it to thwart human purity and cause bloodshed. For this reason, when violence of any form erupts, it becomes an obligation for the medium chief priests to intervene and address the root causes of such violence in order to bring bloodshed to a halt. Once a cease fire and reconciliation between the fighters has been effected, the stage of religious cleansing follows, while *teir* is effectively observed. *Teir* is a religious taboo that prevents people from one clan drinking or eating food with the people of another clan that have killed a relative, until chief priests offer sacrifices to God. The reason is to

162 This is my experience of the construction of the grave of my father, Maluil Jok Agai. Maluil was a chief priest from the priestly clan Payei. My father urged us to bury him alive, I resisted compliance with his demand, yet we could not halt death. He died after a few days in December 1978. All prerequisites for his burial were performed in my presence as an eyewitness.

163 Riek Chol, University of Juba, Bak Deng, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

164 Wol Them, University of Bahr-el-Ghazal.

confess and ask God's pardon to erase the blood spilled. After this religious ritual performance, normal social sharing of food resumes and the chief priests urge the clan who has killed one from another clan to make *apuok* (payment of a blood debt).¹⁶⁵

The killers must confess to having killed, because it is believed that spirits of the killed persons would haunt the killers, if they refrain from confessing in public. It is believed that, if a killer conceals having killed a person to avoid punishment, an endless disaster of death will occur in his own present family and the following generations. The Dinka believe that a killer who avoids confession will receive endless punishment from God, since killing is an offence to God. A killer who is totally resistant to public confession confers that punishment as an eternally sinful condemnation upon the immediate family and successive generations.¹⁶⁶

Generally, the payment of a blood debt to the family of a killed person is a collective responsibility of the killer's clan. Thirty cattle is the blood price for a male and forty for a female. A killer may contribute the payment of some cows and bulls in reference to the existing customary laws of a clan or family structure in paying the blood price.¹⁶⁷ At this point, priests will be invited to mark the final cease fire. (A) Priest(s) come(s) and perform(s) a religious ritual based on the offering of cattle as the ultimate sacrifice of cleansing and purification. During the offerings of cattle, chief priests invoke God in all the ceremonial rites of purification. They entrust reconciliation to Him and ask Him to accept their prayers and bless the initiative of reconciliation. They also ask God to cool the hearts of the people who have been fighting and to resume positive and harmonious relationship in their national institutions such as villages, cattle camps, grazing lands, seasonal drums and courts. These are impressive and dynamic centres of interaction to the Dinka for the expression of their moral, cultural, social, economic and political identity in the present Upper River Nile area.¹⁶⁸

1.4 Intertwined Identity with Cattle and the Myths of Cattle's Origin

*When I sing I eulogise my ox.
When I pray I ask for its health
When an enemy loots it, I die for it
And that is me; I am a Jieng.*

Offering cattle as one of the principal sacrifices of religious purifications indicates that the status of cattle among the Dinka is of extreme significance. Among the Dinka, nothing is greater and more valuable than cattle. Their religious, social, economic and political phenomena are expressed and identified through cattle.

165 Macar Madut, University of Upper Nile.

166 Tong Aleu, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

167 Dut Aken, University of Juba.

168 Agoth Bol Atem, University of Juba.

Different myths are narrated about the origin of the domestication of a cow. Some are associated to God and some focused on the underlying reason for the Dinka's endurance of rains, tolerance to snakes in forests, swamps and the heat of the sun, which they experience, while herding cattle in grazing lands. The Dinka protect cattle to the point of sacrificing their lives to die and save them from Baqqara (nomadic Muslim Arab cattle-herders), wild animals and anyone attempting to steal them.

There are two stories of how the cow became a part of Dinka life and identity. In the first myth, the cow was a divine gift from God. During the distribution of things, God asked a 'Black' Dinka person to choose as possession between a cow and an unknown subject classified as 'what'. According to Deng, God asked the Dinka man, 'which one shall I give you, Black Man; since I have two, there is a cow and the other thing called 'what', which of the two would you like?' The Dinka man quickly responded, 'I really do not want that object 'what.'" God replied to him "what' is much more preferable than the cow". The man responded: 'No', then God said 'If your final choice is the cow, then take its milk and first taste it with your tongue'. The man squeezed some milk from the teat of the cow into his hand, tasted it and declared: 'Let us have the milk and never see the other 'what'".¹⁶⁹

It is possible to infer from this myth that during God's distribution, things were not identified with names. They were all called 'what', but the cow was set apart with an identity. Therefore, 'what' was a symbolic reference that stood for things which other people in the world considered for their survival, but for the Dinka 'what' was not their prime choice from the very beginning, the cow was. For this reason, cattle became completely intertwined with the Dinka identity. They play a series of religious and social roles in their daily lives. A Dinka does nothing on earth without referring to cattle. Any government institution which does not recognise this cultural situation and respect it would face a serious rejection and subsequent lethal resistance from the Dinka. This can be derived from the answers of Dinka students to the question "*what is the best system that you think suits Sudan and please, give the reason(s)*". Some Dinka students answered this question by rejecting the current Sudanese Government in Khartoum. They accuse it of having no respect for their cattle. Their arguments are as follows: "The Jieng people have been trying to establish a system that suits Sudan, where individual people are respected for their ways of life. Unfortunately all the systems ..., under the control of Muslim Arabs in Khartoum are oriented towards the division of the citizens of this country into friendly ethnic groups and antagonistic ethnic groups. We the Jieng have been categorised as an antagonistic ethnic group".¹⁷⁰ "Different Muslim Arab regimes trained the Baqqara Muslim Arabs as friendly ethnic groups and classified the Jieng as their enemies and sent the militia of *Jongoor* which some of

169 Deng, Francis Mading "Scramble for Souls Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan" in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self-Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 214.

170 Abraham Dut, University of Upper Nile.

us called *Murabeleen* (Arab nomads) to us to loot our cattle”.¹⁷¹ “The neighbouring Muslim Arabs fail to understand that cattle is so embedded in the Dinka culture that they should not loot them. We ... have nothing else of importance to us, except cattle, as can be seen from this example:

*When I sing I eulogise my ox.
When I pray; I ask for its health.
When an enemy loots it;
I die for it. And that is me;
I am a Jieng*”.¹⁷²

The extreme love and respect for cattle is the second mythical source which explains how the Dinka domesticated the cow. A Dinka student at the University of Khartoum associates the political instability of Sudan with cattle: “War will continue, if the government does not stop arming the Arabs, Baqqara to loot Jieng’s cattle. We, Munyjiang die, because of cattle. They are... equal to human beings. So, we do not kill them, except for sacrifice and for important guests”.¹⁷³ “The Dinka had to participate in the war that was stirred up in 1983 and acquired the name Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (PLM) and Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in order to prevent the Muslim Arabs from looting our holy cattle”.¹⁷⁴ Muslim Arabs do not know that a cow is a killer. The Dinka do not become remorseful, if one of them dies in the name of his cow, bull or ox. They associate the fatigue and death which cattle cause to them as an inherited curse. The Dinka believe that they once killed the mother of *weng* (cow) and *anyar* (buffalo). Both animals that had lost their mother were furious and outraged towards the Munyjiang. During their discussion over the tragic death of their mother, the buffalo declared: ‘I would avenge my mother in a forest’, but the cow said, ‘I would avenge my mother at home’ and went home. Thus, the love of the Dinka for cattle is a curse from a cow that wanted to avenge its mother and domesticated itself among them.¹⁷⁵ In conclusion “We the Jieng killed ourselves, because of cattle. We attack our enemies, if they take our cattle, and we joined the SPLA against the Muslim Arabs ... because they loot our cattle as booty. They have no knowledge at all that cattle are central to our religious and social identity. Looting them is equal to taking away life and there is no life without cattle. A Dinka without cattle is totally displaced and may remain without identity, unless he searches for them”.¹⁷⁶

171 Malong Gum, University of Juba

172 Madau Atak Mawien, University of Juba.

173 Bol Akot, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

174 Thiik Riny, University of Juba.

175 Dhal Akot, University of Bahr-Ghazal.

176 Bol Jel, University of upper Nile.

1.4.1 Religious and Social Advantages of Cattle

Cattle are intertwined with the Dinka identity in different ways. First socially, as is expressed by the eulogy to an ox. Dinka students maintain that the Dinka are identified within their social institutions by their second names derived from their oxen. All males and sometimes, females have surnames attached to their names. An individual invents songs of praise to his or her ox. His or her first name disappears and is identified in institutional interactions with the name of his or her ox. If (s)he dances, (s)he praises his or ox, if (s)he sneezes (s)he praises her or his ox, if (s)he jumps at the cultural recreationcentres, (s)he praises his or her ox. A Dinka man or a woman does nothing without a reference to the name of his or her ox. A young man prays to his heart by inviting God to protect his cattle. Lienhardt observes that a Dinka man's metaphorical ox-name has nothing to do with its physical appearance in some circumstances. In songs, the same man can be described by a succession of metaphorical ox-names. These may be derived from configurations and colours of oxen which a man has never physically owned. The reason is to identify him with praises that stand for his self-esteem in a social and political community. Man is inclusively bound up with his ox and cattle.¹⁷⁷

Songs among the Dinka are divided into many categories however. Shaw observes that the Dinka songs do not share rhythm, because of their regional accents, but they express the same concepts toward their cattle, religion and culture.¹⁷⁸ My experiences with the division of the Dinka's songs show that all of them centre upon cattle, which are intertwined with Animistic religion, but a Dinka Christian-Animist-student at University of Juba provides an explanation associated with the role of the songs as symbolic expressions of culture and politics and impediments the Dinka face in performing and singing them: "We have ... many obstacles which work to destabilize our country. The Muslims people ... describe us as uncultured. We the Dinka have our religious and social songs, but the state prevents us from singing on national television."¹⁷⁹

There are different types of songs among participant member of the Dinka ethnic group, but each one embodies religious expressions. First, there is *wec* (a solo song). It is a song that one man sings in a kraal to praise his ox and ancestor(s), while thanking God for having cared for the ox. Second, there is *magong*, a sort of a song sung at collective drumming sessions, while the owner of such a song praises God for having gifted him the esteemed ox. In this song, he compliments and expresses his intimate relation with his ox and the kind of treatment he gives to it. During the singing of this kind of song in the interactive public space of a drum, girls are packed into a dense circle by men who move from one position to another within the circle while holding hafts of spears and performing different crouches and turns. Occasionally, married women get involved by voicing shrill-

177 Lienhardt (1961), op. cit., p. 12.

178 Shaw, Archibald (1917), "Jieng (Dinka) Songs", *Man*, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 17, pp. 46-50 p. 46.

179 Joak Garang, University of Upper Nile.

ing ululations and making mimic thrusts. Third, there is *wak* (a song by a person who wants to leave the bachelor life of kraal to get married). In such a song, the owner invokes God to influence the minds of his elders to allow him to leave the kraal. He sings it, while referring to his oxen by describing them as growing older with him without being given to the family of his suggested future wife to be engaged and married to him, so that they produce their children. Fourth, there are *deit tong* (songs of war), which are not exclusively sung during war time, but are also chanted during the celebration of important feasts which include the sacrifice of bulls, cows and oxen. According to some students these songs face resistance from the Muslim Arabs in power. One student states: “We have our religious songs, but our Muslim brothers claim that they are ‘pagan’ songs’. When we fight them, we offer our sacrifice and sing *deit tong*. We also sometimes sing the same songs at our celebration of *Yai* (feast), especially when we sacrifice bulls and oxen. Priests ask for our health and cattle.”¹⁸⁰

In the view of the Dinka, the health of the cattle is directly proportional to the health of people. The Dinka express this proportionality when a priest invokes God in a ceremony at a feast. Shaw produces examples of this form of religious song from the Dinka Ciec in Yirol County, Lakes State as:

*‘Ye gon akwain cok e nonkuok
Ci nong heden ca loi e ye. ‘
‘The vulture follows my steps
With flapping of wings
As if there was something
That I had done for him.’*¹⁸¹

Shaw concludes that the vulture referred to is Satan. Experience of the author suggests that the song belongs to an adolescent Dinka man walking with his ox. The metaphorical vulture, the Satan that follows him, is also following his ox. Yet, this does not provide a complete underlying reason for the Dinka’s extreme and esteemed love for cattle, to the extent of sacrificing their life in defence of them. Love of cattle to the Dinka is equal to love of a man to his bride and the rest of the global subjects are of less significance.

1.4.2 Equivalency of Love to Women and Cattle and the Value of Hoe

Dinka oral traditions and tales claim that marriage started when the number of the Nilotics multiplied and young men commenced to disappear in private with girls for sexual aims. One day, a young man told his father that he loved a certain Nilotic girl and wanted to spend the night with her. His father smiled and asked: ‘how much do you love her’. ‘I love her on the same scale and in the same manner I love my ox’, the boy replied. *Dieet* Malwaldit (oh red big ox), the father exclaimed

180 Madau Agany, University of Juba.

181 Shaw, Archibald (1917), op. cit., p. 46.

in the name of his ox, Malwaldit and declared: 'here is a covenant; let us bless your beloved ox and ask the girl's father to bless his daughter and exchange them to enable both of you have an endless-intertwined-blessed-sleeping together'.

The following day, the boy's father visited the girl's father's abode. During their session, the boy's father cleared his throat and called the girl's father in the name of his ox; Majoangacoat, (hornless purple ox), I have a big word. He looks at Majoangacoat attentively and again, he cleared his throat. Majoangacoat knew that there was a big word to be uttered and remained attentive, his tongue busily licking the upper and lower lips. I have a covenant with my son to undergo an endless-sleeping nights and days with your daughter. He has sworn to me that he loves your daughter as much as he loves his ox. Malwaldit unveiled the mystery between their children. Majoangacoat, the girl's father cleared his throat and replied; indeed, a big word, a big word, but, it is interesting for a man to compare his love for cattle as equal to his love for a woman. I thought a woman was a woman and cattle a far greater entity. Majoangacoat continued and contemplated and hastily concluded, but let it happen in accordance to their will. 'I shall bless my daughter and you take her to your son, however, bless your oxen, bulls and cows and give them to me. I want your son to manifest to me that he sincerely loves my daughter in the same proportion as he loves his ox'.

Finally, Majoangacoat invited his daughter and asked her to join the son of Malwaldit for 'an endless-intertwined-sleeping together'. The daughter was overwhelmingly delighted by the news of being together with the son of Malwaldit forever. After a while, the news of the covenant reached the boy who exclaimed in the name of his ox and confessed that he really loved the girl and handed over the ox, Majok with additional blessed cows that same evening. The father received the cows and oxen, blessed his daughter and told them to go in peace. This was the start of the bride price based on cows, oxen and bulls which exists to this day. In response to this phenomenon, each girl began to notice that the transfer of sacred cows, bulls and oxen from one family to another family was possible as a blessed sacrament, which allowed them to sleep with someone for their whole life. Marriage in cattle is a blessed sacrament among the Dinka-Animists. There is no any amount of money that can be said in a marriage which is not attached to cattle in order to establish an endless-intertwined-blessed-sleeping together'. A Dinka cannot divorce his wife, because she is infertile, for marriage is an endlessly blessed sacrament. Divorces occur as spontaneous social event with possible finding remedies and marriage life revives.

Generally, the Dinka consider cattle as a source of their identity. It is cattle which connects them with the universal world of economic, social, cultural, political and religious phenomena. Rigidity in blessing cattle for marriage and giving them to the family of a bride may tarnish the blessing and eventually the marriage will break up. The Dinka use nothing in interpreting the world of events except cattle. Foreigners have noticed that they face no fear of trouble or disagreement from the Dinka, if they abstain from taking or looting their cattle. Eloranta observes that for the Dinka, cattle are the main centre of power and a currency

equivalent to the Western banking system. They are the significant source for mortgages, marriages, funding of studies, compensation for injury and settling of blood-feud. All these activities are organised and supervised within an established system, which the Western World calls 'Board of Directors'. Within this founded system, the elders of individual villages act as the board of bank directors. A person who owns many cattle represents a power and a chief. On the other hand, he with few seeks additional cattle. A Dinka would rather starve than kill and eat his cattle. Nor would he allow his special oxen to be used on petty things, like ploughing and husbandry, hence, the men curve horns of their oxen, and clean and sharpen them during evenings and mornings.¹⁸²

The Dinka express their arts through their cattle, therefore, curving of oxen horns demonstrates visual arts in their social institutions. John Burton who studied the Atuot Dinka of Yirol in the Lakes State admires the treatment by the Dinka of their cattle by describing the curving of cattle's horns.¹⁸³ His description, however, is not rooted in the field of fine arts, but two more aesthetic scholars, Coote and Anthony consider his description to express a high quality vision of the arts. According to them, Burton describes the cattle colour configurations of the Atuot as being "the most aesthetically pleasing". The description by Burton of the Atuot cattle establishes distinctive references to the visual sensations towards these favoured animals on the part of the Dinka. Burton wants his readers to comprehend an anthropological 'aesthetic' meaning. The Dinka cattle configurations represent an aesthetic science that determines the valued world, which contains formal qualities of objects and they are our valued formal qualities of perception. Their cattle configurations represent common physiological aesthetic objects valuable to the sense of sight. They awaken in us a universal response to certain stimuli, since aesthetics provides a perception of culture. Coote and Anthony conclude that all perceptions are expressions of human culture.¹⁸⁴

The culture of the Dinka derives additional gains from cattle besides aesthetic ones. Dinka students provide examples of these advantages in their answers to the question: "*What is the best system that you think suits Sudan?*" Students argue and claim: "The best system that suits Sudan is the system that sees cattle as a national cultural identity of the Dinka. A system that allows Arab Muslims to loot cattle from us is a system that wants us to have no culture, religion and Dinka life".¹⁸⁵ "Cattle are valuable to us, the Jieng, in many ways. First, they are the main source of nutrition, which provide us delicious food stuff. The successive Arab systems fail to understand that we love cattle. Without love for cattle, we would have not occupied ourselves with smearing their bodies with ash to protect them from all forms of insects that may infect them. Without love for them, we would not have

182 Eloranta, Kari (2002), *Time Zero Ground Zero*, Helsinki: Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat, p. 119.

183 Burton, John W. (1987), *A Nilotic World the Atut-Speaking Peoples of the Southern Sudan*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 67.

184 Coote, Jeremy and Anthony, Shelton (1994), *Marvels of Everyday Vision: The Anthropology of Aesthetics and the Cattle-Keeping Nilotes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 25.

185 Aciec Makor Dongrin, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

sacrificed them to God of the universe.”¹⁸⁶ The Dinka pastoralists check the bodies of their cattle every morning and evening and remove ticks and any dirt on their bodies. Young men polish and sharpen the horns of their oxen and bulls. Every product of cattle has a role to play among the Jieng. Their urine is used for manure, dyeing of hair, tanning the hides and washing hands. Their dung is a public fuel for fires and a powder for bodies and for the cleaning of teeth. Above all, milk and butter are nutrients as both are used to transform ground sorghum or corn into a form of thick porridge the Dinka call *kuen*. It becomes delicious, when it is mixed with the ghee of a cow. And the most important of all is that milk and ghee are always the important libations offered to totems and spirits of ancestors, not porridge.¹⁸⁷

For the Dinka to have a thick porridge, *kuen*, implies that they do not entirely rely on milk, but there are also other items of ‘what’¹⁸⁸ in their surroundings. Yet, they consider those as minor things in the category of the living and cattle are everything. Gray describes the Dinka as nomadic pastoralists adapted to the vast clay plain lands with its magnificent dry season grazing grounds. Other peoples might have found it a harsh, inhospitable environment, but they, as they articulate “hate the hoe” and despise other ethnic groups cultivating the richer ironstone lands towards the south.¹⁸⁹

It is not easy for anybody unacquainted with the Nilotic Dinka to realise the overwhelmingly important part cattle play in their lives as almost their only possession. Cattle have a free dominant role in economic, social, religious and aesthetic life and almost everything is sacrificed for their acquisition. To ‘hate the hoe’ is an equal expression of having no interest to know ‘what’.¹⁹⁰ For the Dinka, summer is a season, when men - mostly bachelors - and girls separate themselves for drinking milk in order to become fat to show the dignity of cattle. The period lasts three months starting in May and ending in July. Within these defined three months, no other food stuff than milk can pass through the throat of the *akier* (person getting fat or gaining weight). During the fourth month, after the fattening, the men and girls would come to the *agoutpiny* (the drum of autumn). In this drum centre, each fat man smear his body with white burned dung of cattle and expose himself naked except for a skin of a serval cat covering the buttocks. The reason for walking naked is to allow the watching assembly to evaluate them in order to select the fattest one from the fat group. At the end, the assembly declares the winner and the relatives rejoice, because he has brought them dignity and pride. Girls do not go entirely naked, but wear *boang* (two half metre strips

186 Macar Mangok, University of Juba.

187 Lueth Dau, University of Upper Nile.

188 Deng, Francis Mading, “The Cow and the Thing Called ‘What’: Dinka Culture Perspectives on Wealth and Poverty” in William Twining (Ed.), Human Rights: Southern Voices http://assets.cambridge.org/9780521130264/excerpt/9780521130264_excerpt.pdf.

189 Gray, Richard (1961). A History of the Southern Sudan 1839-1889, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 11.

190 Deng, Francis Mading: op. cit., Dinka chose the cow with its milk and rejected ‘What’ http://www.assets.cambridge.org/9780521130264/.../9780521130264_excerpt.pdf.

of tanned-leathers). The two *boang* are decorated with velvet on either side and smeared with cow's oil. They are divided into *boaang tweng* (singular front leather) and *boaang cien* (singular rear leather). *Boaang cien* is longer than the *boang tweng*. It is worn at the rear from the hips down to cover the buttocks and reach the knees, while *boang tweng* is tied at the front from the hips down reaching the lower part of the thighs.

Nevertheless, the despal of the Dinka pastoralists for their farming neighbours does not translate into total abstention from agricultural livelihood. They cultivate cereals, peanuts, corn, sorghum, beans, millets, pumpkin, sesame and groundnuts.¹⁹¹ The Dinka students argue that having crops is less valuable in the category of life than having cattle. The latter are the only objects that carry great significance in terms of pride and dignity. Losing their cattle is equivalent to taking away their life and they fight to the point of death to prevent that from happening. Such a fight is expressed metaphorically as: 'it is either me or you'. Dinka students explain: 'All the systems, theocratic, democratic pluralism, military dictatorship are the same in Sudan. Under these systems, Arab Muslims organise militia and take away our cows. Muslim Arabs know that if they take away cattle from us, then we are not human beings, but just equal to ordinary things. Nothing would we offer for sacrifice and nothing would we eat and from nothing would we ... gain pride'.¹⁹² It is important to note that the contested advantages of cattle cause conflicts along the borders between the Muslim Arabs, Baqqara and Dinka. One of the students points the finger to those who join the militia to loot their cattle: "The Misseiryia and Reizegat Arab Muslims on the edge of border with us know our mindset. They know when they take away our cattle, we tell them 'it is either me or you'. This means only two options; kill me as the owner of the cattle first and then take them away after my death; otherwise, we ... kill them, because there is no life in the world without cattle. The government has now ceased arming them to loot us, and so we don't fight them anymore, we ... need peace with our neighbours".¹⁹³ According to Simone some political Arab Muslims of the NIF compare their commitment to Islam as equivalent to the commitment and love of the Dinka for cattle. The members of the NIF argue that "we have nothing else to prove to the world, if you take Islam away, our only weapon. Look what happens to the Dinka, if you take away his cows and he is nothing".¹⁹⁴

Such expressions indicate that there are striking similarities between interpretations of the Dinka and Muslims in Sudan concerning cattle and Islam respectively. Arab Muslims take Islam as a model of interpreting the world. It is Islam, which is their only option in facing the world. On the other hand, the Dinka interpret their Animistic religious world through cattle. For this reason, if

191 Lako, Geroge Tombe (1985). "The Impact of the Jonglei Scheme on the Economy of the Dinka", African Affairs, the Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 84, No., 334, p. 35.

192 Ring Akec Akot, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

193 Garang Deng Wol, University of Upper Nile.

194 Simone, T. Abdou Maliqalim (1994), In Whose Image? Political Islam and Urban Practices in Sudan, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 198.

someone interferes and takes their cattle away, they would prefer death, than to be in the world without cows, bulls and oxen. These interpretations are smuggled into politics. A Muslim Arab student from Ja'aleen studying at the University of Khartoum states: "A democratic system that establishes Islam as a religion is best for Sudan, but I ... hate the form of democracy that rejects the religion of salvation to mankind. We believe that, if an Islam true to the Quran and Sunna were practiced in our system in this country... we would be happy".¹⁹⁵ According to Ayoub, Islam as a religion is interwoven with politics as an "inclusive framework or way of life". For its practical and theoretical framework it takes the sacred law, *Sharia* as a source for regulating general aspects of individuals' worship and moral standards in a society.¹⁹⁶

In contrast, a Dinka Christian Animist at the University of Juba argues that "We the Jieng, love democracy based on cultural diversity, but democracy in Khartoum is mixed with Islam and that is not democracy. Look, the Muslim rulers ... in Sudan prevent old Dinka men from drinking *mou*, a traditional alcohol. Our elders drink this kind of alcoholic beverage at religious festivals. So, there is no democratic justice for the religious sacrifices of the Dinka. Thus, we need our moral standard and our sacred law of Animism to be adopted in public spaces of ritual institutions of the territorial sovereign Sudan".¹⁹⁷



*Dinka Social and Religious Drum after Three Months
Of Fattening with Pure Milk in Apuk Giir Thiik*

195 Ahmed Sharif Mohammad, University of Khartoum.

196 Ayoub, Mahmoud M (2003), *The Crisis of Muslim History Religion and Politics in Early Islam*, Oxford: One World, p. 62.

197 Atem Biong, University of Juba.

1.5 Rituals' Institutions

Gray observes that cattle are an overwhelming possession for the Dinka. A Dinka cannot dream of slaughtering a cow, bull or an ox for the purpose of consuming its meat with his family. They may slaughter it for something greater out of respect and to gain honour. The most common reason for the killing of a cow, ox or a bull is religious rite. Cattle are the most significant offerings in ritual ceremonies.¹⁹⁸ The phenomenon of sacrificing cattle for something greater than great indicates that the Dinka love and honour their cattle to the extent of not slaughtering them for family consumption. Slaughter, however, is permitted under certain criteria, which accord them due respect. So, why do the Dinka sacrifice cattle?

This question is very important, because it reveals the status of an identity to be honoured and offered a cow, an ox or a bull. Such identity must be great enough to deserve an offer. It is an identity to which the Dinka regard themselves inferior and particularly superior to them. Religious offering is a common practice in the world. It is an organised relationship between an independent governing power and a dependent entity, between an inferior and a superior, between the great and the greater, between the higher and the lower, between a servant and a master, between a subordinate and a superordinate, between the top and the bottom. It is a remarkable relationship between contingent entity and an absolute one. For Firth, religious offering appears as a dominant factor in all religions. It seems to be an action which involves the transfer of goods from one person to another without direct counter transfer of any visible equivalent. It is a gift which means that the giver has an authority over the goods. These goods are given voluntarily. They are not demanded, but based on the free choice to give. Offering implies an asymmetrical status relationship of inferiority on the part of the person presenting the sacrifice and superiority of the recipient. It shows that a person in a kingdom makes an offering to the sovereign who in turn does not perform a counter-offering to a person who offers. Thus, offering places the giver in an inferior social position and the recipient at the peak of social superiority.¹⁹⁹

The perspective of religious celebration among the Dinka, where cattle are the main sources of sacrifice constitutes a symbolic interaction of the inferior community with their superior and sovereign governing power. It is a relationship between the contingent community and the absolute at the highest status. The involvement of cattle on such occasions enhances the significance of interaction between the subjects and superior. It is an intimate interactive time for negotiation and placement of their spiritual and material needs as dependents to the independent supreme entity.

198 Gray, Richard (1961), op. cit., p. 11.

199 Firth, Raymond (1963, Jan-Jun) "offering and Sacrifice: Problems of Organisation, Man, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol., 93, No., 1, pp. 12-24, pp. 12, 24.

Most of the Dinka students assert that offering includes the invitation of mysterious clan totems. Dependency on God is emphasised through the invocation of His name in a manner of extreme worship and unique words and movements to request Him to come into their midst. Penance is made, so that the sovereign God can purify the people and cattle. Prayers are characterised by a praising of the sovereign and inviting Him to wash away wrong thoughts of hatred, jealousy, envy, egotism, theft and all behaviour which displeases Him in order not to unleash His anger or to permit disaster and deaths to befall people and cattle. The offering of cattle in sacrifice is directed to the totems which visit human beings for bad and good and for the glorification of God, who in turn stops these spirits from doing harm to the cattle and Dinka people.²⁰⁰ According to Mbiti, the Nilotic Dinka and Nuer are very religious. Whatever they do in their daily activities is for the glorification and worship of God.²⁰¹

The Dinka celebrate different forms of ritual performances. These can be divided in accordance to the guidelines and explanations given by the students. Therefore, the nature of their practices means that the Dinka religious rituals are classified into two groups; the regular seasonal rites and the spontaneous religious rites.

1.5.1 Regular Seasonal Rites

Regular seasonal religious rites are divided into two categories: *yai* (feast) and *amoc piny* (libation). The literal meaning of the word *amoc* is ‘to be offered’ and *moc* without ‘a’ means give. *Piny* means ground, land, earth and down. In this sense, the feast of libation called *amoc piny* means offering to land, earth or down. The substance for an offer is *mou*, a traditional drink, but it is a special form of *mou*, widely known as *mon err*. Literally, *mou* means a traditional alcoholic beverage made from sorghum, corn or maize and *err* is an adjective meaning white. So, *mon err* means white alcohol. In Dinka linguistics, if a noun that ends in a vowel is followed by an adjective in a sentence, then the vowel is removed or deleted and ‘n’ is substituted or inserted. Hence, instead of writing ‘*mou err*’, it changes to *mon err*.

Yai is an extensive religious ritual celebration, which is celebrated in the form of a collective prayer to God, from October to December. People of one clan, non-relatives of other clans and chief priests from other divine clans come together to the centre of celebration. Dinka Christian-Animist students explain “Our Animistic offerings are not limited; we have many forms of ritual offerings. We gather to celebrate *yai* (feast), mostly in October, November and December. It is conducted at a clan’s sanctuary. On this occasion, bulls and oxen, mostly white

200 Angwei Deng, University of Juba, Deng Mayom, University of Upper Nile, Samuel Majok, University of Bahr el-Ghazal, Athuei Monyiir, University of Juba.

201 Mbiti, John S. (1997) (2nd ed.) African Religions and philosophy, Oxford: Heninemann, p. 58.

in colour, are sacrificed to *Nhialic* and any other colour is offered to *yeeth*, yet *Nhialic* is the ultimate end. In prayer, both the name of *Nhialic* and *yeeth* are invoked for the sake of health and peace of people”.²⁰²

Sacrifices are very important among the Dinka Christian-Animists. The majority of them believes that there are no serious contradictions between Christianity and their Animism, because both feature similar ritual offerings. The Anglican Bishop of Bor in ‘Southern Sudan’ Nathaniel Garang notes that sacrifice of the Dinka makes it easy for them to understand Christianity. He states “We Dinka know the blood of cattle sacrifice is very powerful, so the blood of Christ is easy for us to understand”.²⁰³ Among the Dinka a feast (*yai*) involves *mon err*, a white substance made from sorghum, which the initiated elderly groups drink in participant of the souls of their dead ancestors through libation.²⁰⁴ If the offering, however, is of a bull or bulls, then Dinka people would spend seven days praying. During this time, *bäny kec* (sour priests) mainly from the priestly clans would lead the prayer. Adult men hold a procession with the bulls at dawn, while singing hymns. Bulls are brought to the sanctuary and tabernacle during the mornings and evenings. All sour priests lead the prayer in rotation. A nephew from a clan who owns a bull to be sacrificed repeats the prayers of each chief priest. Every chief priest has his own way of invoking totems and God, but all do it for peace. Their prayers invoke God to clean the hearts of people from hatred. The chief priests warn evil spirits to keep away from the people and ask God for intervention and help.²⁰⁵

Analysis of the form of prayers the Dinka chief priests perform reveals the fundamental validity of ritual offerings. They are the means of opening up the gate and channel of dialogue between the mysterious totems and God. The aim focuses on the feelings of guilt of one towards another and therefore invoking God to intervene becomes imperative. God is invoked to visit their collective minds. In prayer, God is acknowledged as the greatest One who promotes what is good for the people and hates what is bad and malicious practice as an enemy of peace. People who plan to have thoughts of hate towards others are assumed to be close to *jaak* (evil spirits) who visit people to their harm and detriment. Under this dissatisfaction, the chief priests invoke God to intervene and purify the hearts and minds of such people and substitute love for these thoughts. Second, ritual offerings establish relationships of imaginary fellowship in sharing food, as *mou* is brewed and served as a public drink. The people who gather for the occasion pour some drinks on the ground. Such a libation marks the symbolic interaction between the souls of ancestors and the living people. Williams and Boyd say that rituals are instruments for gaining and communicating certain kinds of knowledge to God and the mysterious gods in the universe. Because of their significance,

202 Dut Kom, University of Bahr el-Ghazal

203 On Your Tractor (2010 May 6) “On Your Tractor, if You can “, Magazine Economist, <http://www.economist.com/world/middle-east/displaystory.Id=16068960>

204 Deng Mariek Madut, University of Juba.

205 Maluil Kuot, University of Juba.

rituals become practices organised along a regular ritual calendar. Trained practitioners perform and transmit them from generation to generation with remarkable identity that deserves offerings across vast stretches of space and time.²⁰⁶

The regulating time of the interactions of *atiep*, the souls of the dead and the living is what Lienhardt describes as not being dangerous for the living Dinka to call their dead to mind. For them, it is a pious duty to make offerings of beer and milk to the souls of the dead people from time to time, and to recall their names when a divine subject or the clan-divinities are invoked for aid at sacrifices.²⁰⁷

The second regular ritual feast is *amoc piny*, feast of libation. This celebration is made during the time of harvest in August and September and has only two aims. First, it is an occasion to render thanksgiving to God for having allowed the planted seeds of crops to sprout and yield a harvest. The second aim is to foster a collective interaction of the living people and the souls of the dead. The spirits of the dead generations in the known and unknown past are invited to participate in the rite through libation. This ritual performance does not require the presence of a chief priest. Instead, a woman of a house brews *mon err* and her husband uses the occasion to invite the neighbours to come for a drink. A man of the house should not attempt to take the first cup of the drink to himself, without having made a libation at the holy sites and particularly the clan or family sanctuary. A woman pours *mou* for libation in a sacred gourd and places it down at the right side of a room relatively close to the front door while bowing. The action of bowing is a reverence to the receiving souls. The drink remains in that location for a day as a symbolic drink to collective spirits, while the living men and women drink and recreate different stories in the rooms of a house or under a tree or a hut, depending on the weather. This feast takes place in the rainy season, in autumn when heavy rains fall, and thus, most of the Dinka stay indoors, while enjoying the religious recreations and conversation among themselves. During this moment, the souls of the dead participate in the activity through a set apart *mou* in sacred gourd and a poured libation on the ground at the sacred sites.

It is to be noted that, while drinking *amoc piny*, the owner of a house should not claim that he will first satisfy himself with a drink, but the first thought to enter into his mind should be to extend this drink to those passing by and treat them as guests as well as neighbours. Satisfied guests are expected to give blessings to the house and God positively responds to the prayer of the happy guest(s). Dinka students explain: "The Dinka's cosmology is not stable, but we offer a sacrifice of *amoc piny* that is the feast of libation. It is an occasion celebrated August through September".²⁰⁸ "A woman prepares *mou* for the libation and a man of a house invites the participants to aggregate at the house. Neighbours and everyone passing by are ... involved in drinks and friendly jokes are recounted".²⁰⁹ After

206 Williams, Ron G and Boyd, James W (1993), *Ritual Art and Knowledge Aesthetic Theory and Zoroastrian Ritual*, Columbia: University of South Carolina, pp. 8, 70.

207 Lienhardt (1961), op. cit., p. 154.

208 Deng Wol, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

209 Angok Mou, University of Juba.

that “A woman puts libation to the public souls to the right of the door. A man must make sure that he drinks after having poured out *mou*, a local white beer made from sorghum. Guests are given first rate service, so that God rewards the house in blessing.”²¹⁰ In the view of Porter, such forms of public ritual offerings are extremely significant forces. They create a framework for holding and bringing people together for good or bad. It is a moment of solidarity, when there is a bad event and a time for social chanting and recreation, when there is a joyful event.²¹¹ Human beings are naturally subjected to events, some of which represent joy and some of which are associated with fear and threat to life. For the Dinka, an epidemic does not occur out of the blue, but they regard it as the wrath of some unseen supernatural powers and the only solution is to invoke the absolute power to intervene and arrest those powers to suspend the spread of a disease. Such invocation of the absolute power is marked through the religious rite, which is not established in the calendar of religious offerings, but it is a spontaneous one conducted to remove an overpowering moment of cattle’s or people’s illness.

1.5.2 *Spontaneous Rite*

The second form of rite is a spontaneous one which can be conducted anywhere anytime, if there is an interference of *joak*, evil spirit, in the life of cattle and people. This kind of offering is organised in a special way. First, *piaet*, it is the transformation process of an evil spirit from its devilish nature to benevolent spirit. In this ceremony, people sing a religious song to invite *joak* (an evil spirit) to be transformed into a good spirit and leave a human being, and instead enter into a cow or an ox. After the descent of that distinctive *joak* into a particular cow, the latter becomes a mysterious dwelling residence of that spirit and its milk turns sacred. Such milk is not kept in a public jug, but mostly in a private one, so that the family and all relatives can drink from it. In other words, only people who are related to the owner of this cow, either by way of marriage or by clan are allowed to drink it.²¹²

I call this form of religious performance a spontaneous rite, due to its nature. There is no specific seasonal time for it; instead, it is conducted whenever there is interference of a spirit with human affairs with harmful intent. So, the relatives of the afflicted person seek a remedy to please the evil spirit. In addition, the spontaneous religious rite directed at a cow creates three phenomena, which I call the three religious forms of Cs in the Dinka Animism. The first ‘C’ comes from the explanation given that during the ritual performance directed at the interfering spirit, where a cow is made the centre of that spirit, people do not sing any religious songs. They begin chanting and singing a special hymn in a religious ceremony. Such a known special religious hymn is a religious creed. Its primary aim

210 Gai Akuei, University of Upper Nile.

211 Porter, Barbara Nevling (Ed.) (2005), *Ritual and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia*, New Haven: American Oriental Society, p. 1.

212 Mathiang Bol Amet, University of Juba.

is to invoke and entice the inflicting spirit to descend into a cow. The second 'C' emanates from the descending of a spirit into a cow. The spirit transforms the cow from the ordinary status of being a common cow among many cows into a hosting cult. The spirit is transformed from being devilish into a benevolent cult in a cow. The third 'C' is the product of the same cow as its milk and ghee are codified in the social institutions. Such a code introduces religious obligations, with regard to the consumption of its milk and ghee. At this stage, the kin and the affines are the only ones entitled to consume the milk and ghee of this particular cow. People embrace this code strictly and codify it as a dogma.

The phenomenon of the Dinka treatment of cattle to the extent of sanctifying some of them is equal to the treatment of cows by the believers Hinduism. This poses a challenge to academics to establish whether there has been any interaction in the history of human evolution between the Indian Hindus and the Dinka Animists. According to Simons, the Hindus treat a cow as a holy animal and a subhuman for religious purposes and self-identification. This respectful treatment of the cow among the Hindus motivated Mahatma Gandhi, the founder of the non-violent resistance in India to argue that if any rational, worthy, useful practice with great advantages deserves human appreciation as a good one, it is this one: "Cow protection to me is one of the most wonderful phenomena in human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. The cow to me means the entire subhuman world".²¹³

Observations of the general treatment by the Dinka of cattle give the impression that a cow is a looking glass which helps them to interpret the general phenomena of their milieu. It is through cattle that the Dinka reflect upon their identity. In their social institutions, economy is built on cattle; pride is manifested through them. They are the ultimate sacrifice in religious ceremonies. All these advantages mean that the Dinka are outraged if a cow, an ox or a bull is looted or taken away from them. They interpret such an act as an aim to render the Dinka identity-less. Thus, they fight for their protection in order to maintain their extrinsic and intrinsic identity mostly derived and based upon cattle. Put differently, their protection is a necessary action not only in economical terms, but for their inclusive religious, social, cultural and political identifications. According to Gandhi, in the teaching of Hinduism, a cow needs protection. Its protection is a mechanism for saving the animal; instead, it represents self-purification and penance.²¹⁴

The protection of cattle gives rise to psychological conflicts between them and the Muslim Arabs. The Dinka hate to sense that a cow, bull or an ox is used as a tool for cultivation. Witnessing such behaviour towards cattle by non-Dinka people causes psychological disturbances in their minds and, hence, some conservatives seek a remedy. Some of them invent public folk songs as a remedy, conveying

213 Simoons, Frederick J (1979, September), "Questions in the Sacred-Cow Controversy", *Journal of Current Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 3, p. 467.

214 Gandhi, Mahatma (1930, July), "The Myth of the Holy Cow", *the Journal of Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 407-408.

messages of their rage about the use of cattle in farming. For instance, at a public political rally at the town of Gogrial of Warrap State in South Sudan, the Dinka man, Deng Kuot broke out into a song that denounced the use of oxen in husbandry in the Islamic Northern Sudan as:

*The bad cows of the North
Work as human beings
You people of the South
Have you not seen?*

Yet, it is not only the Dinka who associate their identity with cattle in South Sudan, but the Nilotic Nuer people treat cattle in the same way as the Dinka. Similar treatment creates a culture of interdependence between the Nuer and the Dinka as children of one man originally and thus one nation. According to a tale, one time they were one, but the cow caused their disagreement. Still, they are one nation before any danger threatening their existence and their way of cultural life, however, they know themselves differently, not how the foreigners name them. The ethnic Nilotic Nuer knows call themselves Naath, while the Dinka call themselves Jieng, Munyjiang or Jiang. The neighbouring Baqqara Arabs call the Dinka Jiengai and Fertit in Western Bahr el-Ghazal identify them as Jiengei.

Indispensability of Nuer and Dinka

As this study focuses on the customs and social, cultural and political structures of ethnic and racial identities, it is only right to provide a brief background of the term Nuer as an ethnic identity. It is commonly used by the Dinka, Shilluk, Jur-Col and Anuak to identify the group that knows itself as Naath, the 'people'. According to Dinka oral traditions, the first Nuer was a second brother to Jieng, or Jiang, the original ancestor of the Dinka. A Dinka student at the Omdurman Ahlia University states: "In Jieng traditions, Nuer was a second brother to Munyjiang, while we were in Khartoum".²¹⁵

The Dinka students offer oral traditions that delineate the rest of the Nilotics in a similar way as the Nuer do, but differ in naming. Their traditions acknowledge that the Nilotics were originally brothers descending from one man. The Shilluk are known to the Dinka as Baar or Nyikang, the Jur-Col as Domo, the Anuak as Gilo and the Nuer are the Nuer. Jiang (Dinka) was the elder brother of all of them. In a reconciliatory conference for peace between the Dinka and Nuer at the village of Wunlit, Tonj County, in Warrap State in March 1999, Jieng chiefs identified the Nuer as their 'brothers'. Chief Rec Anyeth Rec from the Yirol county of Lakes State identified the Nuer as "the child of my mother. He is a brother who, if you run into problems, would always assist you, fighting alongside you. We want to be one people so that we can fight our common enemy, the Muslim Arabs".²¹⁶

The majority of the Nilotic Dinka students claim that practical relationships between the Nuer and the Dinka are marked by aggressive violence, but that the two are quick to eliminate their differences. The motivation behind this physical violence is always based on the nature of an economy based on cattle, but both ethnic groups understand that their destiny is one, before other people in Sudan. Attempts by external forces such as the British colonisers and the Arabs to eradicate the Nuer have been interpreted by the Dinka as to be followed by their own eradication. Both groups have an intrinsic assumption that they were originally brothers and this reciprocal feeling of solidarity helps them to resolve their differences. Southhall observes that the original mythical brotherhood of Naath and

215 Aweer Atak, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

216 Wunlit Reconciliatory Conference <http://www.southsudanfriends.org/wunlit/>

Jieng enduces the Dinka and the Nuer to hastily reconcile and normalise their grievances, which are always centred on cattle disputes. Moreover, the Naath identify the Dinka as Jieng or Jiang, which also means 'the people'.²¹⁷

Cattle are the dominant source of wealth among the Nuer and it has become the central denominator in defining categories of identity. Nuer students claim that in their homelands they only know the Nilotics who speak their language and the rest of the ethnic groups in Sudan are 'foreigners' and less valuable, simply because they own no cattle. The Shilluk are known as Tet, the Anuak as Gilo and the Lou of Bahr el-Ghazal, known to the Dinka as Jur-Col, as Dimo. The rest of the people, whether within Sudan or in other places in the world are *Jur* (foreigners) and *Bar* (people without cattle), but all the illiterate Nuer reject the use of the term 'Dinka'.²¹⁸

2.1 Religious and Political Sources of the Term 'Dinka'

The current names 'Dinka' and 'Nuer' have indeed been constructed, but not out of a vacuum. There are various religious and political reasons underlying this construction. The majority of the interviewed students from these two ethnic groups identified their ethnic backgrounds in the questionnaires as Naath, instead of Nuer, and as Jieng, Jiang, Munyjieng or Munyjiang, instead of Dinka. There are two ways to determine the origin of the term Dinka. The first is an oral narrative tale and the second a linguistic hypothesis. According to a letter written on 21 February 2004 by five Dinka intellectuals and addressed to the founder of the SPLM and the SPLA, Dr John Garang de Mabior, the origin of the term Dinka is related in Dinka oral narrative tales. It dates back to the nineteenth-century British colonial system. British administrator(s) changed the ethnic name Jieng, Jiang or Munyjiang to an alien name, Dinka. The administrator(s) denounced the use of the name Munyjiang, thinking it to be derogatory to other people, including them. British administrators divided the compound word, Munyjiang into two morphemes, '*muny*' and '*Jiang*'. In Jieng language, the term '*muny*' is a free morpheme, which is used as a debased word, mostly by the Jieng peers who address each other. It means a man, or a boy, while the word '*Jiang*' means the people. The administrators interpreted the term as contempt and an insult and concluded that Munyjiang means 'the man of people' and contemptuously substituted the term Dinka, instead of Munyjiang in order to free themselves from it. The writers concluded that the British made their own a priori interpretation, but "We do not say that we are men of human beings, we are just *Munyjieng* meaning the people."²¹⁹

217 Southhall, Aidan (1976, December), "Nuer and Dinka Are People: Ecology, Ethnicity and Logical Possibility, *Man*, New Series, Vol., 11, No., 4, pp. 463-491.

218 Liem Kur, Katkuoth Koang and Monykoang Lol.

219 Letter written by Kuel M. Jok, Kwai M. Kwai, Dr Mawein Akot, Darius G. Wol and Sabrino M. Majok, under the title: "Distortion of History" 21.2.2004.

This explanatory narrative source is insufficient, because it does not reveal how the administrators chose the term Dinka. For a Dinka student “The name Dinka came from the British colonisers. They were ... dissatisfied with the meaning of the name *Munyjiang* and introduced the name Dinka, instead of *Munyjieng*. The administrator(s) observed that many men among us are called Deng and females are mostly given the name Adeng. Deng is derived from our spiritual ancestor, Dengdit”.²²⁰ According to Deng, Dengdit is a public name attributed to the deity of the Dinka. It is described as a reflection of the tremendous manifestation of the mighty God’s power. His omnipresent power in accordance with the belief of the Dinka is manifested in lightning, thunder and rains.²²¹

Other oral sources claim that the term Dinka came from Deng Kak, a divine chief from Renk, a Jieng area in the northern Upper Nile State. A Dinka elder, Henry Tong Col, explained during the national cultural day in Comboni Ground in 1997 that: “The term Dinka came from our grandfather, Deng Kak who was a spiritual priest of the Jieng in Renk. His people disobeyed the British administrators in the area and attacked them. During the battle, the forces of Deng defeated the British combatants. The commander in the field of the British forces reported in Khartoum to a Governor General that, the chief Priest Deng Kak with his people sung certain religious war songs in their language. The song contained the religious rhythm of their Animism, in which Deng Kak was eulogised, while attacking the garrison. The British Governor in Khartoum listed the tribal group who eulogised Deng Kak in their songs as Dinka”. Tong concluded that we who shared the same language with the tribal Jieng in Renk became known as Dinka.²²²

Again, the explanation is dubious, because the name of the spiritual chief is Deng Kak. So, there is a difference between the names Dinka and Deng Kak. The Dinka are not called Deng-Kak or Denka. Linguistically, the two words, ‘Dinka’ and ‘Denka’ could be homophony, which refers to words which are spelled differently but pronounced the same.²²³ Hypothetically, the Governor General might have applied the socio-linguistic theory, back-word formation. The adoption of this theory would have made him drop the ‘k’ at the end of Kak and the ‘g’ at the end of Deng. The reason could have been to avoid the presence of two consonantal unvoiced ‘k’ and voiced ‘g’ articulated from velar and the resulting in ‘Denka’. Second, it might have been impossible for the British Governor General to preserve the stop aspirated voice ‘g’ at the end of Deng together with un-aspirated voiceless stop ‘k’ at the end of Kak, if he had adopted the linguistic theory of word formation called blending.

220 Ayom Akol, Omdurman Ahlia University.

221 Deng, Francis Mading, “Scramble for Souls: Religious Intervention among the Dinka in Sudan” in Abdullahi Ahmed An’Naim (Ed.) (1993), *Proselytization and Communal Self Determination in Africa*, New York: Maryknoll, p. 203.

222 Speech of Henry Tong Chol on the cultural Day of Jieng in Comboni Ground, Khartoum 1997.

223 Fromkin, Victoria and Robert, Rodman (1993), *An Introduction to Language* (fifth Ed.) New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, p. 131.

It is to be noted that the blending theory combines two separate words to make a single word, by omitting the last sound or sounds of the first word and the last sound or more sounds from the second word. The starting point would be Deng+Kak. The blending, then, changes the structure by omitting 'g' at the end of Deng and the same applies to Kak by omitting 'k' at the end. In this phase, the structure would be Den+ka and the result of such blending is Denka. Yet, the spelling appears as Denka and not Dinka. This difference leads us to propose a further linguistic hypothesis. The British administrator might have faced some articulatory difficulty between the two common names among the Dinka, Deng and Ding. In linguistics, 'e' is a notorious vowel. It is articulated as a front back vowel to sound as 'i'. It is also articulated as a central back vowel; therefore, 'e' might have been articulated phonetically as 'i'.²²⁴ In my view, the explanation of Henry Tong Col is highly hypothetical or invented. It does not provide the name of the British Governor General or the date of the battle between the people of the religious chieftain Deng Kak with the British combatants. Yet, it is an important story that represents the significance role of a religious person such as Deng Kak among the Dinka Animists.

2.2 Religious Distribution of Wealth and Sources for the Term 'Nuer'

The construction of the name Nuer can be only traced from the tale of Naath and Jiang. Their oral traditions maintain that Dengdit the genealogical ancestor of the Naath and Jiang was a sacred priest. He performed miracles and his words were holy and divine. Dengdit had two cows, the mother and its calf, and distributed them, after he felt he was too old and would die. He blessed the two cows and allotted the old cow to Jiang and the young one to Naath. He left the sheep and goats to his other children Domo (Jur-Col), Collo (Baar) and Gilo (Anuak). After this divine allocation, he instructed each one to individually visit him to obtain a blessing and receive his present. Jiang came first and identified himself as 'Naath', instead of by his name and asked for his cow and blessing. Dengdit blessed him and he took the calf. Naath came and identified himself as 'Naath' and asked for his calf. His father responded, 'but you have already taken your calf'. Naath protested, 'no, no, I have not visited to your abode'. 'I have done my utmost to impede Jiang from taking the calf and he has spoiled my spiritual plan and taken your calf', Dengdit replied. Subsequently, Dengdit cleared his throat and vociferated: 'Naath, my son listen to me, the blessing is immutable; take the old cow, however, I abjure from today onward: follow Jiang and raid the children of your cow'.

The relationship between the children of Dengdit represents three conflicts of interest emanating from wealth and power sharing and their implications for the functioning of national institutions. First, it reveals that institutions are not im-

224 Yule, George (1985), *The Study of Language*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 43.

immune to favouritism. There is no absolute proportional equality in all functioning institutions. The allotment of an old cow and Jiang's resistance shows that Naath was more special, loved and favoured than Jiang. These unique qualities influenced Dengdit to allocate a smaller cow that would reproduce multiple cows, bulls and oxen enriching Naath and impoverishing Jiang. Occasionally, in the Nilotics' traditions, parents stop using the official birth name of an extremely loved or sometimes an imp child in social institutions. The parents instead adopt a surname as the principal name for use. Such a name could be transformed into a public name, which the whole family and the outside world would use. Yet, the owner of the surname refrains from using it in the public domain. After a long time, the name will vanish from the next generation of children. Since Naath enjoyed privileges of intimacy, love and special treatment, his father might have dropped the use of the original birth name, Naath, and called him Nuer. For Jiang, it was possible to continue to identify his younger brother from generation to generation by that surname. Gradually, over the course of time the name Naath vanished. The progeny of Jiang inherited the name Nuer, but the progeny of Naath inherited the name of his elder brother Jiang from that time, until today.

In addition, the third brother, Collo (Shilluk) who is known among the Dinka and Nuer as Baar or Tet continues to this day to identify the Nuer as Nuera. This tells us that the third brother inherited the surname to his generation, instead of the name Naath. As Dengdit, spiritually instructed Naath to claim back the multiple children of his cow from Jiang through raids, the Nuer shout 'Jiang 'Jiang' 'Jiang' during raids. The reason for shouting is to frighten the Jiang into running off and leaving the cattle in a kraal, where they can be taken without killing Jiang children. Second, the attitudes of Dengdit towards his two sons indicate that it is impossible to retrieve spiritual power of a blessing once it has been given. The worldly power is a revocable entity, but blessing is not a substance. It is a static-sanctified spirit that has already intertwined the young cow with Jiang, hence, it was irreversible. It shows that human institutions embody injustice, dishonesty, envy, cheating, jealousy and theft. Still, there is always an intrinsic-conjuncture law that reprimands those negative qualities. In this sense, legitimacy of a raid represents human accountability. It is not a blessing to disregard the moral order of ownership to property, but a sanction of rebellion against unjust behaviour. Thus, rebellion becomes another way of rectifying dissatisfaction with a wealth sharing situation. James Ogilo, an elderly Shilluk of about eighty years old argues in his public letter that the current wealth of Jieng came from his traditional cheating of his younger brother, Naath.²²⁵

Since that day of cheating and sanctioning of a raid to reclaim cows from Jiang, it has been imperative for the numerous Naath to access all Jiang cattle within their reach. The Naath can launch an attack upon Jiang kraals or *toc* (grazing lands) and loot cows, bulls and oxen, while consciously exposing themselves to fatal danger. Yet, it is a permitted habitual moment, where the sanction of dis-

225 James Ogilo letter dated September 2008.

order obligation is supplanted, instead of the current etiquette in institutions. A Naath raids without prior hatred towards his elder brother Jiang and the killing emerges as a spontaneous event, not the aim of the raid. Similarly, it is imperative for a Jiang to protect his cattle from a Naath to the extent of killing him as a moral obligation of defending ownership, but not as a sign of hatred towards his younger brother. In essence, the killing defiles the sanctity of Dengdit's sheer solemn promise of raiding. While not stressing that the wrangle over the wealth would reach to the current level of killing, however, the myth has created a social disorder between the two brothers, where each one hunts for cattle, but the defence of it engenders massive carnage. The traditional and religious obligations dictated by that cow have been transformed and become the provocative causes of frequent lethal violence between the Naath and the Jiang. Despite this, one still finds that equal raiding of cattle does not build borders of hatred between the two groups. The participatory dancing drums, feasts, reciprocal marriages and the display of hospitality in sharing fish, honey and milk in pastoral places are evidence of this. However, the spontaneous killing is murder and therefore, despicable. It is a deviation from the will of Dengdit. Among the Nuer, it is possible that the slightest dispute may lead to the murder of a large number of a section. Equally, one section of the Jiang can unleash an attack against another Jiang section and kill. The worst is the cross violence between the Nuer and the Dinka with modern weapons, instead of their traditional *mut* (spear) in Nuer and *tong* (spear) in Dinka.

The two brothers have transformed an insane killing into a pride of heroism. There is nothing that can make the two desist from this mutual murder, beyond the resumption of the Animistic ritual. In a religious practice, the two brothers listen to *Nhialic* or *Kuoth* attentively and promise a religious covenant, where killing is specifically condemned and rejected as a sin. The paradigm is the 'Covenant of Wunlit' in Tonj, where mabior, a white ox was sacrificed.²²⁶ Historically, conflict resolutions after these complex killings are always derived from Animistic ritual sacrifices. Chief priests from both sides lead in prayers and a covenant is established before the *Kuoth/Nhialic* and each one of these brothers swears solemnly not to kill in the future.

The Dinka believe that *jaak* (evil spirits) possessed Nuer's cattle. Some of these spirits include *maherbainhom*, *makoldit*, *mangongdit* and *Arob Nuer*. For this reason, the Dinka in the past refrained from stealing and looting the Nuer's cattle. If the Nuer looted their cattle, they reacted and looted the Nuer cattle and slaughtered them, so that the spirits were avoided. Today, perhaps, modernity is weakening traditional Animism, which emphasises that particular moral teaching among the Dinka. Hence, during the past twenty-one years of war, Nuer cattle became the targets of the Dinka as well. Yet, many Dinka continue to maintain that belief,

226 Wunlit Reconciliatory Conference <http://www.southsudanfriends.org/wunlit/>.

which indeed provides a moral social order. It is to be suggested that the belief of the presence of *joak* in Nuer cattle complements the Dengdit blessing of the raid by the Dinka and it prevents the reciprocal raid of the Dinka.

For quite a long time, from generation to generation, the Dinka have killed an unknown number of the Nuer and the Nuer have killed an unknown number of Dinka. Wars which they invite upon themselves threaten their demographic stability. Without violence, with massacres the order of the day, the population of the two Nilotic brothers would have far exceeded the current population number.²²⁷ The Nuer are divided into the Jikany, which is composed of about sixteen sub-sections, the Lou with its main subsections, Mor and Gou, the Gawaar mostly residing in Ayod, Laak in Pangak, and the Bull with its extensive sub-sections further fragmented into subdivisions. It is not clear, whether the populations of the Nuer and the Dinka have decreased during the twenty years of violence from 1983-2005. Nuer students deem the population of the Nilotics to be under threat because of the Muslim Arabs and not the internal wars over cattle. "The Arabs expelled us from Khartoum, with our brothers, the Jiang. During that time, many were massacred and few escaped toward the modern lands, where we live today and ... there our numbers increased. The Arab slavers ... quickly followed us and kidnapped an additional number of us for slavery. Now, the last war that started in 1983 between us and the Muslim Arabs and ended in 2005 claimed millions of Naath and Jiang".²²⁸

The threat to the Jieng and the Naath populations returns us to history. Northern slavers have captured an unknown tally from these ethnic groups and others from the South. This has had a negative impact on their population numbers in general. Historically, there were campaigns organised by the Northern slavers to seek slaves along the White Nile, which is the modern homeland of the Nilotics. According to Kebbede, the Arab Muslim slavers have been coming to Sudan to raid for slaves for the past four centuries. Cairo was a major market for their sale, until the British stopped the process in 1889.²²⁹ According to An'Naim the conflict which erupted in Sudan between the Christian-Animist South and the Islamic North in 1983 enabled the Muslim Arab Northern slavers to revive slavery. Under the *Sharia*, they felt justified to do so, since they categorise the people of Southern Sudan as pagans. Therefore, it is permissible to enslave them in according to the tenets of *Sharia*.²³⁰ Jok views modern slavery as a continuation of the past slavery practices against the Nilotics. He argues that the reason that has prompted the Baqqara Muslim Arabs of the North to kidnap and enslave the Nilotics in the South is entirely vague. There are no satisfactory explanations. Some researchers claim that the enslavement is a result of a conflict, as the

227 See Sudan's census of April 2009.

228 Beil Kuol, University of upper Nile.

229 Kebbede, Girma (Ed.) (1999), Sudan's Predicament Civil War, Displacement and ecological Degradation, Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing Limiting, p. 31.

230 An'Naim, Abdullahi Ahmed (1990), Towards an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law, New York: Syracuse University Press, p. 175.

Muslims claim that the Nilotics are ‘pagans’ and deserve slavery. This is not correct, because there are no adequate studies to support this assertion. The systematic abduction of the Nilotics has never ceased in Sudan. Jok claims that the only study which focuses on and reveals this tragedy is that of the historian Damzao Dut Majak. This study has documented that the Muslim Arabs abducted Dinka women and children and exploited them for the “reproduction of children to the Arabs of Baqqara.”²³¹

These children remain half-Nilotic in blood, but fully Muslim Arab in religious culture and ethnic identity. Deng puts the figure of Nilotic women and children abducted by Muslim Arabs in Sudan between 1889 and 2000 at “tens of thousands”.²³² In this sense, assimilation to the Muslim Arab identity is considered as one motivation among many underlying the enslavement of the Nilotics in Sudan. Collins explains that Muslim Arabs abduct the Nilotics, especially the Dinka and the Nuer, because of the threat facing their population. It is this assumption that has developed and become “an important factor for them to seize the more fertile women and children” from the Nilotics for reproduction.²³³

The second factor which has had a large impact on the population of the Nuer and the Dinka is the war which started in 1983. These two ethnic groups were the fundamental sources of recruits for the SPLA rebels. In that position, the Dinka and the Nuer fought against the Muslim Arabs, but also turned on each other after the split of the movement into two factions. Jok and Hutchinson explain that since 1983 the SPLA managed to capture most of the towns within the territory of the Nilotic South and was about to capture the former capital city of the South, Juba, when a political rift occurred. Dr Riek Machar, a Naath, broke away from Dr John Garang, a Jieng. This split within the military ranks had disastrous consequences for the Jieng and the Naath. The soldiers of the SPLA divided themselves along ethnic lines, and the civil populations from both sides suffered starvation and killing. Jok and Hutchinson point out that “the number of the Dinka and Nuer who have died in this ... conflict” is unknown, but is a heavy death toll.²³⁴

The third factor that threatens the Nilotic populations is the emergence of modernity within their traditional custom of polygamy. Urbanisation is now becoming a reality among the Nilotics and it threatens their polygamous marriage system with its high production of children. It is easy in villages for a single man with a large herd of cattle to marry several wives. He produces children who take care of his possessions in terms of cattle and farm for their mothers in the villages. Modernity impedes the fulfilment of the practice of polygamy. It comes

231 Jok, Jok Madut. (2001), *War and Slavery in Sudan*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, p. 59.

232 Deng, Francis Mading (2001, Winter), “Sudan- Civil War and Genocide Disappearing Christians of the Middle East, *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol., VIII, No., 1, pp. 1-56, p. 21.

233 Collins, Robert O “Nilotics Slavery: Past and Present”, in Elizabeth Savage (Ed.) (1992), *Human Commodity*, London: Frank Cass, p. 34.

234 Jok, Jok Madut and Hutchinson, Sharon Elaine (1999, September), *Sudan’s Prolonged Second Civil War and the Militarization of Nuer and Dinka Ethnic Identities*, *African Studies Review*, Published by the African Studies Association, Vol., 42, No. 2, pp. 26–27.

with the Christian culture of monogamy. At the moment, men of the educated class among the Nilotics of today marry one wife. The monogamous system is in the process of becoming the dominant model in the social institutions of the Nilotics. For instance, Mary Gray Davidson of the Common Ground Radio in Iowa, USA held an interview over this issue with the son of the most polygamous Nilotic Dinka, Francis Mading Deng, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D C. Deng said he wrote a book in the name of his father '*The Man called Deng Majok*' to demonstrate the legacy of his power. Deng's father had more wives than anyone else among the Nilotics of the South and beyond. Deng explained that the Nilotics saw their culture of polygamy in their isolated world as the best and remained proud of it. It was this culture which influenced his father to marry two hundred wives. Now, with the rise of modernity, some of his children have become Christians and are avoiding monogamy. Deng Majok was able to be polygamous because of a wealth focused on cattle, so each wife owned cattle and her children built houses in the village. Deng concludes that this situation is difficult to maintain in the light of current urbanisation and the culture of Christian orientation.²³⁵

Despite all anxiety among the populations of the Nuer and the Dinka that their numbers might have been reduced owing to the war, the census of April 2009 proved the Dinka and the Nuer to be the largest ethnic groups in the South.²³⁶

Traditionally the Nuer people easily assimilate the Dinka as many of their sections originated from the Dinka. Howell argues that there is no evidence that the Nuer were numerous in the past as many among the Laak, Thiaang and Gawaar sections were originally Dinka, but are now fully assimilated Nuer.²³⁷ Without doubt, assimilation between the two groups is enormously simple. The reason is that the two are conscious of their origins as children of common ancestor. Southhall suggests that the Nuer and the Dinka were originally one ethnic group in their common homeland on the western bank of the River Nile. Some current sections of the Nuer, such as the Jikany, the Lou and the Gawaar had to leave their original homeland, the Nuer section of Bull, and crossed to the eastern bank. Economic competition with the Dinka over cattle and overpopulation in their original region might have encouraged their exodus to their present home on the eastern bank of the Nile.²³⁸ Being originally one ensures that their Animistic beliefs and practices coincide significantly in their institutions.

235 Common Ground Radio (1998, November) "Growing up Dinka", www.commongroundradio.org/.../98/9844.html -

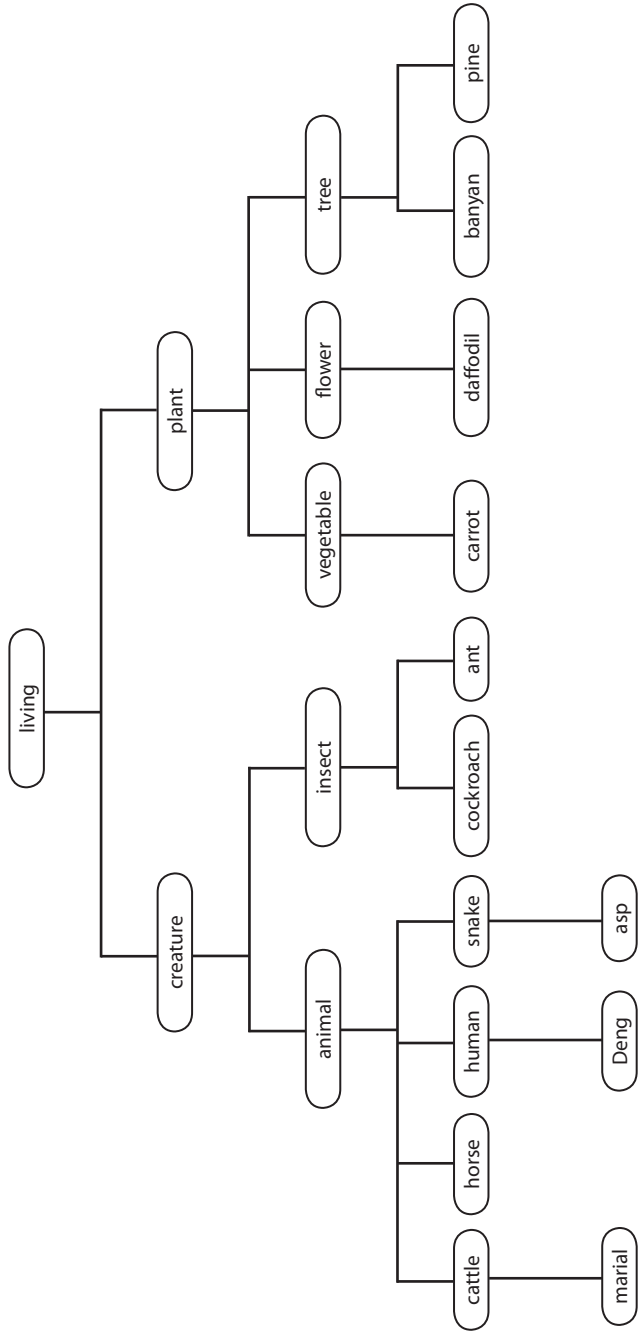
236 Census of April 2009.

237 Howell, Paul P (1947, October), "On the Value of Iron among the Nuer", *Man, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 131-134.

238 Southhall (1976), op. cit., p. 468.

Therefore, there is not much difference between their ritual offerings and sacrifices. What a Nuer priest does in approaching God conforms with religious actions undertaken by the Dinka priest. Both pray towards the east and invoke God while holding spears in their right hands. During prayer at dawn, emphasis is frequently made while piercing the air with the spear.

Hyponymy Diagram of Cattle to the Dinka



Animism of Nuer

It should be noted that during the twentieth century, the Nuer have become receptive to the Gospel and many of them have been evangelised and converted to Christianity. The translation of the New Testament into the Nuer vernacular was completed in 1968 and the Old Testament is in the process of being translated. Despite these achievements, a large number of Nuer people remain adherents to both Animism and nominal Christianity.²³⁹ Some interviewed Nuer students reveal that most of the Nuer, Shilluk and the Dinka students in Khartoum, Wau, Malakal and Juba are not baptised. Yet, they associate themselves with Christianity with complete knowledge of its Biblical literature.

Observation concerning all social structures of the Nilotics demonstrates that Christianity has penetrated into and become a part of their public culture, even though the majority has not received the sacrament of baptism. Political reasons and the slight overlap in religious practice between their Animism and Christianity have strengthened this phenomenon. Most of the Nuer students claim that Christianity does not sever them from their Animistic approach to *Kuoth* (God).²⁴⁰ Some claim that Islam with its *Jihad* is a religion that has been adopted in killing them for centuries. Thus, it is regarded an antagonistic religion and rejected, with no interest being expressed in knowing the content of the Holy Quran.²⁴¹

Religion in Sudan is a fundamental factor in the conflict between the Christian South and the Islamic North. The population of the North is identified as Muslim and Arabic-speaking. Its identity is inseparable from Islam and Arab culture. Both Arabism and Islamism are amalgamated as intersecting entities. In contrast, the population of the South is indigenous in race, culture, language and identifies itself as African. Christianity and traditional African religions (Animism) dominate their social structures. The population of the South adopts Christianity as a collective religion to strengthen them in countering the imposition of Islam by the North. Animists feel that their traditional religions are too fragile to withstand the forces of spiritual and religious globalisation inherent in Islam. Thus, many of them adopt nominal Christianity as a means of confronting international Islamism.²⁴²

239 Vandevort, Eleanor (1968), *Leopard Tamed*, London: Harper and Row Publishers, p. 5.

240 Gai Joak, University of Upper Nile.

241 Monytwel Deng, University of Upper Nile and Koang Monycuar, University of Upper Nile.

242 Deng, Francis Mading (2001), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Today, Christianity has become a dominant religion in the South. Yet, one can still see common traditional practices within the social fabric of the Nuer. Animism remains an intertwined entity with Christianity. For instance, all Nuer students inform me that their clans are committed to the observation of clan totems.²⁴³

The students express the clear role of the Animistic religion among the Nuer, making it possible to divide the religious world of the Nuer into three categorical phenomena. First, *Kuoth* (God) is conceived of, with many attributes of eternity. Students describe Him as an omnipresent Being in the universe and all Nuer *pal* or *lam* (worship) Him.²⁴⁴ The Nuer people believe in the existence of *kuth*, spirits (plural *kuoth*). Each clan has its *kuoth*. A Nuer Christian Animist student at the University of Juba answered in response to the question ‘*what do you worship?*’: “In our worship, it is important to Nuer men and women to pay careful attention to *Kuoth*. All Nuer comprehend properly that *Kuoth* is an omnipresent being greater than all beings. He is *Kuoth caka* (creating God) of all things on the earth and every living object in the universe. He creates and hands out what a man cannot produce.”²⁴⁵ Another describes *Kuoth* as follows: “He is the One who blesses cattle. We have no picture of Him, but specific signs of His power inform us of His divine majesty at work in creating and taking care of the universe.”²⁴⁶ Furthermore, another Nuer states: “*Kuoth* has an ultimate aim of creating us and taking us away... in His free choice. He unfolds His majestic power among all the people of the universe by giving them life and protecting them from danger and bad spirits. It is these many facts about *Kuoth* which make us love Him every day”.²⁴⁷ Yet another student concludes: “The entire Naath respond to *Kuoth* in paying their homage. They offer cattle in sacrifice to manifest their ultimate commitment of *lam* to Him alone.”²⁴⁸

3.1 Worship

Sociologists, anthropologists and religious clergymen often translate African words to their languages in a way that suits their thought patterns and not those of their subject matter. Rules of translation from a source language to a target language dictate that a translator observe the meta-linguistic referent meaning of a word and urge to cautiously follow the rules of the target language throughout the translation process.²⁴⁹ Negligence in adhering to these rules results in ambiguity of meaning in social, cultural and political institutions. In Sudan, the British

243 John Dor, university of Upper Nile, Makuei Deng, University of Upper Nile.

244 Koang Dhor, Dot Koak and Simon Jok University of Juba.

245 Kur Lul, University of Upper Nile.

246 Monytang Katkuoth, University of Juba.

247 Ding Garang, University of Upper Nile.

248 James Mel Koang, University of Upper Nile.

249 Fincchiaro, Mary (1983), *The Functional-Notional Approach*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 65-6.

anthropologist Evans-Pritchard early on acknowledged that missionaries had not correctly translated the common Dinka and Nuer word *theak*. As already noted, he explained that the term *theak* does not mean ‘worship’, but ‘respect’...²⁵⁰

The word ‘worship’ has been widely used in the religious ritual sacrifices of the Roman Catholic Church in multiple ways. It generally refers to special expressions which illustrate the sense of service, reverence and honour given to God in devotion. The Church distinguishes three kinds of worship. The first, *latria*, is the worship due to God alone while *hyperdulia* refers to the adoration of the Virgin Mary as a mother of the living God, Jesus. The third is *dulia*; it is a devotion and reverence to all the saints.²⁵¹

Equally, the Nuer have words which they use in approaching *Kuoth* (God). Nilotic Nuer students explain: “Addressing *Kuoth* culminates in the word *lam* (worship). It is a term which illuminates our minds to know the identity of the mysterious *Kuoth* who requires a worthy attention”.²⁵² Another student states: “*Lam* is a word which we use consciously to address the completely defined *Kuoth* with attributes of being the Creator and Caretaker of the universe. It is a special word that expresses sincere and attentive prayers and praises to Him. It describes Him as the ultimate One who does every good thing to us. For this reason, He deserves reciprocal response through exceptional treatment and addressing and that is *lam*.”²⁵³

According to the students *lam* is a privileged term used for addressing *Kuoth* alone, and not the spirits. It is this term which spreads the light of *Kuoth* over the Nuer and incites them to live in hope of being protected by His power. *Kuoth* is the torch and everyday light of the Nuer people. Vandevort observes that among the Nuer: “if God is mentioned, He is almost benevolent and kind and sometimes naïve”.²⁵⁴

A Nuer student notes that “the clan of Juaal in Lou section of Nuer *thek yiew* (respect a big catfish) as a clan’s totem”.²⁵⁵ Another student says: “Our clan too respects the long horn deer”.²⁵⁶ These animals are believed to have spirits and it is obligatory for an individual of a clan to respect them. Denying them equals self-denial and exclusion from the clan. One student asserts that these totems are void of *lam* and argues that “as a person born in the environment of Nuer, I always respect these clan powers, but not to the extent, that I can consider them as the ultimate or the Supreme God. They are *kuth*, meaning spirits, besides the Supreme *Kuoth* that is God.”²⁵⁷ Another Nuer student concludes that “we the Naath regard *kuth* as important, because they have roles to play in our social and political in-

250 Evans-Pritchard Edward E (1956), *Nuer Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 107.

251 Schweinfurth, G A (1874) “Heart of Africa” http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/W1L-YAK/WORSHIP_ie_worth_ship_O-Eng-weo.html.

252 Dor Muor, Omdurman Ahlia University.

253 John Thuc, University of Khartoum.

254 Vandevort (1968), op. cit., p. 105.

255 Koang Duany, University of Bahr el el-Ghazal.

256 Gai Kuol, University of Upper Nile.

257 Deng Gatkuoth, University of Juba.

stitutions. First, they are the symbolic social identities as every particular clan of Nuer has its Animistic identity. A totem of each clan makes it easy for those who are related to know each other to avoid incest and live as a family originating from one ancestor.”²⁵⁸

This second level of religious structure in the *kuth* category exhibits three phenomena. First, it demonstrates that the acquisition of membership to the Animistic congregation is conditional; however, it does not exude a sense of religious intolerance. Principally, registration as a member is based along the line of being a born child within the clan of Juaal. In this sense, there is no prerequisite religious ritual ceremony other than the transmission from parents of a born child. After having acquired the knowledge, the child is oriented and instructed to respect catfish and deer. At this stage, the grown up child begins to respect them as identical totems received from his or her parents’ clan as an obligatory factor for inclusive membership in the clan. Second, it expresses the syncretism of Animism and Christianity in the sense that a member of the Juaal’s clan who becomes a Christian continues to respect the catfish while he or she worships God. Third, *yiew*, catfish functions not only as a religious identity, but also a social identity. It is a totem, which is respected and it helps the members of Juaal’s clan to distinguish themselves in social relationships thus avoiding incest.

Language plays an essential role for social scientists during fieldwork and yields a discourse that makes sense to them.²⁵⁹ Native Nuer students give two distinctive terms; *lam* meaning ‘worship’, and *thek*, which means ‘respect’. These terms require our attention as they differentiate between *Kuoth* as God and *kuth* as spirits in the thinking of the Nuer.

Some Nuer students have observed the failure of certain scholars and missionaries to fathom the psycholinguistics of the Nuer language. “We use *lam* to worship *Kuoth*, the supreme God and use *thek* for minor spirits as *kuth*. We also use it to mean a sanction that occasionally prohibits a female to drink milk or eat any dairy products, during her menstruation. The religious view underlying this avoidance of milk is connected to purification as the Nuer consider menstruation unclean. So, at this stage, when a Nuer speaks of *thek* in this way, it means avoidance of contamination.”²⁶⁰ Another Nuer student argues: “We have found out that some scholars claim that *thek* means ‘worship’ and that is untrue”.²⁶¹ “We worship *Kuoth*. Unfortunately; the translation by Whiteman makes no sense to us, when we use the term *thek*. Perhaps, learning of the language or translation was a problem, so they ... assumed that the word ‘*thek*’ was equivalent to ‘worship’... but the only words which are equivalent to worship are *pal*, *lam* or *lang*”.²⁶²

258 Theiu Koak, University of Upper Nile.

259 Kelly, G A (1964), “The Language of Hypothesis: Man’s Psychological Instrument”, the Journal of Individual Psychology, Vol. 20, p. 137.

260 Donato Jal, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

261 Charles Deng Gai, University of Upper Nile.

262 Mayen Koang Mai, University of Juba.

In light of these students' explanations, the term *thek* conforms to the English word 'respect' of *kuoth*, while *pal*, *lam* and *lang* are 'worship' of *Kuoth*. These three words are the standard criteria, if they are used in prayer, by which a Nuer would comprehend that a speaker is talking about the *Kuoth*. Similarly, if *thek* is used, a Nuer would understand that a speaker is discussing *kuoth* as a single totem or plural *kuth*. Some scholars and missionaries have documented and published dictionaries of Nuer; however, it seems that linguistic difficulties have negatively affected the translation of the word *thek*, as it is translated 'to worship' 'to adore' God.²⁶³

Already for Evans-Pritchard these translations were incorrect and other cautious social scientists and missionaries have comprehended the mental synthesis of the Nuer, when they use the ritual word '*thek*'. Evans-Pritchard gives a variety of meanings to the word '*thek*' in the social and religious systems according to Nuer thought. He says the word is a common term that is frequently heard coming from the lips of the Nuer. First, when it is used in an intransitive form, it means to menstruate. Second, in the transitive form, it refers to respect. He notes that the word has related and similar meanings among the other Nilotics, the Dinka, and perhaps others still. Evans-Pritchard argues that his long experience with the Nuer allows him to insist that the Nuer would not use the term *thek* in reference to a missionary God and that a Nuer would not formulate translations in such a manner. According to Evans-Pritchard the translations by missionaries of *thek* in the sense of to 'adore' and 'worship' God are false. A Nuer uses the word *thek* or *theak* as an expression of expected attitudes and behaviours of a man toward the parents of his wife. It also means respect for avoiding certain activities and appearances in her presence and is employed in social relationships to mean respect.²⁶⁴

Evans-Pritchard's understanding of the terms which the Nuer use with reference to the identity of God is echoed by a Nuer student. "In our worship, I am certain of whom I am talking to, when I use Nuer words such as *lang*, *pal* and *lam*".²⁶⁵ Eleanor Vandevort who wrote the book '*Leopard Tamed*' spent thirteen years as a missionary in Nuer land and deserves great respect. Her textbook is, however, mixed with her 'own thoughts' as can be seen from two examples. First, she claimed that while having a discussion with Kuac, one of the few and earliest Nuer converts to Christianity in Nasir, South Sudan, she asked him; "do you know the God of your bridegroom?" "I think their God is Lual", which meant their God is red cobra. Second, she also said that a Nuer-Christian teacher in a

263 Huffman, Ray (1929), Nuer English Dictionary' p. 47. *Thek* is translated as 'to worship', 'holiness', 'hallowed' and 'holy' and the Catholic clergy, Crazzolaro J Pasquale (1933) 'a Nuer Grammar' translated it as 'revere' and 'adore', p. 87. Pastor Kiggins J (1948) Nuer- English Dictionary, p. 309. *Thek* is given as 'to esteem highly', 'to revere', 'to adore' and in combination with the noun *miedh* (food) 'to abstain from a prohibited food'.

264 Evans-Pritchard Evans E (1949, July), "Two Nuer Ritual Concepts", Man, Royal Anthropological Journal Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol., 49, PP. 74-76, pp. 74-76.

265 Pal Kom.

certain village invited her to his home to kill Lual, a red cobra, that had entered into a hut and she killed it. After the death of the cobra, an old lady arrived with some corn and cast it at the dead cobra saying: “here God, take this.”²⁶⁶

These two statements, that Kuac identified the God of his fiancée as ‘Lual’, and that the old lady offered grain to the dead red cobra and stated ‘here God take this’, are hardly intelligible phrases coming from the lips of a Nuer. They represent a discourse of missionary thought and are totally irrelevant to the mental template of the Nuer. It would be extremely illogical for a Nuer to ascribe lual as God. Lual falls within the category of *kuth* that are believed to be spirits. Evans-Pritchard shows that the Leng lineages of the Jinaca clan respect *luony* (lion) and others respect *Nyanga* (crocodile) and *nyal* (python), and the lineage of Lak, also known as Cieng Gangni, respect the monitor lizard and *mut* (spear). These are not addressed as *Kuoth*. Instead, they are deemed minor *kuth*, spirits.²⁶⁷

The presence of spirits takes us to the third and final religious stage. One Nuer student explains “We now have innumerable *kuth* in our land, but they came with cows from the Jiang territory. Currently, the Nuer who owned those *kuth* offer sacrifices to them, beside the Supreme *Kuoth* and clans’ *kuth* in which we the baptised practice them compatibly”.²⁶⁸

3.2 Sacrifice of Cattle

Nuer students say that their way of worship is attached to cattle. Each person treats cattle with respect. This special treatment qualifies the cattle to be categorised as quasi humans. Nuer students provide us with two paradigms which show that the Nuer treat cattle as ‘subhuman’ in terms of services that boys, girls and elders render to it. “Cattle are the ultimate important entities in our way of life and worship. And for this reason, we take serious care of them and our enemies, the Muslim Arabs fail to understand this and loot them. Yes, the Jiang loot them also, but it is a normal drama.”²⁶⁹

Another student notes that “looting cattle from a Nuer man makes him very disorganised and he quickly becomes self-superior to himself. In that sense, rules and laws can no longer make him listen. No rules or regulations can separate him from his life inextricably attached to his herds and he will establish his own way to reclaim them.”²⁷⁰ A third student claims that “Me as a Nuer I ... understand the language of my cattle. Certain groaning of cows, bulls and oxen in the morning is a symbolic reference to release them for grazing in the swampy plain full of long grass.”²⁷¹

266 Vandevort (1968), op. cit., p. 47.

267 Evans-Pritchard (1956), *Nuer Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp., 64, 66-67.

268 Nyang Riek, Omdurman Ahlia University.

269 Teer Macol, University of Juba.

270 Deng Riek Liem, University of Juba.

271 Lam Mal Deng, University of Upper Nile.

The Nuer community talks with its cattle. Groaning represents vocal communication; it signals the elders to instruct boys and girls to milk the cows. After all the cows are individually milked, the elders participate in removing the tethering ropes from the neck of each cow, ox and bull. Finally, the cattle move towards the pasture for grazing. The calves remain separated, under the custody of boys. Little calves are given chopped grass to eat, while tethered under trees or constructed huts.

Two scholars have observed the love of Nuer for cattle. Evan-Pritchard says that a Nuer is easily provoked to violence, if someone tries to make off with his cattle. New men who want to know themselves introduce their names attached to the name of their oxen.²⁷² In turn, Vandevort observes that the Nuer consider all properties, such as beads, bracelets, clothes, corn and other human essential items as of less value. They can be passed from a person to a person as less needed commodities. Money is also treated in the same way. It can be requested from a person without incurring an obligation to reimburse the owner. Concerning cattle, no one can ask or beg cattle in the same way; cattle share the same status with people and are treated as “subhuman”.²⁷³

Calling a Nuer by his birth name without an association of his ox is a derogatory remark to his social and political status. He may choose not listen to such a person unless that person is a prophet. The Nuer land has been famous in the Nilotic world, because of the presence of great prophets who enjoyed wide respect also among the Dinka, the Shilluk, the Anuak and the Jur-Col. According to Johnson, prophets such as Guek Ngundeng of the Lou section and Dual Diu of the Gawaar section were prophets recognised by all Nilotics of the western and the eastern bank of the Nile. They performed miracles and conducted sacrifices of cattle to God.²⁷⁴

A Nuer accepts the giving away of his ox under the circumstances of a supernatural threat to his life. Cattle are thus alternatives for the life of the Nuer people. If a son or a daughter of a Nuer contracts some kind of an illness, an ox or a bull must be offered in a religious sacrifice, where the name of God is invoked to intervene and to dispell evil spirit(s) from the sick person. According to Vandevort a Nuer woman had a miscarriage and died. Her younger brother went into a frenzied groaning, saying that he would not stand alone, since he was the last of the children in the family and the rest were dead and he was certain that he would die. During his wailing, a Nuer policeman on the bicycle came and counselled him “you are a young man. You’ve just been given your marks. Give God His ox and everything will be all right”.²⁷⁵

272 Evans-Pritchard (1940), *The Nuer a Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic Peoples*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 46.

273 Vandevort (1968), p. 67.

274 Johnson, Douglas Hamilton (1982), “Nuer Prophets” *African Affairs, the Journal of the Royal African Society*, vol. 81, No.323, p. 231.

275 Vandevort (1968) op. cit., p. 64.

Theoretically, anthropologists have agreed that Nuer sacrifices are limited to two types. First, the confirmation, which refers to the sacrifices celebrated, during the initiation of young men into a new social status within their group and second, the piacular sacrifice, which concerns the welfare of individual people. Such sacrifices offer protection to a person threatened by spirits, often after having demonstrated some fault or neglect to them. The goal of such a sacrifice is described in words to the concerned spirit(s). The description reflects a bargain and exchange of one thing for another. Hence, the central theme of such sacrifices is “substitution of lives of oxen for lives of men”.²⁷⁶ Movements and invocatory words of the priests are structured to represent the religious message of consecration of the beast(s) to be slaughtered. During the invocation, the intention of offering is promulgated to the spirit and every holy priest holds his sacred spear in his right hand. The spear represents the man as a centre of the ancestors of the whole lineage of the clan. At the end of the ritual, people are anointed with the ash and urine of the beast. So, such sacrifice is a gesture of identification of a sick man with a victim, for it is assumed that “man and ox can be said to be really equivalent”.²⁷⁷

Classifying sacrifices of the Nuer into two types is paradoxical, since there is no uniformity of offerings. This study divides them into three classes. First, we have seasonal rites in which sacrifices are offered and celebrated during spring. These ritual occasions are entirely devoted to thanksgiving and praises to the specific God known as *Kuoth*. It is a time to ask Him to continue to give His abundant blessings to the people and cattle. Offering of sacrifices to God is not random, but mostly celebrated in spring. A Nuer student explains: “I am an animist and a Christian. Cattle are the most rational ones which mark our special ritual offering to *Kuoth*. In fact, the Nuer people conduct ceremonies of offerings to *Kuoth*, during spring.”²⁷⁸ Another one adds that during ritual offerings of oxen or bulls to God a Christian participates in all the daily rituals. Such an offering is celebrated in early spring every year and it is entirely devoted to *Kuoth* as a thanksgiving to Him. It is a cosmological marking and welcoming of the new season. So it is obligatory to thank *Kuoth* so that he continues to guide and bless the people in the same way as he has during the past seasons. A Nuer student concludes that priests and elders invoke *Kuoth* to maintain a healthy situation of the people and the cattle, during the coming season.²⁷⁹

Participant observation of this form of prayer shows that the devoting prayer requires a sense of respect and dedication to and reliance upon *Kuoth*. Throughout the specific days of offerings, the divine old priests get up early in the morning at dawn and start the ceremony of offering by way of ritual prayers. They constantly

276 Evans-Pritchard (1954), “The Meaning of Sacrifice among the Nuer”, In Henry Myers Lecture 1954, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 84, pp. 21-33.

277 Ibid.

278 Yel Koang, University of Upper Nile.

279 Garkuoth Duer, Omdurman Ahlia University.

remain *lam* (praying and worshipping) from dawn until halfway through the afternoon, until the final days of slaughtering the beasts. Each old priest holds his spear in his right hand and articulates loudly the reason for the sacrifice. The final day is marked by anointing the people with sacred oil and the slaughter of an ox or a bull. Two entities are spiritually significant in this category of ritual sacrifices; first, the role of the spear that a priest holds in his right hand and second, the cautiousness of *lam*, the worshipping of *Kuoth*. Evans-Pritchard explained that he had witnessed sacrifice among the Nuer and two significant objects stood out during the sacrificial rite. First, the spear brandished in the right hand of the officiate as he walked up and down with it passing the victim and delivering his invocation, while the beast awaited death. What drew the most attention was not the figure of the priest, but the brandished spear which he held in his right hand. The second object was the *lam*; the climax of the worshipping, where invocation stated the intention of the ritual sacrifice. The articulated words in the *lam* are projections of the desire and will of the person as he turns towards the spirit as an essential part of the action of brandishing the spear. As the priest walked up and down, delivering his oration, by opening and closing fingers on it, the movements of the spear in his right hand emphasised his words, thrusting it into the air. All these movements are an integral part of the expression of intent.²⁸⁰

The second class of religious sacrificial festivals is the offerings to *kuth*. After the first harvest, a man can arrange some special thanksgivings to all inclusive *kuth*, not necessarily only to the clan's *kuoth*. A Nuer student notes: "The Nuer offer sacrifices to *Kuoth* and *kuth*. The season of offering marks the distinction between the two. In winter, when crops are ready to be ... consumed my father would always take care to offer sacrifice first. He takes two sets of green leaf corn and puts one on the *riek*, a religious pole, and the other one in a pond. These offerings are dedicated to two entities. The one on the pole is a thanksgiving to *Kuoth* for having allowed a rich yield of corn and the gift of survival until the moment of harvest. The second one placed in the pond is dedicated to company or collective spirits for their intermediary activity to God and resultant abundance of crops."²⁸¹

This form of winter sacrifice is dualistic. The corn with its leaf hung from the pole is entirely consecrated to *Kuoth*, the Creator of the universe. On the other hand, the leaf which is put in a pond is a sacrifice to any spirit. However, the sacrifices of the Nuer do not end here. There is also a third sacrifice which can be called the abrupt sacrifice. It occurs as a result of warding off a general pandemic among people or cattle, or a danger that threatens the life only of a single person. A Nuer student states: "We offer sacrifice at any time when our people sense a danger from a clan's *kuth* which might feel neglected. The clan's totems manifest their anger through affliction of a person from the family. At this stage, we offer

280 Evans-Pritchard (1953, January) "Nuer Spear Symbolism", *Anthropological Quarterly* New Series, Vol. 26, No. 1. p. 18.

281 Deng Liem B, University of Juba.

a ram or a sheep and automatically, the illness ceases in a sick person.”²⁸² Evans-Pritchard witnessed a sick young girl in the Nuer land, during his stay at the cattle-camp in the territory of Yakwac along the Sobat River. The girl was from the clan of Jinaca and from the lineage of Leng. This clan respects the lion and the family acknowledged that the lion’s spirit made her sick. Her health deteriorated and she descended into hysteria. A sheep was slaughtered to this spirit and a cow was dedicated to it. After these religious offerings, the girl recovered abruptly.²⁸³

This kind of offering to the lesser spirits among the Nuer is common and has some underlying purposes. The Nuer believe that the status of living people is far below that of the Supreme God. Each one prays, yet doubts their prayer, because they define their identity as just a human being, too low to face the great God of the universe. The alternative is to seek out those closest to God to intercede. The spirits of the ancestors and other created spirits are thought to be living closer to God and can intervene to make their offerings acceptable to Him. According to Ukpog, the Nuer make their offerings to small spirits as a result of a belief that the intended spirits and ancestors are a medium between the Supreme God and people. The sacrificial offerings to these spirits, however, are not limited to them. Instead, the ultimate recipient is always God.²⁸⁴

This theoretical view creates a rift between the Christians and the Animist Nuer people. Some Christians among the Nuer categorise these offerings as worthless and the Animists categorise the Nuer Christians as lost souls, whose minds are oriented to devote too much thought to the foreign God rather than how the Nuer people think of God, *Kuoth*. According to Vandevort, she was at the village of Jeep when a conflict took place between a Christian Nuer and an Animist Nuer. An Animist Nuer boy carrying a chicken came and found them sitting together as Christians, under the thorn tree and asked; “what are you doing here?” “We are people of Jesus?” Kuac, a Christian Nuer boy, responded and asked the Animist; what are you going to do with the chicken? “We are going to sacrifice it.” “What would you obtain after that sacrifice? Had the Nuer not offered very many of them several times and what worth came out of such offerings to improve our daily life?” The Animist Nuer was provoked and regarded the Christians scornfully and stated: “Your talk is the talk of the foreigner, and automobile. It is not a talk of people here in the Nuer land”.²⁸⁵

Complexity of the offerings causes conflict as a Nuer Christian Animist argues that offerings convey a religious message that attains a physical result. He claims that the Juual clan of the Lou section respects *yiew*, catfish, and that empowers them to possess a mysterious power over the Gawaar, another clan. Members of the Juual and the Gawaar are incompatible in a place of water. Members of these two clans cannot shelter under one roof during rainfall nor cross a river together

282 Thomas Deng Kai, Omdurman Ahlia University.

283 Evans-Pritchard (1956), op. cit., p. 65.

284 Ukpog, Justin S (1983), “The Problem of God and Sacrifices in African Traditional Religion, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 187.

285 Vandevort (1968), p. 65.

in large numbers in one boat. Experiences show that some of the Gawaar once tried to violate this religious belief and stepped into a boat with the Juaal. The result was their tragic death in water.²⁸⁶

286 Koang Dhor, University of Juba.

Animism of the Shilluk

Shilluk is another of the Nilotic groups, besides the Dinka and Nuer.²⁸⁷ Shilluk identify themselves as 'Collo', which means 'people' and they identify the Dinka as Jiango (singular Ojiang), the Nuer as Nuera (singular Onuera), the Anuak as Akango or Gila and the Jur-Col of Bahr el Ghazal as Dimo.²⁸⁸ One Shilluk student explains: "We know ourselves as original children of the one-divine man called Dengdit".²⁸⁹ Another concludes: "Our descendant names carry religious holiness, because they were given and pronounced by our most pious ancestor Dengdit, but the current names which were constructed for us by foreigners carry no holiness, since Dengdit has not articulated them."²⁹⁰

According to a Shilluk student it is the religiosity of their ancestral names, rather than the current constructed names that requires analysis. Also, the claim that Dengdit, the most pious man, was their original ancestor urges us to trace their origin. The students' enumeration of oral traditions is very significant in establishing originality of the ethnic homogeneity of the Nilotics. It is to be noted that oral tales among the Nilotic ethnic groups are consistent. They reveal that they were originally brothers originating from one ancestor. The Shilluk occupy the flat territory covered by grass on either side of the Nile, from Kaka to Lake No on the west bank and from Kodok to Taufikia on the eastern bank. A number of east African tribes, such as the Acholi or Gang, the Lango and the Alur also speak a dialect of the Shilluk. Homayr concludes that it is probable that the land of Shilluk was 'a cradle' of their origin. In any case, migration or series of migrations might have occurred and given rise to the body of tribes speaking the same dialect, some of which are in the region of the present Bahr el Ghazal.²⁹¹ The concern of this study, however, is not with the genealogical identities versus the political constructed ones, but the religious identity of this group. Scholars observe that the religious phenomena of the Nilotics follow the same general patterns. They

287 O'Fahey, Rex Sean and Spaulding Jay L. (1974), *Kingdoms of the Sudan*, London: Methuen & Co Ltd., p. 15, 62.

288 Peter Karlo Deng.

289 Chan Peter Lwal, University of Juba.

290 Nyalwak Othun, University of Juba.

291 Homayr, Reimer Wilhelm (1912, September), "The Shilluk Religion of the Nilotics", *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3, PP. 304-306/1927 P. 304.

all worship a monotheistic God to whom they refer by different names in their own ethnic languages. Nilotic Shilluk worship a monotheistic God by the name of *Jwok*, the Dinka call Him *Nhialic* and the Nuer worship Him as *Kuoth*.²⁹²

The perspective of the religious monotheistic worship of the two Nilotic groups, the Dinka and the Nuer, has been discussed exhaustively in the previous chapters and our focus lies now on *Jwok* of the Shilluk and the methods of organising ritual offerings. It seems that the religious structure of sacrifice to *Jwok* conforms to the Animistic religious performances of the other two Nilotic peoples.²⁹³ There is, nevertheless, a marked distinction in terms of the interwoven nature of politics, religion and social powers. Even though the Shilluk believe in *Jwok* as the Creator of everything, Shilluk students unanimously claim that their spiritual leader, Nyikang, was exceptional. Every Shilluk believes that he had a spirit which he used to disperse the enemies of Shilluk and to reach many dangerous places with his people until they settled in their current home. One Shilluk student claims: "I am a Christian-Animist; I worship *Jwok* as all 'Collo' do. He is an omnipresent *Atyang Ayimo* (Almighty God) and *Jwoga acwaci mal ki piny* (Creator of heaven and earth). Besides, I acknowledge Nyikang as my spiritual heroic ancestor".²⁹⁴ Another puts it thus: "We believe that the spirit of Nyikang is immortal and his soul passes into a *reth*, a spiritual leader. *Reth* is our political, religious and social leader who inherits the power of Nyikang. Our place, where we live now along the Nile was a land of other people, but Nyikang brought us there. We see this land as our collective divine site, because the spirit of Nyikang is there. I respect *nyal*, python ... it is a totem of my clan. My uncle has an additional spirit, which he influences to obtain his needs".²⁹⁵ There are many such statements embodied in the narratives of the Shilluk students. They provide attributes of the monotheistic *Jwok* that the Shilluk worship as a universal Being. His attributes sometimes match anthropologically documented descriptions concerning the Shilluk people. James writes that the Nilotic Shilluk people conceive of *Jwok* as a monotheistic God who created all universal living things. He is timeless and endless, but takes care of the world as a Father of all Shilluk. James concludes that these factors operate within the individual minds of the Shilluk inducing them to praise and perform all forms of worship to Him in their invocations.²⁹⁶

In light of this phase, the religious world of the Shilluk is divided into three levels of beliefs. First, at the highest level, *Jwok* is inclusively observed as the source of life with divine authority to create and care for what He has brought to life. He is a unique Supreme Being, Omnipresent, Splendid and Father-of-All above the polytheistic divinities. At the second level is Nyikang who is the mythi-

292 James E O (Rev.) (1952), "The Eight Volume of Pater Schmidt Wilhelm of the Religion of African Nilotics People of North -East Africa and Synthesis of Hamites and Hamitoids", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Vol. 14, No. 1 pp. 194-196.

293 Lesch, Anne Mosely (1998), The Sudan Contested National Identities, Oxford: James Currey

294 Koang Dwal, University of Juba.

295 Obur Nwal, University of Upper Nile.

296 James, E O op. cit., p. 194-196.

cal ancestral father of the Shilluk. The Shilluk hold to a belief that Nyikang had an exceptional mysterious power that distinguished him from normal human beings. This power functioned in him during battles with other ethnic groups. He led them on a migration along the Nile crossing great distances and brought them to their current territory. This religious category reveals the political and religious identity of Nyikang as a spiritual hero among his people. The third level of religiosity is demonstrated at the level of unavoidable identity of individual men and women with their clan totems.

The Shilluk are a composition of individual clans living in the same land, but every one of them has a distinct totem, which differentiates it from other clans. Members of a clan are not free to reject the identification of their name with the totem of a clan and that leads to their observation and respect of a totem. Even if one would not respect a totem of a clan, still he or she identifies himself or herself with a clan's totem in the social centres of the Shilluk. According to Scheub, there are three levels of Shilluk beliefs. First is the recognition of *Jwok* as the provider of life in the universe. He provides the Shilluk with fish, corn, plant, sorghum, cattle and everything else for their survival. The second level is the cult of Nyikang and the Kings in whom he has been reincarnated. The third religious category is associated with the collective of all cults of ancestry spirits.²⁹⁷

This structure can also be derived from the Shilluk students' answers to the question: '*what do you worship*'. One student identifies himself as a worshiper of *Jwok* who created *opunne*, the divine loaves, heaven and earth. *Jwok* takes care of the Shilluk with their cattle. He makes their crops sprout and grow, and give them fish in the rivers. The student also says that Nyikang is the intermediary between them and *Jwok* and for this reason every Shilluk observes him. Also, his clan does not kill *ngweeji* (lizard), his clan's shared totem. The student adds that they only observe the totems and do not worship them. Totems define their identities. He (she?) concludes that the clan totem helps the Shilluk avoid incest. A common totem which a clan respects always demonstrates kinship and the people of a particular clan cannot marry among themselves.²⁹⁸

Out of the three religious categorical structures of the Shilluk, two require our extensive focus: first, the function of the clans' totems, and second, the role of the mythical spiritual power Nyikang in the political, religious and social institutions. The statements of the students show that among the Shilluk a clan can respect a totem as a religious symbol that functions in distinguishing each clan from other clans. In this sense, totems play two roles; first, the preservation of clan identity as a distinct group, strengthening solidarity against outside threats. Second, it aids in the process of identifying kin and kith that cannot be traced through genealogy. An Animist Christian Shilluk student explains the issue of marriage as "Among us, before any discussion of marriage between a young girl and a young man takes

297 Scheub, Harold (2000) "Juok and the Creation of the Races", Dictionary of African Mythology, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

298 Mom Dak, University of Juba.

its course, their families first launch an enquiry into their clans' totems. If the enquiry finds a sharing of a totem, the proposed marriage would be cancelled and declared invalid".²⁹⁹

The defined religious category of Animism among the Shilluk displays a maximum religious tolerance towards other moral consciences of faiths. It is from these various ascribed spirits residing in natural environmental objects, such as specific trees, fishes, and reptiles, that the totems are often derived. They are received from the original clan ancestors and passed down from generation to generation. The method of respecting and treating them differs from one clan to another, because they serve different purposes at different times and in different circumstances, during migration and in their present residence.

4.1 The New Holy Land

Many of our contemporary territorial nation-states came to be after a series of battles, when leaders defeated their opponents and commenced to associate their identity with that very territory under the cover of some myths of being a holy one.³⁰⁰ Nyikang with his religious mysticism is no exception from this viewpoint. Shilluk Christian-Animist students believe him to be a mysterious powerful and spiritual person, whom *Jwok* had chosen to protect and lead their ancestors.³⁰¹ It was this divine power which directed him to the land, where they live today.³⁰² One student argues that "their homeland is perceived and believed to be extraordinarily holy, because it was a land chosen for them by their spiritual leader, Nyikang".³⁰³

The assertions of the student that the Shilluk spiritual leader brought them to the land where they reside today raises two issues. First, was the land, where the Shilluk live today void of a resident population? If there were people, it is necessary to know, whether Nyikang eradicated those indigenous people or assimilated them, under the new order of interaction. Second, as the land was not originally in the possession of the Shilluk, it is important to trace the original place where Nyikang came from with his people. The initiative of tracing him, however, is connected with his natural identity and the multitudes of myths at various locations of his origin with his people as well as multiple incidents which befell them, during their journey to this new land.

299 Ding Omac, Omdurman Ahlia University.

300 Bowker, John (1978), *The Religious Imagination and the Sense of God*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 32-33.

301 Jelbeny Chan, University of Juba

302 Aban Kimo Adiang, University of Upper Nile.

303 Dut Worec, University of Upper Nile.

4.2 The Nature of the Holy Nyikang and the Migration

There are four legends concerning the nature of the mythical Nyikang and each of them is connected with some unspecific point of origin. First, some students claim that the parents of the mythical Nyikang had quite distinct identities. The mother, Nyakaya, was believed to be a mysterious creature, probably a crocodile and the father was also a spiritual leader. During Nyikang's adulthood, a conflict arose between him and his brother and his brother swore to kill him.³⁰⁴ The circumstances of the conflict compelled Nyikang to seek sanctuary to avoid violence. He set off to another country, where he married a daughter of a local King. Subsequently, more violence broke out and eventually Nyikang took over as a new king in his land of exile.³⁰⁵ Howell says that the Shilluk believe that Nyikang led them out from some place along the Nile, where he was in conflict with other people. Finally, he brought them to the land where they reside today.³⁰⁶

The foregoing legend does not specify the place of the siblings' dispute, which Nyikang left to seek accommodation elsewhere, until his marriage to the daughter of an unknown king. The second legend seems to say something similar regarding the nature of Nyikang, but with a slight elaboration concerning the circumstances of his nature. In addition, it indicates the mythical location of his birth. According to the legend *Jwok* was at one time watching over His creatures and saw the female creature, Nyakaya, with stars in her eyes in one of His nicest rivers in the world, the River Nile. His glance made Nyakaya pregnant and led to the birth of the first greatest hero, Nyikang, the ancestor of the Shilluk people of the River Nile. During his adulthood, Nyikang protected his people and led them away from lethal wars to the land of plenty. His mother, Nyakaya disappeared from the sight of the people and sunk into the depths of the Nile. The Shilluk believe her to be the guardian of the river and worthy of praises during the times of crossing and fishing in the deep waters of rivers and swamps.³⁰⁷

The conception of Nyakaya, the ambiguous creature of the River Nile, conveys the message that *Jwok* is a powerful and complete God, who can create any living beings. Therefore, He created Nyikang according to His own divine plan. According to Shilluk students *Jwok* created Nyikang with exceptional powers. There is nothing that is difficult or impossible for Him, since He is omnipotent and a creator of rivers, animals and plants. His sight penetrates all who exist and sees what is beyond oceans, rivers and forests. It was this metaphysical power of sight that caused the creation and birth of Nyikang.³⁰⁸

Furthermore, there is another legend which is different from the two legends above because it typifies three fundamental religious perspectives. Some Shilluk students claim that their ancestor was Kwa Obago who became a servant to the

304 Dwad Dwang, Omdurman Ahlia University.

305 Angelo Deng, University of Juba.

306 Howell, Paul P (1944, November –December) "Installation of the Shilluk King", *Man*, the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 44, p. 146.

307 Scheub (2000) *op. cit.*, p. 51.

308 Ubuch Omet, University of Juba.

spiritual leader Nyikang. After a disagreement with his brother somewhere along the west of the River Nile Nyikang took his people and crossed to the east of the Nile. During the crossing, waves blocked the passage and Obago urged Nyikango to offer him to the Nile. He was sacrificed and the path was opened for the Shilluk to cross and reach their current land.³⁰⁹ According to Roheim, the migrants were crossing the Red Sea, when waves and tides built up in the marshes of the Nile and impeded their passage. This made it difficult for the immigrants to cross and Obago knew that it was caused by a spirit who required a blood sacrifice. And for the safety of his people, he volunteered to be sacrificed, so that the nation could be saved. He turned and looked at his divine King Nyikang and begged him to sacrifice him to the Nile. Nyikang acted in accordance with the request and sacrificed him. As the blood of Obago gushed down from the sharp edges of the divine spear, the current caused by it removed the marshes and becalmed the towering waves, freeing the way to cross to the area along the Nile around Fashoda.³¹⁰

This legend contains very interesting narratives; first, the volunteering of Kwa Obago of his own life freely for the salvation of the whole nation. Obago, the founder of the Shilluk and an attendant to the spiritual Nyikang felt that it was necessary to sacrifice himself to the river, so that the Shilluk as a nation led by their chosen leader could pass peacefully to the new land. Second, it is also interesting because it identifies the presence of mysterious supernatural powers which could control the river causing giant waves. A third point of interest is that it also manifests the function of blood among the Nilotic Shilluk as the final sacrifice which sets things right. After Obago was offered and his blood poured on the water of the River Nile, the waters parted and the Shilluk crossed to the opposite bank and reached their destination.

One realises that this legend is obviously a copy from the Christian Bible. It relates the story of Moses leading his people, the Jews, to safety by crossing the Red Sea on their way from Egypt. During their crossing, God split the river for the purpose of allowing the Jews to cross. It seems certain that at some point the Christian evangelists might have influenced this legend changing its original form to some extent. Yet, it is interesting that the hero is not Nyikang himself, but Obago, the ancestor of the Shilluk and not Nyikang who was apparently regarded as a spiritual leader.

There is also a fourth legend, but it does not include Nyikang at all. It has been intermixed with some political conflicts of the Shilluk with the Muslim Arabs. This tale is very important, because it indicates the original inhabitants of the land, before the arrival of the Shilluk to their current place. A Shilluk student claims that in their oral narratives the Shilluk have been subjected to migrations from place to place in the history of Sudan. First, they had to leave their original residence in northern Sudan to the western bank of the river Nile, Bahr el-Ghazal, after the Muslim Arabs set their houses on fire. Unfortunately, in Bahr el-Ghazal

309 Nywaya Othun, University of Upper Nile.

310 Roheim, Geza (1923, October) "The Passage of the Red Sea", *Man*, the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 23, pp. 152-155, pp. 152-155.

their ancestor Nyikango disagreed with his brother Dimo and set off on a second migration towards the north of the Nile in order to evade the violence. He arrived in the land of another people, ruled by King Otango Dirim. These people were probably Anyuak or Funj. They showed hospitality to Nyikango and his people, who settled down to live among them.³¹¹ In the view of another student, after the people of Otango Dirim invited the Shilluk to live with them, violence arose between the host group and the immigrants. Nyikango displayed his heroism and dispersed the indigenous people, after having killed many of them. The rest were assimilated into his people and he founded a divine Kingdom with his son Dak contributing in its development and regulations.³¹²

Many useful strands of information can be derived from all these legends. First, there is no disagreement on the emphasis on Nyikang's mysterious nature in the sense that his mother is connected to the water of a river, which is sometimes identified as the River Nile. Some oral and mythical traditions of Shilluk speak of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Second, the legends suggest that Shilluk did not originally come from the south, but from the north to their present day land. Two evidences support this suggestion. First, the Shilluk students know of Khartoum from their oral traditions, claiming it was their original home. They claim that their ancestors lived in Khartoum and moved towards the south. Khartoum has a meaning in their oral tradition. *Kiir* means a river and *tuum* is a confluence of two rivers, the White and Blue Niles.³¹³ Second, if the migration had started from the south and headed north, Shilluk tradition would have provided some narratives related to the environment of East Africa, such as the great mountains and rivers and other natural surroundings.³¹⁴ Even though we have talked about the general geographical location of the Shilluk land, it has been inadequately defined for two reasons. First, we have not discussed the perception and conception of the Shilluk concerning it. For them, it is a symbolic territorial centre of Nyikang's spirit, whom they all respect and to whom they pay homage. So it is a sacred land. Second, the descriptions above do not provide political and religious classifications within the extensions of territory. Shilluk land is a continuous territorial strip of about two hundred miles long. It is situated on the west bank of the River Nile. This territory is politically and religiously divided into two main sections, Gar (North) and Lwak (South). These two sections constitute the present location of the religious, social and political Shilluk ethnic group along the River Nile.³¹⁵

311 Thungjang Deng, University of Juba.

312 Simon Adiang, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

313 Olim James, Omdurman Ahlia University.

314 Roskill, Mark W (1997), *The Languages of Landscape*, New York: Penn State Press, p. 2. Some ethnic groups, although they live somewhere far away from east Africa, still recall the panorama of the Kilimanjaro Mountains and other environmental aspects of east Africa in their oral traditions.

315 Lienhardt, Godfrey, (1955, January) "Nilotic Kings and Their Mother's Kin", *Africa Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 29.

Our next key issue centres on the divisions within the holy land 'Fashoda'. Shilluk students argue: "Migration brought our ancestors to the current land. Our great hero, Nyikang brought us to '*Pacodo*' and foreigners gave it a wrong name, they spell it 'Fashoda'".³¹⁶ A second student describes Fashoda as follows: "Indeed, it is a sacred land; it is blessed with abundant resources of fish and clean water. This land provides our cattle with enormous grass and in turn, they produce abundant milk".³¹⁷ A third student claims: "The rainfall in Fashoda supports the growth of our vegetables. Its forest offers us natural honey and above all, it is the healthiest place for human safety and fertility, because it is uncontaminated."³¹⁸ Another says that the Shilluk are thankful to Nyikang for having sought for them the best residential location on earth. They call their territory Kiir (River Nile). The Arab Muslims, however, came recently and claimed it in their language as *لينيلا* (Al- Nil) and the Europeans called it the Nile.³¹⁹ Finally one student concludes: "These resources, although we believe them to be gifts from *Jwok*, were entrusted to our ancestor, Nyikang, to regulate them for us, so we have an everlasting Kingdom, where everything functions smoothly, until today, except for occasional disruption by Muslim Arabs".³²⁰

The regulation of resources of the people means putting in place a system that includes political, social and religious functional structures within the territory of the Shilluk. It represents a government or a system of central authority of power that issues regulations. It is within the structure of this system, that we shall comprehend the fate of the original inhabitants of the land. As some Shilluk students explained, Nyikang migrated with his people from somewhere and settled them in their current land among the people of Otango Dirim. Among the current Shilluk, there are no structural statuses of majority and minority groups that can establish a cultural distinction between the settlers and the indigenous people. Students also revealed that, during the migration of Nyikang to the present land, successive battles between his followers and the original population of the land occurred, resulting in Nyikang routing them. One argues that these successive wars might have created new circumstances. Many of the original population might have undergone some transformations throughout the course of events. One of these transformations would have been assimilation of the weak to those in power.

The Christian-Animist Shilluk students maintain that the current structure of the Shilluk is composed of two religious sections. Kwaar Nyikang is a composition of descendants of the royal family household, whereas the ordinary people are collectively categorised as Kwaar Dhiang.³²¹

316 Santino Obang, University of Juba.

317 Lino Lual Othwai, University of Upper Nile.

318 Mary Chan, University of Juba.

319 Amol Lual, University of Juba.

320 Kathrine Nyabac, University of Juba.

321 Yohanes Chan.

The existence of the latter section, which is not included within Nyikang's genealogy, shows that genocide was not committed on Otango's people. Instead, their remnants might have been entirely assimilated to the dominant powerful group of Nyikang. Yet, religious obligation to Nyikang as a spiritual man leading his people might have kept the division alive in order to maintain the succession within the family lineage. The Animistic culture of Nyikang would have helped in the assimilation process of Otango's people to the Shilluk. According to Lienhardt, the present divisions of Shilluk into Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang originated from these ancient religious structural organisations. It equally reflects the political territorial structure of the *Gar* (North) and *Lwak* (South) sections. Yet, each of these sections and their scattered villages are fall under one identity, the Shilluk.³²²

4.3 Holy Villages and Economic Stratification

Shilluk students say that Nyikang brought his people to the new holy land and that each one from his family started to build a small hut in isolated locations. These separate buildings across vast expanses of land developed into villages and later acquired territorial identity as *Gar* and *Lwak* groups. After this, the ecology of the blessed 'Promised Land' with abundant resources was bona fide consonant with its economic prosperity.³²³ The two sections became predominantly sedentary and agriculturalist societies with an interest in possessing more livestock. Each village introduced its own economic terms which led to the emergence of economic competition based on individual section production. Nyikang blessed farmers so that the cultivation of crops of millet, sorghum, maize and sesame became the staple work for men and women. Herding of cattle and the keeping of hens, domesticated fowl, and other animals provided additional resources. In addition, wild honey was obtained from the forest and fishing in the tributaries of the Nile and its swamps created equal opportunities for the two communities to remain economically self-sufficient.³²⁴

Economic division between the rich and the poor increased. The producers of fewer crops were despised and suffered the derogatory identification of being poor because of their laziness. One of the Shilluk student notes: "after Nyikang migrated from the North to the present holy land, each one built his hut far from the other and cultivated his crops. They reared tamed animals and got fowl from the forest".³²⁵ Another adds: "These separated huts became *Gar* and *Lwak* sections and they all fished, hunted and ate honey and became rich people, but not everybody was equal in terms of wealth. The rich mocked the poor and identified them

322 Lienhardt (1955), op. cit., p. 29

323 John Wurad, University of Upper Nile and Tonga Lam, University of Juba.

324 Chol Pac, University of Juba Lwal Mac Wuotho, University of Upper Nile.

325 Wunwoic Jell Deng.

as lazy, because they produced few crops and owned few cattle and had difficulty in achieving economic independency. This poverty meant that they only participated in religious sacrifices of others to their totems, Nyikang spirit and Jwok".³²⁶

Despite the economic self-sufficiency within all the sections of the Kingdom, Shilluk students claim that there was a need for social, political and religious inter-independence among the villages. The chain of scattered villages built along the left bank of the River Nile was blessed and grew into a bulk of population that comprised two distinct zones. The upper zone was considered the holy heartland of the nation stretching from Papawojo in modern Tungu (Tongo) County in the south and ending at Wau of Shilluk. The lower zone begins at Kaka in the north and extends to Wau; inhabitants living in these villages are known as Muwomo.³²⁷

Near to the heartland of the Shilluk lands is 'Pacodo' (Fashoda), the capital city of the Kingdom, where Nyikango, who came with the Shilluk from Bahr el-Ghazal reigned and not Nyikang known among the Shilluk as the great. However, there is no consensus among the Shilluk students of who made it the capital city of the Kingdom. According to one student, 'Pacodo' came to be the capital city due to two oxen belonging to Nyikango favouring the place for grazing and camping. The oxen were *pacoat* (hornless). Nyikango said that it was necessary for him to shift to the place so that his favoured oxen could enjoy their pasture and remain under his protection from lions and hyenas. The presence of the spiritual leader at the place was enough reason for all the Shilluk to call it *pari ben* (our home).³²⁸

Remarkably, whether this view is true or not, it shows that Shilluk identity is also attached to cattle that supposedly can force a leader to shift his territorial identity from one location to another for the satisfaction of his two hornless oxen. Second, his presence as a religious representative influenced the Shilluk to identify themselves with the location as their home. In the view of another Shilluk Christian-Animist student, the name *Pacodo* is derived from *coat*, pronounced *Choat* in English meaning a hornless animal in Shilluk, but the plural *Pacoat* would sound like *Pachoat* in English. This student argues: "It is unimaginable, we the Shilluk have no letter 'S' in our language, so how could the name of our place include a letter or a sound that does not exist in our linguistic vocabulary as is the case with Fashoda?"³²⁹ In the opinion of another student, the name Fashoda, instead of '*Pacoat*' was an Arab Muslim influence in constructing the people of the South. The Muslim Arabs thought the Animists were foolish and taught the Animist-Christian Shilluk to articulate the name *Pacodo* as Fashoda. The student concludes that its founder was in fact a *reth* (representative of Nyikang), called Tungo.³³⁰ In fact, we cannot really tell who distorted the territorial name of the

326 Mom Akol, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

327 Rweng Domac, University of Juba and Adiang Lul, University of Upper Nile.

328 Yohanes Chan.

329 Madid Wol, University of upper Nile.

330 Steven Amac, University of Upper Nile.

capital city of the religious Kingdom.³³¹ Our concern is not with the identity of the founder, nor with the distortion of the territorial name, but we are trying to determine Nyikang's role and the system that was established and its continuity up to the present day. Mythical narratives continue to claim that Nyikang chose Fashoda as his religious capital city and introduced economic, social and political laws for the entire Shilluk nation and taught them religion. Sometimes, conflicts among the Nilotic Shilluk developed and many submitted petitions against him. According to one story he was eventually so outraged by the internal conflicts that he said 'I am going to fight the sun at the northern Nile'. Then he left and has not returned since.³³²

This is not the final narrative about the disappearance of Nyikang, though. There are also other stories about it. Some Shilluk believe that Nyikang was incarnated into a wind, after having set up the Shilluk religious, social and political systems. His divine power entered into *reth*, his successor, and continues until today. The *reth* sits on his holy throne in *Pacodo* and it is believed that the spirit of Nyikang possesses him. According to Scheub, the Shilluk believe that Nyikang is immortal and for this reason, his institution is an everlasting one.³³³

4.4 Ministry of the Spiritual Leader '*Reth*'

Shilluk students say that the Shilluk observe *reth* as their inclusive representative of the spirit of Nyikang on the earth. His services to the Nilotic Shilluk people include carrying a divine message which supports national unity.³³⁴ They regard the death of the current *reth* as heralding an absence of social, political, economic and religious order within the Kingdom, since he is the figure who symbolises the national survival of the faithful community. After the declaration of his death, the nation faces an uncertain future. The Shilluk describe that moment as *piny bugon*, national disaster. One student states: "We believe that *reth* represents the spirit of Nyikang among us. He is responsible for everything in our institutions. His death is *piny bugon*, a national disorder. It is equally a lack of order and disorder reigns".³³⁵ According to Howell, the absence of a *reth* among his people is widely described in the Kingdom as '*piny areiny path labo*' meaning "there is no land, the earth is destroyed, the country is ruined."³³⁶

When a *reth* dies, the Shilluk move quickly to restore order and to install a new *reth* on the spiritual throne. Succession to this ministry requires certain conditions or prerequisites. Some of these are related to the physical health of the body

331 Said, Wadie Edward (1979), *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage, p. 176.

332 Thomas Aleng, University of Juba.

333 Scheub, Harold (2000) "Juok and the Creation of the Races", *Dictionary of African Mythology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press p. 4.

334 Amum Adak, University of Upper Nile.

335 Mathew Oyai, University of Upper Nile.

336 Howell, Paul P (1952, July), "The Death of Reth Dak Wad Fadiet and the Installation of His Successor: A Preliminary Note", *Man, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vo. 52, pp. 102-104.

and decent behaviour of the candidates. They are expected to be ritually pure, in regards to some activities regarded as adulterous. A Christian-Animist Shilluk student explains that a successor must demonstrate attributes of courageousness and the ability to execute his social, religious and political duties to perfection. He must be capable of safeguarding the safety of the people and their cattle and to face danger in war, while retaining his religious purity. He should not be feeble in health and have no scars on his body. His duties include constant prayers to God, so that the land produces sufficient crop yields, ensuring health for the people and the animals. He prays to keep insects away from the crops and secure the rainfall needed for the natural growth of crops.³³⁷

This explanation suggests that responsibilities of the *reth* are not limited; they include protection of animals from pestilent diseases, health of the people, courage to face danger and to achieve victory against the enemies of the Nilotic Shilluk. How does a candidate attain this spiritual position and how is the initiation into this sacred ministry conducted? Installation to the office of *reth* is a tortuous process and conflicts may occur. According to Shilluk students, *reth* is considered to be a descendant of Nyikang. Thus, every ceremony that concerns his installation must be carefully arranged using religious rites. First, the candidates, *Nyireth*, referring to a son not installed upon the throne of *reth*, must perform a mock religious battle with Nyikang himself. The ultimate aim of such religious rite is to transfer the soul of Nyikang, the first *reth*, into the incumbent successor.³³⁸ Each procession of these religious ceremonies is a symbolic demonstration of the continuity from the ancient *reths* to the new. When the symptom of incarnation become visible in the person conducting these ceremonies, the other participants recognise that the spirit of Nyikang has finally been incarnated. This symptom shows Nyikang's acceptance of the new *reth*. After that, he can begin to discharge his duties in 'Pacodo'.³³⁹ Howell, however, maintains that the installation in Fashoda entails critical discussions sometimes leading to physical violence between various sections of Shilluk people. Many of these crises are not documented with the exception of the civil war that broke out during the initiation of *reth* Kur Fadiet Wad Yor in February 1952 to the position of the deceased *reth*, Dak Wad Fadiet who died in May 1951.³⁴⁰

Despite such internal conflicts, the enthroned *reth* is accepted as a choice of Nyikang by all and people regard him as a sacred man who uses divine words. All spiritual, secular and social issues or disputes in the kingdom require his verdict as the final one. A Shilluk student explains that the decisions of a *reth* are sacred, permanent and accepted by the whole community. "During those days, he used to instruct the Shilluk people as a Commander in Chief to make war with adversar-

337 Kwoth Deng Wuothon, University of Juba.

338 Lwoi Mat Kuong, University of Upper Nile.

339 Dak Kiir Dwad, University of Bahr el-Ghazal.

340 Howell, Paul P (1952, April) "Observations on Shilluk of the Upper Nile. The Law of Homicide and the Legal Functions of the 'Reth'", *Africa, Journal of the Royal International African Institute*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, pp. 102-104.

ies. All our people believe him to be a *Nya-Jwok* (son of God) and for this reason, each believer bows his or her head and gives him salutation in Shilluk language ‘wuo wuo’ meaning ‘your lordship’.”³⁴¹

Furthermore, another student says that *reth* is the ultimate one to condoning war between the people of the North and the Shilluk.³⁴² Historically, wars have been going on between the Shilluk and the Northern Muslims. *Reth* maintained order and peace by at times rejecting the planned attacks of his subjects against territories in the north. According to O’Fahey and Spaulding, one time Shilluk warriors wanted to attack the Muslims of the territory of Funj but the *reth* dispensed a religious oracle not to invade the area. He spoke with the commanding voice of Nyikang. He warned them not to assault the Funj and told them that, if they insisted on executing their plan against the Funj Kingdom, the Funj would defeat them. “Can I not do whatever I will,” he asked. “Thus saith the Lord”.³⁴³

Continuity of the ancient Animistic religion to the present day might have motivated Howell to describe the Shilluk as an exceptionally “conservative” community and at the same time, he states “times are changing”.³⁴⁴ While the Nilotics might be conservative on other issues, this does not go for their religion. The Shilluk are progressively embracing other religions and they mix their Animistic practices with Christianity and Islam. There are no historical instances of conditions, which prevented a successor to the divine office of Nyikang from being a Christian or a Muslim. A baptised Christian or Muslim could be consecrated to the Animistic ministry of *reth*. “A Christian or a Muslim Shilluk can be intalled in Pacodo as a *reth*, provided that he meets the traditional conditions for the installation to this divine ministry”.³⁴⁵

We have already discussed the conditions that qualify a Shilluk man to be consecrated as a *reth*. Examination of these conditions provides two important insights. First, a Christian or a Muslim from the family of Nyikang can be a potential candidate for the divine ministry of *reth*. There have actually already been Christian and Muslim *reths* in the Kingdom. For example, *reths* John Dak Wad Padiet, who reigned from 1945-1951, and Joseph Kur Wad Papiti of 1974 were baptised Christians. There were also Muslim *Reths* such as Kur Abdhalfathil Wad Nyidhok and Omer Yor Wad Akoc.³⁴⁶ In addition, on 29 March 2010, the current *reth*, Kwong Wad Dak urged the Nilotic Shilluk people on the National Television of Sudan to vote for the Muslim President of Sudan, Omer Hassan Ahmed Al-Bashir. In reaction to his request, a Sudanese Muslim citizen responded and wrote in the Arabic Newspaper, Rayaam that “In fact, this *reth* of Shilluk reminds me of what the late General Yousif Abu Gurun... mentioned in his book; ‘Sudan Tribes’ that the Shilluk ethnic group is the greatest Southern tribe which has accepted the

341 Adok Akol, University of Juba.

342 Adiang Jwok, University of Juba.

343 O’Fahey and Spaulding (1974), op. cit., p. 62.

344 Howell (1952), op. cit., p. 104

345 Gar Duet Fadiet, University of Juba.

346 Mercer, Patricia (1971), “Shilluk Trade and Politics from the Middle-Seventeenth Century to 1861”, the Journal of African History, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 407.

Islamic religion. Believe me; this Kwong Dak is zealous in Islam”.³⁴⁷ This statement does not represent reality; instead it represents conflicting interpretations. For the *reth*, his request to the Shilluk represents religious tolerance, where it is possible for a Shilluk woman and man to vote for Al-Bashir and not necessarily be a Muslim. On the other hand, for an Islamist, the urge of the *reth* demonstrates an interest in converting the population of the Nilotic Shilluk to Islam.

What is important is the religious tolerance that the *reth* shows in politics of Sudan, but our primary search here is the method the Nilotic Shilluk adopt in initiating *reth* to the throne. This is the second aspect involving the conditions for the enthronement to this spiritual position. These conditions seem to be akin to the qualities of the spiritual father of the Shilluk, Nyikang. He was a mysterious man who triumphed in battles against the foes of his people. He was the ultimate authority on social and religious matters which continue to operate in Fashoda, the centre of his regular functions and rulings. According to ‘Animist-Christian’ Shilluk students, the Shilluk believe that Nyikang is not dead; instead, he left the people after he had established all forms of institutions and turned himself into a wind or returned to the River Nile. He acts until this day as an intercessor between *Jwok* and his people, the Shilluk.³⁴⁸

Suggestions by Shilluk students that the Nyikang never experienced bodily contamination contradict the presence of enormous tombs, sanctuaries or shrines of Nyikang in the holy land, Fashoda. Today, the Shilluk widely observe and respect these tombs and shrines. They make it difficult for one to reconcile the presence and the absence of his body. Shilluk students, however, offer several explanations concerning these tombs and shrines. Some assert that the current tombs and shrines in Fashoda are symbolic effigies made to represent the presence of the divine leader Nyikang among his people. Tradition says that Nyikang did not physically die and therefore, his body never experienced decay.³⁴⁹ Some argue that those tombs and shrines belong to the succeeding *reths*, especially Dak and his brother Cal who were the sons of the sixteenth century *reths*. Those *reths* were buried in Fashoda, but traditionally every *reth* is buried in his land of birth and a shrine is erected on top of his grave. Such a shrine must resemble the shrine of Nyikang, which consists of a few huts surrounded by a fence. These are preserved and treated as holy places shielded from any form of impurity and defilement.³⁵⁰

The treatment of these shrines as religiously holy is incompatible with the view of the ruling Muslim Arabs. In answering to the question ‘*what system do you think best suits Sudan*’ Christian-Animist’ Shilluk students argue that “All the systems, whether theocratic, democratic, Islamic, military or autocratic are all the same, since the ruling Muslim Arabs in Khartoum in the north of Sudan are the ones who impose them upon the people”.³⁵¹ Another one notes: “Democracy is the best

347 *Reth Declared His Vote for Al-Bashir*, www.rayaam.info/News-views.aspx?pid=574&id=43772

348 Morris Wuthong Akol, Kur Wac and Doung Chan, university of Upper Nile.

349 Nywal Duob, Fadiet Adiang and Yak Dak Deng, University of Upper Nile.

350 Kur Adiang, Anthony Wuorec, University of Juba.

351 Awuo Duong, Omdurman Ahlia University.

system: we hear of its fruitful operation in the United Kingdom, we read and see it in the media of the United States. There in those countries, minorities are allowed ... to adhere freely to their cultures and religions. Here this is not the case; we are prevented from pursuing our religious values. Those leaders in Khartoum speak of democracy and refuse to respect my religion and even when they attack and kill the people in the South they destroy religious symbols".³⁵²

Wars which embrace religious slogans create an anecdotal anomaly. A dissident to a religious ideologue holding a position under any form of system, whether democratic, theocratic, autocratic or Islamic would assert that such a system, under a religious leadership does not implement the quality of the system, such as democracy. The reason is that religious wars erect barriers of hatred and suspicion between a dissident and a system. Webber observes that religious violence between two or more groups breaks down all natural relationships and imposes barriers on human associations. Each part bestows positive achievements and performances upon its own group in rejection of the other group.³⁵³

The claim that no system in Sudan, whether theocratic, Islamic, democratic or autocratic would function in accordance to its values, if directed by a Muslim leader presents a motley of historical argument between the Animist Shilluk and the Muslim Arabs and also between the Black African Muslims and the Nilotic Shilluk. Historically, the aristocratic system of power of the Black Muslims in the Funj Sultanate faced hostilities from the Shilluk; however, those hostilities were void of religious grievances and ideologies. The Shilluk system was theocratic with its religious leader, *reth*, and yet their political relationship remained reciprocal in political and religious aspects. According to O'Fahey and Spaulding, lack of religious wars between the Funj and the Shilluk led to the process of peaceful acculturation. The northern Shilluk adopted the original dress of the Funj, *rahat*, for their unmarried girls. During the seventeenth century *reth* Tugo introduced some forms of ritual coronation to the divine performance of the *reth* which seems to have been acquired from Sinnar of the Muslim Funj. During the tenure of the *reth* Tokot and Badi II of the Funj, a unit of the Shilluk army cooperated with the Funj army and helped in fighting the rebellions in the northern territories for the common interest of the central authority.³⁵⁴

All the heads of state in Sudan from the day of its foundation as a nation-state until today have come from among the Muslim Arabs of the north, whether the system of government was/is capitalist, Mahdist, parliamentary democratic, based on the *Sharia*, aristocratic, or secularist.³⁵⁵ The approach of those systems to the people of Sudan has displayed a political structured method that promoted and maintained inequality in the distribution of power and wealth between the

352 Ayang Manyang, University of Juba

353 Weber, Max (1970), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology H H Gerth and C.Wright Mills (Trans. Ed.) London: Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD p. 334.

354 O'Fahey and Spaulding (1974), op. cit., pp. 62-63.

355 Hale, Sondra (1997), Gender Politics in Sudan, Islamism, Socialism, and the State, Boulder: Westview Press, a Division of Harper Collins Publishers, Inc, pp. 1, 5, 6.

Islamic North and the Animist-Christian South. Kebbede argues that the long history of Sudan shows that the Christian-Animist South has never experienced “its fair apportionment of development resources and political power, whether before or after independence”.³⁵⁶

Wars between those who identify themselves as Muslim Arabs in the northern part of the country and those who define themselves as African Christians-Animists residing in the South have led to the marginalisation of the South in discussions of power and wealth sharing and threaten its Christian-Animist culture. Generally, the relationship between the ruling power and the citizens requires a consensus concerning a constitution that would regulate all matters of state and that has never happened in Sudan. At this stage, the differences are only increasing between the Christian-Animist South and the Islamic-Arabised North and that causes the territorial state to be in constant insurrection, where one war of mistrust ignites another war and the cycle continues...³⁵⁷

Responding to this problem, a Shilluk student claims that “The current Government of Sudan is an Islamic one and has been in close relationships with the current *reth*, Kwong Wad Dak. Yet, its forces attacked its holy village and pollute the land, killing innocent people and burglarising the resources of the Shilluk people”.³⁵⁸

Mistrust between the Arabs Muslims and the Christian-Animists South gives rise to the generalisation that no system in Sudan would mean a change for the better, as long as a ruler had a Muslim-Arab identity. It is believed that such a leader would not change, if he came from among certain Arab Muslim fundamentalists. Instead, he would exercise disrespect to the religious diversity of others by destroying their shrines in the Christian-Animist zone. Khartoum Monitor, an English-language newspaper reports that after October 2003, the government-allied militia of Khartoum raided Alek, a home village of the most revered religious figure, Kwong Wad Dak, the current *reth* of the Shilluk holy land. Anger arose among the Shilluk after the news spread that the sacred seat of the Nyikang effigy had been brought into public view and treated as a toy by the attacking Muslim forces. In addition, the village of the same *reth* Panyidaway area was incinerated and reduced to rubble.³⁵⁹ These attacks were conducted and particularly targeted the village of the *reth* because Dr. Lam Akol Ajawin had returned to the side of the rebels of the SPLM under the leadership of John Garang de Mabior.³⁶⁰

Religion, Animism and Christianity have not always unified the intelligentsia of the South to form one body against the Muslim North. It is not the first time in the history of the Christian-Animist people of South Sudan that they have fragmented into so many political associations according to ethnic lines.

356 Kebbede Girma (Ed.) (1999), Sudan's Predicament Civil War, Displacement and ecological Degradation, Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing Limited, p. 44.

357 Daly Martin W (1986), Empire on the Nile: The Anglo Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 13.

358 Majwok Akol Arob, University of Juba.

359 Khartoum Monitor (2004), p. 1.

360 Ibid.

According to Iyob and Khadiagala, during the first civil war between the Muslim Arabs of the North and the Christian-Animist South, the political group of the South commenced to fragment itself into tiny organisations. Each group provided a contesting political identity to the people of the South. In July 1967 a Southern politician, Aggrey Jaden, set up his organisation, the Southern Sudan Provisional Government (SSPG). In March 1969, another group was formed that went by the name 'the Nile' and they formed a government called "the Nile Provisional Government" (NPG) in opposition to Jaden. This scenario continued when two other organisations, namely "Anyidi Revolutionary Government" (ARG) and the "*Anyanya* National Organisation" led by Joseph Lagu broke away from the main *Anyanya* organisation.³⁶¹

The majority of the Nilotic Christian-Animist Dinka and Nuer students point their finger at Lam Akol as the mastermind of the unsuccessful coup against John Garang in August 1991. Dr. Lam Akol from the Shilluk and Dr. Riek Machar, a Nuer and Senior Commanders of the SPLM and SPLA, attempted to remove Garang, a Dinka, from power. The result of this fight between the Dinka loyal to Garang and the Nuer loyal to Riek was tragic. Lam executed nineteen officers from his brigade, all Dinka. He suspected that they would resist the coup, thus he killed them before trying to implement it.³⁶²

As religion plays a fundamental role in the politics of the modern Sudan, Lam has been accused of having abandoned the aims of constructing a secular Sudan, since the SPLM allowed him to occupy the position of the Foreign Ministry of Sudan in the 'Government of National Unity' (GNU) composed of two parties, the Islamic NC of the President Omer Hassan Al-Bashir and the secular SPLM, under the leadership of Salva Kiir Mayardit, the First Vice President of Sudan and President of the autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS).³⁶³ Some Christian-Animist students and others from the Islamic North started to be politically suspicious of Lam and branded him a sycophant of the current leadership of the SPLM and its orientation to secularism. The students argue that Lam has abandoned the spiritual blessing that he had received from the Christian-Animists who placed him in the highest position as a foreign Minister. Some accused him of returning to the SPLM in order to take on a ministerial portfolio and to act within its mandate for the good of his Islamic former party, the NC which intends to transform Sudan into an Islamic cultural entity.³⁶⁴

In academic circles, Professors Muhammad Zen el-Abdeen Osman at the University of Al-Zaeem al-Azhari in Khartoum north comments on the relationship of the NCP with Lam. Osman reiterates that in the beginning, Lam held membership of the Islamic party, the NCP, under the 'National Salvation Revolution' (NSR) and left it, after his dissatisfaction with its Islamic ideological

361 Iyob, Ruth and Khadiagala (2006), *Sudan the Elusive Quest for Peace*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 82.

362 Jok and Hutchinson (1999), *op. cit.*, p. 126.

363 Government of Sudan and Government of South Sudan 2005, pp. 33, 51.

364 Deng Atem and Akol Malong Mou.

orientations. Lam said many things about the Salvation and proclaimed that he had no confidence in it. His current rhetorical political speeches and activities, since taking over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; unfortunately justify NSR's version of the theoretical discourse of 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Lam has "become more Catholic than the Pope and more Salvationist than the family of the Salvation" and for this reason, the NCP cannot find a better person than him to execute its policies in diplomatic terms. Osman concludes by presenting the following question to the SPLM: "Will the SPLM continue to maintain its silence".³⁶⁵

The analysis of the professor indicates that religion is not neutral in Sudan. The professor was one of the religious ideologues, before the rift of the Islamic party, into the National Congress and the Popular Congress. The latter is under Turabi's leadership and the former remains under the leadership of President General Al-Bashir. The ideological discourses of the two political organisations transform the Islamic religion in Sudan from a private relationship between God and a worshipper to a public mechanism for addressing political programmes in sovereign Sudan. In other words, the adherents of these political forces have constructed and transformed Islam into a looking-glass for interpreting successive developments of political, economic, social and cultural events in the country.

In the view of this author, shifting religion from private to public politics in a country of religious plurality represents a denial of other religious parameters in Sudan. Such a choice establishes a theatre of continuous religious conflict. The ruling party, NCP, with its Islamic ideology speaks the language of total justification of *Sharia* in national institutions; however, the camp of the Christian-Animists/Muslim-Animist speaks the language of religious pluralism. In this way, neither camp understands the language of the other; instead, their discussions on this issue call to mind the conversation between Humpty Dumpty and Alice, where Humpty Dumpty starts by saying:

'There's glory for you!'
I don't know what you mean by 'glory', Alice said.
Humpty Dumpty smiled consciously. 'Of course you don't- till I tell you.
I meant, 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'
'But glory doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument', Alice objected.
"When I use a word" Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means
just what I choose it to mean-neither more nor less.'³⁶⁶

The conversation of Humpty Dumpty and Alice represents the binary political-religious interpretations in Sudan. Without a constitution that renders religion a private divine issue of individual members in relation to his or her religious choice and the state of Sudan open to all diverse religions, Sudan will constantly remain in a state of endless religious dispute in its public institutions.

365 Sudanile (2006, November 8) "*Al-Wazier al-Kharajia*: Lam Akol, The Foreign Minister: Lam Akol, Sudanile, Electronic Arabic Newspaper, www.Sudanile.net.

366 Carroll, Lewis (1871). *Through the Looking Glass*, London: Macmillan

Conclusion

The preceding chapters reveal that Animism is the religion practised among the Nilotics of Upper River Nile area. Christian missionaries and Muslims, however, have failed to comprehend the inter-related Nilotic practices that have produced the religious identity known as Animist-Christian or Animist-Muslim. Ignorance on the part of some scholars, Christian missionaries and Islamic propagandists of Animism leads them to condemn the Animist population in present Sudan as 'heathens' and 'apostates'. Such religious categories qualify them as enemies of God, and their place in the next world is hell and not heaven. This category has raised borders between the proponents of Animism and the proponents of the prophetic religions in Sudan. The virtual discourse of the latter deforms the minds of the Animist population to sometimes perform their ritual offerings in hiding to evade public notice that bestows upon them a social stigma of shame and guilt. Such a discourse conveys a very strong message in social, cultural and political institutions. It depicts the believers of Animism as a guilty group.

Animism remains a functional religion organising moral order in the Nilotic institutions, but the Nilotics suffer anxiety because of the Islamic and Christian construction of them as pariahs or outcast from the next world of heavenly paradise. The Islamic world and the Christian West are not aware that their derogatory discourses towards Animism are tantamount to discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice towards these believers who also worship a monolithic God. Such a discourse represents profaning of the very One God and stereotyping of the believers of similar One God. It also represents a paradigm of Islamic fundamentalism, which rejects religious tolerance and co-existence of universal religions in the territorial sovereignty of Sudan.

It is worth noting that among the Nilotics the monolithic God is the end, thus discourses, which stigmatise its believers as a population that 'worships idols' are prejudiced. It is a constructed religious identity, which the Christian West and the Islamic world pursue to the detriment of Animism. On many occasions, they take every opportunity to **proclaim in their interactions with the Nilotic people** that their religion, Animism, is Godless. Hence, some anthropologists associate it with 'magic' and Muslim fundamentalists categorise it as a religion of 'heathens'. The reason for such a categorisation is that the Animists simultaneously 'respect' clans' totems and 'worship' God. This study disambiguates the ambiguity that has been a barrier between the Nilotic nation on one hand and the believers of the prophetic religions, Christianity and Islam on the other hand. First, a native

speaker of the Nilotic languages would understand the simultaneity of 'respect' of totem(s) and 'worship' of God. These two terms define what the mental template of the Nilotics is when people talk of religion. Talking about the religious world, three things spontaneously arise in their minds. First, totems occupy the same level as human beings as dependent argons and deserve 'respect', because they were received in miraculous experiences between God and the ancestors of clans. Second, totems function as social identities in national institutions, hence, incest is avoided. Third, God is the creator of all, and thus enjoys 'worship' and distinctive praises and adorations during sacrifice.

Furthermore, the interactions of the Christian West and the Islamic world with the Nilotic Animists have constructed a new phenomenon of religious compatibility. A baptised Nilotic Christian or one converted to Islam continues to 'respect' the clan's totem even as a follower of the new prophetic religion. This religious compatibility has produced a 'gradable' religious identity in Sudan called Christian-Animist or Muslim-Animist. In this regard, the consistent categorisation by Muslim fundamentalists in Sudan of Muslim-Animists as 'apostates' represents religious intolerance and does not represent an absence of God in a Muslim-Animist practice. For a Muslim-Animist, consciousness of *Allah* (God) within the context of African Animism is another complementary way to heaven.

Religious intolerance towards the new religious identity of the Christian-Animists and the Muslim-Animists in Sudan implies a rejection of 'gradable' religious culture and the extreme imposition of Islamic or Christian dogmatic theologies, which aim to disconnect the continuity of the past African traditions, knowledge and philosophy with the present. An ideological system of government in Sudan that removes components of 'gradable' culture and substitutes it with the *Sharia* in all public institutions is dictating the Nilotic Animists to embrace a set of religious limitations of *Sharia* at the expense of Animism. Limitations placed on the people of Sudan on how and what to worship amounts to the rejection of a 'gradable' culture that maintains religious pluralism in the territorial state of Sudan. In this way, national institutions of Sudan remain on the cusp of religious intolerance, a phenomenon that results in a Muslim-Animist quickly categorising his or her opponents as 'apostates', and a Christian-Animist being characterised as an 'enemy' of Islam who may be confronted with war in the name of *Jihad* (Islamic holy war).

Without religious tolerance that fosters a 'gradable' religious culture in Sudan, its institutions will remain in constant opposition between the believers of Christian-Animism and Muslim-Animism on one hand and the Muslim fundamentalists on the other. In essence, desperate attempts of Muslim and Christian movements to homogenise religions in Sudan to Islam or Christianity without Animism have proven unsuccessful. Forced religious re-construction of the Nilotic population into an 'Islamic fundamentalism' has produced counter-resistant religious identities of Christian-Animists or Muslim-Animists in the 'Upper River Nile' area, the current 'Southern Sudan'. It would be wise if leaders of the state of Sudan would promote religious diversity, instead of cultural intolerance. It is

a moral obligation for individual Muslim fundamentalists within the territory of present Sudan to learn from others how they interact with other people who do not share their culture and religion. If all of the citizens of Sudan become aware of cultural differences, then each one of them would be ready to cultivate a better understanding of the relationship between cultures and religions and collectively converge to celebrate religious diversity, instead of its effacing.

Any attempt to reject people of other religious faiths in national institutions of the modern state of Sudan represents religious intolerance which is an antithesis and a threat to harmonious co-existence, peace and stability in Sudan. Thus, it is better for the decision makers in Sudan to permit 'gradable' culture to function within the national institutions without condemnation and rejection as an alternative resolution to religious conflict in the country. In this way, it is incumbent upon the political powers in the state of Sudan to only act as a neutral body with its legal obligation of safeguarding the state against all opponents of the religious tolerance.

Glossary

<i>Adheng</i>	beautiful, handsome, someone that respects social order in Dinka
<i>Adheeng</i>	plural of <i>adheng</i> in Dinka
<i>Al-hathari</i>	Civilisation in Arabic
<i>Akoc</i>	a special tree where sacrifices are made and priests are buried among the Dinka
<i>Al-Nil</i>	River Nile in Arabic
<i>Agoutpiny</i>	an Autumn drum
<i>Ajok</i>	God in the Outho language
<i>Akeir</i>	a Dinka person that drinks milk to become fat from May to August
<i>Amoc piny</i>	feast of libation in Dinka
<i>Ane</i>	a root word for breath
<i>Animus</i>	Latin word meaning wind, breathe
<i>Anemos</i>	a Greek word meaning wind or breathe
<i>Apothou</i>	pumpkin in Dinka
<i>Arob</i>	evil or good spirit in Dinka
<i>Arioac</i>	cowards in Dinka
<i>Atheak</i>	a noun in Dinka and Nuer meaning respect
<i>Atiep</i>	souls in the Dinka language
<i>Atyang Ayimo</i>	Al-mighty God in Shilluk
<i>Bapaizegina</i>	God in the Azande language
<i>Baar a</i>	name for Shilluk among some Dinka
<i>Bar</i>	people without cattle in the Nuer language
<i>Bääny</i>	leadership in Dinka
<i>Bäny</i>	a leader, chief, Chairman, president in Dinka
<i>Bäny bith</i>	priest of un-barbed spear in Dinka
<i>Bäny kec</i>	means sour priest that performs miracles in Dinka

<i>Boang</i>	tanned-leathers
<i>Boaang</i>	tanned-leather
<i>Ceing</i>	good moral relationships in Dinka
<i>Coat</i>	hornless animal in Shilluk
<i>Doar</i>	worship, give praise to God in Dinka
<i>Diet tong</i>	song of war in Dinka
<i>Domo</i>	a name which the Dinka use to identify the ancestral father of Jur-Col
<i>E thek gong</i>	means 'respects hedgehog' in Dinka
<i>Gar</i>	Northern section of the Shilluk
<i>Gilo</i>	a name which the Dinka and Shilluk use to describe the ancestral father of Anuak
<i>Hadith</i>	sayings of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Jaak</i>	evil or good spirits in Dinka
<i>Jiang</i>	a name which Nuer use instead of Dinka
<i>Jihad</i>	Islamic holy war
<i>Joak</i>	evil or good spirit in Dinka
<i>Jongoor</i>	a name for Arabs among the Dinka
<i>Juong</i>	God in the Maban language
<i>Jur</i>	foreigners in the Nuer language
<i>Jwok</i>	God in the Shilluk language
<i>Kic</i>	ordinary person or a person without supernatural power
<i>Kiir,</i>	River Nile in Shilluk and Dinka
<i>Koc tong</i>	warrior people in Dinka
<i>Koc bith</i>	priestly people in Dinka
<i>Kuel</i>	a totem among Payei Dinka clan
<i>Kuong</i>	totem in Shilluk
<i>Kuoth</i>	Written with capital letter it means God and with small letter spirit in Nuer
<i>Kuen</i>	a solid porridge in the Dinka language

<i>Kuth</i>	spirits in Nuer
<i>Lam</i>	worship, praise of God in the Nuer language
<i>Loma</i>	God in the Bongo language
<i>Lual Aghony</i>	a conceptual place for the Dinka, where there is no death
<i>Luony</i>	lion in Nuer
<i>Lwak</i>	Southern section of the Shilluk
<i>Mbiri</i>	God in the Ndogo language
<i>Mbori</i>	God in the Azande language
<i>Mboli</i>	God in the Azande language
<i>Maherbainhom</i>	an evil spirit translated as cracker head of area
<i>Macardit</i>	a free spirit
<i>Magong</i>	a kind of song among the Dinka
<i>Mou</i>	alcohol in the Dinka language
<i>Mon err</i>	a white alcohol in Dinka
<i>Mut</i>	spear in Nuer
<i>Muny,</i>	a derogatory term for a boy of a man
<i>Munysieng</i>	a name for the Dinka (plural)
<i>Nakwuge</i>	God in the Toposa language
<i>Nhialic</i>	God in the Dinka language
<i>Ngun</i>	God in the Bari language
<i>Nyikang</i>	spirit of the spiritual ancestor of Shilluk known as Nyikang
<i>Nyanga</i>	crocodile in Nuer
<i>Nyal python</i>	in Nuer, Dinka and Shilluk
<i>Nyrireth</i>	a son not enthroned in the ministry of reth
<i>Nya Jwok</i>	son of God in Shilluk
<i>Oak aa roak</i>	means 'we pray' in Dinka
<i>Pacodo</i>	a name for Fashoda in the Shilluk language
<i>Pacoat</i>	hornless oxen, cows or bulls in Shilluk
<i>Pal</i>	worship in Nuer

<i>Parakpol</i>	unmarried person who observes social order in Dinka
<i>Pari ben</i>	our house in Shilluk
<i>Pen Nhialic</i>	heaven in Dinka
<i>Piny bugon</i>	a national disaster in Shilluk
<i>Piol</i>	watery cloud in Dinka
<i>Apuok</i>	a payment of blood fine among the Dinka
<i>Raan ater</i>	an enemy in the Dinka language
<i>Rahat</i>	a throng shirt
<i>Reth</i>	spiritual leader that represents Nyikang on the earth
<i>Relegare</i>	Latin word meaning to re-read
<i>Relegere</i>	Latin word meaning 'bind past with present traditions of a Community'
<i>Religio</i>	Latin word meaning religion
<i>Ring</i>	meat or supernatural power in a person among the Dinka
<i>Rinythei</i>	unmarried person who obeys social order in Dinka
<i>Sharia</i>	Islamic law
<i>Tawajha</i>	orientation in Arabic
<i>Teir</i>	Period of time during which food is not shared, when a person has been killed among the Dinka.
<i>Theak</i>	a noun meaning respect in Nuer and Dinka languages
<i>Thek</i>	a verb meaning respect in Nuer and Dinka
<i>Toc</i>	grazing lands for the Dinka and Nuer
<i>Tong</i>	spear in Dinka
<i>Wak</i>	a song sung by a bachelor who wants to marry, relayed in Dinka
<i>Wec</i>	a solo song in Dinka
<i>Yai</i>	feast in Dinka
<i>Yath</i>	totem in Dinka
<i>Yeeth</i>	totems in Dinka
<i>Yiew</i>	catfish in Nuer

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Animism

of the Nilotics and Discourses
of Islamic Fundamentalism
in Sudan

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of Animism as a religion and a culture of the Nilotic peoples of the Upper River Nile in modern 'Southern Sudan'. It gives an account of how the Animistic ritual performances of the divine chief-priests are strategies in conflict management and resolution. For centuries, the Nilotic peoples have been resisting changes to new religious identities and conservatively remained Animists. Their current interactions with the external world, however, have transformed their religious identities.

At present, the Nilotics are Animist-Christians or Animist-Muslims. This does not mean that the converted Nilotics relinquish Animism and become completely assimilated to the new religious prophetic dogmas, instead, they develop compatible religious practices of Animism, Christianity and Islam. New Islamic fundamentalism in Sudan which is sweeping Africa into Islamic religious orthodoxy, where Sharia (Islamic law) is the law of the land, rejects this compatibility and categorises the Nilotics as 'heathens' and 'apostates'. Such characterisation engenders opposing religious categories, with one side urging Sharia and the other for what this study calls "gradable" culture.

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