

PIECES OF A NATION

*South Sudanese Heritage and
Museum Collections*

Zoe Cormack & Cherry Leonardi (eds)

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Introduction

Zoe Cormack and Cherry Leonardi

South Sudan's independence in 2011 came after decades of war between the government of Sudan and rebel forces from South Sudan and other marginalised areas of the country. Independence was the result of a referendum, under the terms of the peace agreement that ended Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005). This was Africa's longest running and one of the world's most destructive conflicts; unsurprisingly it left a legacy of internal divisions and grievances within South Sudan. The creation of a new state in 2011 prompted calls for the identification and celebration of potentially unifying cultural symbols, including material objects. In 2013, when the country erupted into a new conflict and humanitarian disaster, questions about culture and unity gained renewed importance, even as they were eclipsed by the scale of human suffering.

With as yet no national museum of its own, much of South Sudan's oldest surviving material heritage is scattered in museums around the world. This diaspora of objects does not map closely onto the substantial international diaspora of South Sudanese people, however, and the museum collections have remained largely inaccessible and unknown to their communities of origin.

This book is the first exploration of South Sudan's dispersed cultural heritage and a case study of the significance of culture and arts amid crisis and destruction. In many ways, this is an exceptional case, but it also raises questions of wider global importance about African objects in museum collections and colonial legacies in the contemporary world. South Sudan's decades of war and quest for unity give heightened significance to the thousands of objects taken from its territory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which are now housed in museums across Europe, Russia and beyond. The preservation of this material culture contrasts with the loss and destruction wrought by war and displacement within South Sudan. Museum collections might then represent the potential for new ways of exploring the past and forging connections in the present between different communities within the country and around the world.

But South Sudanese objects in European museums also represent difficult and disturbing histories, collected as they (mostly) were in contexts of violence, slave trading and colonialism and used to stereotype and classify Africans as part of European projects of cultural imperialism and racialised nationalism. Can such objects

be re-appropriated and re-animated to tell different stories now? Can they be ‘given back’ in some way to their communities of origin? Can they be extracted from the racial and ethnic classifications of their museum histories? Indeed, can the very notion of a museum be reimagined to avoid replicating stereotyped representations of cultural difference in South Sudan today?

These and other questions were the focus of an international research network, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK in 2017-18, which involved academics, artists, museum and heritage professionals from Europe, South Sudan and its diaspora. This was the first attempt to bring together curators from these museums to interrogate the history of their South Sudanese collections – and to bring South Sudanese counterparts into the dialogue and to discuss their priorities for engagement with the objects in these museums. One result of that initiative is this collection of exploratory essays. Each is focused on a single object (or in some cases a small group of objects), in order to deconstruct and extract them from their historic depictions in museum displays and catalogues and to reimagine their meaning and potential for a range of audiences and stakeholders today. Some of the items discussed lie outside museums altogether and thus offer different and creative ways of thinking about object histories and the definition and valuation of material heritage.

Our title, ‘Pieces of a Nation’, speaks to several issues associated with African heritage and museum collections and evokes some of the tensions that surfaced in the course of the network project. It recognises the divisions wrought by wars and politics within South Sudan and acknowledges the dislocation and dispersal of African cultural material in museums and galleries worldwide resulting from colonialism. But it also evokes the hope, articulated by the South Sudanese partners, that these collections might offer the South Sudanese people a resource to explore identity and nationhood in a dynamic and inclusive way. For these network participants, the objects speak across time and space – often deeply recognisable and familiar, sometimes strikingly unusual and alien, but always with a sense of connection to the ‘grandparents’, as described in this collection by Florence Lokule.

One aim of this book is therefore to showcase the richness of South Sudanese cultural heritage that has been preserved in museum collections across the world. In one sense, we want to highlight that these are ‘South Sudanese’ objects – connected to modern communities of descent and with a particular importance to them. Arts and cultures are often overlooked in contexts of conflict and crisis. As a lecturer at the University of Juba commented, it is refreshing to talk about cultural heritage because it celebrates what people in South Sudan *have*, when more often discussions are focused on what people *need* in the context of humanitarian emergency. Restoring a focus on creative cultures is a necessary step in humanising internal and external representations of societies that are more usually characterised as ‘warzones’. This also has implications for historical scholarship, much of which has similarly been focused on analysing the causes of Sudanese conflicts. Objects embody the work of the hands that created, used and decorated them, unlike the written records by Europeans which have dominated the standard historical accounts of South Sudan. They may offer an opportunity to explore more creative aspects of the South Sudanese experience than is usually found in histories of war, reflecting instead the artistic traditions, innovation and material cultural heritage that formed part of domestic and community life.



Figure 0.1. A potter from the Ndogo ethnic group decorating a pot in Mboro, near Wau, 1924-25. Photograph by J. W. Crowfoot. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Af, B6.10).

The book takes an object-centred approach, but one which foregrounds the human relations behind collections.¹ The chapters each take an object (or a group of objects) as a point of departure. Most are now housed in museum collections in Europe, but some remain with communities in South Sudan and others have actively resisted incorporation into formal projects of heritage preservation. The authors come from a range of backgrounds; some are the curators of the objects they discuss, others are academics working on South Sudanese history and cultures, others are heritage professionals and artists.

Another aim is to highlight the connectivity of – and within – South Sudan. In part, we want to begin to reconnect histories that have since become detached from one another. Too often, South Sudan is represented as being isolated and without history. Indeed, the common framing of South Sudan as ‘the world’s newest nation’ has created a problematic assumption of the country as a blank canvas. Objects compel us to think differently. They offer material evidence of deep histories of cultural exchange, artistic adaptation and socio-economic interconnections across multiple modern-day boundaries within and beyond South Sudan.

Finally, our aim is to explore the complexities of these connections beyond the more conventional focus on relations between former colonial powers and post-colonial states in contemporary discussions of decolonising museum practice and potential repatriation. The combination of both Ottoman-Egyptian and European imperialisms in Sudan and the allure of Nile exploration and trade in the nineteenth century has meant that South Sudanese material culture has formed an important part of the collection and display of ‘Africa’ beyond the typical colonial metropole, in places including St Petersburg, Venice and Ljubljana as well as London, Paris and Berlin. The objects are therefore embedded in local, regional and national histories in surprising ways and places. More recently, the South Sudanese diaspora has been preserving and producing its own material cultures in new locations from North America to Australia.



Base map data source: OpenStreetMap

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Figure 0.2. A map of South Sudan and surrounding countries.

South Sudan's presence in museums today is strikingly transnational, but there is limited support or scope for celebrating or conserving material heritage and arts within the country itself. Most African countries inherited ethnographic and national museums from colonial administrations, or founded these institutions after independence. South Sudan is in the unusual position of not having a national museum, as museums in the former Sudan were, and have remained, in Khartoum. While this absence may be indicative of the broader losses, destruction and deprioritisation of material culture in a prolonged conflict context, it also represents an opportunity to debate and rethink the very concept and purpose of a national museum, and perhaps to avoid replicating the problems of representation in older museums around the world.

Those problems of representation were painfully apparent for South Sudanese participants in our network discussions, who also drew connections between the more recent civil wars and the longer history of violent extraction and exploitation in which

the collection of museum objects was embedded. In this introductory essay, we therefore feel it necessary to outline some of that history, in order to contextualise the complex, fraught meanings of European museum collections for South Sudanese people today. We then explain how and why these collections emerged in the places they did, before turning to the broader issues and questions they pose for contemporary and future museum practice, both globally and in South Sudan itself.

Violence, agency and collecting in South Sudanese history

Behind the wide dispersal of South Sudanese material is a history of appropriation. As Jok Madut Jok has written, a long history of victimisation at the hands of outside forces has been a powerful narrative driving the struggle for South Sudanese independence.² But it also necessarily lies behind the history of European collecting, which is deeply entangled with the violent and extractive commercial and imperial incursions into the region after 1840. Yet the museum collections on which we are focusing also embody histories of indigenous agency in the making, exchanging and appropriating of material cultures in multiple directions over the past two centuries.

The period between 1840 and the 1880s saw the extension of multinational trading and exploration into southern Sudan from the north, under the loose but expanding frontiers of the Ottoman-Egyptian administration headquartered in Khartoum.³ This was a period of ivory extraction, slave trading and the plundering of the region for a thriving European market in ethnographic and natural history specimens. But some of the indigenous inhabitants also seized the opportunities presented by this commerce to diversify their material culture and build status and power. The overthrow of the Ottoman-Egyptian state in Sudan by the Mahdi's uprising in the 1880s and the subsequent British-led 'Reconquest' of Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian forces in the late 1890s heralded a different phase of collecting under the control of the colonial state and its independent successor.

Extraction and exchange, c. 1840-1880s

Overland trade routes and slave raiding already extended into the northern parts of southern Sudan before the 1840s. The Ottoman-Egyptian conquest of central-northern Sudan in 1820-21 had driven demand for enslaved people and goods southward over land. But the opening of the Nile to navigation as far south as Gondokoro (near modern-day Juba) by the expeditions of the Turkish naval officer Salim Qapudan in 1839-42 enabled a significant expansion of the ivory trade by Ottoman-Egyptian officials and multinational merchants. European traders, explorers, officials and missionaries alike tended to be dependent on the transport and security infrastructure established by the Khartoum-based merchants, who were in turn embedded in international networks of credit and luxury commodity markets, particularly for ivory.⁴ By the 1850s this trading infrastructure was spreading inland through networks of fortified stations known as *zaribas*, and exploiting local alliances and conflicts to obtain enslaved people, ivory and supplies, or the cattle with which to procure these. Efforts in the 1860s and 1870s by the Ottoman-Egyptian government to establish its own network of government posts to combat the slave trade and establish basic administration often resembled and overlapped with the violent requisitions of the traders.⁵

The region's inhabitants were frequently depicted by European travellers, colonial officials and even later historians as previously isolated peoples, unprepared for the



Figure 0.3. Stool-headrest with tobacco holder made by Bongo people, before 1875. From the Wilhelm Junker collection, Kunstkamera. Courtesy of the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (the Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences (МАЭ 5228-6).

incursions of foreign traders and armies.⁶ But this is in many ways misleading: southern Sudan may have seemed remote and untouched to Europeans, but its history was characterised by migration and interaction, not isolation. Oral traditions emphasise the movements of people, often across long distances, and the assimilation of people from multiple origins into communities. The exchange of cattle or valuable objects as marital bridewealth helped to forge and maintain important relationships between families from different areas, clans and lineages. ‘A woman is married to any tribe’, as Florence Lokule emphasises in this volume. Rather than living in isolated and clearly bounded ‘tribes’, as colonial officials later imagined, the people of the region were part of complex networks of relations and flexible forms of identity and affiliation, many of which stretched beyond their immediate locality. Cattle-herders in particular needed to move across significant distances to find seasonal grazing and water, but people also travelled to access resources like salt, iron, fishing and hunting grounds, and sources of blessing and healing.⁷ Some long-distance trade routes stretched as far as Ethiopia, present-day northern Uganda and Sudan, bringing commodities like cloth and beads to Gondokoro even before Salim’s expedition.⁸

It is not surprising therefore that European travellers in the nineteenth century reported considerable interest in the new goods and opportunities of the Khartoum trade. Ferdinand Werne, a German member of Salim’s expedition, recorded that Nuer women rather than men came to the boats and were ‘excessively talkative ... it was with them we transacted business and bargained for durra [sorghum] and tobacco’.⁹ From the outset, these early expeditions nevertheless often resorted to considerable violence, as shown in Werne’s accounts of murder and looting.¹⁰ Yet there is evidence of efforts by indigenous authorities to establish exchange on a more equal or useful basis, which also reveals the existing significance of object-giving as a way to establish alliances or subordination. In 1841, for example, the Bari rain-king Logunu of Bilinyan (near Gondokoro) presented Salim with an iron stool and a female figurine on their first meeting, while Salim gave Logunu a weighty bronze cowbell which was subsequently incorporated into rain ceremonies at Bilinyan.¹¹ The symbolic importance of such exchanges would also be apparent forty years later when the Zande ruler Gbudwe sought to use gifts to establish an alliance with



Figure 0.4. Wooden figure attributed to Bari people. Purchased in Cairo by Henri Delaporte, 1848-54. Courtesy of the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Pauline Guyon (71.1930.54.337).

the Ottoman-Egyptian Governor of Equatoria, Emin Pasha, as discussed in Paola Ivanov's chapter in this volume.

As the volume of trade and travel increased, so did the demand for artefacts from the region, particularly among Europeans. Romolo Gessi, the Ottoman-Egyptian Governor of Bahr el-Ghazal, writing from a government station in present-day Rumbek in 1874, described something of a frenzy over material culture:

'It is very difficult to find these objects. Everybody here wants to buy them, and the prices have been spoiled, especially by Englishmen who pay for this rubbish at its weight in gold ... so as not to return to Europe without a collection.'¹²

This demand encouraged violence and theft of objects by the crews of commercial expeditions.¹³ But there were other more complex effects as the market for artefacts created opportunities for barter and brokerage. The cosmopolitan communities attracted to *zaribas* may also have provided openings for cultural exchange and the creation and spread of new art forms.¹⁴ It has been suggested that Bari figurative statues, one group of objects that

are widely represented in museum collections from this period, may have been produced expressly for trade by entrepreneurial Bari craftsmen who had identified a European interest in figurative art and were seeking to take advantage of the new commercial opportunities.¹⁵

The expansion of commerce also created opportunities for both existing authority figures and new trading chiefs to establish a powerful role as middlemen, receiving, displaying and distributing trade goods such as cloth, beads, copper, alcohol and guns in exchange for ivory.¹⁶ Some southern Sudanese individuals or communities were at times dictating the terms of trade, demanding particular items in exchange, and adapting their own economies and styles in response to the commercial and imperial forces. Throughout this period, objects were moving in both directions, and appropriated for new purposes on both sides of the exchanges, however fraught and unequal these relations ultimately proved. Even the most exploitative commerce of all – the slave trade – generated its own diaspora of both people and objects: the movements of enslaved people, soldiers and labourers from southern Sudan to the towns of northern Sudan and Egypt were accompanied by the migration of objects, arts and crafts. Buwali's chapter on *rongo* instruments from Western Bahr el-Ghazal shows how material and creative cultures played an important role in these emerging urban communities.

Colonialism, nationalism and conflicts in the twentieth century

These patterns of appropriation intensified and continued in the era of European imperialism in the region. The overthrow of Ottoman-Egyptian rule in the northern Sudan by the forces of the self-proclaimed Mahdi, Mohamed Ahmed, in the mid-1880s had temporarily halted European trading and collecting in the region. But the lengthy campaign by the British-led Egyptian Army to 'reconquer' Sudan in 1896-99 saw a renewed interest in collecting, particularly of weapons, clothing, flags and other military paraphernalia appropriated from defeated Mahdist forces on the battlefields. These looted trophies were displayed back in Britain, gifted to Queen Victoria or dispersed in private and military collections around the country. Some of the objects that would travel from the battlefields of northern Sudan to European museums came originally from southern Sudan, as chapters by Badcott and Mack in this volume show. Such objects reveal both the role of southern Sudanese soldiers and enslaved people in the Mahdist army and the spread and multiple appropriations of material cultures.

The defeat of the Mahdist forces paved the way for the establishment of the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of the Sudan (1899-1956). The extension of this colonial administration to the whole of southern Sudan was a protracted and often violent process, even involving the use of the British air force in some of the campaigns against Nuer communities, such as that recounted in Vokes and Johnson's chapters. A total of thirty-six military patrols and campaigns were launched in southern Sudan between 1899 and 1930,¹⁷ which also involved trophy-hunting and collecting by British officers. Some of the objects seized were housed in Khartoum in the Museum of Antiquities at Gordon College, established by Reginald Wingate, the first British Governor of Sudan. One example is a drum that was taken on a punitive expedition in 1905 against the Zande King Gbudwe (also called Yambio), who died from injury during his attempted capture. Captain Brakenridge, who accompanied the expedition emphasised the perceived symbolic significance of such objects:

‘The drum was an object of great reverence; we saw several, all of the same shape, but none so big, apparently the size was relative to each “sultan’s” importance. That we carried away the drum was of great effect in assuring the people that Yambio was really done for.’¹⁸

The Museum of Antiquities received other objects taken on punitive expeditions, notably the drum and pipe of the influential Lou Nuer prophet Ngundeng Bong, whose spiritual and peacemaking authority had extended over a wide area encompassing different Nuer, Dinka and Anuak communities in the nineteenth century. British administrators, haunted by memories of the Mahdi’s charismatic leadership, sought to neutralise any such potential for inspirational authority and resistance. These objects, together with the ceremonial rod or *dang* of Ngundeng, were captured during the final Nuer campaigns of 1928-30, in which his son Guek was killed by government forces. The *dang* was taken to England by the Lou Nuer District Commissioner Percy Coriat.¹⁹ In other cases though, British officials were keen to appropriate the power of such objects to enhance the authority of colonial institutions; the rod of a prominent Ma’di diviner was kept in a district office for litigants to be made to swear upon before giving evidence.²⁰

The military trophy-hunting of the colonial ‘pacification’ campaigns gradually gave way to ethnographic collecting by colonial administrators and anthropologists from the 1920s onwards. This too was bound up with the assertion of colonial power, even if in less overtly violent ways. Material cultures became part of how the colonial administration differentiated, categorised and stereotyped southern Sudanese ‘tribes’, and how it displayed them to British audiences in the imperial metropole.²¹ But as in the nineteenth century, this was not simply a one-way street of appropriation. The Condominium period was a time of considerable economic change and processes of commoditisation, with more complex effects on southern Sudanese material cultures. While the use of money was initially enforced through the imposition of taxes, over time demand for imported commodities like clothes, soap, bicycles and radios would increase, often beyond the capacity of shops in the region to meet. Paper, pens and typewriters were central not only for the colonial administration and its bureaucratic cultures but also for the broader spread of literacy and Christianity.

Once again then, objects were moving in both or multiple directions. Imported goods began to supplant some of the indigenous production, particularly of iron. Some individuals saw the opportunity to produce items to meet the British demand for cultural artefacts, again echoing nineteenth-century responses to commercial opportunities. This is exemplified by the workshop at Li Rangu headed by the Zande potter Mbitim, discussed in Livne’s chapter, which fed the market for pottery among European colonial personnel and Syrian medical staff at the site.

The essentialisation of southern Sudanese cultures as exotic and primitive would live on in deeply problematic ways in the independent Sudan. For the predominantly northern Sudanese administrators replacing the British, these cultures could appear as an embarrassing obstacle to the modernisation and national unity they sought. Attacking the British failure to redress the ‘backwardness’ of the southern provinces, one new administrator of Torit District declared in 1955 that it was ‘high time’ for the Otuho

‘to know or to be made to know that they, in their present state, belong to a stage of civilization which disappeared hundreds of years ago and that unless they adapt themselves to the prevailing stage the complexities of the modern world will inevitably shatter their tribal life and destroy their obsolete tradition against their will.’²²



Figure 0.5. A map showing the location of museums in Europe and Russia with significant South Sudanese collections.

This heavy-handedness and subsequent attempts to impose the Arabic language and Islamic religion as the basis for forging a more unified national identity contributed to provoking southern Sudanese resistance, which solidified as the Anyanya rebellion by 1963. The tensions between ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’ would be the focus of much political debate and conflict over the next fifty years in Sudan.

The first and second Sudanese civil wars (1963-72 and 1983-2005) had devastating effects on southern Sudan, causing the deaths and displacement of millions of people. For many of those who survived, the extended periods of conflict and displacement are also felt to have irrevocably damaged the social, moral and cultural life of their societies. This sense was epitomised for some of our network participants by the loss of material cultures over the past fifty years – not only in terms of physical objects that were destroyed, stolen or left behind as people fled conflict and famine, but also the skills of their production that may have been lost with older generations and displaced by the new materials of the global aid industry or commodity cultures of foreign places of exile. In this context, objects that have been preserved in European museums represent precious remnants of and links to the skills and cultures of recent ancestors, otherwise severed by conflict and migration. But the origins of these objects also resonated painfully for some participants with the longer histories of violence and extraction that underlie the civil wars of the twentieth century.

South Sudanese museum collections in Europe

These long-term histories explain why the largest concentration of historic material heritage from South Sudan is held in Europe. A survey of museum inventories conducted by Zoe Cormack indicates that there are around 15 to 20,000 objects from South Sudan in European and Russian museums in more than ten countries.²³ This volume of material reflects the fact that the Upper Nile was the subject of sustained imperial, geographical and commercial interests. The widespread location of objects today only makes sense in the context of the phases of collecting discussed above. Most material in continental Europe and Russia was acquired during the first phase (c. 1840-1880s), by a cosmopolitan array of individuals who tended to leave collections to their home towns or countries, which is why we see a wide geographical spread of material in this period. The second phase of collecting began with the Anglo-Egyptian Reconquest of Sudan and the establishment of Condominium rule. The collections assembled in this period are much more closely connected to the extension of British colonial control. As a result, they are largely in British museums.

To more closely understand these patterns of extraction, we also need to know about the people who removed objects. Many of these individuals cultivated the identity of 'collectors' and saw themselves as conduits of important scientific discoveries, but they usually had other reasons for being in Sudan. In the nineteenth century, Europeans entered as multinational traders, explorers, travellers, missionaries and European officers who served in the Ottoman-Egyptian government. In the twentieth century, colonial interests, professional anthropology and art dealing also shaped museum collections. While hard to neatly separate these identities (as people often inhabited multiple roles – such as consul and trader), understanding these forms of access helps to explain the varied routes through which material was dispersed into European museums in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Given the centrality of trade networks for European access to southern Sudan in the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that multiple museum collections were originally assembled by traders themselves. The current locations of these collections reveal just how international the ivory and slave trade was in southern Sudan. One of the most successful traders was Franz Binder, from Sebes, a small town in southwest Transylvania, now in Romania. He donated around 500 objects from southern Sudan to the Association of Natural Sciences of Sibiu (a larger Transylvanian town) and the local museum in Sebes in 1862. These later formed the collection of the Franz Binder Museum of Universal Ethnography in Sibiu, when it opened in 1993.²⁴ Other traders donated collections that have now fallen into obscurity, hidden in smaller regional museums, like that of Antoine Brun-Rollet in the Armoury Museum in Turin or the collection of 1800 objects left by another Italian ivory trader, Antonio Castlebolognesi, to the Museum of Natural History in Ferrara.²⁵ Occasionally, traders supplied several museums. John Petherick, an ivory trader and sometime British consul in Khartoum sold objects in London auction houses in the 1860s. Some were purchased by Augustus Pitt-Rivers for his collection (which later formed the nucleus of the Pitt Rivers Museum) and the curator Wolleston-Franks for the British Museum (see chapters by Coote and Petch and Cormack).

Khartoum and Cairo, major nodes in the Nile Valley trade, soon became places where objects from southern Sudan could be acquired. Visitors could purchase objects that had been taken during commercial expeditions (often directly from traders themselves). For example, the Liverpool merchant George Melly, who visited Khartoum in 1851, was

offered a collection of southern Sudanese objects at the house of the trader Antoine Brun-Rollet.²⁶ Similarly, the French consul in Egypt (1848-54), Henri Delaport, purchased objects (now at the Quai Branly in Paris) from traders in Cairo who had business links stretching into southern Sudan.²⁷ Even the Egyptian Khedive Isma'il himself acquired objects from Sudan which he gave to the British Museum between 1866 and 1878, including around twenty artefacts from southern Sudan.

As European public interest in Sudan and Nile exploration was increasing at this time, the region attracted self-styled 'explorer'-travellers. Some like the Russian-German doctor Wilhelm Junker made extensive journeys and amassed thousands of objects.²⁸ His collection is now split between the Kunstkamera in St Petersburg (where Junker lived and which holds the largest volume), the Weltmuseum in Vienna and the Ethnological Museum in Berlin. Alexandrine Tinne, discussed by Kingdon in this volume, is a rare example of a female leisure traveller, who led an expedition to the Bahr el-Ghazal in 1863-64. Her collection from this voyage is now housed at the World Museum in Liverpool, while the collection of her companion, the German zoologist Theodor von Hueglin, is at the Linden Museum in Stuttgart.²⁹ Illustrating the close connection between trade and exploration is the collection of Giovanni Miani at the Museum of Natural History in Venice. He saw his collecting as 'scientific' and 'ethnographic' and his travels were partly funded by the French Geographical Society, but he also travelled with a trading company and on at least one occasion stole objects after the company's soldiers had ransacked villages in search of ivory.³⁰

Scientific motivations more broadly were an important factor driving collecting and learned societies frequently funded expeditions and later received objects. The Archaeological Museum in Perugia holds the collection of Orazio Antinori, one of the founders of the Italian Geographical Society, who travelled to Sudan in 1860-61.³¹ He was accompanied by Carlo Piaggia, a man from Lucca who originally entered Sudan with a trading company, but broke away and stayed for extended periods at a Zande court. His resulting collections were sold to the Ethnographic Museum in Florence and Berlin.³² The museum of the Khedival Geographical Society in Cairo amassed a collection from southern Sudan (and northeast and central Africa more widely).³³ Many of these objects were the gift of Muhammed Mukhtar Pasha, the Egyptian Governor of Sudan in 1883-84. One of the most prominent actors in the Society was the German botanist Georg Schweinfurth, who travelled extensively in Sudan before becoming its founding president in 1875, then director of their Cairo Museum 1880-89. His travelogue, *The Heart of Africa*, was a bestseller when it was released.³⁴ He also published an illustrated book about the material culture of southern Sudan and north-eastern Congo.³⁵ Despite his connections with Cairo, what remains of his own collections (after fire damage at Jur Ghattas *zariba*) are today housed in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin and his drawings at the Frobenius Institute.

Missionary work was another draw to southern Sudan. One collection came from the Roman Catholic missionary Ignaz Knoblecher, who travelled up the White Nile in 1849-50 and subsequently established the short-lived mission at Gondokoro and the Holy Cross Mission between Shambe and Bor. Some of the objects were acquired by the Weltmuseum in Vienna but the bulk of the collection remained in his native Slovenia, where it is housed in the Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana. Knoblecher provides an example of how a museum collection can take on local and national significance in a country without any other obvious link to South Sudan. Knoblecher is now remembered as an important symbol



Figure 0.6. Ivory spoon, probably obtained in the region of Gondokoro, 1848-58 by Ignaz Knoblecher. Courtesy of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (2551).

of Slovenia's global connections. The collection was the subject of a major exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum in 2009 and Škocjan, the town of his birth, continues to celebrate his life and work in South Sudan.³⁶ 2019 was the 200th anniversary of Knoblecher's birth and his life and collection was the subject of three exhibitions and publications.³⁷

Government and consular work also brought Europeans into Sudan and this created opportunities for individuals to assemble collections. Ferdinand Werne and Joseph Pons d'Arnaud, a French engineer working for the Egyptian government, both made collections on Salim Qapudan's initial Nile journeys to Gondokoro. These were donated to the Berlin Ethnological (then Royal) Museum in 1844 and the Louvre in 1842 (and later transferred to the Quai Branly), respectively.³⁸ The first African objects to be catalogued at the Anthropological-Ethnographic Department at the Natural History Museum in Vienna (now held in the Weltmuseum, Wein) were from the Upper Nile, brought to Austria by Joseph Natterer, the Austro-Hungarian consul in Khartoum (1857-62).³⁹ Later, as Europeans were appointed in senior positions in the Ottoman-Egyptian Government of Sudan, they also participated in the search for objects, often with the parallel aim of establishing a reputation as men of science or exploration. The collections of Isaak Eduard Schnitzer or 'Emin Pasha', the Governor of Equatoria, were sent to Vienna where they are now in the Weltmuseum (see Haumberger and Ivanov, this volume). Parts of his entomology collections – many of which were obtained on his behalf by the Italian Gaetano Casati – are housed in the Natural History Museum in London.⁴⁰ Romolo Gessi, an Italian military officer who served as the Governor of Bahr el-Ghazal from 1874 to his death in 1881, leveraged his government position to acquire objects, with the support of the Italian Geographical Society. His collection was posthumously exported to Italy and purchased by the Italian government as the first African collection for the newly founded museum of Ethnography and Prehistory in Rome (now the Museo della Civiltà). Gessi also recruited the photographer Richard Buchta to accompany him, on what is the earliest known photographic tour of central Africa.⁴¹ Various Austro-Hungarian consular representatives to Sudan assembled collections while in Khartoum, which were sent to Vienna.⁴²

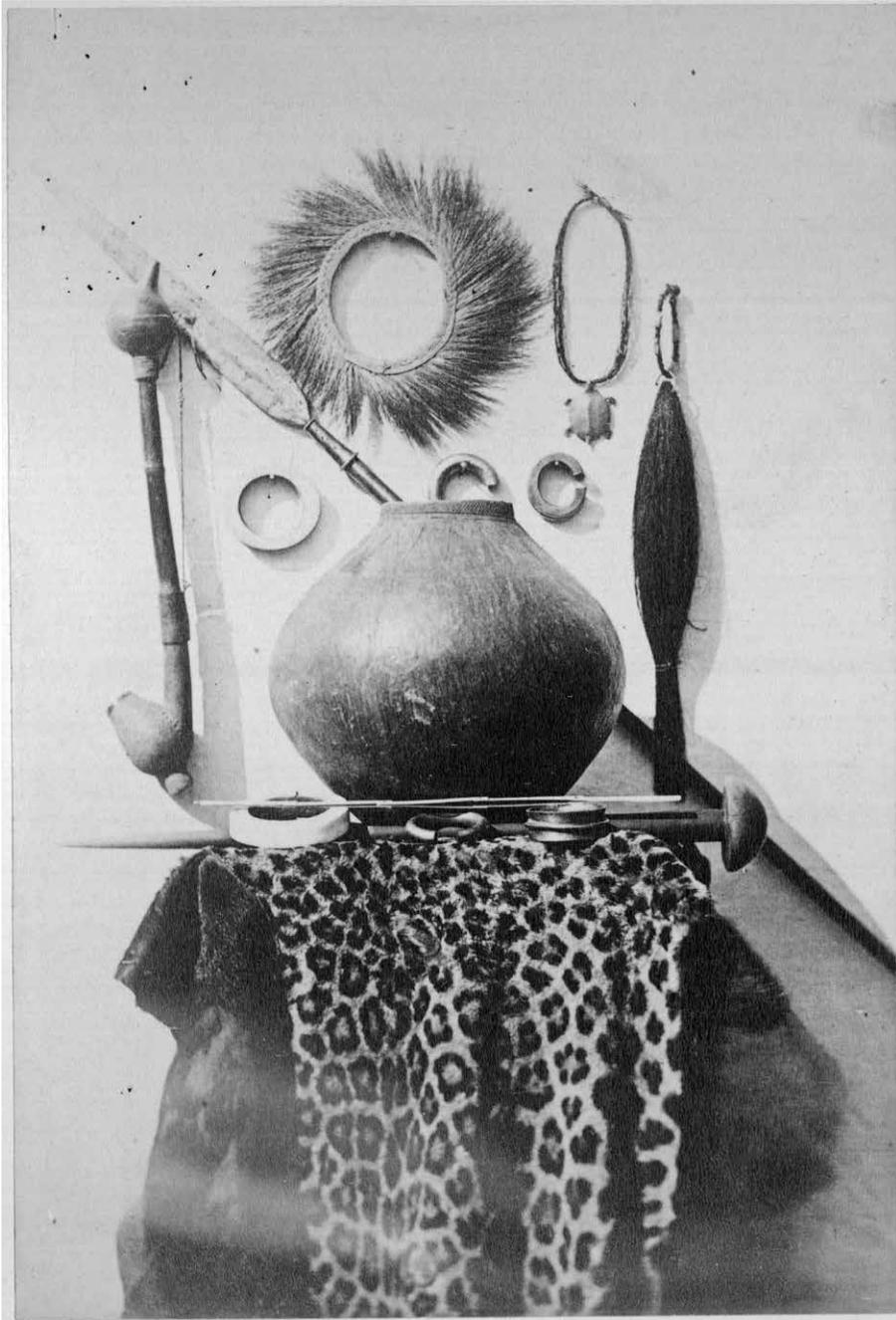


Figure 0.7. A display of Shilluk material culture photographed by Richard Buchta, 1878-80. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1998.203.1.12.1).

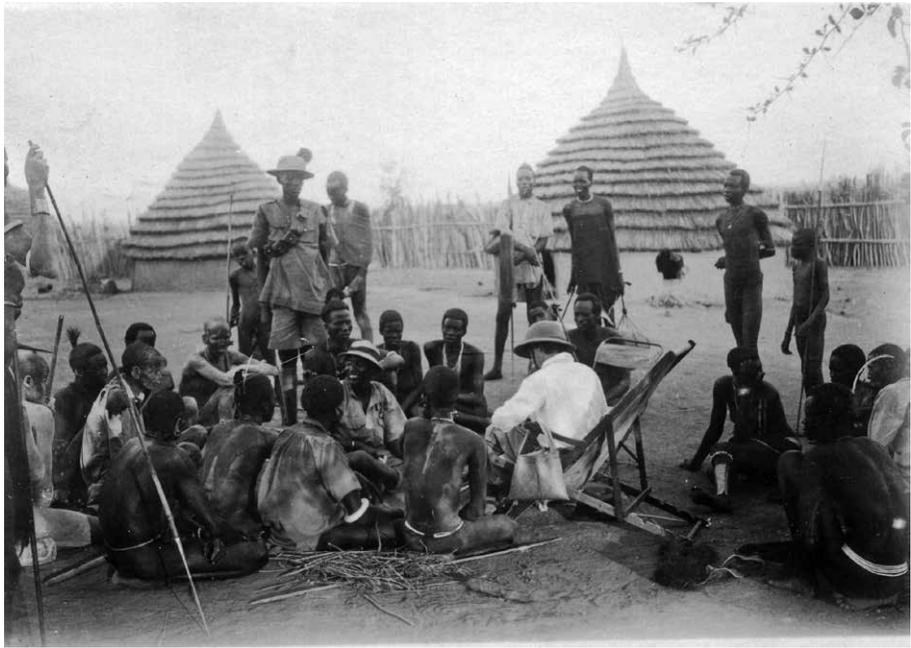


Figure 0.8. Hannah Powell-Cotton buying objects in a village identified as Kornuk, South Sudan in 1933. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Powell-Cotton Museum (SUDAN 1 Binoc VIII 016).

The collecting free-for-all of the nineteenth century was largely halted by the Mahdist victories in 1880s Sudan, which significantly restricted access and trade routes to the south. The Anglo-Egyptian Reconquest of Sudan in the late 1890s was associated with a wave of battlefield collecting and looting, and most of these artefacts made their way to Britain. Collections were assembled in the process of extending colonial control, firstly during ‘pacification’ and later as part of colonial governance, often by anthropologists or people whose presence in the country was dependent on colonial networks. The Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) contains objects that illustrate the range of colonial collecting. Some of their founding collections are from southern Sudan and were obtained in the nineteenth century (as Coote’s essay discusses). The British colonial period created new flows of objects, beginning with battlefield collecting: the PRM would receive objects taken as loot and trophies during patrols and pacification campaigns, as Douglas Johnson explains in this volume. Later collecting was the work of colonial administrators and anthropologists. Oxford anthropologists, like Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, were supported by the Sudan government. Evans-Pritchard himself collected and sold objects to the PRM and later donated his southern Sudan photographic collection. Colonial administrators and their families have also donated southern Sudanese objects to the museum.

A less well-known example in the UK is the Powell-Cotton Museum in Birchington-on-Sea, which contains the ethnographic and natural history collections of Percy Powell-Cotton and family. He was a British hunter, traveller and collector, who along with his wife Hannah made two extended trips to southern Sudan, in 1903 and 1933-34. As well as leaving material to their own collection, the Powell-Cottons sold material from southern Sudan to the PRM and the British Museum.

Missionary activity was an important conduit of objects in the twentieth century too. The Verona or Comboni Fathers, who had a presence in Sudan throughout the twentieth century, amassed many artefacts, which can be found at the Africa Museum in Verona. A Croatian missionary who served in Upper Nile in the early twentieth century, Stjepan Mlakic, left a collection of letters, photographs and objects to the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

Sudan's independence in 1956 marked a new phase of collecting and museum work. The new Ethnographic Museum in Khartoum inherited the collections of the Museum of Antiquities at the former Gordon College (now University of Khartoum), including southern Sudanese objects. This period also saw the beginning of (albeit limited) art market interest in southern Sudan. Despite the rising insecurity and political tensions in the south, Andreas and Waltraud Kronenberg (Austrian anthropologists employed by the government of Sudan) were able to increase the museum's collections by 750 objects from southern Sudan and the northern region of Wadi Halfa between 1958 and 1964. The most visually striking was a group of almost life-size figurative sculptures, made by Bongo and Belanda people in Bahr el-Ghazal, originally used to mark the graves of important people. A selection of these, along with four large figurative sculptures, obtained from the site of a former sleeping sickness hospital in Li Yubo were brought to Khartoum where they were installed in the courtyard of the Ethnographic Museum.⁴³

Bongo funerary art proved to be an enduring interest in the post-independence period. One of the most significant collecting events was an expedition by the Belgian art dealer Christian Duponcheel in 1973, in which he removed at least eleven Bongo and Belanda commemorative grave statues from Bahr el-Ghazal (similar to those taken to Khartoum by the Kronenbergs). These sculptures were sold to high profile public and private collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the British Museum, where they are currently on display. The long history of the controversial trade in these grave markers is discussed by Cormack in this volume.

The intermission in conflict in the 1970s and early 1980s allowed for other sorts of museological and archaeological research. The British Institute in Eastern Africa, in collaboration with the Southern Regional Ministry of Culture led an expedition in parts of the country which resulted in objects for the PRM (including the gourd discussed by Langton in this volume) and the British Museum; duplicates were left with the Ministry of Culture in Juba. These were intended for a museum in Juba, planned in the late 1970s but halted by the outbreak of the second civil war in 1983. After the end of that war in 2005 and the independence of South Sudan in 2011, there was another plan for a national museum. A 'Traveling Exhibition' project run by the Ministry of Culture in Juba and UNESCO aimed to assemble a founding collection for the museum. The chapter by Atem and Lorins in this volume explores some of the complications that arose from the process of collecting. But once again, these plans were put on hold by the resumption of conflict in 2013.

The other side of these initiatives is the repatriation of some objects, imagined as part of a process of healing. The Sudanese government returned the drum and the pipe material belonging to the prophet Ngundeng (which was looted during a military patrol in 1928-30 and stored at the Ethnographic Museum in Khartoum) to the Lou Nuer in 1973, in an act of reconciliation after the end of the first civil war. The *dang*, which had been taken to England, was returned in 2009, after it surfaced in an auction and was purchased by the historian Douglas Johnson, who has written about Nuer traditions of prophecy. Although the *dang* was returned amidst much celebration, it was quickly drawn into the

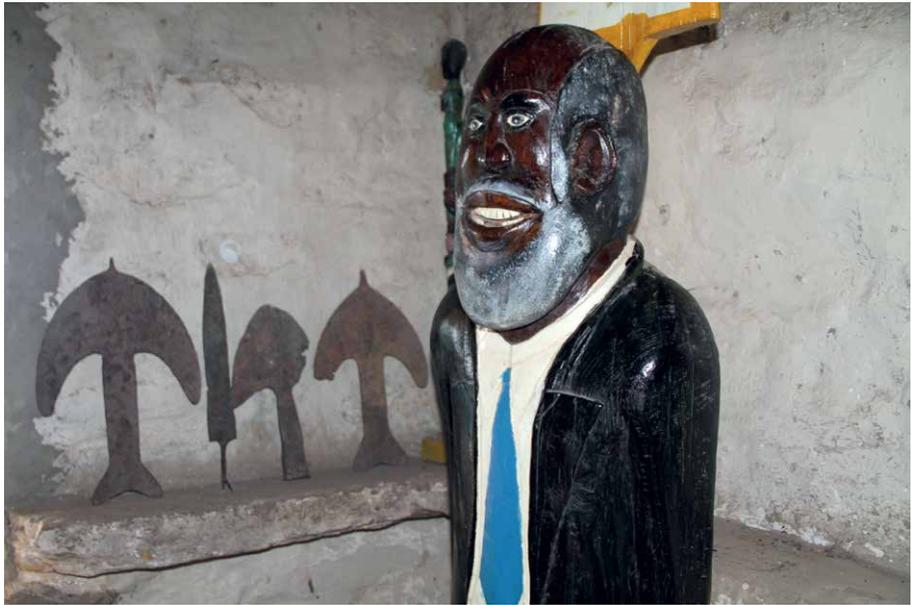


Figure 0.9. A statue of John Garang beside a display of iron hoes in the museum in Kajo-Keji, 2010. Photograph by John Ryle.

political landscape. It was supposed to be returned to Ngundeng's descendants but it never reached them. Instead, Riek Machar, the Vice President at the time, appropriated the *dang*, allegedly using it to bolster a claim that he was himself the fulfilment of one of Ngundeng's prophecies and destined to rule South Sudan. After the outbreak of conflict in 2013, in which Machar fled the country, the location of the *dang* is unknown.⁴⁴

Conflict and migration have prompted South Sudanese people to preserve, rework, create and rediscover material cultures. The house erected by the first British District Commissioner in Kajo-Keji, Major Stigand, has been re-appropriated as a small museum, containing statues of SPLM/A leader John Garang as well as locally-made hoes, spears, carvings and other objects. This represents at least one example of a spontaneous local attempt to preserve and display material culture using the museum as a model. Wars have produced their own material cultures, some of which have afterlives as means of commemorating wartime heroism, sacrifices or atrocities. These include the ruined tanks that remain in many towns or the use of discarded bullet casings in jewellery.⁴⁵ New memorials have been erected in commemoration of incidents in the civil wars.⁴⁶ Even during conflict and displacement people held on to precious objects like family photograph albums,⁴⁷ and produced new educational and political materials such as the pamphlet described in Kindersley and Wawa's chapter in this volume.

Rethinking museum collections from South Sudan

Taken together, the movement of objects from South Sudan into museum collections over the last 180 years has been enormous. At our first workshop, South Sudanese arts and cultural practitioner Anyieth d'Awol described the disorientating experience of seeing herself 'on display' in the museum cabinet and yet, at the same time, being unable to

recognise herself in that display. Her reaction highlights the distorted realities that historic practices of collecting and display have produced. This experience of the museum as a site of discomfort also speaks to many pressing issues in academic and public debates about the power and politics of representation, colonial legacies and trauma in museums.⁴⁸

The South Sudanese objects examined in this book are part of a wider corpus of material from Africa and other previously colonised parts of the world, now located in European museum collections. Ethnographic museums (where the majority of South Sudanese collections are now held) have been the subject of post-colonial critique for several decades. The development of these institutions in the nineteenth century was intimately linked to the expansion of European empires. Not only did colonial infrastructures facilitate the flow of objects towards Europe (and some other parts of the world), but racial ideologies drove the processes of categorisation that underpinned museum collecting and display. The dispersal and display of African cultural and artistic heritage obtained in colonial contexts is currently the focus of renewed attention.

South Sudanese objects and voices have not featured prominently in these debates but the South Sudanese experience brings new perspectives to some of their most important facets. South Sudan has endured long and multiple colonialisms. It was one of the most important subjects for the development of social anthropology and therefore closely linked to the history of anthropology and ethnographic museums. South Sudan's experience of conflict, the displacement of its people and their urgent search for ways of understanding the violent past and rebuilding relationships in the present has much to offer debates about museum collections.

Perhaps the most important of these is understanding what South Sudan's experience of conflict and instability means for its citizens' relationship with their dispersed cultural heritage. The idea that African objects are safer and better looked after in European museums has often been used to patronise African institutions and deflect conversations about the colonial history of museum collections. Yet, in South Sudan's case, it is true that historic material heritage has been preserved abroad in a way that would not have been possible in the country itself, largely because of conflict and displacement. South Sudan is not only dealing with post-colonial issues, but also addressing the legacy of past and current conflicts. Understandably, given the urgency of these issues, the possibility for museum work to promote reconciliation and understanding within South Sudan and the diaspora has been a pronounced theme in the network's discussions. Could these collections offer ways of reimagining, even healing the past and the present? The events surrounding the return of Ngundeng's *dang* and its appropriation by the former Vice President highlight the unstable cultural politics of a country emerging from civil war, where attention to 'heritage' can become divisive, as well as being a source of social and spiritual nourishment.

Memory and temporality have always been key concepts for understanding the significance of museum collections. They are quintessential spaces for the foundation of national myths and memories. The establishment of museums always involved forms of time travel – not only in the problematic sense that these institutions represented European notions of progress and backwardness, by providing the opportunity to view objects from a supposedly earlier stage of human development, but also by carrying the objects themselves through time.⁴⁹ The Sarr and Savoy report, commissioned by President Macron of France to move processes of restitution forward, identified memory

as a key part of the work which restitution of objects to Africa could do: because the absence of objects can sever a community's memory and attempts to explore the past.⁵⁰ Taking this point further, Achille Mbembe recently suggested that the loss of art and cultural artefacts from Africa has also threatened the continent's capacity to imagine and aspire; that the removal of Africa's heritage has removed the right to the future.⁵¹ For South Sudanese, attempting to build a sense of national identity and cohesion from the fragments of civil wars, these are fundamental and existential concerns, as much as they are complex and unpredictable.

This book points to a more nuanced reading of violence and memory. Many of the chapters highlight the creative uses and reuses of culture under duress, showing how the story of African cultural heritage during colonisation has not only been one of loss. Other chapters show how despite violent dislocation, multiple historical narratives can be recovered through close engagement with a museum object. Despite the lack of formal calls for returns, many South Sudanese people we spoke with informally during the period of the AHRC network believe that South Sudan is the rightful home for objects removed from the country over the last two hundred years; even while many felt that restitution should be a longer-term objective, given the country's ongoing conflicts and humanitarian emergency. At our final meeting in Juba, several participants reiterated that heritage and museum objects are important because they prompt the question, 'who are we?' They are valuable in large part because they are a point of departure. In this sense, objects stored in museums across the world not only represent a lost or remembered past; they are also a means of future-making, tools to repair the pieces of a troubled nation.

Part One

**Nineteenth Century
Commercial
Entanglements**



From 'bush' to 'boudoir'

Zachary Kingdon

The African collection at World Museum Liverpool contains various artefacts from the present day South Sudan that were presented in August 1866 by the Anglo Dutch businessman John Tinne. The items include a tobacco block (30.8.66.28; see Figure 1.2) and a Bongo pipe (30.8.66.3; see Figure 1.1). These two artefacts had been acquired by John's half-sister, Alexandrine Tinne, during her second 1863-64 expedition on the Upper Nile. In 1863 Alexandrine Petronella Francisca Tinne (1835-69), Alexine for short, equipped an extravagant expedition in order to follow the Bahr el-Ghazal River with the aim of penetrating as far as Azande country in the Southern Sudan. Although she had vast funds at her disposal from a legacy from her father Philip Tinne, who made his fortune largely from plantations in Guyana, Alexine had little interest in challenging the pre-eminence of male 'scientific' explorers of her day. The fact that she broke many social conventions and disentangled herself from the world of her upbringing in the Dutch royal court, can be understood in the light of her being a 'modernist' of her time. It was her determination to fully experience 'modernity' and 'freedom'¹ in the pleasures of travel that led her restlessly to go looking for beauty and pleasure where it was not supposed to be found. However, she was unprepared to forego many of the comforts and privileges that she evidently considered her right, due to her extreme wealth and high social rank.

Her own predilections notwithstanding, Alexine nevertheless permitted the German zoologist Theodor von Heuglin and his botanist companion Hermann Steudner to join her expedition. These two lent some scientific purpose to the enterprise through their natural history and ethnographic collections and the map that Heuglin was able to make of the Bahr el-Ghazal region. The expedition reached a place called Bongo, a few days trek west off the Jur River from Wau, before disease overtook it and caused it to turn back. Many on the expedition were to succumb to disease, including Steudner, Alexine's mother Henriette, and two European family servants.²

Figure 1.1. Bongo earthenware pipe with wooden stem wrapped in copper wire. Collected by Alexine Tinne, probably during her 1863-64 Bahr el-Ghazal expedition. Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool (World Museum), (30.8.66.3).

Alexine did not keep any records of her ethnographic acquisitions and the Bongo attribution for the tobacco block was made by a curator at the museum, Charles Gatty, in his 1882 catalogue of the museum's antiquities and ethnographical collections.³ Gatty's source for this attribution was Schweinfurth's 1873 account of his travels in central Africa between 1868 and 1871, in which Schweinfurth related that:

'Tobacco is indispensable to the Bongo, and is universally cultivated. The species known as Mashirr (*Nicotiana rustica*) is very pungent; its small thick leaves are pounded in a mortar, and are subsequently pressed and dried in moulds. From the cakes thus formed, the natives break off fragments as they require them, grind them into powder by means of stones, and smoke the preparation in long pipes that have pretty clay bowls.'⁴

Given the lack of accompanying documentation, there is something of a puzzle as to how and why this pungent souvenir found its way into Alexine Tinne's possession. The tobacco block would probably have been of scientific interest to Steudner and Heuglin, but Schweinfurth, writing a decade later, expressed particular disgust at Bongo smoking practices.⁵ Heuglin described meeting with a group of Bongo men at Wau in April 1863, who all carried smoking equipment,⁶ so Alexine's tobacco block may have been of a piece with the pipe and could have been purchased directly from a Bongo man.

Both items could have been acquired at the *zariba* (fortified trading settlement) of the Khartoum trader Ali Amuri at Bongo. In any event it is clear that the Tinnes' Bahr el-Ghazal expedition had much contact with Bongo people, who were exploited in large numbers to carry the expedition's baggage and also the persons of Henriette and Alexine Tinne. Many such porters were provided from among Ali Amuri's vassals at Bongo and the expedition camped at Amuri's *zariba* for a considerable period of time.⁷ Although we cannot know the particular details of how Alexine Tinne came to acquire the pipe and tobacco block, it is clear that, from the planning stage onwards, the Tinne Bahr el-Ghazal expedition was pre-enmeshed in existing infrastructures of travel, translation and trade on the Upper Nile.⁸ On the Bahr el-Ghazal these infrastructures were being actively forged by traders of various nationalities based at Khartoum through violence, looting, factional alliances, and slave raiding.⁹ The Tinne expedition was dependent on the Khartoum traders' *zaribas*, which were held by the force of their mercenary occupants, and fed by vassals and slaves settled in the surrounding areas. In fact the expedition should be seen as having been compromised and corrupt from the start, because it was equipped like a Khartoum trading campaign. The initial crew, guides, servants and armed men that the Tinnes hired in Khartoum formed a "'train" of more than 150 people'. Many of these denizens would have harboured the usual mercenary expectations of a trading voyage as their 'flotilla' set off up the Nile in January 1863 'amid song, beating of drums, and firing of muskets'.¹⁰ Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that Alexine should have been accused of slave trading when she returned to Khartoum. Although her accuser, Musha Pasha, may have been partly motivated by political considerations and personal animosity, there was clearly a case to answer, as Kate Petherick, the wife of a British trader, related in a letter to her sister:



Figure 1.2. Bongo tobacco block. Collected by Alexine Tinne, probably during her 1863-64 Bahr el-Ghazal expedition. Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool (World Museum), (30.8.66.28).

‘When the ladies’ boats returned from the Bahr el Gazal, they were filled with slaves, and the Dutch flag was the protection. An invalid servant of Von Heuglin’s, returned in the boats for change of air, denouncing the proceedings of the *reises* ... and their men.’¹¹

In her own estimation Alexine’s Bahr el-Ghazal voyage was intended as an exploratory pleasure spree. However, at Khartoum in this period such an expedition can be expected to have translated, in the minds of mercenaries and crew, to the excesses of an ivory or slave trading expedition. As Schweinfurth described in relation to his host Abu Sammat, the power of the gun created its own logic and authority was held during a trading expedition partly on the promise of ‘profit’ sharing, as well as festive consumption of the fruits of plunder and exploitation at the up-river *zaribas*. Thus:

‘on the 23rd of November [1869] I found myself at the head Seriba of my friend and protector, who received me with true Oriental hospitality ... in short he had taken the utmost pains to insure me the best and amplest provisions that the locality could supply. My attendants, too, who, together with their slaves, made up a party of thirteen, were entertained as freely as myself: everything contributed to keep them in good mood, and they were delighted jointly and severally to throw in their lot with mine. ... As Aboo Sammat used jocosely to remark, they were accustomed at home to carry mud, but here they carry a gun instead.’¹²

Although a powerful personality in her own right, Alexine also possessed an arsenal of guns, which included five revolvers. So when Alexine’s authority was challenged by her mercenaries toward the end of May 1863, they held her at gunpoint. Like her porters, the soldiers threatened to mutiny, because their rations were too meagre.¹³ Alexine, who spoke Arabic, managed to take back authority, and on 14 June Heuglin wrote that she and her mother were being carried ‘in heavy sedan chairs by negroes, which were held

in step by a *wakil* with his whip, surrounded by soldiers'.¹⁴ In her embellished account to John Tinne, Henriette described how they travelled on the march to Bongo in the following terms:

'We take very short journeys and always find a village to sleep in about four o'clock. We stop at a place which pleases us and send for the Sheik, who gives orders and chooses our host who clears out his cattle and furniture, and we take possession for the night.'¹⁵

In reasserting her authority over her 'mutinous' employees, it is likely that Alexine made concessions to them that represented a capitulation to their expectations of a Nile expedition of the kind they were familiar with. A possible hint to this effect was provided in Henriette's letter to John, quoted above, in which she stated that: 'We know the masters of nearly all zeribas [sic] on our route; and they have promised to supply us with wine and all we want'. But the main evidence would seem to be contained in Kate Petherick's letter to her sister, mentioned above, in which she relates that the expeditions' boats were full of slaves on their return from the Bahr el-Ghazal. At best, Alexine's disingenuous claim that she had been 'unaware of the fact that her boats had been used by the ships' staff for the transportation of slaves'¹⁶ only underlines the ambiguous basis of her authority as the leader of a pleasure spree, the consequent 'mission creep' implied in accommodating the expectations of her servants and mercenaries, as well as the compromises she must have made, by looking the other way, in order to shore up her threatened authority. In any case, Alexine's dependence on the 'masters' of the *zaribas* along the route meant that the expedition was already deeply implicated in the Nile infrastructure of travel, translation and trade. Thus, whatever claims Alexine may have made for her expedition, as a disinterested exercise in pleasurable tourism, her acquisition of a Bongo tobacco block and pipe during the expedition was inevitably a product of the organised violence and slavery that underpinned the expanding trading infrastructures of the Bahr el-Ghazal at the time.

Leaving aside Alexine's personal limitations, the Tinnes' second Nile voyage was remarkable for the way that it literally collapsed the physical and moral distance between 'bush' and 'boudoir'. While 'glamping' in the Sudan the Tinnes became viscerally entangled in the 'savagery' of nineteenth-century globalised capitalism and the brutal methods employed by the Khartoum merchants in ivory extraction. 'Scientific' travellers of the period were equally dependent on Nile trading infrastructures for their success, but Alexine's Bahr el-Ghazal expedition especially can be seen to starkly highlight the corruption embedded not only in the 'ethnographic' artefacts acquired in the Bahr el-Ghazal, but also in some of the amusements and luxury consumer products of wealthy nineteenth-century bourgeois households, like the piano, with its ivory white keys, for example, or even the ivory handles of the Tinnes' hairbrushes. The fact that the pipe and tobacco block that Alexine probably acquired in the vicinity of Bongo would have constituted treasured items of personal significance and pleasure for their original owners only adds to the poignancy of the context in which Alexine acquired them.



'A very singular helmet...'

Jeremy Coote and Alison Petch

The beaded headdress discussed here has been part of the collections of the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) since its foundation in 1884. That is, it is one of more than 25,000 objects given to the university by General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900) to form the founding collection of the museum that continues to bear his name.¹ By 1884 it was already a well-known object, having been exhibited and published a number of times. Moreover, it has continued to attract the attention of curators and researchers from time to time, especially in recent years. As a result, the entry for the headdress in the PRM's database is full of information, while the object file is full to bursting with correspondence, reports, offprints, and photocopies.² Numerous questions remain, however, and the object continues to be puzzling.

The headdress was first brought to public attention when it was exhibited by the trader John Petherick (1813-82) during an invited talk he gave at the evening meeting of the Royal United Services Institution (RUSI) in London on Monday 7 May 1860. Petherick had recently returned to England, bringing with him a large collection of weapons and other objects from what is now South Sudan, some of which he took along with him to RUSI's premises in Whitehall Yard to illustrate his talk. In the published version, Petherick provides an apparently precise provenance for the headdress – 'The Nouaer on both sides of the Nile from 8 to 10 degrees north latitude, wear a helmet of cylindrical white beads'³ – and illustrates it with a small line drawing.⁴ General Pitt-Rivers was almost certainly among those who attended Petherick's talk; indeed, he was a member of the RUSI's council at the time and may well have initiated the invitation to Petherick to talk about his collection.

Two years later Pitt-Rivers acquired the headdress at the sale of 'the very interesting collection ... procured during several expeditions ... by John Petherick', held at Bullock's 'great rooms' in High Holborn on 27 June 1862. Listed in the sale catalogue as 'a very singular helmet of cylindrical white beads (Nouaer)',⁵ the headdress was one of as many as perhaps a hundred objects that Pitt-Rivers purchased at the sale.

Figure 2.1. Headdress of cylindrical glass beads on a network of string; 490 mm long; acquired by John Petherick in the 1850s; part of the founding collection of the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1884.32.3).

Five years later Pitt-Rivers exhibited the headdress at another meeting of the RUSI, held on 28 June 1867, at which he gave the first in his series of lectures on the subject of 'primitive warfare'. He introduced the headdress, in comparison with helmets from Ancient Egypt and India, as 'an Ethiopian one, composed of beads of the same form, brought from Central Africa by Consul Petherick',⁶ and in the published version of the lecture a rather poor line drawing by Pitt-Rivers himself was reproduced⁷ to which the following was provided as an 'extended description', again with a scientific-seeming provenance:

'A Head-dress of nearly the same form ... belonging to the Nouaer tribe of Negroes, inhabiting both sides of the Nile from 8° to 10° N. latitude, brought to England by Mr. Petherick, and now in Colonel Fox's [*i.e.* Pitt-Rivers'] Collection. It resembles the Egyptian very closely, and is composed of cylindrical white beads, fastened together with a kind of string. The beads are of European manufacture.'⁸

The headdress was soon to become much more widely known through its publication in the two-page account of 'the Nuehr' in the African volume of J. G. Wood's popular *The Natural History of Man*, first published in thirty-two one-shilling parts. Wood provided a much more detailed illustration of the headdress, consisting in a line drawing of the whole object accompanied by another illustrating the nature of its construction.⁹ Drawing on Petherick's and Pitt-Rivers's accounts, but also presumably on a close examination of the object and a reading of at least some of the wider literature, Wood also provided a more detailed description:

'A head-dress of remarkable beauty was brought from this tribe by Mr. Petherick, and is now in the collection of Colonel Lane Fox [*i.e.* Pitt-Rivers]. It is white, in imitation of the white clay with which the head is usually decorated, and is made of cylindrical beads shaped as if they were pieces of tobacco-pipe. These beads, or bugles, as they ought perhaps to be called, are threaded on string, and fastened together in a very ingenious manner. The singular point in this head-dress is the exact resemblance to the soldier's casque of ancient Egypt, and to the helmets now in use in India and other parts of the world.'¹⁰

From June 1874 to 1878 the headdress was exhibited, along with the rest of Pitt-Rivers's collection, at the Bethnal Green branch of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum). The entry for the headdress in the catalogue published to accompany the exhibition repeated what had already been written elsewhere, with its scientific-seeming provenance: 'Helmet of cylindrical white beads, with neck-guard at back, worn by the Nouaer on both sides of the Nile, from 8 to 10 degrees N. latitude. Similar in form to ancient Egyptian head-dress. Obtained by Mr. Petherick'.¹¹ It also makes clear that it was exhibited, at the 'North Arch' of the museum, in a display of 'Head-Dresses and Helmets from Different Localities'; and it was presumably displayed in a similar way at South Kensington from 1878, when the collection was transferred there, until 1884, when it was transferred to Oxford.

By the time the headdress arrived in Oxford, therefore, it was reasonably well known. Not long after its arrival, it appears to have been put on permanent exhibition in a display titled something like 'Defence: Helmets'; and we know from a brief reference in Alan A. Blackman's B. Litt. thesis on 'The Material Culture of the Nilotic Tribes of East Africa' that it was still on display in the mid-1950s.¹² Aside from the reference in Blackman's thesis, however, there is no

evidence of any other notice being taken of it from its arrival in 1884 until the late 1970s. For example, there appears to be no reference to the headdress in any of the extensive writings of Oxford anthropologists on the peoples of South Sudan; in either E. E. Evans-Pritchard's publications on the Nuer or Godfrey Lienhardt's publications on the Dinka.

From the late 1970s, however, the headdress began to again be the focus of attention. First, in 1977-78 it was one of the objects selected by the PRM's conservation technician J. S. (Sue) Walker for the work she was to submit for examination for the Museums Association's Conservation Certificate. Then, in the mid-1980s it began to attract the attention of external researchers. This was in part because of the work that, following his research visits to Southern Sudan in the early 1980s, Coote began to carry out on the related collections at the PRM, but it was also because of the renewed interest in the history of the region, illustrated by the series of Anglo-Sudanese expeditions to Southern Sudan sponsored by the British Institute in Eastern Africa, and the increasing awareness among anthropologists and historians of the research potential of the collections held in museums. So it was that in 1985 the PRM's record for the headdress began to be transformed.

First, in December 1985 the records were annotated to the effect that John Mack of the British Museum thought that the headdress was unlikely to be a helmet and 'much more likely to be the ceremonial wear of a priest or healer ... where there is no singular and uniform style'. Then, in January 1986 Margret Carey (also of the British Museum) drew the attention of the PRM's staff to the publication of the headdress in Wood's *Natural History of Man* before going on to publish it herself in her overview of *Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa*.¹³ Indeed, Carey was so intrigued by the headdress that she continued to maintain an interest in it for many years, discussing it with PRM staff on numerous occasions before giving a conference paper about it – and another 'puzzle in African beadwork' – in 2007.¹⁴

A particular stimulus to further research at the PRM was the decision to include the headdress in a new display devoted to 'Nuer and Dinka'.¹⁵ As the researcher tasked with curating the display (with Coote as consultant), Petch set about following up several leads, corresponding with colleagues in European museums to confirm the presence of similar headdresses in other collections. Thus, in June 1992 Roma Milder-Splindler confirmed the presence of two similar headdresses in the collections of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (III A 321, III A 2273): the former collected by Georg Schweinfurth, the latter collected by Johannes Duemichen, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Strasbourg, 'during his expedition to Egypt, Nubia and Sudan in the late 1850s and early 1860s'. Then in November 1983 Adina Vargatu confirmed that there was a similar headdress in the collection of the 'Franz Binder' Museum in Sibiu, Romania (E57), which had been collected by the Transylvanian trader Franz Binder among the Gok Dinka.¹⁶ (More recently, in October 2019, Floriane Morin has confirmed the presence of another example in the Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland (ETHAF 011110).)¹⁷

Then in the early 2000s the headdress was one of the more than 1,200 objects studied in detail by Rachael Sparks as part of her work on the PRM project 'Recovering the Material and Visual Cultures of Southern Sudan: A Museological Resource'. One of the unexpected but wholly welcome outcomes of the project was the way in which the accessibility and availability of the records online made the collection a first port of call for researchers wishing to access information about and images of examples of the

historic material culture of South Sudan. So it was that in 2013 the collection was drawn on for images for the Government of South Sudan's publication *A Shared Struggle*, and the headdress was published once again.¹⁸

Documenting the post-collection history of objects like the headdress is a necessary task for museum curators, who owe it to the research community and the descendants of the object's makers and users to make all such information available and easily accessible. Clearly, however, this must be a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. After all, what we really want to know is who made the headdresses, where, when and why, and who used them, where, when and why. European collectors and commentators have drawn attention to their similarities with other 'helmets' from Ancient Egypt, India, and Circassia – and even with eighteenth-century European judicial wigs,¹⁹ sometimes with the explicit or implicit suggestion that the form must have been inspired by foreign examples. Setting aside these speculative and remote comparisons, however, and given that it appears that use of the headdresses had been abandoned by the late nineteenth century, we are wholly reliant on nineteenth-century sources for further information.

Treated with due care and attention, the nineteenth-century literature is of some help. For example, Petherick himself recorded the presence of what sound like very similar headdresses among western Dinka he referred to as 'Neanglau' (which judging from the maps accompanying his publications were presumably Gok Dinka). According to Petherick both the chief 'Anoin' and his brother 'wore caps resembling sailors' sou'westers, composed of white tubular beads sewn in close contact on to a piece of soft hide; the thread was of cotton, and in its manufacture a thorn provided a good substitute for a needle'.²⁰ These sound like headdresses of the same general form as the example in the PRM, but with bases of a different material – a piece of hide rather than a network of string. Intriguingly, Petherick writes as if he saw them being made.

Two examples of similar-looking headdresses made of cowrie shells rather than glass beads have also been reported. One was apparently collected by the Italian explorer Giovanni Miani (1810-72) among the Dinka in 1859²¹ and survives in the collection of the Museo di Storia Naturale in Venice (SNMI0137). The other is known from a drawing by Karl Girardet, based on a sketch by the trader Angelo Castelbolognesi (1835/1836-74), that was published in the latter's account of his travels in Bahr el-Ghazal in 1856-57.²² No provenance is given for this 'Bonnet en *cauris* (cypraea)', but it is possible that archival research of the sort devoted recently to Castelbolognesi's Egyptological collections²³ might throw light on where and when the headdress was acquired.

More pertinently, Schweinfurth (1836-1925) reported that while he was travelling among the Dinka he 'often saw those strange specimens of head-gear which, in the shape of a Circassian chain-helmet, are formed exclusively of large white bugle-beads, which in Khartoum are called "muria"'.²⁴ Schweinfurth also reports that 'this decoration is especially common amongst the Nueir',²⁵ noting that 'in Wood's "Natural History of Man" ... there is an accurate illustration of these ornaments'.²⁶ It may be that Schweinfurth is reporting independently that he has seen such headdresses among the Nuer, but it may also be that he is merely reporting what Wood, drawing on Petherick and Pitt-Rivers, asserted.

The recent publication online of the drawings by Schweinfurth held at the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt am Main, including one dated June 1871 of a Rek Dinka man wearing what may well be the headdress that survives in the collections in Berlin (Figure 2.2), illustrates how much more research remains to be done and how we have barely begun to

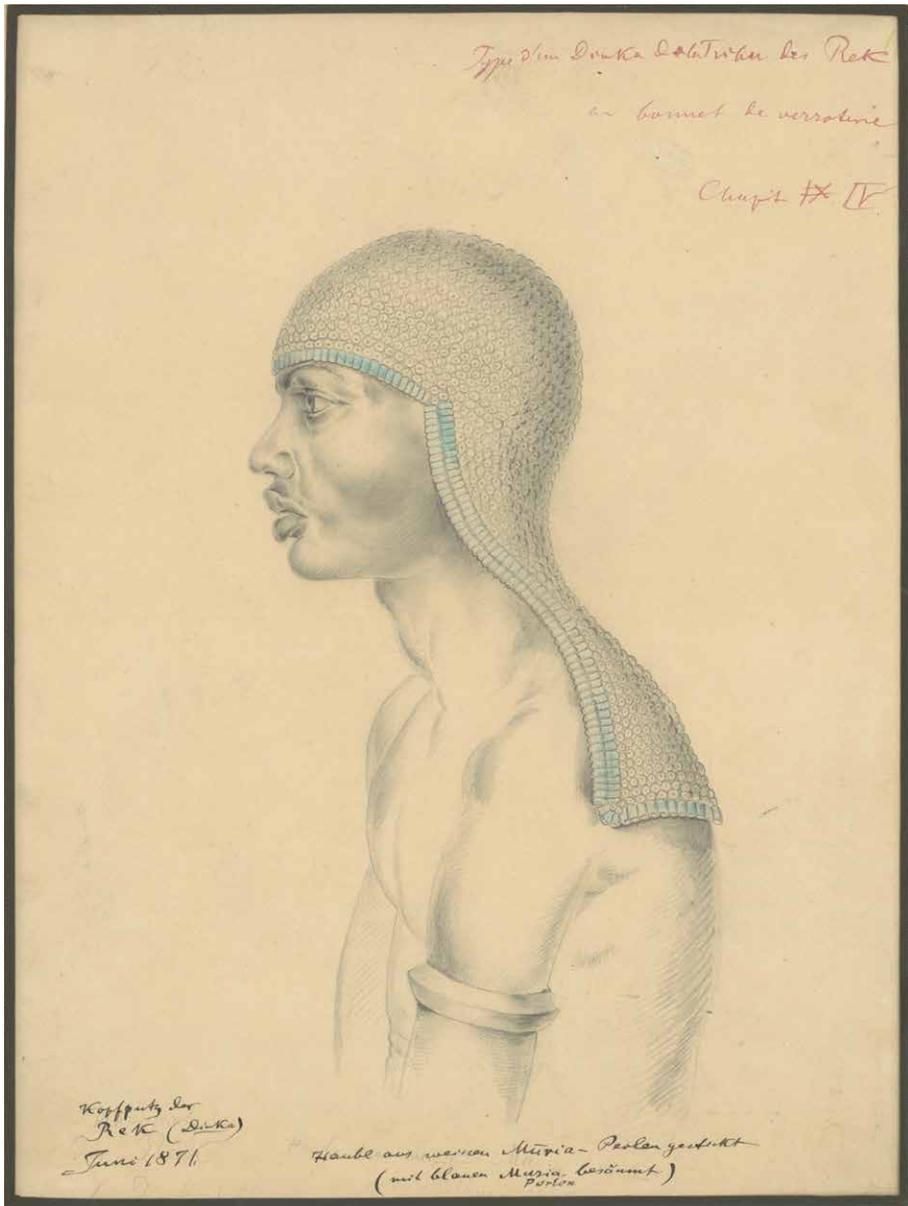


Figure 2.2. Portrait of a Rek Dinka man wearing a beaded headdress; drawn by Georg Schweinfurth in June 1871; pencil on paper; part of the collections of the Ethnographisches Bildarchiv, Frobenius Institute, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Courtesy of the Ethnographisches Bildarchiv, Frobenius Institute, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (EBA-B 02221).

bring together the scattered museum collections with the associated archives and written records. If resources can be found to bring together the relevant documents – objects, publications, drawings, photographs, manuscripts, maps – then we might begin to be able to contextualise such objects as the Nuer/Dinka headdresses, place them in more precise geographical and historical contexts, and reach some understanding of the circumstances of their production, use and meaning.

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A headdress of human hair

Nadja Haumberger

In the collections of the Weltmuseum Wien in Vienna there is an elaborately decorated headdress, made in part out of human hair, which is attributed to the Otuho people of South Sudan. It was given to the museum by Isaak Eduard Schnitzer (also known as Emin Pasha) who served as the Governor of Equatoria Province in the Ottoman-Egyptian government of Sudan (1878-85). While this is a visually striking object, the use of human hair as a material immediately raises questions over the ethics of its care and curation. This essay considers the headdress and the museological questions it provokes.

Museums are developing practices for handling ‘objects’ wrongly categorised as such: including the remains of people, ancestors, in part or as full skeletons. Declarations, working groups and recommendations¹ extensively debate how to deal with this material in an ethical way. Most current debates urge for more attention on ethnographic collections. In their original contexts, objects may have restrictions over who is allowed to engage with them; others might have required a trained specialist to handle them. Given these regulations, as well as the sensitivity of human materials, one major question museum professionals face is how to be respectful in handling objects held in our respective institutions.

As museum anthropologists, we cannot simply see these objects as aesthetic material. We must try to understand their origin, their biography and their historical entanglements, in order to retrace the context that forced them into museum collections. When faced with objects containing human remains, we are also often confronted by our own discomfort and privilege in accessing sensitive objects and information. Yet at the same time, the documentary records available to museum practitioners may be narrow or only reflect the perspectives of European collectors. This Otuho headdress reveals the limitations of working exclusively with existing museum documentation, and the necessity of involving diverse – in this case South Sudanese – perspectives in the research process. This is vital if museums are to think about the potential of their collections.

Figure 3.1. Headdress, attributed to Otuho. Donated by Isaak Eduard Schnitzer (known as Emin Pasha, 1840-92). Registered in March 1882, Weltmuseum Wien. Courtesy of the KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Vienna (14.318).

The biographical dimensions of an object are especially apparent with this headdress, given its historic creation literally on someone's head. At first glance, this headdress or helmet does not appear to be ethically sensitive, except for the time frame in which it was acquired. Headdresses made by East African pastoralists are generally considered a form of body adornment or armour.² Thus, it is a personal item, all the more so considering that it was created using a framework of woven and felted human hair, as well as other components.

In museum records, the headdress was first registered in October 1882 as a 'helmet-like headgear'. It was most likely collected by Emin Pasha³ during his travels from Gondokoro to 'Lattuka and Labore' from 31 March to 26 May 1881. From the museum's documentation we do not know when, where or from whom Emin acquired the helmet. The collection of which this headdress is part was meant for the Austro-Hungarian consul Martin Ludwig Hansal in Khartoum. Emin and Hansal were well acquainted,⁴ even though they were contracted by different nations. Hansal subsequently decided to forward and donate the collection to the museum in Vienna.⁵ Comprising the list of the shipment from Khartoum, the headdress finds mention as a 'felt helmet with glass bead adornment'.⁶ Hansal signed and sent the letter as well as the objects on 15 November 1881. He provided the information that was used to comprise the inventory list at the museum later, specifically geographical remarks.

The headdress is oval-shaped with a thicker woven bottom in chain stitch, with the same plant fibre running throughout the helmet. Except for the bottom, the headdress is covered with a paste comprised of various materials to produce a closed surface and finished with red soil throughout. On the front upper side, hair has been moulded into the binding paste, of which the exact composition is unknown. The red and blue beads on the top back half are sown onto the surface, as are cowrie shells beneath. On the crest, constructed to sit slightly raised from the rest of the headdress, more plaiting can be found, almost entirely covered with beads. The beads and the cowrie shells are prestigious and trade goods while the red soil coating is a non-trade material. Serving as a helmet plume, together with a second ornament, a small wooden stick adorned with black and red feathers in grass fibre is driven into the plaiting. The second small wooden stick is shaped so it precisely fits a rifle cartridge, secured to the crest with a metal ring inserted through the plaiting on top of the helmet as well as the stick itself. The inventory entry references this cartridge as 'a brass case of a rifle'.⁷ The referenced *Hinterladungsgewehr* was a type of rifle used by German-speaking officials. Since there is no mark on the cartridge, it could also be wrongly attributed to that particular rifle. The cartridge might point to the tradition of attaching metal ornaments to these types of helmets.

Given its ornamentation, this is the most elaborate example of an Otuho headdress in the Viennese collections. There are three others, one of which was from the same collector and donated to the museum a year earlier and is of the same proportions and style, but with three metallic rings attached at the top and no bead ornaments. Additionally, this headdress has small holes on each side and the top which may have been used for attachments, presumably individual feathers, given the proportion of the holes.

In the inventory list, the hair used is identified as human. The use of hair corresponds with historical accounts by Europeans Samuel White Baker, Percy Powell-Cotton, as well as Emin himself. In 1866, Baker describes the production of such a headdress, then as a hairstyle, in great detail including depictions of men wearing them.⁸ These elaborate

headdresses took several years to grow and groom. Over time, this style seems to have changed, becoming disassociated from a person and transforming into a removable helmet. Baker also mentions red and blue beads being the most fashionable, used for adornment only, as well as ostrich feathers for the same purpose.⁹ Cowrie shells sewn onto the brim are mentioned in his account as crucial for any helmet to be considered complete. Both Baker and Emin further describe an attachment on the forehead of a metal plate.¹⁰ It is unclear why the helmets Emin collected do not have these metal plates as they are not mentioned in his short description of what he believed to be the war attire of Otuho.¹¹ A third description of Otuho headdress is from Percy H. G. Powell-Cotton in 1904. He collected in the same area as Baker but described separate helmets only.¹² These three men all encountered Otuho material culture at different times and in this way record changes over a forty-year time span. Emin in particular was more occupied with documenting other aspects of his travels, in accordance with nineteenth century German-speaking travelogues of Sudan, South Sudan and neighbouring countries. Europeans of the time do not express any sensitivities or reservations about the materials used to create the helmet. All accounts describe the headdress mentioning that human hair has been used. Why and how this was so is unclear and there is no mention about this being unusual or troublesome to collect. Given the shape and general construction of the headdress, we may assume that this helmet was not grown on a man's head. The extent to which it was a high-status object remains unclear: although it incorporates trade items like beads, neither ostrich feathers nor major metal ornaments were used.

What does the available information mean for the interpretation and care of this headdress? From a museum's perspective, attempts to retrace the historical network of entanglements start with any accessible written accounts. However, the documentation process and historical information we have on specific objects predominantly reflect European concerns. Social status, prestige or power relations are not usually apparent in historical records, least of all if the collector was a diplomat, missionary or anything other than a trained anthropologist, as was the case for early collections in ethnographic museums of the German-speaking region. Such records can only tell us part of the story of any object. What was considered important and what was openly ignored illustrated the ideas of a certain time. Questions we are facing today were simply not in focus, or at least not recorded in any official way. The possibilities to learn more about an object's future interpretations can be enabled by embracing a genuine, shared approach to these collections.

Encouraging alternate perspectives to be heard is just as crucial. Often, museum professionals are left wondering and analysing what we do and do not know about specific objects. The example of this Otuho headdress illustrates how crucial it is to provide access to museums' archives and storages when trying to handle and interpret items in a sensitive manner. This can enhance our understanding and a multi-faceted use of collections beyond the gaze of museum professionals.

Part Two

Travelling and Talking Objects



The 'Omdurman' slit drum

John Mack

The so called 'Omdurman' wood slit drum or gong, generally attributed an origin in South Sudan, is an iconic object. Despite its imposing bulk and difficulty of transport, it has seemingly passed through many hands and been moved vast distances before reaching its current location: on display in the British Museum (BM) Sainsbury Africa Galleries in Bloomsbury, London. It is also, however, something of a mystery object. This essay presents some new information and an alternative solution to the puzzle of its origins.

The celebrity of the drum comes in part from the renown of its successive owners: originally sculpted – it has been speculated – for a chief in the south-west corner of what is now the Republic of South Sudan, it was then transported north and came at some point into the possession of Khalifa Abdallahi, the leader of the Mahdist forces opposing Ottoman Egypt's territorial ambitions in the Sudan; taken as loot by Major-General Herbert Kitchener (Commander-in-Chief of the Anglo-Egyptian forces) subsequent to the Battle of Omdurman on the outskirts of Khartoum in 1898, it was next presented to Queen Victoria and kept in Windsor Castle; it was then transferred to the BM by King George VI in 1937. From there it was moved to the Museum of Mankind in Piccadilly, London, where the BM's Department of Ethnography was temporarily installed in 1970; and finally, it went back to Bloomsbury again for incorporation into the new Africa Galleries opened in 2001. Rather like a passport, at successive transfers it had a moniker inscribed on it: Islamic-inspired designs carved on the flanks in – presumably – Omdurman; the royal crown on the tail in Windsor; and finally its museum number – 1937.11-8.1 – in Bloomsbury.

This particular slit drum has been the subject of several significant discussions exploring this history, the most comprehensive by the then-Director of the BM, Neil MacGregor, in his BBC radio series and subsequent book *A History of the World in 100 Objects*.¹ It has also inspired a fictionalised version of some of the details by Nigel Barley, a former BM curator. A satirical description of an imagined meeting between Baron Kitchener of Khartoum (as

Figure 4.1. Wood slit gong in the form of a bush cow, taken after the Battle of Omdurman, 1898, but in a style associated with the Azande and related peoples on the south-west borders of the Republic of South Sudan. H 80 cm x W 60 cm x L 271 cm. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Af.1937, 1108.1).

he had become) and the Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, E. A. Wallis Budge, is related through the BM cat who sat in on the discussion. In the ensuing conversation, 'K of K' was overheard remarking:

'It is a considerable piece of wood, carved as an almost life-sized bushcow and shipped from the dark and thumping heart of Africa, the forests of the Congo, down the Nile to South Sudan and then, as booty, ever northwards by slavers, picked up from among the thousands of the dead that lay slaughtered at Omdurman in the Sudan, ever acquiring new graffiti along the way, until it gets stamped with a royal crown at Windsor.'²

This later history of the Omdurman drum is well known. However, the backstory of the object up to the point of its recycling as a battle trophy remains more speculative. There are, in fact, various possible scenarios to explain its presence far from its purported place of origin. The usual explanation is that it was brought north from the equatorial forests of the south by ivory and slave traders in the nineteenth century. It is presumed that it was carried the vast distance cross-country to the Nile and thence northwards – Neil MacGregor follows the usual line suggesting that it is 'almost certain' it came to Khartoum as part of the slave traders' booty.³ But is this the only scenario? One other possibility has never been explored: that it was, in fact, carved in Omdurman itself (or Khartoum) from a large trunk of wood that could have come down either the White or the Blue Nile and not necessarily from the forests far to the south-west.

There were very significant numbers of southerners in Omdurman by the end of the nineteenth century. By no means all were 'slaves' in the conventional understanding of that term. Father Ohrwalder, who was a captive of the Mahdists for 10 years from 1882, tells us that at one military parade he witnessed there were on his estimate 31,000 'blacks' in the Khalifa's forces⁴ and that 500 armed 'blacks' with rifles constituted his trusted 'life guards'.⁵ Even allowing for exaggeration, these are large numbers. Concerning those from the south-west regions, he notes that among the inhabitants of Omdurman in a period around 1888 there were 'Niam (Azande) and Mombuttu (Mangbetu) cannibals', both of which groups, he tells us, had their own quarters in the town, married within their own people and spoke their own languages. Significantly, the Azande in particular had a reputation for their facility in singing and had what he refers to as a 'sort of school of music in which they practise all day'.⁶ While there is no evidence that the drum was being used to accompany singing, their presence and their reputation does at least give a context for the carving of the drum *in situ* in Omdurman though, arguably, not necessarily the work of a specialist carver. It is, after all, quite roughly carved and not necessarily finished to judge by the rudimentary detail, including a sketchy crescent shape on the side that remained to be completed when acquired in 1898.

In fact, this is not the only drum of this kind with associations in the Nile/Congo watershed area to have become known around this time beyond its place of origin. One drum was taken from Yambio in Zande country by a British punitive expedition in 1905 and displayed in what had become Gordon College in Khartoum.⁷ Like many subsequently documented, it is more barrel-shaped than the 'Omdurman' drum though it is, likewise, clearly bovine in form. Another earlier example was collected by the French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza from an area in the borderlands of what are now the Republic

of South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is identified as Yangere, a language group neighbouring the Azande. It was accessioned in 1896 as part of the collections of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, the predecessor of the Musée de L'Homme in Paris. This is currently exhibited in the Louvre, displayed in the African section of the 'masterpieces' gallery of the Pavilion des Sessions. A similar piece in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is also attributed to the Yangere, probably by comparison with Brazza's example. Both these are also bovine in form though with flatter sides than the Yambio drums.

Comparing these four examples and others from the area – *e.g.* in the American Museum of Natural History, New York⁸ – the 'Omdurman drum' is significantly larger, the most crudely carved and divergent in form from other documented examples. It is also distinctive in having what are clearly Islamic designs on both flanks, one in relief and the other indented. Sculpting in relief requires carving back the whole surface of the side of the object to leave the design standing proud, while indentation only involves removing the interior part of the design, a convex versus concave process of creating pattern. As a result, the BM drum is notably lopsided when viewed from the front. This has led to the observation that the drum's tone would have been altered in the process of applying the Islamic designs, presumably as part of its Mahdist commission. But does that matter? It is sometimes described as having been part of 'an orchestra' and examples have been documented being played in concert with other instruments, such as the cordophones found in the area.⁹ However, there is every reason to doubt this as the only context. We have a further reference to them in an autobiographical account by the Arab merchant and slave trader Zubeir Pasha. He talks of a signalling device used in warfare and in hunting which he calls a *runga*: 'a large piece of wood which is hollowed out, and made in the form of a buffalo or elephant: it is beaten with a stick that has three strings of india rubber after the manner of a European fiddle'. 'From this instrument', he continues, 'the villagers extract different notes, each with its individual meaning, so that by it the people can be summoned for the purpose of war, or for collecting grain or for an elephant hunt, and so on'. It is, he remarks, effective over distances of up to an hour and a half's travelling time apart and is used to pass messages from village to village over long distances.¹⁰

The original location of the Zande example from 1905 is described by its captor, Captain T. F. J. Brakenridge, thus:

'The drum stood in the open, near Yambio's hut, but the place was not well cleared, and there was no evidence of its being a place of assembly; in fact, as far as we could learn, it was rare for anyone except his immediate bodyguard and councillors to enter within the precincts of his village.'¹¹

Clearly, none of the drums of this kind are light enough to be easily manoeuvred and are most likely to have been sounded *in situ*. Almost all of those that were carried by the followers of the Khalifa have a different distinctive bell-shape. We also learn from Father Ohrwalder that the drums used by the Khalifa's forces as a rallying call had two tones, which the example in the BM also achieves with its unbalanced form, though in other respects the Mahdist drums discussed and illustrated in photographs of Omdurman war trophies have round metallic bases with skin membranes and are clearly of north African origin.¹² The drum now in the BM is sufficiently divergent from both Mahdist and



Figure 4.2. 'The Death Flag: The Khalifa's Black Flag, with Drums and Other Trophies Captured at Omdurman', *The Navy and Army Illustrated*, 5 November 1898, 165.

equatorial forest styles to suggest the alternative proposition that it was actually sculpted in Omdurman by a 'Niam' non-specialist carver for local use.

One other puzzle remains. In reading the various eyewitness accounts of the battle and the subsequent displays of the 'booty', it remains odd that so imposing an artefact seems to have escaped description. It is not even certain where it was captured – though, most probably, it was taken from the house in which the war drums were stored.¹³ In Britain there was an exhibition of 'The Dervishes Trophies' in the Banqueting Hall in London on 21 November 1898, eight weeks after the battle. The *Times* report of the event mentions 'the great war drums' in passing, but otherwise dwells on the flags, weapons and clothing captured.¹⁴ Queen Victoria records that on the following day 'L'd Kitchener presented me with a number of very interesting trophies from Soudan, chiefly from Khartoum'.¹⁵ Again, the slit drum is not identified then or later and there

is no precise date recorded for its arrival in the Royal Collections. Otherwise, the only other note in her journal relating to a gift from Lord Kitchener is of a ‘very large (and live) Egyptian donkey’¹⁶ which, as far as her records go, apparently trumped a very large sculpted bush cow.

However, an illustration of the high-end trophies from Omdurman has come to light in the course of research, which was probably photographed in Egypt with the objects arranged against the background of the famous Mahdist Black Standard (Figure 4.2). It was published in *The Navy and Army Illustrated*¹⁷ where the bush cow drum is definitively identified as ‘the great war drum’ of the Khalifa. The Zande-style drum would, therefore, have been used as a rallying call in Omdurman itself, replicating the use of such drums in Zande country. A smaller signalling gong, also of Zande origin, is just visible in the same photograph hanging from the head (and a Zande shield behind). The handheld gong would have been carried into battle as a communicating device between the various sections of the vast Mahdist army – and it, too, was presented to the Royal Collections.

Arguably, in a battle widely trumpeted as revenge for the beheading of General Gordon in Khartoum in 1885, it was the authentically ‘Mahdist’ loot that was the obsessive focus. In that context, a sculpted drum in the form of a bush cow which evoked origins in the non-Muslim south was out of place, albeit that the Islamic designs on its flanks added appropriate ambiguity to its story. Its iconic credentials only emerge later as a result of speculation about what is plainly a colourful biography.

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A talking drum

Samuel Zanunga Biegene, Takido Zambia Sebit
and Sebit Fandas

The following are personal accounts of the *gugu* (slit drum or gong in Zande language). They were given in the context of a research project, investigating expressions of resilience in the arts and heritage of South Sudan.¹ The event which prompted these recollections was facilitated by Sebit Fandas, a musician currently practising in Juba. It was itself part of a series of ‘storytelling circles’ held across Juba in 2019-20, which aimed to explore the meanings and significance of different artistic practices in South Sudan in an open and multi-vocal way. These events were conceptualised and coordinated by a Juba based NGO, the Likikiri Collective.

A *gugu* is a large slit drum, which can stand up to 5 ft high. These drums are often carved into zoomorphic designs to resemble a cow or buffalo. The largest make a sound similar to a buffalo lowing, as the wind blows through them. They are traditionally used at dances and as a means of communication. The sides of the drum are hollowed out to different thicknesses to create a characteristic two tone ‘voice’. The sound can also be regulated by hitting at varying distances from the slit, or by covering parts of it. The ‘Omdurman’ drum, discussed by John Mack in the previous chapter, is an example of a *gugu*. In this intergenerational conversation, the authors reflect on the importance and changing position of the *gugu* in Zande society, but also on the significance of ‘heritage’ more widely in South Sudan. Takido is an experienced *gugu*-maker who now lives in Juba. Samuel is a recent graduate of Juba University and a researcher with the Likikiri Collective.

The *gugu*-maker’s story: Takido

When I was growing up as a child and able to run, we went with my mother to visit my uncles in Congo. That was where I saw what they call *gugu* for the first time in my life. It was at a party with the neighbours of my uncle. I was so happy to see people dancing but most of all, I was interested in the *gugu*: the sound and the way people could beat it was so amazing. I came near to it, just to see how it was played.

Figure 5.1. Takido Zambia Sebit displaying a model *gugu* at Likikiri Collective Storytelling Circle on *gugu*, Luri, Juba, South Sudan, 11 September 2019. Photograph by Elfatih Atem.

Then there was a time when my father went hunting far into the forest, a distance of a day's walk. At that same time, the doctor came to vaccinate people for sleeping sickness.² It was a problem for anyone to miss this vaccine, because if you missed it, there would be a heavy fine. Yet, there was no way we could tell our father to come for that vaccine. But there was a certain old man, who came together with [the medical team] and he asked me whether that *gugu*, which he saw under the granary, was my father's. Then I said, 'Yes, it is his.' Then that old man picked up the drumstick and starting beating the *gugu*, passing the message to my father that we have news at home. My father heard that *gugu* and started to return home, taking from morning till evening, until he arrived and asked me, 'what happened here at home?' I told him, 'tomorrow is the last day for the vaccine and you know all the rules for the vaccine: if someone misses it, there will be a charge.' Then my father said, 'Yes, I knew there was some issue at home: that's why they were calling me with the *gugu*.'

So, at that time I developed the interest to one day make my own *gugu* too, with the intention that it could talk. The thing which really motivated me to go and make my own *gugu* was the miracle I saw that time, to call my father with it from a far distance and he could hear it and could come home immediately. That is why I wanted to learn about it and learn to make it.

I learned about making the *gugu* directly from my father, at home. When my father was making a *gugu*, I came near him and asked him, what tree he was using. He asked me if I wanted to make the *gugu* too. Then I told him, 'Yes, I need to know which type of tree should be used'. Then he told me that he was using the tree called *bakaikpo*. Then, he asked again if I needed to learn how to make it. And I said, 'yes, am I not a man?'

There is something we call *wene bera* (Zande: having a sharp mind, talent or a gift); not all people are gifted. When I saw my father making the *gugu* for the first time, I came near to it and had a look at it for a while, turning it around to see how the hole was made. Then I hit it to hear the sound it made: I hit it to the right to hear the sound and then to the left to hear that sound: one sound was big and the other small. It was not only my father who taught me how to make this *gugu*; it was because of my own interest and the gift I had.

During that time, to find metal tools for carving the *gugu* was a big problem. Where will you find that metal? Before the English people came to our land we used to get metal from a specific stone called *woronzo*. After you have collected all the stone, then you cut down the big trees and bring the wood near the stone, pack them on top of the stone and set it on fire. You have to dig a hole, so when the fire gets hot and the stone begins to melt, the liquid from the stone would flow in to the hole. After the stone finished burning, the liquid from the stone, which had run into that hole would freeze down into metal.

But as it was, I had to go to the shop of a trader who was called Kamunde. There I saw a long blade, which I brought to my father so that he could sharpen it for me. After my blade had been sharpened, I went to the bush to look for the *bakaikpo* to cut it down for my *gugu*.

I started with the legs, as I had seen my father do. At that time I was in primary school year three. I took a pencil and drew a picture of the *gugu* in my book to look at it while making the real one, physically. You carve each side with a specific tool called a *gaga*. Each side makes a different sound, one we call the 'female' voice, the other the 'male' voice. The middle section is for controlling the sound.

After my *gugu* was finished, people came to bring it home. But the nature of the *gugu* [requires that] after you make a new one, far in the bush, some sacrifices have to be

made before entering the compound. If you take it straight home before the sacrifices have taken place and women see it with their eyes, it will never sound good. You have to make traditional beer [from millet] which we call *gbangara*, and call people while the *gugu* is still somewhere nearby in the bush. Then people come to start drinking that beer, and then the owner of the new *gugu* selects the people to go and bring it home and place it in the middle of the compound. Then all the people who are around at that time take a mouthful of the beer and spit it into the new *gugu* as a way of blessing it. Then they call the master who knows how to play it very well to come and beat it, while women come to ululate during the process.

So, I brought it near the home and left it there first. Then I went to my father to inform him that what I had been making in the bush was now ready: could he come to see it? Then my father went with me to the place of my small *gugu*. 'Wow,' he said, 'Very good. You are now a man. You can make a *gugu*.' Then he went to bring those things for the sacrifices. After all the sacrifices were done, early in the morning my father started to beat that *gugu* and then I saw many people asking, 'Whose small *gugu* makes such a loud sound as this early in the morning?'

In the past, our churches were using the *gugu* for telling people the time for prayer. They would beat it first to remind people, then a second time so that people should be ready, and a third time to announce that it was now time to enter and pray. We have other different sounds for hunting animals or for passing information about war or any bad thing coming into the community. And then we have the special sound that you could play to tell people that you are 'Mr So-and-So' and you are at your home drinking and thanking God that all your crops in the garden are out; this is to show your happiness to the rest of your neighbours. For the funeral, if someone dies, the family would bring the *gugu* and an expert player would inform people what had happened, who died and mention the owner of the house, so that people could come for that bad news.

I left my community to work as a soldier and went to many places. When I used to go home to see my people, I didn't see people practising those things anymore. People lost their direction just because of modernisation; they are now using a telephone for their communication and they have forgotten about their traditional ways of communicating. But if something is your culture, there is no reason for you to throw it out or to leave it and join the culture of other people, so whenever I see this it pains me and I am not happy with it.

I moved to many places in my [military] work. I came across a *gugu* in Khartoum when our commander ordered us to go and clean a store. I saw a big *gugu* there which somebody had designed very well, using a buffalo horn. As soon as I saw it I came and saluted my commander and asked him to take our *gugu* back but he said I should do what I came here for; we did not come for the *gugu*. How that *gugu* was taken to Khartoum I could not tell you, but what I heard was that the *gugu* was taken during the war of King Gbudwe and the British took it to Khartoum.

Another time, I came here to Juba and I saw people from the Zande community organising their traditional dance with only a drum and jerry-can. It was in the year 1990 [the height of Sudan's second civil war]. Then I said, I am Zande but I have seen my community doing wrong things, so I have to make a *gugu* for them.

Even though it takes all your time and energy to make your *gugu*, you will be happy when all the work is finished and you take it home. People will know that you have a nice *gugu*, so whenever someone has a party they would come to you and ask you to bring your



Figure 5.2. A *gugu* at Likikiri Collective Storytelling Circle on Zande songs and dances, Hai Mauna, Juba, South Sudan, 20 September 2019. Photograph by Elfatih Atem.

gugu. Sometimes they would give you money and cook a chicken for you and provide you with a big pot of our traditional beer. You would be respected very much and they would clear a room just for you and your people, because you would not go there alone, you go there with your people so that whenever they give you those things then you can share them. In that process you will feel so happy and important because it's your *gugu* that is maintaining people now, and those who come with you will be happy too that they are eating and drinking now because of you.

The researcher's response and reflections: Samuel

This project has reminded me a lot of my life in the past. The interview I did with Takido the *gugu*-maker helped me to reflect far back into my childhood. I also remembered the first day in my life that I saw a *gugu* in my village in 1990, when I was almost five years old. I had heard the sound being played very far away before that, but I was too young to know what it was. The man who remains in my mind up to now was a certain pastor called Martino *ba se gugu* (which means Martino the *gugu*-maker). He was a well-known man to us children, not because he was a pastor or *gugu*-maker, but because he had almost thirty orange trees surrounding his compound. You know how kids love oranges! In order to get access to them we had to become friends with his only son, Moses, and his cousin. We were best friends, always going around together and swimming at the river. There were almost twenty-seven of us boys who were age-mates in our village. My father had a lot of sugar cane for them to eat so they became friends with me and my brothers, and they used to praise and encourage us so that we felt happy and brought them sugar cane. So we did the same to get them to bring us oranges, and if they were reluctant, then I could threaten them with not sharing my father's sugar cane anymore.

One day, by chance I was passing Martino's granary and I raised my head to look inside and saw a *gugu* for the first time. I was so surprised, I ran like anything thinking that it was an animal, because the shape of the *gugu* is exactly like an animal with four legs and a tail. Then I burst into serious crying with a loud voice, running towards my big brother. He was surprised to see me running towards him with such speed while looking backwards in terror. He was asking me to tell him what was happening but I couldn't even open my mouth to speak because my heart was beating so loudly. I scared them too, but they couldn't see what I was running from and I still couldn't speak. They told me to go and drink water to cool down my agitation. I went behind the others so that if the animal chased us I could run and leave them!

But I did not know that we are going to sit under the same granary where I saw the animal. To my surprise, I saw the son of Martino sit down on that animal, oh my God! He had given all the chairs to his friends, so he sat on the *gugu*. I came and sat far away on the other side and quietly I asked my brother, what is this animal? He said, 'no, it's not an animal – it's a *gugu*.' And I asked him, 'what is a *gugu*? And what is it for?' Then he explained the use of the *gugu* in the church and at parties. Immediately, the son of Martino started to play it and it reminded me of the sound that I had heard in the distance. Then I slowly came near to it and touched it, but still I couldn't quite believe it or forget how strange it looked at first. That was my first day to see a *gugu*.

When we were going home, I told one of my best friends that the reason why I was running and crying was because of that *gugu*, and that at first I thought it was one of those animals that our parents used to say were eating kids. He couldn't keep quiet with my secret because it made him laugh until he fell down. He told the rest of our friends and they laughed at me like anything.

When I was older and we used to go to the church on Sundays, we spent most of our time playing the *gugu*, until the watchman in the church used to hide the drumstick from us because we made a lot of noise and the *gugu* is not supposed to be played without a good reason. When I reached adulthood and could go to traditional dances, then I really got used to the *gugu* and I sometimes used to play it also.

Through this project and meeting Takido, I developed a greater understanding of the importance of the *gugu* to our community. It has the very important role of passing on information of anything happening in the community. The *gugu* was the first telephone among our community, and the *gugu* is our music together with the drums and xylophones.

The project has really motivated me to practise my own language after not studying it for a long time, since I was in primary school. Not only that, it even made me know more about my own culture, for example learning why the *gugu* was being made, and which specific trees are suitable for making the *gugu* according to our traditional belief. I also learned that the *gugu* has two voices, male and female, and that the *gugu* itself can talk. Furthermore, I came to realise that many of our cultural materials are dying just because we don't value them; we value the modern materials more and we don't believe in our own cultural things anymore.



Music that breathes life

Justin J. Billy Buwali

As a theatre maker and academic who deals with material and intangible culture, I am interested in what objects mean to South Sudanese people. I believe that studying objects and understanding the different ways they are used can open a window on to our past and help us see who we are and where we are going. I also believe that it is important for us (as scholars, practitioners and artists) to think more creatively about the role and significance of material objects in our communities.

One example that captures this point is *rongo*, a group of musical instruments which have a very strong social, cultural and spiritual power for Ndogo, Bai, Gulu and Serre people in Western Bahr el-Ghazal state. In fact these people sometimes call themselves the ‘*Rongo* group’ because they are the only people who use these instruments in their music.

‘*Rongo*’ is an Ndogo word meaning ‘stop the water’. The name originates from a myth, which describes how, when these instruments are playing, all life’s activities stop and everyone shall run to join them. Even the water stops to listen to *rongo*. *Rongo* is not simply an ‘instrument’: it is the story of life for the people who create it. And the *rongo* orchestra is, in some important ways, a living entity rather than simply an object. *Rongo* is music that breathes life.

The name ‘*rongo*’ is usually applied to a specific form of xylophone, made of ten wooden slats with ten long gourds below which act as resonators. It is hung around the neck and played using two sticks in each hand to strike the slats.

‘The ten bars are pentatonically tuned and paired in octaves with the lowest pair at the player’s left, and the other pairs ascending in pitch from right to left. The musician uses a pair of rubber-headed beaters in each hand so that he can strike a bar and its lower octave simultaneously.’¹

Each orchestra has three of these instruments: *Gu Rongo*, played as bass; *M’billi*, played as the lead instrument and *Ju Rongo*, played as solo. There is also a drum and four

Figure 6.1. Rongo dancers group perform in Juba, South Sudan, 2013. Photograph by Justin J. Billy Buwali.

rattles made from gourds called *vi ci*, which complete the full *rongo* orchestra. Only men are allowed to play *rongo* instruments, but only women are allowed to sing as part of the performances. Men and women dance to the *rongo* music, which is performed on important social occasions and celebrations.

The creation of the *rongo* instruments is also significant and subject to various regulations and traditions. They are not created where people live, but by experts deep inside the bush. Their construction is secret, and only a few people are allowed to know how to make *rongo*. The construction also takes months. After getting the material required, there are secret rituals which go into the making of each part.

Given this secrecy, we are lucky that Faustino Roro Kamitin, the son of one of these specialist *rongo*-makers, wrote an account of their construction in 1947:

'The *rongo* is made from either ebony or a special hard dried wood fetched from the forest, which is carved into a key board of ten pieces with varying tones. After they have been carefully carved and tuned, they are fitted over the gourds, which are got by first sowing the seeds during the rains. These gourds, which are of a special kind (*karaka rongo*), and are used only for this purpose, are sown near trees, where the stems, after growing, creep up and yield gourds, which are cut down and taken to the nearest stream or waterpool, where they are left for a week or so, then taken out, cleaned, and hollowed out, and left ready to fit to the slats at any available time.'²

He added that even the wax used to fix the slats and gourds to the main board came from special ground bees, while material from bats' wings or spider-webs was used to cover the tiny holes at the ends of the gourds to enhance the sound.

It is still the case now that after their construction, the instruments cannot be played until a special blessing has taken place. Everyone gathers around the *rongo*, which are put on the ground. At this point, the chief brings different kinds of alcohol and blesses the *rongo* by putting some of the alcohol on each instrument while uttering some secret words. The remaining alcohol must be drunk by the people; it must all be finished in that place where the *rongo* have been blessed. The musicians then pick up the instruments and start playing short songs. When the songs have been played many times, the *rongo* are now ready to be used.

From then on, every time *rongo* are played there should be alcohol to be shared by the musicians and kept with the instruments. It is also important for *rongo* to be played from time to time, even if there is no specific social event. Otherwise, the instruments will start to play themselves and this will be followed by a lot of bad luck and crisis, which will require many sacrifices to remedy.

In some significant ways, the relationship between *rongo* and people is more than just a relationship between people and inanimate objects: it is a spiritual connection. When the owner of the *rongo* dies, the instruments are said to start playing themselves without any musician and they do that for some time before stopping. There was a case of this recently in Juba. I learned of the death of a man who owned *rongo*. He had several houses. He died in one house and simultaneously the *rongo* (stored in another house) began to play themselves. So these are not simply 'old' or 'traditional' beliefs; they are also part of the contemporary experience of urban life for Ndogo, Bai, Gulu and Serre people.

Rongo is not just musical equipment for *Rongo* people: it is an expression of a deep understanding of life with its social, historical, political, religious, economic and spiritual dimensions. *Rongo* has its own life: it breathes; it gets angry; it gets happy and it even dies.

The *rongo* tradition is also dynamic, not static. We can trace a variety of historical changes with regard to how the *rongo* is played and its role within the communities which create it. Roro Kamitin described spreading and changing *rongo* dance forms among the different communities in Western Bahr el-Ghazal in the colonial period; he also stated that men, including musicians themselves, would sing, whereas nowadays it is said that men do not sing.³ The photographs in this chapter show changes in *rongo*: it used to be performed wearing traditional leaf clothes, but when the missionaries came, they persuaded people to wear clothes.

The dynamism and mobility of *rongo* is most striking in accounts of it being played in Egyptian cities by the descendants of slave soldiers or cotton workers originally from South Sudan. In these urban communities, it seems to have become part of eclectic Sudanese musical and spiritual traditions known as *zar*, as well as being played at wedding celebrations. Known here as the *rango*, it has ‘the same layout of paired octave bars as the *rongo*, but its large frame stands on the floor rather than being suspended’.⁴ Clearly, *rango* performance was an important way to maintain and forge a sense of identity and community in contexts of slavery and hardship, and its popularity helped to spread it well beyond its communities of origin. But the specificity of the *rongo*’s materials and manufacture also led eventually to its scarcity in these urban contexts, as the vintage instruments brought with the original captives and migrants became damaged and worn out. Neither the gourd plant nor the knowledge of *rongo* manufacture were available in Egypt, making these instruments irreplaceable. Thanks to initiatives by an Egyptian folk music expert, at least one of these 190-year-old instruments was still being played in 2010, reportedly held together ‘with strips of tape, matchboxes and even bandages – the gourds look as if they’ve been mummified’, and still retains the ‘aura of magic and mystery’ that provoked disapproval from many Egyptians.⁵

For me, the *rongo* orchestra raises some critical questions about the way South Sudanese heritage is to be understood and preserved. What is the connection between material and intangible culture heritage? How does material culture reflect our lives as South Sudanese (in terms of beliefs and values, morals)? Most of the analysis of our material has been from outsiders; we need to study these things ourselves and learn more about how materials were produced and for what purposes. How have material practices changed? The possibility of seeing an object like a *rongo* instrument in a museum (whether in Europe or South Sudan) poses all kinds of challenges. How should its significance be conveyed? How can its spiritual life be recognised and honoured unless it is played regularly by its specialist musicians? To simply label *rongo* a ‘musical instrument’ is an impoverished description of the social significance of this art form. This should push us to interrogate how a museum can be a link for people in South Sudan.



Like doves in flight

John Ryle

The *toor* – there are two – are metallic and shine in the dark. They are twisted and look like stars. Or stones. Or like the hammers used by blacksmiths to work iron. They fell to earth from the sky. Or were seized as plunder in a dispute between two tribes. Or else they formed part of a marriage exchange between them. The *toor* can fly; making a whirring sound as they pass overhead, like doves in flight. Sometimes they sound like thunder. When there is fighting they vanish and hide in the river, or in a distant part of the floodplain.¹

That, in summary, is what is known, or said, of the *toor*. Their home is a seasonal cattle camp called War Nyang – pool of the crocodile – twenty kilometres along a sandy road north-east of Rumbek, the capital of Lakes State, in the scattered forest and open grazing land on the southern rim of the floodplain of the Upper Nile. In settled times these enigmatic objects are kept away from human gaze, concealed inside a platform hut at War Nyang. But in South Sudan, as elsewhere, these are not settled times; and in recent years the *toor* have more than once absented themselves.

As a cattle camp, War Nyang is unusual: it is also the site of a ritual centre controlled by the Roordior clan of Kuei, a subdivision of the Agaar Dinka, the agro-pastoralist people who are the majority inhabitants of Lakes State.² Members of the Panamachot sub-clan of Roordior are holders of the *bith*, a cylindrical lance in the form of a fishing spear that is a symbol of spiritual authority widespread among Dinka communities west of the Nile. The *toor* are under their guardianship.

In the recent past the spiritual authority of the *bany e bith* – the spear-master – extended to all five of the primary divisions of Agaar. But since the 1983-2005 civil war in Sudan, and subsequent independence of South Sudan, the influence of customary authorities has diminished, and the established arrangements between Agaar communities have been disrupted by the ubiquity of guns, by political and military conflict, and by cattle raiding and a remorseless cycle of revenge killings. The people of Kuei have become locked in conflict with neighbouring Agaar groups, and the shrine at War Nyang has declined in influence, becoming, at one point, a battleground.

Figure 7.1. The house of *toor* at War Nyang, near Rumbek 1982. Photograph by Andrew Mawson.

From the 1980s onwards I visited War Nyang a number of times – in peace and war – to learn the history of the shrine, attending sacrifices and interviewing the spear-master and other notables.³ But I have never seen the *toor*. Few people have done, especially men; this includes, with one or two possible exceptions, the spear masters themselves. The only individuals who can see or handle these objects – who are safe in their presence – are women past child-bearing age. Women who are still menstruating are warned they will become infertile; and men who lay eyes on the *toor* are said to be liable to suffer injury, infertility or death.⁴ There are no photographs of the *toor*; and physical descriptions, as summarised above, are contradictory and imprecise. Accounts of comparable *materia sacra* in other Dinka shrines in South Sudan are few and far between.⁵

During the colonial era in Sudan, the pre-eminent *bany e bith* of Kuei, Gol Meen, was adroit in establishing relations with the Anglo-Egyptian administration – more so than the leaders of other Agaar groups. This allowed the shrine at War Nyang to prosper. Possession of the *bith* is hereditary within the lineage of Panamachot, and the shrine is controlled up to the present day by descendants of Gol Meen, part of an agnatic line that goes back to the first ancestor. Up to the early 1980s the custodian of the *toor* was Thong Chegok, the last surviving widow of Gol Meen (who died in 1936). Since her time, the role of custodian has been filled successively by Nyanyuai Gol, a daughter of Gol Meen, and by Ajak Ruei, one of the widows of his son, Makuer Gol. (Makuer Gol eventually followed his father as *bany e bith*, and presided over the shrine from 1961 until his death in 1993).⁶ Although it is only women who can see the *toor*, it is notable that recorded descriptions of them are usually mediated through male elders. This reflects the patriarchal nature of Dinka society and likely gender bias on the part of researchers, including myself.

A key role taken by Thong Chegok, and her successors as custodians of the *toor*, is that of officiant at the annual ceremony of the blessing of the seeds.⁷ During this ritual, which takes place at the start of the planting season, seeds were traditionally brought by representatives of Agaar sections to be anointed with oil or animal fat in which the unseen *toor* had been immersed. It is an event that formerly brought all Agaar sections together in an affirmation of their collective dependence on the fertility of the land and the cycle of the seasons; in the present century, however, this wider function of the shrine has fallen into abeyance.

Approaching the complex of ritual buildings at War Nyang – then and now – the visitor is struck, first, by the *luak nhialic*, the byre of Divinity. This is the shrine of the first ancestor, Mayual, principal divinity of the ritual complex. The *luak* is an unusually large circular thatched building of a type used in other Dinka areas to keep cattle safe at night. But the *luak* at War Nyang – sixteen metres in diameter and seven or eight in height – is empty, save for a large drum called Mongok that stands on an earthen platform at the centre of the building, accompanied by a *bith* and the horns of sacrificed bulls. (There is a termite mound also, and a population of bats and snakes.)⁸ Bulls and oxen that are brought to the *luak nhialic* at War Nyang are there not for shelter, as they would be at an ordinary *luak*, but for sacrifice.

Yot *toor*, or *aduel toor* – the house of *toor* – stands about a hundred metres from the byre of Divinity. It is a medium-sized thatched hut on a platform standing two or three metres high, supported by tree trunks set in the ground. This type of dwelling is widespread in Lakes, designed for protection from floods and nocturnal predators. The house of *toor* at War Nyang is built in the shade of a *rual* tree (*Kigelia africana*), identifiable by its large sausage-shaped fruits. This tree is the clan emblem of Roordior, the spear-master clan; people of Roordior say they are *ruai ke rual* – related to the *rual* tree. The tree plays a key

role in the Agaar version of the Dinka myth of origin: when Mayual, the first ancestor, falls to earth from the sky, he lands in a *rual* tree.

The *luak nhialic* at War Nyang (also referred to as *luak Mayual*) is thus not simply a *luak*; and the house of *toor* is not simply a house. The two buildings are symbolic transformations, respectively, of a byre for cattle and a dwelling place for people. Rather than livestock or human beings, their denizens are divinities and powers – *yeeth* (singular, *yath*) and *jaak* (singular, *jok*) – spiritual symbols, embodiments of the forces that, in traditional Dinka cosmology, control human life. In this sense the *luak nhialic* and the house of *toor* function as metonyms, as signifiers of the two principal sources of Dinka livelihood: livestock husbandry on the one hand, and cultivation on the other.⁹ The *luak* represents the domain of cattle husbandry – the work of men – while the *toor* house is linked to agriculture, work largely performed by women. Hence the role of the female custodian of the *toor* in the annual blessing of the seeds. The blessings and sacrifices that structure the ritual life of the shrine are calibrated to the ecology of the flood plain, an acknowledgement of its inhabitants' dependence on it.

What is to be made of the *toor* themselves, these ambiguous shining objects? Where do they come from? What is their role in the ritual life of the shrine? The most concrete detail in available descriptions is that they are metallic and resemble blacksmiths' tools. ('*Toor* are things like *lung* [iron]' is how one of Gol Meen's sons explained it. '...There are two of them ... *aci rieric* [twisted but separate].') There is more than one account, however, of the origin and history of the *toor*.

The primary account, as explained by Makuer Gol – and confirmed in conversation with his son and successor, Deer Makuer – portrays them as the spoils of war (though neither Makuer nor Deer put it in those terms).¹⁰ The *toor*, in this account, were formerly the property of a chief of the Jur Bel people (the name by which the Agaar Dinka refer to their southern neighbours – 'Bëli, as they call themselves). The 'Bëli are a smaller group than the Agaar. They are historically hunters and honey-gatherers, acquainted with the arts of metal-working rather than cattle pastoralism.¹¹ In the past, 'Bëli occupied a far larger area than they do today, including the land where Rumbek town now stands – and the site of War Nyang itself. At some point in the pre-colonial era, expanding Dinka communities displaced the 'Bëli from a considerable part of their domain.

In Makuer Gol's account of this process, an Agaar ancestor, Buoi Kuot, was in negotiation with 'Bëli to gain grazing land for his cattle, but became frustrated by their demands. He sent a son of his maternal uncle with instructions to ask 'Bëli metal workers to sharpen spears for him. This was ostensibly to castrate a bull for sacrifice; but instead the maternal uncle's son used the spears to kill the 'Bëli chief and despoil his compound, removing the *toor* and the chief's stool of office.

The word *toor* itself has no cognates in the Dinka language. It is most likely derived from *mi tɔrɔ*, the 'Bëli word for a sky-god, linguistic equivalent of the Dinka *nhialic*.¹² As a sky-god *mi tɔrɔ* has power over rain, so it is likely that the *toor* appropriated by Agaar from the compound of the 'Bëli chief are a pair of what in ethnographic literature have been called 'rainstones' (which are not necessarily made from stone). Rainstones are ritual objects used in rain-making ceremonies and for swearing binding oaths. Among the 'Bëli such objects are known as *ndëli 'ba tɔrɔ*, 'hammers of the sky [or rain]', *ndëli* being the 'Bëli word for a blacksmith's hammer. They are believed to have fallen to earth from above.

The *toor* thus have a sacred quality and an association with blacksmithing that is derived from the cultural practices of their original owners.

The technology of iron-working, it may be noted, came late to the floodplain, perhaps as recently as the eighteenth century, contributing to the air of mystery that surrounds the *toor*. There is no iron ore to be found in Dinka areas (and little stone), though Rumbek town lies on the edge of the ironstone plateau that borders the floodplain. In Dinka communities, metal workers – who are known in Lakes as *ajuong* – form a separate occupational caste, disprized by the cattle-keeping majority. (This is despite universal dependence until recently on their technical skills for the manufacture of hoes and spears.) Like the *toor* themselves, blacksmith clans are held to have a non-Dinka origin. In the pre-colonial era it may be surmised that iron, as a new-fangled material from outside the Dinka realm, would have had a power and mystery comparable, in the present day, to that of titanium or carbon fibre.

The *toor*, then, insofar as they are made of metal and resemble a blacksmith's tools, can be understood as symbolic power objects, capturing the role of the new, life-enhancing technology of iron-working, vital for cultivation, while simultaneously asserting their new owners' dominion over the place and people that they were appropriated from. This is consistent with the symbolic landscape of War Nyang: the *luak* is a byre that is not used to house cattle; the *bith* is a fishing spear that is not used for fishing. And the *toor*, likewise, are not blacksmiths' tools as such, but a representation or transformation of them.

Further to the narrative above, there is a different story of the origin of the *toor*. In this account, rather than being taken from the land of the 'Bëli, the *toor* are described as falling to earth from the sky directly into the Dinka domain, in the same manner as Mayual (the first ancestor and presiding divinity at War Nyang), and perhaps at the same time.¹³ This version – told with no sense of contradiction by the same elders who provided the account of the appropriation of the *toor* from the 'Bëli – has the function of establishing a connection between the 'Bëli account of their celestial origin and the Dinka Divinity, thus assimilating the *toor* into a distinctively Nilotic cosmology.

And there is yet another version of the story. In this version the *toor* are represented as a gift from the 'Bëli, and linked to a pivotal event in relations between 'Bëli and Agaar: the marriage to a 'Bëli chief of Akon, a daughter of the Dinka ancestor Buoi. This marriage, which is commemorated in a public shrine near the main square in Rumbek, is understood by the Agaar to have been part of a negotiation in exchange for land, including the land where War Nyang stands; Akon Buoi is praised for what is represented as an act of self-sacrifice – that is, allowing herself to be given in marriage to non-Dinka. In Agaar songs, past and present, Rumbek is frequently referred to as 'the land of Akon Buoi'.

Why should it be only post-menopausal women who can safely see the *toor*? According to traditional Dinka cultural tenets menstruation presents a danger of ritual pollution: reproductive fluids have their own sacred aspect and their own set of prohibitions; post-menopausal women personify ritual purity. Speculatively, then, the liminal quality of the *toor*, partaking both of the physical world and the world of spirits, of *jaak*, could explain why those beyond child-bearing – and thus closer to the world of the ancestors – might have a special relation to them.

Yet the role of the *toor* cannot be reduced to a Procrustean bed of theory. When I met Thong Chegok at War Nyang in 1980, in her old age – still wearing the apron of goatskin that was the dress of women in an earlier time – she told me, 'The *toor* cool the heart [*puou bi lier*]. We don't quite understand them. They have their own light; but to our sight they are confusing.'¹⁴

Such are the accounts of the *toor* and their origin recorded at War Nyang in the years that it has been possible for outsiders to visit the shrine. In 2015, four years after the independence of South Sudan, with intercommunal conflict in Lakes State escalating, the hostilities between Kuei, the people of the *luak nhialic*, and Rup, a rival Agaar tribal section, reached crisis point. The shrine at War Nyang, thitherto a symbol of unity between the five sections of Agaar, was not exempt from this conflict. That year, on 16 April, a Rup war party set fire to War Nyang. The *luak nhialic* survived, but the *Yot toor* was burned to the ground.¹⁵

Following the event I spoke with Deer Makuer Gol, the current spear-master. He told me that the *toor* had left the *luak*. They had travelled north, he said, flying through the air to safety in the territory of Pakam, an Agaar section allied with Kuei against Rup. The *toor*, he stressed, do not like war. I learned later that they were reported to have returned briefly to War Nyang in the form of doves. Then they vanished again.

It was not the first time that the *toor* had moved – or been moved – from War Nyang, nor was it the first time the house of *toor* had been put to the torch. In the late 1940s the house was destroyed by fire and the *toor* vanished, to reappear later in the bush in Gok, a Dinka area west of Agaar.¹⁶ And during the first civil war in Sudan – the Anyanya war of the 1960s and early 1970s – it is said that a northerner, a soldier in the Sudanese army, tried to set fire to the ritual buildings at War Nyang, but was struck dead by Divinity.

In 2019, when the situation in Rumbek was calmer, I spoke once again with Deer Makuer.¹⁷ He told me that the house of *toor* at War Nyang had been rebuilt and the *toor* had reappeared. This meant, he said, that peace between the warring sections would soon follow.

As material objects – tangible but unseen – the *toor* mediate between the physical world and the realm of the ultrahuman, privileging those who control access to them and interpret them. Their numinous quality, their mutability, and their ability to sustain more than one myth of origin make them a flexible symbolic resource. Known to have been taken by force from the previous inhabitants of the land, but also represented as part of a bridewealth payment and as a divine gift, they provide multiple justification for the occupation by Agaar of a significant part of the territory where they now live – a process of cultural assimilation that follows an act of material appropriation. The story of the *toor* exemplifies the perpetual tension between the pastoralist drive for access to grazing land and the need to maintain peaceful relations with surrounding communities.¹⁸

In Rumbek today the introduction of new weapons technology and the subsequent spread of small arms have brought increased violence and social division to everyday life. This has exacerbated the intimate enmity that prevails between communities in competition for resources of land and political power. The enduring presence of the *toor* in the ritual centre at War Nyang is a reminder of the conflicting pressures of the agropastoralist way of life, the life-giving aspect of iron, the role of elders and spiritual leaders in communal memory, and the possibility of peace.

Acknowledgements

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Part Three

**Resistance
and
(Re)appropriations**



The musealisation of the gift

Paola Ivanov

In the inventory book of the Africa collection of the Weltmuseum Wien, the following entry can be found referring to a lance with the catalogue number 20.573:

‘Niamniam, lance of King Mbio, with a big head (74 cm long, blade 40 cm, shaft 34 cm); the short wooden shaft is tightly wrapped with flat copper wire, on the back end, an 84 cm long square iron tip is attached. Length 2.31 m.’¹

The piece was gifted by Emin Pasha,² who served under Ottoman-Egyptian rule as governor of the province of Equatoria, to the museum, and inventoried in 1884 in the then anthropological-ethnographic department of the Court Museum of Natural History. At this time, weapons were favoured items among Europeans who travelled in Africa, standing both for the colonial stereotype of the continent’s wilderness and, when reduced to innocuous museum objects, its subjugation through alleged European ‘superiority’. In fact, ethnographic museums in the global north store masses of weapons in their historic collections. However, with the exception of a few outstanding pieces, today nearly no attention is paid to them, despite the fact that metal weapons from Africa display a high aesthetic and technical quality and were also (and often are until today) extremely valued in their contexts of origin, as they were often embedded in economic and social exchange and in the constitution of political authority.

This particular, masterfully crafted copper lance offers a deeper insight in the political processes during the period of Ottoman-Egyptian rule in South Sudan. It also provides clues to a more differentiated view of historical events in its region of origin. And it is highly significant for grasping the attitudes that lay behind European ethnographic collecting and thus the nature of the relationship between European and local actors.

‘King Mbio’ is the name that ivory and slave traders from the northern Sudanese Nile valley gave to the prince Yambio or, as he was also called, Gbudwe (ca. 1835-1905), one of

Figure 8.1. Copper spear formerly belonging to the Zande prince Gbudwe, gift of Emin Pasha to the Weltmuseum Wien. Courtesy of the KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Vienna (20.573).

the Zande leaders who ruled in the region of the Nile-Congo divide. The Azande, to whose (wrongly) fabled anthropophagy the name 'Niam-Niam' in the museum's entry hinted, have an iconic status in anthropology. The renowned British social anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard dedicated one of his most influential discussions to the topic of Azande witchcraft and magic.³ Evans-Pritchard himself carried out his fieldwork in the British colonial period mainly in the former territories of prince (or, as he writes, king) Gbudwe. He collected important historical reports from Gbudwe's former courtiers, which form the basis of his reconstruction of the pre-colonial political organisation of the Azande and of the military and political history of Gbudwe's principality. He highlighted Gbudwe's power and his resistance to the different intruders in the region and their local allies.⁴ In 1882, Gbudwe was defeated by Ottoman-Egyptian troops from the Bahr el-Ghazal province, under the command of Rifa'i Agha, a former trader who became part of the government. Gbudwe also confronted the first troops of the Congo Free State, who supported his nephew and enemy Renzi (d. 1921, son of his brother Wando); in 1905, the Anglo-Egyptian government, in order to occupy his strategically important territories, and so take an advantage in the competition with King Leopold II for the Upper Nile basin, sent out a strong force against him. The soldiers captured Gbudwe's residence and fatally wounded the ruler.⁵

How, then, did the lance of this famous prince come into the Vienna museum – and why has the piece passed unnoticed until today? What does its presence in a museum reveal about the historical and political dynamics of the encounter between local peoples and the Ottoman-Egyptian, northern Sudanese and European intruders?

Under the rule of the Avungara dynasty, and in the West, of the Abandia dynasty, the Azande were the most powerful people that traders and later Ottoman-Egyptian representatives encountered during their expansion in today's South Sudan (and neighbouring regions in today's Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda). The Azande themselves were the product of the expansion of the different branches of the two dynasties and their original followers from the lower basin of the river Mbomu in today's Central African Republic. This expansion incorporated a great number of different peoples in what is sometimes called the 'Zande amalgam'. In the nineteenth century, the Avungara expansion was still in full swing. Different princes belonging to different lines of descent from the founder Ngura were fighting against un-subjected people, as well as against each other, for political dominance.

Avungara princes took different stances towards the traders and representatives of the Ottoman-Egyptian government, mainly depending on their political interests. Therefore, it would be a historical misunderstanding to think of a generalised 'resistance' to the traders.⁶ Moreover, 'King Mbio's lance' and numerous other weapons made of copper show that the Zande principalities were well integrated into the growing trade system. The prestigious material, which because of its malleability was only used for arms intended for display, was brought into the region by the northern Sudanese traders for exchange with the regional rulers. The metal was imported from Europe as well as from the mines of Hufirat an-Nahas situated between Darfur and the Bahr el-Ghazal.⁷ Contrary to Evans-Pritchard's reconstruction, at the beginning of the traders' expansion, Gbudwe's father Bazingbi as well as his other sons and grandsons seem to have sporadically allowed trading expeditions to cross their territories (which would imply that direct exchange took place).⁸ However, they recognised very early that these new players in the region,

through whose support new (often non-noble or not legitimate) local chiefs came into power, constituted a danger for Avungara supremacy, and consequently fought against them on several occasions. Gbudwe in particular locked his territory against the traders' penetration until his defeat against the troops from Bahr el-Ghazal in 1882.

How then, did 'Mbio's lance' come into the possession of Emin Pasha? A historically uninformed view might presuppose that all objects were plundered from their original owners by Europeans or other invaders. However, historical sources demonstrate that the traffic in so called 'ethnographic' objects was already very intense before the establishment of the Ottoman-Egyptian government, and that these objects could pass through different hands; and so the means of acquisition included a whole spectrum of possibilities from gift giving, to barter, to plundering and other violent means of appropriation.

Khartoum-based traders as well as South Sudanese actors were well aware of the European interest for so called 'antiquities', a word which covered all objects collected by Europeans: not only ethnographic, but also natural objects (animal and bird skins, insects, etc.) as well as, in the north, archaeological artefacts. In the course of both their trade expeditions and raids among local peoples, the traders also took back ethnographic objects with them. In fact, the earliest collections of pieces from Azande country, for example those of the trader John Petherick from 1858 and the traveller Theodor von Heuglin from 1863-64, as well as the Azande collection stemming from Wilhelm Junker's first travel in the region (1877-78) were in reality put together in the Bahr el-Ghazal or other *zariba* territories – or even in Khartoum itself. European travellers and government employees, like Emin Pasha, exchanged objects or bought them from each other. First and foremost, ethnographic objects like lances or spears, throwing knives, shields, ivory horns, bark cloth, stools as well as a great variety of items of personal adornment became a frequent gift that local rulers made to Europeans as a means of establishing alliances (albeit in the context of power dynamics fundamentally destabilised by commercial intrusion).⁹ Chief Ringio, probably a low Avungara noble who came into considerable power as middleman between the local population and traders kept objects in a specific house, in Junker's words, 'literally a museum of antiquities'.¹⁰ From this 'collection', which he was not allowed to access, Junker got some objects (a new Zande shield, a Mangbetu bark cloth and a leopard skin) as gifts, in this case unequivocally as an act, by a powerful chief, of alliance or even patronage. In the case of Emin Pasha, numerous Avungara princes, who had more or less willingly accepted the Ottoman-Egyptian rule, sent him objects through emissaries or his subordinates who visited their territory.

It should not be overlooked that the exchange of objects was already a locally established means of building alliances. For Azande people, spears and lances had a crucial role in this. Generally, in the region of the Nile-Congo watershed, metal objects were the main means of exchange in the sphere of social relations (misunderstood by the European travellers as 'money'). Specifically spears, which were together with shields the main war tools of the Azande, were distributed by the princes to their warriors, used as bride wealth or as compensation. Moreover, a particular kind of lance, the description of which very much conforms to the appearance of 'Mbio's lance' in Vienna served as a sort of flag in war:

‘The true banner of the Azande is the gbuļu, or bagbuļu, [as it is called] when it is on a large scale, [which is] a kind of war pennant. It is nothing other than a large, rather flattened lance, with a hole in the middle; it was carried ahead of the bulk of the army and could not fall into enemy hands unless through defeat. The gbuļu-bearer who allowed his banner to be captured was sure to be put to death by his leader.’¹¹

Is the lance, after all, a spoil of war? This seems rather improbable, as it was the Bahr el-Ghazal members of the Ottoman-Egyptian government who waged war against Gbudwe. Whereas Emin Pasha, who mostly stayed in Equatoria’s administrative headquarters in Lado, had only letter contact with them. Another important function of the gift of spears or lances was the establishment of war alliances. If a Zande prince solicited another one to join him in war, he sent him one or more spears. If the prince accepted the alliance, he kept the spear; if not, he seems to have either broken the spear or possibly sent the emissary back with the gift.¹²

In contrast to his predecessors and the Bahr el-Ghazal administration, Emin’s politics in Equatoria were mainly led by the principle of establishing good relationships with the local rulers. For some time he kept up a rather intense exchange with Gbudwe. In November 1880, he wrote in a letter that he had received an invitation from Gbudwe to visit his territory.¹³ As Evans-Pritchard notes, the fundament of Gbudwe’s enmity with the Bahr el-Ghazal government was the fact that this was represented by powerful Arab traders-cum-war-lords like the already mentioned Rifa’i Agha and allied with the hostile prince Ndoruma (ca. 1845[?]-1903, son of Gbudwe’s brother Ezo).¹⁴ Gbudwe and his fellow rulers, who had little exchange with the traders, had no reason to think that the new powerful officials from the Bahr el-Ghazal and the Equatoria administration were part of the same government. Instead ‘they [the Zande kings] thought, not without some justification ..., that each served his own interests and was opposed to those of the others’.¹⁵ Thus, when on 6 July 1881, Emin wrote in a letter that ‘Sultan Mbio has thoroughly defeated the people from the Bahr-el-Ghazal, who had marched against him after Gessi Pasha [the Bahr el-Ghazal’s governor] left’, he added: ‘however, to me, he has sent gifts’.¹⁶ Gbudwe’s victory, combined with the arrival of the gifts, strongly suggests that he had intended to forge a war alliance with Emin. The lance now in Vienna was possibly a part of this alliance request. However, it appears Emin did not understand Gbudwe’s message. The exchange continued and in the beginning of 1882, Emin sent an expedition into his territory. That July, he received a delegation from the prince which again invited him to visit. This visit never materialised, as, at the end of 1882, Emin received intelligence that Gbudwe had been defeated and taken prisoner. Emin complained in a letter about the ‘rule of force’ employed by the Bahr el-Ghazal administration.¹⁷ Yet, the fate of Gbudwe was only worth a laconic commentary in his diary: ‘It is a pity about the brave man’.¹⁸ On 14 April 1883, the last steamer from Lado travelled to Khartoum before the *Mahdiyya* interrupted the Upper Nile navigation. With it was a box for the Austrian consul in Khartoum, Martin Hansal.¹⁹ Among the contents were objects destined for the Vienna Museum, including ‘Mbio’s lance’.²⁰

There is strong evidence to conclude that ‘Mbio’s lance’ came into Emin’s possession in the context of Gbudwe’s political manoeuvring. The absence of any reaction from Emin (apart from his half-hearted intention to visit Gbudwe) shows how ignorant Europeans were of the social and political surroundings they had entered. Emin’s main motivation

for his career in Equatoria was to make a name for himself as natural scientist and principally ornithologist, and gain the possibility to go back to Europe as a renowned man. His disinterest in Gbudwe's fate characterises the European indifference towards real, living people, an indifference that underpinned the European idea of colonial domination. The fact that a gift, the very materialisation of social relationships and reciprocity, ended up in a museum and never was given proper attention also shows how the agency of the African protagonists was doomed to be futile in the context of colonialism, as no place was foreseen for them. It also shows how ethnographic collections were a means of constructing distance between 'colonised' and 'colonisers'. Ultimately, these collections became a place of social death. This is all the more reason to now establish relationships with people from the societies which originally produced, used, and exchanged these objects, thus transforming ethnographic collections into places of social life.



'Captured' at the Battle of Omdurman

Nicholas Badcott

In 1970 a large wooden club was donated to the collections of the Royal Marines Museum in Portsmouth. It was collected by Sergeant Robert Trowbridge of the Royal Marine Artillery while he was serving with Anglo-Egyptian military forces during 'the Reconquest', or campaign to take back Sudan from the Mahdists.¹ Marines like Trowbridge had responsibility for the artillery and machine guns on the invading gunboats, which steamed up the River Nile towards Khartoum in 1898.² As land forces approached the city in early September, they were supported by heavy fire from the gunboats before and during the battle known as Omdurman or Karari, which culminated in the defeat of the Khalifa's army and the end of the Mahdist State in Sudan.

Although the club is documented as having been 'captured' at the Battle of Omdurman, the circumstances of its acquisition by Trowbridge are currently unknown.³ It is possible that some gunboat personnel had the opportunity to go ashore and collect directly from the battlefield, exchange with other servicemen, camp followers or local Sudanese, or bid at the sale of 'loot' that took place within days of the victory.⁴ During the Reconquest, many British soldiers, sailors and marines, especially officers, collected the weapons, armour, uniforms and banners of the Khalifa's soldiers. Some of these 'trophies' made their way into military collections, while others were kept in private possession, donated to museums or sold to dealers in Britain. The club is a relatively unusual trophy from Omdurman, and those collecting there particularly favoured other object types, when these were available and portable; Sergeant Trowbridge himself also acquired a Mahdist flag, a shield and two swords while serving in Sudan.

The club is very similar to examples acquired from the Shilluk areas of South Sudan that are now held in the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the British Museum in London.⁵ It was carved from a single piece of wood and has a straight shaft or handle that tapers to a point at one end and has a large, spherical head at the other. Its surface is smooth and appears undecorated. European travellers, administrators and soldiers in

Figure 9.1. A club in the National Museum of the Royal Navy collections, Portsmouth, UK. H 720 mm x W 150 mm x D 140 mm. Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum of the Royal Navy (RMM 1970/100).



Figure 9.2. Three Shilluk men. Photograph by C. G. Seligman?, Upper Nile, South Sudan, c. 1910. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1998.348.17).

Sudan in the nineteenth and early twentieth century frequently refer to clubs like this in their writings, sometimes describing them as a knoberry, a term used for a comparable weapon in southern Africa.⁶

‘Every man carries and cherishes a long spear, with a laurel-leaf-shaped blade and a tuft of ostrich feathers near the butt; when prepared for war he carries also a knoberry, an extra throwing spear or two, and a light oblong shield of wickerwork or hide.’⁷

As Count Gleichen and others have written, the club formed part of the 'panoply' worn or carried by many Shilluk men.⁸ Figure 9.2, probably taken by the anthropologist C. G. Seligman during his field research in Sudan in 1909-10, shows a similar club being carried with other weapons and accoutrements, including a rather different club, relatively straight in form.

Contemporary descriptions of the use of Shilluk and other clubs in Sudan are elusive or limited. The type in the present study is frequently classified in museum catalogues in the UK as a 'throwing club' but it may also have been held in the hand to hit or hammer an opponent's body.⁹ John and Katherine Petherick describe the experience of a fellow traveller in Sudan, who had been hunting in 1859 when a group of Nuer 'suddenly dashed at them, and, hurling their clubs with vexatious precision, followed up their villainous attack with lances'.¹⁰ However, we do not have comparable testimony for the Shilluk using the club as a projectile to soften up or distract their enemies. In contrast, Romolo Gessi, who served in the Ottoman-Egyptian regime as Governor of Bahr el-Ghazal and travelled widely across southern Sudan, described the Governor of Fashoda, Yussuf Bey, dying from 'the blows of the Shilluks' weapons' during an engagement in 1875.¹¹

It has also been suggested by a number of early twentieth century sources that Shilluk clubs were 'multi-purpose' and could also be put to non-violent uses. The missionary and linguist Diedrich Westermann, for example, describes clubs being used to bruise grass fibres for rope-making and to flail dura or sorghum heads to extract the grain.¹² Domville Fife, on the other hand, suggests that the 'special club' used by the Shilluk against the Dinka 'is an ingenious affair, combining in one article, made of exceedingly hard wood, a spear, knobkerry and seat'.¹³ An iron spike sometimes found on the end of the haft would seem to provide the 'spear' being proposed here and one that could be pushed into the ground to turn the club into something to rest on.¹⁴

Although the Shilluk were rarely described or photographed without a club, it does not seem to have been their principal weapon for fighting or hunting. As mentioned above, three spears were carried: a broad-bladed stabbing spear and two small throwing spears.¹⁵ According to Gessi, who witnessed Shilluk hunting techniques in the 1870s, the 'lance' or spear was the Shilluk weapon of choice when trying to kill a lion 'single-handed'.¹⁶ But it was also effective against a human foe, notably when used to bring down the governor's horse during the attack on Egyptian forces at Kaka in October 1875.¹⁷

The depiction of the club by collectors and museums primarily as a weapon has parallels with the militaristic display of similarly multi-functional spears discussed by Jok Madut Jok in this volume. It contributed to the Ottoman-Egyptian and British construction of Shilluk, Nuer and Dinka societies as martial: the 'fighting Nuer' in particular gained an enduring fierce and hostile reputation among foreign traders and imperialists in the nineteenth century.¹⁸ But the Shilluk kingdom had a longer and more ambiguous history of interaction with wider commercial and military forces. As British imperial engagement with Sudan grew in the 1890s, the Shilluk were frequently noted for their fighting prowess and seen as 'the finest and bravest'.¹⁹ Invariably, European travellers, soldiers and administrators compared them favourably with other groups across the region. So, for Gessi:

'The Shilluk passes for a most intrepid warrior; he never retires, even when in inferior numbers, before a foe.'²⁰

The British and their allies, it seems, were assessing the martial abilities of the southern Sudanese not only as opponents but as potential recruits for the British-led Egyptian Army. It suited those guiding and promoting British involvement in Egypt and Sudan to emphasise Shilluk capabilities, their exploitation by the Mahdists and their support for regime change. Rudolf Slatin, whose book on his experiences as a captive in Mahdist Sudan was edited and translated by Reginald Wingate, the Director of Egyptian military intelligence, enthusiastically states:

‘the Shilluks, armed only with their lances, frequently broke the squares and inflicted considerable loss on the soldiers ...’²¹

When writing his own book on ‘Mahdiism’, Wingate suggested that there were thousands of Dinka and Shilluk men ‘unwillingly serving under the Khalifa’.²² This was the line maintained by those hoping for the overthrow of the Mahdists. However, the long-term relationship between the Shilluk and the Egyptians had been rather more complicated.

As the Ottoman-Egyptian Sudan expanded its trading frontiers southwards in the mid-nineteenth century, many Shilluk joined the forces of the traders while their kingdom continued to tax trade through its territory. Shilluk control of the White Nile was not lost until the 1860s, when Egyptian and Sudanese shipbuilders took over the forested Aba Island, from where the Mahdi would launch his rebellion in the 1880s.²³ The armies of the Ottoman-Egyptian regime also employed men from southern Sudan taken during slaving missions. These slave soldiers were known as *‘jihadiya’* and formed a significant part of the government’s army in Sudan.²⁴ Although sometimes at odds with the governors and garrisons imposed by Cairo and Khartoum, some ‘free’ Shilluk had fought alongside the Egyptians under Rashid Bey Ayman against the Mahdi in December 1881.²⁵

As the Mahdi’s power grew, some people from the south saw in this movement an opportunity ‘to rid themselves of an oppressive and unpopular Government’.²⁶ These recruits to Mahdist forces were joined by slave soldiers captured in battle and taken after the surrender of Khedival forts, and later by men, including Shilluk, enslaved as rebellions in the south were crushed by the Khalifa’s commanders. Perhaps as many as 15,000 of these southern Sudanese were grouped together into a military unit, also known as the *jihadiya*, and carried firearms rather than their more traditional weaponry.²⁷

Although direct references to Anglo-Egyptian Army encounters with Shilluk soldiers fighting for the Mahdists at the Battle of Omdurman are yet to come to light, fine examples of their military material culture can be found in a range of museum collections across the UK. Many of the clubs, spears, shields and drums collected by British servicemen on campaign in the Nile Valley are likely to have originally made their way north with those southern Sudanese serving in Mahdist forces or as trophies or loot taken during Mahdist raids against the Shilluk, Zande, Nuer and Nuba, among other groups.

We can only speculate about the early life and the journey of the club into Sergeant Trowbridge’s British hands but it is fascinating to think that its original Shilluk owner may have followed a similar path himself that led to service in one of the battalions of the new Anglo-Egyptian Condominium that took control of Sudan in 1898.

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Car Koryom's fly whisk

Douglas H. Johnson

This is a trophy of war, described in the museum labels on display as 'the insignia of a wizard', or 'wizard-chief' of the 'Lau Nuer', 'captured' from him in 1928, and loaned to the museum by C. Armine Willis, then governor of Upper Nile Province in Sudan. It is 506 mm long, made of light yellow and dark greyish-brown ostrich feathers (*Struthio camelus*), bound together with two cut lengths of a cylindrical animal tail. No further details about its former owner, Car Koryom, or the circumstances of its 'capture' are given in the display.

Car Koryom (c.1877-1948) came from the Maiker-Rumjok section of the Lou Nuer and lived in the village of Padiak along the border with the Gaawar Nuer and the Ghol and Nyareweng Dinka. He was a member of the Dang-gonga age-set (initiated c.1895), and he and his family had ties with the two most important Nuer prophets of the nineteenth century: Ngundeng Bong of the Lou and Deng Laka of the Gaawar. Prophets among the Nuer (*guk kuoth*) claimed to be seized by a named *kuoth* or divinity, with whose voice they spoke and who imbued them with enhanced spiritual powers, particularly in healing, cursing, and prediction. In about 1914 Car fell ill and claimed to be seized by the divinity Deng. He is reputed to have proved this claim when he saved a Lou Nuer raiding party from annihilation by the Twi Dinka when he plunged into the ground a spear given to his father by the prophet Deng Laka; thus opening an avenue of escape.

Throughout his active career as a prophet Car Koryom generally promoted good relations with his Nyareweng Dinka neighbours. Many sought refuge with him from Gaawar Nuer raids, and he counted many Dinka among his followers. He had a Nyareweng wife (a former captive), and his sister married a Nyareweng husband. He even intervened to mediate a fight between two Dinka sections.

British administrators in the Upper Nile Province, as elsewhere in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, were suspicious of inspired religious figures, whether Muslim or pagan, and dismissed all Nuer prophets as wizards or magicians, using the colloquial Arabic term,

Figure 10.1. Fly whisk of ostrich feathers set in a hide handle, insignia of the prophet Car Koryom. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1928.67.2).



Figure 10.2. Car Koryom with fly whisk at his arrest at Lang on 11 January 1928. Photograph by Noel Walter Eastwood. Courtesy of Mrs Jean Eastwood.

kujur, regarding them as ultimately subversive and inevitably hostile to government. Throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century administrative control of Upper Nile Province and the territories including the Nuer was precarious. In the 1920s a new policy of native courts was introduced with government recognition of a hierarchy of sectional chiefs, partly to circumvent the influence of the prophets.

The reorganisation of the province included the construction of a motor road through Lou Nuer country, using *corvée* labour. Many Lou objected to the forced labour involved and Guek Ngundeng, the son and spiritual successor to Ngundeng Bong, became the spokesman for opposition to the road. Charles Armine Willis, the former director of intelligence in Khartoum and newly appointed governor of Upper Nile Province, warned the central government that Guek's opposition presaged a rising of 'the *kujurs* in a body', though there was little evidence then to support a coordinated conspiracy of prophets among the Nuer. Two bombing raids by the RAF against Guek at his father's shrine at the end of December 1927 scattered his following, many of whom sought refuge with Car Koryom at his dry season camp in Lang, east of Padiak village.

Car Koryom had taken no part in Guek's alleged preparations to resist the road, and prior to 1927 had scarcely come to the attention of government administrators. The few who had dealings with him regarded him either as sensible or harmless. With the government programme of creating new chiefdoms among both the Dinka and Nuer some government-appointed chiefs saw Car as a rival and a competitor for the loyalty of young men. Car attracted many Nuer and Dinka young men through his generosity in giving them cattle with which to pay bridewealth and marry. In the lead up to military operations against Guek administrators received contradictory reports about Car's loyalty from his rivals among the newly appointed chiefs.

It was partly at the urging of government chiefs that a patrol of mounted infantry accompanied the Nuer-speaking district commissioner, Percy Coriat, to Car's cattle camp in Lang on 11 January 1928, where they were met by Car and a following of a hundred unarmed men. Car denied any involvement in Guek's resistance but was taken into custody anyway. When the force made camp at the Pading on the Khor Fulluth during its return to the province capital, Malakal, Car leapt over a four foot high fence at night and escaped, leaving his *dang* – a decorated ceremonial stick or rod – and his ostrich fly whisk behind.

Car Koryom roamed free while the government expanded its military operations against other Lou and Gaawar prophets. He was not present at the final confrontation between government troops and Guek Ngundeng on 8 February 1929 in which Guek was killed. Car's family claim that he had been present the night before the battle but had announced he had no quarrel with the government and persuaded his age mates to depart before the troops arrived. Throughout the rest of 1929 police patrols fanned out searching for Car. Hostages were taken from his section and held until he finally gave himself up in March 1930. He was imprisoned for a few years but released and returned home, where he continued to be respected as a prophet, and died in 1948.¹

Surviving government documents provide no convincing evidence to support the accusation that Car was hostile to government and a subversive force among the Nuer. He is remembered among the Lou Nuer mainly as a healer and a peacemaker, for which there is some supporting evidence in contemporary records.

Governor Willis claimed that a conspiracy of *kujurs* necessitated an increase in his executive powers in his province. The central government denied him the autonomy he

requested but ultimately sanctioned military action against the Nuer. It was this military action, rather than a prophetic conspiracy, that provoked widespread rebellion among the Lou and Gaawar Nuer, beyond the original *casus belli* of the road.

Car Koryom was neither a wizard nor a chief, contrary to the labelling in the museum. The fly whisk had no ritual or spiritual significance, though it is a rare object among the Nuer. It is, however, a relic of Britain's last colonial pacification campaign in Africa.



'Small drum, wooden and hide, variable pitch'

Richard Vokes

Museum collections across Australia contain numerous artefacts connected with present day South Sudan. The Western Australian (WA) Museum's African holdings include a drum that has recently become important for the South Sudanese community in Australia, especially Melbourne, and which has been mobilised by them as an object for 'living heritage'. Australia is now home to approximately 25,000 people of South Sudanese heritage, which is the largest diaspora outside of Africa, and this community is increasingly engaging with museum artefacts as media for historical storytelling.

The drum was donated to the WA Museum in 1955, by a Mrs Margaret Rose Harper, nee Drummond, in memory of her late brother, Peter Drummond – who was almost certainly the person who acquired it from East Africa. The instrument, which is constructed of wood and hide, with a density of intricately knotted cords around its entire body, is typical of a drum-making style that was common to many of the Nilotic peoples of Sudan and northern Uganda during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹

Air Marshall Sir Peter Drummond was born in Perth in 1894, into a merchant family. In 1914 he enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force, and saw action at Gallipoli, before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps, and thence in 1918 to the newly established (British) Royal Air Force. A WWI 'ace', Drummond was to remain in the RAF for the rest of his life. He was killed on 27 March 1945 over the North Atlantic, while piloting an RAF B-24 Liberator called *Commando* – which had been Winston Churchill's personal transport throughout World War II – on a routine flight to Canada.

In February 1919, Drummond had taken command of the RAF's No. 111 Squadron, then based in Egypt, and in early 1920 he led a deployment of its planes – most likely its De Havilland DH9as – south into Sudan, in support of Governor-General Lee Stack's then ongoing 'Garjak Patrol' against the Gaajak Nuer of eastern Upper Nile Province.

The Gaajak Patrol (formally: Patrol No. 71) had been originally planned in early 1914, although with the delay of WWI, it did not finally launch until January 1920. Over

Figure 11.1. 'Small drum, wooden and hide, variable pitch.' W 210 mm x H 290 mm. Photograph by Xavier Leenders, courtesy of the Western Australia Museum (F1937).

many years preceding, the British administration in Khartoum had become increasingly loathing of the Gaajak Nuer who, living in a remote part of their country close to the Ethiopian border, not only evaded taxation, but also raided their neighbours with apparent impunity. The spoils from these raids, cattle and slaves, were easily traded across the border into Ethiopia, including for firearms and ammunition – one result of which was that by 1920 the Gaajak had become one of the most heavily armed groups in Upper Nile. As a result, the government were also increasingly concerned that unless the Gaajak ‘grave menace’ could be addressed, then ‘the whole Nuer people who had hitherto been under administration would break away, either in open or passive resistance’.²

It was in this context, then, that in mid-January of that year, a military column was sent out from Nasir Town, under the command of Lt.-Colonel C. R. K. Bacon, to (re-)assert British control. In the weeks preceding, a gunboat had been used to attack Gaajak settlements along the territory’s various watercourses, and to capture and destroy Gaajak canoes. It was to ultimately neutralise seventy-six of the vessels. These actions were followed by those of the column itself, which over a ten-week period engaged in a wide range of hostilities across both Gaajok and Gaajak Nuer country (the former of which the column had had to cross in order to reach the Gaajak). And from early February 1920 onwards, all of this was also supported by Drummond’s planes – which were used to throw handheld bombs into Nuer camps (thereby reproducing a tactic that had been first developed by the Italian pilot Giulio Gavotti over Libya, during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12, and popularised during WWI).³ Drummond’s planes also strafed the Gaajak camps with gunfire. These RAF’s air raids were to continue until late May 1920, for a full two months after the column itself had withdrawn.

In his final report on the Patrol, Bacon made a glowing assessment of the operation in general, and of the RAF’s contribution in particular. He recorded that in addition to the canoes, the Patrol had killed several hundred Nuer ‘warriors’, had burned 18,479 Gaajak huts (from an estimated total of around 22,000), and had seized large volumes of livestock and stores. For Bacon, the RAF’s role in the operation had been ‘great and decisive’, the warplanes having played a key role in, in particular, impressing upon the Gaajak ‘to what their families and cattle now lay exposed’. The air operations had also killed at least forty people (and the report also stressed that this was only a minimum estimate⁴). The dispatch even included one anecdote in which an especially prominent Chief, Giit Gong, had sued for peace after seeing the column’s guns, and after having become ‘awe-struck’ by their ‘wireless set talking with the “birds” (aeroplane[s])’.

However, despite all of its ballyhoo, Bacon’s report could not disguise the fact that the Patrol had nevertheless failed to neutralise, or even to engage (so far as Bacon knew), its primary target: the Gaajak Chief and Prophet Mut Dung. From the outset, it was clear that the British regarded Mut Dung as the most influential Chief in the region, and as their main adversary. This impression was heightened by intelligence reports received on the eve of the operation, which indicated that Mut Dung was then hosting the notorious Dinka diviner Ajak Tor Bil (‘the well-known malcontent’), and by his actions during the Patrol itself. It was then confirmed during the Patrol, as Mut Dung demonstrated an uncanny ability to evade capture, and to maintain his influence over a significant number of chiefs (none of whom would submit to the British). And to add to it all, Bacon even received accounts that Mut Dung was spreading malicious rumours among the Gaajak, based on his divinations, that the British had caused a recent smallpox outbreak in the province, and that the cattle of any

Nuer chief who submitted to the administration would similarly die of disease. At the end of his report, Bacon could do little than to note his 'regret' that Mut Dung remained at large, free to continue his raiding of neighbouring groups with impunity.

In fact, and unbeknownst to Bacon, the Gaajak Patrol had not only failed to diminish Mut Dung's political-spiritual authority – it had significantly enhanced it. And the primary agents of this enhancement had been none other than Peter Drummond's aeroplanes. Because it later transpired that at one point during the air operations, a group of other Nuer Chiefs had consulted Mut Dung about this new threat, and had asked him to carry out a divination on the matter. Dutifully, he 'consulted his Kujur', and announced that the planes should be no longer a threat. A short time afterwards, two of Drummond's machines were destroyed by a fire while in their hanger at Nasir, in an event which therefore – as a subsequent intelligence report dryly put it – 'added to his credibility'.⁵ Even more dramatically, it later also transpired that at one point during the Patrol, intelligence had been received as to the precise location of Mut Dung in a cattle camp, and an aeroplane had been sent out to specifically bomb that target. It dropped its last bomb into the camp, which landed just a few feet away from Mut Dung himself – yet failed to go off!⁶

Shared memories of how Mut Dung was once attacked by British aeroplanes, and how he 'defeated' them, continue to be held among Gaajak Nuer – including among those now living in Australia. From 2001 onwards, a growing number of South Sudanese refugees were accepted into Australia as part of the country's quota obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention – and among these were many Gaajak Nuer (who had been then living in camps around Gambela, Ethiopia). Today, there are around 25,000 people of South Sudanese heritage in Australia, with the majority of the Gaajak living in and around the city of Melbourne, in the state of Victoria.

In recent years, a group of elders from that community – which includes at least one of Mut Dung's direct descendants, Kaway Mun Nok – have begun to engage with African artefacts held in Australian museums. And within this group, the WA Museum's drum has already proved to be particularly evocative: not only in drawing out new stories about Mut Dung's life, but in reminding people of the ongoing potency of the man's apparently many, and varied, prophecies. Because it turns out that, according to oral history, one of the main sources of his divinatory authority was a set of similar drums, each of which held sway over a different domain of human experience. The most powerful of these drums was called Tut Kur (lit: 'White Bull'), which could influence the outcomes of war and famine. Moreover, after Mut Dung's death – he was in fact killed just a few months after the Gaajak Patrol, during a cattle raid on a neighbouring group – his metaphysical power was apparently passed down through his patrilineage to subsequent prophets, including to one who is still highly active in Gaajak country today.⁷ But most intriguingly of all, legend has it that one of Mut Dung's drums was also captured by the British during the Gaajak Patrol. Could the Museum's drum and the prophet's lost artefact be one and the same item? It seems almost certain that they are not, but the association nevertheless speaks to the potency of these instruments, as objects which are 'good to think with'.

Acknowledgements

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Part Four

Problems of Representation



'Spears' that are not spears

Jok Madut Jok

It is often said that nations require symbols around which their citizens can rally as they forge a sense of cohesion. These symbols include cultural objects that may be celebrated on a national stage, so that all citizens can see themselves represented. When South Sudan became independent in 2011, the question of what would enable South Sudanese to think of themselves as one people almost immediately emerged as a daunting policy challenge, especially given that the new political dispensation (the separation) was born of a series of vicious wars of resistance to foreign rule and has been accompanied by continued political turmoil and threats of disintegration from the start. What makes the new country a nation-state, not just a geographic political entity but a place where all those who live within its borders can share a sense of collective belonging?

Given its cultural diversity, it was important to identify some symbols the new country could use to instil a sense of unity among its citizens. One such object is the spear, which is a multi-purpose object common to almost all ethnic groups in South Sudan, though its form and function varies considerably. This is not to suggest that the spear holds the key to South Sudan's unity and stability, but that the spear signifies the role of arts and cultures as a site of dialogue over the nation's identity, over the meanings of ethnic similarities and differences pertaining to the question of national unity.

Indeed, the spear is a highly contentious object, which has been subject to much misrepresentation as a symbol of violent conflict. Perhaps more than any other object, the spear has played a big role in the way the people living in the territory that became the Republic of South Sudan were imagined and described, mainly by outsiders who have visited, ravaged, exploited and colonised the region since 1821. These outsiders have almost always misnamed the spear, misunderstood its main functions and often simplistically seen the spear as just another implement of war. Museum displays, travel accounts, journalistic reports and ethnography have attached violence to this object. This connection has been repeated so frequently that it has earned bearers of the spear a reputation of being 'warlike' simply on account of its possession. These misrepresentations have gone unchallenged by

Figure 12.1. Example of *töng* purchased in 1979 in Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, South Sudan. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1979.20.111).



Figure 12.2. Example of *tōng* purchased in 1979 in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1979.20.107).

indigenous knowledge producers, so much so that depictions of spears as objects of violence have formed part of a lasting narrative about South Sudan and have blurred the lines between the true story about spears as objects of culture and spears as evidence of violence.

Yet ‘the spear’ is a multidimensional category of objects with a wide range of functions and meanings, many of which are not only non-violent but *counter*-violent. Spears represent cultures of dialogue, rituals of peacemaking and traditions of constraining and regulating violence that are more important than ever amid South Sudan’s contemporary conflicts and their modern weaponry. Despite this, the most common way in which museums in Europe display these objects is as weapons. In this essay, I will show how paying attention to the way ‘spears’ used and described by the people who created them is an important step towards challenging or guiding the conversations about these and other South Sudanese objects in foreign museums.

The Jieng (Dinka) and Naath (Nuer) make a clear distinction between *bith* and *tōng*, but the English language lumps these objects together and call them ‘spears’ and therefore weapons. Yet there are significant differences between the better-known term, *spear*, and *bith* and *tōng*. Three shapes are particularly prevalent. *Tōng* is a flat leaf-like spear. *Bith* has two main types: *nyueny* and *läk*, but may have other unconventional designs. It is often produced to special request by highly specialised blacksmiths according to its intended use. The production of spears has been an important point of intercommunal contact and exchange, since the blacksmiths from whom Dinka and Nuer acquired their spears and other iron objects tended to be from other ethnic groups. So the communities that use the spears the most are not the producers of the spears.

The items in Figures 12.1 and 12.2 are called *tōng* in Dinka language. The variations in the shape of *tōng* results from the artistic expression of the blacksmith or the owner who commissioned them, depending on their intended purpose. The more unconventional the shape, such as in the additional sharp branches that stick out from the blade in Figure 12.1, the more mysterious the spear is intended to be, therefore increasing the spiritual powers the user is believed to possess.

The object in Figure 12.3 is *bith e nyueny* in Dinka, the perforated fishing and hunting object. It tends to be more functional in daily life, less ceremonial and with fewer meanings enshrined into it. The sharp teeth on it are meant to maximise its ability to stick onto the target, whether in hunting, fishing, or to inflict maximum damage in the event that it



Figure 12.3. Example of *bith e nyueny* purchased in Egypt in 1891, probably originating from South Sudan. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1942.8.61).

is used in war. A Dinka or Nuer speaker would not use the word *tông* to refer to *bith e nyueny*; in a sense, it is not a 'spear'.

Another layer of complexity is the Dinka ceremonial spear, *bith e läk*. It is the most commonly used, feared and revered, to the point that the anthropologists refer to the Dinka priests as 'master of the fishing spear'. This is another misnomer. The ceremonial spear is not used for fishing. In fact, it cannot be good for the way the Dinka fish, as *bith e läk* is smooth and thin, and fish would not stick to it.

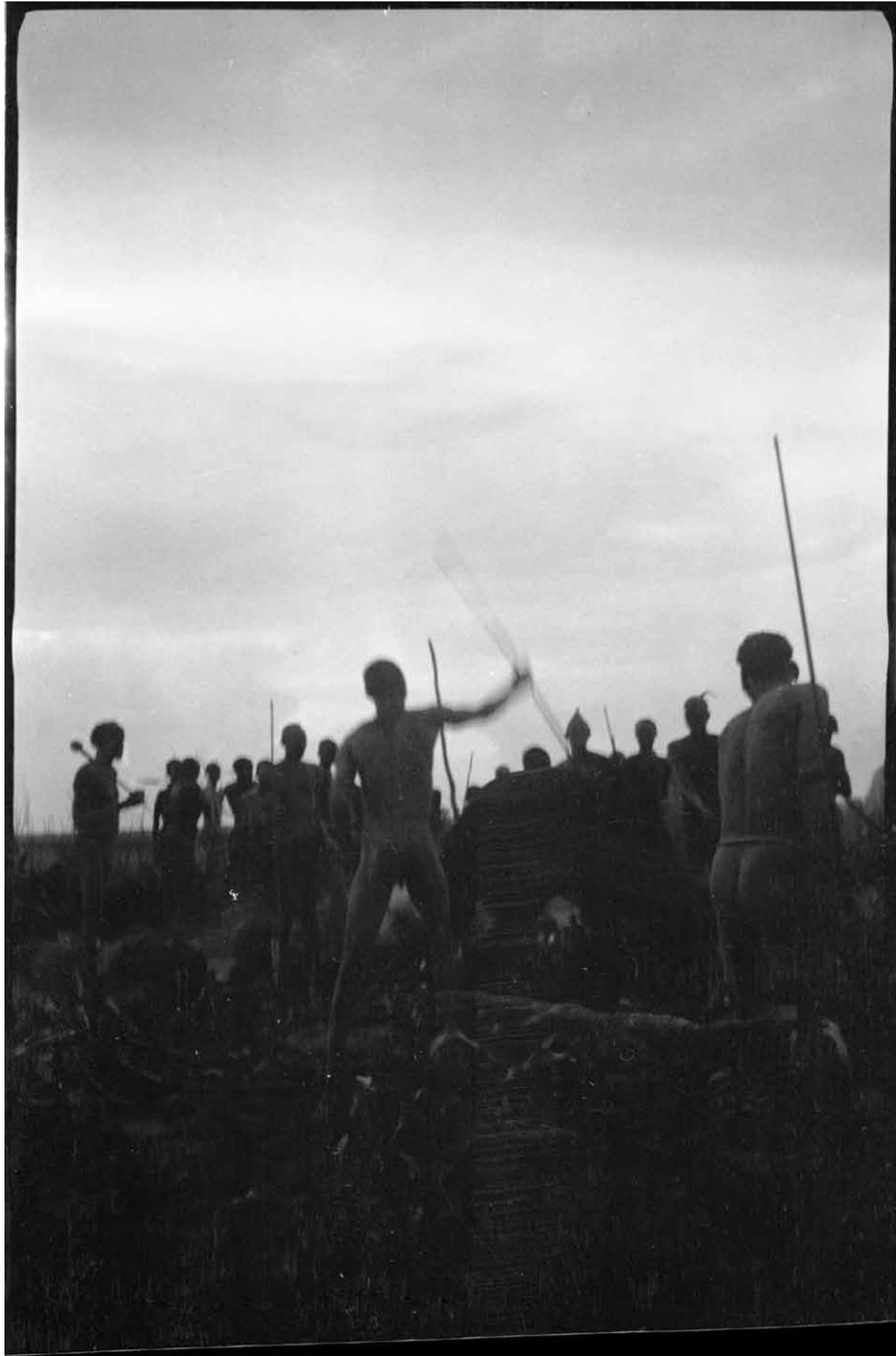
There is further confusion because even among the Nilotic users of spears a wide and long leaf-shaped spear, *tông ajuong*, for the Rek section of Dinka, also carries spiritual meanings, mainly used by spiritual leaders during prayer incantation and to slaughter sacrificial animals. Nuer people use it in the same way. A renowned Nuer prophet, Wurnyang, was known for using this type of spear on a sacrificial bull: one strike to the back of the bull, aiming at its heart from the top, and the bull is dead. Some *tông ajuong* can be so revered and feared that their sharp edges have to remain symbolically concealed or covered, or the spear has to always reside in a dark corner of the spiritual hut, until the day of prayer, when it can be brought out but returned to its resting place soon after.

The point here is that the variety of spears that Nilotic people of Sudan possess are applied to too many uses for them to be reduced to only one purpose, war. These are not just weapons but objects of such important ceremonial use that the English word 'spear' does not begin to capture all the meanings that these objects conjure among the people who produce them. The confusion may be born of the problems of translation. A Dinka speaker might understand the English term 'spear' to mean *tông*, the flat leaf-like spear with a pointed tip and a ridge through the middle. This causes confusion when someone with such an understanding also sees the word spear applied to another object, a smooth round object with the tip as thin as a needle, *bith e läk*. Language is not the only obstacle to outsiders' understanding of the role of spears; they are also likely to have a limited grasp of the overall cultural context in which the spears are produced and respected and how they are used in all aspects of productive and ceremonial life. Displaying all spears as 'weapons' almost entirely misses the point. Some of these objects may have been used in warfare, but that was far from their only or unified function.

Many of these so called 'spears' are just as much a form of artistic expression as they are utilitarian, so much so that the lines blur between art, function, aesthetics and symbolism. Their ceremonial value means that Nilotic people see them as a medium for conversation and coming to terms with the supernatural. The spears transcend the mystery of life, just as much as churches and mosque and shrines and all the objects in use in these religious institutions of other societies. They can inspire conversations between South Sudanese of different ethnic backgrounds and can enable them to extend the dialogue beyond the usual political differences, tribalism, class disputes, peace, reconciliation and equity, into the realms of religious belief, a realm which appeals to the human conscience, allowing the dialogue to cover every aspect of human relations, and hence allowing South Sudanese to visualise how they are connected to one another and to their country.

Even the role of spears as weapons is more complex than their depiction has allowed. When spears were the main weapon in violent conflicts, the casualties were quite limited and it was much easier to reconcile such conflicts, as it was possible to trace who killed whom so that blood compensation could be paid and a cleansing ritual performed to ensure that the spirits of the victims did not continue to haunt the feuding parties. Nowadays, guns have replaced spears, increasing the scale of killing and making it impossible to identify the individual killer, exonerating all responsibility and preventing reconciliation. In the absence or weakness of the central government to combat intercommunal conflict, there is no central judicial authority that can equitably protect and punish. Conflict resolution seems to have abandoned the former system of mediation by 'spear masters', allowing the young fighters to display increased disregard for the old system and the moderating influence of ancestral and religious structures is increasingly eroded. Far from simply representing violent conflict then, the spear symbolises a time when violence could be mediated and resolved more effectively than it is today.

Cultural objects might appear marginal to conflict resolution or wellbeing, but when these objects are no longer in use, people lament the loss of their symbolic role as moral objects that bound them together or contained enough power to constrain anti-social behaviour and keep the community intact. This sense of loss becomes particularly evident when South Sudanese see some of these objects in foreign museums, especially if these objects are no longer being produced. The almost instinctual reaction to viewing South Sudanese objects in foreign museums is to wonder how they can be repatriated or at least made available to South Sudanese so they can use them to reconnect with their past, especially for younger generations of the diaspora communities who have been detached from their communities of origin in South Sudan.



Out of frame

Christopher Morton

The focus of this short essay is a photograph taken by the British social anthropologist Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902-73) in the village of Nyueny, in the Leek Nuer area of western Nuerland in South Sudan in October or November 1936 (Figure 13.1). The image is dark, but clearly visible is a man in the act of thrusting a spear into the heart of a dark coloured sacrificial ox standing in front of him. Against a cloudy skyline are silhouetted a number of other figures witnessing the scene.

Evans-Pritchard's numerous publications on South Sudanese ethnography made him the leading British anthropologist of the mid-twentieth century. His fieldwork between 1926 and 1930 resulted in the classic volume *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937). At the invitation of the Sudan government he began fieldwork among the Nuer in 1930, visiting again in 1931, 1935 and 1936. He published several widely-influential books as a result of this fieldwork, including *The Nuer* (1940), *Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer* (1951) and *Nuer Religion* (1956). Evans-Pritchard's legacy is a rich one for both scholars and South Sudanese people more generally, and this essay draws on his extensive archive of photographs at the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford, where a collection of manuscripts, sound recordings, and artefacts are also held.

The photograph that is the subject of this essay was probably taken shortly after sunset, hence the low light levels, and the context was that these men had come to make sacrifices at the homestead of a girl called Nyakewa, who had been killed by lightning. According to Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer practice in the 1930s, the Nuer believe that someone killed in this way becomes a *col wic*, a sacred spirit who has been taken directly by God. They are not buried in the normal way, but covered over with the remains of their house, or else grass and thornwood if killed in the bush. Sacrifices are made as soon as possible in the homestead of the deceased, since the misfortune needs to be removed from the community.

Evans-Pritchard describes the ritual activities following Nyakewa's death in some detail. In particular, one description seems to fit this photograph closely:

Figure 13.1. Man spearing an ox near a *col wic* spirit shrine dedicated to a Leek Nuer girl called Nyakewa. Photograph by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Nyueny village, Unity State, South Sudan, 1936. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1998.355.172.1).

'Shortly before sunset a procession of about twenty men arrived ... headed by the *gwan buthni* [ritual specialist] leading a black ox ... The black ox was speared near the sacred stake and the sheep and goats were speared immediately afterwards.'¹

It is possible that the photograph was taken in the gloom of early the following morning, since a number of animals were also sacrificed by kin members then. For instance, Evans-Pritchard writes that: 'At dawn the following morning the dead girl's senior maternal uncle sacrificed a bull on behalf of the maternal kinsfolk ... The uncle made a short oration before spearing it.'²

There are five photographs in Evans-Pritchard's archive that are closely connected to this one, of the same format and showing the same scene. One of them shows the man holding his spear aloft, pointing it towards the ox, and this could well show the uncle's 'short oration' as he addresses the *col wic* spirit. This oration seemingly lasted long enough for Evans-Pritchard to move position and to walk around the back of the man, apparently to get a better view of the spearing, which this image then captures. Space precludes a more detailed discussion of the rituals associated with *col wic* here, but there are a few aspects that I wish to point out, since they not only have a direct bearing on the photograph I am discussing, but speak to the wider relationship between photography, anthropology, and visibility.

As related by Evans-Pritchard, the Nuer of Nyueny village told him that *col wic* meant 'black head' and that this was due to the fact that Col, one of the sky gods who controlled lightning, was black-haired. Both the person killed by lightning, the *col wic*, and Col the god of lightning, seem intricately connected in Nuer thought. The association with darkness is also seen in the choice of sacrificial oxen, a *thak ma col*, which should be black: 'This *ma col* sacrificial victim, *col* the spirit of lightning, and the *col wic* make a harmony of darkness (*col*), the darkness of storm.'³

The association between the *col wic* and darkness is then extended by the timing of the sacrifices connected with it, in the twilight of sunset and sunrise. Evans-Pritchard's account of Nuer conceptions of time is worth considering in this respect. In contrast to Western abstract notions of time passing, the Nuer talked to Evans-Pritchard about time as a set of relationships between activities. In the annual cycle this was based on seasonal changes and the activities that went with them, such as cattle camps and horticulture, and in the daily cycle of milking, etc. Indicating when something might happen might be done by reference to such activity, or else the position of the sun in the sky.

However, certain parts of the day were thicker with activity, and hence time, than others. Significantly, Evans-Pritchard noted that there were almost as many points of reference between 4 and 6am as there were for the rest of the day. 'This may be chiefly due', he wrote, 'to the striking contrasts caused by changes in relations of earth to sun during these two hours'.⁴ While also noting Nuer terms for parts of the night, based on the movement of stars, here again the vocabulary was richer around the transition between night and day than for the night time itself. Evans-Pritchard suggests that the richness of terms relating to the transitions of morning and evening is due to their role in directing activities that are commonly done at these times, such as starting journeys, tethering cattle, etc., and that fewer terms exist for times when the heat of the day reduces activity.

The richness of social activity in these transitions between day and night raises interesting questions about the relationship between the anthropological method of

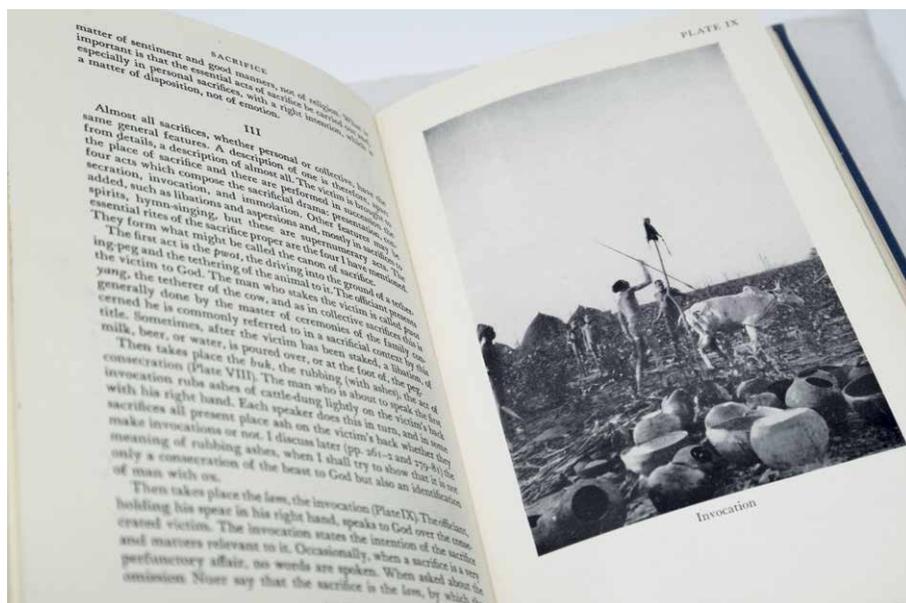


Figure 13.2. Plate IX in Evans-Pritchard's book *Nuer Religion* (1956), captioned 'Invocation', showing the spearing of an ox near the *col wic* shrine erected for Nyakewa. Photograph by the author.

participant-observation and visibility, and how variations in visibility can be traced in such things as ethnographic description, and especially the photographic record of fieldwork. As I have recently noted in relation to Evans-Pritchard's dramatic account of an Anuak séance, which occurred at night and hence was not photographed, the relationship between anthropology and photography has historically been mostly a daytime relationship, with a curfew of visualisation that ends with the setting of the sun.⁵

There is an intense relationship between visibility, seeing, and knowing in anthropology, of which photographs such as the *col wic* sacrifice make us more conscious. In the gloom of sunrise or sunset, human eyes adjust well, yet the camera is less well equipped to do so. The part-light of the day is an important reason why activities such as ritual take place when they do, in the transitional times between day and night, life and death. They do not take place in the dark, but as darkness is approaching or receding. Visibility during these rituals enables people to see, to witness the sacrifice, but the transitional time of day is also an important dimension. There is an important cultural distinction to be made between visibility and seeing in which photography is heavily implicated. As Shawn Michelle Smith argues, while photography significantly expanded cultural ideas of what is visible, it also exposed its limits; sight was expanded and yet we also gained a strong sense of a world only partially perceptible to us.⁶ Evans-Pritchard's photograph of the *col wic* sacrifice brings us to the edge of sight, a boundary where we perceive and interpret the visible world incompletely and inadequately. We struggle to see the sacrifice well because of the camera's poor sight, resulting in an underexposed image. When it came to illustrating sacrifice in his later volume *Nuer Religion*, Evans-Pritchard used an image from the *col wic* ceremony (Plate IX; Figure 13.2) but taken the following morning when the lighting conditions were better. Yet the image itself,



Figure 13.3. The original photograph on which Plate IX was based, after cropping the figure to right. Photograph by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Nyueny village, Unity State, South Sudan, 1936. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1998.355.247.2).

although more *visible*, does not allow us to *see* Nuer sacrifice better than the dark image, and indeed has had to be cropped heavily on the right, presumably since the publisher saw the figure that was standing there in the original photograph as extraneous to the key part of the illustration, the man spearing the ox (Figure 13.3).⁷

Yet the function of such plates in anthropological monographs such as *Nuer Religion* is not so specific; it is not to communicate something so complex that only a visual demonstration can suffice as part of the argument. It is rather to allow us to see the field for ourselves, to bring to perception the scenes described, and so to help our comprehension and the process of cultural translation. In which case, the cropped figure of the person witnessing the sacrifice is just as important as the view of the sacrifice itself, since our sense of people witnessing the ritual is vital to our comprehension of its role in Nuer society.

What fascinates me then about the *col wic* photograph I have been discussing here is the way it brings to the surface the relationship between visibility, sight and knowing – both in the social field as well as in anthropology as a discipline. The photograph reminds us of the limitations and boundary points of this relationship, and the way in which the important role of the photographic image in mediating social experience within anthropology has largely been constrained to the day time, and also mostly outside of those transitional times after sunset and before sunrise when ritual activity often takes place, yet the camera has been poorly equipped to see.

This issue of cultural visibility of course has implications for how South Sudan and its peoples have been represented in museums and ethnography over the years. Objects, sights, sounds, and experiences that were not accessible to anthropologists, whether as a result of darkness, as I explore here, or else since they were inappropriate for outsiders to know about or see, are hardly represented in written ethnographies or in museum displays. This historical distortion of how South Sudanese culture is represented has been compounded in more recent times due to a lack of collecting activity that might address these representational issues in museums.

This is not to say however that anthropologists have not carried out fieldwork to bring Evans-Pritchard's 1930s Nuer ethnography up to date, and Sharon Hutchinson's work is notable in this respect. In her study of Leek Nuer responses to gun-based violence in the 1980s for instance, she describes how people began to equate bullet victims with lightning victims, and hence able to become *col wic* spirits: 'By thus equating the roar and flash of lightning with those of gunfire, Nuer survivors ... were able to validate their losses and salvage something from their grief.'⁸ This spiritual equation also gave courage to fighters since they knew that their relatives would ensure that they gained descendants through ghost-marriage after their death, a practice whereby a relative would marry someone in their name. The practice of classifying bullet victims as *col wic* came to the attention of Nuer leaders in the Sudan People's Liberation Army in the late 1980s, who immediately began a campaign against it, fearing that it would cheapen this formerly rare category of spirits, and also affect the way fighters behaved in battle. As Hutchinson argues, the wartime ideological campaign against treating bullet victims as *col wic* spirits was intended to undermine any mediating structures that stood between the loyalty of soldiers to their commander, including those of kinship, community and spirituality. The close link between these structures as represented in *col wic* was emphasised both by Evans-Pritchard, who argued that 'the conception of Spirit is refracted by the social structure',⁹ and by Hutchinson, who understood it as a cultural response to a new type of warfare, and how the collective dealt with sudden deaths as a result through established religious practices. However, Hutchinson herself never witnessed a mortuary ceremony for a person killed by bullets,¹⁰ and so, like the dark image of the mortuary ceremony that is the subject of this essay, ethnographic knowledge is always limited and subject to issues of visibility and, hence, understanding.



A Dinka Madonna?

Ludmilla Jordanova

Like every object, John Bloss's photograph of an unnamed Dinka woman and her child is multi-faceted (SAD.705/6/7). There is the thing itself, displayed in 1982 in an exhibition at Durham University, with a pin mark in the card mount. There is the striking black and white image with its strong contrasts, blurred background and female figure filling most of the space. There is the photographer, a British colonial medical practitioner who worked in the Sudan between 1933 and 1954, producing hundreds of images during his time there. There is the setting in which the picture was taken. Maker, subject, situation and artefact form a cultural cluster, a single material entity, the visual properties and multiple contexts of which are best considered together, insofar as the evidence permits.

The papers and pictures of Dr Bloss are deposited in the Sudan Archive at Durham University, which provides its current context. Because of the prominence of the Archive, it is no surprise that the photograph has had an afterlife. It has been published and digitised. Now I am giving it further attention, suggesting ways it may, and may not, be interpreted. In doing so it is evident that it raises not only some of the most familiar and general issues about forms of power and relationships, the allure of photography and the role of medical men in colonial settings, but also questions about forms of display and the ethics of looking. Is it right that *Dinka Mother and Child at Shambe*, as the photograph is called in one publication, be put on public display? How is it to be viewed and presented in the twenty-first century? Indeed what is its relationship with South Sudan?

A useful starting point is *Treasures of Durham University Library*,¹ which foregrounds fifty items of special value and interest, where this photograph features, with a commentary by Martin Daly. Daly mentions the achievements of the Medical Service and acknowledges Bloss's role in its activities, before stating, 'it is his achievement in photography that is celebrated today'. Daly sees the value of such photographs as direct and historical, providing 'the only 'accounts' we have of certain events, the only impressions of historical personages, and the best records of long-term environmental and cultural change'. In relation to Bloss, he emphasises 'artist merit': 'like an Old Master painting, not only is it

Figure 14.1. Dinka mother and baby at Shambe. Photograph by J. F. E. Bloss, 1934-66. Courtesy of the Sudan Archive, Durham (SAD.705/6/7).

visually stunning, it is also a record of a lost society ... Bloss's "Dinka Madonna" speaks more poignantly than statistics of what has been lost'.² We should note the way in which the photograph is aestheticised, the references to European high art, and the nostalgia.

The image is certainly arresting with both mother and child looking towards the camera and the spectator. There is little to distract from their bodies, the strong light highlighting patches of skin, and an array of jewellery presented in crisp detail. There is another image of these same figures in the Bloss collection, this time in colour, which was taken at more or less the same moment. Here mother and child take up less of the photographic space; there is more background and foreground, and part of another figure is visible to the left. In the colour image, neither mother nor child is engaging with us directly, while the presence of other details and objects are distracting. There is little sense of a considered composition, which the black and white version, presumably carefully cropped, displays (SAD.888/15/12). The photographer was clearly making choices that we are free to interpret.

Bloss's papers reveal that photography was a long-standing interest, and he refers to the importance of such hobbies in his memoir. The title page of his unpublished *Experiences of a Medical Inspector*, written in 1948, lists his qualifications, including A.R.P.S. – Associate of the Royal Photographic Society (SAD.704/1/1). It is reasonable to infer that he was a skilled photographer, able to develop his own film. SAD.705/6/7, then, arises from practices that were important to Bloss, which expressed his priorities, even if now, some eighty years later, it is unclear precisely what these were. He grew up in London, the son of a poor East End vicar and is likely to have had some exposure to European artistic traditions. Discussing this particular photograph in terms of Madonnas and Old Masters is problematic, however. It indicates a wish to elevate Bloss's achievements by associating him with admired traditions of European painting and it imposes a highly specific model of motherhood on the unnamed woman. Bloss may well have had a well-developed aesthetic sensibility, but commentators need to consider both his contexts and the most apt comparisons for his work.

Taken as a whole the photographic work of John Bloss is diverse. It includes pictures that seem to have been taken to show particular features, such as hairstyles and scarring patterns, those that illustrate activities, such as fishing, families, items made by specific groups, such as an *ambatch* boat made by Shilluk people, buildings, townscapes and landscapes. It may be that Bloss himself saw his photography as falling into a number of categories, since their visual styles are distinct. The photograph under discussion here seems less 'illustrative' than others in the collection, a proportion of which focuses on individuals in a more intense manner. Mounted images are given handwritten titles – in this case 'Mother and Baby at Shambe (Dinka)' – on the back. The title given to this image varies, and the more 'Dinka' is stressed, the easier it becomes to see the people depicted as simply types rather than individuals. There is no date on the back, but in *Treasures* it is given as c.1940. Much else remains unclear – how subjects of photographs were selected and approached, whether there was any link with his medical activities, and the uses to which the photographs were to be put, for example.

John Bloss was a prolific and skilled photographer, who produced a substantial body of work during his time in the Sudan. His reasons for being there were medical, and since he published a number of papers on tropical diseases, and discussed his professional activities at length in his memoir, it is clear that the work itself was important to him.

The colonial setting is inescapable. Furthermore, we know a fair amount about his values and attitudes from, for instance, the letters home he wrote between 1938 and 1943 to be circulated among family members. Perhaps the characteristic that is most relevant here, although it comes as no surprise, is the broad generalisations about groups and nations that he makes – the point applies as much to Europeans, such as Germans and Italians, as it does to Africans. His unthinking use of taxonomic categories is striking. Bloss documented the communities with which he interacted in Africa, socially, medically and photographically within a framework that has been remarkably pervasive and persistent. It remains evident in documentaries and publications that claim to show seemingly distant parts of the world and their ways of life in a manner that appears merely descriptive but is charged with assumptions. Bloss's photographs, in other words, must be placed in larger discursive and visual contexts.

As late as 1982, the year of Bloss's death, Time-Life Books published *Warriors of the White Nile: The Dinka*, with colour photos by Sarah Errington and extensive commentary by John Ryle, which may usefully be compared with Bloss's images. The book begins with a series of portraits.³ Some of these photographs focus more on the face than Bloss did, and include a man holding a baby. They are seen in profile and are clearly interacting, rather than looking out as Bloss's mother and child are. As a result, Errington's pictures appear less posed, and more the result of a chance encounter. Bloss also captured a man with a child in his lap, with only the adult looking out of the picture, fully aware of being photographed (SAD.893/1/11). Later in Ryle's book there is 'A young mother of twins suckles her baby girls'.⁴ Here the comparison with Bloss's image is also instructive, since the top of the mother's head is cut off and there is no obvious attempt to create a pleasing composition. Thus there are two features of 'Dinka Mother and Child at Shambe' that invite attention: the evident care in crafting the photograph and the way in which both subjects are engaging the photographer's and our attention. Bloss, then, gives us some visual clues that he is paying a specifically aestheticised form of attention to the mother and child before him.

Questions nonetheless remain. How might viewers interpret the woman's expression? It could be described in terms of a steady gaze. There are no immediate signs of tension – her left arm and hand, for example, appear relaxed. It is legitimate to understand Bloss's way of seeing in terms of his colonial role, which enabled him to travel extensively, and to take a close interest in what he saw. This much we know about the context in which the picture was taken, that is, it is possible to gain some general sense from the historical and biographical contexts in which it was produced, but little in terms of detail. There is a broader pattern here. Bloss's photographs are well known among Africanists. For example, six of them were used in the first and second editions of *A Modern History of the Sudan* by P. M. Holt in a part of the photographic insert called 'The Land and the People', also the title of the first chapter.⁵ One implication, present also in *Warriors of the White Nile*, is that such images are somehow timeless, hence their roots in a specific moment and interactions become irrelevant. The implication is that photography captures a vivid, immediate reality and that it speaks at some general atemporal level. The authority that derives from photographic technology and the simultaneous presence of photographer and subjects allows the picture to provide a kind of ahistorical statement about 'the Dinka'. Ethnographic categories are thereby affirmed. Further, the nostalgia for a lost world present in Martin Daly's commentary is

fed by this image belonging to a whole era and way of life, now destroyed, 'a ... society ... that has since been mutilated' in his words.⁶ Daly's comments imply a past state of affairs that endured over a long period, and was only recently disrupted.

No simple interpretation of this picture is credible now. The point is reinforced by the patchy evidence available with which to further contextualise the photograph. But even if it existed, our difficulties would be not be solved. Given a globalised photographic culture, it seems unlikely that anyone would see a 'Dinka Madonna'; rather they see a woman and child. They may wonder about the exact circumstances under which the image was made; they are likely to grasp that it is arresting, carefully wrought visually speaking, but they may feel at sea when it comes to what it means and how it speaks about South Sudan. Other more emotional reactions are also possible, such as anger about the display of an African woman's near-naked body to a colonial official and thence to wider audiences, and dismay that Western art categories have been used to elevate Bloss's photography. This work may have been made *in* South Sudan, but in a context of dramatically unequal power relationships, so that we can say it is not *of* South Sudan. There are innumerable photographs of African woman in this vein, and a growing body of scholarship that expresses unease about their content, uses and contexts of display, seeking to generate respectful, well-informed and critical commentary on this important form of visual culture.⁷

'Dinka Mother and Child at Shambe' is eloquent about the activities of a medical practitioner and photographer whose collection arose out of a specific time and place. As Bloss recalled 'those years have been among the happiest I have known' (SAD.704/1/3). Yet the image itself has been multiply deracinated: the woman and child have no names; we know nothing about their encounter with Bloss; the photograph has circulated outside South Sudan as a commodity. For it to be displayed at all today, however, its multiple facets and complexities need to be avowed, its contexts explored, and its capacity to render viewers uncomfortable acknowledged. Treating it as an isolated work of art is inappropriate; much better to recognise it as an element within larger visual regimes that invite many forms of critical engagement, including ethical ones.



An unused hunting spear

Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp

In April 2017, I visited the home of Lucy-Dana Brain to interview her about a collection that she had offered to the Horniman Museum for donation, assembled by her parents Roger and Audrey Brain in Sudan from 1953-59, and Nigeria from 1960-69. Like many children born to parents who were working in emerging and recently independent states during this time, her sense of self is deeply shaped by her upbringing in Khartoum and Ibadan. These are places that she has not felt able to return to since moving to Paris as a 12-year-old in 1969, when her father took an advisory post for UNESCO. During this interview, and subsequent ones, it became clear that the collection is imbued with a deep sense of loss; a loss associated with childhood memories attached to places that for Lucy-Dana no longer exist. It was not only the cities of Khartoum and Ibadan in 2017 that were unrecognisable, but also her privileged place within them. In this short chapter I will focus on a small collection of objects acquired by Roger Brain in southern Sudan in 1954 to explore how the economic, political and social shifts he represented in the lead up to independence framed both the desire to collect, and the way in which this collection was imagined at the time and remembered by his family in the present. The collection consists of a 210 cm double ended hunting spear, a bow and set of arrows, and a series of headrests accessioned by the Horniman in 2019.

Roger Brain was an agricultural scientist affiliated with the University of Khartoum, employed as a lecturer at the Faculty of Agriculture (FoA), located in Shambat. The faculty was established in 1951 to provide professional training for future employees of Sudan's Ministry of Agriculture,¹ as well as undertaking research to support the development of Sudan's agricultural industries. It was in this respect aligned with Sudan Political Service (SPS) policy aims to develop Sudan's economic sustainability in the lead up to independence, with building national agricultural productivity as a central aim. Roger Brain's appointment in 1953 speaks to the double circulation of British officials during this time with increasing numbers of individuals in governmental posts leaving as a result of Sudanisation policies, matched by the arrival of British academics and technocrats

Figure 15.1. Double ended hunting spear purchased in Ukuk, Dongotonas, 1954. Courtesy of the Horniman Museum and Gardens (2019.80).

employed on short-term contracts for training and capacity building purposes. Roger's letters indicate a steady transition in the British colonial scene in Khartoum, with frequent reference to leaving drinks and the availability of second-hand colonial-issue furniture through auction. This reflects a shift from an established and embedded professional community deeply engaged in long-term governance, to shorter-term future-focused and expertise driven appointments with a higher turnover. I am interested in the way in which this professional transition also involved carrying over a particular 'culture' of colonialism to use Thomas' term (1994),² embedding longer-term colonial imaginaries within future planning for an independent Sudan.³

In June 1954 Roger Brain led a pilot-census for the Southern Development Investigation Team (SDIT); an organisation established to map the economic potential of the south and outline recommendations for future research, investment and infrastructural development. This was considered necessary given the need to realign economic productivity and social development with the northern and central regions around Khartoum.⁴ Agricultural development had been dominated by the massive Gezira Scheme which had since 1923 transformed large swaths of formerly occupied land into an irrigated landscape focused on the cultivation of cotton. The Zande Scheme at Nzara was the only significant mass-cultivation scheme in the south; by 1954 questions had been raised about its sustainability and investment had been downgraded. SDIT was developed in part-response to this, plotting wider economic potential. Roger conducted his fieldwork with the support of his cohort of students enrolled at the FoA. They journeyed by steamer down the Nile through Malakal to Juba, then trekked overland to Torit travelling south to survey a selection of 'typical villages' in the Dongotonas including Isoke (Isohe), Ukuk, Ludwara and two smaller settlements named in the report as Dito and Moi Moi.⁵ While the purpose of the journey may be understood in the context of attempts by the SPS to build an economically united Sudan at independence, the trip was also embroiled within the rising political tensions in the south, with the group stranded for several weeks in Juba as a result of strikes.

Despite six years spent in Sudan, it is illuminating to note that it was only during this fieldtrip in 1954 that Roger paid particular attention to archiving his experience through prolific letter writing, taking photographs and collecting. As I have discussed elsewhere,⁶ this reflects an enduring association of southern populations with both cultural specificity – representing particular cultural traits that would enable inherently different economic futures from populations in the north – and cultural fragility, within policy and planning documents issued at the time. As the steamer approached Juba, Roger Brain wrote to both his parents and his wife Audrey, asking them to archive his letters in lieu of a formal journal so that he might 'write them up one day' as a public memoir. These letters take on an ethnographic descriptive tone, focusing on the appearances of the people living in the region, and an attempt to characterise their way of life. This sits in stark contrast to letters home written on fieldwork in central and northern Sudan which predominantly describe mechanised agricultural landscapes, with limited reference to the significant numbers of people required to cultivate the land and operate machinery.

Roger Brain's letters also relate his desire to collect objects (in particular spears), his assumption that these would be made available to him, and the difficulties he faced persuading people to part with their possessions in exchange for money. A few days after arriving in Juba, for example, he complained to his wife about 'the lack of native objects to

buy, spears etc'.⁷ In Ludwara Roger admired the 'very wide bladed spears with tassels on' owned by the men that lived there, irritated at their reluctance to sell him anything despite 'trying very hard for them to'. Finally, in Ukuk, he succeeded in purchasing a spear, a bow and set of arrows, but remained disgruntled since the spear on offer was not 'used', as he had expected, but 'rather white'. He reassured his wife that they could 'stain it and not tell anybody'. He had better luck on return to Juba where the group were once again stranded due to strikes, successfully purchasing a collection of headrests and some waist beads. The reluctance of people to sell him their objects is interesting in light of concerns raised in the final SDIT report (1955) about the difficulties convincing local populations to trade in cattle products. This indifference to a cash economy is attributed to an 'unprogressive and unimaginative system of trading' and an inherent conservatism that was closed to shifting patterns of material consumption.⁸ Other sources, including Reining's discussion of the Zande Scheme,⁹ highlight how prioritising northern markets in supply chains meant that core subsistence goods had an inflated cash value in the south, making existing models of supply and exchange far more reliable. It seems relatively unsurprising that people were unwilling to part with objects of real use value in exchange for cash, and goes some way towards explaining why the spear Roger got his hands on was unused.

The spear purchased in Ukuk has a wooden shaft, with a hammered iron leaf-shaped and centrally ribbed blade attached to one end, and an elongated iron spear-butt attached to the other. The Pitt Rivers Museum records two similar examples as 'Achoi spears', used for big-game hunting along the border with northern Uganda (1939.7.100-103, 1939.7.104), just south of the Dongotonas. This association with hunting was important to the narratives that became attached to the spear and the wider collection as it travelled with the family from Khartoum, to Ibadan, Paris and Wiltshire. Contrary to being an object sought and purchased, Lucy-Dana's inherited memories from her father recall the spear being given to him by one of the local residents to enable him to hunt and procure food; something that would have involved a significant period of training in order to handle the spear and track game successfully. His proficiency as a hunter was established in the narrative by successfully killing a leopard; the skin was taken and turned into a rug that lay on the floor in the living room. This slotted into a wider recollection of having 'lived among' the residents, sharing their food and sleeping quarters. A wooden headrest with Roger Brain's name etched into the bottom was supplied as evidence of this genuine integration. Unsurprisingly, his letters written at the time offer a different account. The team were predominantly based at the Catholic Mission station in Isoke, making trips on foot with a team of porters to surrounding villages on day trips or camping overnight in tents. Roger specifically mentions failed attempts to hunt with his new spear, preferring to use his pistol instead, but again with limited success. In Ukuk, for example, he describes how he 'blew a cloud of feathers out of a sand grouse but it flew away unconcerned ... that's several times it has happened'. Perhaps not the leopard hunter after all.

As noted in Jok Madut Jok's article in this volume (Chapter 12), the numerous spears collected by colonial officials in the nineteenth and early twentieth century have become almost iconic of South Sudan in European museum collections. This is something that has both led to and strengthened an association between southern populations and warfare, with spears displayed and interpreted as indicators of inherent violence. As well as rooted in a racist construction, both the association and the emphasis on collecting spears may be understood as part of a potent professional narrative, consciously or not legitimising

the use of violence and processes of confiscation. Roger Brain's repeated attempts to procure a spear highlights both how spears remained potent symbols of southern populations, as well as the materialisation of this through an enduring desire by British expats to collect and own spears. Important here is the ability of objects to index self-affirming and often aspirational recollections once they have been disarticulated from their original contexts of use. If this rested on a sense of professional moral superiority and masculine heroism for nineteenth and early twentieth-century collectors, arguably Roger Brain's narrative indicates the importance of cultural mastery and integration. It is important to note that his professional competence in this field rested on an ability to arrive at concrete conclusions about the capacities of people and their land to advance Sudan's economic future. It is also worth reflecting again on the emphasis placed on creating sustainable and economically self-sufficient communities through policy and planning that paid attention to cultural specificity. Taken together, these highlight how economic planning for southern Sudan drew on an embedded assumption that communities and their relationships with the land were of cultural significance, while also being relatively uncomplicated and easily comprehensible by foreign observers. The narratives that surrounded Roger's spear indicate how easily such assumptions endure beyond particular colonial encounters through their connection to objects and the ways in which such objects continue to be framed.

Part Five

Markets and Collecting



The potter of Li Rangu

Inbal Livne

One of the most iconic pieces in the Powell-Cotton Museum's South Sudan ethnographic collection is a clay water pot topped with an anthropomorphic head (see Figure 16.1). The water pot has been singled out as a particularly fine example of Zande/Mangbetu design, and as representative of a new form of pottery that developed in the early twentieth century, as relations with incoming Europeans increased in the border regions linking what are now South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.¹

The Powell-Cotton Museum's water pot is one of several collected by Percy and Hannah Powell-Cotton in 1933 from a potter named Mbitim, who worked as the head potter in a workshop based at a European sleeping sickness hospital in Li Rangu, South Sudan. The Powell-Cottons gifted other identical pots to the British Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum, and other British colonial administrators gifted further identical pots to those museums as well. The Powell-Cottons also collected a wide range of other items from Mbitim's workshop, filmed him making a water pot and collected sets of his tools.

In this chapter I will examine the water pot's role as a connecting thread between a Zande pottery workshop and European collector and how this relationship has influenced our understanding of agencies – of indigenous artists, European collectors and curatorial staff – and their collective role in the development and promotion of this Zande artistic tradition.

Li Rangu was established in 1928 as a means of 'opening up' the Southern Provinces of Sudan to civilian medical facilities,² and in turn to further colonial invigilation of the population. The facility went on to become the second largest leprosy and sleeping sickness hospital in Africa and included accommodation, hospitals, kitchens, kilns, plant cultivation and animal husbandry.³ Cruikshank does not mention the making and selling of crafts, but such workshops clearly existed by the time the Powell-Cottons visited a few years later in 1933.⁴ The objects on offer in the workshop were diverse, reflective of the needs and influence of the Europeans who both ran the hospital and acted as the buyers of the items produced.⁵ In addition to water pots, on sale were various items such as decorative bowls and book-ends.

Figure 16.1. Anthropomorphic water pot made by the Zande potter Mbitim at his workshop in Li Rangu sleeping sickness hospital, South Sudan. Courtesy of the Powell-Cotton Trust (ETH.SUD1.909).



Figure 16.2. Bowl decorated with four figures seated at a table. Figures in the Zande style, bowl likely an art piece for the European market. From the workshop of Mbitim, Li Rangu sleeping sickness hospital, South Sudan. Courtesy of the Powell-Cotton Trust (ETH.SUD1.1080).

On 27 April 1933 Percy and Hannah Powell-Cotton had tea with Mrs Mika Wyld, wife of District Commissioner Major Wyld, who oversaw the Court of Appeal in the area surrounding the Li Rangu sleeping sickness station. The Wylds had several Zande pots collected from the workshop at Li Rangu, and Mika Wyld gifted two of them to the Powell-Cottons. It is presumably here that the Powell-Cottons first heard about Mbitim and the workshop. The following day they visited the settlement themselves.⁶

All the items bought by the Powell-Cottons have distinctive anthropomorphic designs, which Nigel Barley has suggested were a result of several developments. Firstly, the developing relations between Zande and Mangbetu communities, which saw the creation of ‘new’ traditions with Zande ‘heads’ being added to Mangbetu designed pots.⁷ Secondly, potters were adapting to the new local political framework, which included European buyers and influences.⁸ But Li Rangu was not just a contact zone⁹ for Europeans and Zande; medical staff at the facility, who appear to have acted as brokers promoting the workshop’s output, were themselves incomers, neither Zande nor European but largely, it seems, Syrian.¹⁰ John Mack has noted the importance of these medical professionals in maintaining relations at Li Rangu and similar sites.¹¹ Li Rangu, therefore, was a dynamic contact zone of competing political and civilian powers, contained within the microcosm of the hospital settlement environment.

On the day of the visit to Li Rangu, Percy Powell-Cotton records the following in his journal: ‘Dr Jabbour in charge ... showed us around ... [saw] black pottery, bought 2 dishes with 4 heads round each, 2 of 4 men sitting eating, 4 of man sitting smoking, 2 pots with heads ...’¹² Powell-Cotton’s writing style, listing what was available and the fact that there were large quantities to buy, supports the notion of a relatively large

workshop, catering to visitors and tourists. Rachel Sparks has previously suggested this, noting that Li Rangu was a meeting point between Zande craftspeople and Europeans stationed in the region.¹³ The result of this contact zone was the development of a market where Zande craftspeople had a space to develop and experiment with new forms appealing to Western audiences, but which retained many of the hallmarks of traditional Zande decoration.

Later that same day, 28 April 1933, Percy returned to the workshop with Dr Jabbour. He recounts: 'off at 12:15 to "Mbitim" head potter got film of making a pot with head, very quick to catch on what was wanted, got specs of clay and "tools". He to make [more] bits to order, gave 10p tip'.¹⁴

Percy only stayed with Mbitim for about an hour, filming him as he shaped and finished one of the distinctive water pots. In order for both potter and film-maker to work together so efficiently and quickly it seems probable that the Powell-Cottons were not the first Europeans for whom Mbitim had provided demonstrations, even if this was the first time he had been filmed. On completion of filming, the Powell-Cottons left. Apart from receiving a package of pottery at their home in Birchington, Kent, some months later, the Powell-Cottons had no further contact with Mbitim.

A year later, on 8 May 1934, Hannah Powell-Cotton gave a short presentation to the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) titled 'Village Handicrafts in the Sudan'. The presentation, printed in the journal *Man*, accompanied a series of films presented to the RAI that captured a number of potters and woodworkers from across South Sudan. On Mbitim, Hannah recounted the following:

'A Zande Potter Mbitim was an artist of exceptional skill and originality. His pots, jars and dishes were of varied and beautiful forms, many decorated with Zande heads and figures, each one distinct, true to type and with its own definite personality... This man's services are now pledged to the Sleeping Sickness Station at Li Rangu, where he is encouraged to make book-ends and other objects of European design, but his work still remains individual.'¹⁵

At this juncture, the Powell-Cottons' involvement with, and interest in, Mbitim and the pottery workshop at Li Rangu ended. Yet the pots themselves, and the water pot form in particular, now had a new trajectory, as part of several museum collections.

In total, the Powell-Cottons collected seventeen finished pieces from Li Rangu, nine of which remained at the museum, while the rest were distributed between the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, and the British Museum. These pieces appear to represent most of the forms available for sale at the Li Rangu workshop: my research so far has yet to uncover designs in any UK museum that do not conform to one of these types. As with all the museum's objects, these pots and dishes were recorded on catalogue cards probably in the 1940s, typed up by the museum secretary, from the original notes and curio lists made during the expedition. Yet apart from a set of potting tools (ETH.SUD1.546), none of the catalogue cards mention the name of Mbitim specifically, only Li Rangu as a geographic provenance.

When I arrived at the museum in 2013, these objects were firmly established in the museum's psyche as items manufactured by Mbitim's own hand, and the relationship between Mbitim and the Powell-Cottons was strongly articulated, based on, it seemed,

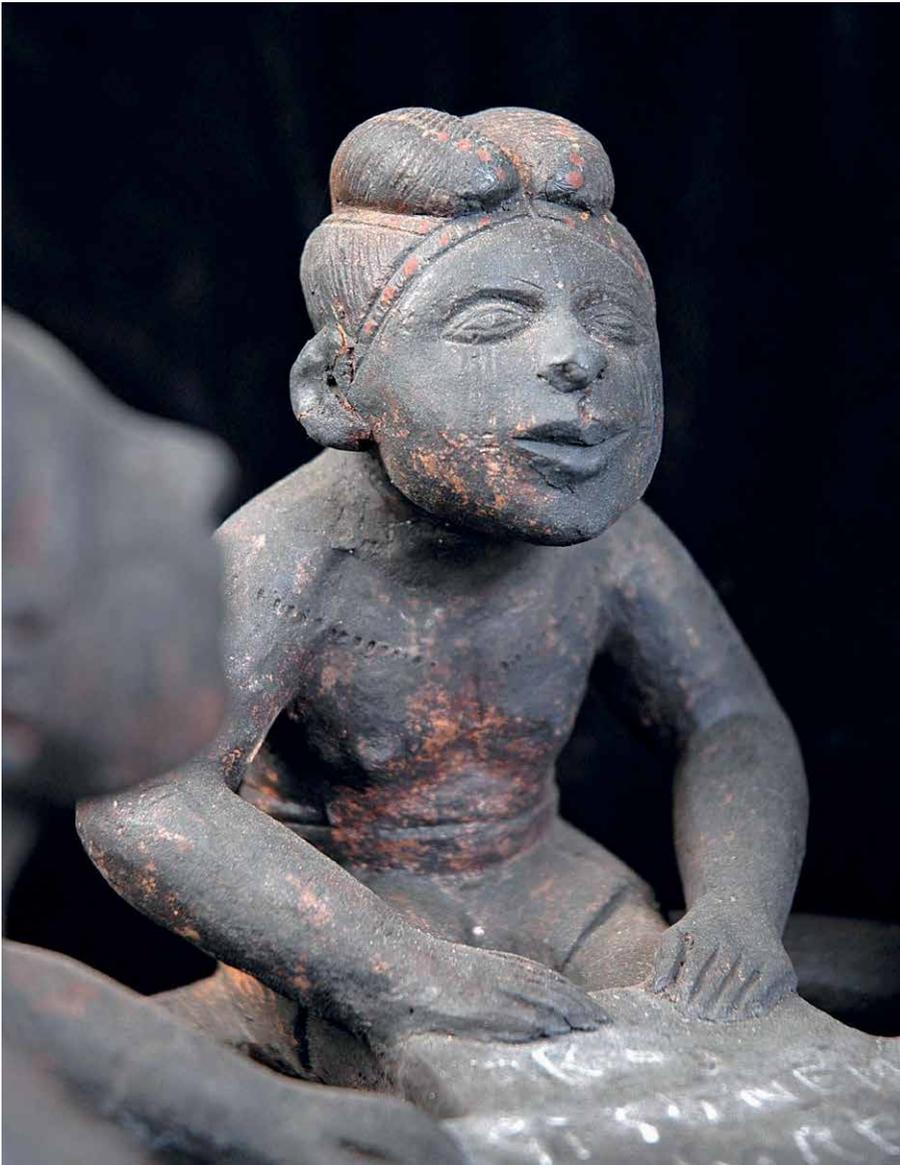


Figure 16.3. Close-up of one of the figures from decorative bowl ETH.SUD1.1080. From the workshop of Mbitim, Li Rangu sleeping sickness hospital, South Sudan. Courtesy of the Powell-Cotton Trust.

the fact that the museum had a significant amount of finished objects, tools, the film and Hannah Powell-Cotton's article (though Mbitim's work only accounts for one paragraph). Therefore, when I began my own interrogation of these objects, the collectors, the artist and the museum, Mbitim was a significant presence, and a poster-boy for how the Powell-Cottons nurtured relations with collected communities during the colonial era; an idea that was actively engaged with as an antidote to narratives of colonial encounters steeped in violence, prejudice and racism.

In reality, the archival evidence shows a fleeting meeting between two men who were both professionals in their field, each of whom could make something of the relationship with the other, but whose relationship was, by its nature, unequal and entangled in the nuances of colonial encounters. This is not to say that Mbitim was not an artist of exceptional skill. Rather, the Powell-Cotton Museum has used Mbitim himself as an object through which multiple narratives, favourable to the Powell-Cotton family memory, could be played out in a space (the museum) which has long struggled with how best to acknowledge its complex relations to the Empire and the practices of colonial collecting.

Those objects attributed to Mbitim in the Pitt Rivers and the British Museum came directly from the Powell-Cottons and include a variety of items replicated in the Powell-Cotton Museum's own collection. However, all other objects in the museums that can reasonably be attributed to Mbitim's workshop (through date and geographic provenance and style) are water pots, identical in style and decoration. Harold Alfred MacMichael collected three further examples, now in the Pitt Rivers and Horniman Museum collections, in 1931 during his tenure as Civil Secretary of the Sudan Administration, possibly in Tombura, not far from the Li Rangu settlement.¹⁶ Rachel Sparks, in her write up of the two pieces in the Pitt Rivers, notes that they are near identical to the Powell-Cotton examples.¹⁷ In the British Museum, two further water pots (Af1931,0411.3 and Af1931,0411.2) were donated by Captain J. E. Voysey. These examples were also acquired in 1931 in Tombura. A third British Museum example (Af1931,0321.44) was acquired in the same year, and in the same location, by Dr Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard.

Further to the British examples, two more water pots, almost identical to those versions at all three UK museums, can be found in Cleveland Museum. Purchased from anonymous donors, they were attributed to Mbitim in the 1990s by Derek Howlett, then curator of the Powell-Cotton Museum.¹⁸

None of these examples have been directly attributed to Mbitim at the point of donation to the museum, possibly because none were purchased directly from him, but from either the workshop, through the Syrian medical staff moving through the region, or through some other outlet, perhaps in Tombura. It was Powell-Cotton's interest in the process of manufacture, as much as the finished article, that led him to the potter himself.

Li Rangu provides an example of the complex relations that existed in colonial contact zones in South Sudan in the early twentieth century: Zande patients and staff were overseen by Syrian doctors who were in turn overseen by local European officials, following directives of the larger Sudan administration in Khartoum. Layered on top of this power dynamic were the less discernible relations that formed between craftspeople at the settlement, possibly also patients and staff, brokered in part by professional Syrian staff, who helped promote and sell wares to Europeans who both worked for the administration and were just passing through.

The purpose of the workshop itself was to make money for the hospital, so creating wares that would sell was imperative. Whereas in other situations new styles and traditions were developing more organically, I believe that at Li Rangu Mbitim, as head potter, was actively required to create forms with direct appeal to European tastes. It therefore made sense to put the most effort into those particular forms that generated the most interest. It is from this process, I would argue, that the significance of the water pot emerges.

Why is the water pot design the most enduring of Mbitim's creations, and did he even manufacture them all himself when his name has only retrospectively been attached to so many museum examples? I think it is no coincidence that this was the object he chose to make on the day the Powell-Cottons filmed him. The water pots are distinctive in the finesse of their detail and every single example I have seen is of equally high quality. It is my opinion that the water pots now found in UK museums were all made by Mbitim himself. As the head potter he most likely developed the templates for most of the other designs sold in the workshop and perhaps provided the finishing details. However items such as the anthropomorphic heads on the large art piece bowl (ETH.SUD1.1080; see Figure 16.2) are clearly not finished with the same finesse as the water pot pictured in Figure 16.1 (see Figure 16.3 for close-up detail).

It is the notion that these were 'Mbitim's pots' that, I would argue, is why they are the most visible examples of his work. These were not just basic forms knocked out of the workshop, but the work of, as Hannah Powell-Cotton noted 'an artist of exceptional skill'. They held a prestige; water pots with human heads were a long-held tradition in the Yambio region surrounding Li Rangu,¹⁹ but they also exemplified the pinnacle of Mbitim's attempts to marry Zande tradition and European taste. In these water pots, he understood what a European buyer might want: something that was instantly recognisable as Zande, but with a nod to European sensibilities, something that was delicate enough to be considered a piece of art, rather than just a utilitarian object with decoration, but something that had a specific purpose and was therefore a 'real' ethnographic object. The book-ends were too much of a novelty, bearing no relation to any form of pottery the Zande themselves might use, and the large shallow bowls too big for easy transport or display in a domestic European setting. The water pots were a master class in understanding emerging trends.

What is the role of the water pots today and what do they mean for the Powell-Cotton Museum? It is the unfortunate truth that rarely is a museum that holds colonial-era ethnographic collections in the fortunate position to be able to connect a named artist with their work. That Mbitim can be recognised for the man he was, and not just an anonymous potter, is thanks to the Powell-Cottons and their record keeping, but also the Powell-Cotton Museum's desire to positively portray the colonial experience. While the Powell-Cotton Museum has historically overplayed the relationship between the collector and the artist as a means of lessening the guilt surrounding colonial relations, it has completely underplayed a more important, vital, narrative. The story of Mbitim, the Powell-Cottons, Li Rangu and the Museum is a vivid lens through which to understand the complexity of colonial relations in the early twentieth century; it is an opportunity to re-insert the long missing voice of the potter himself and the voices of other South Sudanese artists and craftspeople who have been absent from the collection. A water pot can be a gateway to a small act of de-colonising the Powell-Cotton Museum's collection, and we must be brave enough to use the opportunity to change how we display, interpret and interrogate such narratives.

It is impossible to know exactly what happened to Mbitim. All of his potential works in museums appear to have been collected between 1930 and 1934. The film made by the Powell-Cottons in 1933 does not suggest he was an elderly man by this time, so his short period of productivity is most likely down to the fact that he was a patient at Li Rangu who, by 1934, was either unable to work or had passed away.²⁰

Perhaps without their head potter, the workshop developed new products, more suited to the craftspeople onsite. Or, perhaps, it shut down. Many other anthropomorphic vessels produced by Zande craftsmen exist in museums all over the world: the practice was certainly not developed by Mbitim, but his particular style is a visible fingerprint, traceable in museum collections, making sure he remains a known artist where so many others remain nameless.

Acknowledgements

I would particularly like to thank Zoe Cormack for providing me with a number of references and leads during my search for Mbitim's pots in European museums.



The market in memory

Zoe Cormack

Depicting a male figure, carved from a single piece of wood and standing just under a metre tall, the object accessioned as Af.7392 in the British Museum was brought to London by John Petherick, a British consul and trader in Sudan between 1847 and 1864. It was made by an unknown Bongo artist at least 150 years ago; and was once inserted into a grave, part of Bongo traditions for honouring the dead. The feet join a short base, which has been broken, possibly from the moment it was excised from a burial site.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Bongo people have participated (under varying degrees of coercion) in a global market in African art and material culture, which has seen their artistic heritage widely dispersed in museums and private collections. Despite being a minority community in South Sudan, Bongo commemorative sculptures are the most prominent pieces of the country's material cultural heritage in museums. The British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris are just some of the large institutions that display examples. The Petherick piece appears to be the first Bongo commemorative sculpture to have entered a museum collection. Its story is a window onto the trade in Bongo commemorative arts and material culture, which has continued up to the present day.

Petherick almost certainly obtained this sculpture between 1856 and 1858, when he led three separate ivory trading expeditions through Bongo territory in Bahr el-Ghazal province. According to his own account, he established a base in the village of a Bongo chief he names 'Djau' in the 'northern frontier' of Bongo territory,¹ and he writes of seeing similar sculptures in Djau's village:

'Narrow footpaths ... were ornamented with rough wooden posts, carved into semblances of human figures, four feet apart; the first was largest in size, the others had on their heads wooden bowls. These figures were said to represent the chief proceeding to a festival, and followed by his retainers.'²

Figure 17.1. Bongo commemorative sculpture. H 98 cm x W 16 cm. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum (Af.7392).

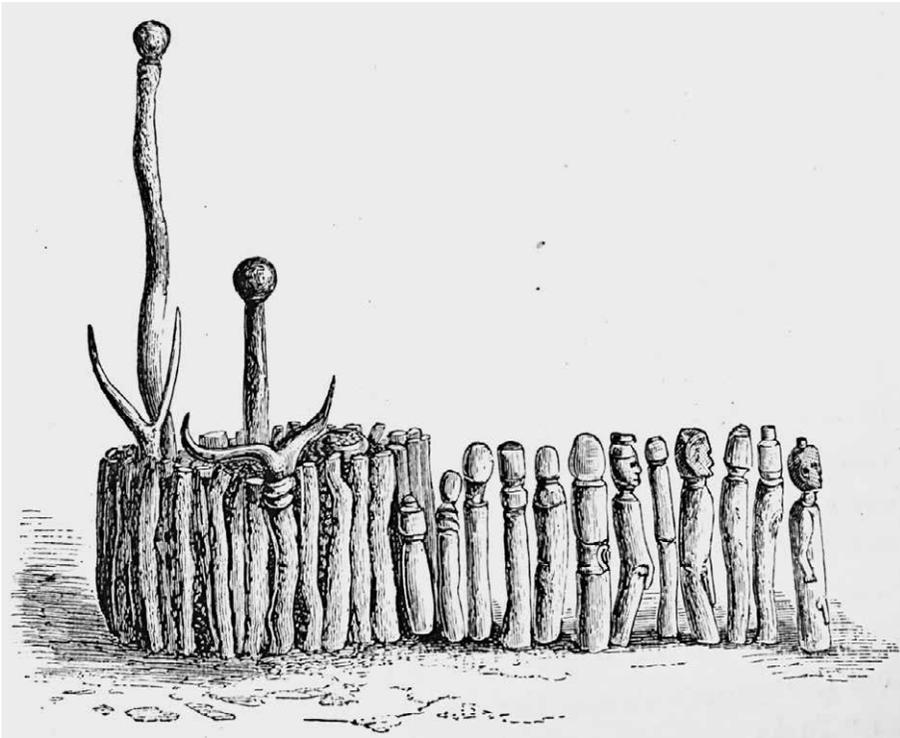


Figure 17.2. Illustration of Yanga's grave, from G. Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years Travel and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central African from 1868-1871*, volume 1 (Harper and Brothers, 1874), 285.

But Petherick is a problematic and imprecise narrator, and at the very least he misunderstood the nature of the objects he saw. Other contemporary descriptions and later ethnographic accounts make it clear that these were not ornamental as Petherick imagined, but commemorative statues at the site of graves. A useful comparative description was written by the botanist Georg Schweinfurth in the 1860s. He illustrates the grave of an elder, named as Yanga, at a village called Moody (Figure 17.2). His observations give a sense of how Af.7392 might have been placed in its original context:

‘with a large heap of stones fenced in by posts, a votive jug, 4 votive pales, and carved wooden figures, 1,3 metres high, representing the family of the deceased, as they start from the grave in procession, the latter [Yanga] at their head’³

It would now be generally accepted that these were commemorative sculptures, traditionally made to honour important people, usually those who were accomplished hunters. The figurative pieces were often accompanied by notched wooden posts, representing the number of animals killed by the deceased.

The sculpture Petherick brought back from Sudan was purchased for the British Museum from the London dealer William Wareham by the curator Augustus Wollaston Franks in 1871. It is part of a larger collection he had assembled, which was sold through London auction houses in the 1860s and 1870s. These sales included the beaded headdress

discussed by Coote and Petch in this book, which formed part of the founding collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. The British Museum documentation on this object is sparse. Its file consists simply of an acquisition slip, written by Franks, describing it as a 'rude male statue' of a type made 'to commemorate brave men who have made themselves conspicuous as hunters or warriors'.

The story of how commemorative arts were removed and transported to museums in foreign countries is always an uncomfortable one, and there are particular factors to be taken into account in the Bongo case. One reason for the abundance of Bongo material culture in collections assembled in the nineteenth century is geographic. Bongo territory in Bahr el-Ghazal was on the frontline of the slave and ivory trade and the expansion of state authority in southern Sudan. Many trading and administrative centres were established close to Bongo settlements. One of the largest was called Jur Ghattas, now the town of Tonj. All travellers entering Bahr el-Ghazal would have passed through here and were certain to have met and interacted with Bongo people. As is often the case, the trade in art went hand in hand with other forms of extraction.

But there were further reasons that Bongo artworks became collectable. In his early account, Georg Schweinfurth spread the view of Bongo people on the brink of destruction.⁴ Their material culture became emblematic of an African population destroyed by the slave trade. Many subsequent accounts are written in the manner of a historical salvage of Bongo culture 'before it finally disappears'.⁵ While true that many Bongo people were enslaved during this catastrophic period, other historical dynamics have influenced their population and identity, making this a more complicated story. Importantly, many Bongo communities were incorporated into the expanding Zande empire in the nineteenth century.⁶ Later, colonial policies also impacted on their livelihoods.

These different factors driving the collecting of Bongo art were bound up, in complicated ways, with aesthetic judgement. Bongo artistic skills have been highly regarded by Europeans and neighbouring people. It is likely that Bongo people created artworks at Zande courts, and their material culture was included in tributes received by the famous leader Prince Gbudwe.⁷ To Europeans, they possessed an 'artistic taste above the average'.⁸ Bongo iron and woodwork were seen as 'very elegant' and of 'admirable quality'; these creative skills were so desirable, Schweinfurth claimed, that Bongo craftspeople were put to work by *zariba* owners to make iron shackles for the slave trade.⁹ Whether all the objects grouped together under the title 'Bongo art' were all made by Bongo people themselves is less clear. 'Bongo' has come to offer a useful pedigree. And, particularly in the case of commemorative statues, a complex network of regional traditions have been glossed as 'Bongo art' and even works created by neighbouring Balanda and Mittu people are often grouped as 'Bongo', while their creators might have held more diverse and cross-cutting identities.

After Petherick's collection, Bongo material culture was extensively acquired by European travellers during the later nineteenth century. The 1868 diary of two Italian visitors to Sudan, Orazio Antinori and Carlo Piaggia, specifically notes how Bongo commemorative statues were the subject of extraction and trade: 'these figures are stolen by the Arabs from [Bongo] cemeteries, and brought to Khartoum where they are mistakenly passed off as idols of the Negro tribes'.¹⁰ Commemorative arts were of continued interest to Europeans after the Reconquest of Sudan. In 1917, the anthropologist Charles Seligman published an image of a Bongo funerary sculpture in

the collections of Gordon College in Khartoum. It had been ‘taken from the grave of a Bongo chief’ on the road between Wau and Tombura and deposited by an unknown donor.¹¹ The anthropologist Evans-Pritchard conducted a short period of research, in part addressing the ‘anthropological mystery’ of Bongo funerary sculptures. He acquired two commemorative statues which he sold to the Pitt Rivers Museum.¹² A longer study was conducted near the town of Tonj in the 1950s by Andreas and Waltraud Kronenberg. During their research, they collected nine figurative statues and three commemorative notched posts for the Ethnographic Museum in Khartoum.¹³

Artistic traditions are not, however, static; and there have been striking developments in Bongo commemoration in the twentieth century and beyond. Some have suggested that the practice of making commemorative statues was declining in the colonial period.¹⁴ But there is evidence of more complicated artistic change. The Kronenbergs noted that in Tonj, the old practice of creating a heap of stones above the grave (as described by Schweinfurth at Yanga’s grave) was being replaced by a cement grave stone in the shape of a coffin, which was then surrounded by commemorative sculptures and posts. In the 1950s, the colonial government set up a woodworking studio in Tonj that employed Bongo carvers. They made small wooden animals that were to be sold as souvenirs in markets across Sudan. But these commercial carvings were also being used in commemorative sculptures. Even the government symbol of Bahr el-Ghazal province, a crane, found its way into grave arts.¹⁵ A visitor to Tonj in the 1970s noted other adaptations: sculptures were now clothed and they were smaller in size. And – while important people continued to be commemorated with grave statues – the relationship between hunting and memorialisation had changed: many of those honoured were not hunters. One statue seen in Tonj carried a gun, indicative perhaps of different hunting practices, or even a reference to the recent civil war.¹⁶ Documentation has recently come to light which shows that the Metropolitan Museum of Art example of a ‘funerary’ statue was being used in Tonj market place in the 1970s, outside of a grave context entirely, as a way of ensuring harmonious commercial relationships.¹⁷

The intervention of the international art market has become increasingly important in understanding Bongo commemorative arts. In 1973, in the aftermath of the first civil war, a Belgian art dealer, Christian Duponcheel, visited southern Sudan and acquired eleven Bongo and Belanda figurative sculptures. Duponcheel had previously made a name for himself collecting and dealing art from West Africa. The Bongo pieces were sold to high profile museums and private collections in Europe and North America. The British Museum purchased one, adding a second example of Bongo commemorative culture to their collection. The Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired another, which was redisplayed in 2018. The artist Georg Baselitz acquired two.¹⁸

Bongo funerary sculptures have appealed to the global market in African art, in part, because they fit into a western canon of ‘African art’, which values figurative, sculptural work. They also seem to provoke a fascination with rarity and the unknown past. The curator William Fagg, writing about one of the Duponcheel sculptures, speculated that Bongo grave markers represented ‘genuinely primitive art, unchanged in essence from a time when there was no other African art’.¹⁹ Bernard de Grunne, another art dealer who has been closely involved with Bongo material, speculates in a sale catalogue that there may be a link between these sculptures and ancient Egyptian sculpture, appealing to enduring speculation about the connections between South Sudanese history and



Figure 17.3. Bongo figure for sale in a gift shop in Nairobi, Kenya, 2016. Photograph by Zoe Cormack.

the ancient Nile Valley.²⁰ It is telling that the small smattering of recent articles and publications on Bongo artworks have all been aimed at the art market.

The aftermath of Sudan's first civil war was a major moment for the trade in Bongo commemorative art. Other collectors, and Europeans working in the aid intervention and in the United Nations acquired commemorative statues.²¹ I interviewed one collector of Bongo sculptures, now based in Nairobi, whose collection began in this period. He recalls that people were bringing commemorative sculptures to the side of the road to sell, in need of money and aware of their commercial value. From 1998, Bongo sculptures appeared in greater numbers on European and American art markets. An article by Krüger in *Tribal Arts* magazine documents a large number in private collections.²² As recently as 2018, Bongo funerary sculptures could be found in tourist shops in Nairobi, nestling between other pieces of wood carving. Many bear no signs of having been inserted into the ground (see Figure 17.3). Were these even made for Bongo graves? Or were they, as it seems, produced explicitly for trade?

In one respect, Petherick's acquisition of the statue now housed at the British Museum is a reminder of the historical roots of the demand and the circulation of Bongo memorial culture, which has been closely tied to a long arc of violence and disruption. It also represents one point in the changing patterns of production, exploitation and trade around an apparently similar set of artistic forms, that continues up to today. The circulation, sale and possible production of these objects outside South Sudan raises the possibility that 'Bongo commemorative art' now exists as dynamically as a trade commodity, as an act of remembrance.



Containing the harvest

Patti Langton

This gourd was collected in 1979 at Napongayit village in the Boya Hills, during the first British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA) expedition to South Sudan (which was then Southern Sudan). Funded by the Royal Geographical Society, the expedition included two anthropologists and three archaeologists – I represented the Pitt Rivers Museum. The expedition embarked from Nairobi in Land Rovers, researching in three locations in Southern Sudan. We stayed among the Moru Misa community in the Mundri district in what was then Western Equatoria; the Dinka Tuic people near Gogrial in Bahr el-Ghazal; and the northern Larim group (also known as Boya or Longarim) in the Boya Hills in Eastern Equatoria. The aim of the anthropologists was to collect cultural and historical data from the local people and make collections of objects, which were to be divided at the end of the expedition between the Pitt Rivers Museum, the British Museum and the anticipated ethnographic museum to be built by the Southern Regional Government in its capital, Juba. Sadly the Juba museum was not built – prevented by a second civil war against the Sudanese government which broke out in 1983.

At our final location near the Boya Hills, I was invited to stay in the Larim village of Napongayit. Peter Longole, the local teacher, became my Larim co-worker and consultant. He invited me to stay in his aunt's village, which lay about 16 miles north by dirt track from the main Torit-Kapoeta road. Most of the time he and I collected histories and information on cultural practices in the villages, but towards the end of my stay I let it be known we were collecting artefacts for museums. I was ambivalent about introducing a monetary element into a friendly relationship; however that was the main aim of the museums which had sent us on the field trip. Today we question the manner and coercion that might accompany collecting, but I can only say that the concept of exchange, for money or more likely for tobacco or sugar, was inherent in the Larim culture. In fact, the Larim people found our desire to collect used and old objects amusing; for them they were nearing the time of replacement, and they assumed we

Figure 18.1. Gourd bowl from Napongayit village in the Boya Hills. Purchased by Patti Langton in 1979: Patti Langton collection. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (1979.20.141).

would want new things. There was no suggestion that the objects were exchanged for money out of need; the people in my village area brought old objects and parted with them willingly. In fact they would have been happy to give us the objects. We explained that the objects would go to Juba and the UK. We were careful to keep the price of goods or money in keeping with the economy of the local people.

The gourd in the photograph is almost identical to one I have at home which belonged to Nakam, Peter Longole's father's sister and the eldest wife of Lokozowa. She was my village host during the time I was staying in Napongayit in 1979, and again in 1980 when I returned to complete my fieldwork there. The gourd was used when serving food to her husband, visiting male relatives and age mates of her husband, or for special occasions. It is one of a number of different styles of gourd, each having a different function, for example milk gourds with narrow apertures; large plain gourds used by men to collect blood from cattle to supplement food; large plain gourds used to carry grain; etc. There are a number of examples in the Pitt Rivers Museum's objects collection.

This particular gourd was used to serve 'merte', which Peter Longole translated as 'beer'. On my third day in the village I wrote in my notebook:

'It is clear the women have been up for a while, and have made some pinky-white thick liquid which Peter also describes as 'beer'. After the alcoholic depredations of the night before drinking 'beer' I am a bit wary at this early hour, however it turns out this 'beer' is really a mild thin porridge affair, only very slightly fermented, and fizzy tasting. It is much less pungent than the sorghum beer of last night, being part millet, which is sweet. Nakam serves us with a lovely decorated gourd, *patterned with burnt out zigzags along the outside* (my emphasis). Peter and I sit on the right of the hut, drinking alternately from the gourd. Nakam sits a little way off in the left side of the hut, but doesn't drink. She and Peter chat.'

The decorative pattern of the gourd demonstrates its special nature, and its use can be seen as representative of the many differences between the lives, status and activities of men and women among the Larim people at that time. Lokozowa and the other Larim men regarded themselves as 'cattle people', and much of their culture and activities revolved round cattle. Nakam and the other women, however, produced the majority of Larim sustenance through agriculture, which was regarded as women's work. All major decisions were made by men, including marriages, which involved the transfer of an agreed number of cattle and goats from the family of the groom to the family of the bride. So when Nakam's daughter, Nakine, reached puberty Lokozowa arranged for her to marry, against her will, an old rich man (to be his fourth wife) in exchange for a large number of cattle and goats. As men took a long time to accumulate sufficient animals to wed, they tended to be many years older than their brides. Lokozowa's alliance with this older man, brother of one of the four 'big men' of the whole community, enhanced Lokozowa's standing. While women seemed to have autonomy in the domestic sphere, and indeed were usually very feisty, final decisions rested with men.

I found that the roles of men and women were also quite different. They lived separate lives. I had been accepted as an 'honorary man' due to my outside status, and in my relationship to Peter, a respected teacher. He had been educated as a teenager in Uganda during the first civil war, so was also an outsider in some sense. This allowed me to walk



Figure 18.2. A young woman repairing a gourd bowl in the Boya Hills, South Sudan. Photograph by Patti Langton, 1980. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (2008.78.2.576).

and eat with Peter and other men, something no Larim woman could do. Women served men food, but never ate in front of men; indeed women hid food if a man passed by. They would never eat out of a decorated gourd. Peter was a close relative of Nakam and therefore was allowed into the hut, but normally men and women walked, sat and moved independently. From the passage from my notebook quoted earlier, it is clear that both the night before and that morning, women had been told by their male relatives to cook and serve food to me, a visitor and honorary male, which they did. The previous night I had been with three of Peter's male friends visiting the mother of one of them, and we had been fed in the *rerung*, a special enclosure in her compound specifically created for visiting men to meet. The next day, as recorded in the passage, we sat on the right of the hut, the men's side, and Nakam, on the left having served us, did not eat.

On marriage Nakam's daughter Nakine would have been given a sleeping hut and granary in her husband's village, which belonged to her alone. She might have had her own separate compound if she was the first wife but would be likely to have shared with other wives as a fourth wife. Her husband would be a visitor, spending his life 'outside' the main body of the village, with his age mates and cattle, only visiting his wife's compound if he wanted food, or to spend the night with her. A woman's compound and home were her territory. Her husband would also have acquired two fields for his new wife to tend, one near the village, another about four kilometres away, near the River Losinga. He would help with clearing the fields and initial planting, but the work of tending the crop, the collection of the grain, and the threshing devolved onto the wife.

On my return in 1980 I discovered that the 1979 rains, which should have fed the crops, did not fall, there was a severe water shortage and there had been no harvest. Food was scarce. The competition for water and grazing led to wars between the Larim and neighbouring Toposa people who also had cattle. The gourd in the photograph was not put to use, as the harvest had failed. There was no grain to make *merte* or the sweet thick 'beer' we ate for breakfast in 1979. Men and women had to create different ways of sharing food, the men still depending on cattle and milk, but sending blood, milk and meat to the women and children when they could. The women collected *magu*, a tough green vegetable, which, with borassus palm fruit, made the bulk of their diet.

This gourd reminds me of the plight of a marginal group, so dependent on the rains, always in danger of famine and drought. What was my role and ethical position in that situation? On that final visit, I brought a sack of grain for Nakam – and she divided it equally between her co-wives, and used it all within days, so as not to engender envy with the neighbours. And the gourd reminds me of the importance of being careful how you involve yourself as an outsider: for example the payment for the gourd and other objects needed care not to upset the economic balance, and I only bought objects in 1979 during a time of full harvests, when they were not difficult to replace.

Looking at relations between men and women I ask myself how far, as an outsider, do I criticise the lack of autonomy of the women in making choices: their apparent strength, yet the rigid rules of marriage and decision making. In 2011, through an extraordinary chance meeting with someone familiar with the area, I was able to reconnect with Peter Longole, by then a Member of Parliament for the Boya Hills area. Peter had sent some of his children to be educated in Kampala, also including Theresa (not her real name), Nakine's daughter. Theresa and I have kept in touch since her college years in Kampala, where she took business studies. As an insider, and an

educated Larim young woman, she has been adamant that girls in the villages should be allowed education, and she wants to change attitudes to prevent what she terms 'forced marriages'. She managed to get work with a UN agency – but her main work in 2019 was famine relief in the Boya Hills. They were again facing drought, and the food gourd would again be waiting for a better year.



Of replicas, refusals and resistance

Elfatih Atem and Rebecca Lorins

South Sudan's Traveling Exhibition project originated in the optimism surrounding the country's independence in 2011. It was envisaged as part of a broader programme that would lead towards the establishment of a national museum. The Traveling Exhibition was intended to create the founding collection of the future museum and provide a forum for different communities in South Sudan to connect with each other through their material culture traditions. The team was to move across South Sudan's ten states, receiving donations of artefacts and displaying these to different communities before accessioning them for the national museum. It was an explicit attempt to move toward a model of shared authority in museums and allow the South Sudanese people to select the objects that would eventually represent them in the museum. Support for the project reflected the aspiration (by both national as well as international actors) to establish a public culture sector. It was funded by the Open Society Initiative of Eastern Africa (OSIEA) with additional support from the French government; the project was co-developed by UNESCO Juba and the national Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MoCYS) with then-Undersecretary of Culture Jok Madut Jok.

The Traveling Exhibition was initiated as a pilot project in 2014, targeting three states: Eastern Equatoria (Torit, Lopa Lafon, Kapoeta, Loa and Magwi); Western Bahr el-Ghazal (Raja, Wau and Jur River); and Western Equatoria (Yambio, Tambura, Maridi and Mundri). The state ministries were responsible for raising awareness of the exhibition to ensure the attendance and participation of a wide array of community members. The primary communication vehicle used was radio, and there were several announcements made in the weeks prior to the event, with local authorities calling for '*haja turathiyya*' or 'heritage things', as well as soliciting objects with more precision, calling for pots, baskets, spears, etc. to display at the Traveling Exhibition. The messages were also meant to explain the intention to collect objects to travel to different locations, and for eventual inclusion in the projected national museum in Juba. The enthusiasm with which many community members approached the Traveling Exhibition was palpable: long processions of people

Figure 19.1. A woman in Loa, Eastern Equatoria, holding the pot that she refused to donate to the Traveling Exhibition. Photograph by Elfatih Atem, 2014.

wearing cultural dress for the occasion, playing music, and carrying their objects on their heads typically preceded each event. People reported that an event of this type, where national or local officials showed interest in providing a platform for art heritage, was rare, and that they felt motivated to not only come forward to share their objects but to see and learn about others' objects.

Yet, while often welcomed by community members with curiosity and enthusiasm, these events also revealed more problematic aspects. There were several unexpected outcomes of the participatory process, which have inspired the questions explored in this chapter. What happens when participants refuse to donate their objects or engage in ways that question the premises of participation? What stories do these (absent) objects tell? How can we ethically and effectively integrate stories of absence, stories of silence and stories of refusal into a museum narrative? Given that the very presence of objects from South Sudan in European museums testifies to histories of violence and coercion, we would like to suggest that there is great value in reflecting on those processes of failed or subverted acquisition. It is perhaps these absent objects that best represent untold stories of refusal in the history of European collecting in South Sudan.

In this chapter, we share a few examples of resistance to the collecting process, encountered during the 2014 pilot of the Traveling Exhibition, for which Elfatih Atem was the national consultant. The negotiations presented here illustrate assertions of agency by those invited to participate. They are snapshots of compromise, debate or outright refusal that subvert dominant understandings of museum practice and ultimately create space for conversations about alternative futures for museums.

Story 1: Objects offered out of obligation in Magwi

In Magwi, state ministry staff had been involved in the training and publicising of the exhibition and were therefore well-informed and prepared for the event. In one case, however, a woman staff member at the ministry engaged with the exhibition team in a way that revealed a sense of anxiety and obligation, rather than free and voluntary participation. Appearing with several objects, including a pot and three necklaces, she eventually confessed that these objects had been taken from the ministry office, rather than selected from among her belongings. The objects were not hers to donate, but she had felt so compelled to bring something to the Traveling Exhibition that she brought items from her office. The master narrative of a 'participatory process' of collecting had made this woman feel obliged to deliver.

Story 2: A 'real' replica in Loa

The majority of individual participants in the Traveling Exhibition sites were women bringing 'ordinary' objects, affirming women's central role in the making and maintaining of everyday material culture. In response to the call by the chief or county commissioner for *haja turathiyya*, women answered with the material culture of domestic life, objects still in everyday use that many women develop the skills to produce and pass down to other women in their households. At Loa, a village in the Ma'di area of Eastern Equatoria, a woman arrived with a cooking pot she had made herself. When asked whether she might contribute the pot to the Travelling Exhibition, she was hesitant and explained that it held sentimental value but that she could go and make another one for the team to take. She almost immediately went home and after a few hours, returned with a new pot, almost



Figure 19.2. A chief plays the *rongo* for a large crowd in Sopa, Western Bahr el-Ghazal. He later declined to donate the *rongo* to the Traveling Exhibition. Photograph by Elfatih Atem, 2014.

identical to the one she had refused to give away. The woman's desire to retain ownership over her original pot, but make a replica for the sake of the national museum, raises questions around the nature of 'originality' or 'authenticity' in museum collections.

Story 3: 'These objects are not for sale' in Jur River

On another stop in the Traveling Exhibition, the women of Jur River challenged the hierarchies of value that come with the commodification of cultural heritage. They proudly displayed their objects, and expressed the desire to publicly demonstrate the skills and techniques they had honed over many years. They brought with them what they considered to be their cultural heritage as requested by the state ministry, sharing clay pots and palm basketry, and discussing the objects and their production in detail. But when it came to handing over the objects to the national team and donating them to the proposed museum in Juba, they grew reluctant, explaining their deep connection to the objects. Although they suggested that part of their reluctance had to do with the difficulty in producing the objects again – both in terms of procuring materials and in terms of the labour involved in making the final product – they also insisted that the items were not for sale. The objects the women produced were meant to circulate in a domestic sphere where their value derived from their use and from their embeddedness in a set of relationships. Although the Traveling Exhibition was not in and of itself a profit-making venture, the women understood that such an initiative would extract the artefacts from their local context – and from a domestic sphere of value – into a market sphere in a way that might fundamentally threaten their original value.

Story 4: Spiritual objects in Raja County

Some participants brought items of great spiritual and cultural significance. In Sopa, Raja County, a former police officer who had recently been selected as a chief responded to the call for cultural heritage by bringing a *rongo* handed down to him by his father and grandfather. As Buwali's chapter in this volume details, the *rongo* is an instrument with a rich set of narratives governing its use and display, although many of these rules and prohibitions must be understood as contextual. During this event, and as illustrated by the photo (Figure 19.2), the chief played the *rongo* for the large crowd gathered at the exhibit, but when asked to donate it for the sake of the national museum, he declined. Giving reasons that resonate with the women from Jur River, the chief cited the object's personal value as connected to his family line, and the difficulty of reproducing it given the nature of the materials and the specialist labour involved.

Each of these stories illustrate what we are calling 'small acts of resistance' to conventional museum practice and which, we argue, are crucial to consider as we collectively reimagine the place of museum and heritage work within liberatory futures. The stories we shared of absent objects are stories that in another telling of the Traveling Exhibition would be kept out of view, as they could be too revealing of collection efforts gone awry. But rather than keep the refusals off-stage, we suggest they serve as flashpoints that help illuminate unspoken assumptions, submerged tensions and potential alternative avenues for a post-colonial museum and heritage praxis.

In bringing refusal as a key concept to the fore, we follow in the footsteps of indigenous scholars from various disciplines who have been theorising refusal, and 'piec[ing] together a methodology around refusal, not as a simple or extremist or prohibitive stance, but as a generative orientation'.¹ Tuck and Wang have theorised the concept of 'refusal' as always grounded within the violence of colonial relations. They enlist the idea of 'refusal' as a strategic gesture that unsettles master narratives of knowledge production, and, in our case, dominant understandings of museum ideals and practices.

The refusals we witnessed during the Traveling Exhibition did not simply draw limits, but signal new openings, pointing us toward a heritage work that is in the service of a specific community in a specific context, one that shifts the terms of engagement, and one that carries the potential for generating new approaches and relations. We leave with some reflections on the refusals we have shared, and how they may generate possibilities for museum and heritage practice going forward.

The refusal to donate objects is part of the participatory process. For consultative and participatory processes to be meaningful, communities must be involved at the inception of a project and at all levels of decision making. Decolonial approaches to museum and archive practice have described the importance of ensuring an active role for communities to shape the structure and content of public programmes. Sangwand uses the term 'contributive justice' to refer to 'the duty and opportunity for everyone to contribute labor and decision-making', referring to the primary archival functions of appraisal, description and access.² In the museum field, too, communities should be empowered to appraise their own objects, hold internal discussions as to the value of different objects, produce descriptions that include contextual detail, and decide where and how and if such objects are displayed. As different communities are consulted on the possibility of heritage initiatives and institutions, some may assert limits on what kinds of

tangible and intangible heritage may circulate in the public sphere and for what purpose. These refusals should be welcomed as part of an open and participatory process.

Refusal opens a space to differently imagine the nature and purpose of museums in South Sudan. The museum as an institution has historically been invested with the power to authorise cultural heritage, but we must leave open the very shape and definition of 'museum' in different times and places, and the possibility that alternatives to a static structure may better serve a community's desire to preserve and display the past. In the context of South Sudan, where a national museum is yet to be established, the conversation on what museums are, and for whom they exist should be nurtured and extended. All four stories we shared raise questions about whether a centralised museum located in the capital of South Sudan is the best or only option for preserving and presenting cultural material. We posit that the participants' refusals to submit to the collection and acquisition process are assertions of the agency to determine whether, how, when and where to present their material culture. In this sense, refusals to donate to a centralised institution open up the possibility for conversations about supporting a decentralised, localised heritage sector and to simultaneously recognise the informal and customary ways in which people already engage with cultural preservation and education.

Refusals contain historical, cultural and subjective information that is important to document and discuss. Decolonial approaches to museum practice and knowledge production more broadly have drawn attention to the gaps and silences in representations and exhibitions of the material culture of historically marginalised groups. Too often, objects are presented accompanied by incomplete, inadequate, inaccurate or distorted descriptions.³ The 'experts' tasked with completing descriptions in museums in the global north too often lack the necessary knowledge to adequately describe objects in their collections from the global south. Yet, the entrenchment of discourses of 'expertise' results in devaluing the knowledge bases and lived experience of heritage workers in the global south. Furthermore, processes that privilege 'scientific' or 'objective' ways of knowing too often lead to exhibitions of objects stripped of any context and detached from any specific historical or cultural past. We suggest that refusals should loom as shadows over exhibitions from places which have experienced processes of dispossession and violent extraction, inviting us to reflect deeply on the types of information shared and not shared in public programmes. The notion of refusal can be used to honour distinctions between what is accessible and what is off-limits to researchers, curators and viewers of exhibitions and programmes. We challenge museum and heritage professionals working in these contexts to consider ways to make visible the power dynamics and hierarchies that underlie the extraction of objects in public programmes, drawing attention simultaneously to the 'violating instruments' of the collectors, the resistance of the creator communities (including but not limited to refusal), and the ethical and emotional stakes involved.⁴

Ultimately, the stories here serve as important reminders that the goals of heritage experts may be in tension with the needs of communities, turning the encounter into one that is more conflictual than collaborative. But if we are willing to think in creative ways, we can embrace refusal as a way to rethink museums and other cultural institutions that were introduced during the colonial period.

Part Six

Heritage in War and Peace



Reference I

EDUCATION POLICY
OF
THE NEW SUDAN

AND
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Issued by
The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement

Yei/Himman-New Cush

January, 2002

New Sudan ephemera

Nicki Kindersley and Yosa Wawa

This document was shared with us from the personal archives of Margaret, a former wartime teacher, education NGO worker, and former state Minister of Education, in Juba in 2019. We have been collecting old wartime ephemera from the 1960s to the 2000s, including songs, poems and pamphlets, as part of a project to reconstruct the history of wartime education in South Sudan.

The A5-size pamphlet is a bit battered. Its white covers are soft paper; although Margaret did not have any other documents like this, someone has used a marker pen to label its cover with 'Reference 1'.

The pamphlet bears the flag of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement, which later became the flag of the new Republic of South Sudan: white, black, red and green, with a yellow star. On the left-hand top corner is the emblem of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), with the motto 'Unity, Equality and Progress'. The logo of the Secretariat of Education is placed at the right top corner: an open book and a candle.

This small booklet was published in Yei and at 'Himman-New Cush' in 2002. Yei is south-west of Juba, the capital of South Sudan, and was one of the first major towns that the SPLM and its army (SPLM/A) captured from the Sudan government in 1997, in Operation Thunderbolt. Being relatively well supplied from neighbouring Uganda, it became the de facto capital of the SPLM. Himman itself is a small site to the east of Mt Lotukei, near the Nakichot and Naminit mountains, on the southern borders of South Sudan with north-eastern Uganda. After the SPLM/A headquarters of Torit were recaptured by the Sudan government in July 1992, the SPLM/A moved its headquarters into the mountains, which it renamed New Cush, or New Site. Cush is both a Biblical reference to the Black land of Cush described in Isaiah 18 and a reference to the ancient kingdom of Cush, both of which people have claimed as the heritage of South Sudan. Claiming a New Cush, or a New Site, also refers to the idea of a New Sudan, the wartime idea of transforming the whole of Sudan into a new democratic and equitable state.¹ Because of the mountainous nature of

Figure 20.1. 'Education Policy of the New Sudan and Implementation Guidelines'. Issued by The Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement. Yei/Himman-New Cush, January 2002. Private collection of Margaret Ayite. Photograph by Nicki Kindersley, 2019.

the terrain, Himman was safe from Sudan government aerial bombings. By 1998 the SPLM Secretariat had moved to Yei, leaving a skeleton staff at Himman.

The SPLM/A's Ministry of Education was a late addition to the growing structures of rebel government. By 1988, after about half a million people had died from war and starvation in five years of conflict, major humanitarian programmes – including the UN's Operation Lifeline Sudan established in 1989 – began to try to work with the rebels to reach populations in captured territories. By 1990, the SPLM/A's Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association had established a presence in all liberated areas of the Sudan. In addition to coordinating relief, it functioned as a local government. The 1994 Chukudum Convention of the SPLM set out structures of rebel government, forming a National Liberation Council of 183 members. Besides its legislative powers, the Council approved the appointment of Secretariats, including one for Education.²

By the early 1990s, with growing concerns from southern Sudanese communities and the SPLM/A that they were losing years of education in the now-protracted conflict, SPLM/A organisers and commanders began to re-establish school systems in liberated areas. Teachers who had joined the rebel movement were recalled from the front lines and allocated schools to open for displaced children. Other teachers in active front lines – across Upper Nile and greater Bahr el-Ghazal – worked to organise informal schools around rural rebel bases for displaced families seeking protection with the rebel army, working under trees with hand-copied textbooks.

The pamphlet is part of the ephemera of this SPLM/A rebel government, mostly now only surviving within personal archives like Margaret's. The little white booklet is a late part of the history of rebel-made educational systems and standards. With its logos, mottos, index and annexes, the education policy pamphlet was part of the war effort. The production of pamphlets, position papers and news briefings became critical to building a credible alternative SPLM/A government: this pamphlet emphasises the legitimacy of the SPLM government in its first chapter, 'Sovereignty', tying the pamphlet to Chukudum Convention Resolution No. 7.3, which is the liberation of the individual and society, and Resolution No. 19.2, which aims at the promotion of self-reliance.

The war effort required the SPLM/A to both write a pro-Southern political history of the Sudan, and propagate this historical worldview to its fighters and wary local communities. The pamphlet's Introduction explains that Sudan education has been plagued by violent engagement with 'waves of foreigners and other soldiers of fortune' – who suppressed and supplanted the cultures, traditions and history of local people, 'thus undermining the very foundation of meaningful and relevant education', creating an elite and irrelevant system and standard of formal education.

The pamphlet sets out a vision of a New Sudan, with 'no segregation' and a new society built through 'overcoming the culture of violence', with school debates, drama, games and sports, and inter-regional visits. It emphasises the need for respect for the beliefs, opinions, and cultures of others, and proposes educational efforts through talks, round table discussions, and collective dances – as well as celebrations of the nation and the signing of 'heroic songs' praising the SPLM/A. This is all rooted in the formal aspirations of the SPLM: self-reliance, and liberation of the individual and society from all forms of political, economic and social constraints.

As an aspirational object, then, the pamphlet does not give detailed policies – the curriculum is only mentioned in passing. It notes extensive training needs, with English as

the official language of instruction, and Swahili and Arabic to be introduced as subjects in the later years of primary education. The pamphlet also tries to rebalance 'the foundations of meaningful education' in the South: it includes prospects for promoting women's education, for alternative curricula and educational pathways for adult and disabled learners, and for people with learning difficulties, as well as the need for education opportunities for people in cattle and fishing camps.

The pamphlet is also a relic of tensions over the funding of these visions of a New Sudan government and society. It emphasises the rebel government's responsibility for education, via the Civil Authority of the New Sudan (CANS) – an administrative structure set up at the Chukudum Convention – and through aid agencies and communities. The pamphlet determines that 10% of the CANS-collected social service tax should go to education, and 50% of resources for schooling should be contributed by the community. In practice, the real systems of rebel taxation, and the SPLM/A's control of its communities and humanitarian assistance, were generally much less organised, and often violent and exploitative.

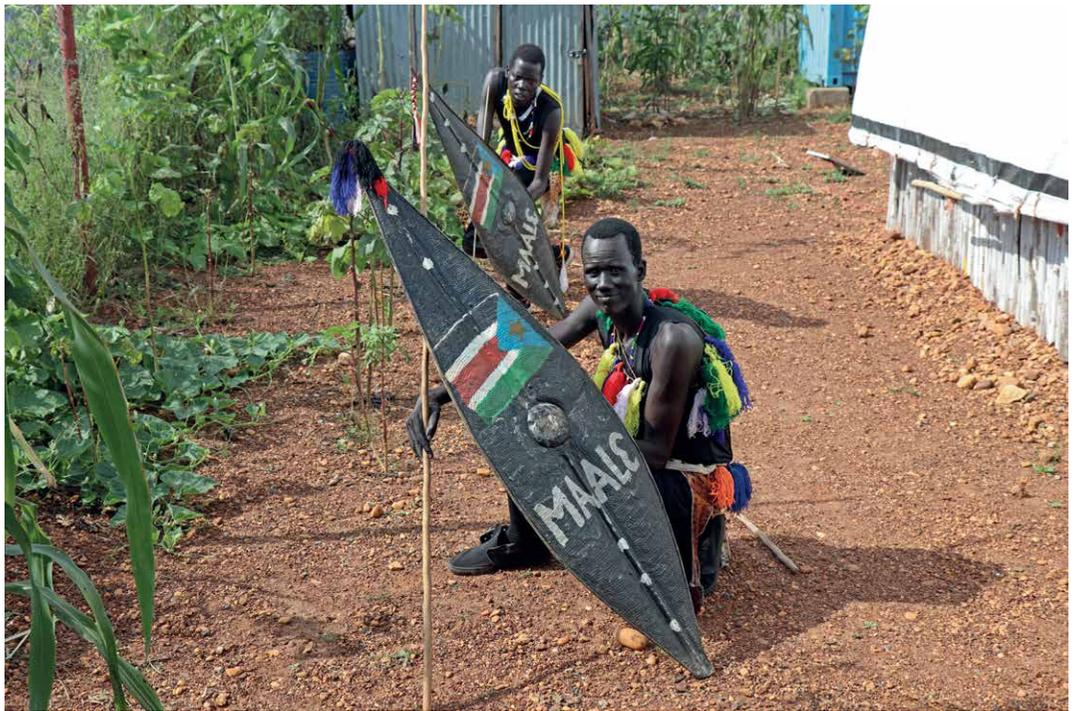
In this sense, the neat white pamphlet, and its simple percentages, is a gloss on realities. It could act as a physical barrier and playing card in negotiations with aid agencies and the United Nations – by neatly asserting sovereign policy and an official reality, it could be a practical tool in blocking or controlling aid and assistance.

In reality, though, the pamphlet is a heavily disputed document – while it asserts a unified policy, it is one version of the SPLM's education policy drafted and discussed during the development of the New Sudan Curriculum in mid-1996. There are other, competing pamphlets with alternative texts in private archives, the physical remains of the internal inter-personal divides and political differences that characterised the SPLM/A and its rebel government structures.

This pamphlet is one of many similar booklets produced by the SPLM since around 1997, often in very limited print runs and circulated among a very small group. Because there were no formal offices, and those involved in the SPLM/A's government and aid systems were working from their private homes in Nairobi and Kampala, most of the war's written records are in people's homes.

There were, however, many other pamphlets, generally also made up of folded A4 photocopied pages and soft card covers, printed in short runs from the photocopiers of churches and aid agencies, or group-funded local photocopy shops. These pamphlets are part of South Sudan's wartime cultural ephemera, and are still re-sold on market stalls across the country: our collections include vernacular-language textbooks and traditional story collections, self-written community histories, song books and poetry collections. These homemade books circulated in refugee camps and displaced settlements, and were used in community-run schools and church groups. They are the fragile physical traces of the widespread intellectual and cultural production of South Sudanese people within this long conflict, and bear the imagery and ideas of past hopes and plans for the future.

This pamphlet is representative of these lost ideas of a future New Sudan. The future of the SPLM/A post-war government fundamentally changed when its leader Dr John Garang de Mabior died in a helicopter crash in 2005 at Himman, where this pamphlet was printed. Although our project is collecting digital copies of these wartime materials for a small online archive, we are leaving the originals with their owners and authors, whose homes currently act as an archive of this wartime work. Much like the plans and ideas it contains, this fragile pamphlet (and many others) will likely also be lost to time.



Heritage in displacement

Deng Nhial Chioh

Deng Nhial Chioh is a heritage professional and advocate for culture. He runs an organisation called Maale Heritage Development Foundation in Juba. Maale was originally founded in Khartoum during Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005). Since the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in 2013, Deng became one of almost 200,000 people living in Protection of Civilians sites (PoCs) in UN bases across the country. The majority of people who live in PoCs are Nuer, who sought refuge with the UN when Nuer soldiers and civilians were targeted in ethnic killing by government forces and allied civilians in Juba in December 2013. The subsequent civil war between Salva Kiir's government and the SPLM-in Opposition, led by Riek Machar, has seen the manipulation and mobilisation of ethnic identities, so that PoCs inhabitants have not yet felt safe enough to leave permanently. Since 2014, Deng has resumed the work of Maale from the PoCs on the outskirts of Juba. The following are his reflections on his work with Maale and working on South Sudanese heritage in displacement in Khartoum and now Juba.

Maale was founded in Khartoum in 2001, during Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005). At this time, many southern Sudanese were displaced to northern Sudan, Egypt and other countries. We had come into a new culture and it was difficult for our kids to know about our home and the life we had left in southern Sudan. The idea came that we should make an organisation to awaken people to the value of their heritage. Displacement had brought a lot of changes; people were even leaving their names. They were taking Islamic or Christian names. They were also about to give up their old values and ways of life. We were adjusting to a new life in a place where there were no cattle, where relationships were not the same and kinship values also different. We were afraid of losing our culture.

*We came up with the idea of *Maale Heritage Development Foundation*, which I founded in 2001, in a part of Khartoum known as Kalakla [a suburb where there were many displaced southern Sudanese]. I was a student of anthropology at the University of Juba, which had been relocated to Khartoum at that time. The name '*Maale*' is a greeting*

Figure 21.1. *Maale* dancers wearing improvised costumes in Juba Protection of Civilians site in 2019. Photograph by Elfatih Atem.

in the Nuer language. It means something similar to 'hello'. People probably know us best for our dancing, and our mandate has mainly focused on intangible cultural heritage – music, dance, riddles, folktales and joke naming system of the people. But we are also interested in material culture.

Several experiences inspired me to create *Maale*. One of the most important was my childhood. I grew up in Fangak, in Jonglei. As a child, I learned about different cultures, as my father is Nuer and my mother is Dinka; she is from a place called Atar. I had what you could call a traditional experience of early life. As children, we played together, ran after cattle and fished in the river. Sometimes I travelled with my mother to her village and got to know her culture and Dinka language. Then, in the 1980s I came to Malakal and I learned the Shilluk language. These early experiences showed me that culture is very important.

I was also inspired by reading the books of [the British social anthropologist] Evans-Pritchard, while I was studying anthropology at the University of Juba. I really enjoyed Evans-Pritchard's books. When I saw he had spent relatively little time in Sudan and didn't know Nuer language, I realised that we could do much more. We have a saying in Nuer language which says that when a blind person is given a food and that food tastes good, he will say, if my food tastes this good, then how good must food be for people who can see? Evans-Pritchard was here for a very short time; he only observed. I thought, if the children of this community learned and got a university education – what would they be able to say about their own Nuer culture? We could produce wonders! I began to learn about the Nuer and I fell in love with Nuer culture. This also inspired me to learn about the other cultures of South Sudan – Dinka, Shilluk, Anyuak ... and so on.

Also, there were several other cultural organisations that were established in Khartoum at this time. *Maale* was part of bigger movement for displaced southern Sudanese to celebrate their cultural heritage during the civil war. We used to perform dances in Jebel Aulia, in Haj-Youssef and in other places where there were many internally displaced people (IDPs). Often students would invite us to come and dance. We began to participate nationwide; we were even invited on TV. In 2005 we participated in a large festival called, 'Khartoum: The Capital of Arab Culture'. Even though we do not consider ourselves to be 'Arab', many northern Sudanese were interested to see us perform and learn about our southern Sudanese cultures. At that time all they knew about us was the war.

In 2005, when John Garang arrived in Khartoum after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, there was a celebration and *Maale* participated in that too. At that time, we began to feel like we are part of nation building. That feeling increased over the years. In 2006, I returned to Juba and was employed in the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports. We (along with other cultural groups) participated in the Independence Day celebration and other national events. We felt as if we represented South Sudan together. Sometimes people mistook us as only representing the people of Upper Nile, but sometimes they look at us as a national organisation. We see ourselves as working for all communities.

Over the years, there was a lot of change to *Maale*. We brought in the idea of heritage studies to South Sudan. We wanted to teach people to appreciate and understand cultural heritage. We began to focus on public awareness programmes, to encourage people to reflect on national dress, traditional laws and language development. We have begun to teach heritage and take part in radio shows. But our hearts are not yet fulfilled; we want to do more.



Figure 21.2. Deng Nhial Chioh training dancers in Juba Protection of Civilians site in 2019. Photograph by Elfatih Atem.

Since December 2013, with the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan, *Maale* has found itself a heritage organisation in displacement once again. There have been a lot of changes. We can't participate in occasions outside the Protection of Civilians sites (PoCs); we are afraid, and we don't feel happy. As an organisation, we have suffered greatly. We lost some of our members in this crisis. One of our members was killed in Unity State. Up to now, we don't know what has happened to everyone we've worked with and trained. The power of our group is not the same, as we are scattered. Some are refugees in Uganda, Kenya; some are in other PoCs in South Sudan.

The circumstances we are in now are quite different to those in Khartoum. These PoCs are not like IDP life in Khartoum. In Khartoum, people were physically scattered across the city and in different places. Here, we are all together. If one thing happens, it affects us all. Sometimes there is good news; sometimes there is bad news. When there is fighting in a certain part of the country, you might hear that your relative has been killed, and then people will mourn together.

The work we are doing now is also different from how we started in Khartoum. A big reason for this is that most of the people who ran to the PoCs are Nuer, although not exclusively. We are keeping the idea of promoting other cultures, but our ability to do that is restricted, because of the situation in which we find ourselves.

We slowly started to revive cultural activities in the PoCs, but this did not happen immediately. We wanted to boost the mood of IDPs. All of us were traumatised. There is a big problem here about suicide and people losing their minds; this is because there were many violations against people during the war.

At the beginning, it was hard to hold cultural activities, because people didn't think the PoCs should be a place of dancing. They said, 'we are mourning' and traditionally, when there is a death, people stop dancing. But after some years, we began to hold cultural events.

We respect the values of the community, but we started again. People asked us, 'how can we laugh and how can we dance when our people are dying?' We said, we have to keep hope; we cannot stay in mourning all of the time. But it is important to realise that people are not dancing in PoCs because they are happy; we are doing this because it is therapeutic.

I think that coming together through cultural heritage is one way for people to overcome the pain of war and displacement. But there are many challenges for us here. One big issue has been internal divisions within the PoCs. People were fighting among themselves, not just people from different ethnic groups, but mainly people from different Nuer sections. When people came here in the PoCs, they didn't know much about each other, even though they mostly identify as Nuer people. Culture and cultural performance became one way to bridge these divides. We wanted people to dance together, to compete that way, rather than through fighting.

Another big challenge is that we came to the PoCs with nothing. I lost my entire collection of books, artefacts and traditional costumes for the *Maale* dancers in the fighting that happened in Juba in 2013. My collection had taken years to assemble, but I'm slowly rebuilding it. We have also made new costumes for our dancers: we have made shields out of metal [rather than hides] and strips of tarpaulin to make decorative tassels. I have also encouraged women to continue to make traditional objects in the PoCs, although they too struggle to find materials. One woman has recently made the traditional carrier for a baby – called *dieny*. It is a basket that is carried on the head.

Similarly to how we felt in Khartoum, we want to educate the young people in the PoCs about culture, and to know their languages and heritage. I have been teaching a heritage studies course to university students living here. Even though we are now in South Sudan, we are not living in normal conditions and there are big challenges for knowing culture. We also want to document their life in the PoCs, although that is very difficult.

I also believe that cultural and heritage organisations operating in a situation like the PoCs have to adopt a wider social responsibility. We try to inform people about the role of UNMISS [The United Nations Mission in South Sudan] and the services being operated by NGOs in the camp. People from those organisations have even thanked us for what we are doing.

We mainly perform in the PoCs now. We have only once performed outside the PoCs since 2014, at the 'Peace Through Sports' event organised by UNESCO in 2016. What prevents us is that we don't want to get involved in political issues and we are concerned about the security situation. The country is divided; it is hard for cultural organisations to operate like this. We stopped dancing for more than six months after July 2016 because many people died in the camp then [when fighting again erupted in Juba near the PoCs between government and SPLM-IO forces].

Over the years, the circumstances in which we have operated have changed, first as a result of the end of the civil war in Sudan and the Independence of South Sudan, then as a consequence of the beginning of conflict in South Sudan. *Maale* started in Sudan, when people ran in the war. We didn't want to lose our culture; we have looked for ways to preserve our tangible and intangible heritage. Now we have adapted in the PoCs. The situation has forced us to change our activities. The experience of displacement here is different: we are bound together in an extreme way; we feel everything together as a

community. *Maale* remains committed to maintaining the cultural heritage of the people and providing an outlet. We have found new questions to work with in the PoCs. You could even say that the PoCs are sorts of heritage sites; they are connected with the outbreak of violence and the way people have been forced to change their way of life. The sites themselves are symbolic. We are learning what that means for the future, together.



**Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection and
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A European Union jerry-can

Adebo Nelson Abiti and John Giblin

In 2018, this European Union branded jerry-can was collected in the Ariwa refugee camp, or more accurately refugee settlement, in West Nile, Uganda. The Ariwa camp is the home of 700,000 South Sudanese people displaced by ongoing violence and insecurity in South Sudan. The jerry-can is now in the Uganda National Museum in Kampala. It is part of a collection of objects that reflect the conflict and post-conflict material culture of residents living in internally displaced person camps and refugee camps in northern Uganda.

This jerry-can is made from thick plastic; it has a white opaque body and a red screw top lid. It has a broadly three-dimensional rectangular form, 47 x 34 x 17 cm. The two sides with the smallest surface area are its top and base. The top has a handle next to the opening, which is closed by the red lid. The body of the jerry-can and the lid were made separately from high density polyethylene by injection moulding and were united later. The jerry-can is branded, or decorated, with a European Union (EU) symbol of twelve gold stars on a blue background. The stars stand for the EU's ideals of unity, solidarity and harmony. Beneath the EU symbol is printed in ink the words, 'Funded by European Union and Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid'. Although the location of manufacture is unknown, jerry-cans like these are mass-made for different companies and branded and shipped separately to their destination, in this case presumably to an EU distribution centre before being sent to the intended beneficiaries of EU aid. More research is needed to ascertain the jerry-cans' manufacture, distribution and trade locations and routes. In its present state, the jerry-can shows signs of use with black smudges over its body that appear to be from engine oil or another hydrocarbon.

The jerry-can is interesting in and of itself. For example, while it may be necessary to mark a product, so that you can trace it after manufacture and through shipping to its destination, the level of branding appears to be an advertisement too. The potential consumers of this message, however, are limited. Although the jerry-can may make it into a news report about the refugee settlement, this is unlikely, and instead guaranteed audiences include settlement residents and workers. The intentionality of this decision, among similarly branded aid objects distributed by Oxfam and the US Agency for

Figure 22.1. European Union branded jerry-can. Courtesy of the Uganda National Museum.

International Development (USAID), and others, is thus worthy of attention. However, we are interested in how the object has absorbed and emits new meanings and challenges material culture stereotypes, when it is explored in the context of its use in the Ariwa refugee settlement and, post-museum acquisition, as an object in a national collection in Kampala.

Aid agency branded jerry-cans in refugee settlements in West Nile are ambivalent objects. They can clearly be identified as aid objects because of their branding and they have been donated during war and displacement, and thus may symbolise need, conflict and/or separation. By contrast, they are also used for fetching water and as drums for making music, and thus have a social life and may be symbols of cultural survival and success. In this way, these containers, like other obvious aid objects in similar contexts, resist easy classification and are reflective of multiple entangled narratives and flows of meaning. In this context, can the EU jerry-can be an international aid object and a living part of South Sudanese culture and, now in Uganda National Museum, a South Sudanese cultural artefact?

Jerry-cans are plastic containers that, in this region, are typically used for collecting and transporting water. Ceramic pots once fulfilled this role, aiding the collection of water from springs, rivers and lakes. Sources might be close by but were often far away, especially in dry seasons or at times of drought. Ceramic pots have incredible properties, absorbing water into their semi-porous walls, allowing evaporation to cool the contents. But pots are also heavy and cumbersome and there was a likelihood that they would be broken when collecting water. In Uganda, there is a saying that, 'the pot breaks at the door'. While pots remain the container of choice for water storage, based on their cooling properties and the favoured mineralogical taste they exude, today, lightweight, easily sealed, and affordable jerry-cans have largely replaced pots as aids for carrying water. The theme of vessels as objects of aid, and particularly water containers as givers of life, weaves through this example.

The refugee camps in West Nile were typically unsuitable for settlement, bushy areas, infested with tsetse flies and rarely within ten kilometres of good water sources. Having fled violence in South Sudan, people typically arrived in the refugee camps with few possessions. Relief agencies provided tools and equipment and the refugees, mostly women and children, built homes for themselves. In this way, the camps are more accurately referred to as refugee settlements. Residents were given jerry-cans to collect water from distant sources for cooking food, bathing and washing utensils. In June 2018, Jackiline Nyiracyiza and Adebo Nelson Abiti (Uganda National Museum) visited the Ariwa refugee settlement for a workshop and community exhibition, funded and mentored by the British Museum's International Training Programme (Giblin). During meetings with women and a few elderly men, the first object encountered was the EU branded jerry-can. It was used for collecting and storing water, as was to be expected, but was also used in traditional dance performances as a drum. The dances were performed for funeral rites, marriage ceremony and child naming. Among the Kakwa, Kuku and Bari people, the dance is called *Ggoja nabaleti*. The jerry-can no longer only moved to the motion of water collection but now also moved to the motion of dancing and drumming. It had become a multi-functional, multi-experiential object.

As mundane objects, pots and drums function very differently but they are conceptually linked. Both have bodies and, like bodies, are vessels, one for water and

the other for sound. Museums with African 'ethnographic' ambitions have long filled themselves with ceramic pots and wooden drums. For many early European collectors and museums, these were exotic specimens of supposedly primitive cultures. At other times, especially in an era of African decolonisation, they were recycled as proud markers of identity within a new nation. But throughout the shifting meaning of pots and drums, a sense of authenticity has been constructed and maintained that identifies these objects as culturally diagnostic things, based on an assumption that they were made and used by the same people and thus reflective of single ethnicities. Moving past the obvious failures of this ontology, because it ignores fluidity, dynamism, agency and the movement of objects and people, among other issues, what place does a foreign-made, and foreign used, EU branded jerry-can have in the Uganda National Museum?

Research by both authors elsewhere in northern Uganda has shown that an aid-relief material culture assemblage, which was assembled during conflict, has been maintained into post-conflict times because these objects retain functionality and they act as memory aids of past conflict. In this way, objects that were once symbolic of conflict have since been conceptually recycled into positive identity markers that are symbolic of survival. These assemblages have some correlation with ethnicity but only because the conflicts during which they were amassed were broadly ethnically defined. However, ethnicity becomes less of a defining feature when the scale is increased to include multiple conflicts because the same objects were distributed across multiple sites and contexts of displacement. In addition, these objects were not made by the users and so may for some be culturally 'inauthentic'. Furthermore, the South Sudanese people that used the jerry-can were not actually in South Sudan but were living as refugees in northern Uganda. In a normative, traditional, 'ethnographic' collecting practice, the object is inauthentic and unrepresentative, but for us the object is authentic and social-historical.

At Uganda National Museum, the jerry-can, like other aid objects that we have recorded and collected, encapsulates an important set of experiences, including the experience of conflict, displacement, need, and aid-relief distribution, as well as cosmopolitan encounters, and survival, both personal and collective, against the odds. In this context, it has another life beyond the refugee settlement, demonstrating the transformative power of objects in the lives of people. Today, Uganda National Museum is reviewing its old displays in its ethnographic gallery, which are narrowly, ethnically defined and depict an uncritical ethnographic present. These displays contain objects that are useful and have relevance but the way in which they are displayed distances Ugandan visitors because they are presented with a vision of timelessness and primitiveness. The EU branded jerry-can will be displayed at Uganda National Museum to promote understanding of cultural dynamism and interactions between refugees and host communities. The jerry-can has the potential to tell a story about how refugees choose to express themselves and process trauma during conflict by transforming objects. At Uganda National Museum, away from the conflict and the refugee settlement, the jerry-can is a memory that, when handled by residents of the settlement who will be invited to the Museum, may speak again as a drum with sound and voice. It is a memory of cooking, washing, marriages and funerals, as well as traumas.



Because the world is not ending

Florence Henry Lokule & Alex Miskin

This conversation is about Florence's experiences of teaching heritage at Porti Primary School in cosmopolitan Juba. She draws on her personal reflections about the importance of cultural heritage in her own childhood and a period of displacement in Khartoum. As well as being the head teacher of Porti Primary, Florence is an accomplished actor; she has participated in productions in Khartoum and Juba. Alex Miskin studied anthropology at the University of Juba and works as a researcher with the Rift Valley Institute and the South Sudan National Archives.

Florence: Heritage, to my understanding, is cultural items or cultural traditions brought from one generation to others. It is something very important to me. My father used to send me to the village during holidays when I was at school. At that time, I experienced things that my grandparents were using. I respected them because they were from the generations that came before me. There were stools which my grandfather used to rest his head on, bowls made from the tree, there is even this basket you can see I have in front of me. These objects have been made from our own resources and skills and I am proud of that.

Alex: Why is it important for these materials to be preserved?

Florence: It is important because the world is not ending. We have generations still to come. We are giving birth to children and our children and grandchildren must know the heritage of their grandparents. Eventually, if they don't know their cultures, they will end up with cultures that are not their own. If they know that they have their own heritage, it will help them.

Figure 23.1. *Kebi* (winnowing pan) in a house in Juba, 2020. These examples are used as decorative items displaying small items at home. They are usually placed on a table in the sitting room. Photograph by Alex Miskin.

I can give you an example. I remember something called *kebi* [Bari: winnowing pan]. A *kebi* is in a triangular shape. You handle it with opposite hands and raise it up. The dirty items fall away and leave only what you want. It is made from *zaf* which is a certain plant in the bush. *Kebi* was used during the time of my great grandparents and up to now I am using it at home. It is used for decoration in the room to showcase my culture, it is used for cleaning things like groundnuts and it is used for eating. I even used it when I was [displaced] in Khartoum [during the 1983-2005 civil war] because some of my relatives were making it for sale and we were using it. At this moment, I have it at home.

We are supposed to teach our children about our cultures. Maybe I have not explicitly told my children about the importance of the *kebi* but I have been using it since their childhood. I had my first kids in Khartoum and I also had the grinding stone at home in Khartoum and I was using it. So, they just found it as a normal item to use and it is very important. There was a time I was using the gas cooker and the gas ran out. I had a lot of woods at home and I collected them and put my food on an open fire. The children gathered around ... we were a big family and even the neighbours came. They asked, "Mum what are you doing?" Then I said ok, it is very important for me to use these cultural materials that our people or we were using before for the sake of these children. I have children who have graduated [from university] but they are still using *kebi*. They know it is very important. For example, if I want to clean the dura [sorghum] or groundnuts, the only thing that can clean it properly is *kebi*.

Alex: We have been discussing the importance of heritage at home in South Sudan, but I want to go back to something we talked about before, it is too interesting to leave out. It is about a discussion that was held on South Sudanese heritage material in London and probably in other European and American States. How did seeing that make you feel?

Florence: The day I learned about our cultural heritage stored in other countries, I felt many things. I liked [to see] it but I was so angry about why it went there. I thought, "this is ours", "this is my tradition, who took it to London?" Our heritage is very important, our cultures are very important. So, we must teach our children to know that it is very important. I know that people are developing, but we can develop our heritage too. The objects in London and other foreign countries, we need them badly! We need them here. I think I felt this so intensely because I love those objects. I was not alive at the time they were taken, but I love them because I respect my great grandparents. My respect for them extends to respecting what they were making, using and wearing.

Alex: South Sudan is culturally diverse. This is a strength but it can also cause tensions. Sometimes you hear people say that if you want to know certain kinds of dress, you must go to a specific ethnic group. People are identified –



Figure 23.2. Kebi (winnowing pan) in use for sorting and cleaning grain at Konyo-Konyo market in Juba, 2020. Kebi are in extensive use at this and other markets. Photograph by Alex Miskin.

often stereotyped – on the basis of their appearance. How can you overcome the differences that heritage might highlight and reach a kind of unity in our shared heritage?

Florence: This is very important. In our school performances, you will not find a certain tribe dancing in its own way only. You will find the same pupils dancing all the traditions of our country. The same people, from different tribes will perform the dance of five or more tribes. The way they are dancing and dressing differently creates love, it creates harmony and in this way it brings peace.

Recently I went to Rwanda for a peace building training. We were told to dress according to our cultures. We were from different tribes. The occasion was beautiful and we planted trees in Rwanda wearing our different cultural

attires. I am an actress and sometimes in performances we put on those traditional attires and give a message of peace – of solidarity.

Alex: From your own perspective, what would you say is the importance of heritage to South Sudan as a whole?

Florence: It is very important because everyone loves it. You know when it comes to our national celebrations. When you go to the stages and see those dancers and teams who are organised, you will find them dressed up in the cultural materials of their ancestors. It is very important for our country as a message of peace.

Alex: Now let us come to Porti Primary and Nursery School. What do you think is the value of using heritage material or material culture for teaching children in South Sudan?

Florence: Currently, heritage is part of the school curriculum, as a co-curricular activity. If a school chooses, it can introduce classes in heritage to enrich what students learn in school. However, not all schools have done so. I believe it is very important for our pupils to know about their cultures. A simple example is that if they are acting or presenting dances during celebrations in the schools, they will need to perform their traditional dances. They must have this knowledge themselves, because we as elders we are not going to remain forever. The children will be the ones to take heritage into the future. It is not an easy task. Our school is big, we have 700-800 pupils. We have to select a smaller number for heritage classes, because you can't have all those numbers all in the training room. You will find those ones who have not been picked are not happy. Everyone really wanted to join in. Like recently we were making beads as a key handle, everyone wanted to take part. We were in the church because we were using the church as a hall. Those ones who were not picked sneaked in! They really liked it.

Alex: Given that your school is in the centre of the city, we are in the capital of South Sudan, your pupils are drawn from different communities. These communities have diverse cultural heritages. As an institution, how do you ensure that there is inclusivity?

Florence: I am so proud and happy because I am a mother and I know the effects of tribalism, I think that is what you are getting at. Not including somebody is tribalistic. I am a mother and I am a South Sudanese who doesn't like this. I include everybody. For example, I am teaching them Bari. Bari is in our curriculum. Even so, there are a lot of different languages spoken in the school. When I begin teaching them Bari, I tell them about the importance of all our indigenous languages. I tell them, "now you people, who came from Uganda?" They raise their hands. I ask, "do you speak Luganda or Swahili?" They say, "yes". I reply, "is it your tribe? No!" We tell them to know their own tribe

before knowing somebody else's. Then eventually when starting to teach, we allow them to learn others' languages while sharing and valuing their own. For example water in Bari is *piong*. After teaching them the alphabet I tell them the alphabet can be used in every language. They pick up the letters and write *piong*. Then I ask, "which other languages are spoken here?" And one will rise and say, "Dinka". They will then come and write *piu* which means water in Dinka language. So, everyone participates in learning Bari and sharing their own language: and they love it! Now it is the non-native speakers are those performing Bari well! It is because I gave them the right to acknowledge their own languages in the classroom. These are our tribes, these are your tribes and you have to be proud of your identity. So they are even disturbing me to come and teach them Bari and those disturbing are not Bari speakers. It is about picking their interest first, that is it, we are including every student here. Maybe one day we will invite you to see our celebration and you will see a Dinka pupil singing a Bari song like s/he is a Bari. So we are here uniting them. And coming to my teachers, they are not from one tribe, they are from all over the country: Nuer, Dinka, Toposa. Maybe I have the challenges of, you know, of some people coming in to complain ... you know you just want to employ such and such. I say no. I am a peace builder and I am a mother. A mother or a woman is married to any tribe so I am here to bring all these students together.

Alex: What message do you give about the use and importance and the value of heritage materials?

Florence: As I have said, the message that I would like to pass on about heritage to our people (and to schools in particular) is that people should respect and love their heritage. In heritage we can have peace, in heritage we can have love. You know heritage is the symbol of everything that is good in our country and it can promote peace in our country, I am sure. So, my message is it should be taught in schools. Since we have these co-curricular activities in our curriculum, let schools start it. I am just asking everyone in our country to promote our material heritage because they are really very important.

Afterword

A world in process: recovering agency through objects

Annie E. Coombes

One of the most enduring images from the two workshops I participated in (at Durham University and the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford) as part of the South Sudan Museum Network was in the presentation by the Director of the South Sudan National Archives, Youssef Onyalla. Under voluminous tenting – an open-ended basilica – sheltered untidy bundles of papers, barely held together with string and spilling out as far as the eye could see. These are the documents which contain the secrets (sometimes in triplicate) of the various and arbitrary borders and locations that made up the numerous colonial administrations of what is now South Sudan. A treasure trove of historical knowledge and misinformation on damp ground and at the mercy of termites. South Sudanese staff and students aided and trained by concerned international agencies and historians, the Rift Valley Institute, the British Institute of Eastern Africa (BIEA) and UNESCO engaged in a painstaking salvage operation. Down an unremarkable street in Juba in a modest private house, there is now a place of relative safety for this fragile repository of part of South Sudan's history heroically wrested from the clutches of a cycle of devastating civil wars which were an ever-present reality at the time of the workshops.

When the archive was finally in place no government ministers turned up to celebrate the opening of this extraordinary resource. Nonetheless, it was clear that once people were exposed to the contents of the archive, they were, in Mawan Muortat's words, 'captivated'. In one notable instance, curiosity was stimulated via an open-air exhibition of archival documents printed on to bedlinen draped on the railings surrounding the University campus and at Konyo-Konyo market. However, by the date of the workshop in January 2018, Onyalla and his team were still waiting for the long-term security of the archive to be assured with the passing of an Archive Bill supported by the Council of Ministers.

In many senses the European collections of artefacts looted, gifted or exchanged whose biographies are outlined in this book are an equivalent kind of material archive. Dispersed in European collections all over the world, the stories of material heritage from South Sudan narrated in this book point to the more granular detail of the histories of

their acquisition and the complicated transactions between parties with uneven access to agency and power.¹ They also begin to map the multi-layered significances of such collections for very different constituencies. In particular, reading these short essays, one is struck by the poignant realisation that precisely because of repeated armed conflicts since 1963, including the outbreak of internal conflict in South Sudan in 2013, it may be that certain examples of the material heritage of the newly minted country can now only be found outside South Sudan. Consequently, and paradoxically, these deeply flawed European and North American repositories have become a crucial component in projects of cultural renewal and restoration through their preservation of photography, recordings of praise poems and song, and of material remnants of ceremonial practices and other forms of indigenous knowledge.

Many African collections, especially those prised from their social, political and spiritual roots as a result of violent colonial extraction, are currently at the centre of revitalised restitution cases. The Abomey treasures from the former Kingdom of Dahomey, whose return was recently conceded by the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, and the Benin 'bronzes', which remain in the British Museum in London, are two of the best known restitution cases where protracted negotiations have persisted for decades. In the case of South Sudan, restitution may not yet be a practical option. The fallout from conflict and civil wars in many countries across the globe has created a precarious environment for the preservation and conservation of material heritage. Creative strategies are required to enable dispersed collections to be reunited with their communities of origin. South Sudan is no exception. Often the solution is found in collaboration with the communities most directly affected. The demands from communities of interest in African countries including South Sudan, together with relevant diasporic African communities, have forced European museums to pay greater attention to the impact their knowledge might have for a better understanding of European museum collections and conversely the benefits such interaction might have for the individuals involved (African and European). For example, 'Rethinking relationships and building trust around African collections' (involving the Horniman Museum, London; the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford; the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge; and World Museums, Liverpool) is an ongoing collaborative project which describes its agenda as acting '...on contemporary debates about colonial repair, justice and restitution' and seeking '...to build trusting and equitable relationships with heritage professionals and stakeholders in Kenya and Nigeria...'.² And specifically relating to South Sudan, the Pitt Rivers Museum has recently hosted members of the South Sudanese diaspora to discuss what significance the Museum's collections might hold for them, as part of its South Sudan research programme in collaboration with Jok Madut Jok, who was Global South Visiting Professor in 2018.³

South Sudan's long history of struggle for independence, and the recurrent violence this entailed, might lead one to expect that the establishment of a national museum would be lower down the list of priorities for the new state. However, this was not the case. Since his earlier role as Undersecretary of Culture at the birth of the new nation in 2011, Jok Madut Jok has always been insistent that the establishment of a national museum was one of the cornerstones that might help to build a sense of cohesion and a collective sense of dignity, humanity and national unity in a country with over sixty known languages. In some senses the twin projects of nation building and cultural value have always been associated with national museum projects from their inception in the nineteenth century

colonial metropole, for example the National Gallery, London, or the mimicry of their manifestations in colonial heartlands such as the South African Museum, Cape Town. Even the earliest grand municipal museums in nineteenth-century Europe have always had elements of an agenda of containment and control at their heart whether in terms of class or ethnicity. More recently major museum projects suggest a perverse reverse appropriation of colonial power. The most obvious instance here is the Louvre 'brand' purchased by the Louvre Abu Dhabi, and interpreted variously as invasive soft French power or the appropriation of Western cultural values harnessed to the wealth and status of governing elites in the United Arab Emirates.

On the other hand, the concept of a national museum proposed by our South Sudanese colleagues at the workshops was inspirational precisely because of its departure from these models. They were insistent on the humanising effect of preserving and conserving intangible and material heritage, and of recognising the value of both quotidian and ceremonial objects. They were also attentive to differentiating the subtle mutability of multiple roles assigned to the same artefacts.

In this volume Elfatih Atem (from the Likikiri Collective and the Ministry of Culture) and Rebecca Lorins describe the intention behind the method of gathering the collection for what was to become the national museum. Initiated as a pilot project in 2014, a mobile unit travelled around three states in South Sudan (Eastern Equatoria, Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Western Equatoria) inviting members of the communities they visited to bring out objects they felt would best represent themselves in their diversity as South Sudanese peoples. It was, as Atem and Lorins say, 'an explicit attempt to move toward a model of shared authority in museums' (Chapter 19). Similar in spirit to the Kenyan Community Peace Museums in the aftermath of the post-election violence of 2008, the larger ideal behind the South Sudanese mobile museum or 'Traveling Exhibition' was to reintroduce the shared aspects of their cultures to populations who had been factionalised through colonialism, tribalism and subsequently civil war. However, the concept of 'community' – inevitably an elusive category – is highly complex in the South Sudanese case. In the context of a new nation with over sixty languages and a growing number of displaced populations, refugees and an expanding diaspora, it was never going to be easy establishing a 'national' narrative where everyone felt accommodated and recognised.

In conversations over the period of the workshops, Jok Madut Jok and Elke Selter (who had participated in the new museum project as part of UNESCO South Sudan) made it clear that there were competing agendas and growing tensions surrounding the national museum project. The political class were keen to take control of the content in the museum and envisaged a large and imposing building representative of statehood which included tales of military feats during the various civil wars. The risk of South Sudan being defined solely in terms of war and conflict was undermining to elders and others who had suffered the violent impact of military incursions into their homes and territories and to students of culture and school children who wished to see themselves represented as arbiters of style and creativity through clothing and music, for example. In addition, in a region rich in historical and contemporary traditions of intangible heritage – poetry, praise song and music – any emphasis on collecting material artefacts might risk skewing the record for posterity.

There are some arguments to be made against the idea of a museum, certainly a national museum where too much hangs on the ability to either neutralise or reify ethnic

difference and to harness the narrative to an overarching national agenda. Hard to do at the best of times and especially so in a situation of recurrent civil war.

In almost every case worldwide where there has been evidence of gross human rights abuses, there is now a museum erected to honour the victims. In many of the histories represented, the blame is not always easily apportioned, and this ambiguity complicates the process of remembrance. Where personal and community compromises and ambiguities are acknowledged, however, a museum can become a site of healing and reconciliation. Smaller local museums have often been more successful in pursuing projects of reconciliation because they can be more responsive to the direct needs of those affected by legacies of violence. They are also freer of some of the bureaucratic obligations affecting large national institutions called on to accommodate broader constituencies, which can make it difficult for them to pay attention to the specific requirements and protocols that make reconciliation effective. On the one hand, the anonymity of a bigger institution can be helpful in providing a 'neutral' territory for the disclosure of grievances; on the other hand, the associations of these museums with state sponsorship can dissuade the victims of violence from working with them. Atem and Lorins in this volume draw our attention to those occasions where individuals refused to give up objects during the mobile museum's attempts to make a collection through soliciting local communities on their travels through the three states. They argue that this represents a form of resistance to the hegemonising narrative of a 'national' museum.

As an alternative to a national museum, it is perhaps important to note that local and community museums in post-conflict contexts are adept at applying local knowledge of the ways retribution and vigilantism operate in their areas and are attentive to local power dynamics that could either exacerbate the violence or, conversely, contribute to its alleviation. In Kenya, Dr Sultan Somjee, then an ethnographer at the National Museum of Kenya, worked with grassroots organisations to promote local forms of conflict resolution using elders' knowledge of how material culture had historically been used to broker peace in each of their specific ethnic groups. The community peace museums he helped to establish all over Kenya were instrumental in initiating dialogue between ethnic communities whose historic antagonism to each other dated back to the colonial period, when the British and their Kenyan allies forced the removal and relocation of communities for strategic and economic benefit.⁴ Community museums in many countries are often controlled by those directly affected by the traumatic events that have necessitated reconciliation and redress, and this is a critical factor in enabling successful resolution. In some senses then, a distributed museum model might offer a better foundation for peace than any centralised endeavour.

The last three essays in this collection focus on material culture as indicators of resilience. Through the objects they describe, we are reintroduced to the ways in which creative reinvention has been born out of necessity in the reduced and precarious conditions of Protection of Civilians sites (PoCs) for internally displaced peoples fleeing from violence. Deng Nhial Chioh describes the importance of using culture as an anchor in times of insecurity and displacement and the need for cultural organisations to shift priorities and modes of engagement according to the requirements of where they are working and with and for whom. 'You could even say that the PoCs are sorts of heritage sites; they are connected with the outbreak of violence and the way people have been

forced to change their way of life. The sites themselves are symbolic. We are learning', he says, 'what that means for the future, together.' (Chapter 21)

In many conflict contexts globally, women are on the receiving end of violence and rape is routinely used as a weapon of war. In addition, the instability of the aftermath of war can lead to frictions within the domestic environment. Poverty and displacement often leave men frustrated at being unable to perform their usual roles for an indefinite period of time. Frustration can lead to an exponential rise in violence against women. With a heavily armed population, violence against women is exacerbated. The same has been true in South Sudan. However, even under these inauspicious circumstances, a knowledge of heritage and cultural practices has sometimes provided a path to sustainability and dignity. The Roots Project is one such non-profit organisation founded in 2009 by human rights worker and lawyer, Anyieth d'Awol who spoke movingly about the aims of the project at the Oxford workshop. Set up in Juba as a women's empowerment project, sometimes representing up to twenty-four different ethnic groups – a leap of faith and trust by both the organisers and the women – women work together to produce internationally prize-winning beadwork and other art and traditional crafts for sale or commission in a place of safety where they can raise their children and earn a livelihood. Literacy, maths training and job skills are part of the mission of the centre in order that women are equipped for a different future with a greater degree of self-determination than can often be afforded in times of war and food insecurity.⁵

Consequently, for an answer to the question of why there is some urgency and necessity to preserving cultural traditions and heritage in South Sudan, it would be difficult to find a better response than Florence Henry Lokule's: 'It is important', she says, 'because the world is not ending. We have generations still to come. We are giving birth to children and our children and grandchildren must know the heritage of their grandparents. Eventually, if they don't know their cultures, they will end up with cultures that are not their own. If they know that they have their own heritage, it will help them.' (Chapter 23)

Endnotes

Introduction

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Chapter 1

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- 4 G. Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa From 1868 to 1871* (with an introduction by Winwood Reade), I (Sampson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873), 118.
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- 12 Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, 167. See also pages 66 and 184-5.
- 13 Willink, *The Fateful Journey*, 63, 125.
- 14 Heuglin, *Reise*, 185, quoted in Willink, *The Fateful Journey*, 126.
- 15 Letter H. Tinne to John Tinne, 1 July 1863 (NA 2.21.008.01/227), quoted in Willink, *The Fateful Journey*, 128.
- 16 Willink, *The Fateful Journey*, 174.

Chapter 2

- 1 For convenience's sake throughout this article we refer to the man known at different times in his life as Fox, Lane Fox, Lane-Fox, Rivers, and Pitt Rivers by the hyphenated version of the name he adopted from 1880 and by which he is known to posterity; that is, Pitt-Rivers. For recent accounts of his life and work, see the website of the 'Rethinking Pitt-Rivers' project at <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/>.
- 2 Throughout this article, we draw extensively on the contents of the headdress's object file; University of Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, Related Document Files, 1884.32.3. For the entry for the headdress in the online version of the PRM's database, go to <http://objects.prm.ox.ac.uk/pages/PRMUID126761.html>. For the entry for the headdress on the website of the 'Southern Sudan' project, go to <http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/details/1884.32.3/>. For an article about the headdress on the website of the 'Rethinking Pitt-Rivers Project', go to <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/object-biography-index/19-prmcollection/200-1884323-nuer-headdress/index.html>.
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- 5 *Catalogue of the Very Interesting Collection of Arms and Implements of War, Husbandry, and the Chase, and Articles of Costume & Domestic Use, Procured during Several Expeditions up the White Nile, Bahr-il-Ghazal, and among the Various Tribes of the Country, to the Cannibal Neam Nam Territory on the Equator, by John Petherick, Esq., H.M. Consul, Kharthoum, Soudan: Which Will be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Bullock, at his Great Rooms, 211, High Holborn, W.C., on Friday, June 27th, 1862, at Twelve for One O'Clock* [catalogue of a sale held by Bullock in London on 27 June 1862] (London, 1862), 8, lot 102.
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- 12 A. A. Blackman, 'The Material Culture of the Nilotic Tribes of East Africa' (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1956), 250.
- 13 M. Carey, *Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa* (Shire Ethnography 3) (Shire Publications, 1986), 16, fig. 7, see also 21.
- 14 M. Carey, 'Two Puzzles in African Beadwork', in J. D. Allen and V. Hector (eds), *International Bead & Beadwork Conference, 22-25 November 2007* (Kadir Has University, 2007) [unpaginated].
- 15 See J. Coote, 'Take a Case: Nuer and Dinka', *The Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum Newsletter*, 90 (Autumn/Winter 2017), 3.
- 16 See W. Hirschberg, 'Aus der völkerkundlichen Sammlung des Museums des Siebenbürgischen Vereines für Naturwissenschaften in Hermannstadt. Die Dinka under Nuer in der Sammlung Franz Binder', *Verhandlungen und Mitteilungen des Siebenbürgische Verins für Naturwissenschaften zu Hermannstadt. Fortgesetzt: Mitt. Der Arb. Gem. für Naturwissen schaften Sibiu-Hermannstadt*, 85/86:1 (1935/1936), 50-1, fig. 28.
- 17 In a recent article, Michael Oehrl claims that the headdress in Geneva is represented in a drawing by Schweinfurth in the collections of the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt am Main, implying that it was collected by him (M. Oehrl, 'Beaded Coiffures of the Acholi, Dodinga, Latuka, and Related Groups', *Tribal Art Magazine*, 20:3 (no. 80; Summer 2016), 121, n. 5). The headdress in Geneva was purchased in Paris in 1926 and nothing else is known of its history. Moreover, there is only one drawing of such a headdress by Schweinfurth in the Frobenius Institute (EBA-B 02221; Figure 2.2 here), and that is of the example in Berlin. The item EBA-B 02355 is a print of a photograph of EBA-B 02221, perhaps prepared for the illustration in the fourth edition of Schweinfurth's *Im Herzen in Afrika* published three years before his death (G. Schweinfurth, *Im Herzen von Afrika: Reisen und Entdeckungen im zentralen Äquatorial-Afrika während der Jahre 1868-1871, Ein Beitrag zur Entdeckungsgeschichte von Afrika* (4th edn, F. A. Brockhaus, 1922), 79).

- 18 T. McKulka (ed.) *A Shared Struggle: The People & Cultures of South Sudan* (Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Government of the Republic of South Sudan, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, 2013), 26.
- 19 Carey, 'Two Puzzles in African Beadwork'.
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- 21 G. Miani, *La spedizione alle Origini del Nilo* (Co' tipi di Gaetano Longo, 1865).
- 22 A. Castelbolognesi [as Angelo Castel-Bolognesi], 'Voyage au Flueve des Gazelles (Nil Blanc)', *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau Journal des Voyages*, 5 (June 1862), 386, n.2; see also A. Castelbolognesi, *Viaggio di Fiume dell Gazzelle (Nilo Bianco), 1856-1857*, translated and edited by Giacomo Savioli, (Liberty House, 1988), 74.
- 23 See C. R. Nuzzolo and I. Guidotti, 'Re-Excavating Egyptological Manuscripts: The Explorer Angelo Castelbolognesi and his Donations to the Museums of Ferrara and Florence', in E. Czerny (ed.), *In Search of the Orient: Proceedings of the Symposium Held at Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien (September 20th to 24th, 2016)* (Egypt and Austria, XI), (Spolok Slovákov v Pol'sku : Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Towarzystwa Słowaków w Polsce, 2018), 277-87.
- 24 G. Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa, from 1868 to 1871*, translated by Ellen E. Frewer (Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1873), I, 153-4.
- 25 Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, I, 154.
- 26 Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa*, I, 154, n.

Chapter 3

- 1 Examples of these guidelines for the German-speaking territories would be the general statement by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Germany) about their dealings with human remains within their collections, the Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections by the German Museum Association or the ICOM Code of Ethics. All of these have been revised and commented on since their respective first publications.
- 2 C. Spring, *African Arms and Armor* (British Museum Press, 1993), 119.
- 3 Pasha is a title used in the Ottoman empire, attributed to soldiers and high civil servants after their names.
- 4 This can also be understood when looking at the various letters printed in the *Notifications of the i.r. Geographical Society in Vienna [Mittheilungen der k.k. Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien]*, especially volume 22, 434-7.
- 5 The museum was at this point the Anthropological-Ethnographical Department at the Royal Imperial Natural History museum, officially established only in 1876.
- 6 Letter and list from Martin L. Hansal to Ferdinand von Hochstetter on 15.11.1881, received 23.12.1881, Archives Weltmuseum Wien. The shipment also included objects from other collectors like Ernst Marno, who created a separate list for his collections in July 1881. This was also not the only shipment from Emin sent through Hansal.
- 7 Inventory list, Post 31/ 1881, Weltmuseum Wien.
- 8 S. W. Baker, *Der Albert N'yanza, das große Becken des Nil und die Erforschung der Nilquellen* (Hermann Costenoble, 1868), 143-9.

- 9 Baker, *Der Albert N'yanza*, 147.
- 10 Baker, *Der Albert N'yanza*, 147; F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika. Ein Reisebericht mit Beiträgen von Emin Pascha* (Reimer, 1894), 777f.
- 11 Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika*, 778.
- 12 One example can be found in the Pitt Rivers Museum's collections (1940.7.092.1 to 4).

Chapter 4

- 1 N. MacGregor, 'Sudanese Slit Drum', in N. MacGregor (ed.), *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (Allen Lane, 2010), 613-19.
- 2 N. Barley, *Requiescat: A Cat's Life at the British Museum* (2013), www.ebookit.com/books/0000003386/Requiescat.html. This is not an entirely improbable meeting. Wallis Budge was in correspondence with close associates of Kitchener: both Rudolf Slatin, the escaped Mahdist prisoner and at the time a senior officer in the Egyptian army, and Major Reginald Wingate (later Governor-General of Sudan) head of military intelligence during the campaigns that led to the Battle of Omdurman.
- 3 MacGregor, *A History*, 617.
- 4 Father Joseph Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp, 1882-1892*, redacted from original manuscripts by Major F. R. Wingate (Samson Low, Marston and Co., 1892), 225.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 301. On the institution of 'military slavery' in Sudan and Egypt see Douglas Johnson, 'The Structure of a Legacy: Military Slavery in Northeast Africa', *Ethnohistory*, 36:1 (1989): especially 77ff. regarding the status and changing patrons/allegiances of southern Sudanese soldier-slaves. 'Blacks' here may refer to other Sudanese and from the south to a number of different ethnic groups involved in the armies of the Muslim north – particularly Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 301.
- 7 C. G. Seligman, 'An Avungura Drum', *Man*, 11 (1911), 17.
- 8 Enid Schildkrout and Curtis A. Keim, *African Reflections: Art from Northeastern Zaire* (University of Washington Press, American Museum of Natural History, 1990), 197, 210, 211.
- 9 Éric De Dampierre, *Harpes Zandé* (Klincksieck, 1991).
- 10 Z. Rahman, *Black Ivory and White or the Story of El Zubeir Pasha Slaver and Sultan as Told by Himself*, translated by H. C. Jackson (B. H. Blackwell, 1913), 53-4.
- 11 As quoted in Seligman, 'An Avungura Drum', 17.
- 12 Such as those illustrated in Ohrwalder, *Ten Years*, 305.
- 13 R. Slatin, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan: A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879-1895*, translated by Sir F. R. Wingate (Edward Arnold, 1905), 351; see also Winston Spencer Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, Col. F. Rhodes (ed.) (Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), II, 209, where he describes what may be the 'Omdurman' slit drum as being in the 'arsenal'.
- 14 *The Times*, 21 November 1898, 12; available in *The Times* digital archive: www.gale.com/intl/c/the-times-digital-archive.
- 15 Queen Victoria's Journals, 22 November 1898; available at: www.royal.uk/sites/default/files/media.victoria.pdf.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 13 November 1899.
- 17 *The Navy and Army Illustrated*, 5 November 1898, 165.

Chapter 5

- 1 'Art Heritage, Resilience and Humanitarianism in South Sudan'. Principal Investigator, Tamsin Bradley (University of Portsmouth). Funded by the British Academy/GCRF Sustainable Development Programme, 2018.
- 2 Editors' note: this would probably have been a test for sleeping sickness, rather than a vaccine. During the colonial period, tests were conducted by using needles to take fluid from the glands in the neck.

Chapter 6

- 1 Mahi Ismail, revised by Jamie Linwood, 'Rongo', *Grove Music Online* (2011) <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.L2214895>.
- 2 Faustino Roro Kamitin, 'The Rongo', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 28 (1947), 179-80.
- 3 Roro Kamitin, 'The Rongo', 180.
- 4 Ismail, 'Rongo'. Also Magda Saleh, 'Dance in Egypt – Rongo (Sudanese dance)' in Virginia Danielson, Dwight Reynolds and Scott Marcus (eds), *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The Middle East* (Routledge, 2017).
- 5 Tim Cumming, 'Rango's sound traditions: ancient instrument ready to r' [sic], *The National*, 12 April 2010, www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/music/rango-s-sound-traditions-ancient-instrument-ready-to-r-1.551862; Mohamed Elmeshad, 'Rango: an instrument of revival', *Egypt Independent*, 19 December 2010, <https://egyptindependent.com/rango-instrument-revival/>; World Music, 'Rango', www.worldmusic.co.uk/rango.

Chapter 7

- 1 The characteristics of the *toor* are described and analysed by Andrew Mawson in 'The Triumph of Life: Political dispute and religious ceremonial among the Agar Dinka of the Southern Sudan' (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1989), and in the same author's "'Bringing what people want": shrine politics among the Agar Dinka', *Africa*, 61:3 (1991), 354-69.
- 2 The Dinka, or *Muonyjaang*, are the largest ethnolinguistic group in South Sudan, subdivided into more than twenty tribal groups. The Agaar of Lakes State form one of these primary groups. Amothnhom is a subsection of Kuei, which is one of the five (formerly eight) primary divisions of Agaar.
- 3 I visited War Nyang in 1980, 1993, 2005 and 2006 and held conversations with Makuer Gol Mayen, the presiding *bany e bith*, in 1980 (in Rumbek) and in 1993 (at War Nyang). In 1980, in the company of Bishop John Malou, I interviewed Ater Gol Mayen, Makuer's elder half-brother and rival, who presided over the luak in the 1940s and 1950s, following the death of Gol Mayen, before Makuer Gol became spear-master.
- 4 Irene Leverenz, *Der Kuhstall Gottes: Ein Ritual der Agar-Dinka* [The Byre of God: An Agar Dinka ritual], *Sudanesische Marginalien*, Bd. 6 (Trickster, 1994).
- 5 Discussing *baany bith* in the 1950s and 1960s, Lienhardt (*Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka*, Oxford University Press, 1961) noted that several spear masters of his acquaintance had assembled collections of 'objects of various kinds which have at some time struck a master of the fishing spear or one of his ancestors as being of possible religious significance'. 'Among them,' he wrote, 'there will perhaps be old beads, small meteorites, a horn of thiang or cob containing medicine acquired at some time from a non-Dinka wizard, perhaps an ingot or two of metal.'

- 6 A visit to the shrine in 1993, at the height of the north-south war in Sudan, when Makuer Gol was approaching death, is described by the present writer in 'The Groundnuts and the Hyena', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 29 July 1994.
- 7 Mawson, 'The Triumph of Life', and Leverenz, *Der Kuhstall Gottes*.
- 8 These were the visible contents of the *luak* when I was permitted to look inside it in 1980.
- 9 Mawson, 'The Triumph of Life'. In the present article, following Lienhardt (*Divinity and Experience*), the word Divinity, with initial capital and without definite or indefinite article, is used to translate *nhialic*; while local powers, *yath* (plural, *yeeth*) are referred to as 'divinities', *i.e.* with a lower-case 'd'. The term *jok* (plural, *jaak*) can be used for both Divinity and divinities.
- 10 For a longer version of this account of the origin of the *toor* see Leverenz, *Der Kuhstall Gottes*, and Mawson 'The Triumph of Life'.
- 11 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Non-Dinka Peoples of Amadi and Rumbek', *Sudan Notes and Records*, XX (1937), 156-8: 'Jur: 'Bëli and Modo'.
- 12 Andrew Persson (personal communication 14 June 2020) and Janet Persson, 'Notes on *toro* and *mītoro* and rainstones' (MS, 2020).
- 13 Interview with Ater Gol (1980).
- 14 Thong Chegok, Interview by John Ryle and Magai Enoch, War Nyang, 18 February 1980.
- 15 'Conflict Turned Supernatural', Report by USAID Vistas, Rumbek, May 2015.
- 16 Mawson, 'The Triumph of Life'.
- 17 Deer Makuer Gol, Malai Makuer Gol, Gumnok Manhom Gol, Mading Ambor Yom Gol, and Mayen Kuc Adhiel. Interviewed by John Ryle and Alier Makuer Gol, Juba, 4 September 2019.
- 18 As the principal Dinka account of their origin acknowledges, the *toor* are cultural property appropriated from the 'Bëli people. As yet, however, there has been no 'Bëli claim for restitution.

Chapter 8

- 1 Author's translation.
- 2 Birth name Eduard Schnitzer, 1840-92.
- 3 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford University Press, 1937).
- 4 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Azande. History and Political Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 1971).
- 5 For information about Gbudwe's biography and all sources to it, including the writings of Evans-Pritchard, cf. P. Ivanov, *Vorkoloniale Geschichte und Expansion der Avungara-Azande: Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung*, Studien zur Kulturkunde 114 (Köppe, 2000), 658-9.
- 6 P. Ivanov, 'Cannibals, Warriors, Conquerors and Colonizers: Western Perceptions and Azande Historiography', *History in Africa*, 29 (2002), 170-4.
- 7 E. W. Herbert, *Red Gold of Africa: Copper in Precolonial History and Culture* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 161-5.
- 8 Cf. Ivanov, 'Cannibals, Warriors', 122-3.
- 9 Cf., for example, W. Junker, *Reisen in Afrika 1875-1886*, 3 volumes (E. Hölzel, 1889-91), III, 11-12.
- 10 Junker, *Reisen in Afrika*, I, 377.

- 11 C.-R. Lagae and V. H. Vanden Plas, *La Langue des Azande* (Editions dominicaines "Veritas", 1921-25): s.v. 'bannière'. Editors' translation.
- 12 A. de Calonne-Beaufaict, *Azande. Introduction à une Ethnographie générale des Bassins de l'Ubangi-Uele et de l'Aruwimi* (M. Lamertin, 1921), 49; Junker, *Reisen in Afrika*, II, 366; S. S. Wassara, 'Political History of the Southern Sudan Before Independence of the Sudan', in R. Bereketeab (ed.) *Self-Determination and Secession in Africa: The Post-Colonial State* (Routledge, 2015), 61.
- 13 G. Schweinfurth et al (eds), *Eine Sammlung von Reisebriefen und Berichten Dr. Emin-Pascha's aus den ehemals ägyptischen Aequatorialprovinzen und deren Grenzländern* (Brockhaus, 1888), 259.
- 14 Evans-Pritchard, *The Azande*, 354-5.
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- 6 Count Gleichen, *Handbook of the Sudan* (HMSO, 1898), 85.
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- 11 R. Gessi, *Seven Years in the Soudan* (S. Low, Marston & Co, 1892), 97.
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- 26 Collins, *The Southern Sudan*, 23.
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Chapter 11

- 1 The drum's entry in the WA Museum catalogue suggests that Drummond may have in fact acquired it in Uganda.
- 2 This and the following quotes are taken from: C. R. K. Bacon, 'Patrol No. 71 – Political Report' (19 June 1920); reproduced as Document No. 17 in: D. H. Johnson, *Empire and the Nuer: Documents and Texts from Pacification of Southern Sudan, 1898-1930* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
- 3 T. Hippler, *Governing the Skies: A Global History of Aerial Bombing* (Verso, 2017).
- 4 Bacon, 'Patrol No. 71', 239.
- 5 Sudan Intelligence Report, June 1920, 4.
- 6 Upper Nile and Pibor District Monthly Diary, January 1922, National Records Office, Khartoum, Civsec 57/3/12.
- 7 Mut Dung's metaphysical power stemmed from his being possessed by the one of the 'Sky-spirits', Wiu. The same spirit has continued to possess a line of his male descendants, down to the present. See E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'The Nuer: Tribe and Clan', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 18 (1) (1935), 55.

Chapter 13

- 1 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'The Nuer Col Wic', *Man*, 49 (1949), 8.
- 2 *Ibid.*
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- 4 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Clarendon Press, 1940), 101.
- 5 C. Morton, *The Anthropological Lens: Rethinking E. E. Evans-Pritchard* (Oxford University Press, 2020).
- 6 S. M. Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Duke University Press, 2013), 6.
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- 6 M. Daly in Gameson (ed.), *Treasures of Durham University Library*, 149.
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Chapter 15

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- 5 SAD.69/11/1-12, report on a survey of the Dongotona mountain range submitted to SDIT by the University of Khartoum.
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Chapter 16

- 1 J. Mack, 'Art, Culture and Tribute among the Azande', in E. Schildkrout and C. A. Keim (eds) *African Reflections, Art from Northeastern Zaire* (American Museum of Natural History, 1993), 230; N. Barley, *Smashing Pots: Works of Clay from Africa* (Smithsonian Press, 1995), 144; R. Sparks, "'An Artist of Exceptional Skill": The Zande Potter Mbitim', *Friends of the Pitt Rivers Museum Newsletter*, 55 (2006), 10.
- 2 A. Cruikshank, 'The Birth of a Leper Settlement – Lirangu, Equatoria', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 29(2), (1948), 183.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 187-8.
- 4 An article in the January 1939 *Leprosy Review* notes that occupational therapy, including presumably the making of craft items, played a big part in the daily routines of those living at the settlement. British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, 'Report on Leprosy in Sudan', *Leprosy Review*, 10(1) (1939), 15-17.
- 5 Mack, 'Art', 230.
- 6 Percy Powell-Cotton, Journal (unpublished, Powell-Cotton Museum Archive, 1933).
- 7 Barley, *Smashing Pots*, 143.

- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 A contact zone can be defined as ‘a social space where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination’. M.-L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge, 1992), 4.
- 10 Professor Siddiq Ibrahim Khalil has noted the propensity of medical facilities in Southern Sudan at this time to employ Syrian doctors, who were Christian and therefore considered politically ‘safe’, but who as non-Europeans were far cheaper to employ. S. I. Khalil, ‘Medical services in Sudan: a historical perspective’, *Sudan Medical Journal*, 49:1 (2013), 52. Further evidence comes from Sir Reginald Davies, who wrote in his diary (dated 1920-34) ‘On Tuesday we had a visit from Dr. Negib Younis, formerly of Nahud and now a combatant of leprosy and sleeping sickness in the far south. He brought a present of a piece of their (the Zande) pottery, rather wonderful work – a low black bowl, very thick, with very well modeled ‘human heads’ in full relief round the sides...’ (Papers of Reginald Davies (1887-1971), Coll.191, University of Edinburgh Special Collections). The piece described sounds similar to that found in the Pitt Rivers Museum (number 1934.8.133). As Davies was based in Khartoum at this time, it is most likely that Dr Younis (another Syrian doctor) brought the piece from Li Rangu to the capital. It is unknown where this piece is now.
- 11 Mack, ‘Art’, 230.
- 12 Powell-Cotton, Journal, 28 April 1933.
- 13 Sparks, “‘An artist...’”, 10.
- 14 Powell-Cotton, Journal, 28 April 1933.
- 15 Hannah Powell-Cotton, ‘Village Handicrafts in the Sudan’, *Man* 34 (112) (1934), 91.
- 16 See Pitt Rivers Museum catalogue reference for objects 1950.12.117 and 1950.12.118, http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/details.php-a=1950.12.118&-show=1950.12.118_c.jpg.html (accessed 31 January 2019). The Horniman Museum catalogue reference is 30.12.50/1, <https://horniman.ac.uk/collections/browse-our-collections/object/66641/type/term/identifier/term-500512/page/4> (accessed 31 January 2019).
- 17 The reference to Mbitim as the artist was added during the Pitt Rivers Museum project *Recovering the Material and Visual Cultures of the Southern Sudan: A Museumological Resource*, a web-based project completed in 2005. Object catalogue entries for Mbitim’s work were updated by Rachel Sparks, a member of the project team. See <http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk/project.php.html> for more details.
- 18 Personal communication between the author and the curator of Cleveland Museum, Dr Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi (email correspondence, 10 October 2017).
- 19 Mack, ‘Art’, 230.
- 20 Hannah Powell-Cotton (‘Village Handicrafts’, 91) noted that he had pledged his life to the work of the hospital, and we know that the hospital administrators were strict in maintaining separation between the sick and the healthy (Cruikshank, ‘The Birth of a Leper Settlement’).

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- 3 G. Schweinfurth, *Artes Africanae: Illustrations and descriptions of productions of the industrial arts of Central Africa* (Samson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1875), Tab VIII, figure 7.
- 4 G. Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa: Three Years' Travels and Adventures in the Unexplored Regions of Central Africa, From 1868 to 1871*, I (Samson Low, Marston, Low and Searle, 1873), 259-260.
- 5 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'The Bongo', *Sudan Notes and Records* 12:1 (1929), 1.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 7 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Azande: History and Political Institutions* (Oxford University Press, 1971), 220.
- 8 S. Santandrea, 'Notes on the Bongo' *Sudan Notes and Records* 39 (1958), 77.
- 9 Schweinfurth, *The Heart*, 280.
- 10 O. Antinori, 'Viaggi di O. Antinori e C. Piaggia Nell'Africa Centrale', *Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana*, 1 (August 1868), 91-155, at pages 102-103.
- 11 C. G. Seligman, 'A Bongo Funerary Figure', *Man* 17 (1917), 97-98.
- 12 Evans-Pritchard, 'The Bongo'.
- 13 A. Kronenberg, 'Wooden Carvings in The South Western Sudan', *Kush* 8 (1960), 275-281.
- 14 Santandrea, 'Notes on the Bongo', 74.
- 15 Kronenberg, *Wooden Carvings*, 278.
- 16 K.-J. Krüger, 'Kwanja Gete et les Sculpteurs Bongo de Sud du Sudan' in B. de Grunne (ed.), *Mains de Maîtres: A Le Découverte des Sculpteurs d'Afrique* (Bernard de Grunne, 2001), 241-242, figures 38 and 39.
- 17 Y. Biro, 'Identity, Meaning, Function: Reclaiming the Histories of the Met's Bongo Ngya', Metropolitan Museum of Art blog (2018), www.metmuseum.org/blogs/collection-insights/2018/bongo-commemorative-post-ngya.
- 18 For a full list, see B. de Grunne, *Bongo: Monumental Statuary from Southern Sudan* (Bernard de Grunne, 2011), 8.
- 19 W. B. Fagg, *African Majesty, from Grassland to Forest: the Barbara and Murray Frum Collection* (Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), Entry number 59.
- 20 de Grunne, *Bongo*, 9.
- 21 K.-J. Krüger, 'Arts of the Bahr-el-Ghazal: Funerary Sculpture of the Bongo and Balanda', *Tribal Arts* (Winter/Spring 1999/2000), 82-101, page 88.
- 22 *Ibid.*

Chapter 19

- 1 E. Tuck and K. Wayne Wang, 'R-Words: Refusing Research', in D. Paris and M. T. Winn (eds) *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities* (Sage Publications, 2014), 304. Also see A. Simpson, 'On ethnographic refusal: Indigeneity, 'voice' and colonial citizenship', *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue*, 9 (2007), 67-80.
- 2 T-Kay Sangwand, 'Preservation is Political: Enacting Contributive Justice and Decolonizing Transnational Archival Collaborations', *KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies*, 2:1 (2018), <http://doi.org/10.5334/kula.36>, 2.

- 3 A. Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- 4 Tuck and Wang, 'R-Words', 307.

Chapter 20

- 1 C. Tounsel, 'Khartoum Goliath: SPLM/SPLA Update and Martial Theology during the Second Sudanese Civil War', *Journal of Africana Religions*, 4:2 (2016), 129-153.
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Afterword

- 1 My own academic and intellectual trajectory was forged by my interaction with what was then the Democratic Republic of the Sudan and the evident divisions between north and south. A subsequent career as an academic working on issues of power and agency surrounding the collection, display and narratives of belonging and exclusion in historical and contemporary exhibitions of material culture and heritage from the African continent is largely the result of being forced to confront my own ignorance in the face of the complex political situation I experienced during that period. Later research on the intractable tensions and contradictions surrounding the legacy of British and other colonial relations on the African continent was due in no small measure to lessons I learned from my students and their parents as a teacher in Sudanese government secondary schools, on the cusp of the second civil war which broke out in 1983. Divisions in the classroom encouraged my attempts at surreptitious essay-writing classes, setting topics designed to get students from north and south to explore the differences and similarities between their experiences of 'home' in a naïve effort to dispel evident prejudice in the classroom against southerners (and following a visit to Wau which I was able to make in the school break, extended thanks to the fact that the plane failed to turn up that week). Our living room floor is still graced by the skills of prisoners from Wau's open prison who wove me a carpet out of the soft browns and greys of local goats who were our constant companions. On my return to the UK the university hosting my PhD decided that since the year had been 'wasted' it was unlikely that further funding would be available. How woeful for an academic institution to so underestimate the transformative power of encounter.
- 2 See <https://rethinkingafricancollections.org>
- 3 See www.torch.ox.ac.uk/exploring-our-south-sudanese-identity-at-the-pitt-rivers-museum
- 4 For a more detailed analysis of the Kenyan community peace museum (CPM) movement, see A. E. Coombes, L. Hughes and Karega-Munene, *Managing Heritage, Making Peace: History, Identity and Memory in Contemporary Kenya* (I. B. Tauris, 2014).
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PIECES OF A NATION

South Sudan became independent in 2011 after decades of rebel wars with the Government of Sudan. Independence prompted discussions about South Sudanese identity and shared history, in which material objects and cultural heritage featured as vitally important resources. However, the long-term effects of colonialism and conflict had largely precluded any concerted attempts to preserve material culture within the country; museums remained in Khartoum, the capital of the formally united Sudan. Furthermore, tens of thousands of objects had been removed from what is now South Sudan during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to museum and private collections around the world.

Up to now there have been few attempts to reconnect the history of these South Sudanese museum collections with people in or from South Sudan. *Pieces of a Nation* is the first extended study of South Sudanese material cultural heritage in museum collections and beyond.

The chapters discuss a range of different objects and practices – from museum objects taken from South Sudan in the context of enslavement and colonialism in the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries to efforts by South Sudanese to preserve their country's cultural heritage during recent conflicts.

With essays by 32 contributors in Europe, South Sudan, Uganda and Australia, this book delivers a unique range of perspectives on museum objects from South Sudan and on heritage practices in the country and among its diaspora. Written by curators, academics, heritage professionals and artists in accessible and engaging style, it is intended for scholars, museum professionals and a wide range of individuals interested in South Sudan, African arts and cultures, the history of museum collecting and colonialism and/or the role of material heritage in peacebuilding and refugee contexts.

At a time of widespread, prominent debates over the provenance of museum collections from Africa and calls for restitution, this book provides an in-depth empirical study of the circumstances and practices that led to South Sudanese objects entering foreign museum collections and the importance of these objects in South Sudan and around the world today.

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